

Salvation for the Belief-Challenged

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1. Why the red letters kept me belief-challenged

In the big, eternal view of life, the universe and everything, the most important thing about you is whether your soul is saved or lost (unsaved). I remained lost for decades, though I was well-acquainted with the words of the earthly Jesus found in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I was seeking the power and presence of God in my life and reasoned that the best place to find directions was in the red letter sayings of God manifest in the flesh as Jesus Christ.

Because of my avoidance of the epistles of the apostle Paul, I was totally missing out on God's power and presence in the church of what's happening now. During an argument with a mid-Acts preacher on February 5th, 2006 - praise the Lord! I saw the light! The obstacles to my belief were removed and my soul was saved. I was 58 years old and had been seeking God for 35 years.

Prior to my magnification of Paul's office, I had been belief-challenged by the current absence of miraculous signs and wonders, ignorant of their close association with God's intended holy nation of priests, Israel.

"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;" (1Cor 1:22-23 AV)

I had been belief-challenged by seeing Calvary as a victory for evil, not realising that it had always been God's hidden or mystery plan (kept secret by not being prophesied) to establish a simple soul-salvation program based upon faith in Christ's finished work at Calvary.

"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:" (Col 1:26 AV)

John the Baptist had preached, solely to the Jews, "repent and be baptised for the kingdom of God is at hand". Peter and the other apostles of the circumcision had later preached to the Jews, "repent and be baptised and you shall receive the Holy Ghost". The spiritual fellowship of the Holy Ghost was the 'kingdom of God' that was preached by John as being 'at hand'. Although the circumcision apostles hoped that the physical and political kingdom would also be restored to Israel at that time, it was not to be. Because of establishment Israel's unworthiness and their rejection of his Holy Ghost, God instead set the unprophesied dispensation of grace loose among the Gentiles.

The risen and glorified Christ saved Paul (then Saul) in Acts chapter nine and during that and subsequent visitations gave him a distinctive gospel to be preached among the Gentiles (non-Jews like me). To Paul it was revealed that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe"

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Corinthians 1:21 AV)

Paul's gospel is not a rehash of John's, the Lord's and the twelve's gospel of the circumcision to the Jews. It is totally centred on salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary. The "power of God unto salvation" - a free gift to all that believe Paul's gospel of Christ.

"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 1:16 AV)

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal 1:11-12 AV)

2. How do you know if you are saved?

Belief that is not superficial

“And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” (Acts 16:26-31 AV)

The Phillipian jailor had been awoken by a God-sent earthquake that had loosed the stocks on the prisoner’s feet and opened the prison doors with supernatural precision. On the verge of taking his own life rather than face the consequences of losing his prisoners, wonder of wonders, the prisoners are all still there and imploring him *not* to take his own life. If you take into account that most Gentiles of the time were deeply superstitious, the Phillipian jailor would have been in an extremely receptive state of mind to whatever these extraordinary strangers had to say.

My first serious attempt to ‘believe on the Lord Jesus Christ’ was about 15 years before I got saved. I read an Open Air Campaigners booklet (I found it in the strings compartment of a second-hand guitar case that I bought) called “The Answer in 20 Minutes” and followed the directions it gave. Among other things I thanked the Lord Jesus for suffering the death I deserved and invited him to become my personal saviour. But I felt that it was all somehow superficial and that nothing had changed. I tried again with different words in different churches but came away with the same sense of the superficiality of my efforts and the results.

Like the Phillipian jailor it took a major crisis, a personal earthquake that brought me to the brink of suicide, before my stale, unbelieving mind could be shaken loose from the concrete it was set in. It was by the grace of God that I was confronted by a staunch, saved, Pauline, mid-Acts, KJV Bible believing preacher while I was in a fairly desperate state of mind. I initially argued with him from my accumulated knowledge about the Bible and spiritual matters. I was well-acquainted with the teachings of the Lord during his earthly ministry but exposed the great yawning gap in my knowledge by minimising Paul’s importance – after all, he hadn’t even met the Lord, said I. The preacher then pointed out that Paul had indeed met the Lord, the risen and glorified Lord, and that his words are of even greater importance than those of the Lord during his earthly ministry - because they are his most recent and because they are directly addressed to us Gentiles.

I thank God that occasionally when arguing with someone I have developed the habit of ‘trying on’ his or her opposing point of view by saying to myself “Maybe he’s right”.

So I 'tried on' the grace preacher's Pauline point of view. God immediately made it abundantly clear that he was indeed right. The earnest of our inheritance, the Holy Spirit, is unmistakable when he comes to dwell within you. A massive reorganisation of my brain's Bible database was set in motion and went on for weeks. Something within me was doing it. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were relegated to the background information section and Romans to Philemon gradually started filling up the foreground. There was an indescribable, dimensional 'depth' difference in my everyday, mundane consciousness and a gentle, spiritual light seemed to emanate from my old King James Bible during our studies in those early weeks.

Hopefully a great personal crisis is not always necessary. But simple, unfeigned belief in Paul's gospel of Christ most certainly is.

Illumination, reproaches and afflictions

The truly saved know they are saved. Our illumination is within - an illumination of belief and understanding - spiritual light but not a spiritual fireworks display. They will most likely have endured reproaches and afflictions *after* they were illuminated. This has been my experience and it seems to be par for the course.

"But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward." (Heb 10:32-35 AV)

Revelation of the mystery - Grace is not a consolation prize

The saved have had a personal revelation of the mystery. We have seen "what is the fellowship of the mystery". My revelation of the mystery came when I was shown from scripture that salvation by grace to those who believe the 'foolishness' of the preaching of the cross, had always been God's hidden plan for redeeming us. He had kept it a secret (a mystery, not prophesied, unsearchable) since the world began.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:" (Eph 3:8-9 AV)

Prior to this I had seen events after Calvary (the preaching of redemption through faith in the crucified Jewish Messiah) as a consolation prize from God because of unforeseen evildoing by his people Israel - his primary purpose being that his Son would be accepted by his people as their Messiah and the world would be blessed through Israel's restored physical/political kingdom. In other words, because of my

ignorance of God's foreknowledge, I had seen Calvary as a victory for evil, not as a victory for God. In fact, I don't think I really believed that the 'preaching of the cross' was from God, but that Christians had dreamed it up to account for God's seeming defeat and his subsequent silence (i.e. no signs and wonders, angels etc. for nearly two thousand years).

When I was shown how the pre-Calvary and post-Calvary dots are connected I came to see that God's offering of salvation by grace was in fact his PRIMARY purpose, and that the restoration of the physical/political kingdom to Israel, though contingent upon the perfect sacrifice of Israel's Messiah, was never on God's agenda for A.D. 33 or thereabouts.

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 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." (Acts 1:6-7 AV)

God had 'slipped one by' the devil's princes of this world.

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1Cor 2:7-8 AV)

The Lord's closest disciples were just as much in the dark regarding God's real purpose as Satan was, in spite of the Lord's suffering and death for the sins of many, his burial and his resurrection on the third day, having been prophesied – his spiteful entreatment and death for the iniquities of many by Isaiah (Isaiah 53) and his burial and resurrection on the third day by the pre-type of the prophet Jonah (Jonah 1:17; 2:10 - 3:2).

"But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 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." (Mat 12:39-40 AV)

"Then he took *unto him* the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge *him*, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." (Luke 18:31-34 AV)

The resurrected, ascended and glorified Lord Jesus Christ made the mystery known to his and our apostle Paul – God’s hitherto unrevealed plan to set Israel aside as the vehicle for his purpose (for a time) and to establish a new creature called the Church, the body of Christ, in which all the people of earth (Jew or Gentile) were equally eligible for membership based solely upon their faith or belief in the gospel of the finished work of redemption performed by the Lord at Calvary.

“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:” (Col 1:24-27 AV)

To receive the Spirit of Christ, the mind of Christ, and to be sealed into an eternal inheritance in heaven, with a glorified, celestial body, is no consolation prize.

“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. 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. 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. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” (I Corinthians 2:12-16 AV)

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 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, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:11-14 AV)

“But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other *grain*: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh *is* not the same flesh: but *there is* one *kind* of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, *and* another of birds. *There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another.” (I Corinthians 15:35-40 AV)

3. Why is it important to be saved?

Getting out of the first Adam and into the last Adam

A sin-cursed planet and a fear-ridden, suffering-plagued human life of three score and ten years (if you're lucky) are the inevitable consequences of our rebellion against our holy and loving God. Though it may seem strange to a Bible non-believer, the ancestors of all of humanity, Adam and Eve, were initially without suffering, sin and death. No suffering. No sin. No death. No sin-cursed planet. God had set in motion a great program that might be called "Righteousness and Eternal Life on the Beautiful, Peaceful, Planet of the Humans".

He warned Adam and Eve that disobedience to his solitary requirement of them would bring death into the picture.

"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." (Gen 2:17 AV)

Eve's disobedience brought greater sorrow upon all women and subservience to their husbands.

"Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." (Gen 3:16 AV)

Adam's disobedience brought sin, suffering and mortality upon us all, and a sin-curse upon the planet.

"And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Gen 3:17-19 AV)

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" (Rom 5:12 AV)

At his appointed time, God sent his Son into the world to provide fallen humanity with a way back to righteousness and eternal life – a way of redemption or salvation for fallen humankind.

"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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:16-17 AV)

“For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” (Rom 5:17-19 AV)

“For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom 6:23 AV)

From a heavenly perspective, each soul is either in Adam or Christ (the last Adam).

“For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” (1Cor 15:21-23 AV)

“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit.” (1Cor 15:45 AV)

Condemned no more. Justified and righteous.

We are no longer under sin’s death sentence. Saved souls are justified by faith, are at peace with God and made the righteousness of God in Christ.

