Understanding the Bible

Respecting Distinctions

Tom Wilson

A Bible Study Guide

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The back cover caricature of the author was drawn by the well-known artist Jan van Haasteren as a favor to Els Rooswinkel, who maintained a web site dedicated to puzzles with artwork drawn by Jan. I originally created a version of this web site and handed it over to Els, who developed the site far beyond its initial content. In appreciation of my effort, Els asked Jan to draw me.

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Preface

Book Origin

As I began the development of my bible studies, I created one series called “Rightly Dividing the New Testament”. It had 6 topics that ended up in this guide and two that did not. The two that did not essentially got reduced to fit into side studies. The content that I did have has been greatly increased (I’ve learned so much more than I knew back then). Obviously, other topics have been added.

The best way to understand right division is to see the distinctions in the areas where there is commonality. Most of Christianity keeps the commanlity and overlook the distinctions. I think this is an amazing study series. Obviously, any work can be improved, so I expect that that will happen.

A Bible Study Guide

This book is referred to as “a bible study guide” since it is intended to guide you while you study. Depending on the topic, a study guide may not have much discussion. This is typically true for more advanced topics, where there may be many verses with little explanation. If you feel overwhelmed in this situation, you may be over your head. Give yourself time as you wrestle with the scriptures. A guide is not meant to be a commentary on every given verse.

Typically, I have found most of the scriptures for you and organized them in a way that will help you draw the conclusion that God would have you draw. I don’t have everything right, including my limited explanations. So, focus on the scriptures.

To make the guide useful, you should:

- read the larger context around the quoted verses,
- read certain passages again and again,
- search for words and phrases when you study, and
- look at concordance information to learn more (if appropriate).

You are in charge of your maturing. Use the guide as you see fit.

A study guide may have side studies that address necessary background material. These side studies are blocked off from the main material so that they can be skipped or revisited. When a side study ends, it should help you return your focus to the interrupted topic. Advanced side studies often require more work beyond what is presented or they may require you to visit other study guides.

A traffic light may appear in the margin. A green light indicates something positive worth noting. When applied to a verse or passage, it is an important scripture that is fundamental to the teaching. A yellow light is a warning that something may not be clear. It might highlight that I am giving my opinion, which could easily be wrong. A red light indicates something negative worth noting. It might accompany a quote from a corrupt bible or a tradition that is taught that isn’t really the truth of the bible.

A “pointing finger” simply indicates something worth reading in order to help you find important information when skimming pages. A “thumbs up” indicates a positive message. A “thumbs down” indicates a negative one. These are very similar to the yellow, green, and red lights.

The main chapters and appendices have a whirlwind[1] symbol ( ) in the bottom right corner of each page. This is a hyperlink that takes you to the index of verses. This is an easy way to go that index and look at verses that are elsewhere in the study guide. Hopefully, your PDF viewer has a way to come back to where you jumped from, eventually taking you back to the page where you clicked on the whirlwind.

How to Get the Most out of This Book

You can certainly print this book if you would like, but you will get the most out of it by using a good PDF reader and learning how to use it. The book contains many hyperlinks to navigate it. Examples are the table of contents and list of figures, chapter and figure references, and the page references in the bible verse index.

A good reader will allow you to navigate the table of contents as a sidebar. You can also create bookmarks and display those bookmarks in the sidebar. You can also highlight text and insert comments. These too can be displayed in the sidebar. Maybe your reader will have more facilities.

Having a good on-line bible will also aid you when you study using this book. That should have a concordance and you should go to the trouble to learn how to use it. Beware of commentaries! It is unlikely that anyone is teaching what you are reading here. You get to decide what you believe—whether it is right or wrong.

How to Improve This Book

You should have gotten this book for free with no expectation of giving anything in return. But you can give back to it by suggesting improvements, which might consist of the correction of simple typographical or spelling errors, or better explanations of verses.

You can submit feedback by first contacting me through the "Contact" link at `https://thechurchoforlando.org`. A reply will then ask you for your comments. Similarly, if you have clarifying questions, I might end up supplementing the book as a result.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank everyone that has contributed to something open source or otherwise free. It has been a further motivation for me to make this book freely available. More specifically, I would like to thank everyone involved with

1. Linux, in general,
2. LaTeX and its numerous packages, Macintosh ports/tools (MacTex, TeXShop, TeXLive), and the TeX Users Group,
3. LaTeX Beamer in particular, and
4. the LaTeX discussion forums, where many of my problems were already solved.

There is no way to list all of the contributors.

We all benefit from a more robust version of this book.

[1] The bible describes the Spirit as a whirlwind that could carry a prophet to another place.

Introduction

If you are unfamiliar with **rightly dividing the word of truth**, then this study guide is for you. Most of Christianity does not understand this concept. Because of that, most of Christianity is carnal and immature. Sure, you might be offended at this, but you should be more offended by those that (unintentionally) duped you in the first place.

I spent 21 years in denominational tradition. I thought I was mature. Then, I came across *Through the Bible with Les Feldick* on TV. I was surprised at how much I misunderstood. Then I had to find other teachers who were teaching correctly. I would have loved to have had this guide to help me.

Besides the main focus of "right division", this guide is also intended to help you study the bible more efficiently. Many chapters begin with the definitions of words from a dictionary. The dictionary that I am using is the *American Dictionary of the English Language* [2]. While a dictionary from 1760 or so would be better, the one I am using is free. What I will commonly show is how often the dictionary provides definitions that are not reflecting the bible's usage.

Each dictionary definition is often followed by an advanced side study using concordance information. If using a concordance is new to you, don't worry. While you might be able to follow what the side study is teaching, the *How to Study the Bible – Volume 2: Intermediate Topics* study guide [4] can teach you how to use an on-line concordance. The side studies here are set apart from the rest of the text so that you can skip them and return to them later when you have learned how the concordance can be useful. The concordance is typically more useful than the dictionary, but it also is not a source of truth like the bible is.

The material in this guide is divided into two main parts. The first predominately concerns right division of prophecy and mystery. The second has other topics with a minor right-division component and with important distinctions that are not usually understood. The appendix's sole purpose is to demonstrate how important it is to have the correct English bible.

Once you mature in this area, you will be amazed at the information in the bible. It couldn't have been written by a bunch of men—it could only have been written by God himself. Maturing in this area can take time, but it will then open the door to more advanced topics. The good news is that there are other study series beyond this one.

Dedication

To Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, without whom nothing would be possible

Colossians 1:16—For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him

To Dahlia, my wife and my helper in all things

Genesis 2:18—And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.

To all the members of the body of Christ

2 Corinthians 13:11—Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Part I

Right Division Distinctions

1 Prophecy vs. Mystery 2
2 Biblical Dispensations 8
3 The Many Gospels 21
4 Apostles 40
5 The Many Baptisms 49
6 The Churches 65

Right division distinctions involve concepts that appear in both parts of the bible that are to be divided. When the distinctions are not respected, confusion results. Right division results in seeing the prophecy and mystery programs. From that foundation, it is easy to see different dispensations, gospels, apostles, baptisms, and churches.

CHAPTER

1 Prophecy vs. Mystery

There are numerous distinctions in the bible, but most of them that we will focus on in this book concern distinguishing between prophecy and mystery. When I say *prophecy*, I don't mean a specific prophecy, but prophecy in general. Also, when I say *mystery*, I don't mean every mystery in the bible, but a specific kind of mystery. If this seems confusing, then you really need to read this chapter.

So, why must we distinguish between these two things. Well, this verse tells us to:[1]

2 Timothy 2:15
15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Rightly dividing the word of truth means dividing *truth from truth* and not *truth from error*. The true bible, the *King James Bible*, does not contain any errors. The proper definition tells us that we must divide some parts of the bible from other parts of the bible. Some will say that we must divide the *old testament* from the *new testament*. Well, that can be done, but that is *wrongly dividing* because the new testament is not a cohesive set of scriptures with respect to doctrine. Understanding the testaments later in this book will help make that clear (see Section 9.3).

The main focus of 2 Timothy 2:15 is dividing *prophecy* from *mystery*, although lesser things can require division as well. Unfortunately, the majority of Christianity cannot see this need to divide the bible this way. The inability to see this is a result of believing the traditions of men.

1.1 What Is Prophecy?

Dictionary Definition: prophecy

1. A foretelling; prediction; a declaration of something to come.
2. In Scripture, a book of prophecies; a history; as the prophecy of Ahijah.
3. Preaching; public interpretation of Scripture; exhortation or instruction.

Prophecy is God's means to demonstrate an aspect of who he is: God knows the future. Only God can reveal what is to come.

2 Peter 1:21
21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

Through prophecy, God has revealed much of his plans. As he has battled fallen angels and sinful men, he has foretold much of what he was going to do. Let's see a couple of verses that talk about prophecy's place in history:

[1] It is really necessary to have the right bible for this verse: the *King James Bible*. See the study *The English Bible* study guide [13] to understand this fully.

Luke 1:70

70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

Acts 3:20-21

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:
21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Prophecy has been around since the world began (or, since the beginning of the creation). The verse in *Acts* takes place after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, so prophecy continued after the resurrection. Of course, we would expect prophecy to continue until all prophecies are fulfilled.

1.2 What Is Mystery?

Dictionary Definition: mystery

1. A profound secret; something wholly unknown or something kept cautiously concealed, and therefore exciting curiosity or wonder.
2. In religion, any thing in the character or attributes of God, or in the economy of divine providence, which is not revealed to man.
3. That which is beyond human comprehension until explained.
4. An enigma; any thing artfully made difficult.
5. A kind of ancient dramatic representation.
6. A trade; a calling; any mechanical occupation which supposes skill or knowledge peculiar to those who carry it on, and therefore a secret to others.

A *mystery* can be a secret, something concealed, or something not understood until explained. There are a number of mysteries in the bible. God gives us mysteries to challenge us to study:

Proverbs 25:2

2 *It is* the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings *is* to search out a matter.

But, as I said before, we will focus on some specific mysteries.

Romans 16:25-26

25 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,
26 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:

The passage above talks about a mystery that was kept secret since the world began. It is obviously revealed to us now. But until it was revealed, it was not known. Prophecy and mystery were in direct opposition: Something foretold (prophecy) could not be withheld (mystery).

Prophecy has come through many prophets. However, several mysteries were revealed to only one person, Paul. These few mysteries are collectively referred to as *mystery*, just as there are many prophecies in *prophecy*. Let's see more about the mystery:

Ephesians 3:2-7

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward:
3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,
4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)
5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;
6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:
7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

Paul says that what was revealed to him was not made known to other men. This particular mystery concerned Gentiles being fellow-heirs with Israel. This was not true during prophecy.

First, let's see some more verses about the mystery. This one says that God hid some things from the princes of this world, which would include the fallen angels:

1 Corinthians 2:7-8

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:
8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Colossians 1:25-27

25 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;
26 *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:
27 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:

Again, the mystery was hidden "from ages and from generations" until it was finally revealed.

1.3 Rightly Dividing the Bible

God made the division of prophecy and mystery very simple. Paul was the one who received all of the revelation of the mystery, and it is Paul who writes all of the books about it. You will find Paul's name as the first word of each of the books *Romans* through *Philemon*. The *prophecy* part of the bible is everything else. Most Christians have never heard of such a thing and will refuse to hear it!

Figure 1.1 demonstrates right division and additional aspects for the maturing of believers. The new testament is divided into two groups in Figure 1.1(a). The book of *Acts* provides a transition from prophecy to mystery.[2]

Another important verse allows us to see some structure in each group:

2 Timothy 3:16

16 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

Figure 1.1(b) shows a structure in Paul's church letters. Figure 1.1(c) shows the same structure in the Hebrew, or Jewish, church letters. This structure only makes sense with right division. There would be no good reason to have two similarly structured sets of instructions if they are to all believers.

Paul's church letters provide *doctrine*, *reproof*, and *correction* for us today; the rest of the Bible is for instruction in righteousness. Here are what those terms mean:

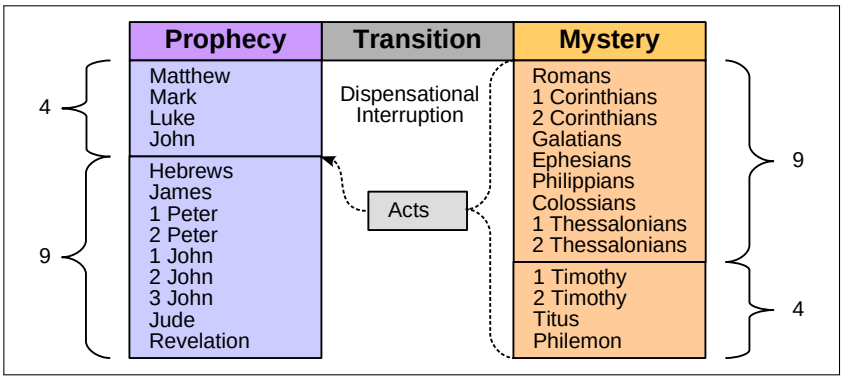
- Doctrine: Instructs believers about what to believe and how to live
- Reproof: Points out where behavior does not align with belief
- Correction: Points out where belief does not align with doctrine

The foundation of Paul's teachings is the cross: *Romans* provides the doctrine, *1 & 2 Corinthians* provide the reproof, and *Galatians* provides the correction. This foundation is *milk for babes*:

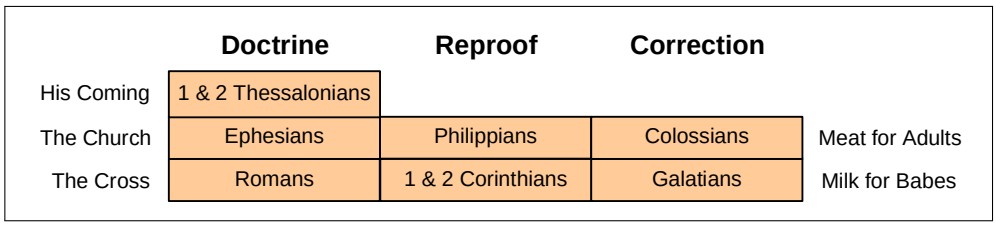
1 Corinthians 3:1-3

1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ.
2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able.
3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

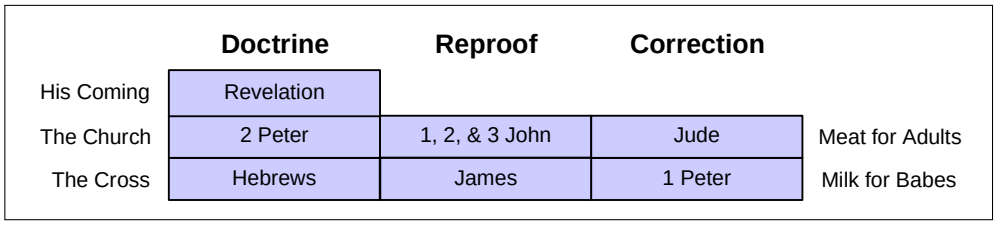
[2] Chapter 2 discusses dispensations.



(a) The Structure of the New Testament



(b) The Structure of Paul's Church Epistles



(c) The Structure of the Hebrew Church Epistles

Figure 1.1: **(a)** This diagram shows how the new testament books are to be rightly divided. The book of *Acts* explains what happened to Israel during the transition to the dispensation of grace. Paul's (mystery) books are divided into 9 church epistles and 4 pastoral epistles. The prophecy books are divided into 4 gospel accounts and 9 church epistles. **(b)** This diagram shows how Paul's church epistles are organized according to 2 Timothy 3:16. **(c)** This diagram shows how the Hebrew epistles are similarly organized.

Most churches err in what the cross means. This mainly occurs by mixing Jesus' teachings with Paul's (note that Paul got his instructions from Jesus by revelation and not from his earthly ministry). Jesus didn't teach that his death, burial, and resurrection would bring forgiveness of sin to all; that information comes through Paul only.

Built upon the foundation is our church, called the *body of Christ*. *Ephesians* provides the doctrine, *Philippians* provides the reproof, and *Colossians* provides the correction. Those who don't properly understand the cross also do not understand our church. The Christian church is separate from Israel's church (which appears in the gospel accounts and *Acts* 1-7). These churches will be investigated in Chapter 6.

Finally, the final church epistles deal with Jesus' coming. *1 & 2 Thessalonians* provide the doctrine. There is no reproof or correction because we are transformed at his coming. You could also say that the doctrine, reproof, and correction are present in all of the letters.

The Hebrew epistles, which are written to Israel's church, have similar structure. Notice the reference to *milk for babes* in one of those letters:

Hebrews 5:12-14

12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.
13 For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.
14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Notice that those who use milk are unskillful in the word of righteousness! *Hebrews* teaches what the cross means to the Hebrew church (of the past and of the future). The cross has a different meaning to them compared to us today.

Each of the two churches has a coming of Jesus. Jesus' coming for us is *in the air* because we are a heavenly church while his coming for Israel is *to the earth* because they are an earthly church/nation.

God has organized the books of the new testament for us with structure in mind. While there was a transition from prophecy to mystery, there is no need for a transition back. When the mystery period ends, prophecy will continue as before. Of course, the bible will still be around and those following prophecy will still have to rightly divide. Paul's mystery letters will still be useful, but will not contain primary doctrine for believers at that time.

There is also structure in the gospel accounts, Paul's pastoral epistles, and the old testament. See *The English Bible* study guide [13] for more information concerning structure in the bible.

1.4 Resolving Contradictions

Have you ever thought that there would be contradictions in the bible? Contradictions aren't errors: the *King James Bible* has no errors.[3] But, you know there are some contradictions: Adam couldn't eat meat, but Noah could. There were certain meats that Jews couldn't eat. How do you know what applies to you?[4] Contradictions are resolved by knowing what is written to you and what is not. They also arise in the new testament.

We will consider a couple of contradictions between prophecy and mystery. More contradictions are explained in the *How to Study the Bible – Volume 2: Intermediate Topics* study guide [4].

1.4.1 Forgiveness: Later or Now

In prophecy, Israel's national forgiveness comes when Jesus returns (i.e., the 2nd coming):

Acts 3:19

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

In the mystery, forgiveness comes at the point of believing:

Colossians 2:13

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

These are very different.

1.4.2 Forgive to be Forgiven or Already Forgiven

In prophecy, forgiveness is dependent on a believer forgiving others:

Matthew 6:14-15

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

In the mystery, forgiveness has already been freely given.

Ephesians 4:32

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

As a result, we are to forgive others. Again, these are very different.

[3] Unfortunately, other bibles have errors. See *The English Bible* study guide [13].
[4] The discussion of what can be eaten occurs in Side Study 2.2.

1.5 Prophecy and Mystery on a Timeline

Before we draw prophecy and mystery on a timeline, we need a timeline as a reference.

Side Study 1.1: History and Ages (Advanced Study)

The *Biblical Time* study guide [3] presents a timeline of history that covers approximately 7000 years (see the timeline at the top of Figure 1.2). Almost 6000 years have already occurred and at least 1000 years are still to come. There have been approximately 2000 years from Adam until the call of Abraham, another 1000 years from Abraham until David's reign, and another 1000 years from David until Christ. It has been almost 2000 years since Christ died.

With very rigorous study, it is possible to identify when certain events occurred in the past. Many judgments can be assigned to a date on the timeline. Examples are the fall of man, the flood, the confusing of languages at Babel, the plagues of Egypt, and the exile of Israel. Other events include the crucifixion of Christ and the fall of Israel. These are also shown below the timeline in Figure 1.2.

In his letters, Paul tells us about time in the past, the present, and the future. These can be viewed as ages in Figure 1.2. Paul generically refers to the present as "But now" in Ephesians 2:13 and the past as "time past" in Ephesians 2:11-12. Even earlier in the past is a time where "death reigned" in Romans 5:14. He also references the future as the "world. . . which is to come" in Ephesians 1:21. We will use these ages as points of references for other concepts in this study guide.

Figure 1.2 shows our reference timeline with time shown in 1000-year increments. Below it are several reference judgment events. Four ages are shown. As mentioned in Side Study 1.1, all of this information is detailed in the *Biblical Time* study guide [3].

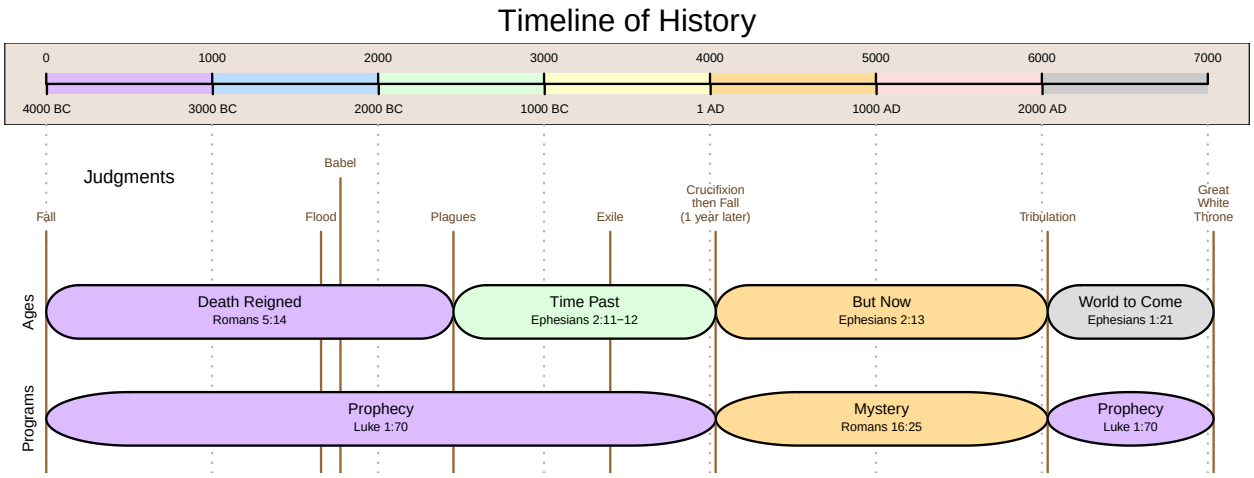


Figure 1.2: This timeline shows the past, present (called *But Now*), and future over a time period of 7000 years. The bible defines 4 ages that cover this time interval. Prophecy and mystery are shown in another category called *Programs*. Prophecy is everything other than *But Now*.

Adding prophecy and mystery to the timeline is very easy. It is Paul who tells us about the mystery revealed to him. He discusses it as occurring in the *but now* part of the timeline. Because the mystery interrupts prophecy, prophecy will continue when the mystery ends.

Conclusion

Prophecy and mystery are in direct opposition. Something foretold (prophecy) could not be withheld (mystery). Several mysteries were first revealed to Paul. God has structured his word so that dividing prophecy and mystery are very easy. Most Christians have never heard of these truths even though they are present in the bible. You must keep pondering this until it becomes clear to you.

