

The Gospels

1 Thessalonians 1:5

The previous lesson made the case that Paul's gospel (the Gospel of Grace) was unique and separate from the Gospel of the Kingdom. While the Kingdom good news proclaimed the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom if Israel were to repent and be baptized in faith (Acts 2:37—38), Paul's Gospel of Grace proclaimed the good news of a heavenly hope to all who believe in the person of Jesus Christ and His work on the cross (1 Corinthians 15:1—4). This difference is born out by comparing the commission given to the Disciples and Paul's commission. They were to go to ALL nations with a baptism of repentance and teaching them all the commands taught by Jesus (Matthew 28:18—20) while Paul was to preach a message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:20). Jesus taught many things no longer followed by today's churches claiming to follow the so-called Great Commission such as selling all possessions (Luke 12:33) or obeying those who sit in the seat of Moses (Matthew 23:1—3). Paul actually contradicts Jesus' clear teaching to His Disciples by saying we are free to give what we decide to give (2 Corinthians 9:7) and that we are no longer under Law (Romans 6:14). He also rejected Jesus' command to the Disciples to baptize (1 Corinthians 1:17). How is it even possible that most people think the gospel in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John is the same one preached by Paul?

The Gospel and the Gospel of God

The term "the Gospel" is used over 50 times in the New Testament and the Gospel of God is used eight times. The use of these two terms seems to indicate there is only one Gospel being preached. For instance, Paul says in 1 Thessalonians that he is preaching the Gospel of God (1 Thessalonians 2:9) while Peter says he is preaching the Gospel of God (1 Peter 1:25) and even Mark writes that he is preaching the Gospel of God (Mark 1:1). How is it possible to say Peter and Paul preached different Gospels when it clearly states they were both preaching the Gospel of God?

The simple answer is to ask about the source of the Good News. Did the message preached by Peter come from God? Of course it did. Did the message preached by Paul also from God? Again, the answer is yes. God is the source of both Gospels; they are both the Gospels of God.

To further understand this take a look at Galatians 3:8.

Galatians 3:8 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.

Notice that the Gospel was preached to Abraham. Was Abraham told that he needed to believe that Jesus would die, be buried and rise again the third day? Although there are some who adhere to this belief system, this is not what Abraham's Good News was. By reading to the end of the verse we see his Good News was that in him all nations would be blessed. This is a reference to the coming of Jesus Christ but not to Abraham needing to believe in His death on the cross. The Disciples were clueless about Jesus dying and rising (Luke 18:34) so it would be a real stretch to say that Abraham would need to believe what the Disciples could not understand. It was only after Christ had risen from the dead that the Disciple's minds were opened so they could understand these things (Luke 24:45).

It thus appears that the terms Gospel and Gospel of God are merely generic descriptors of whatever Gospel was being preached at that time. The Gospel being referred to would therefore be defined by the context of the writings. When Gospel is used in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John then one should automatically think Gospel of the Kingdom. When Paul uses the term Gospel he is referring to the Gospel of the Grace of God, a subset of the Mystery revelation.

Gospel of Christ

This is literally the good news of Jesus Christ. Whether speaking in terms of the Millennial Kingdom as revealed through John and the Disciples or of God's Grace as revealed through Paul, Christ is the foundation of both and the common link between both sets of doctrine. Mark is the only writer in the Gospels to use this term in Chapter 1 verse 1. The rest of the occurrences are found in the Pauline Epistles. Paul also uses similar terms such as the Gospel of His Son, Christ's Gospel and Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mark states he is writing about the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This beginning is in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and marks the coming of Jesus Christ as Israel's Messiah. Paul writes about Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection and how that relates to us in the Church, the Body of Christ. These are two completely different programs with the same foundation.

Verses of refutation

Galatians 1:23

There are a couple of verses that are used to "prove" that Paul actually did preach the same Gospel as Jesus and the 12. The first reference is found in one of Paul's earlier books shortly after spending three years in Arabia.

Galatians 1:23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

From Acts 8:1—3 we know Paul (Saul) was on a rampage to crush the growing Kingdom church. Jesus and anyone who believed He was the Messiah were the enemies who needed to be eradicated. He thought he was doing God's will by stamping out these believers. Once he was saved, Paul preached what he was taught by Jesus Christ, the Gospel of Grace.

Believers in the region of Judea knew of Paul's reputation as a fearsome persecutor of the Kingdom church but the rumor they heard was that he is now preaching the same doctrine he once repudiated. This verse does not prove Paul was preaching the same thing as Jesus and the 12 Disciples, only that it was rumored he was doing so.

1 Corinthians 15:11

Another statement spoken by Paul is also used to show he and the Disciples were preaching the same message.

1 Corinthians 15:11 Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

Peter preached that Christ rose from the dead, as did Paul. Peter spoke of Christ's death in terms of a shame to Israel, something they were to repent of (Acts 2:22—38) while Paul gloried in Christ's work on the cross (Galatians 6:14). Both men preached Christ's death but each was preaching a different gospel. Both men had Christ as their foundation but each built their own structure on the one true foundation (Matthew 16:18—19; 1 Corinthians 3:10—11).

Acts 19:8; 20:25

Paul's preaching of the kingdom shakes up some dispensational believers because they don't understand how Paul is using the term. Acts 19:8 and 20:25 both show that Paul did in fact preach the Kingdom of God. This same term is used in the Gospels when speaking of the Millennial Kingdom that will be established on this earth after the Tribulation. Paul uses the Kingdom of God in a broader sense, often referring to the realm of believers (1 Corinthians 6:9; Colossians 1:13). The Kingdom of God is generic encompassing the Millennial Kingdom as well as the realm of Grace saints (the Kingdom of His Son)(Colossians 1:13).

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