“And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” (Rom 4:22-25 AV)

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:” (Rom 5:1 AV)

“*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Rom 8:1-2 AV)

“For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2Cor 5:21 AV)

Spiritual power

We are no longer powerless with regard to behaviour which formerly controlled us, such as alcohol, drug and sex addiction.

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.” (Rom 6:14-15 AV)

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” (1Cor 6:9-12 AV)

Pure conscience

Our conscience is purified.

“Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.” (Tit 1:15 AV)

Delivered from fear

We are released from bondage to the spirit of fear.

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (2Tim 1:7 AV)

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Heb 2:14-15 AV)

Adopted children and joint-heirs with Christ of God

We are God's adopted children.

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then

heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom 8:14-17 AV)

Spiritual light – illumination, enlightenment

We are translated into the spiritual kingdom of God's dear Son.

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son:" (Col 1:12-13 AV)

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," (Eph 1:18 AV)

"But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;" (Heb 10:32 AV)

Members of Christ's body

We are members, not of Israel, but of God's new creature, the body of Christ.

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1Cor 12:27 AV)

"Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2Cor 5:17 AV)

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." (Gal 6:15 AV)

Patience and endurance through tribulation

We are able to cheerfully endure all manner of tribulation that is to be expected on this sin-cursed planet ruled by Satan.

"And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Rom 5:3-5 AV)

"*We are* troubled on every side, yet not distressed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;" (2Cor 4:8-9 AV)

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;” (2Cor 4:17 AV)

“Great *is* my boldness of speech toward you, great *is* my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.” (2Cor 7:4 AV)

Resurrection and eternal life

Though our earthly bodies will die we can look forward to eternity in heaven with a new, incorruptible, glorified body.

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?” (1Cor 15:51-55 AV)

4. Why is being lost not a good thing?

Blinded to the truth by the god of this world

Only the truth can make you free. The truth about our relationship with our creator and our situation here on this planet, is only presented by the God-inspired writers of the Bible.

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32 AV)

Science is a wonderful thing and much is learned by scientific techniques. But scientists (and just about everybody else) work on the assumption that some mad, blind force of nature has managed to create this extraordinary universe with intelligent (and at times sensitive and loving) beings such as ourselves and an earthly habitat tailored to our needs.

Intellectual pride keeps us from seeing that our creator is necessarily far more intelligent than us and has chosen to communicate with certain individuals and instructed them to write what he said in a book. God has signified his approval of most of these individuals with wondrous prophetic power and miracles.

If much of the Bible seems like a far-fetched fantasy, only fit for eccentrics or gullible fools, then the ‘god of this world’ (Satan, the devil) has succeeded in blinding your mind and keeping you lost.

*“Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44 AV)*

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” (2Cor 4:3-4 AV)

Spiritual darkness

The lost are living in spiritual darkness.

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” (John 3:19-21 AV)

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8 AV)

"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." (1Cor 2:14 AV)

Futile reliance on good works

Salvation is a gift of God – it cannot be earned or achieved. Many lost souls are religious people who believe that good works will put them in good standing with God and get them into heaven when they die. Regular church attendance, tithing, unselfish social work, being good and kind etc., are good things in themselves, but only faith in God's provision for salvation - the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary, is acceptable to God. That is all he asks of us and all he will accept.

"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." (Eph 2:8-9 AV)

Candidates for first and second death

Lost souls remain in Adam and therefore in sin and subject to the sin-penalty, death. Though it seems harsh, simple oblivion after death is not an option. Their souls will be resurrected and subjected to the second death - eternal damnation in hell. (I didn't make the rules!) And if hell isn't bad enough just wait until it is cast into the lake of fire.

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Mat 10:28 AV)

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Mat 25:46 AV)

"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." (Luke 16:23-25 AV)

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev 20:13-15 AV)

5. How does a lost soul become a saved soul?

A lost soul becomes a saved soul by hearing the gospel of Christ and believing it.

*“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.”
(Rom 1:16 AV)*

The whole salvation formula is contained in Romans 1:16 above.

Question: What is the power of God unto salvation?

Answer: The gospel of Christ to every one that believeth.

And what is the gospel of Christ?

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:” (1Cor 15:1-4 AV)

Unfeigned Bible belief

Because the gospel of Christ is totally related to and inseparable from the rest of God’s word, it would seem to be impossible to truly believe the gospel unless you become a Bible believer. Becoming an unfeigned Bible believer is incredibly difficult in the 21st century.

We don’t find it too difficult to believe that Jesus Christ was a great prophet or even the greatest spiritually enlightened teacher that ever lived. But can we believe that he was ‘God manifest in the flesh’ – fully God and fully man, in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily?

We can study the sayings of Jesus as a part of our pursuit of spiritual wisdom, but to simply believe that the Lord has already accomplished everything necessary for our salvation doesn’t leave any room for us to boast of our spiritual attainment.

We can patronise the Bible’s version of creation by making it allegorical or by twisting it into alignment with the latest scientific discoveries, but can we abandon our Darwinian and ‘13 billion year-old universe’ ideas and accept that God’s ways are as far beyond our understanding as our ways are beyond the understanding of a goldfish?

In the next few chapters I will do the best I can to help you overcome some, hopefully all, of your Bible scepticism.

6. Obstacles to Bible belief

Nature, Love – the new names for God

I watched a TV documentary in which scientists described how their development of a mechanical human hand, at a cost of millions of dollars, was only about half as effective as the one that *nature* made. Do they realise the extraordinary intelligence that they are crediting nature with? They are willing to humble themselves before nature but they studiously avoid the word God. Christianity is a foolish sideshow to most scientists – a crutch for lesser minds than theirs. Yet it was the Word of God that made the human hand.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (John 1:1-3 AV)

One of the thought pioneers of my baby boomer generation was John Lennon. He believed in love but did not believe in Christ. Yet the apostle John declared that God is love and the apostle Paul said that love is the fulfilling of the law.

“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” (1)John 4:8-9 AV)

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Rom 13:10 AV)

Alcoholics Anonymous has been very successful at getting drunks off the booze with a spiritual program of action. Members are encouraged to establish a relationship with God ‘as they understand him’. We would be seriously underestimating the compassion and longsuffering of our living God if we thought him too rigid to respond to the prayers of someone who is sincerely seeking him among the bewildering array of gods that are on offer today. Though many members come to trust in the God of the Bible, almost all are very bristly about a God of any kind at first.

Most scientists, artists and recovering drunks have gone to great lengths to avoid association with the God of Christianity. Something has blinded them to the love of God and the glorious gospel of Christ.

“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” (2Cor 4:4 AV)

How does Satan blind minds?

The god of this world blinds the minds of them that are lost. Just how does he do this? Most people think the devil is to be found in bars and at AC/DC rock concerts. But

that is not where he focuses his efforts. In order to be the god of this world, Satan (the father of all lies) has to infiltrate and corrupt the truth wherever it manifests.

Satan had successfully occupied Moses' seat in the Jewish religion by the time their Messiah arrived. Establishment Israel's lawyers, scribes and Pharisees were nearly all in the devil's employ. They were the target of the Lord's most bitter attacks during his earthly ministry.

*"Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not."
(Mat 23:1-3 AV)*

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Mat 23:29-33 AV)

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44 AV)

This was no accident. This is a demonstration of how Satan works. The seat of religious truth, the religious establishment, is most sought after by the liars, the money worshippers, the mean-spirited, proud and overtly pious lovers of prestige – those who serve Satan.

Satan switches from Judaism to Christianity

Satan was quick to see when God set aside Israel and went to the Gentiles with the gospel of Christ. His first tactic was to try and stop the apostle of the Gentiles by killing him. And who did he use to accomplish this? A quick browse through the book of Acts from chapter 13 onwards will inform you that the same people that killed the Lord and Stephen, establishment Israel, were Paul's main attackers. But Paul had a commission from God and even Satan was unable to stop it.

Satan could not stop the spread of the truth of the gospel so his next tactic was to infiltrate and corrupt the Christian establishment. He has done a very thorough job. Millions of non-establishment Christians were martyred by the establishment Roman Catholic Christian church up until around the 17th century. The truth came to light again for a while with Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation and the printing and distribution of Bibles so that ordinary folk could read them. Our authorized King

James Bible spread throughout the world. It was such a successful agent for truth that Satan has been discrediting it and replacing it with supposedly superior translations since the late 19th century.

Satan moved on Protestantism and has done a great job of disintegrating it into thousands of denominations which agree on very little and spend most of their energies in claiming they are the only true Christianity and attacking the other 'false' denominations. He has turned focus away from the Bible in the big protestant denominations and led them into a worldly liberalism that totally discredits them as representatives of God.

That is the most obvious way that Satan blinds the minds of the lost today. He has discredited Christianity and given those on the outside plenty of reasons to stay away. A similar situation to that of the Jewish religion of the first century now exists in much of the Christian religious establishment.

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." (2 Corinthians 11:13-15 AV)

But its not all bad news. God is not an automaton. He knows what's going on. He knows that Christendom is largely in Satan's clutches and I believe he takes this into account when dealing with those who have become violently opposed to 'religion'. He hears all sincere prayer and can lead even the most anti-religious of us into knowing him and acknowledging his Son's work on our behalf.

There are still many fellowships of genuine believers and the authorized King James Bible has not been entirely phased out. You can still get a copy. If you are serious about knowing God then get an established Christian to pray to him on your behalf. He will pray to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. You may well be astonished at God's response. You don't even need to find a Christian that you know or like. God will respond to the prayer of a Christian stranger that you don't like personally. Doesn't matter.

Young Earth, Angels, Adam & Eve etc.

These days anyone who believes that we humans have 'devolved from the Garden of Eden' over 6000 years rather than 'evolved from primordial ooze' over millions of years, is labeled as having gone too far with Bible belief, or less kindly, as a religious fanatic or nutter. Schools won't allow such ridiculous teachings.