CHAPTER

2 Biblical Dispensations

Some distinctions in the bible arise due to different instructions in different dispensations. Unfortunately, many believers are not taught that there are dispensations, and so this results in disrespecting these many distinctions. Also, those that believe in dispensations often believe in too many of them.[1]

Does the bible teach that there are dispensations? While the it doesn't focus on them, they are clearly taught. The word *dispensation* occurs 4 times.[2] Let's see those verses:

1 Corinthians 9:17

17 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.

Ephesians 1:10

10 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:

Ephesians 3:2

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward:

Colossians 1:25

25 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;

Paul is the only one who uses the word. We will see that he is the one that defines what the dispensations are. If some defines other dispensations, they are establishing a tradition.

To deny dispensations is a heresy, or at least evidence of spiritual immaturity. Corrupt bibles often do not use the word *dispensation*. Refer to Section A.2 for some examples.

2.1 What Is a Dispensation?

Let's consider the definition for *dispensation* in the *Webster's Dictionary 1828* [2]:

Dictionary Definition: dispensation

1. Distribution; the act of dealing out to different persons or places; as the dispensation of water indifferently to all parts of the earth.
2. The dealing of God to his creatures; the distribution of good and evil, natural or moral, in the divine government.
3. The granting of a license, or the license itself, to do what is forbidden by laws or canons, or to omit

[1] Ironically, someone that rightly divides is called a *hyperdispensationalist* regardless of how many dispensations he believes that there are. It is really his belief in the dispensation of grace that invites the slander. Those in error often have names for those that aren't.

[2] The number 4 symbolizes governance over the earth. How appropriate!

something which is commanded; that is, the dispensing with a law or canon, or the exemption of a particular person from the obligation to comply with its injunctions.

4. That which is dispensed or bestowed; a system of principles and rites enjoined; as the Mosaic dispensation; the gospel dispensation; including, the former the Levitical law and rites; the latter the scheme of redemption by Christ.

Definition #4 is close to the bible's usage, although it is clumsy. Definition #2 is applicable too, but is too generic. As is often the case, the dictionary can give you some insight, but it isn't always helpful.

Side Study 2.1: Concordance Entry for *Dispensation* (Advanced Study)

Another way to understand what a word means is to look at a concordance. A concordance often shows how a word is translated. That can give insight to its meaning. However, we shouldn't view all of the translated words as synonyms.

The word *dispensation* only occurs in the new testament, so let's look at the Greek word that it comes from:

***oikonomía* (G3622)**

From G3623; administration (of a household or estate); specially, a (religious) "economy":–dispensation, stewardship.

This word is translated as *dispensation*, *stewardship*, and *edifying*. So, *stewardship* is a good meaning for the word, and likewise *administration* is an acceptable synonym. Isn't it strange that the dictionary doesn't use these words in any definition.

Since the word is also translated *stewardship*, this can also be investigated. The only instances come from G3622, and they are all in this passage:

Luke 16:2-4

2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.
3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.
4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

The only other verse with G3622 is this one, where it is translated as "edifying":

1 Timothy 1:4

4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: *so do*.

A very important aspect to a dispensation is the administration, or agency, involved. This should be a key to our identification of different dispensations: Who is God's agency in each one?

When we consider that an administration has an administrator, we probably should not create a new administration (or dispensation) every time a new instruction is given to the administrator. The bible has new instructions given to man throughout it, but that shouldn't mean a new dispensation begins each time. So, the better question is: When does the administration (or, the administrator) change?

Side Study 2.2: What Can Man Eat?

Right division of the word of truth is more than just dividing prophecy and mystery. Other divisions are necessary since God has progressively revealed instruction. Consider what someone could eat during the time of prophecy. Let's start with the instructions that were given to Adam:

Genesis 2:16-17

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:
17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Adam only ate fruits and plants. After the flood, different instructions were given to Noah:

Genesis 9:3-4

3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.
4 But flesh with the life thereof, *which is* the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

Noah could eat any meat. When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, he gave them the law covenant which included these instructions:

Leviticus 11:2-3

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These *are* the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that *are* on the earth.
3 Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, *and* cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.

The passage goes on to list many things that Moses and the Israelites could not eat. After the mystery was revealed to Paul, God gave some different instructions to Peter, who was still following the law covenant:

Acts 10:11-15

11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:
12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.
13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.
14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.
15 And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

Now Israelites could eat all things like Noah could. Of course, Paul tells us this:

1 Corinthians 10:27-29

27 If any of them that believe not bid you *to a feast*, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.
28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth *is* the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:
29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another *man's* conscience?

Not only can we eat all things, we aren't to worry about things sacrificed to idols. So, if all verses in the bible are equally important, which instructions do you follow? Some believers can grasp this example, but cannot continue to apply it to other concepts of the bible.

Finally, do we need a different dispensation because the instructions changed? If that were the case, there might be dozens, or even hundreds, of dispensations!

When we consider what Adam was told and what Noah was told, should we expect a new dispensation to begin with Noah? If that is the case, we might expect to see numerous dispensations throughout the bible. The key to understanding dispensations is to understand the agency that God is using to communicate with man.

It is important to note that a dispensation isn't a period of time (i.e., an age). Yet, a dispensation does occur during a period of time. We will observe that the dispensations do align with ages. So, they appear to be intertwined.

2.2 A Traditional View of Dispensations

Many people define 7 dispensations while others define as many as 12. The desire is to start a new dispensation after every "major" judgment. The problem with that is that there are numerous judgments in the bible.

Figure 2.1 shows a traditional view of dispensations. This view suggests that God uses a trial-and-error approach to his dealings with man. This is demonstrated by the "Man's Failure" row near the bottom of the diagram. They are also demonstrated to be tied to judgments as seen in the "God's Judgment" row. One of the most severe judgments by God was the carrying off of Israel into exile. Yet a new dispensation does not start afterward.

This is a view that does not respect distinctions in the bible. This is clearly seen with the dispensation of *Grace* ending with the tribulation. The dispensation of grace must end before the tribulation can come. Such a view ignores

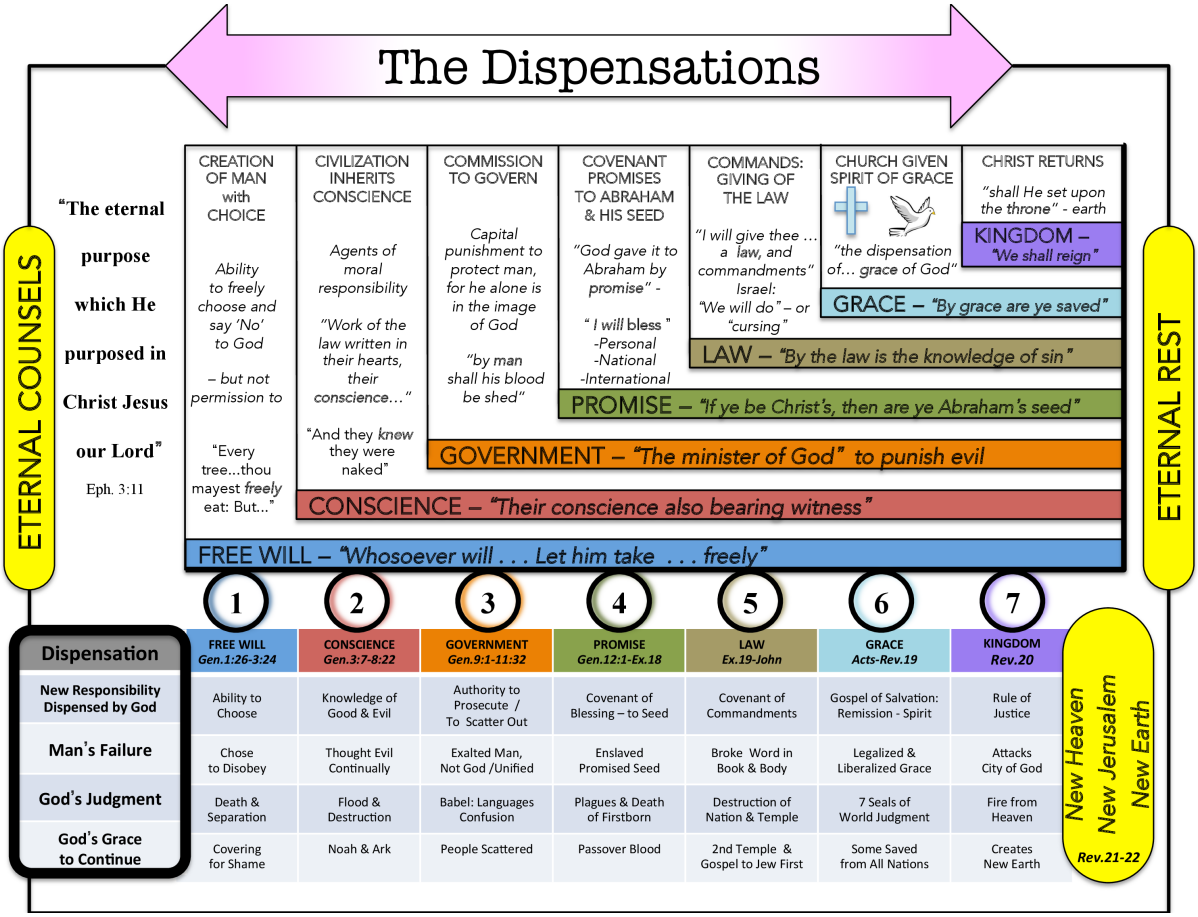


Figure 2.1: This diagram shows a view of dispensations that is commonly taught. While the later dispensations are correct, the earlier ones are not supported by scriptures. Nonetheless, even the details of the correct dispensations are incorrect because right division is not being applied.

the active conflict by Satan against God and places all of the burden on man's failure. If you consider the first three dispensations, they simply come from man's reasoning. There is no scripture for it!

Free Will is often called *Innocence*, where man has the ability to choose. After the fall, man still has the ability to choose. Thus, *Innocence* seems to be a better name. Man doesn't fall on his own, it takes intervention by the devil.

Conscience is the next dispensation, but nowhere does God leave man to operate based upon his conscience. The word *conscience* doesn't even appear in the old testament. Nowhere does the new testament look back at this time period and describe it as a way of operating. Regardless, Adam (and man in general) is in charge before and after the fall. Man's general task is the same, but what he has to do is even harder.

Government is the next dispensation, and this too does not make sense. Adam was told to subdue the earth, which made man the governor of it. Noah was essentially told the same things as Adam, and so what has really changed? The main change is that government now has the responsibility to execute capital punishment. Such an idea may have occurred before the flood as witnessed by Cain's and Lamech's fears of being avenged for killing someone. But such punishment was required after the flood. The flood judgment isn't solely because of man's failure. It is the intervention by angels that had driven man to the extreme point of violence. Man is in charge before the flood and also after the flood.

Promise occurs next, but not because of the judgment at Babel. While nationalism is introduced, no specific nation is God's agent. In just 12 chapters of *Genesis*, four dispensations are defined. It is unfortunate and absurd. But, that is tradition for you. You can cling to it if you would like, or you can mature beyond it.

2.3 The Biblical Dispensations

We will define the dispensations using the scriptures. We will start with the current dispensation since it is the one that is the most clearly defined. Then we will define the others relative to the current one. So, the dispensations

will not be given in a chronological order.

The other key aspect of this analysis will be that there are transitions between dispensations. This is usually ignored when a sloppy set of dispensations is constructed. God gives progressive revelation and usually has transitions into dispensational changes.

2.4 The Current Dispensation: Grace

All four verses using the word *dispensation* were written by Paul. Three of those four verses refer to the current dispensation. They are repeated here for you:

1 Corinthians 9:17

17 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.

Ephesians 3:2

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward:

Colossians 1:25

25 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;

Paul said that he had a dispensation given to him for us. What is being dispensed is grace.

Side Study 2.3: Grace—Witnessed vs. Manifested

Isn't grace in every dispensation? Some will object to a dispensation of grace since grace appears elsewhere in the bible. The problem with that perspective is that it does not respect the distinctions in the bible. There is a difference between grace now and grace elsewhere in the bible.

Let's see mention of grace in the old testament:

Genesis 6:8

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

Exodus 34:6

6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

Jonah 4:2

2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, *was* not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou *art* a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

Now, let's see the distinction that Paul gives us concerning grace today:

Romans 3:21-22

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;
22 Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

The law and the prophets witnessed to grace, but grace is fully manifest now.

Let's see how Abraham experienced grace:

Genesis 15:6

6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Paul affirmed what *Genesis* said:

Romans 4:3

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

By grace, Abraham was justified by believing what God said (i.e., by faith).

David should have died according to the law, but was forgiven by grace:

Romans 4:6

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

While the old testament saints witnessed grace, the law was not done away with like it is today:

Romans 6:14

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Law and grace are opposites.

Romans 11:6

6 And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:
9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

So how could grace exist during the law? The law and its works obscured grace. Grace could break forth to be witnessed, but then the law would obscure it again. Grace today is like the sun shining on a cloudless day. Grace under the law was like rays of sunshine occasionally breaking through the dense clouds on a completely overcast day.

Galatians 3:12

12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

Likewise, a Christian can hinder grace by trying to follow the law today:

Galatians 5:4

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Under the law (and even before it), righteousness still came by faith, but was manifested by works that demonstrated it because the works obscured grace:

Hebrews 11:4

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Hebrews 11:7

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Even when Jesus came, the law was still in effect. Someone could be justified by faith, but still manifested his faith through works, such as baptism.

James 2:22

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

In the dispensation of grace, we do nothing to demonstrate our righteousness. We have it by faith:

Romans 3:28

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

The body of Christ (often called *the church*) is God's agency during this time period. The church operates according to Paul's letters: *Romans* through *Philemon*. The book of *Acts* gives us history as to how the mystery interrupted prophecy, yet it is not a book of doctrine for us.

Paul tells us that this dispensation will end with the resurrection and rapture of the church, but does not tell us when it will come (see the *Resurrection* study guide [8]). It should not involve a judgment since God is at peace with the world at this time.

There are two clear people groups during the dispensation of grace: the body of Christ and the heathen. God is working through his church, the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:27

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

Ephesians 1:22-23

22 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church,
23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Colossians 3:11

11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all.

There are no distinctions for those that are saved.

The heathen, which includes lost Jews, are identified in the scripture:

Galatians 1:16

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Galatians 2:9

9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

There are nations during this time, but none are recognized or in charge. The body of Christ does not reign, but speaks for God through his written word rightly divided.

There is no law in the form of a covenant for the church today. We still have commands that we are to obey, but there are no defined rituals or worship system. There is nothing that you can do to "fix" whatever you have done incorrectly. Those that attempt to follow the law are simply immature (i.e., Galatians 5:4). Falling from grace isn't losing ones salvation. It is simply trying to work to please God when it is impossible to do so.

Dispensation Quick Facts: Grace

Began: When Paul was saved in Acts 9
Ends: When the body of Christ is resurrected and raptured (not the tribulation)
Law & Priesthood: None
Agency: Body of Christ (Section 6.5)
Transition: While scripture was being completed
Books: Romans to Philemon (and Acts 9-28 for history)

2.5 The Previous Dispensation: The Law and the Prophets

What was the dispensation before the dispensation of grace? It is commonly taught that the previous dispensation is called *the law*. But does the bible call it that? Luke, Paul's companion in *Acts*, gives us something better:

Luke 16:16

16 The law and the prophets *were* until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

Paul uses the same phrase:

Romans 3:21

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

Technically, the law and the prophets ended with John the Baptist. So what was going on from John the Baptist until Paul? It is a transition from the law and the prophets to the kingdom. But grace interrupted that transition. We will discuss what was supposed to follow the law and the prophets later because it didn't come. We will also discuss this transition fully at that time.

Side Study 2.4: The Transition into the Kingdom – Part 1

The transition into the kingdom began with John the Baptist. The time from then until the kingdom was expected to be about a generation (i.e., 40 years – see the *Biblical Time* study guide [3] for a discussion of this):

Matthew 24:34

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

During this transition, Jesus brought many new teachings. The law covenant will still in place, but Jesus eventually cursed it when he cursed the fig tree in Matthew 21:18-21. This transition was to culminate in Daniel's 70th week (Daniel 9:27), or the tribulation, followed by Christ's return. However, this transition was interrupted when Israel rejected the final offer of the kingdom in Acts 7.

The *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, *John* and Acts 1-8 cover this time period (*Matthew* may have been the only book completed by this time).

So, the law and the prophets preceded grace. We know the law began with Moses (John 7:19). The period of the law and prophets contains many judgments. For example, there are the 5 courses of chastisement prophesied in Leviticus 26 (refer to the *Ruth* study guide [9] appendix for a study of these chastisements). Yet none of these started a new dispensation. And God's agency was Israel throughout.

Salvation occurred through Israel's law covenant:

Ephesians 2:12

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

God made a new nation:

Acts 7:8

8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so *Abraham* begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac *begat* Jacob; and Jacob *begat* the twelve patriarchs.

Numbers 23:9-10

9 For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

10 Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth *part* of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!

There are other names used for these people groups:

Ephesians 2:11

11 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

The nation of Israel was God's agency on the earth.

Romans 3:1-2

1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision?
2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Dispensation Quick Facts: The Law and the Prophets

Began: When the old testament law was given to Israel in Exodus 19
Ended: When John the Baptist began his ministry
Law & Priesthood: Written old testament law and Levitical priesthood; chosen prophets from Israel
Agency: The nation of Israel (previously the church in the wilderness [Section 6.3])
Transition: From the call of Abraham until Israel is freed from bondage in Egypt
Books: Exodus to Malachi; transition into: Genesis 12-50 and Job; transition out of: Matthew to John, Acts 1-8

2.6 The First Dispensation: Promise

Paul describes the dispensation that precedes the law:

Galatians 3:19

19 Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

Note that the *law* was **added** to the *promise*. But, the law didn't nullify the promise:

Galatians 3:21

21 *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

This dispensation begins with the promise of a seed:

Genesis 3:15

15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

The promise continued with Abraham:

Galatians 3:16

16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Job awaited the promise (i.e., his redeemer):

Job 19:25-27

25 For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth:
26 And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God:
27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; *though* my reins be consumed within me.

After the law came, God refined the promise through David:

Romans 1:2-3

2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)
3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

It might not be clear who is in charge (i.e., who is the steward) during this dispensation. We saw in Side Study 1.1 that death reigned during this time (refer to Figure 2.2). Nonetheless, man, in general, is God's steward. The dispensation begins with Adam (he represents all men). Noah is given similar instructions as Adam.

God is speaking to man through prophets or preachers (such as Enoch or Noah). There is oral communication, but nothing is written and retained.

Side Study 2.5: A Form of the Law During the Promise (Advanced Study)

As is the theme in this book, there are distinctions everywhere in the bible if you will look for them. The people before the law didn't operate in a vacuum where God had told man nothing. Paul tells us that Gentiles understand elements of the law:

Romans 2:14-15

14 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:
15 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;)

Verse 15 says that the Gentiles show the law written in their hearts. The people during the time of promise did sacrifices and offerings: Abel in Genesis 4:3-5 (and Hebrews 11:4), Noah in Genesis 8:20, Abraham in Genesis 22:2-8, and Jacob in Genesis 35:14. This can be furthered by looking for verses that reference an altar (e.g., Isaac in Genesis 26:25). Job did the duties of a priest for his family (Job 1:5) and prayed for his friends (Job 42:8).

Recall that Abraham met Melchizedek:

Genesis 14:18

18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he *was* the priest of the most high God.

He was a priest before Aaron was made a priest under the law covenant.

Likewise, Moses' father-in-law was a priest:

Exodus 3:1

1 Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, *even* to Horeb.

Again, this precedes the giving of the law to Israel.

Noah knew which animals were clean and unclean in Genesis 7:2; this showed up in the written law in Leviticus 11:2-24. There is reference to nakedness in Genesis 9:22; this showed up in the written law in Leviticus 18:6-8 and Leviticus 20:11. Noah cursed Canaan in Genesis 9:25; this showed up in the law in Deuteronomy 23:2 (refer to the *How to Study the Bible – Volume 2* study guide [4] to understand these events with Noah). Judah understood levirate marriage in Genesis 38:8-9; this showed up in the written law in Deuteronomy 25:5-6 (refer to the *Ruth* study guide [9] for more information).

Before Babel, there was just "man" (or, "all men"). The judgment at Babel brought forth nations (or, Gentiles):

Genesis 11:9

9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Genesis 10:5

5 By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

But God didn't deal with the nations much differently than before they were formed:

Acts 14:16

16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

So, it really makes no sense to create multiple dispensations before the law.

Dispensation Quick Facts: Promise

Began: When Adam and Eve sinned in Genesis 3
Ended: When Israel was given the old testament written law
Law & Priesthood: Oral law with informal priesthood (heads of households) and random prophets

Agency: Man (although death reigned)
Transition: From the creation of man until the fall (Genesis 1-2)
Books: Genesis and Job (Genesis 12-50 and Job contain transition)

2.7 The Next Dispensation: The Kingdom

The dispensation that follows the dispensation of grace is the kingdom. However, the dispensation of grace interrupted the transition into the kingdom. It makes sense that what was interrupted will continue.

Side Study 2.6: The Transition into the Kingdom – Part 2

Paul makes it clear what will immediately follow the end of the dispensation of grace:

2 Thessalonians 2:6-10

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.
7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way.
8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:
9 *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,
10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

When the body of Christ is gone, the antichrist will be revealed and the tribulation will follow.

God made a point of completing the bible while Paul (and others) were still alive. What he wanted believers to know when the transition continues, he has already written down in advance. Many teachings in *Matthew* to *John* and Acts 1-8 will still have some value. *Hebrews* to *Revelation* will be applicable at that time.

Paul acknowledged the kingdom:

Colossians 2:16-17

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*:
17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.

Paul mentioned Israel's ceremonial holydays, highlighting that we are not observing such things today. However, they were a shadow of what is to come. They will come back in their fullness during the kingdom.

All Israel will be saved at that time with the law written in their hearts:

Hebrews 8:10-11

10 For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:
11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

They will have the ability to keep the law perfectly through the new covenant and the Holy Ghost. Therefore, this Israel will be different than the one during the law and the prophets and the transition into the kingdom.

God will be working through Israel again:

Zechariah 8:23

23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard *that* God *is* with you.

