

He continues his preaching there, fomenting another assassination plot against him, and flees to Caesarea and then Tarsus (verses 23-30). At this point Peter, who had dominated the first 7 chapters of the Acts, appears back on the Scene, and Saul disappears. In chapter 11 he reappears with Barnabas in Antioch where they spend the next year, it says, teaching among the brethren there. In chapter 13, he and Barnabas are separated by the Holy Ghost from the other disciples, “for the work whereunto I have called them,” and his name is changed from Saul to Paul. From this point on he dominates the rest of the Acts (we only hear from Peter, who had been the prominent figure through the first twelve chapters, one other time, in chapter 15).

The question must arise in the inquiring mind: why has this fellow, Saul (Paul), suddenly taken such a prominent role in things during this tumultuous period of time for the early church? Since he was never in the scheme of things from the beginning, and it was Peter who was given the “keys of the kingdom” (Matt. 16:19), where does he fit into all this?

3

“To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” (4:4,5)  
“Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (5:1,2)

...and later on in the letter to the Ephesians:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. (2:8,9)  
The clear and consistent theme in all these passages is that salvation and justification cannot be obtained by works (the deeds of the law), but only by ceasing from such, and simply believing something, which is:  
“...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures....for our justification.” (1 Corinthians 15:3,4; Romans 4:25)

3

Traditional Christian theology offers at least a couple of stock answers to these questions : 1. He was the replacement for the betrayer, Judas, or the “true” 12th apostle; 2. He was the apostle who would take the gospel (the same message being preached by the 12) to the Gentiles, or the “13th” apostle. While there is no scriptural truth whatsoever in the first assertion, there is in the idea of him being sent to the Gentiles; chapter nine, verse 15 makes this clear. This stance goes astray, however, by presupposing that Paul would be taking the same gospel message to the Gentiles that Peter and the other disciples in the Jerusalem church were preaching to Israel. This is based on the fact that he started out preaching what he later referred to as “the gospel of God” (Romans 1:1-4): that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Acts 9:20-22; Matt. 16:16). Apparently, it is assumed that, because he preached this, he also preached repentance and baptism for salvation (Acts 2:38), even though there is no written record that he did. In Acts 13 it is made evident that the apostle did, indeed, preach something quite different from the Acts 2 message.

4

All this together makes up what the Apostle referred to twelve times in his letters as, “The gospel of Christ.” It is never referred to as such anywhere else in the New Testament, including the four “gospels,” Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. There is a perfectly sound explanation for this: it could not have been revealed before Paul revealed it because he said it was a “mystery:”

The Mystery

“Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.” (Romans 16:25, 26)  
If, as it clearly says in this passage, this gospel was kept a secret until revealed by Paul, it could not have been revealed by the Lord in his earthly ministry, or by the twelve apostles in the first part of the Acts.

4

The Acts 13 Separation, And The Gospel Of Christ

We find in Paul’s letter to the Galatians, chapter 1, verses 17,18, the explanation for the apostle’s absence between Acts 9 and 11. In chapter one of this letter Paul clearly establishes that during this absence he received a gospel that was “not after man... but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:11,12), i.e., he was not taught it by the other apostles. In the Acts we see this message emerge in chapter 13, when he and Barnabas get separated out from the other disciples by the Holy Ghost, “...for the work whereunto I have called them.” (verse 2). That work would be the preaching of the “gospel of Christ” (Romans 1:16), which is revealed in the sermon Paul preaches in Antioch:

5

If it was revealed in those parts of scripture, then Paul is a liar and his letters need to be expunged from the canon of scripture. This would be the honest thing to do, rather than what traditional religious teaching does in its attempt to “blend” Paul’s revelation with the New Testament/Covenant/Kingdom message given to the 12. The fact is, Paul’s revelation isn’t part of the New Testament, nor does it establish a N.T. church: It reveals and establishes a new dispensation wherein a “new man” is being formed.

The Dispensation of Grace

“For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery... that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel...(Ephesians 3:1-3;6)

5

“But he (Jesus) whom God raised again (from the dead), saw no corruption. Be it known to you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” (Acts 13: 37-39).

Contrast this with what Peter preached at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost:

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do (to rectify this situation)? 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.” (Acts 2: 36-38)

6

The Gentiles are to be made fellowheirs, and partakers of his promise in Christ. This is not the case in the New Covenant, where the Gentile Nations will not be fellowheirs, but servants of Israel (see Isaiah 60,61,62; Jeremiah 31). Whereas the New Covenant promises an earthly inheritance, the promises of the dispensation of grace are strictly heavenly (Ephesians 1:3; 2:8). Those who are to be partakers of this heavenly calling—individuals who have trusted in the word of truth (the gospel of Christ)and enjoined by a spiritual baptism (1 Cor. 12:13) into spiritual entity Paul called “the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27), are now called to join together in a new fellowship, referred to as “the one new man....the fellowship of the mystery” (Eph. 2:15; 3:9). The only way this new man could be instituted was to abolish any and all religious observances:

“But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

6