The Biblical version of creation requires us to think outside the square of what is possible according to current scientific understanding. God's ways are beyond our understanding and that is to be expected of us creatures when considering our Creator.

“Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter’s clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?” (Isa 29:16 AV)

Can you believe this?

- The word of God created heaven and earth and all things therein in six days. He created a fully-matured, intelligent, speaking, human couple in the Garden of Eden here on earth only 6000 years ago.
- His heavenly creation included a great host of immortal beings called angels. They do not breed, though fallen angels somehow managed to mate with human females producing offspring that were a corruption of God’s creation and necessitated his destroying most life on earth by a great flood.

Angels have spiritual bodies (not wispy ghosts – they can be as ‘solid’ as flesh), are rarely visible to us and normally stay in heaven, though when they visit earth they usually appear to humans as men dressed in bright, white clothing. Unfallen angels praise and serve God voluntarily as messengers, guardians, soldiers and dealers of death and destruction on a grand scale.

Seraphim and cherubim are the highest in the hierarchy of angels. Seraphim have hands, feet and six wings but only use two to fly. Cherubim have two wings, hands, feet and two or four faces. Though these are Biblical descriptions, angels can most likely transform their appearance at will.

- The current sin-cursed earth is nowhere near as peaceful and beautiful as it once was and has fallen as a result of the first human couple being beguiled by Satan and letting God down. Satan was once Lucifer - a very powerful cherub who pridefully rebelled against his Creator with the aim of becoming as God. He is currently transformed into an angel of light and is the usurper god of this world.

Would you sit around watching paint dry for thirteen billion years?

God’s creation of heaven, earth and everything therein was quick and quite recent. Even if science has the thirteen billion years since the big bang fairly right by our current way of measuring time and the speed of light etc., why would an all-powerful God bother sitting around ‘watching paint dry’ for thirteen billion (-6000) years? He may well have ‘booted’ the universe 13 billion (-6000) years ago and fast-forwarded events (x 13 billion) to the really interesting part where he created a creature that could think for itself, talk, relate to him, have dominion and multiply.

God was there and scientists, archaeologists, anthropologists, biologists, cosmologists, physicists etc. were not.

“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.” (Job 38:4 AV)

Science ignores our Creator

Though the Bible version of events may seem naïve and strange when compared with science's latest version, this is because scientists must adhere to strict disciplines of proof that necessarily exclude an unseen but sovereign and all-powerful God from their ongoing, changing explanations. If and when scientists stumble onto an infinitely intelligent, all-powerful, all-seeing Super Being, to whom this universe is as a fishbowl is to us – then they will have to do some really serious upgrading of their theories.

“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.” (Acts 17:24-28 AV)

God the programmer, programming language and program

Our own technology is showing us new possibilities that make God's six-day creation, by commands alone, more plausible. The virtual universes and avatars of computer games are created by programmers using words - not ordinary words but words of power or commands. In skilful hands the commands of a programming language can make a populated virtual universe out of unseen binary code.

The word of God made this universe out of things that are not seen – the binary code of the universe.

“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:” (Rom 1:20 AV)

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that **things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.**” (Heb 11:3 AV)

What is the binary code of the universe? From my layman's understanding of sub-atomic physics I have gathered that the smallest, unseen building blocks of creation are waves and particles. Observational science (the genuine science that observes God's creation rather than speculative science which tends to exclude God) has shown that a particle can be a wave and that a wave can be a particle. So they coined the term wavicles. The universe at the sub-atomic, unseen level is binary and therefore programmable. Each of our senses (sight, hearing etc.) has been designed to experience creation within a particular range of binary wavicle vibration. Light is a

faster wavicle vibration than sound so our eyes see and our ears hear. The universe is programmable and it has a programmer who is also a programming language.

God the programming language is his Son.

“And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, **who created all things by Jesus Christ:**” (Ephesians 3:9 AV)

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, **by whom also he made the worlds;**” (Heb 1:1-2 AV)

“Through faith we understand that **the worlds were framed by the word of God**, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” (Heb 11:3 AV)

The Son of God is the Word of God “by whom also he made the worlds”. God did not utilise a programming language as such – his Son (his Word) IS a living and all-powerful programming language. He commands and it is so.

God’s program is his predestinated purpose.

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.” (Romans 8:28 AV)

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:” (Ephesians 1:11 AV)

“According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:” (Ephesians 3:11 AV)

“Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” (2 Timothy 1:9 AV)

Where does the third person of God, the Holy Spirit, fit into this concept? Well, from my experience the Holy Spirit overshadows and quickens my spirit. If I see myself as an avatar in a programmed universe then I must see the Spirit of God as being the Programmer himself intervening in my consciousness from his ‘workstation’ in heaven. Believing his Son (his Word) and having his Word residing and activated in my heart, puts me into his purpose and puts his purpose into me.

Perhaps my mother was onto the virtual nature of life, the universe and everything when she sang to me as a child – “Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream, merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream”

God spoke to Moses

Ancient cultures all had their creation stories and some are similar to the Bible version of events as recorded by Moses. Perhaps Moses just borrowed creation stories from other cultures and elaborated on the myths around at the time. We know he spent his early life in the midst of Egyptian culture after being rescued as a baby by Pharaoh’s daughter.

But the Bible tells us that at times God audibly speaks to his people – with such clarity that young Samuel thought Eli was calling him.

“That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here *am* I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth. And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.”
(1Sam 3:4-11 AV)

We know that God spoke to Moses on many occasions.

“And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here *am* I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy ground. Moreover he said, I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.” (Ex 3:4-6 AV)

“With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” (Numbers 12:8 AV)

Moses got the history of creation directly from the Creator himself.

First and last Adam

The most compelling reason I have to believe that Adam and Eve are my distant ancestors, is the evidence of my own salvation experience which came about because of my faith in the death, burial and resurrection of the last Adam – the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” (1Cor 15:45 AV)

I know that the fall of the first Adam (and my sharing in that fall) must be true because I was ‘made alive’ in Christ, the last Adam.

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1Cor 15:22 AV)

The Incarnation

People find it difficult to believe that God entered into his creation via a virgin birth, interacted with us for a while, was killed and buried and then arose from death and returned to heaven, after spending some more time with those who had believed he was who he said he was.

Many think that the earthly Jesus Christ was just a really good bloke who got killed for his trouble or maybe, more generously, they will grant him the status of a great prophet or a spiritually-enlightened one. None of these ideas are good enough. For the kind of faith required to save a soul it is necessary to be totally comfortable with his being God manifest in the flesh.

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” (1Tim 3:16 AV)

Programmer as avatar

Returning to the crude analogy of a computer game’s virtual universe - why should it be more difficult for God to manifest as a person in his universe than it is for a player to manifest as an avatar in a computer game’s programmed world? If the guy who actually designed and programmed the computer game (and the computer) appeared incognito as an avatar in his own game, you can bet he could do some stuff that no ordinary avatar could do. The miracles of the earthly Lord were not difficult for him. Nor are they difficult to explain when you grasp who he was.

God’s word is the Word who created heaven and earth and manifested among us as Jesus Christ - the second person of our triune God.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1 AV)

“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.” (John 1:10 AV)

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14 AV)

“And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:” (Eph 3:9 AV)

“Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;” (Hebrews 1:2 AV)

Christian faith is foolishness

God’s saving gospel may seem like foolishness to you.

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” (1Cor 1:18 AV)

It is likely that God in his wisdom placed his saving gospel in what seems like foolishness so that the proud, wise and mighty would be excluded from salvation.

“For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I *am*, and none else beside me.” (Isa 47:10 AV)

“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” (Mat 11:25 AV)

“Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” (1Cor 1:20-21 AV)

“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and

things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence." (1Cor 1:25-29 AV)

Being willing to trust in what seems like foolishness requires faith. Faith is required to please God. He rewards those who believe he exists and diligently seek him.

"But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."
(Heb 11:6 AV)

If you find the preaching of the cross foolishness then you may be placing yourself beyond salvation. Good luck. Don't complain later, when you're in eternal torment, that nobody warned you.

If Bible belief makes me a fool in the eyes of the world, so be it. It is a small price to pay for eternal life. God's ways are beyond my understanding - or Einstein's for that matter.

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." (1Cor 3:18 AV)

The door to heaven

Returning once again to the crude analogy of avatars and programmed computer game universes. (I am not trying to suck up to the current generation by harping on about this particular analogy. There is simply no other analogy which fits so well.) The avatars can often receive greater powers, or advance to a new and better universe, by finding the right door or picking up a particular, often inconspicuous item lying about the place. The programmers of the game have set in place objects which trigger great power and transform the avatar and the universe he occupies.

God has placed the 'door to heaven' in plain view. Those who enter will be saved - with all the aforementioned gifts that salvation brings.

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." (John 10:9 AV)

The door has been preached to the whole world but very few have entered. Why isn't the whole world crowding through it? The main reasons are those that have kept people away from the beginning. God in his wisdom required the Gentiles to believe something that seemed like foolishness to them (the resurrection from the dead among other things), and the Jews to believe the blasphemous idea that their Messiah manifested in the flesh as a humble Nazarene who would not even produce a sign for them on demand.

"The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it

is evening, ye say, *It will be* fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, *It will be* foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not *discern* the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.” (Mat 16:1-4 AV)

“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;” (1Cor 1:22-23 AV)

There are many other reasons why people do not believe the gospel of Christ today. I think it is safe to assume that the ‘god of this world’ is behind them all. Many of the largest Christian denominations have agendas which would be adversely affected should people find out just how simple salvation really is. Other spiritual teachings offer greater mysticism, or militancy or austerity or emphasis on financial gain than the plain old Christianity of our childhoods.

I spent decades going down what seemed like more attractive spiritual paths. The door to heaven had been in plain view since my childhood yet I became ashamed of it and thought it foolishness for most of my life.

The Bible is confusing and contradictory and where have all the miracles gone?