The other nations will be under the law:

Zechariah 14:16-17

16 And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.
17 And it shall be, *that* whoso will not come up of *all* the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

Dispensation Quick Facts: Kingdom

Begins: When Jesus returns and establishes the kingdom
Ends: After the final rebellion preceding the great white throne judgment
Law & Priesthood: A subset of Israel's written law and teachings that Jesus gave; Israel will be a priesthood
Agency: Redeemed Israel (previously, the kingdom church [Section 6.4])
Transition: From John the Baptist until Christ returns; This has been interrupted by the dispensation of grace
Books: none; transition into: *Matthew* to *John*, Acts 1-8, *Hebrews* to *Revelation*

We can now look at the 4 dispensations that we have defined and the ages that they accompany. Figure 2.2 advances what we defined in Figure 1.2. There is a dispensation that aligns with each (major) age that Paul defined. A few judgments are shown simply to demonstrate that judgments do not need to start dispensations.

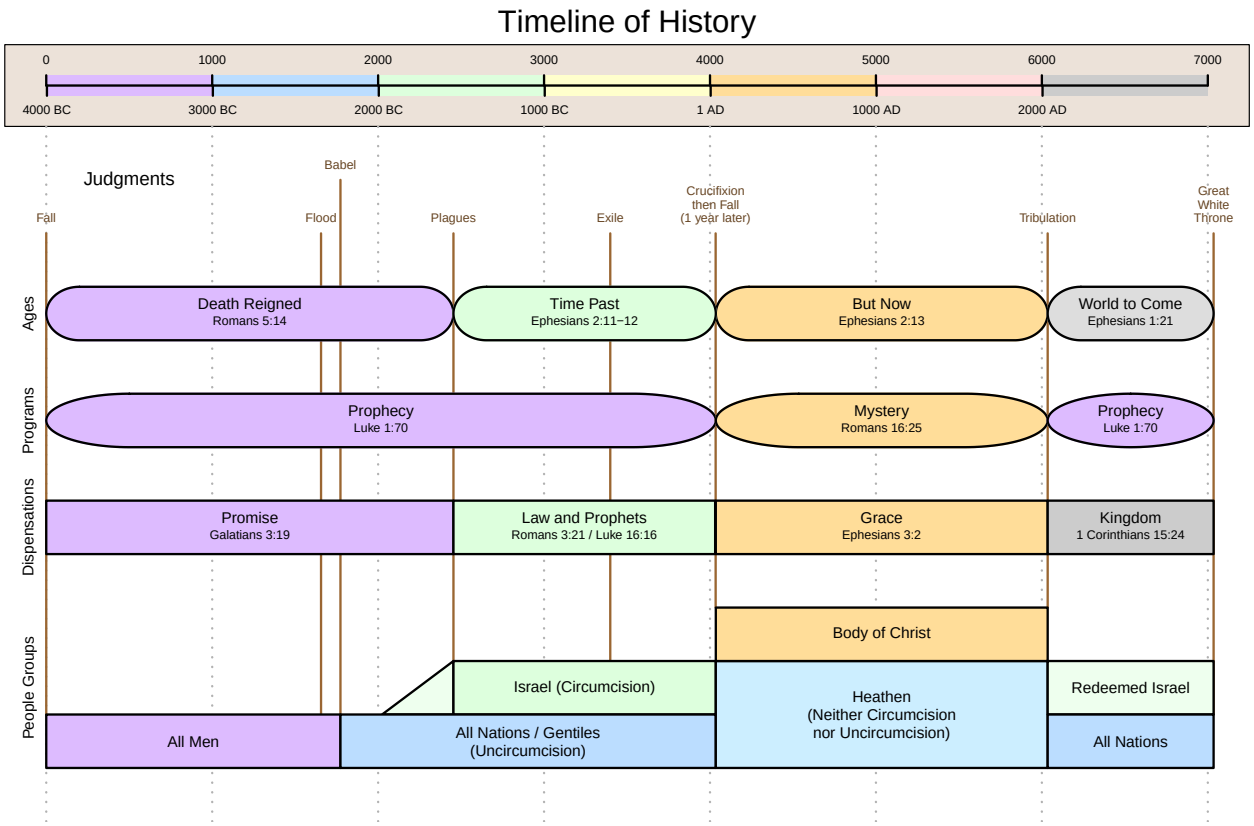


Figure 2.2: This figure adds to what was presented in Figure 1.2. The dispensations defined in this chapter align with the ages defined in Chapter 1. The people groups might reflect how man is viewed in the different dispensations (one transition is shown).

You should give some thought to the people groups portion of the figure. Under the dispensation of promise, there is a change from "All Men" to "All Nations", but nothing really changed with respect to how God was dealing with man. God used random men to speak through. There is clearly no new agency formed throughout *Genesis*. However, a transition begins during this time and it takes about 400 years for it to complete. Why? Because God was forming a nation from one man and it took time for Abraham's descendants to multiply. No other transition is this long.

There is a clear change in administration when the law is given to Israel. The transition into the kingdom was not supposed to be very long (possibly 40 years). The transition into grace began with Paul receiving revelation over

time. This took approximately 35 years. And finally, the transition into promise may have been less than a week![3]

2.8 The Last Dispensation: The Fullness of Times

Ephesians 1:10

10 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:

Paul tells us about "the end" that leads up to this:

1 Corinthians 15:23-28

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.
24 Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.
25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.
26 The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death.
27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under *him, it is* manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.
28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

It isn't clear if this dispensation will align with an age. It might be an age that never ends.

Conclusion

Today, we live in the dispensation of grace during which there is no law. The promise, the law and the prophets, and the kingdom all have some works of the law present. It makes sense that there are 4 dispensations leading up to the end. When someone tells you that there are more (or less), make sure they justify it with scripture rather than an argument from man's wisdom.

[3] We won't study that, but creation ended on the seventh day and Adam and Eve likely fell on the fifth day of the next week. Why? Because 5 represents death – Jesus died on the same day of the week!

CHAPTER

3 The Many Gospels

Gospel is a word that is very much misunderstood by Christians because it is plagued by religious tradition. Let's consider the definition in the *1828 Webster's Dictionary*:

Dictionary Definition: gospel (noun)

The history of the birth, life, actions, death, resurrection, ascension and doctrines of Jesus Christ; or a revelation of the grace of God to fallen man through a mediator, including the character, actions, and doctrines of Christ, with the whole scheme of salvation, as revealed by Christ and his apostles. This gospel is said to have been preached to Abraham, by the promise, "in thee shall all nations be blessed."

It is called the gospel of God. It is called the gospel of Christ. It is called the gospel of salvation.

1. God's word.
2. Divinity; theology.
3. Any general doctrine.

Well, this gets us off on the wrong track of religious tradition. The first few sentences describe Jesus' ministry, which is traditionally called a "gospel account" (i.e., any of *Matthew–John*). That is definitely not the same as the gospel of God, gospel of Christ, or gospel of your salvation today. Then there are three numbered definitions. They make no sense to me.

The dictionary definition is not very good. As is often the case, the dictionary has definitions that reflect cultural use and not biblical use. That is not wrong. It simply means that the dictionary isn't always helpful when we study.

Strong's concordance suggests that *gospel* means *good news or tidings*. This advanced topic can be investigated in Side Study 3.1. The concordance provides a better definition, but, like the dictionary, it is not a source of truth.

Side Study 3.1: Concordance Entries for *Gospel* (Advanced Study)

As you mature in studying the bible, you will want to learn how to use a concordance. A concordance shows how a Hebrew or Greek word is translated into English. I won't describe a concordance further, but will just demonstrate its usage. When we use the concordance, we don't really care what the original language words are. Don't ever be impressed when someone uses the words. I will typically use the concordance numbers instead.

If you search for the word *gospel*, you will see that it only occurs in the new testament. It is translated from 3 different Greek words. Let's see them.

***euangelízō* (G2097)**

From G2095 and G32; to announce good news ("evangelize") especially the gospel:–declare, bring (declare, show) glad (good) tidings, preach (the gospel).

G2097 essentially tells us what *gospel* means in the bible: "good news or tidings". We will see the verse where it is translated as *preach* in Section 3.4.

***euangelion* (G2098)**
From the same as G2097; a good message, i.e., the gospel:–gospel.

G2098 is always translated as *gospel*, and, so, it does not really tell us more about the word.

***proeuangelízomai* (G4283)**
Middle voice from G4253 and G2097; to announce glad news in advance:–preach before the gospel.

G4283 occurs only once and is translated "preached before the gospel". This doesn't really help us understand what *gospel* means. We will see the relevant verse in Section 3.6.

Gospel occurs one other time and appears as a word inserted by the translators. That means that it does not come from a Greek word and has no concordance number. It will appear in italics (or brackets, depending upon the publisher):

1 Corinthians 9:17
17 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.

A concordance is never used to correct the translation, but it can give us better understanding of the words used. For more information on using a concordance, refer to the *How to Study the Bible – Volume 2: Intermediate Topics* study guide [4].

It is interesting, yet a shame, that the dictionary does not reflect what the concordance told us. Also, nowhere do we find any mention of salvation. Maybe the concordance missed that too. Alternatively, maybe we shouldn't associate salvation with the good news. If that is the case, a phrase like "gospel of your salvation" (see Ephesians 1:13) would make a lot of sense.

3.1 What Does *Gospel* Mean in the Bible?

While the concordance gives us much better insight as to what *gospel* means compared to the dictionary, we should still turn to the ultimate source of truth: the *King James Bible*. Other bibles are not God's word, but that is a topic that I will not address here (see *The English Bible* study guide [13]).

Here are the definitive examples that tell us what the word means:

Luke 4:18
18 The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

That verse quotes this verse:

Isaiah 61:1
1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound;

Where *Luke* says "gospel", *Isaiah* says "good tidings". So, *gospel* really does appear in the old testament through its definition.

Many improperly teach that *gospel* means *a salvation message*. It can mean that but often does not. As Jesus went around Israel during his ministry, he was preaching to both believing and unbelieving Jews. But they had something new to believe and works to perform to demonstrate their faith and obedience. If you looked in the old testament at the word translated as *good tidings* in Isaiah 61:1, you would learn more about that word. It wasn't a salvation message.

3.2 Is There More Than One Gospel?

Is there more than one gospel in the bible? Unfortunately, many Christians will say "no". Or, they will say "Yes—one true gospel and many false gospels". This is a good example of the maturity of the church today. For those that

do not understand, they might reference this verse:

Galatians 1:6-9

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:
7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.
8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.
9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

This comes from Paul and his message was that there was only one gospel available to his audience. Some were being deceived by false teachers. Many times, the gospel that they were hearing was another, but it was not *good news* to them. Mixing law and grace is a bad thing!

Let's see that the bible clearly teaches that there is more than one gospel:

Galatians 2:2

2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

First, Paul mentioned "that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles". He was clarifying the gospel that he preached because there was valid another that he didn't preach.

Galatians 2:7-9

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter;
8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)
9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

Verse 7 references two gospels: (1) gospel of the uncircumcision and (2) gospel of the circumcision. Most bad teachers want to say "gospel to" rather than "gospel of", and then claim that it is the same message to two different audiences. That clearly does not make sense.

The word *gospel* occurs 104 times in the new testament. Paul used the word 75 times. He used the word so frequently because he needed to highlight the distinction between his gospel and any other. If you search the bible for "gospel of . . . ", you should find the following results:

1. . . . (the blessed) God
   - also: . . . peace
2. . . . the kingdom (of God)
   - also: . . . Jesus Christ, the Son of God
3. . . . (our Lord Jesus) Christ
   - also: . . . the grace of God / . . . your salvation / . . . his Son
4. . . . the circumcision
5. . . . the uncircumcision

If you think these are all synonymous, then you need to study better. There is even one more gospel beyond these, which we will address in Section 3.8.

3.3 The Gospel of God

The "gospel of God" is not the first gospel mentioned in the bible, but we will deal with it first. It is mentioned by both Paul and Peter. If you understand how to rightly divide the scripture, you might wonder how that could be: How could prophecy and mystery share a gospel? It is mainly because it is in the old testament. Paul is the one that clearly defines it:

Romans 1:1-4

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;
4 And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

Verse 2 says that this gospel was given previously by the prophets, meaning in the old testament. There are two key elements of this gospel given in verses 3 and 4:

1. Jesus was of the seed of David according to the flesh, and
2. Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection.

Let's see where these elements are given in the old testament, starting with the first:

Isaiah 9:6-7

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.
7 Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Jeremiah 23:5-6

5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.
6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Jeremiah 33:15

15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

People often reference this verse as the gospel:

John 3:16

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

However, they misunderstand which gospel they are referencing. That verse references Isaiah 9:6.

For the second element of the gospel of God, I do not think that Paul is trying to tell us that Jesus would be declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection in the old testament. That declaration is given here:

Acts 13:32-34

32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,
33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.
34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

Paul said this, although Luke recorded it.

Regardless, we do find scriptures that speak of Jesus' resurrection in the old testament:

Psalms 16:10

10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Before we investigate this gospel further, let's see that Peter mentions it:

1 Peter 4:17

17 For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?

However, this isn't something that he and the other apostles taught before Jesus' resurrection because they did not understand that he had to die (e.g., John 20:9). But, once the apostles were given the Holy Ghost (in John 20:22), they had their understanding of the scriptures opened:

Luke 24:44-46

44 And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me.
45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,
46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

It even highlights his death and resurrection.

So, now let's see that Peter preached the two elements right after the ascension at Pentecost by looking at several excerpts from his sermon in Acts 2. He mentions the second element first:

Acts 2:24

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

Acts 2:27

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Then he mentions the first element:

Acts 2:29-30

29 Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.
30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

Then he repeats the second element:

Acts 2:31-32

31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.
32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

And declares him to be the Son of God:

Acts 2:36

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Side Study 3.2: What Followed the Gospel of God?

The gospel of God does not tell the recipient to do anything. What we will see is that another gospel followed or was combined with this one. Shortly after Peter preached the gospel of God at Pentecost, he added the gospel of the kingdom:

Acts 2:37-38

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?
38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

So, the believer had to do something. The gospel of the kingdom will be discussed in Section 3.4.

Paul preached the gospel of Christ with the gospel of God, as we will better understand in Section 3.5. But here is what he said to do after preaching it:

Acts 16:30-31

30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?
31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

When asked what to do, Paul didn't say to be baptized—only believe. Paul wasn't sent to baptize (1 Corinthians 1:17).

Baptism is discussed in Chapter 5.

Paul preached the gospel of God right after his salvation experience:

Acts 9:19-20

19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.
20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

By preaching that Jesus was the Son of God, Paul would have highlighted that this was affirmed by Jesus' resurrection.

Paul says something quite interesting here:

Galatians 1:23

23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

Paul preached the gospel that he once persecuted. That would be the gospel of God. That was not the gospel of Christ; Paul couldn't have persecuted what was not yet known. He also didn't preach the gospel of the kingdom.

Paul preached the gospel of God to both Jews and Gentiles:

Acts 17:1-3

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:
2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,
3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

Acts 18:4-5

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.
5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that* Jesus *was* Christ.

Side Study 3.3: What Did Philip Preach? (Advanced Study)

Philip has two stories in Acts 8, which follows the final rejection of the kingdom in Acts 7 and precedes Saul's conversion in Acts 9. This Philip is not the apostle Philip. He also goes to Samaria, where the apostles apparently had not been yet. The number 8 can symbolize a new beginning (refer to the *How to Study the Bible – Volume 2: Intermediate Topics* study guide [4]). What did Philip preach?

Acts 8:5

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

That doesn't seem to tell us much.

Acts 8:12

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

He obviously is baptizing, so he is preaching the gospel of the kingdom as well. If you read verses 14-17, you will see that the apostles are eventually involved in order to give the Holy Ghost.

Later in the chapter, Philip encounters the Ethiopian eunuch. The eunuch is reading about Jesus' death in the old testament:

Acts 8:32-33

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:
33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

Acts 8:35

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

The eunuch had evidently heard some preaching in Jerusalem and so he asked to be baptized:

Acts 8:36-38

36 And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?
37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

So, Philip preached the gospel of the God and the gospel of the kingdom. That is all that he knew.

Side Study 3.4: What Did Peter Preach to Cornelius? (Advanced Study)

Acts 10 has the story of Cornelius' conversion. It was teaching Peter that something different was going on (like Acts 8 was doing). After Peter's vision, he said this to Cornelius:

Acts 10:34-43

34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:
35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.
36 The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)
37 That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;
38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.
39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:
40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;
41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.
42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead.
43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

We read of no response by Cornelius, but this happened:

Acts 10:44

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

Paul tells us this with respect to the gospel of God:

Romans 15:16

16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

That explains what Peter witnessed.

But what does Peter do next?

Acts 10:47

47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

Peter wanted to do what the gospel of the kingdom required: baptism. He did not yet have understanding that the kingdom on earth was not coming.

Let's look at the "gospel of peace" and see if it is similar to the "gospel of God":

Romans 10:15

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

This refers to:

Isaiah 52:7

7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

So, we can say that what Paul said is in the old testament. *Isaiah* says that God would reign. I think we can conclude that this will come to pass when Jesus reigns as the son of David and as the Son of God. So, I think the connection is there, but it is not as strong as what Paul said in Romans 1:1-4.

Here is one more verse with the phrase:

Ephesians 6:15

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

3.4 The Gospel of the Kingdom

During his ministry, Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom:

Matthew 4:23

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

What exactly did he preach? An earlier verse tells us:

Matthew 4:17

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The gospel was preached because the kingdom was at hand (or near in time). The people were told that they had something to do: repent (of breaking the law covenant) and be baptized.

Side Study 3.5: What Did the Coming of the Kingdom Mean?

When God made Israel into a nation, he told them this:

Exodus 19:5-6

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

This is echoed here:

1 Peter 2:9

9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

John's vision in *Revelation* says:

Revelation 1:6
6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 5:10
10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

All of Israel will be priests. How can that be if the law covenant priests had to be descended from Aaron? There will be a new covenant priesthood where anyone can be. Refer to Subsection 9.2.3 for more information on the covenants.

The following are requirements for being a priest:

1. A priest cannot have any blemish (Leviticus 21:16-21)
2. A priest must be washed (Exodus 29:4—see Subsection 5.4.2)
3. A priest must be anointed with oil (Exodus 29:7—see Subsection 5.4.3)

Therefore, before entering into the kingdom, all of Israel must be healed, baptized (washed—see Subsection 5.5.1), and anointed with the Holy Ghost (see Subsection 5.5.2).

This next verse also says that Jesus was preaching the gospel:

Matthew 9:35
35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

However, it also says this was why he was **sent**. Someone that is sent to preach a gospel is an *apostle*. We will study what an apostle is in Chapter 4.

In Side Study 3.1, we saw that G2097 can be translated "preach". It shows up in this verse:

Luke 4:43
43 And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.

Jesus was saying that he was preaching the good news that the kingdom was at hand (or near). That doesn't tell anyone how to get saved (but we saw how they were to do that in Matthew 4:17). This next verse says something similar:

Luke 8:1
1 And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve *were* with him,

Here, the word often translated as *gospel* is translated as *shewing the glad tidings*, which is similar to what we saw in the old testament. And those glad tidings were about the kingdom. Not only were they preached, but they were shown.

Luke 7:22
22 Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.

Many miracles accompanied the message. We will better understand that the miracles accompany the apostle not the message itself.

He also said that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached before his return:

Matthew 24:14
14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

The "end" signifies his return from heaven:

Matthew 24:3

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

This has yet to happen.

Why is there *good news* about a kingdom? The gospel of the kingdom focused on the Davidic covenant (see Subsection 9.2.4 for details of that covenant). Recall that the Messiah being descended from David was one of the key elements of the gospel of God. This is why you find many references to David in *Matthew* (compared to the few in *Mark* and *Luke*):

Matthew 1:1

1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

The fact that Abraham is mentioned brings attention to the covenant with Abraham. Thus there is a gospel of the circumcision (see Section 3.6).

Matthew 1:6

6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Urias;

Matthew 1:20

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

Matthew 9:27

27 And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, *Thou* Son of David, have mercy on us.

Matthew 12:23

23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

Matthew 15:22

22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

Matthew 20:30-31

30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David.

31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David.

Matthew 21:9

9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

Matthew 21:15

15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased,

Matthew 22:42

42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, *The Son* of David.

The kingdom was still the focus of Jesus and his apostles after his resurrection:

Acts 1:6-7

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

Three covenants were important during Jesus' ministry. The Davidic covenant was built upon the law (or, Mosaic) covenant, which was built upon the Abrahamic covenant. This is why Abraham, Moses, and David were prominent names during Jesus' ministry. Much focus is given to Moses and the law because the associated covenant had been broken. So, note this verse:

Matthew 4:17

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

In that verse, the people were told to repent (or change their minds). For the kingdom to come, the conditional covenant required the people to repent. The good news was that changing their minds was all that was required. For more information on the covenants, refer to Chapter 9.

Individual salvation, meaning justification, came solely through believing that Jesus was the Christ. National salvation involved being a righteous nation that kept the law. Prophecy focused more on the national salvation than individual salvation. To be part of the righteous nation, a believer had to repent and be baptized. The thief on the cross believed and was saved, but he was unable to enter into the kingdom alive:

Luke 23:42-43

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.
43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

So, repenting and be baptized was not necessary. Of course, he would be resurrected into the kingdom.

Finally, did the Jews have to believe that Jesus was the Christ? My answer is "no". Take note of this:

Matthew 16:15-16

15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?
16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

It was late in Jesus' ministry that he started to teach that he had to die. Just before this is when this passage appears. My thought is this: Hasn't Jesus been preaching that he was the Christ? Evidently not. I think it was something that the people should have known and quite a few testified to that. Note what he said here:

Matthew 16:20

20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

This was said because he began to teach that he had to die.

A good exercise is to search the gospel accounts for the word "Christ". There are gaps in the accounts where the word does not appear. Most of the references in *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* appear late in Jesus ministry. You might note that someone that was possessed with devils might declare that Jesus was the Christ. *John*, as usual, is different—it appears a little more fequently there.

3.5 The Gospel of Christ

The gospel of Christ is a phrase only used by Paul, and he uses it 11 times. It should not be confused with the "gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" mentioned in Mark 1:1.

Notice what Paul wrote Romans 1:

Romans 1:1

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Romans 1:9

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

Romans 1:16-17

16 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.
17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

He sequences through "the gospel of God", "the gospel of his Son", and then "the gospel of Christ". We should think of the latter two as the same.

This gospel was committed to Paul:

1 Corinthians 9:17-18

17 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.
18 What is my reward then? *Verily* that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

In contrast, the gospel of God was not committed solely to Paul since others preached it. The gospel of Christ is synonymous with the *grace of Christ*:

Galatians 1:6-7

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:
7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Paul uses this phrase in the context of it being a gospel and then explicitly says the *gospel of Christ*. Paul also calls this the "gospel of the grace of God":

Acts 20:24

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

While Luke wrote this, it was Paul who said it. Paul more frequently uses the word *gospel* without following it with the word *of*.