If you want to be a Bible believer but find the Bible confusing and contradictory in places, and are maybe disappointed at the current absence of spectacular miracles like the dead being raised, the sick being healed and believers walking on water, then this is your lucky day. If you can grasp the fundamentals of progressive revelation, mid-Acts dispensationalism and right division, you can become a fully-fledged Bible believer and a saved soul.

Becoming a Bible believer

You can become a Bible believer by learning how to **rightly divide** God’s word of truth;

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2Tim 2:15 AV)

by becoming a **dispensationalist**;

“If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:” (Eph 3:2 AV)

“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;” (Col 1:25 AV)

and by seeing that the Bible is a book describing **progressive revelation** by God.

*“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;”*
(Heb 1:1-2 AV)

These three clarifying conceptual tools, used in conjunction, will transform the Bible from a collection of confusing and contradictory fragments into a clear, orderly, interwoven and perfect whole.

First get a copy of the Holy Spirit-approved word of God

The Holy Spirit wrote the Bible and all saved believers are indwelt by that same Holy Spirit – the third person of our triune God.

“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” (2Cor 3:3 AV)

The Holy Spirit has clearly and unmistakably indicated to me which Bible to use - the authorised King James Bible. Since being saved I have been astonished at the simultaneity of my sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit with my study of the words on the pages of my authorised King James Bible. That is all the Bible approval I need. Although it is clearly a personal experience, I have talked to other saved KJV Bible-believers who concur.

I have understandably been greatly influenced by the views of more established believers who passed on their understanding of mid-Acts dispensationalism to me. It so happens that both of my teachers were in the staunch ‘King James Only’ camp and I attempted to get on board with their reasoning. But the scholarly reasons for and against the various source texts are way beyond my degree of scholarship (and outside my sphere of interest) so I have opted to trust the Holy Spirit instead. No doubt the scholars will mock me and say “does he think he has the Holy Spirit within him?”, and in so saying they convict themselves of not believing their own salvation.

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” (Rom 8:14 AV)

*“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”* (1Cor 2:9-10 AV)

“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.” (1Cor 2:11 AV)

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” (1Cor 12:7 AV)

This stance amends some of my earlier comments, which were a mere parroting of my teacher’s views, and keeps open the possibility that there are other Bibles out there that also have the Holy Spirit’s approval.

7. Progressive Revelation and the Revelation of the Mystery

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;”
(Hebrews 1:1-2 AV)

God has revealed new information over time which has augmented and sometimes superseded the information he gave out previously.

- Adam had no real idea of the extraordinary consequences of disobeying God and listening to his wife. God revealed them after the deed was done.
- The law was not revealed in Abraham’s time. It was revealed hundreds of years later through Moses.
- Moses did not reveal the Messianic kingdom prophecies that God revealed through later prophets like Isaiah and Zechariah.
- The prophesied redeemer was manifest in due course.

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:” (Job 19:25 AV)

“But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”
(1Pet 1:19-21 AV)

- Paul was trying to stamp out Peter’s little flock of believers until the Lord revealed that he had other plans for him.

“Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” (Acts 9:13-16 AV)

- Peter was not keen on visiting the house of an ‘unclean’ Gentile (Cornelius) as late as Acts chapter 10. He agreed to go after God revealed to him in a trance that the Gentiles had been cleansed.

“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." (Acts 10:28 AV)

The revelation of the mystery

God had the mystery in mind before he created heaven and earth. It was a mystery in the sense that it was hidden. It was not, and could not, be revealed to any prophet prior to the crucifixion. If the devil's earthly princes had known that God's plan was to offer salvation by grace through faith in the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord, they would not have crucified him.

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1Cor 2:7-8 AV)

"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," (Rom 16:25 AV)

The earthly Lord knew about the mystery - he was God manifest in the flesh. But even the need for him to die for the sins of many, be buried and rise again on the third day, was hid from his disciples. Though these things had been prophesied, they were hid from his disciples (and Satan).

"Then he took *unto him* the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge *him*, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." (Luke 18:31-34 AV)

The introduction of the mystery

Acts 7 - the setting aside of Israel

Although the revelation of the mystery came later, with the benefit of hindsight it is possible to backtrack and see when the Lord actually started introducing it. Most mid-Acts dispensationalists agree that the mystery program (the Lord's hidden eternal purpose since before the world began) began to be introduced here on earth soon after Israel's rejection of the Holy Spirit - made abundantly clear by their stoning of Stephen, 'full of the Holy Ghost' (Acts 7). God's setting aside of Israel as a vehicle for his purpose (a key component of the mystery) most likely occurred at that moment.

"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." (Matthew 12:31 AV)

Acts 9 – the mystery apostle and the salvation by grace of an enemy

Soon after this the Lord saved his mystery apostle Paul (Acts 9). I call Paul the Lord's mystery apostle, not only because the Lord revealed the mystery to him, but also because the Lord already had his twelve apostles. Why did he need another one? I believe the precedent for this was established during the Lord's earthly ministry. His apostles and disciples were selected because they had the potential to be filled with new teachings.

"And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved." (Luke 5:37-38 AV)

To launch a new dispensation to both Gentiles and Jews, the Lord required a new wine bottle. Paul was the perfect candidate – staunch, young and highly educated in the scriptures, fluent in the Hebrew and Greek languages and a Roman citizen. But he was also the most energetic and aggressive persecutor of the Lord's Spirit-filled flock. So the Lord saved his worst enemy by his first exercise of irresistible grace. Call me a Calvinist but what else was it? One minute Paul is breathing out threatenings and slaughter and charging toward Damascus to arrest any of the Lord's disciples he could find and bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. The next minute he is meekly submitting to that same Lord.

"And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." (Acts 9:1-6 AV)

This glorious manifestation from heaven instilled in Paul an almighty fear of the Lord and he remained the Lord's faithful servant until his death.

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16 AV)

"The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the

holy is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10 AV)

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:" (2 Timothy 4:6-7 AV)

Paul referred to his salvation as being the first of its kind when he used the words "me first" in his first letter to Timothy

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it **ignorantly in unbelief**. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 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." (1 Timothy 1:12-16 AV)

Taking note of the exact wording around Paul's "me first" pattern is critical. Paul's salvation was not the first example of Jesus Christ shewing forth mercy toward sinners. He could not claim to be the first sinner to have obtained mercy. Above eight thousand souls had been saved prior to Paul and they were all sinners because all have sinned.

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41 AV)

"Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand." (Acts 4:4 AV)

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Romans 3:23 AV)

Paul's salvation is a "me first" pattern of Jesus Christ shewing forth all longsuffering toward **ignorant** and **unbelieving** sinners. Since the Holy Spirit was first poured out on the apostles on the day of Pentecost, all who had received it were believers who had gladly received – they had received voluntarily. They had become believers and gladly repented and were baptised on the strength of the preaching of Peter's little flock and the wonders and signs that were regularly occurring. They were not ignorant and they were not unbelieving. They were deserving to a greater or lesser extent.

Paul was not a willing volunteer but a rebel. Paul was a self-righteous Pharisee who thought he could see. (Perhaps the Lord was making this point to Paul when he blinded him for three days).

"And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." (John 9:40-41 AV)

"Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." (Acts 26:5 AV)

Yet the Lord saved him by grace through faith, without works, because he rebelled in ignorance and unbelief. (Don't we all?) The thousands saved prior to Paul got saved by their choice and works. Paul got saved by God's choice in spite of his works. But God hath chosen

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;" (1 Corinthians 1:27 AV)

GRACE = UNMERITED FAVOUR. Paul's salvation is the first salvation by grace alone, without works.

"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." (Ephesians 2:8-9 AV)

Ok. So the Lord saved Paul by grace but where was the faith coming from? Paul was an unbeliever.

"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." (1 Timothy 1:13 AV)

The answer to this seeming riddle is contained in scriptures such as the following. (This important distinction between faith **IN** Jesus Christ and the faith **OF** Jesus Christ has been lost in many modern translations.)

"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:" (Romans 3:22 AV)

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the **faith of Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the **faith of Christ**, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Galatians 2:16 AV)

Believers are saved by grace through the faith **OF** Christ. But they must first be believers. At what point did Paul become a believer? Paul became a believer when the risen and glorified Lord appeared unto him. His ignorance of the deity of Christ was addressed by a personal deific appearance. He became a believer on the road to Damascus and received the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, three days later. (Why did

Paul have to wait three days? I believe the Lord did this to drive home to this spiritually blind Pharisee his declaration of John 9:40-41 above, and to deeply approve Paul's apostleship of the new dispensation with a type of his own death, burial and resurrection.) After three days, when he received the Spirit of Christ, he was saved by the faith OF Jesus Christ. (Paul had not been ignorant and unbelieving regarding the then existing scriptures and the law of Moses. He was ignorant and unbelieving that Jesus Christ was and is the fulfilment of both.)

So the sequence of events in salvation by grace through faith (based upon my own experience and to the best of my understanding,) is as follows:

1. Ignorant and unbelieving sinner (like Paul)
2. Ignorance is dealt to (in Paul's case by glorious appearing of the Lord)
3. The sinner, no longer ignorant, is a believer, and is immediately (3 days later in Paul's case) indwelt by the Spirit of Christ and "in Christ"; justified by grace through the faith OF Christ - the faith of he who died for his enemies (ignorant and unbelieving sinners).

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." (Romans 5:10 AV)

Other aspects of Paul's salvation were clearly *not* a pattern for us who have been saved since. The Lord did not deal to my ignorance and unbelief with a personal visitation or even a vision. I did not receive the Holy Spirit after three days of blindness through water baptism and the laying on of hands (as Paul did). The Holy Spirit came into my heart during an argument with a grace preacher – precisely at the moment I conceded that perhaps Paul was my apostle. I had been ignorant of the Lord's revelations to Paul and that Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles. Once my ignorance was dealt to, belief became possible. Once I believed I was saved by grace through the faith OF Jesus Christ.