However, the phrase "the gospel of the grace of God" also comes from the fact that Paul said that he had a dispensation for his gospel in 1 Corinthians 9:17. That dispensation is also mentioned here:

Ephesians 3:2

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward:

So, the gospel of the grace of God is preached during the dispensation of grace. Dispensations are discussed in Chapter 2.

Like the gospel of God, the gospel of Christ has some elements that were in the old testament:

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

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

The two elements here are:

1. Christ died for our sins, and
2. he was buried and rose again the third day.

Note that these elements are not the same as those in the gospel of God. Let's see these in the old testament starting with the first element:

Isaiah 53:5-12

5 But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.
8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.
9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.
10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.
11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.
12 Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

We need to note that the old testament and, thus prophecy, focused on Israel (e.g., *my people* in verse 8) and not Gentiles. This can be confirmed in Matthew 1:21. However, the mystery part of Paul's message included Gentiles (that will be shown shortly).

For the second element, we find:

Jonah 1:17

17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Matthew 12:40

40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

We also have this verse:

Psalms 16:10

10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

It needs to be viewed with respect to this one:

John 11:39

39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been *dead* four days.

In order for Jesus not to see corruption, he must be resurrected before the fourth day.

Also, throughout *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, there are numerous references to "the third day" (see the *Resurrection* study guide [8] for examples).

The gospel of Christ brought salvation to the Gentiles apart from Israel:

Romans 11:11

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Ephesians 2:11-13

11 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;
12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:
13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Paul did not preach this gospel where the kingdom gospel was preached:

Romans 15:19-20

19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.
20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

The gospel of Christ is the power of God:

Romans 1:16

16 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.

1 Corinthians 1:18

18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

Notice how the phrase "the power of God" in both verses brings together "the gospel of Christ" and "the preaching of the cross".

While other gospels mention that Christ had to die and be resurrected, only this gospel focuses on the cross and the crucifixion:

1 Corinthians 1:17-18

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.
18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.
2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Side Study 3.6: Whose Gospel Is It?

As you study, you will find that Paul uses the following phrases: (1) the gospel, (2) my gospel, and (3) our gospel. Sometimes the first form is followed by (1) of God or (2) of Christ. But in the other two cases, just whose gospel is it?

Paul used "my gospel" in *Romans* and *2 Timothy*:

Romans 2:16

16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Romans 16:25

25 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,

2 Timothy 2:8

8 Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:

He is the only author and so he referenced the message given to him by Jesus in this way.

Paul used "our gospel" in *2 Corinthians*, *1 Thessalonians*, and *2 Thessalonians*:

2 Corinthians 4:3

3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

1 Thessalonians 1:5

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

2 Thessalonians 2:14

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In all of these letters, Paul coauthored the letter with someone else. The first verse of each letter named the coauthors. But there is only one gospel here.

There may have been a brief period of time where Jews were still getting saved apart from Paul's gospel. The dispensation of grace started with Paul in Acts 7. Yet the Ethiopian eunuch is saved in Acts 8 and Cornelius is saved in Acts 10 without Paul's gospel. But that is occurred because of a transition between dispensations.

Here are some other verses with different "gospel of" phrases that should be equivalent to "gospel of Christ":

2 Thessalonians 1:8

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Ephesians 1:13

13 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Romans 1:9

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

3.6 The Gospel of the Circumcision

The gospel of the circumcision is only mentioned once:

Galatians 2:7

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter;

It is only mentioned after the kingdom had been rejected in Acts 7. There was still good news to believing Jews even though the kingdom wasn't coming.

The gospel of the circumcision focused on the Abrahamic covenant (see Subsection 9.2.2). This too was an unconditional covenant. But, you need to understand with whom the covenant exists:

Acts 7:8

8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so *Abraham* begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac *begat* Jacob; and Jacob *begat* the twelve patriarchs.

It isn't with just any of Abraham's descendants.

Just as Jesus was the son of David, he was also the son of Abraham:

Matthew 1:1

1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Compared to David, Abraham is only mentioned a few times in *Matthew*:

Matthew 1:2

2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

Matthew 3:9

9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Matthew 8:11

11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 22:31-32

31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,
32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Abraham was said to have had a gospel preached to him:

Galatians 3:8

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

This isn't about Abraham's salvation. It concerns justification of the heathen, or Gentiles. Romans 4 discusses Abraham's salvation. It also says that he was saved before he was circumcised. So, the gospel of the circumcision has to do with his circumcised descendants, specifically through Isaac and Jacob. God would bring salvation to the world through Israel (Paul's gospel brought salvation to the world apart from Israel).

But it also good news that God is not done with Israel:

Romans 11:25-28

25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.
26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:
27 For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.
28 As concerning the gospel, *they are* enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, *they are* beloved for the fathers' sakes.

3.7 The Gospel of the Uncircumcision

The gospel of the uncircumcision is only mentioned once:

Galatians 2:7-9

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter;
8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)
9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

The *uncircumcision* is clarified to be the *heathen*. This means Gentiles as well as unbelieving Jews, who are excluded from the *circumcision*. In the new testament, *circumcision* refers to the believing Jew:

Romans 2:28-29

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:
29 But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

In a general sense, the good news to the uncircumcision is that circumcision is not required at this time.

Once Israel was set aside in Acts 7, God reverted to the promise to Abraham:

Romans 4:9-11

9 *Cometh* this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.
11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

Today, believing Gentiles are spiritual descendants of Abraham:

Romans 4:16

16 Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

But we are not spiritual descendants of Isaac and Jacob.

The events mentioned in Galatians 2 align with those in Acts 15. In the latter, the apostles essentially abandoned their commission since prophecy had been interrupted. Unbelieving Jews were put into the scope of Paul's ministry. He was already commissioned to the Gentiles [and Jews] (see Acts 9:15) and given a special provocation ministry to the scattered Jews (see Acts 13:2).

Figure 3.1 shows the potential relationships among several of the gospels already mentioned in this chapter. Jesus and his apostles clearly preached gospel of the kingdom apart from the gospel of God. Eventually, Jesus began to teach that he had to die and intertwined it with the gospel of God, which was something he already knew. Once the apostles had the Spirit, the two gospels were basically inseparable.

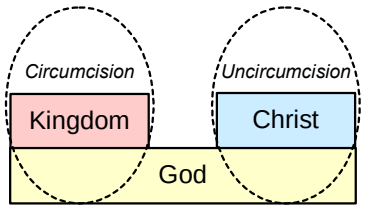


Figure 3.1: The relationships among the 5 "gospel of. . . " phrases are shown. The gospel of God is the foundation and contains information from the old testament. The gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of Christ are each built upon it. The gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of God are collectively called the gospel of the circumcision. The gospel of Christ and the gospel of God are collectively called the gospel of the uncircumcision.

While Paul defines the gospel of God for us, he doesn't really preach it alone. He essentially shows us that there was an aspect of his gospel that was already known and an aspect that was not. The part that was known was also key to the kingdom gospel. The gospels of the circumcision and uncircumcision are not really new; they simply provide an easy way to contrast what the two programs, prophecy and mystery, were preaching.

3.8 The Everlasting Gospel

The "everlasting gospel" is mentioned only once:

Revelation 14:6-7

6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,
7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

In the vision shown to the apostle John, this passage comes after the 7 trumpets and before the 7 bowls. So, Israel will be a redeemed nation at that point. That gospel is to the Gentiles that remain. It is called *everlasting* because it has always been true. It says to fear God.

Side Study 3.7: Fearing God

Let's see some verses that relate to fearing God:

Proverbs 1:7

7 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 9:10

10 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man.
14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.

Psalms 111:10

10 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do *his commandments*: his praise endureth for ever.

Job 1:1

1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

Cornelius was a Gentile that feared God:

Acts 10:2

2 *A* devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

Paul addressed Jews and God-fearing Gentiles:

Acts 13:16

16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with *his* hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

Acts 13:26

26 Men *and* brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

Someone could fear God without becoming a proselyte to Israel. Someone that feared God would likely have some understanding of what he was doing and would bless Israel according to the Abrahamic covenant. The Roman centurion is a good example of such a man (see Luke 7:1-10).

Galatians 1:8

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Paul said that an angel would be accursed if he preached another gospel to us. But, we will be gone from the earth when the everlasting gospel is preached.

The everlasting gospel is for the everlasting kingdom promised in *Daniel*:

Daniel 2:44

44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Daniel 7:27

27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

Gentiles will enter into the kingdom via the *sheep and goats* judgment given in Matthew 25:31-46. This will reflect the Abrahamic covenant: I will bless those that bless you and curse those who curse you. This will be a fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham.

Conclusion

Gospel simply means *glad tidings*. It can mean a salvation message, although it doesn't say what the message is. The bible clearly teaches that there is more than one gospel, although there is only one gospel today, during the dispensation of grace.

No gospel, or salvation message, is communicated in one verse. Often many verses are necessary to understand salvation. "Believing in/on Jesus" is not any gospel. Many will reference this:

Acts 16:30-31
30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?
31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

This doesn't detail what to believe. Paul's doctrine is not in *Acts*. He didn't write the book. His doctrine (i.e., what to believe) is in *Romans* to *Philemon*. The justification doctrine is predominately in *Romans*.

CHAPTER

4 Apostles

Some might think that a disciple and an apostle are the same thing. As we will see in some later verses, there were some people that were both disciples and apostles. However, they can be mutually exclusive. A *disciple* is a follower, or a student. An *apostle* is someone sent to carry out the business of the one who sent him. During Jesus' ministry, those that were apostles were also disciples. But not all disciples were apostles. The 1828 *Webster's Dictionary* has this definition for apostle:

Dictionary Definition: apostle

A person deputed to execute some important business; but appropriately, a disciple of Christ commissioned to preach the gospel.

We will see that Jesus sent out most of the apostles other than himself; he, of course, was sent by God. All of the apostles had power and authority to do miraculous things (i.e., signs):

2 Corinthians 12:12

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

It may not be the case that all apostles had the same power and authority. All of these signs validated the message that each delivered. Most apostles saw Jesus personally:

1 Corinthians 9:1

1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

I will highlight some possible exceptions.

Since we must rightly divide prophecy and mystery, we must expect that apostles will end up being divided into these groups as well. To whom the apostles were sent and the message that they were given should likewise be different.

Side Study 4.1: Concordance Entries for *Apostle* (Advanced Study)

If you search for the word *apostle*, you will see that it only occurs in the new testament. It is translated from 2 different Greek words (and one of them is translated *apostleship*). Let's see them.

***apostolos* (G652)**

From G649; a delegate; specially, an ambassador of the Gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ ("apostle") (with miraculous powers):–apostle, messenger, he that is sent.

While this definition is pretty good, we will see that there were some apostles not commissioned by Jesus—Jesus being one of them. Also, as we should already know, saying "**the** gospel" is very sloppy since there are more than one (and why is it capitalized?).

***apostolē* (G651)**

From G649; commission, i.e., (specially) apostolate:–apostleship.

This word references the office rather than a person in the office.

4.1 Jesus

You might not think that Jesus was an apostle because he isn't called that during his ministry, but. . .

Hebrews 3:1

1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

You will find many verses in the book of *John* that say that God (or, the Father) had sent him, which is part of the definition of *apostle*. You will also find a few verses that say that John the Baptist was also sent by God, but he is never explicitly called an apostle. Perhaps that is because John didn't do any miracles.

But concerning Jesus' apostleship, we particularly note:

John 20:21

21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

He was speaking to the 12 apostles and they were sent, or commissioned, with similar instructions that he had (we will see this in the next section). This was said at the end of his ministry, so we should conclude that the commission hasn't changed (here in *John*) from the first commissioning of the 12 three years earlier.

Next, we note this:

Romans 15:8

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers:

Being a minister of the circumcision meant that Jesus only ministered to Israel. Therefore, we find him making this statement:

Matthew 15:24

24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

That was amplified when he commissioned the 12 apostles. Jesus obviously did many miraculous things. Many were recorded for us, but even more were not:

John 21:25

25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

4.2 The Twelve Apostles

Jesus commissioned 12 primary apostles. We will see in the next section that there were some others. This first passage makes it clear that these 12 were already disciples:

Luke 6:13

13 And when it was day, he called *unto him* his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

And this says a little about what they were to do:

Mark 3:14-15

14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,
15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:

Those previous passages will help you not get confused by the next one, which might lead you to believe that disciples and apostles are the same thing:

Matthew 10:1-4

1 And when he had called unto *him* his twelve disciples, he gave them power *against* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.
2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother;
3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;
4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

Jesus appointed 12 apostles to Israel because 12 is the number of Israel (e.g., there are 12 tribes). He gives them fairly detailed instructions:

Matthew 10:5-15

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not:
6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.
8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.
9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,
10 Nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.
11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.
12 And when ye come into an house, salute it.
13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.
14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.
15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

The details of the 12 apostles' commission are more fully discussed in Chapter 11. Many teachers do not respect the distinctions of Israel's program in this commission when it is furthered after Jesus' resurrection.

Side Study 4.2: Replacing Judas

Many improperly teach that Paul should have been Judas' replacement. First, let's see why Judas needed to be replaced:

Matthew 27:3-5

3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,
4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What *is that* to us? see thou *to that*.
5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Peter had the authority to choose a replacement (Matthew 16:17-19), as did the other 10 (Matthew 18:18-19). They did this before Pentecost:

Acts 1:15-17

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)
16 Men *and* brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.
17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

The 11 apostles had the Holy Ghost already, so they did not do this on their own. And this was how the choice was made:

Acts 1:20-26

20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.
21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,
22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.
23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.
24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,
25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.
26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Verse 21 says that an apostle had to be with Jesus during his whole ministry:

John 15:26-27

26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:
27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

Luke referred to the apostles in a similar manner:

Luke 1:2

2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;

Later, we will see why Paul was not qualified to be the replacement for a few reasons. Paul acknowledged that there were 12 apostles later in time:

1 Corinthians 15:5

5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

Paul's letters make it clear that he was sent to the Gentiles and not Israel (although this should not be confused by his provocation ministry of Israel described in Subsection 4.5.1).

4.3 The Seventy Apostles

Luke tells us about 70 other apostles:[1]

Luke 10:1

1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

They were not called apostles here, but they had similar instructions as the 12:

Luke 10:3-12

3 Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.
4 Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.
5 And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace *be* to this house.
6 And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

[1] If you have a corrupt bible, Luke 10:1 says 72. See *The English Bible* study guide [13] for more information.

7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.
8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:
9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.
10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,
11 Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.
12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

But, here is where we get confirmation that they were apostles:

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;
4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:
5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:
6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.
7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.
8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Verse 7 is referring to these 70 since the 12 were mentioned in verse 5.

Since 70 typifies the Gentile nations, it might be that this group was intended to reach the scattered Jews. Since prophecy has been interrupted, all of the apostles have died. It might be that the 144,000 in Revelation 7 could end up with this task. But they aren't called apostles, nor is their assignment detailed.

4.4 Paul

Paul emphasized his apostleship in almost every letter he wrote. Of his 13 letters, the 4 exceptions are: *Philippians*, *1* and *2 Thessalonians*, and *Philemon* (all of these letters have co-authors, but that is probably not the reason for the omission). But those were all written to mature believers, who probably understood his office.

Paul made it clear that he was the apostle of the Gentiles:

Romans 11:13

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

An apostle has an office.

1 Timothy 2:7

7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, *and* lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

2 Timothy 1:11

11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

Paul (also called Saul) was probably an apostle first, and then a disciple:

Acts 9:26

26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

Side Study 4.3: Paul's Conversion and Commission

How was Paul saved? Did he hear the gospel that he later preached? Paul said that others were saved by grace:

Ephesians 2:8

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

But they followed the pattern that he set:

1 Timothy 1:16

16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Paul's conversion is described in Acts 9, 22, and 26. You might want to read the large passages in each chapter. Here are a few excerpts to highlight his commission to the Gentiles:

Acts 9:15-16

15 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:
16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Acts 22:21

21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

Acts 26:16-18

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;
17 Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,
18 To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Acts 9:15 mentioned that Paul would be a witness before the children of Israel. This will be highlighted later in Subsection 4.5.1. It is also made more explicit in Acts 15, which is highlighted by this verse:

Galatians 2:7-9

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter;
8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)
9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

The gospel of the uncircumcision is the gospel of the Gentiles. But, the agreement was that Paul would go to the heathen, which was both Gentiles and unbelieving Jews.

Side Study 4.4: Why Paul Couldn't Replace Judas

When Judas was replaced by Matthias in Acts 1, Paul wasn't a believer. This is demonstrated in Acts 9:

Acts 9:4-5

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?
5 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.

Paul didn't recognize Jesus' voice, like a believer should have:

John 10:4

4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

He obviously didn't meet the qualifications given for a replacement in Acts 1. Right division would also easily disqualify Paul from being an apostle to Israel: He had a different commission with a different gospel to a different audience.

4.5 Other Apostles

We find a few other apostles mentioned during the dispensation of grace. It is not clear that all of these saw Jesus (if so, it wasn't recorded in scripture).

4.5.1 Barnabas and Paul

As you are read the book of *Acts*, you come across this verse:

Acts 14:4

4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

The story at this point concerns Barnabas and Paul, but we only know of Paul as an apostle. Is Barnabas the other? Well, you get confirmation a few verses later:

Acts 14:14

14 *Which* when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard *of*, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

So, you have to ask yourself: When was Barnabas commissioned? If you study, you will understand that he was already part of the kingdom church (see Acts 4:36). What does he have to do with Gentiles? Well, nothing directly. But pay attention to the previous chapter:

Acts 13:2-4

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.
3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.
4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

Barnabas and Paul have been given a special ministry to provoke the Jews. This commissioning comes via the Holy Ghost rather than from Jesus. Paul tells us about this further:

Romans 11:11-14

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.
12 Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?
13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:
14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation *them which are* my flesh, and might save some of them.

Throughout *Acts*, Paul usually went to the syngogues first.

Acts 17:1-2

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:
2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

1 Corinthians 9:20

20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

This is why Paul did many miracles (i.e., signs are for the Jews). Did Barnabas do any? Well, none are recorded. After Paul and Barnabas split, Barnabas continued his apostleship with Mark (see Acts 15:36-40).

4.5.2 Apostles in the Body of Christ

1 Corinthians 12:28-30

28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.
29 *Are* all apostles? *are* all prophets? *are* all teachers? *are* all workers of miracles?
30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

Ephesians 4:11

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Ephesians 3:5

5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

Paul's letters make it clear that there were other apostles besides him. No details are given because the scripture focuses on Paul as the apostle of the Gentiles. It would make sense that they were given the same instructions as Paul. While Ephesians 4:11 indicates that Jesus gave some to be apostles, the commissioning may have come through the Spirit (like it did for Barnabas):

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.
8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;
9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;
10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:
11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

While apostleship isn't mentioned there, there is much commonality with the list later in the chapter (verses 28-30 above). We should also understand that the gifts of the Spirit are not being given today. So, there are no apostles now.

4.6 False Apostles

We will note that there were also false apostles:

2 Corinthians 11:13

13 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

Revelation 2:2

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

Those that went amongst the Jews taught error concerning Jesus and the kingdom. Those that went amongst the body of Christ and the heathen typically taught that the law was part of the salvation message. Neither were sent out by Jesus (nor by the Holy Ghost).

Summary

Table 4.1 summarizes the apostles, their audiences, and their gospels (refer to Figure 3.1 and the surrounding text to understand the subtleties around these names). Jesus, the twelve, and the seventy were only sent to lost Israel. This excluded the Gentiles.

Table 4.1: Summary of the Apostles

Apostle	Sent To	Gospel
Jesus	Israel	Kingdom
The Twelve	Israel	Kingdom
The Seventy	Israel	Kingdom
Paul	Heathen	Christ
Barnabas and Paul	Lost Jews	Christ
Body of Christ Apostles	Heathen	Christ

Paul was initially sent to the Gentiles. Lost Jews were added in a separate commission with Barnabas. This combination was formalized in Acts 15 with the term *heathen* (also, in the dispensation of grace, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile). Barnabas continued without Paul, evidently only going to lost Jews. The instructions concerning other apostles in the body of Christ are not given, but are assumed to be the same as Paul's instructions. The distinctions among all of the apostles are clear and should be respected. To mix them is a great error.

CHAPTER

5 The Many Baptisms

One of the most divisive topics in Christianity today is baptism. Paul tells us this:

1 Corinthians 1:17

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Most people do not associate the beginning of the verse with the end of it: It appears that water baptism has an impact on our gospel. Let's do a thorough study of the topic of baptism.

5.1 What Is Baptism?

Let's see what the dictionary says about *baptism* and *baptize*.

Dictionary Definition: baptism

1. The application of water to a person, as a sacrament or religious ceremony, by which he is initiated into the visible church of Christ. This is usually performed by sprinkling or immersion.
2. The sufferings of Christ.
3. So much of the gospel as was preached by John, the Baptist.

Dictionary Definition: baptize

To administer the sacrament of baptism to; to christen. By some denominations of christians, baptism is performed by plunging, or immersing the whole body in water, and this is done to none but adults. More generally the ceremony is performed by sprinkling water on the face of a person, whether an infant or an adult, and in the case of an infant, by giving him a name, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which is called Christening.

These definitions are horribly tainted by religious tradition. These definitions may reflect common usage (predominately by the Catholic church), but they do not accurately reflect how the bible uses them. Chiefly, there are baptisms that do not involve water.

Side Study 5.1: Concordance Entries for *Baptism* (Advanced Study)

The words *baptism* and *baptize* only occur in the new testament because they are transliterated from Greek words. We will see that there is an equivalent word in the old testament.

***baptízō* (G907)**

From a derivative of G911; to immerse, submerge; to make whelmed (i.e., fully wet); used only (in the New Testament) of ceremonial ablution, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian baptism:–Baptist, baptize, wash.

The word is also translated as “wash”. Also, the concordance tells us that this word is related to G911 (you’ll have to look that one up yourself), which is translated as “dip”. That too will help us when going to the old testament.

***baptisma* (G908)**
From G907; baptism (technically or figuratively):–baptism.

***baptismos* (G909)**
From G907; ablution (ceremonial or Christian):–baptism, washing.

G909 can also be translated as “washing”.

***baptistēs* (G910)**
From G907; a baptizer, as an epithet of Christ’s forerunner:–Baptist.

G910 is simply a title for John (the Baptist). This exemplifies how critical baptism is to what he was doing.

We desperately need to pay attention to the bible since the dictionary and the concordance have done us a disservice by focusing on only one of the many baptisms (and even that baptism is not completely described).