I had been seeking a long time, and I had found. I had knocked a long time and the door was opened. I cannot say if I was saved due to irresistible grace. Perhaps I was ordained to eternal life or perhaps I just persisted and got lucky. I can say that it was unexpected and that my faith took on a whole new dimension with the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48 AV)

Acts 10 – Gentile inclusion and the power of the preaching of the cross

The Lord's next move was to send Peter to the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10), after revealing to him that uncircumcised Gentiles were now on equal terms with the Jews before God. God would soon reveal to Peter that the baptism with the Holy Ghost was

not exclusive to Jews. He had broken down the middle wall of partition and made the Gentiles nigh.

“And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” (Acts 10:15 AV)

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” (Acts 10:34-35 AV)

“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 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.” (Acts 10:44-45 AV)

“And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” (Acts 11:15-18 AV)

The above scriptures make it quite clear that this was the first occurrence of Gentiles receiving the Holy Ghost. I am speaking here of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, sent by the Lord from heaven after his ascension, and first poured out on the Jewish believers on the day of Pentecost. To be baptised with the post-Pentecostal Holy Ghost is to be baptised into the Lord's death, burial and resurrection – i.e. to be washed by the Lord's death, burial and resurrection. (Don't be confused by the various names that the Holy Spirit is referred to. Lots of names but the same Spirit – the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of truth.)

“I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” (Mark 1:8 AV)

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection:” (Rom 6:3-5 AV)

“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor 6:11 AV)

This was not the Holy Spirit’s ministry in Old Testament times so if there were any Spirit-filled Gentiles prior to Calvary, they don’t count.

I am convinced that the Lord’s timing of Peter’s visit with Cornelius, being right after Paul’s salvation, is greatly significant. Paul was to become the Lord’s apostle of the Gentiles and he would need the approval of kingdom-keys carrying Peter to give his Gentile apostleship legitimacy. In due course Peter and the other apostles of the circumcision gave their approval to Paul’s Gentile apostleship.

“But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) 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.” (Gal 2:7-9 AV)

The Lord went to great lengths to arrange the encounter between Peter and Cornelius – as great as or greater than any God-arranged meeting in the Bible. First he gave Cornelius a vision:

“He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.” (Acts 10:3-6 AV)

Then he gave Peter a vision to ensure he would visit the house of an ‘unclean’ Gentile. Though Peter was initially unclear as to what the vision meant, the arrival of Gentiles from Cornelius at the gate helped him to understand it:

“Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate,” (Acts 10:17 AV)

The risen and glorified Lord’s direct interference in the course of events, as recorded in Acts chapters 9 and 10, was brief, concise and economical – he did only what was necessary to ensure the establishment and spread of the Christian Church among the Gentiles.

Most mid-Acts teachers would disagree with my introductory point for these mysteries. Their main objection would probably be that Cornelius heard and believed Peter's preaching - therefore his salvation (which astonished the Jews who were present) did not signify that anything new had started and that Cornelius and his gathering of kinfolk and near friends were merely saved into Peter's little flock - believing Israel, not the body of Christ. Methinks that some get carried away with dividing (rightly or wrongly). God at no time had two separate bodies of believers. (See Chapter 11 - 'Rightly dividing Israel and the Christian Church'.)

The mystery was not revealed to Paul until much later but it seems clear from the scriptural evidence that the revelation of the mystery lagged behind the actual introduction of the mystery. At least two of the mystery revelations were introduced by the Lord with the saving of Cornelius and his gathering; the mystery of the Gentiles being fellowheirs of the promise of Christ, and the mystery of the gospel - the power of the preaching of the cross.

Two chapters before in Acts 8, Samaritans had required the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Ghost - 'apostolic mediation' as C.I. Scofield put it.

*"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." (Acts 8:14-17 AV)*

One chapter back in Acts 9 our apostle Paul was filled with the Holy Ghost, through the laying on of hands and water baptism, three days after his blinding encounter with the risen and glorified Lord. (The three days have God-given death and resurrection significance and mark Paul out as a very important servant of the Lord. Saul the persecutor of the Lord died on the road to Damascus. He was born of the Spirit three days later.)

*"And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." (Acts 9:17-18 AV)*

No such mediation was required in the saving of Cornelius and his gathering who were saved way before Peter could get them into a tank of water or lay hands on them. *Hands-off, dry baptism of Gentiles* - things had changed; God's dispensation had changed. It is clear from the context that God was 'ringing the changes'. He had just recruited his mystery apostle Paul and his next move was to bring his kingdom keys-carrying chief apostle Peter up to date.

Peter and the other believing Jews with him were aware that they had just witnessed the first occurrence of Gentiles receiving the Holy Ghost but they were not aware that they had just witnessed the first occurrence of people being saved by the power of the preaching of the cross alone. By simply telling the story of the events concerning Jesus Christ, Peter had of course told them that the Lord had been slain and had been raised up by God on the third day, and that through his name whosoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins. By simply relating to others the events that had occurred, Peter had quite inadvertently 'preached the cross'. Cornelius and his gathering believed what they heard and were saved.

"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. 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: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; 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. 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. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:38-43 AV)

Peter's tidings covered the same main points as what was to become Paul's gospel declared in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. The Lord gave Paul the full revelation of the mystery over the years leading up to the writing of his epistles.

The components of the mystery

I have detected seven mysteries that Paul spoke of. Combined they form the unprophesied arrangement which is currently in place between man and God. I believe the heart of the mystery to be what I have called Mystery 3 - the mystery of the gospel of Christ and of Godliness.

Mystery 1: Israel's blindness

God's holy nation Israel is blinded in part - the 'part' being in fact nearly all of them. Blinded Israelites persist in attempting to establish their own righteousness by the works of the law. A remnant of Jewish believers, according to the election of grace, is not blinded. In Paul's time there was an elect remnant and there probably still is today.

"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. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Rom 10:3-4 AV)

"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." (Rom 11:5 AV)

“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.” (Rom 11:25 AV)

Mystery 2: Middle wall of partition broken down. Gentiles fellowheirs, of the same body, partakers of his promise in Christ

God has concluded his holy nation Israel in unbelief, along with us heathen, pagan Gentiles 😊, so that he might show mercy to all. Through Israel’s diminishing we Gentiles have greatly benefited (though the world will benefit even more greatly by Israel’s ultimate fulness). For the first time God reveals that he is making a new creature, the church, the body of Christ, in which there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile.

“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. 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?” (Rom 11:11-12 AV)

“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.” (Rom 11:32 AV)

“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: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” (Eph 2:12-18 AV)

“If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 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; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:” (Eph 3:2-6 AV)

Mystery 3: The mystery of the gospel of Christ, and of Godliness

The mystery of the gospel is a mystery indeed. The preaching of the cross alone is now the power of God unto salvation. Through simple unfeigned belief we are gifted the earnest of the Holy Spirit, righteousness, sanctification, justification, glorification, eternal life – did I miss anything?

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:” (1 Cor 15:1-4 AV)

“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 Cor 1:18 AV)

“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.” (Rom 1:16 AV)

“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” (Eph 6:19-20 AV)

“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;” (Col 2:2 AV)

“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:” (Col 4:3 AV)

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” (1Tim 3:16 AV)

Mystery 4: Christ's oneness with his church

Each member of the body is a member of Christ. It is not a human hierarchy or organisation but a Godly organism.

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of an harlot? God forbid.” (1Cor 6:15 AV)

“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Ephesians 5:29-32 AV)

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.” (Col 1:18 AV)

“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:” (Col 1:27 AV)

Mystery 5: The mystery of iniquity – the spirit of antichrist

The spirit of antichrist did not waste any time. It got to work on the church right from day one. John also spoke of it in an epistle to the Hebrew believers. The unrestrained, full manifestation of that Wicked awaits those who will experience the great tribulation.

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 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:” (2Thess 2:7-8 AV)

“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” (1John 4:3 AV)

Mystery 6: The catching up of the church mystery prophecy

We even have prophecy within mystery – commonly known as the rapture.

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (1Cor 15:51-52 AV)

In Old Testament times the focus of prophecy was earthly; the restoration of David’s kingdom to Israel on a much grander scale, through which all the people of earth will be blessed.

The New Testament reveals that our earthly bodies are not our eternal bodies but merely seeds that must die so we can be transformed into our eternal, heavenly form. The whole focus of Christianity is heavenly and the man Jesus Christ, God manifested among us, declared the shift in focus and personally led the way from earth to heaven.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” (John 12:24-25 AV)

“*Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other *grain*: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.” (1Cor 15:36-38 AV)

Mystery 7: The dispensation of the fulness of times

The Father’s ultimate purpose to gather all things in heaven and earth together in Christ.

“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:” (Eph 1:9-10 AV)

“For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.” (Col 1:19-20 AV)

8. Dispensationalism – God’s ‘house rules’

“The earth *is* the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” (Ps 24:1 AV)

Though most people throughout history have lived out their lives with no awareness of being in God’s house, he nevertheless has always had some people who knew him and to these he has revealed his ‘house rules’ of the day.

When there is a marked change in the arrangement between God and the people of earth, a human dispenser is used to dispense the change, which becomes a new dispensation of God.

The common strand through all dispensations is that God always counts faith in his word of the day as righteousness. I have included some examples of this from the book of Hebrews along with scripture supporting God’s ringing of the changes. I have not attempted to adhere to any of the existing dispensational charts.

Marriage, dominion, gardening, vegetarianism, but stay away from that tree

Adam and Eve were joined in the first marriage union. They could pretty much do what they wanted except eat the fruit of a particular tree. They were given dominion over the earth and all the other creatures. Meat was not on the menu for man or beast. Adam tended the garden of Eden.

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” (Gen 1:26 AV)

“And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which *is* upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which *is* the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein *there is* life, *I have given* every green herb for meat: and it was so.” (Gen 1:29-30 AV)

“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” (Gen 2:15 AV)

“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.” (Gen 2:17 AV)

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” (Gen 2:24 AV)

Everyone will experience much greater sorrow and suffering. It will be much harder to make a living. Husbands rule over wives. Everyone will die. Life expectancy of up to 969 years. Clothing will be worn in public. One language.

After the fall the sorrow of women was greatly multiplied and they were to be ruled over by their husbands. The earth was sin-cursed and obtaining the necessities of life became a lot harder. Disobedience brought sin and death upon all. Clothing was required. A lifespan beyond 900 years was commonplace. All people spoke the same language.

"Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." (Gen 3:16 AV)

"And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;" (Gen 3:17 AV)

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Gen 3:19 AV)

"Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them." (Gen 3:21 AV)

"And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died." (Gen 5:5 AV)

"And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died." (Gen 5:8 AV)

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." (Gen 11:1 AV)

Life expectancy lowered to 120 years. The whole earth will be flooded. Noah must build an ark to save him and his family and breeding couples of all creatures.

After the angelic corruption of Seth's seed line prior to the great flood, God reduced the life expectancy of man to 120 years - although this scripture may be referring to the number of years the race had until its destruction in the great flood. It is evident that there was a major drop off in life expectancy after the flood. Noah made it to 950 years while, ten generations later, Joseph lived a mere 110 years. God was greatly

vexed by the corruption of his creation, and the violence in the earth, and decided to destroy all but one chosen family and breeding couples of all beasts and birds. Noah was given specific instructions for the construction of an ark in which they would all survive a great flood of the whole earth.

“And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.” (Gen 6:1-7 AV)

“And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.” (Gen 6:12-14 AV)

“And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. 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. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female.” (Gen 6:17-19 AV)

Replenish the earth. Government of man by man introduced with requirement of capital punishment for murderers. All other creatures will fear you. You can hunt and eat meat now. I will not destroy all flesh off the earth with a flood again.

After the flood, God instructed Noah and his sons to replenish the earth and introduced measures to counter the re-emergence of the all-prevailing violence prior to the flood. He introduced human government by requiring murderers to be put to death by their fellow men. He also put the fear of man into all creatures and approved hunting and the eating of meat after the flood. He established a covenant with Noah

and every living creature not to use a flood to destroy the earth again. The rainbow is his token of this covenant.

“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth *upon* the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.” (Gen 9:1-3 AV)

“And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” (Gen 9:5-6 AV)

“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. 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: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.” (Gen 9:11-13 AV)

“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.” (Heb 11:7 AV)

You shall not be one people with one language clustered in a single city. Your language shall be confused and you shall spread over the whole earth.

After inspecting the Tower of Babel the Lord confused the single language into many and scattered the people over all the earth.

“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people *is* one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 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.” (Gen 11:4-9 AV)

A promised land and circumcision for my people

God later separated off Abraham and established a covenant of promise with him and his seed. Circumcision was introduced as a token of the covenant.

“And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. 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. 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. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. 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. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.” (Gen 17:6-11 AV)

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:” (Heb 11:8-9 AV)

Signs and wonders will approve my spokesman and an array of specific laws and ordinances will be obeyed by my people.

God employed a series of mighty wonders and signs to assist in freeing his people from captivity in Egypt and to approve Moses as prophet and chosen leader of his people. He established a law covenant with Israel and declared them his peculiar treasure, his holy nation of priests. The law contained ten main commandments of God and hundreds of ordinances. God’s house rules had become very specific. Animal sacrifice and washing in water were required to cleanse the people from sin.

“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: 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.” (Ex 19:5-6 AV)

“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. Then let them take a young bullock with his meat offering, *even* fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering.” (Num 8:7-8 AV)

"By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry *land*: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned." (Heb 11:29 AV)

My people can have a king to rule over them, and they can build me a temple. Life expectancy now 70 to 80 years.

After Moses, God continued to personally rule his people through Joshua and a series of judges until Samuel. His people wanted a king, as other nations, so God allowed them to have a king, starting with Saul. A type of God's prophesied kingdom of heaven on earth was seen in the reigns of David (a man after God's own heart) and his son Solomon, under whose direction the great temple was built at Jerusalem. Life expectancy has lowered to 70 or 80 years over the intervening years since Moses' time.

"And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king." (1Sam 8:10 AV)

"And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name." (1Ki 5:5 AV)

"The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." (Ps 90:10 AV)

"And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will." (Acts 13:22 AV)

After Solomon, Israel deteriorated and split into two nations - Israel (later Samaria) and Judah (containing Jerusalem). The former had a succession of evil kings and the latter had a mixed bag. God ultimately allowed both disobedient and unbelieving nations to be forced into exile in Syria and Babylon respectively.

Prophets remain as my voice among my people

A remnant of Judah returned to their land after the Babylonian exile. Prophets such as Daniel had kept their faith alive and let God's displeasure with his people be known. He and a line of prophets before and after him foretold the coming Messiah, the future wrath of the Lord and the future Davidic kingdom of heaven on earth ruled by the Messiah and the twelve tribes of Israel.

"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. 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." (Jer 23:5-6 AV)

"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." (Dan 2:44 AV)

My Son is coming to Israel. Receive him and listen to him.

Heralded by John the Baptist, Israel's prophesied Messiah, Jesus Christ, arrived and preached the kingdom of heaven, repentance and water baptism for 3½ years. His own 'received him not' and he was cruelly tortured and crucified.

"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mat 4:17 AV)

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:" (Acts 2:22-23 AV)

My Spirit is coming to Israel. My Son will return if Israel repents

After the Lord's ascension he sent the Holy Spirit to the believers on the day of Pentecost. Peter continued to urge the Jews to repent. He reminds them of the prophecies that the Lord will return at the times of refreshing and unbelievers will be destroyed.

"But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. 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; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: 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. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3:18-23 AV)

Though many believe, the chief priests instigate the stoning of Stephen and a great persecution of the believers. All but the apostles flee Jerusalem.

My people Israel are broken off. All are concluded in unbelief.

After the unbelieving Jews rejected the kingdom, crucified their prophesied Messiah, rejected the Pentecostal Spirit-filled little flock and killed Spirit-filled Stephen, God concluded them in unbelief - along with us heathen, pagan Gentiles (as we were back then).

"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." (Rom 11:11 AV)

"Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:" (Rom 11:20 AV)

"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." (Rom 11:32 AV)

My new church will make one body of both Jew and Gentile. I offer salvation by grace to all who believe on my Son. My wrath and vengeance on this unbelieving world will come next.

God introduces the dispensation of grace through a new apostle Paul, offering salvation by grace through faith in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary to both Jew and Gentile. The faithful become members of a new creature called the church, the body of Christ, and will depart earth prior to the wrathful day of the Lord.

"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. 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. For the body is not one member, but many." (1Cor 12:12-14 AV)

"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." (1Thess 1:10 AV)

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," (1Thess 5:9 AV)

For the first time in the Bible, God's dispensing of a new arrangement with the people of earth is actually referred to as a dispensation.

"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;" (Col 1:25 AV)

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:" (Eph 3:2 AV)

9. Rightly Dividing

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

See the 66 books of the Bible as 66 letters from God

Israel’s mail, past and future

About 43½ of the letters (Genesis 12 to the middle of Acts) have “Jews in the past” on the front of the envelope.

Nine of the letters (Hebrews to Revelation) have “Jews in the past and future” on the front of the envelope. Even if you are a Jew these letters do not contain your marching orders for the present time. They are addressed to Jewish believers within their covenant relationship with God – an arrangement that was set aside back in the first century and which will not resume until after the church is raptured and the great tribulation recommences. They are not specifically addressed to believers in the current grace dispensation and some of the doctrines, especially in James’ epistle, have caused great confusion in the church over the centuries. There is little to confuse us in Hebrews and the epistles of Peter and John. Hebrews was almost certainly written by Paul and is clearly addressed to Hebrew believers while Peter and John may have increasingly ministered to Gentiles later in their lives and were no doubt influenced by Paul’s revelation from the Lord.

The book of Revelation is all about the fulfilment of end-times prophecy; God’s day of vengeance, Israel becoming a holy nation of priests, the establishment of a Davidic kingdom over the earth for a thousand years. The church of this age will depart to be with the Lord prior to all of this. Whether or not we will return with the Lord to play some part in the end game on planet earth is up for debate. Personally, I hope to be off somewhere else entirely

Our mail now

Only the last half of the book of Acts and Paul’s 13 letters (Romans to Philemon) have “Jews and Gentiles *now*” on the front of the envelope. (Presumably you are aware that if you are not a Jew you are, like me, a Gentile.)

All scripture is profitable

“All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:” (2Tim 3:16 AV)

Right doctrine is critical

Rightly dividing is not about ignoring parts of the Bible. It is about understanding the different time and audience contexts of each book. This is especially critical with regard

to doctrine. Bible doctrine is our instructions from God. If we were to follow the doctrine for Israel given by God to Moses, we would be sacrificing animals and stoning adulterers.

New Testament doctrines

Not following Israel's Old Testament doctrine may seem obvious enough but it gets more difficult when it comes to rightly dividing the doctrine of the earthly Lord and his twelve apostles of the circumcision (Israel),

"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:" (Rom 15:8 AV)

from the doctrine for the uncircumcision (we Gentiles) given later by the risen, glorified Lord to the last person to see him, Paul.

"And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." (1Cor 15:8 AV)

"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." (Rom 15:16 AV)

The difficulty is made far greater by the divisions that our Bible comes with. We see the New Testament start with the book of Matthew and assume that everything thereafter is addressed to us.