5.2 Distinguishing Baptisms

Paul tells us this:

Ephesians 4:4-6

4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
6 One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

So, he says that there is one baptism. It will be easy to show that there are many baptisms in the bible (and thus the name of this chapter). So, evidently Paul means something in particular when he says that. Likewise, Paul said that there was one gospel, even though we saw that there were several. So, there are many baptisms and right division will steer you toward the correct one (likewise, for the gospel).

Many people think that this is all that baptism is:

Matthew 3:1-6

1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,
2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
4 And the same John had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.
5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,
6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

They don’t understand what John is doing and why. They don’t search the old testament and wouldn’t find *baptize* if they did. So, let’s look at all of the baptisms in the bible. We will approach this dispensationally.

5.3 Baptisms During the Promise

You will not find anyone that experiences a baptism in *Genesis*. But wait a minute—what about this verse:

1 Peter 3:20-21

20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.
21 The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Being saved by water (in verse 20) is likened to baptism (in verse 21). Unless there was a leak in the ark, Noah and his family did not get wet (if they did get wet, it would have been a sprinkling!). Unfortunately, many use this passage to justify baptism today. But I will reiterate: Noah did not get immersed! The ark did not get immersed either. You could say that the water was "poured out" on it.

At the same time, it can be said that the earth was baptized by the flood:

2 Peter 3:5-7

5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:
6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:
7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

The earth didn't need to be saved, but it was physically cleansed of all of the corruption that was upon it.

Side Study 5.2: The Earth's First Baptism (Advanced Study)

If you view the flood as a baptism of the earth, then there was another during creation. Technically, this would be in the transition to the dispensation that we are calling *promise*. When the earth was created on the first day, it was soon covered with water. On the third day, it was raised out of the water as a type of resurrection. See *The Biblical Creation* study guide [12] for details of the referenced creation days. See the *Resurrection* study guide [8] for details of the resurrection type.

5.4 Baptisms During the Law and the Prophets

There are a few baptisms in the old testament during the law and the prophets, but you won't find the word *baptize*. Recall the the new testament words that are transliterated as "baptize" can also be translated as "wash". Nevertheless, the new testament will tell you of some old testament baptisms.

5.4.1 Passing Through the Red Sea

Here is one baptism that the new testament mentions:

1 Corinthians 10:1-2

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;
2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

Verse 2 mentions "in the cloud" and "in the sea". The former can appear quite confusing if you are looking for someone to get wet. The *cloud* is mentioned numerous times during the exodus and the wandering in the wilderness. I will provide just one passage about it:

Psalms 105:38-39

38 Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them.
39 He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night.

The people were not ever described to be "in the cloud". So we should take this to mean something *positionally*. Other baptisms will involve a figurative meaning like this.

Concerning "in the sea", they went through the red sea, but they didn't get wet. If they did get wet, it was a sprinkling from the spray of the sea. But if you understand that the water was frozen, that probably didn't happen either:

Exodus 14:22

22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry *ground*: and the waters *were* a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

As with the church in general, there were unbelievers among the believers:

1 Corinthians 10:5

5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

So, the baptism was not part of salvation since anyone can go through a religious ceremony.

5.4.2 Washing the Priests

A priest must wash before he began his ministry:

Exodus 29:4

4 And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water.

Exodus 40:12

12 And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water.

Leviticus 8:6

6 And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water.

Notice that someone else did the washing. We do not have any details of what the washing was.

Let's see if there are other verses that might help us:

Exodus 30:18-21

18 Thou shalt also make a laver *of* brass, and his foot *also of* brass, to wash *withal*: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein.
19 For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat:
20 When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:
21 So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, *even* to him and to his seed throughout their generations.

Exodus 40:30-32

30 And he set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and put water there, to wash *withal*.
31 And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat:
32 When they went into the tent of the congregation, and when they came near unto the altar, they washed; as the LORD commanded Moses.

So, the laver was for washing the hands and feet. Even Moses did this. But, this might be different than the washing of the priest to begin his ministry.

Since the washing of the priest occurred at the door of the tabernacle, it is likely that the water from the laver was used. A person certainly couldn't get in the laver.

I think this passage from the new testament demonstrates what Moses did:

John 13:4-10

4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.
5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel wherewith he was girded.
6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?
7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.
8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.
9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head.
10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash *his* feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

This washing event occurred after they ate a meal. Most likely, they had already washed their hands. But, Jesus was simply demonstrating how one would wash another. The bason would be akin to the laver.

Side Study 5.3: Washing by Dipping

The Hebrew word translated as "wash" in Exodus 29:4 can also be translated as "bathe". We would think of this as cleaning the skin. We would also think of immersing most, or all, of the body as it is washed.

We are going to use both testaments to improve our understanding. In Side Study 5.1, we saw that the new testament word (G907), which is translated as "baptize", can also be translated as "wash". It was related to G911 which means "dip". Let's see an old testament passage with both words:

2 Kings 5:10-14

10 And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.
11 But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.
12 *Are* not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.
13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, *if* the prophet had bid thee *do some* great thing, wouldest thou not have done *it*? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?
14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Verse 10 says "wash. . . seven times" and verse 14 says "dipped. . . seven times". I would expect that Naaman immersed himself fully in order to cleanse all of his skin. So immersion makes sense here.

So, Aaron and his sons were probably not immersed, but they were washed. Yet, washing can be by immersion.

5.4.3 Anointing the Priests with Oil

A priest must also be anointed with oil:

Exodus 29:7

7 Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour *it* upon his head, and anoint him.

Leviticus 8:10-12

10 And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that *was* therein, and sanctified them.
11 And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all his vessels, both the laver and his foot, to sanctify them.
12 And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.

Psalms 133:2

2 *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

Side Study 5.4: The Anointing of a King

Simply by searching for words that begin with *anoint*, you will see the many verses that talk about this concept. The king was also to be anointed:

Psalms 89:20

20 I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him:

Judges 9:8

8 The trees went forth *on a time* to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us.

1 Samuel 15:1

1 Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee *to be* king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD.

1 Samuel 16:13

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

5.4.4 Cleansing Rituals

There are a few examples of cleansing rituals involving a sprinkling of water. One of them involves fire.

5.4.4.1 Cleansing Levites

There are a few other ceremonial sprinklings. The Levites were sprinkled with the *water of purifying*:

Numbers 8:7

7 And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and *so* make themselves clean.

Numbers 8:21

21 And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them *as* an offering before the LORD; and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them.

5.4.4.2 Cleansing the Unclean

The unclean were made clean by a similar sprinkling. Here it is called the *water of separation*:

Numbers 19:13

13 Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness *is* yet upon him.

Numbers 19:18-19

18 And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip *it* in the water, and sprinkle *it* upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave:
19 And the clean *person* shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even.

Notice here that there are two things happening: a sprinkling followed by a bathing.

5.4.4.3 Cleansing Booty

There are several verses on the water of separation. Here is an important one:

Numbers 31:21-24

21 And Eleazar the priest said unto the men of war which went to the battle, This *is* the ordinance of the law which the LORD commanded Moses;
22 Only the gold, and the silver, the brass, the iron, the tin, and the lead,
23 Every thing that may abide the fire, ye shall make *it* go through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of separation: and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water.
24 And ye shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and ye shall be clean, and afterward ye shall come into the camp.

This is associated with a purifying fire.

Israel will do something similar during the kingdom transition. Believers will be purified by the water of separation. Unbelievers will pass through the fire (and won't survive).

5.4.5 Sprinkling Blood

There are several things that are sanctified by the sprinkling of blood:

Exodus 24:6-8

6 And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.
7 And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.
8 And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.

Exodus 29:21

21 And thou shalt take of the blood that *is* upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle *it* upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him.

Leviticus 8:30

30 And Moses took of the anointing oil, and of the blood which *was* upon the altar, and sprinkled *it* upon Aaron, *and* upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with him; and sanctified Aaron, *and* his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him.

Hebrews 9:19-21

19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,
20 Saying, This *is* the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.
21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

5.5 Baptisms During the Kingdom Transition

For those that think there is only one (kind of) baptism in the bible, they simply do not read carefully:

Matthew 3:11

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:

There are three baptisms mentioned in this one verse! We will look at each in turn, and then some others that aren't mentioned here!

5.5.1 Water Baptism

Part of the announcement of the kingdom was a command to repent. John the Baptist was the first to preach it:

Matthew 3:2

2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

It had baptism associated with it:

Matthew 3:5-6

5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,
6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

We already saw in Section 3.4 that Israel was a covenant people that were guilty of breaking the covenant due to idolatry. And they were meant to be a kingdom of priests.

Side Study 5.5: Why Was Jesus Baptized?

Here is the account of Jesus' baptism:

Matthew 3:13-17

13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.
14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?
15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.
16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:
17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

The short, unfulfilling answer is "to fulfil all righteousness".

Maybe this explains it:

Acts 22:16

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

That can't be it! He wasn't a sinner! How about this: It's a picture of his death, burial, and resurrection! Jesus never preached that (maybe others teach that he did).

A priest began his ministry at 30 years old:

Numbers 4:3

3 From thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.

Luke 3:23

23 And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was *the son* of Heli,

He was washed and anointed. These rituals did not save him because he didn't need saving.

While Jesus wasn't a sinner, his nation of Israel was. The "repent and be baptized" message is a national one. Jesus identified with his people.

Paul summarized this baptism:

Acts 19:4

4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

Peter continued it after Jesus' resurrection and ascension:

Acts 2:38

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Repentance wasn't about being a sinner. It had to do with breaking the conditional law covenant. The baptism was a ceremonial washing to prepare the people to be a priesthood.

As suggested in Side Study 5.3, the baptism, or washing, could be accomplished by dipping (in a river). Let's see verses that suggest that:

John 3:23

23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

Matthew 3:16

16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

Mark 1:10

10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

Acts 8:38-39

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.
39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

So all of these passages suggest going down into water in order to be dipped. Note that dipping is not the same as how many baptize today. The traditional that occurs today is to tilt the person backwards into the water–this denotes death and burial. The person is lifted up to be standing again–this denotes resurrection. This is very wrong since no one understood that Jesus had to die when kingdom baptism began. It is more likely that the person stooped down in order to submerge the head (if that happened at all).

Side Study 5.6: Was John Also Sprinkling?

Some might say that John was sprinkling. Let's see why that might be.

Matthew 11:7-9

7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?
8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses.
9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

Luke 7:24-26

24 And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?
25 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.
26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.

Why does Jesus mention shaking a reed? Some suggest that John is shaking a reed with hyssop on the end. That might align these verses with Subsubsection 5.4.4.2 where there was both a sprinkling and bathing/washing. Here is some other possible evidence:

Psalms 51:2

2 Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

Psalms 51:7

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

But let's go back to the two passages above. Jesus asked three times: "What went ye out. . . to see"? He further asked: (1) a reed, (2) a man, and (3) a prophet. I think he was saying that John was the reed! And, likely, the wind was the Holy Ghost!

This verse might also be linked to the idea of sprinkling :

John 3:25

25 Then there arose a question between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

But this verse sheds some light on the previous.

John 2:6

6 And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

These were most likely used for the washing of hands (and possibly feet). Such a washing is demonstrated in John 13:4-10.

John's baptism separated the believers from the unbelievers:

Luke 7:29-30

29 And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.
30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

Now, a misunderstood verse:

Mark 16:16

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Jews were saved by faith, but "saved" here was with respect to surviving the judgment that would come when the kingdom was to be started. It was quite possible to be baptized in spite of believing. We would expect that Jesus' disciples were baptized. Judas was one of them.

Here are other verses that speak of Israel's water baptism:

Hebrews 10:22

22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

The sprinkling here is a spiritual one.

1 Peter 3:21

21 The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Jesus commissioned his apostles to baptize:

Matthew 28:19-20

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

5.5.2 The Baptism with the Holy Ghost

The old testament prophesied about an anointing with the Spirit.

Side Study 5.7: Prophecied Anointing with the Spirit

The old testament had prophecies about anointing with the Spirit:

Proverbs 1:23

23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

Note that the *anointing* was a *pouring*. This identifies it with the pouring of oil in Subsection 5.4.3.

Isaiah 32:15

15 Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

Isaiah 44:3

3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

Ezekiel 39:29

29 Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.

Zechariah 12:10

10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only *son*, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.

Joel 2:28-29

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:
29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

This was quoted in the new testament:

Acts 2:17-18

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:
18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

Those who were water baptized were anointed later:

Matthew 3:11-12

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:
12 Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Acts 1:5

5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Acts 2:1-4

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.
4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The “tongues like as of fire” is not the fire of Matthew 3:11.

This shows the purpose of the anointing:

1 John 2:27

27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

This would enable the believers to know what to do during the tribulation. It was also why they were not to commit blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (see the *How to Study the Bible – Volume 3: Advanced Topics* study guide [5] for a study on that).

Consider this one:

Acts 10:45
45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The language in the verse helps you understand that this is the baptism of the Holy Ghost that was part of prophecy. Although Paul was saved in Acts 9, Cornelius was not in the body of Christ.

5.5.3 The Baptism with Fire

There is a baptism of fire:

Matthew 3:11-12
11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:
12 Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

This will be the tribulation, or Daniel's 70th week. The parable of the wheat and the tares describes this. Here are the relevant verses:

Matthew 13:30
30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Matthew 13:40
40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

Refer to the *Matthew* study guide [7] for details.

5.5.4 Jesus' Other Baptism

Jesus talked about another baptism after he had already been baptized with water by John and with the Holy Ghost.

Matthew 20:22-23
22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.
23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father.

Luke 12:49-50
49 I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?
50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

This verse helps us understand what he was referring to:

Matthew 16:21
21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

The "cup" was referring to his suffering, and it culminated in his death:

Matthew 26:27-28
27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;
28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Here are other verses that describe his suffering and death:

Hebrews 2:9

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

1 Peter 3:18

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

This is another baptism that doesn't involve water.

5.5.5 New Testament Blood Cleansing

Just as the old testament had a blood cleansing (see Subsection 5.4.5), so does the new testament:

Hebrews 9:11-15

11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;
12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.
13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:
14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

1 John 1:7

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Revelation 1:5-6

5 And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,
6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 7:14

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

But this is spiritual—not physical nor literal.

5.6 Baptism During Grace

Paul tells us about a baptism that we experience once we are saved:

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ.
13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Galatians 3:27

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

We are baptized **by** the Holy Ghost **into** the body of Christ. We are **not** baptized with the Holy Ghost. There is no water or oil; it is symbolic.

Romans 6:3-4

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?
4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

We walk in newness of life; our resurrection is not yet.

Colossians 2:11-12

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:
12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Our baptism is symbolic of Christ's 3rd baptism (see Subsection 5.5.4):

Philippians 3:10

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

But Paul tells us that he was not sent to baptize:

1 Corinthians 1:17

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

The 12 apostles to Israel were sent to baptize (see the end of Subsection 5.5.1). Paul was not.

Side Study 5.8: Didn't Paul Water Baptize Some?

1 Corinthians 1:12-17

12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.
13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?
14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;
15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.
16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.
17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Paul baptized a few; so did some of his fellow apostles. But these were sometimes a sign of authority to the unbelieving Jews. Crispus was the head of the synagogue (Acts 18:8), so baptism is something that he and other Jews understood. Some misunderstand that Paul baptized the Jews who only knew of John's baptism (Acts 19:1-7). But they had already been baptized; Paul laid on hands to give them the Holy Ghost. The other baptisms that involved Paul were Lydia (Acts 16:5) and the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:33).

Many believe that Paul had not received the instruction not to baptize yet (1 Corinthians had not been written yet). Regardless, these baptisms are reported in *Acts*, which is not doctrine to us. It should be clear that if water baptism was even optional in our program, Paul would have baptized more and told us that we could do it. Instead, verse 17 says "Christ sent me **not** to baptize". Those that want to abuse this verse will explain it as optional.

Of course, Paul himself was baptized (Acts 9:18), but that was performed by a kingdom Jew who didn't know otherwise.

Some denominations of Christianity that do not rightly divide teach water baptism as a witness. They say that water baptism is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection. They will quote Romans 6:4 (given above), but say that it is not required by citing Mark 16:16 (and this contradicts the verse) and also claim that they do it out of good conscience according to 1 Peter 3:21. Of course, Jesus wasn't buried in the ground (see Matthew 27:59-60), so a picture created by being immersed in water provides a poor illustration. The best testimony of your salvation comes out of your own mouth.

Ephesians 4:4-5

4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Paul makes it clear there is one baptism. That's the baptism into the body of Christ. The Holy Ghost does this baptism, not a man. If there is one baptism, water baptism cannot be a second baptism, even if it were optional.

The cleansing rituals that Israel had are accomplished by God's word, not a physical ceremony:

Ephesians 5:26

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

Titus 3:5

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Side Study 5.9: Is There a Baptism for the Dead? (Advanced Study)

So, what do we make of this verse?

1 Corinthians 15:29

29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

We can only imagine what the carnal and unlearned will do with this verse. There are three things that you have to do to understand it:

1. Understand how the bible talks: e.g., understand the phrase "for the dead"
2. Keep the verse in the context of the passage: verses 12-34
3. Find similar themes

I'll do most of the study and you will have to do the rest.

If you search for "for the dead", you will find 8 verses in the old testament. These all speak about taking some action on behalf of the dead. Here are two examples:

Leviticus 19:28

28 Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I *am* the LORD.

Ezekiel 24:17

17 Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not *thy* lips, and eat not the bread of men.

You should look up the others.

Now, who is "the dead"? You need to keep this in the context of the passage. You can conclude one of two things: (1) all that have died (i.e., the resurrection of the dead) or (2) more specifically Jesus Christ (i.e., Christ risen from the dead). When we understand the full teaching, we will know it is the latter.

Next, you want the next verse, but I'll give both verses together:

1 Corinthians 15:29-30

29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?
30 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

The bible is using a pattern that occurs elsewhere. There are two questions that begin with "why". Study elsewhere will show you that it is equating the two "why" questions. Here is one example:

Romans 14:10

10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Another example is in 1 Corinthians 6:7.

Next, the theme that you need is a "baptism" that is likened to "standing in jeopardy every hour". This is basically suffering persecution while doing no wrong. This, of course, should lead us to Jesus' third baptism. We covered that in Subsection 5.5.4.

So, Paul is saying in the larger passage that if Christ is not risen from the dead, then our faith is in vain. If that is the case, why be persecuted for preaching a lie? He sums it up with:

1 Corinthians 15:32

32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

There is no mysterious baptism here (other than people not understanding it).

5.7 Baptism During the Kingdom

The new covenant will bring the sprinkling spoken of in the old testament:

Ezekiel 36:24-27

24 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.
25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.
26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.
27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.

Conclusion

How many baptisms did we see? If you aren't sure, Table 5.1 summarizes them for you. Even if you don't agree with everything in the list, you will have to acknowledge that there are many baptisms. Paul tells us that there is one and it is clear which one it is.

Table 5.1: Summary of the Baptisms

#	Dispensation	Medium	Type	Description
1	Promise	Water	Pouring	Noah's Family
2	Promise	Water	Immersion	The Earth
3	Law & Prophets	Water (?)	Pass Through	Israel Through Red Sea
4	Law & Prophets	Water	Wash	Priests Washed
5	Law & Prophets	Oil	Pour	Priests Anointed
6	Law & Prophets	Water	Sprinkle	Cleansing Rituals
7	Law & Prophets	Fire	Pass Through	Booty / Spoils
8	Law & Prophets	Blood	Sprinkle	Law Covenant & Testament
9	Kingdom Transition	Water	Immersion	Believer's Baptism
10	Kingdom Transition	Holy Ghost	Pour	Believer's Anointing
11	Kingdom Transition	Fire	Pass Through	Unbelieving Jews
12	Kingdom Transition	None	Spiritual	Jesus' Suffering and Death
13	Kingdom Transition	Blood	Spiritual	New Testament Cleansing
14	Grace	None	None	Baptism into the Body
15	Kingdom	Water	Sprinkle	New Covenant Cleansing

I wouldn't want to emphasize it too strongly, just in case the count is wrong, but there are 12 baptisms involving Israel.

CHAPTER

6 The Churches

Church is a word that is very much misunderstood by Christians because it is plagued by religious tradition. Consider how people use the word today:

- Where do you go to church?
- You need to find a local church.
- Are you a member of the church?
- It's time for church.
- Don't do that in church.
- We need volunteers to clean the church.
- Why don't you join our church?

Does the bible use the word in any of these ways?

Also, many Christians think there is only one church in the bible. This comes from a non-dispensational view of scripture, and this leads to traditions of men. We will contrast the details of the churches in this study.

6.1 What Is a Church?

Let's start with the dictionary definitions:

Dictionary Definition: church

1. A house consecrated to the worship of God, among Christians; the Lords house.
2. The collective body of Christians, or of those who profess to believe in Christ, and acknowledge him to be the Savior of mankind.
3. A particular number of christens, united under one form of ecclesiastical government, in one creed, and using the same ritual and ceremonies; as the English church; the Gallican church; the Presbyterian church; the Romish church; the Greek church.
4. The followers of Christ in a particular city or province; as the church of Ephesus, or of Antioch.
5. The disciples of Christ assembled for worship in a particular place, as in a private house.
6. The worshipers of Jehovah or the true God, before the advent of Christ; as the Jewish church.
7. The body of clergy, or ecclesiastics, in distinction from the laity. Hence, ecclesiastical authority.
8. An assembly of sacred rulers convened in Christ's name to execute his laws.
9. The collective body of Christians, who have made a public profession of the Christian religion, and who are untied under the same pastor; in distinction from those who belong to the same parish, or ecclesiastical society, but have made no profession of their faith.

There is a lot of bad information mixed in with a little good. It is better to get an understanding from the bible, which is what we will do in this chapter. It can also be helpful to use a concordance.

Side Study 6.1: Concordance Entries for *Church* (Advanced Study)

The word *church* only occurs in the new testament and it is predominately translated from one word:

> ***ekklēsía* (G1577)**
> From a compound of G1537 and a derivative of G2564; a calling out, i.e., (concretely) a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both):–assembly, church.

It comes from two other words and essentially means *called out*. In spite of what the concordance definition says, it is not used to describe a congregation of a synagogue. That will be discussed further below.

G1577 is typically translated as *church(es)*, but three times as *assembly*. In the latter case, the three instances occur in the same passage: Acts 19:32-41 Also, in that same passage, the other word translated as "robbers of churches" occurs:

Acts 19:37

37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

> ***hierosylos* (G2417)**
> From G2411 and G4813; a temple-despoiler:–robber of churches.

This does seem to reference a temple in the context.

Searching the new testament for the word *assembly* results in two more instances besides those cited for G1577:

Hebrews 12:23

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

That verse makes the connection in English between an assembly and a church.