The big doctrinal changes

The three really great points where new Bible doctrine was introduced are within the chapters of Genesis, Exodus and Romans. God rings the changes through chosen people and the most sweeping doctrinal changes he made came via Abraham, Moses and Paul. Most Bible students can see the first two easily enough:

Abraham was set apart as the progenitor of God's holy nation, Israel.

"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen 12:1-3 AV)

Moses was given the law for God's holy nation.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.” (Ex 24:12 AV)

But most miss that grace doctrine, which superseded the law, was dispensed by Paul after the Lord had concluded Israel in unbelief, along with us Gentiles.

“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.” (Rom 11:32 AV)

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” (Rom 6:14 AV)

Jesus brought heaven to earth

The New Testament opens with John the Baptist announcing that the kingdom of heaven (also called the kingdom of God) is at hand.

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:1-2 AV)

With the first coming ministry of Jesus Christ, God’s kingdom became more than a distant hope for his people. It was walking among them. Resurrection and eternal life were at hand.

But there was no doctrinal change for the Jews at this time. The means whereby they were to enter eternal life remained the law. Jesus came to fulfil the law and the prophets.

“And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God:* but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” (Mat 19:16-17 AV)

Although John’s gospel contains new doctrine, it must be remembered that John’s is a hindsight gospel, written late in the first century, long after the mystery had been revealed to Paul.

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:” (John 1:12 AV)

Rather than “keep the commandments” to enter life, the requirement after his resurrection and glorification is to “believe on his name”.

The earthly Lord came to fulfil the law and the prophets

The Lord's first coming earthly ministry was the fulfillment of the Old Testament law and the prophets. Although he intensified the law and gave more detail regarding prophecy, he did not introduce new doctrine until his heavenly ministry, declared to the world through the apostle to the Gentiles - Paul.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." (Mat 5:17 AV)

He made sin in one's heart as bad as sin carried out, thus making us all guilty sinners before God.

"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matthew 5:28 AV)

He came to fulfil prophecy of Israel's coming Messiah.

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." (Deut 18:18 AV)

He also revealed that the pouring out of the Holy Spirit prophesied by Joel,

"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: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." (Joel 2:28-29 AV)

could not take place until after he had gone away from them, i.e. until after his ascension.

"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." (John 14:26 AV)

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John 16:7 AV)

It was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:4 AV)

He also spoke at length about the great tribulation prophesied by Isaiah, Joel and others. This is yet to be fulfilled.

*“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”* (Mat 24:21-24 AV)

The risen, glorified Lord introduced major new doctrine through Paul

The Lord withheld his great introduction of grace doctrine until after he had ascended to heaven (Acts 1), was glorified and had sent the Holy Spirit to Peter’s little flock (Acts 2), and after establishment Israel had stumbled by murdering Spirit-filled Stephen (Acts 7).

The Lord then appeared to Saul, a fiery and staunch opponent of the Lord’s Jewish believers and consenting to the death of Stephen, and over time revealed to him the mystery. Saul became Paul – the apostle of the Gentiles, the new wine bottle for God’s new wine of grace.

“And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.” (Luke 5:37-38 AV)

*“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: And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called *me* by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:”* (Gal 1:13-16 AV)

10. Rightly Dividing Prophecy and Mystery

Through his apostle Paul, the Lord revealed his hidden plan that he had not revealed through any of his Old Testament prophets or during his earthly ministry. Paul's revelation of the mystery is somewhat mysterious but the main meaning of the word mystery in this context is 'hidden', 'secret' or 'not prophesied'. We have the benefit of 20/20 hindsight and we are so familiar with most aspects of the mystery that we assume it was known about prior to it being revealed to Paul.

Powerful benevolent aliens versus powerful evil aliens

It may make the difference between God's prophesied and hidden purposes clearer to use another crude analogy.

In prophecy the benevolent aliens are going to establish rule over the earth, bring the whole planet into line and establish a peaceful, just kingdom. To achieve this they must first draw out a race of evil aliens (that have secretly ruled this planet for thousands of years) and defeat them and the earth people under their influence. Billions will die.

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Mat 24:21 AV)

In mystery the benevolent aliens are offering the people of earth a way of joining them in their realm, receiving bodies like theirs and living with them forever - prior to their invasion of earth. They are holding off their invasion until their rescue offer ceases to be taken up by the people of earth.

"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:" (Gal 1:4 AV)

Prophecy is about bringing heaven to earth

Prophecy is God's revealed earthly purpose - bringing heaven to earth through the establishment of a heavenly kingdom on earth, ruled by Christ and the twelve tribes from the new Jerusalem.

The next item on the prophecy agenda is the day of the Lord, the great tribulation.

"Howl ye; for the day of the LORD *is* at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces *shall be as* flames. Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it." (Isa 13:6-9 AV)

Then the heavenly invasion.

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all *men, both free and bond, both small and great.* And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." (Rev 19:11-21 AV)

The binding of Satan and the millennial kingdom.

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (Rev 20:1-4 AV)

The final destruction of God's enemies.

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of

fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Rev 20:9-10 AV)

The new heaven and earth and the eternal heavenly kingdom.

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev 21:1-4 AV)

Mystery is about earth people going to heaven

Although the resurrection from the dead is also the hope of Israel, they have rejected the One who came to make it available to them. So the resurrection of the dead is currently only available in God's new creature, the Church of the mystery. Mystery is God's eternal purpose in Christ that was not revealed in prophecy but revealed through the apostle Paul – that the Lord Jesus Christ was the firstborn from the dead and the firstborn of many brethren.

The Lord rose from the dead and ascended to heaven and his body was glorified - it was transformed into an eternal spiritual body like that of the angels. He forbade Mary Magdalene to touch him on the day of his resurrection but invited Thomas to do so eight days later. With all the doors shut, he appeared in the midst of them. His body had changed.

"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and *to* my God, and your God." (John 20:17 AV)

"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." (John 20:26-27 AV)

Through Paul came the revelation of how earth people can follow the Lord Jesus Christ to heaven and be glorified. The Lord has paved the way in all respects for each believer by redeeming them with his blood.

Each member of the body of Christ will be resurrected and glorified and forever be with the Lord in heaven.

“And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour.” (John 12:23-26 AV)

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” (1Cor 15:19-23 AV)

“*Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other *grain*: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.” (1Cor 15:36-38 AV)

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.” (1Cor 15:51-53 AV)

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Rom 8:29 AV)

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.” (Col 1:18 AV)

“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: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1Thess 4:16-17 AV)

Prophecy Program - God’s supernatural activity

It is very important to understand that “the Jews require a sign”.

“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:” (1Cor 1:22 AV)

(Please note that there was an overlap of signs and wonders into the mystery program. The miracles of Paul and the supernatural gifts of tongues and healing in the early church persisted for as long as the Lord persevered with unbelieving Israel. Paul's epistles written after his final words to the Jews in Acts 28:25-29 make no further mention of them.)

God used mighty signs and wonders to show his approval of his chosen spokesmen to Israel. The spectacular physical type of miracles associated with the earthly Lord and the great prophets and apostles, for example Moses, Elijah, Peter and Paul, were particularly manifested for the "Jews who require a sign". They arrived with Israel and departed with Israel and were only required until God's plan of salvation had been fully accomplished and revealed. They will return again when Israel as a nation is born of the Spirit in the great tribulation.

Paul was the last person so approved of God by mighty wonders and signs and through him was revealed God's arrangement with us to this present day. Since God's complete plan of salvation is now accomplished and revealed, he currently has no need to approve any further prophets and apostles with mighty wonders and signs.

Moses

"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry *land*, and the waters were divided. 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. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, *even* all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians. And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, *and* all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry *land* in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses." (Ex 14:21-31 AV)

Elijah

“*And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah. And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child’s soul come into him again. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.*” (1Ki 17:16-24 AV)

“Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under*. and I will dress the other bullock, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under*. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress *it* first; for ye *are* many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire *under*. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But *there was* no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he *is* a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that *there was* neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and

laid *him* on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do *it* the second time. And they did *it* the second time. And he said, Do *it* the third time. And they did *it* the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. And it came to pass at *the time of* the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant, and *that I have* done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* the LORD God, and *that thou* hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench. And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there." (1Ki 18:23-40 AV)

Jesus

"But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." (Mat 14:24-27 AV)

"Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. 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. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles." (John 11:38-47 AV)

Peter

“And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.” (Acts 3:2-10 AV)

Paul

“And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him* said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.” (Acts 20:9-12 AV)

The last signs of God’s approval of Paul came late in the historical book of Acts.

“And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.” (Acts 28:3-6 AV)

“And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:” (Acts 28:8-9 AV)

Tragically, many a genuine seeker has been turned off the gospel of Christ because of the charlatans who are prospering financially by claiming to be channels for the type of miracles that God used to approve his prophets and apostles. It is fertile ground for ‘the god of this world’ to deceive many. When the church has departed the earth and

prophecy resumes with the tribulation, there will be many false prophets and Christs exhibiting mighty wonders and signs through the power of Satan,

“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Mat 24:24 AV)

but there will be no mistaking the return of the Son of man.

“Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, *he is* in the secret chambers; believe *it* not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” (Mat 24:26-27 AV)

Mystery Program – God’s supernatural activity

Paul was the last prophet or apostle approved by signs and wonders. But now the supernatural activity of God’s grace is available to all who truly believe that the Lord Jesus Christ did everything necessary for their soul’s salvation at Calvary. Justification, redemption, imputed righteousness, forgiveness, sanctification and glorification – all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:” (Eph 1:3 AV)

Spiritual miracles brought about by the word of God working effectually in believers.

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” (1Thess 2:13 AV)

God has not somehow lost his ability to perform spectacular physical miracles. He is under no obligation to perform them and there is no telling when he will or will not oblige. I have personally experienced an extraordinary healing of painful pressure within my brain (probably brain damage from more than a decade of daily drunkenness – I had been dry four years at the time of the healing) that occurred soon after a prayer on my behalf by a Christian pastor. I was cynical and unbelieving at the time and only allowed the pastor to pray for me rather than hurt his feelings with my cynicism.