James 2:2

2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

The word translated *assembly* comes from:

> ***synagōgē* (G4864)**
> From (the reduplicated form of) G4863; an assemblage of persons; specially, a Jewish "synagogue" (the meeting or the place); by analogy, a Christian church:–assembly, congregation, synagogue.

This word relates the word *congregation* to *assembly*. While it also related to *synagogue*, a synagogue and church are very different things. Jews attended synagogues (physical places) and were typically not new testament believers. Churches (not physical places) consisted of new testament believers.

Since the word *church* does not occur in the old testament, we need other words to look for there. *Assembly* and *congregation* are good candidates.

This study demonstrates how the concordance can be useful. We are not going to the source language (e.g., Greek) to correct the translation. We aren't finding hidden meaning in the definitions. The word relationships that we established are there in the English translation. It also demonstrates that the concordance isn't a source of truth since we can see flaws in the information provided.

So, a church is a called-out group of people. They are typically called out of the world, meaning that they have turned from sinful living in attempt to live as God would have them live. While the people in the church are all considered to be believers, we will soon learn that we must allow unbelievers to be in their midst. These unbelievers will typically profess some sort of belief, but it is often erroneous. We will also learn that the church is not yet in the physical place where they belong—they are in a transition stage.

We will look at the verses that define 3 specific churches.

6.2 Church vs. Churches

As you read scripture, you will see references to a *church* and to *churches*. Simply paying attention to context will help you resolve the usages. We will demonstrate the most common usages.

6.2.1 One Church Per City

One thing that you should notice is that a church is usually associated with a city. In the following verses, you will note one church in each of the following cities: Jerusalem, Antioch, Cenchrea, and Corinth.

Acts 11:22

22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

Acts 13:1

1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Romans 16:1

1 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

2 Corinthians 1:1

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

Sometimes the people of the city are mentioned instead, but it still viewed as one church. Here we will see Laodiceans and Thessalonians:

Colossians 4:16

16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

1 Thessalonians 1:1

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

6.2.2 Many Churches Per Region

Scripture will reference multiple churches existing in a region:

Acts 15:41

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

1 Corinthians 16:19

19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

2 Corinthians 8:1

1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

Galatians 1:2

2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:

The natural conclusion is that there were many cities in a region, and there are many churches within it.

There are a few other references to *churches*:

Romans 16:4

4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Romans 16:16

16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

1 Corinthians 14:33

33 For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

6.2.3 A Church in a House

Finally, we will see that there can be a church in someone's house:

Acts 8:3

3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

Romans 16:5

5 Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

1 Corinthians 16:19

19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

Colossians 4:15

15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

Philemon 2

2 And to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:

The "church" in each of these verses is the believers that are meeting together. Now we don't conclude that because there are many believers' houses in a city, then there are many churches in a city.

Side Study 6.2: Is "Local Church" Biblical?

If you ever hear someone mention the "local church", ask him for a definition of it. Ask multiple people and you probably will get multiple definitions. Why is that? Mostly because the phrase is not in the bible. As usual, someone will explain that the concept is in the bible. Then why are there different definitions?

I'll give a couple of definitions that I have heard. The first definition is: "The local church is a group of believers who get together to perform the whole work of the ministry (as defined in 1 Timothy 3)." I've made the reference to 1 Timothy 3 optional, since some might think that "the whole work of the ministry" is sufficient phrase. So, if believers get together and do not do all of the works of the ministry that Paul describes, then, by this definition, it isn't a "local church". Yet, the bible calls that group a "church" simply because they are believers.

The second definition is: "The local church is a group of believers who get together at a specific location." The rationale behind that is that the word *local* essentially means *location*. This is furthered by the idea that you can tell the believers where to meet by the specification of the location. If you search for verses with variations of "church in his/thy/their house", you find 4 verses. These are still called *churches* in spite of a location being (indirectly) specified. I would expect that those that cling to the first definition would likely overlay it on the second definition.

If you are honest with yourself as you study the scripture, you might conclude that the *local church* is a tradition of men. That wouldn't be wrong if teachers didn't claim it was in the bible. I think this tradition is necessary today due to the division that exists because of denominations.

Consider these two brief passages:

1 Corinthians 1:12

12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:4

4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

Ask yourself if there is another church besides the "local" church. Some will say there is a "parachurch", which technically isn't a church, but an organization that supports many churches. That's also not in the bible. Others might say that some denominations have an organization over all of the churches in that denomination. And that is also not in the bible. Some will probably say that there is a church that consists of all believers. The term for that is "the body of Christ". Tradition will introduce new terms like *catholic* or *universal*. We don't need those words.

When some of those believers come together, the bible simply calls them a "church"—you don't need the word *local*. "Bereans" check out a teaching to see if it is in the bible. If enough of us do that, then we can push back on the traditions that are taught.

6.3 The Church in the Wilderness

Stephen calls the Israelites in the wilderness a church:

Acts 7:37-38

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.
38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

They are saved out of the world (of which Egypt is a type). Israel will be a nation but they aren't in the land yet. So, there might be a subtle difference between them being a church and a nation.

Deuteronomy 26:8-9

8 And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders:
9 And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, *even* a land that floweth with milk and honey.

Their destination is the promised land.

Side Study 6.3: A Church Can Also Be an Assembly or Congregation

The old testament doesn't use the word church. However, it does use the words *assembly* and *congregation*:

Exodus 12:3

3 Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth *day* of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of *their* fathers, a lamb for an house:

Exodus 12:6

6 And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

Leviticus 8:4

4 And Moses did as the LORD commanded him; and the assembly was gathered together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Numbers 14:5

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

This assembly wasn't in a synagogue.

This church was baptized unto Moses (i.e., the leader):

1 Corinthians 10:1-2

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;
2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

This was a national baptism.

Before entering the promise land, the unbelievers were destroyed:

Hebrews 3:15-19

15 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.
16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.
17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness?
18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?
19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Jude 5

5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

Physical circumcision was required for all males:

Leviticus 12:2-3

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean.
3 And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

I'll provide a summary for each church to make them easier to compare. For information on resurrection, refer to the *Resurrection* study guide [8].

Church Quick Facts: Church in the Wilderness

Dispensation: law and prophets (Section 2.5)
Initial Leader: Moses
Gospel: none (or, the law covenant)
Apostles: none
Baptism: passed through the Red Sea (Subsection 5.4.1)
Circumcision: physical
Law & Priesthood: old/law covenant (Subsection 9.2.3) and Levitical priesthood
Temple: while in the wilderness, Israel had the tabernacle
Resurrection: on the earth at the beginning of the kingdom (see [8])
Destination: promised land (Canaan which became Israel)

6.4 The Kingdom Church

The book of *Matthew* mentions another church:

Matthew 16:18

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The rock is Jesus, not Peter.

Matthew 18:15-17

15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.
16 But if he will not hear *thee, then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.
17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

This church also appears in Acts 2-12 and the general epistles. All of Israel will be scattered again and brought back to the land. Then they will become a nation again.

As in Side Study 6.3, this church is referred to as "an assembly";

Hebrews 12:23

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

Hebrews 10:25

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

James 2:2

2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

Side Study 6.4: Did Believing Jews Meet in Synagogues?

While the word translated as "church" can also be translated as "assembly" and the word translated as "synagogue" can likewise be translated as "assembly", are "church" and "synagogue" somewhat synonymous? The other way of posing the question is this: Did believing Jews meet in synagogues?

Let's see several passages that answer the question with "no":

John 9:22

22 These *words* spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

John 12:42-43

42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:
43 For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

John 16:1-3

1 These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.
2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.
3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

Looks like an overwhelming conclusion already.

Here are a few verses of a story in Acts 8. The synagogue in Corinth was adjacent to the church.

Acts 18:8

8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

So, Crispus heard the gospel and believed. But we don't really know what became of him with respect to his role in the synagogue.

Paul continued teaching there for a year and a half:

Acts 18:11

11 And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Acts 18:17

17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

But there was a different chief ruler at this time. We can conclude that Crispus was no longer in the synagogue. We read in 1 Corinthians 1:1 that Sosthenes became a Christian as well.

All the evidence is that believing Jews did not remain in the synagogues long. If they did, they kept their mouths shut. But, a kingdom Jew needed to confess Jesus before men according to Matthew 10:32.

Before the millennial reign begins, unbelievers will be destroyed:

Zechariah 13:8-9

8 And it shall come to pass, *that* in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off *and* die; but the third shall be left therein.
9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It *is* my people: and they shall say, The LORD *is* my God.

Ezekiel 20:34-38

34 And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out.
35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.
36 Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD.
37 And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant:
38 And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Verse 38 mentions their destination.

The predominate church was at Jerusalem:

Acts 8:1

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

But there were also churches throughout Judaea:

Galatians 1:22

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

And Galilee and Samaria:

Acts 9:31

31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

There were also kingdom churches wherever Jews were scattered. There was also one in Babylon:

1 Peter 5:13

13 The *church that is* at Babylon, elected together with *you*, saluteth you; and *so doth* Marcus my son.

Spiritual circumcision (of the heart) was required:

Ezekiel 44:9

9 Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that *is* among the children of Israel.

Romans 2:28-29

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:
29 But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

Church Quick Facts: Kingdom Church

Dispensation: (transition to) kingdom (Section 2.7)
Initial Leader: Jesus, then Peter
Gospel: Initially, gospel of the kingdom (Section 3.4), then the gospel of God (Section 3.3) is added to it
Apostles: Jesus (Section 4.1) and the 12 (Section 4.2); 70 were added later (Section 4.3)
Baptism: water baptism (Subsection 5.5.1) followed by Holy Ghost baptism (Subsection 5.5.2)
Circumcision: physical and spiritual
Law & Priesthood: new law covenant (Subsection 9.2.5) and Melchisedec priesthood in future
Temple: (second) physical temple in Jerusalem
Resurrection: on the earth at the beginning of the kingdom (see [8])
Destination: restored land of Israel

6.5 The Body of Christ

Of course, Paul tells us about our church today:

1 Corinthians 12:27

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

Ephesians 5:23

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

Ephesians 5:32

32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

This church also appears in Acts 11-28 and Paul's epistles.

Our citizenship is in heaven:

2 Corinthians 5:1

1 For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Philippians 3:20

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Unbelievers are left behind (most likely to be destroyed):

2 Thessalonians 2:7-12

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way.
8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:
9 *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,
10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.
11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The predominant church was at Antioch in Syria:

Acts 11:26

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

We are not under a law:

Galatians 5:18

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Physical circumcision is not required:

1 Corinthians 7:19

19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

Galatians 5:6

6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Colossians 3:11

11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all.

Yet, we have a spiritual circumcision:

Colossians 2:11-13

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:
12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.
13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Church Quick Facts: Body of Christ

Dispensation: grace (Section 2.4)
Initial Leader: Paul
Gospel: gospel of Christ (Section 3.5)
Apostles: Paul (Section 4.4)
Baptism: spiritual (Section 5.6)
Circumcision: spiritual only
Law & Priesthood: none
Temple: the body of Christ is the temple (e.g., Ephesians 2:21-22)
Resurrection: in heaven before the tribulation and kingdom (see [8])
Destination: heaven

6.6 What Is the Church of God?

The "church of God" can have two meanings. One is a reference to all believers in both the kingdom church and the body of Christ. The other is a reference to either the former or the latter, but not both. The phrase is typically only used by Paul, although it does occur in *Acts* once where Paul was speaking. Of course, this makes sense since it was Paul who best understood both programs. We will also find "churches of God" a few times, and it is always used by Paul.

Let's consider the idea of referencing both churches:

1 Corinthians 1:2

2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

When Paul says "church of God" here, he is referring to the church in Corinth, which is part of the body of Christ. But, he refers to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord"; this would include believers in both programs. He makes that explicit when he says "both theirs and ours". This actually takes us back to "church of God". While there was a church of God in Corinth, there were also churches of God in many places.

This verse might be another example:

1 Corinthians 10:32

32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

Paul may be speaking about the body of Christ when he mentions the church of God. But since he is calling out Jews and Gentiles, he could be referring to the larger definition. Still again, he might be referring to Jews and Gentiles before they were saved.

Here is one of several examples where church of God refers to the body of Christ:

2 Thessalonians 1:4

4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

Here are the verses where he refers to the kingdom church:

1 Corinthians 15:9

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Galatians 1:13

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

Galatians 1:23

23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

Paul never persecuted the body of Christ; he only persecuted the kingdom church.

1 Thessalonians 2:14

14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews:

The churches in Judaea were kingdom churches. The church of the Thessalonians followed those churches in that they suffered like things.

6.7 Today's Churches

What can we say about churches today? The predominate things is that the place where the church meets (i.e., a building) is also called a church. Not all buildings look the same, but many of them have a similar architecture feature: a steeple. Figure 6.1 shows two things: **(a)** shows a steeple and **(b)** shows the thing that it might be related to.

Consider this verse:

Daniel 3:1

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height *was* threescore cubits, *and* the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

The image that Nebuchadnezzar had made was 60 cubits by 6 cubits (i.e., 90 feet x 9 feet). Most people think that it is a statue of him, but that isn't likely. The ratio of height to width is 10-to-1. The Washington Monument

(a) A Church Steeple

(b) The Washington Monument

Figure 6.1: Do modern churches continue the pagan traditions of the past? **(a)** Many churches have a steeple on the top of the building. Is this a form of the image described in Daniel 3:1? **(b)** The Washington monument has the same ratio of height-to-width as that image.

(shown in Figure 6.1(b)) has the same proportions. Refer to the *The Biblical Angels* study guide [11] for more discussion on this symbol.

Another problem with today's churches is the relationship that many establish with the government. I won't go into the details of what a 501(c)3 organization is since that can be researched elsewhere. While it appears to simply be declaring a non-profit nature for the church organization, it gives entitlements to the government in exchange.

Many immature churches suffer from following the church leader rather than the scripture. While such churches are not cults, they can become like one through the indifference of the congregation. When churches fall apart, it is the leader, or a small group, that is left with the money (often from the property sale).

The bad doctrine in many churches often comes from a non-dispensation view of scripture. This allows improper doctrines to be taught as applicable today: baptism, tithing, the existence of spiritual gifts, and replacement theology. We are to be united on doctrine but we aren't:

1 Corinthians 1:10

10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Philippians 1:27

27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

Philippians 2:2

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.

Because of numerous doctrinal divisions, there are hundreds or thousands of churches in a city.

One problem that many church leaders do not understand is the inviting of the lost into the congregation. This verse is used to bring in the lost:

1 Corinthians 14:23

23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those that are* unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

That just says that **if** the lost are in the congregation that they will not understand the misuse of the spiritual gifts (tongues, in this case). Well, those gifts don't exist today (see the *How to Study the Bible – Volume 2: Intermediate Topics* study guide [4], and that verse was not instruction to bring the lost in. The church is for the saved. The lost get added to the church by believing the gospel right where they are. The immature church doesn't share the gospel and so they invite them to church to hear it. This results in the gospel being preached week after week, hindering the congregation from growing spiritually.

Conclusion

Understanding how the bible uses the words *church* and *churches* isn't that hard. The believers saved by grace are in the body of Christ; the believers saved by the kingdom gospel are in the kingdom church (although that term is not explicitly used in the bible). A city with believers has a church there. A geographic region (typically defined by ruling governments) has many cities, some of which have believers in them. So there are many churches in such a region. When believers convene in a house, it is still called a church. Yet, the city isn't said to have *churches*.

Any church may be referred to as a "church of God" since that phrase is more generic. All believers in both programs might also be referred to as "the church of God". The generic phrase *in Christ* might be used instead (see Chapter 7).

Go back and look at Figure 2.2. For the dispensation of the law and the prophets, the old testament church was God's agency on the earth. Of course, this became the nation of Israel. For the dispensation of grace, the body of Christ, a church, is God's agency on the earth. For the dispensation of the kingdom, the kingdom church, which will become the redeemed nation of Israel, will be God's agency on the earth. Only the dispensation of the promise lacks a church; therefore, death reigned. It is nice when all of these things come together.

Side Study 6.5: Where Is Paradise? (Advanced Study)

Finding distinctions in the bible never seems to end. If you search for the word "paradise", you will find it three times:

Luke 23:43

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Revelation 2:7

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

2 Corinthians 12:4

4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

These do not exactly align with the churches, but they are close. The old testament saints went to paradise in the heart of the earth (i.e., hell). So, Jesus told the thief on the cross that there was where they would both be.

After Jesus died on the cross, the kingdom saints would go to the paradise in the New Jerusalem. Paul tells us that our paradise is in the 3rd heaven. To understand these paradises better, refer to *The Biblical Creation* study guide [12].

Part II

Other Distinctions

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There are other distinctions that are important in the bible. Some of them have a component related to right division of the scripture. Other distinctions are blurred through bad teaching and/or bad study.

CHAPTER

7 In Christ

In Chapter 6, we investigated the three different churches—one in the old testament and two in the new testament. indexchurch When the two churches of the new testament are not distinguished, other terminology gets confused. A good example is the confusion of the phases "in Christ" and "in the body of Christ". The latter is certainly the name of the church during the dispensation of grace (see Section 6.5). So, what does "in Christ" mean? Let's see that it is not a synonym for the aforementioned church.

We should know that Paul was the first in the body of Christ. Many will use this verse to support that claim:

1 Timothy 1:15-16

15 This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.
16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Paul said that he was the "chief" of sinners. Here, *chief* means "the leader", although many teach that he was the "worst of sinners". Nonetheless, he said "in me first", suggesting that he was first in the body of Christ, and "a pattern to them", suggesting everyone else.

Side Study 7.1: Paul: From Worst to First! (Advanced Study)

1 Timothy 1:15 is probably one of the best examples of a common bad explanation that demonstrates that many teachers do little studying. It is commonly taught that when Paul said that he was the "chief" of sinners, he meant that he was the worst of sinners. The dictionary will lead you to the right conclusion, but let's go right to the concordance. The word translated as "chief" comes from this word:

***prōtos* (G4413)**

contracted superlative of G4253; foremost (in time, place, order or importance):–before, beginning, best, chief(-est), first (of all), former.

"First" and "best" should jump out at you. Of course, we should think of "best" and "worst" as being antonyms, or opposites.

How can people reach the wrong conclusion here? Perhaps, they want to magnify God's grace: God saved the worst of sinners by grace! That might be true, but we don't know if that person was Paul.

Many times the word "chief" shows up in English when it is attached to a noun in translation: e.g., chief priest, chief ruler, or chief captain. Further study will demonstrate that chief never means *worst*.

However, he said that there were others "in Christ" before him:

Romans 16:7

7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

7.1 What Does "in Christ" Mean?

Let's see many examples of the phrase in scripture and then form a conclusion. Paul says many times that believers that are in the body of Christ are "in Christ":

2 Corinthians 5:17

17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

1 Thessalonians 4:16

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Sometimes the phrase is "in Christ Jesus":

Romans 8:1

1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Romans 16:3

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:

Galatians 3:28

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:13

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Philippians 1:1

1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

Believers in the Jewish churches in Judea were also "in Christ":

Galatians 1:22

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

1 Thessalonians 2:14

14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews:

1 Peter 5:14

14 Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace *be* with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Jude 1

1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, *and* called:

But Paul clarifies what "in Christ" means:

1 Corinthians 15:22

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

To be "in Adam" means to be lost (or dead) and separated from God. To be "in Christ" means to be saved (or alive).

This verse mentions all saved:

Ephesians 1:10

10 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:

Next, let's see some other phrases that are similar.

7.2 "In God"

By being "in Christ", we are also "in God":

1 Thessalonians 1:1

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:1

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

1 John 4:15-16

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.
16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Or in the Son and in the Father:

1 John 2:24

24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

7.3 "In the Lord"

In the old testament, "in the LORD" is the same as "in Christ":

Psalms 37:7

7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

Psalms 56:10

10 In God will I praise *his* word: in the LORD will I praise *his* word.

Psalms 64:10

10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

Isaiah 45:17

17 *But* Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

Isaiah 45:24-25

24 Surely, shall *one* say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: *even* to him shall *men* come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.
25 In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

"In the Lord" also occurs in the NT:

Ephesians 6:21

21 But that ye also may know my affairs, *and* how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:

Colossians 4:7

7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:

Revelation 14:13

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

Conclusion

No one was in the body of Christ before Paul because 1 Timothy 1:16 says “in me first”. However, many were in Christ (i.e., saved) before Paul.

CHAPTER

8 Was God a Respecter of Persons?

Acts 10:34-35

34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:
35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

Why does Peter say this? Was God a respecter of persons previously? Many will say no and reference:

Galatians 3:28

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

8.1 What Is a Respecter of Persons?

Let's understand what a respecter is by starting with the dictionary.

Dictionary Definition: respecter

One that respects; chiefly used in the phrase, respecter of persons, which signifies a person who regards the external circumstances of others in his judgment, and suffers his opinion to be biased by them, to the prejudice of candor, justice and equity

To be thorough, we should look at the definition of *respect*:

Dictionary Definition: respect (verb)

1. To regard; to have regard to in design or purpose
2. To have regard to, in relation or connection; to relate to
3. To view or consider with some degree of reverence; to esteem as possessed of real worth
4. To look towards

So, if God is a respecter of persons, is he playing favorites?

8.2 Judging Among Equals

God told Israel not to respect anyone more than another as they judged one another:

Leviticus 19:15

15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

Deuteronomy 1:17

17 Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; *but* ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment *is* God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring *it* unto me, and I will hear it.

Deuteronomy 16:19

19 Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

Proverbs 24:23

23 These *things* also *belong* to the wise. *It is* not good to have respect of persons in judgment.

Proverbs 28:21

21 To have respect of persons *is* not good: for for a piece of bread *that* man will transgress.

This, of course, continued into the new testament:

James 2:9

9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

1 Peter 1:17

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear:

What was to be judged was someone's works, or deeds.

Genesis 4:4-5

4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:
5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

So God respected the proper offering.

What about God respecting any particular person?

2 Samuel 14:14

14 For we must needs die, and *are* as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect *any* person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.

2 Chronicles 19:7

7 Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do *it*: for *there is* no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

These verses say that he doesn't. But, as we will better understand later, this is said with respect to Israel.

8.3 God's Respect for Israel

When the people of the earth rejected God at Babel, he confused their languages and scattered them. They formed nations, but God was not their God. He assigned devils over the nations:

Deuteronomy 4:19

19 And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, *even* all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

That is summarized here:

Ephesians 2:11-12

11 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;
12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

God called a man, Abraham, out of idolatry and built a nation from him.

Exodus 2:24-25

24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.
25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto *them*.

This says that he had respect unto Israel!

As God brought Israel out of the bondage in Egypt, he began to distinguish between the two:

Exodus 8:22

22 And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms *of flies* shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I *am* the LORD in the midst of the earth.

The reason was so that everyone would know who Israel's God was.

Exodus 9:6

6 And the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.

Exodus 9:26

26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel *were*, was there no hail.

Exodus 11:7

7 But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

Leviticus 26:9

9 For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you.

This comes as a result of the covenant that God made with Israel.

Note what the LORD told Israel:

Deuteronomy 28:9-14

9 The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways.
10 And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee.
11 And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee.
12 The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.
13 And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do *them*:
14 And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

Verse 9 says that they would be a holy people unto God. Verse 13 says that they would be the head and not the tail, and that they would be above and not beneath.

Deuteronomy 4:5-8

5 Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.
6 Keep therefore and do *them*; for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.
7 For what nation *is there so* great, who *hath* God *so* nigh unto them, as the LORD our God *is* in all *things that* we call upon him *for*?
8 And what nation *is there so* great, that hath statutes and judgments *so* righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

Israel would be nigh unto God. They were not to be viewed like the other nations:

Numbers 23:9

9 For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

There are now (1) Jews and (2) Gentiles. This is a distinction, and God was respecting the distinction that he defined.

Romans 3:1-2

1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision?
2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Romans 9:3-5

3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:
4 Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service *of God*, and the promises;
5 Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Romans 15:8

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers:

Jesus and his apostles only dealt with Israel:

Matthew 15:24

24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

John 20:21

21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

Matthew 10:5-6

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not:
6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

8.4 Israel's Stumbling and Fall

Romans 11:11-12

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is come* unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.
12 Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

Israel was said to "fall" and "diminish" because they were "above".

Romans 11:30-32

30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:
31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.
32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

All are in unbelief now that Israel has been cast down to the same place as the Gentiles.

While we are now nigh, we were far off in the past:

Ephesians 2:13-14

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.
14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*;

Now, there is no respect of persons:

Romans 2:11

11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

Ephesians 6:9

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

Colossians 3:25

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Romans 3:29-30

29 *Is he* the God of the Jews only? *is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:
30 Seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

Romans 9:24

24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Romans 10:11-13

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.
12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.
13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Galatians 3:28

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:11

11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all.

The difference is gone now, but it is clear that it used to be present.

Romans 1:16

16 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.

Romans 2:9-10

9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;
10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

God sent Paul to the Jew first so they would understand that their status had changed. There were no longer preferred.

8.5 Israel Will Rise Again

Romans 11:25

25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

Romans 11:1-2

1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, *of* the tribe of Benjamin.
2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

The next verse is about the kingdom, where Israel will be elevated again (God will be with them):

Zechariah 8:23

23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard *that* God *is* with you.

1 Peter 2:9

9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

That verse takes us back to Exodus 19:5-6, where God elevated Israel.

CHAPTER

9 Covenants and Testaments

One particular place where the immaturity of the church shows is in the area of covenants and testaments. Why are these two different things confused and thought to be synonymous? One big reason is that most Christians have corrupt bibles. This is briefly demonstrated in Section A.3.

The first thing we must do is understand what these words mean. Then we will review the covenants that God has made with various people. Finally, we will study what the testaments are.

9.1 Definitions

Let's see what the dictionary says about these words. Hopefully, you have already learned how the dictionary can get you off to a bad start.

Dictionary Definition: Covenant (noun)

1. A mutual consent or agreement of two or more persons, to do or to forbear some act or thing; a contract; stipulation.
2. A writing containing the terms of agreement or contract between parties; or the clause of agreement in a deed containing the covenant.
3. In theology, the covenant of works, is that implied in the commands, prohibitions, and promises of God; the promise of God to man, that man's perfect obedience should entitle him to happiness.
4. In church affairs, a solemn agreement between the members of a church, that they will walk together according to the precepts of the gospel, in brotherly affection.

Definitions #1 and #2 should be sufficient for understanding what a covenant is. The important language that is missing is that a covenant (i.e., a contract) is between living parties. The third definition mentions "theology" and should likely be dismissed.

Dictionary Definition: Testament

1. A solemn authentic instrument in writing, by which a person declares his will as to the disposal of his estate and effects after his death. This is otherwise called a will.
2. The name of each general division of the canonical books of the sacred Scriptures; as the Old Testament; the New Testament.

With respect to the bible content, definition #1 is what we want. Notice that this makes an agreement between a dead person and one or more living persons. Definition #2 brings in the error that covenants and testaments are the same thing.

So, it should be quite easy to distinguish between a covenant and a testament.

Side Study 9.1: Concordance Entry for *Covenant/Testament* (Advanced Study)

Let's see what the concordance says about the word translated as "covenant". In the old testament, we have:

b^e*rîyth* (H1285)

From H1262 (in the sense of cutting (like H1254)); a compact (because made by passing between pieces of flesh); confederacy, (con-) feder(-ate), covenant, league.

This word is never translated as "testament". In fact, the word "testament" does not appear in the old testament in the English bible. The word is also translated as some other English words.

In the new testament, we have this word:

***diathēkē* (G1242)**

From G1303; properly, a disposition, i.e., (specially) a contract (especially a devisory will):–covenant, testament.

It is translated as "covenant" and "testament". Of course, translators needed some wisdom to decide which word to use. Again, see Section A.3 for examples of where corrupt bibles cannot choose the correct word.

9.2 The Covenants

A covenant is an agreement between two living parties. Many covenants in the bible are between God (the "greater" party) and certain men (the "lesser" party). There are others between men. Some covenants have a **sign** (as a reminder).

A covenant can be unconditional or conditional. In an unconditional covenant, the lesser party isn't required to do anything. In a conditional covenant, the lesser party must do specified things.

9.2.1 God's Covenant with Noah

Before the flood, God promised Noah that he would make a covenant with him:

Genesis 6:18

18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

But the covenant was actually made after the flood:

Genesis 9:8-11

8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,
9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;
10 And with every living creature that *is* with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.
11 And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

This covenant was really with every living creature. It was unconditional.

God created a token (or a sign) of the covenant:

Genesis 9:12-17

12 And God said, This *is* the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual generations:
13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.
14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:
15 And I will remember my covenant, which *is* between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.
16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* upon the earth.
17 And God said unto Noah, This *is* the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that *is* upon the earth.

The **rainbow** is that sign.

This covenant is not really one of focus for the remainder of the bible. But, it is good that it is captured so that we can understand the meaning of the rainbow

9.2.2 The Covenant with Abraham

It appears that there are two covenants with Abraham, but the bible only refers to them as one. The way to view this is as a progressive revelation of the covenant.

9.2.2.1 The Land Component of the Covenant

Genesis 15:5

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

Genesis 15:18

18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

This covenant included two aspects: (1) the land and (2) the seed that will inherit the land. The focus at this point is the land. This covenant was made during a sacrifice ritual:

Genesis 15:9-10

9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.
10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

The seed was clarified as those that would go into bondage in Egypt:

Genesis 15:13

13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

This was going to eliminate several potential claims to the covenant before the claimants were even born.

More verses referring to the land will be revealed when we see the other component of the covenant.

9.2.2.2 The Seed Component of the Covenant

God promised Abraham a land for his descendants to dwell in. Now, he would covenant with those people:

Genesis 17:2-8

2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.
3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,
4 As for me, behold, my covenant *is* with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.
5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.
6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.
7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.
8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

Note the reference to the land again.

Side Study 9.2: Are There Two Covenants with Abraham?

It appears that there are two covenants made with Abraham because the components are in two separate chapters and are separated in time by 13 years. Well, *thirteen* can denote *separation* or *rebellion*. Both symbol definitions apply here.

Genesis 16 tells the story of the child that was not meant to be (i.e., the child that was not of the covenant). Satan's attempt to thwart God's covenant came through Sarah's plan to produce a child her own way. Ishmael hindered the covenant. But, God clearly indicated that the covenant came through Isaac.

Satan also tried to thwart the land component by defiling the land through the Canaanites.

The sign of the covenant is **circumcision**:

Genesis 17:9-14

9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.
10 This *is* my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.
11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.
12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which *is* not of thy seed.
13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.
14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

While all in Abraham's household were to be circumcised, the covenant was refined to be through Isaac and Jacob:

Genesis 17:19-21

19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his seed after him.
20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.
21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

Note what is said about Ishmael. God said that he had blessed him, **but** his covenant would be established with Isaac. So, other descendants like Esau and Abraham's children through Keturah were not part of the covenant. Here are more verses that clarify with whom the covenant was made:

Exodus 2:24

24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

Exodus 6:3-5

3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of* God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.
4 And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.
5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant.

Leviticus 26:42

42 Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

Psalms 105:8-12

8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations.
9 Which *covenant* he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac;
10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, *and* to Israel *for* an everlasting covenant:
11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance:

12 When they were *but* a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.

The land given to Israel is part of the Abrahamic covenant.

Acts 3:25

25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

Acts 7:8

8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so *Abraham* begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac *begat* Jacob; and Jacob *begat* the twelve patriarchs.

Figure 9.1 shows a hierarchy of covenants. We have only seen the Abrahamic covenant to this point. The others will be discussed shortly. The covenant with Noah is unrelated to these.

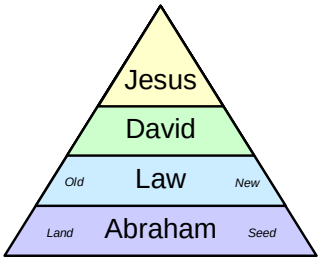

Figure 9.1: Some of the covenants have a progressive revelation of detail. The covenant with Abraham has a land part and a seed part. The seed part is refined through Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's 12 sons (later becoming tribes). The law covenant was given to Israel as a nation fulfilling the aspect of the seed inheriting the land. The original (old) law covenant was temporary and is due to be replaced by a new covenant in the future. The covenant with David concerned reigning over the nation of Israel. This continued the seed promise to an eternal king. That is fulfilled through Jesus Christ (with whom there is no covenant).

You might think that the men that God made the covenant with ended up dying. But God doesn't view it that way:

Matthew 22:32

32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

9.2.3 The (Old) Law Covenant with Israel

The next covenant is often simply called "the law". As we shall see, it was added to the Abrahamic covenant. It concerned Israel:

Exodus 19:5-8

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine:
6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.
7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.
8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

Notice that the people agreed to the covenant. This was a conditional covenant that contained blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.

The covenant was confirmed with a sacrifice:

Exodus 24:3-8

3 And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.
4 And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.
5 And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD.
6 And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

7 And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.
8 And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.

Note that there was a **book of the covenant** (verse 7). This book was put in the **ark of the covenant**:

Deuteronomy 31:25-26

25 That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying,
26 Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.

The sign of this covenant was the **sabbath**:

Exodus 31:13-17

13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it *is* a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that *ye* may know that I *am* the LORD that doth sanctify you.
14 Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it *is* holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth *any* work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.
15 Six days may work be done; but in the seventh *is* the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth *any* work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.
16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, *for* a perpetual covenant.
17 It *is* a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

Ezekiel 20:12

12 Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I *am* the LORD that sanctify them.

Ezekiel 20:20

20 And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I *am* the LORD your God.

This covenant was temporary:

Galatians 3:19

19 Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

Because the covenant was conditional, it could be broken:

Ezekiel 16:59-62

59 For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.
60 Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.
61 Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant.
62 And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD:

This is why people were told to repent during Jesus' ministry (i.e., to change their minds about breaking the covenant).

A later covenant, the **new** covenant, will cause this covenant to be referred to as the **old** covenant.

Hebrews 8:13

13 In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.

That covenant is covered in Subsection 9.2.5.

Figure 9.1 shows how the law covenant is built upon the Abrahamic covenant. The fact that the old covenant will be replaced by the new covenant does not really change this relationship.

9.2.4 The Covenant with David

The next important covenant is the one made with David. While David wasn't Israel's first king, he was supposed to be.

Psalms 89:3-4

3 I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant,
4 Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

Psalms 89:28-29

28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.
29 His seed also will I make *to endure* for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.

2 Chronicles 7:18

18 Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man *to be* ruler in Israel.

The previous verse was said to Solomon. So when (and where in scripture) was David promised this?

2 Samuel 7:12-16

12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.
13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.
14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:
15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I put away before thee.
16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

It doesn't appear that this is a covenant formed like the previous ones. There was no sacrifice ritual, and there does not appear to be a sign associated with the covenant.

Psalms 89:34-37

34 My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
35 Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.
36 His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.
37 It shall be established for ever as the moon, and *as* a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

Notice how the covenant with David is linked to the covenant with Israel:

Psalms 132:11-12

11 The LORD hath sworn *in* truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.
12 If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.

Here, we will see Israel's covenants tied together:

Jeremiah 33:20-26

20 Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season;
21 *Then* may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers.
22 As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.

23 Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying,
24 Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them.
25 Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant *be* not with day and night, *and if* I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth;
26 Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, *so* that I will not take *any* of his seed *to be* rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

The covenants with David and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are mentioned. The law covenant is indirectly referenced by the covenants with the priests. This lesser covenant will be addressed in Subsubsection 9.2.6.2.

Side Study 9.3: Covenant with the Day and the Night

Jeremiah 33:20 and 33:25 mentioned a covenant with day and night. Like the covenant with David, this is essentially equivalent to a promise made. These say something similar:

Genesis 8:22

22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

Jeremiah 31:35-36

35 Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, *and* the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts *is* his name:
36 If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, *then* the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

Both *Jeremiah* passages says these covenants are forever.

9.2.5 The New Covenant with Israel

God promised a new covenant with Israel because the old (law) covenant was broken by them. This covenant will be unconditional and forever.

Jeremiah 11:10

10 They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:
32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:
33 But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.
34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah 32:40

40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

Ezekiel 16:60

60 Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.

God said he would remember the former covenant (which was temporary), yet establish an everlasting one.

Ezekiel 34:25

25 And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

Ezekiel 37:26

26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.

Hosea 2:18-19

18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and *with* the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.
19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.

Let's see much more detail about the new covenant in the new testament:

Hebrews 8:6-13

6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.
7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.
8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:
9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.
10 For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:
11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.
12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.
13 In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.

Hebrews 10:16

16 This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

They will know the Lord and they will know the law. They will be able to keep the new covenant.

Hebrews 12:24

24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.

Romans 11:26-27

26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:
27 For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

The new covenant will come after Jesus returns and sets up the kingdom. When the day of atonement is fully come, he will take away their sins.

9.2.6 Lesser Covenants

There are a number of lesser covenants in the bible. This first one is essentially like a vow:

Job 31:1

1 I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?

9.2.6.1 Covenant of Salt

A covenant of salt is mentioned a few times:

Leviticus 2:13

13 And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.

Numbers 18:19

19 All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the LORD, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: it *is* a covenant of salt for ever before the LORD unto thee and to thy seed with thee.

2 Chronicles 13:5

5 Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, *even* to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?

9.2.6.2 A Covenant of an Everlasting Priesthood

The law covenant also brought a covenant of an everlasting priesthood:

Numbers 25:11-13

11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.
12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:
13 And he shall have it, and his seed after him, *even* the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

Nehemiah 13:29

29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites.

Malachi 2:4-8

4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.
5 My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him *for* the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.
6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.
7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he *is* the messenger of the LORD of hosts.
8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

9.2.6.3 Covenants Between Men

There are several covenants between men:

1 Samuel 11:1

1 Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabeshgilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.

1 Samuel 18:3

3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

1 Kings 20:34

34 And *Benhadad* said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then *said Ahab*, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away.

9.2.6.4 The Covenant with the Antichrist

The most notable covenant that isn't with God is with the antichrist:

Daniel 9:27

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Isaiah 28:14-18

14 Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which *is* in Jerusalem.
15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:
16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.
17 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.
18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

9.3 The Testaments

We already saw the definition for *testament* in Section 9.1. Is there more than one testament in the bible? Recall that the word does not appear in the "old testament".

Hebrews 9:15-20

15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.
16 For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.
17 For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.
18 Whereupon neither the first *testament* was dedicated without blood.
19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,
20 Saying, This *is* the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

The answer is an obvious "yes". The "old" testament is called the "first" testament here.

The new testament began with Jesus' death on the cross. So, the new testament is not the beginning of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, or *John*. However, all of these books were written after the new testament was established.

9.3.1 The Old Testament

Let's understand the old testament back when it occurred:

Exodus 24:3-8

3 And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.
4 And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.
5 And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD.
6 And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.
7 And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.
8 And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.

The old testament went into affect with the death of the sacrifices. An ox is a symbol of Jesus (e.g., a servant).

Like the new testament, the old testament does not begin with *Genesis*. Yet, *Genesis* was written after the old testament was estabished.

2 Corinthians 3:6-14

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.
7 But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away:
8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?
9 For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.
10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.
11 For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious.
12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:
13 And not as Moses, *which* put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:
14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which *vail* is done away in Christ.

The "letter" means the law. It was always intended that the law would be done away with.

While the old covenant and old testament were established at the same time, the new covenant and new testament were not. This is one reason why a covenant and a testament should be distinguished.

9.3.2 The New Testament

Let's see where Jesus spoke of the new testament:

Matthew 26:26-29

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.
27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;
28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.
29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Mark 14:22-25

22 And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake *it*, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.
23 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave *it* to them: and they all drank of it.
24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.
25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Luke 22:15-20

15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:
16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.
17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide *it* among yourselves:
18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.
19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake *it*, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.
20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

Paul expounds upon what Luke wrote so that we know it is also for us today:

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread:
24 And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.
25 After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me.
26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

Hebrews 7:22

22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

A *surety* is a bondsman. The context around this verse concerns a better priesthood.

Revelation 11:19

19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Lightnings and *thunderings*—these remind us of Mount Sinai. The world may be judged by the first testament. Well, they should have gotten under the second testament in order to avoid the judgment of the first.

Conclusion

A covenant and a testament are clearly different concepts. Yet, there is some similarity. It is important to distinguish them because we are not under any covenants today.

Ephesians 2:12

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

Romans 9:4

4 Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service *of God*, and the promises;

Yet a covenant and a promise can be viewed as being similar. We do have promises today.

CHAPTER

10 The Two Kingdoms

The new testament uses two phrases: (1) the kingdom of heaven and (2) the kingdom of God. Some incorrectly teach that these are synonyms, but they are not. We wouldn't be expecting for God to be setting up two kingdoms, but let's see if we can find any distinctions between the two.

The first thing we should do is understand where the phrases are used. Table 10.1 shows the number of times each phrase is used in each book of the new testament. "Kingdom of heaven" only occurs in *Matthew*. "Kingdom of God" occurs in many books. It is quite interesting that the phrase does not occur in any of the Jewish epistles. However, to be fair, you can find other phrases such as "kingdom of our Lord" and "kingdom of our God" in those books.

Table 10.1: Kingdom of H=Heaven/G=God

Book	H	G
Matthew	33	5
Mark		15
Luke		33
John		2
Acts		7
Romans		1
1 Corinthians		4
Galatians		1
Colossians		1
2 Thessalonians		1

If you search the whole bible for the phrase "kingdom of", you will get a variety of results. But these can be put into two categories. Here are the two categories followed by their actual instances:

1. the name of a king: Og, Sihon, Saul, Ahasuerus, my/his father
2. a territory: Israel, Judah, Babylon, Persia

There are some others that can be argued into either category. So, "God" would align with the first category; "heaven" would align with the second.

This next verse might be why we see these two phrases:

Daniel 2:44

44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

So, if the God of heaven set up a kingdom, it could be called (1) the kingdom of God or (2) the kingdom of heaven. Since God reigns in heaven, the kingdom of heaven would extend down to the earth. The kingdom of God would be all things that God reigns over, both in heaven and in earth.

We are not going to look at all of the verses; you will have to search for them yourself.

10.1 Similar Usage

So, let's look at examples where similar verses use the different phrases. Here is our first example:

Matthew 11:11

11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Luke 7:28

28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Here is our second example:

Matthew 19:14

14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Mark 10:14

14 But when Jesus saw *it*, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Luke 18:16

16 But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Here is a third example:

Matthew 19:23

23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Mark 10:23

23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

Luke 18:24

24 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

You can find other examples. Based upon these comparisons, we might conclude that these phrases are the same. But notice that none of these examples define what the phrases mean.

10.2 Finding Distinctions

Side Study 10.1: Who Is the Audience (Advanced Study)

The *How to Study the Bible – Volume 3: Advanced Topics* study guide [5] presents a study called "Who Wrote the Gospel Accounts". If we consider the audiences of the writers, we might have additional insight. When *Mark* and *Luke* were written, the kingdom had already been rejected. That is very likely to be true for *John* as well, although its content is very different than the other accounts. So, it may be the case that the kingdom of heaven was only available until the kingdom was rejected by Israel, and the kingdom of God remains available even today.

Since *Matthew* uses both phrases, we might expect to find some distinction within that book. Let's start with the verses that have "kingdom of God".

Matthew 6:30-33

30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith?
31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?
32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.
33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

The passage talks about basic physical needs. By seeking the kingdom of God and God's righteousness, those things will be provided for. So, the kingdom of God must not be a physical kingdom. That is confirmed here:

Romans 14:17

17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

It consists of spiritual concepts (but it is not a spirit realm).

Let's continue with the "kingdom of God" passages in *Matthew*:

Matthew 12:28

28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

It appears that the Spirit of God is an inherent part of the kingdom of God.

Matthew 21:31-32

31 Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

The publicans and harlots believed and repented. This will enable them to enter the kingdom of God.

Matthew 21:43

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

I'm not sure that this one helps.

In this next passage, *Matthew* mentions both phrases. We will follow that with the same concept in *Mark*.

Matthew 19:23-24

23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Mark 10:23-25

23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Mark tells us that *trusting in riches*, rather than *in God*, is the problem. Again, it is a faith issue.

Let's tie some of this together with the only passage where one of the phrases appears in *John* (we will only look at one of the two verses):

John 3:5

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

As we understand from the gospel of the kingdom (see Section 3.4), believers were to be baptized with water and with the Holy Ghost. This was necessary to enter the kingdom of God (and the kingdom of heaven would evidently follow). But the actions followed the faith.

Luke 17:20-21

20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

This says that the kingdom of God is internal (within) and not external. This didn't mean that these Pharisees had the kingdom of God within them at that time. The Holy Ghost wasn't given yet. Some teach that the "kingdom of God" was a reference to Jesus, who was "in their midst". If that were the case, then the kingdom of God **did** come with observation because he was standing before them.

Side Study 10.2: How the Kingdom of God Comes

The kingdom of God comes with the gospel:

Mark 10:29-30

29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,
30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

Luke 18:29-30

29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake,
30 Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

Compare "the gospel's" in the first passage with "the kingdom of God's" in the second.

The kingdom of God comes not only with God's word (i.e., the gospel), but in power (e.g., eternal life) and with the Holy Ghost:

1 Corinthians 4:20

20 For the kingdom of God *is* not in word, but in power.

1 Thessalonians 1:5

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

1 Corinthians 2:4

4 And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

2 Corinthians 6:6-7

6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,
7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

John 17:2-3

2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.
3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

To be in the kingdom of God is to know God!

1 Corinthians 15:50

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

Eternal life requires immortality, not mortality.

The kingdom of heaven is a physical kingdom. It requires righteous works for it to exist:

Deuteronomy 4:6-8

6 Keep therefore and do *them*; for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.

7 For what nation *is there so* great, who *hath* God *so* nigh unto them, as the LORD our God *is* in all *things that* we call upon him *for*?
8 And what nation *is there so* great, that hath statutes and judgments *so* righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

God gave Israel the law to make them a righteous nation.

Israel had this physical kingdom without the Holy Ghost during the time of Solomon. The apostles looked for it to be restored:

Acts 1:6

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

But now, the spiritual component, which was absent before, had to come first.

Matthew 11:12

12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

The unrighteous were trying to take the kingdom by force by denying Jesus and persecuting his followers.

Luke 16:16

16 The law and the prophets *were* until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

This is best interpreted as Israel trying to assert the kingdom according to their own righteousness rather than God's:

Romans 10:2-3

2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.
3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Israel had traditions that didn't come from God. These essentially hindered those that wanted to follow Jesus:

Matthew 23:13

13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

James 2 discusses how Israel needed works to accompany their faith. This is essentially what we must understand about the kingdom. The kingdom of God came by faith; the kingdom of heaven accompanied that faith with works. The thief on the cross had faith for eternal life (Luke 23:43), but he would have to be resurrected into the kingdom. Jesus was looking for a generation to enter the kingdom alive in order to be that righteous nation on the earth during the kingdom period. But they needed faith first.

CHAPTER

11 The Commission

When any apostles were chosen and sent out, this was generally called their *commission*. They were sent to a specific audience with a specific gospel message. But Christians do not fully understand the commission of the twelve apostles. Tradition has created a "great commission" that isn't in the scripture, and it comes from not rightly dividing. They did not go to the Gentiles and Paul was not an extension of their commission.

11.1 The Initial Commission

We will break up the commission into three parts in order to better understand it.

11.1.1 Restricting the Audience

As presented in Section 4.2, the twelve apostles were given this initial commission when they were chosen:

Matthew 10:5-6

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not:
6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Their gospel was the gospel of the kingdom (see Section 3.4). Notice that the apostles were not sent to the Gentiles. This restriction was never lifted. The corresponding accounts in *Mark* and *Luke* do not have the details concerning Gentiles and Samaritan cities. The Gentiles won't be reached until the kingdom begins.

Side Study 11.1: Why Not the Cities of the Samaritans (Advanced Study)

It is commonly misunderstood what is meant by "into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not". Most take this to mean that they weren't to go to the Samaritans. But, as is usually the case, the bible means what it says.

The Samaritans were Jews of the northern kingdom in the old testament. Galilee was also part of the northern kingdom and nothing is said about it. Many Samaritans were carried off into captivity by Assyria. However, Assyria brought foreigners into settle the land. And so, the peoples were intermingled.

2 Kings 17 has details that explain the situation. Here are a few excerpts:

2 Kings 17:6

6 In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor *by* the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

2 Kings 17:24

24 And the king of Assyria brought *men* from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed *them* in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.

2 Kings 17:26

26 Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land.

2 Kings 17:29

29 Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put *them* in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt.

So, attention is drawn to the fact that Gentiles were placed in the cities of Samaria. This is confirmed here when the exiles returned:

Ezra 4:10

10 And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnappar brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest *that are* on this side the river, and at such a time.

Jesus did not tell his apostles not to go to the Samaritans at all. There are accounts where Jesus went through Samaria:

Luke 9:52

52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

So, going into the villages was allowed.

Luke 17:11

11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

The most interesting account of dealing with a Samaritan is in John 4:1-42. It says this:

John 4:4-5

4 And he must needs go through Samaria.
5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

He went to the city, but not into it (the account makes that clear). At the end of the story, the people of the city came to where Jesus was. For a detailed study of this story, refer to the *John* study guide [6].

It also says this in that story:

John 4:9

9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

This was a problem that the Jews had; it wasn't something that Jesus taught. In fact, Jesus used the story of the good Samaritan to provoke the Jews (Luke 10:30-37).

We read this in Acts 8:

Acts 8:5

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

Philip goes to a Samaritan city. But we should note that he was not an apostle and was not given instructions as to where to go. Later in the story, Peter and John were called upon. But we don't know that they went into the city. We do read this:

Acts 8:25

25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

So evidently, they remained true to their instructions.

The commission does not prohibit them from dealing with proselytes, which are essentially Jews anyway (e.g., Acts 2:10). Jesus dealt with two Gentiles during his ministry: a Roman centurion (Luke 7:1-10) and a woman of Canaan (Matthew 15:21-28). In each case, the Gentile approached him. In the former case, he communicated through elders.

The commission aligned with Jesus' ministry:

Romans 15:8

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers:

Ephesians 2:11-12

11 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;
12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

What are the covenants of promise? The Abrahamic, the old (Mosaic), and the Davidic were all made with Israel (see Chapter 9).

Note that these verses focus on Israel:

Matthew 1:21

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Luke 1:67-68

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,
68 Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

Luke 7:16

16 And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.

"His people" means Israel.

11.1.2 The Instructions

The instructions for the apostles are fairly straightforward. They also are in three of the ministry accounts.

Matthew 10:7-15

7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.
8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.
9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,
10 Nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.
11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.
12 And when ye come into an house, salute it.
13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.
14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.
15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Mark 6:7-13

7 And he called *unto him* the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in *their* purse:
9 But *be* shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.
10 And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.
11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.
12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.
13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed *them*.

Luke 9:1-6

1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.
2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.
3 And he said unto them, Take nothing for *your* journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.
4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.
5 And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.
6 And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.

They were given power to perform signs and wonders (without having the Holy Ghost!).

11.1.3 Warnings and Encouragement

Let's continue the commission given in *Matthew*:

Matthew 10:16-22

16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.
17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;
18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.
19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.
20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.
21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death.
22 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Events on a timeline were given here. Verses 17-18 describe pre-tribulation events (cross reference Matthew 24:9). In verse 20, the Holy Spirit has already been given. So that would have been in the future relative to when Jesus said it. Verse 21 describes tribulation events. Verse 22 mentions "the end"; that would be the end of the tribulation.

Here is the next verse:

Matthew 10:23

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

This says that Jesus will return before the apostles complete their commission in Israel. But, what about the scattered Jews? We'll get to that next.

11.2 The Resurrection Commission Extension

Jesus gave more instructions after his resurrection. But these didn't change the original commission. It is also interesting that each ministry account has unique information.

11.2.1 Details in *John*

We will start with *John* since it contains something very important.

John 20:19-23

19 Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.
20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them *his* hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.
21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you.
22 And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:
23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.

In verse 21, we see is that Jesus was sent (refer to Section 4.1). To whom was he sent?

Matthew 15:24

24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

In verse 22, the second thing is that the apostles were given the Holy Ghost right here. We will have confirmation of this in *Luke* (see below). When the Holy Ghost came upon them in Acts 2, it was to bring them the gift of tongues.

11.2.2 Details in *Luke*

Luke is going to confirm what we read in *John* (above):

Luke 24:44-49

44 And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me.
45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,
46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:
47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
48 And ye are witnesses of these things.
49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

How did Jesus open their understanding? He gave them the Holy Ghost. Look at part of its purpose:

John 14:26

26 But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Verse 49 says they will be endued with power from on high. That wasn't receiving the Holy Ghost for the first time. It was receiving the power to speak in tongues.

Luke also told us this in his other book:

Acts 1:8

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The apostles are given an ordering: Jerusalem and Judea, then Samaria, and then the world. We will make sure that we understand what "going to the world" means after we have seen the other passages.

11.2.3 Details in *Matthew*

Matthew 28:16-20

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.
17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.
18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.
19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

We know from the previous two accounts, that the apostles already have the Holy Ghost. Therefore, they understand what these instructions mean.

Note that the apostles are sent to baptize. We don't read about that in the initial commission. It is clear from the ministry accounts that baptisms were being done:

John 4:1-2

1 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,
2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

It is interesting that they are told to baptize "in the name of the Father. . . and of the Holy Ghost". If you search for baptisms which are done in someone's name, they are only done in name of (1) Jesus Christ, (2) the Lord Jesus, or (3) the Lord. I guess they understood what the commandment actually meant. For the more detailed study of this topic, refer to the *The Revelation of God* study guide [15].

Verse 20 says that Jesus would be with them "unto the end of the world", which is odd since he was going away. I think they understood what that meant.

This passage is consistent with what Jesus said here:

Matthew 24:14

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Now, did they understand what teaching all nations meant? The tradition of the "Great Commission" turns this into taking the gospel to the Gentiles. But let's see that the commission was still constrained to Jews:

Acts 10:28

28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

Peter said this well after Jesus' ascension.

Acts 11:19

19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

This doesn't involve the apostles, but the general understanding was that Israel was only dealing with Israel.

11.2.4 Details in *Mark*

Mark 16:14-20

14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.
15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.
16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.
17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.
19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.
20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

This has new details but it still aligns with the others. Verse 16 highlights that baptism was central to the message. But it also tells us that signs follow those that believe. Why? Because the audience consists of unbelieving Jews and Jews require signs. Mentioning tongues would mean that the miracle at Pentecost would have already past. Drinking any deadly thing would link to information in Revelation 8:11 (*Revelation* may have been written by the time *Mark* was). Verse 15 says to preach the gospel to every creature (and this doesn't mean animals!). Again, the apostles knew what Jesus meant.

11.3 Putting It All Together

As originally commissioned, the apostles were to go to Jews only. They were supposed to begin in the own nation and expand out to all nations. They were going to all nations because there were Jews scattered into these nations:

Acts 2:5

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

Leviticus 26:33

33 And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

And there were promises to bring them back:

Deuteronomy 30:3

3 That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.

Ezekiel 36:19

19 And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them.

Ezekiel 36:24-26

24 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.
25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.
26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Because the Jews were scattered, many of them speak other languages. This is why the gift of tongues came at Pentecost:

Acts 2:5-6

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.
6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

Acts 2:8-11

8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?
9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,
11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

Side Study 11.2: A Commission Pattern In *Esther*

The book of *Esther* has an important pattern for understanding how the gospel was supposed to work. First, let's start with this post-resurrection passage:

Mark 13:10

10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

Mark uses the word "publish". Searching for that word will bring us to this one:

Esther 8:13

13 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province *was* published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

This is the beauty of our English bible. We are getting a link between a Greek word in the new testament and a Hebrew word in the old testament. This is achieved by the translation of God's word into English (where it is still God's word!).

You need to understand what was happening in the book of *Esther*. The Jews of the kingdom were going to be persecuted and killed. The king had a message that he wanted to tell the people:

Esther 8:11

11 Wherein the king granted the Jews which *were* in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, *both* little ones and women, and *to take* the spoil of them for a prey,

As a type, this corresponds to the gospel that the apostles had to preach.

It needed to be translated into the language of the people:

Esther 8:9

9 Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that *is*, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth *day* thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which *are* from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language.

The translation of the gospel message will be accomplished by the gift of tongues. We already saw the link between publish in *Mark* and *Esther*.

Here is what resulted:

Esther 8:17

17 And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

The Jews had joy—that is what good tidings are supposed to bring. And many of the Gentiles became Jews (or, proselytes). The message wasn't to Gentiles, but they heard and converted.

Jesus taught that the tribulation was supposed to come in their near future. That tribulation was the seventieth week of Daniel. Let's see what the scripture says:

Daniel 9:24

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

The entire seventy weeks were for Daniel's people, which is Israel. It isn't for the whole world. Not even the last 7 years are for the whole world. Yet tradition teaches that it is for the whole world. The gospel of the kingdom is for the Jews, not the Gentiles. Yet tradition teaches that it was for the Gentiles.

Let's look at another passage that is corrupted by tradition:

Revelation 7:9

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

Revelation 7:13-15

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?
14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

It is taught that these are Gentiles. But, the type in *Esther* tells us these are Jews and proselytes.

Gentiles will enter the kingdom via the sheep and goats judgment. This is described in Matthew 25:31-46. It is told as a parable in Matthew 13:47-50. Reference the *Matthew* study guide [7] for more information.

11.4 The Commission Loosed

It is important to understand the commission was loosed by the apostles when they better understood that the mystery interrupted prophecy. This took place in Acts 15. However, Paul gave us important information here:

Galatians 2:7-9

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter;
8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)
9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

James, Peter, and John turned the lost, scattered Jews over to Paul. This James was not an apostle, but Peter and John were apostles. How could they stop the commission that they were given? Well, it was clear that God had changed the plans, but they were given the authority to do this:

First, Peter had the authority:

Matthew 16:18-19

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

And, so did the rest of the twelve:

Matthew 18:18-19

18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

11.5 Paul's Commission

Paul's commission was not a continuation nor extension of the commission of the twelve apostles. Paul did not preach the kingdom gospel. Paul was not sent to water baptize. Both Jews and Gentiles were in the church that Paul was building. The gospel was different. The baptisms were different. The churches were different. Paul did go to Jews as commissioned by the Holy Ghost in Acts 13:2, but he didn't preach a different gospel. The lost Jews were formally turned over to him in Acts 15.

Paul briefly tells us what we are doing today:

2 Corinthians 5:16-19

16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more.
17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
18 And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Since we no longer know Christ after the flesh, we follow Christ through Paul:

1 Corinthians 11:1

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

All men are to be saved today:

1 Timothy 2:3-4

3 For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;
4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

That wasn't the case for the kingdom gospel.

Part III

Appendices

A The Need for the Right Bible 118

APPENDIX

A The Need for the Right Bible

The majority of Christians are babes in Christ. Like a real child, they don't know that and cannot be told that. If it is true for you, you can use that as an opportunity to mature. Or, you can cast this reproof aside and continue on in whatever you are doing.

A few necessary steps for becoming very mature are:

- Getting the right bible,
- learning to rightly divide, and
- learning how to study advanced topics.

I will not devote much space to these topics since this is not what the book is about. But it will help you see (1) why you have never heard what is in this book before and (2) why you may have trouble receiving what it teaches. Believe me: it will be easier to get mad and toss this book aside!

There is only one bible in English today, and it has been around for over 400 years. It's called the *King James Bible* (KJB) and not the "King James Version". If you don't understand the issues concerning the bible, this demonstrates your immaturity. If you misunderstand the issues concerning the bible, perhaps you are an older person that is still immature. If you are willing to take note that there is a bible issue, you can look into that and mature. This appendix will only highlight some of the issues; it will not teach the fullness of the topic. To study the topic completely, refer to *The English Bible* study guide [13].

God promised that he would preserve his word. If you believed a man that said that we cannot have God's pure word today, then you've made the wrong decision and believed a liar. Once you believe that God has preserved his word, you'll understand that it can be translated into other languages. Again, this will not be proven here.

God does not need multiple versions of his word in English. It is the devil who provides a bible buffet. If you use the phrase "King James Only" to accuse someone that agrees with what I am saying, that too highlights that you don't understand the issue. The KJB is the English bible that comes from the correct source text. There were English bibles before it; there have been none after it.

You have the freedom to use a corrupt bible. I started my Christian life using one. If you use the wrong bible, you are not going to understand some of the concepts that are critical to understanding more advanced topics.

A.1 The Prophets or Isaiah?

The simplest example of showing that most other bibles have errors is to use the "Mark 1, 2, 3" test, which means to look at:

Mark 1:2-3	**KJB**
2	As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.
3	The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

This passage quotes two prophets. Verse 2 quotes Malachi 3:1. Verse 3 quotes Isaiah 40:3. However, the *New International Version* (NIV), like many bad bibles, says:

Mark 1:2-3	**NIV**
2 as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" [a]—	
3 "a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" [b]	
footnotes: [a] Malachi 3:1, [b] Isaiah 40:3	

This is a glaring error. The original Greek text is wrong because it has been corrupted. You may feel that you are smart enough to look past problems like this, but there will be other things that you don't know to look past.

If your bible passes this test, then use the "Acts 1, 2, 3, 4" test (Acts 12:3-4).

A.2 Dispensations

It is hard to understand and study dispensations using bibles that don't have the word. Do other bibles have the equivalent of the word? I don't think so, but you can decide for yourself. Let's see the KJB verses that have "dispensation" in them and then the corresponding NIV and *New King James Version* (NKJV). We will see that NIV never translates using the word "dispensation". The NKJV, which is supposedly improving on the KJB, moves away from the word on 2 of the 4 occasions. This obviously does not make sense in the big picture.

1 Corinthians 9:17	
KJB	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.
NIV	If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.
NKJV	For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.

The move to "stewardship" will blur the distinction made between what Luke wrote and what Paul wrote.

Ephesians 1:10	
KJB	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:
NIV	to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.
NKJV	that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

Ephesians 3:2	
KJB	If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward:
NIV	Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you,
NKJV	if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

Colossians 1:25	
KJB	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;
NIV	I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness–
NKJV	of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,

So, the NIV has used different English words in all 4 verses. The NKJV uses "dispensation" twice and "stewardship" twice. The latter makes studying more difficult; the former makes it almost impossible. Most corrupt bibles are like the NIV in their inconsistent translation. Of course, none of these bibles are God's word anyway.

A.3 Covenants and Testaments

We saw in Side Study 9.1 that there was Greek word (G1242) that could be translated as "covenant" or "testament". Many corrupt bibles use a different Greek than the one that the KJB is translated from, but the problem is the same (it is a problem of word choice, not source language). Let's see how some of these bibles confuse doctrine for believers.

2 Corinthians 3:6	
KJB	Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.
NIV	He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
NKJV	who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

We should know that Paul says that we are not under any covenants. But the NIV and NKJV bibles contradict that. It would take some maturity to understand the scripture and translate accordingly.

Hebrews 9:16	
KJB	For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.
NIV	In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it,
NKJV	For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

In this case the NKJV bible chose the word "testament" and got it right. Why didn't the translator get it right before. The NIV danced around the issue by using the word "will". The word "testament" does not appear in the NIV bible. Searching for the word "will" will be quite frustrating since it is a common verb as well as a noun with a different definition than the one used here. It occurs over 1000 times.

A.4 Studying Advanced Bible Topics

Once you have the right bible and you know how to rightly divide, you need to learn how to study and not just read. I'm going to be more helpful here since we will be doing that in this book. I will demonstrate how to study in a few areas of trying to understand an advanced topic.

Ecclesiastes 12:12-13

12 And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books *there is* no end; and much study *is* a weariness of the flesh.
13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man.

Verse 12 tells you that studying is a lot of work; it will wear you out. Verse 13 says that you need to read this whole book and not quit part way through. Next, the bible is going to tell you how to study!

Isaiah 28:9-10

9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *them that are* weaned from the milk, *and* drawn from the breasts.
10 For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little:

In order to grow up (and not be a babe drinking milk), you need to learn how to study topics where the verses are scattered.

1 Corinthians 2:11-14

11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.
12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.
14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

This confirms what *Isaiah* said: we compare spiritual things with spiritual. The bible defines what words mean by context. Sometimes you find the definition of a word elsewhere or by reading a group of verses. The Holy Ghost doesn't give you understanding by simply reading. It gives understanding by reading, re-reading, and further studying. Then the "aha!" moment might come. My explanations might "click in place" for you or they might not. If not, then you have work to do (rather than concluding that I am wrong).

2 Timothy 4:3-4

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
4 And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Babes in Christ have itching ears. They want to be told what to believe and they want those things to be miraculous! They want to be part of the big crowd. But God's word often brings you into isolation from the larger group.

Proverbs 29:1

1 He, that being often reproved hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

As you hear the truth and reject it, you harden your heart. You will see a lot of scriptures in this book. They might not make much sense at first. Studying will cause you to look at the verses in your bible and ponder them over time.

Reference Materials

Completed and draft e-books are available via `https://thechurchoforlando.org`.

[1] *Acts*, Tom Wilson, e-book; First Edition, planned

[2] *American Dictionary of the English Language*, Noah Webster, 1828; commonly called *Webster's Dictionary 1828* (see `https://websterdictionary1828.com`); this dictionary is in the *e-Sword X* application

[3] *Biblical Time*, Tom Wilson, e-book; First Edition, 9/7/25

[4] *How to Study the Bible – Volume 2: Intermediate Topics*, Tom Wilson, e-book; partial Draft Edition, 2/25/26

[5] *How to Study the Bible – Volume 3: Advanced Topics*, Tom Wilson, e-book; partial Draft Edition, 2/3/26

[6] *John*, Tom Wilson, e-book; First Edition, planned

[7] *Matthew*, Tom Wilson, e-book; First Edition, planned

[8] *Resurrection*, Tom Wilson, e-book; Second Edition, Revision A, 1/19/26

[9] *Ruth*, Tom Wilson, e-book; First Edition, Revision B, 3/29/26

[10] *Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*, J. Strong, 1890; this concordance is in the *e-Sword X* application

[11] *The Biblical Angels*, Tom Wilson, e-book; First Edition, Revision A, 9/11/24

[12] *The Biblical Creation*, Tom Wilson, e-book; First Edition, 1/1/24

[13] *The English Bible*, Tom Wilson, e-book; First Edition, 6/3/25

[14] *The Language of Prophecy*, Tom Wilson, e-book; partial Draft Edition, 1/8/26

[15] *The Revelation of God*, Tom Wilson, e-book; Draft Edition, 1/19/25 (first edition coming soon)

Index of Bible Verses

This index of bible verses is provided so that you can quickly find where passages appear. The index is organized by book name. Each book name is followed by an ordered list of chapters, followed by the verse(s) cited. Each reference is followed by the page(s) on which it appears. In the soft copy, the page numbers are hyperlinks. Boldface page numbers, if any, refer to references to verses rather than quoted verses.

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Tom Wilson has assembled numerous scriptures that help you understand what rightly dividing the bible means. There are numerous words and concepts that have both similarities and differences. The simplest example is the word “gospel”. There are different gospels—they are similiar yet different. If you cannot see these distinctions, you will never mature in God’s word.

There is also an extensive index of scripture references so that you can find where certain passages are discussed in the presentation of the topic. All this information is put at your fingertips because God wants his people to know and understand him.

Do you have faith to believe what God says? Or will you be faint and bow to the common traditions? Prove yourself today!

Look for other books in the “Understanding the Bible” series.