Because we have an eternal heavenly destiny we will need to receive a new incorruptible body. Our focus is heaven not earth. Miraculous healings of our vile, earthly, sin-cursed flesh should not be our focus or priority.

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like

unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Php 3:20-21 AV)

11. Rightly dividing Israel and the Christian Church

It was only after I was helped to clear Israel out of the way that I was able to see clearly the distinctive doctrine of Paul's gospel of grace and believe, and be saved. I had remained lost after years of journeying through various denominations that blur the line between Israel and the Christian church. The power of God unto salvation eluded me until I opened my mind to the then strange idea that Paul was my apostle and the masterbuilder of the Christian church - separate and distinct from the nation Israel.

Most Christian denominations today have somewhat understandably laid claim to Israel's covenants and claim Peter as their apostle - as the first pope or what have you. It is quite a conundrum and difficult to see where Israel ends and the Christian church begins.

After several attempts at this subject I think I have found a model that works as an illustration of the God-directed transition from Israel to the Christian church. The model has helped me to see the transition more clearly and hopefully more accurately reflects what actually happened.

The ISRAEL Ltd. employee rebellion

In my model Israel is called ISRAEL Ltd. - a strictly national earthly company that the heaven-based Owner chose to temporarily shut down due to a long running and widespread employee rebellion. Throughout the company's history the Owner's earthly representatives had been rarely obeyed and were more often ignored, rejected and/or killed. The rebellion came to a head when the Owner sent his Son from heaven to take hands-on earthly control of the corporation. The employees rejected his authority and had him killed. The Owner then raised his Son from the dead and recalled him to heaven to sit at his right hand.

The Owner made one final bid for control of ISRAEL Ltd. by sending his Holy Spirit as an internal, invisible presence among his loyal employees on earth. The rebellious employees instigated a persecution of the Spirit-filled employees and declared their rejection of the Owner's Holy Spirit by killing one of his brightest lights.

The new recruit - masterbuilder of CHRISTIANS Ltd.

The Owner's glorified Son then manifested from heaven to forcibly recruit the rebellion's point man and give him the role of masterbuilder of a new corporation - CHRISTIANS Ltd. He was to go offshore and hire a foreign workforce. The Owner revealed to this new recruit that through his foreknowledge he had always planned the establishment of the new multinational corporation and that the death, burial and resurrection of his Son was not a setback but was really a great victory - secretly planned from the outset. His Son's work had made it possible for each employee to have a direct link with him and his Son in heaven via the internal presence of his Holy Spirit - the ultimate in a 'flat', non-hierarchical management structure. The Owner also

revealed that a small remnant of the staff of ISRAEL Ltd. had been kept on by the new corporation.

ISRAEL Ltd. employees had gone about establishing their own righteousness by obeying an array of laws and ordinances.

“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. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” (Romans 10:3-4 AV)

CHRISTIANS Ltd. employees submit themselves unto the righteousness of God when they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. .

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 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:” (Romans 3:21-22 AV)

Scriptural basis – ISRAEL Ltd. employee rebellion

The scriptures regarding Israel’s history of unfaithfulness to God, their poor treatment of most of his prophets and their rejection and murder of God’s Son are well known. Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, summed it all up just prior to being stoned to death by his countrymen.

*“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do ye*. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their teeth*. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” (Acts 7:51-60 AV)*

With the stoning of Stephen, the nation Israel’s rejection of God’s Holy Spirit was communicated to him in no uncertain terms. The battered body of the ‘man with the face of an angel’ was dumped on God’s doorstep. God then withdrew Israel’s ‘most

favoured nation' status – a reality that Israel and most Christians still haven't cottoned onto. This change in status was first revealed to Peter in Acts 10.

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." (Acts 10:34-35 AV)

God currently does not have a 'most favoured nation'. He has only his new creature – the church, the body of Christ, which in my model is represented by the new multinational corporation under the headship of his Son in heaven with each employee directly joined with him via the indwelling Holy Spirit.

"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." (1Cor 12:13 AV)

"For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Eph 2:18 AV)

God has a long-standing covenant with his beloved ISRAEL and he will honour it after the new corporation has reached its fulness and has departed the earth.

"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. 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: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." (Rom 11:25-32 AV)

Scriptural basis – the new recruit, the wise masterbuilder

Saul (later Paul) was the zealous point man of ISRAEL Ltd.'s rebellion against the Holy Spirit. He was consenting to the death of Stephen and on his way to arrest other Spirit-filled employees at Damascus when the risen and glorified Lord intervened.

"And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from

heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." (Acts 9:1-6 AV)

The Lord gave Ananias at Damascus a glimpse of what was in store for Saul.

"Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." (Acts 9:13-16 AV)

The church at Syrian Antioch with its large Gentile membership was the first branch of the new multinational and where it got its name - CHRISTIANS Ltd. Saul did not plant this church but ministered there in partnership with others.

"And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. 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. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 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." (Acts 11:20-26 AV)

Paul (Saul's Greco-Roman name) got the extremely hazardous task of going further abroad and setting up more branches of the new multinational corporation with a foreign workforce, (we heathen, pagan Gentile dogs 😊) in the face of hordes of hostile employees of the shut down ISRAEL Ltd. who did not believe for a moment that he was acting upon orders from their God. Paul was initially in partnership with Barnabas but later became *the* 'apostle of the Gentiles'.

"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. 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. And when they

had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." (Acts 13:1-4 AV)

"And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." (Acts 22:21 AV)

"For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:" (Rom 11:13 AV)

"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1Cor 3:9-11 AV)

"But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." (Acts 13:45 AV)

"And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead." (Acts 14:19 AV)

CHRISTIANS Ltd. was regularly infiltrated by Judaisers (disgruntled employees of the shut down ISRAEL Ltd.) with an agenda to sabotage their freedom under grace and put them back under the law – preferably circumcised as well. They thought the Gentiles were being employed by ISRAEL Ltd. and should act accordingly.

"And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:" (Gal 2:4 AV)

To Paul was given the revelation of ISRAEL Ltd. being temporarily shut down.

"What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. 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. 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?" (Rom 11:7-12 AV)

Paul was also given the revelation of the mystery – God’s plan of salvation kept secret since the world began. (See Chapter 7 - ‘Progressive Revelation and the Revelation of 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,” (Rom 16:25 AV)

Which employees of ISRAEL Ltd. were absorbed into CHRISTIANS Ltd.?

Most of the employees of ISRAEL Ltd. did not find employment in the new multinational corporation - only a remnant according to the election of grace. Those employees of ISRAEL Ltd. who continued to go about establishing their own righteousness were not eligible for employment in the new multinational corporation.

“But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;” (Rom 9:31-32 AV)

“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. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” (Rom 10:3-4 AV)

The above scriptures declare that the criteria for ISRAEL Ltd. employees to be kept on in CHRISTIANS Ltd., was not merely whether or not they believed that Jesus Christ was their Messiah. It was whether or not they also ceased from **‘going about to establish their own righteousness’ by the works of the law.**

James and his ‘thousands of Jews’ never left Judaism

This criteria would exclude James’ multitude in Jerusalem, encountered by Paul in Acts 21, who were all ‘zealous of the law’ and keen for Paul to demonstrate that he also ‘keepeth the law’.

“And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many **thousands of Jews** there are which believe; and they are all **zealous of the law**: And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake *Moses*, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that

they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; **but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.**" (Acts 21:20-24 AV)

Paul chose not to do battle with James over the issue of his continuing reliance upon the law for righteousness. He perhaps sensed the hopelessness of overcoming such deep-seated and widespread ignorance of the new dispensation. Imagine the uproar if Paul had immediately responded to the above comments by James with what he had already told the Galatian churches.

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (Gal 2:21 AV)

I am fully aware that it is most likely this James that wrote the book of James in our King James Bible. I am not suggesting that James was unworthy to do this. I am merely following the evidence of the scriptural trail. In doing this it becomes clear that James and his multitude never left the Jewish religion – they clung fast to Israel and the law and never made the leap to the righteousness which is by faith alone. This does not disqualify James from writing a book of the Bible as a 'Hebrew kingdom saint', but it does disqualify him from writing a book of the Bible as a Christian.

Paul's doctrine of the grace of God is the bridge to Christianity – the Church of the risen glorified Christ. By the word of God in the book of Acts it is quite clear that James and his people were not impressed with Paul's doctrine and never left the Jewish religion. They remained within the corporation called Israel Ltd. and never became employees of the new multinational called Christians Ltd. Although they fully believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah to Israel, they persisted in trusting in the law for righteousness. **YOU CANNOT MIX WORKS AND GRACE AND CALL YOURSELF A CHRISTIAN.**

"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 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." (Romans 11:5-6 AV)

Paul called them 'false brethren' - those who tried to reintroduce the law to the churches he planted. From a Christian point of view, James and his 'thousands of Jews' were indeed false brethren. From the point of view of Judaism, they were saints.

"And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:" (Galatians 2:4 AV)

Paul knew that Jerusalem was "in bondage with her children" prior to his visit with James. He went there anyway (in spite of the prophetic warning of Agabus,) and nearly got himself killed. Such was his love for his kinsmen.

“For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.” (Galatians 4:25 AV)

“That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:” (Romans 9:2-3 AV)

“And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.” (Acts 21:10-11 AV)

Peter, John, Barnabas and many others became Christians

As with any major corporate restructuring there was a period of transition and confusion. Although I am swimming against the tide of opinion of many highly esteemed mid-Acts teachers, I believe that a small group of Peter’s little flock at Jerusalem, who acknowledged the ongoing revelation given by the Lord to Paul, were the elect remnant of ISRAEL Ltd., absorbed into the new multinational CHRISTIANS Ltd.

It is clear that Peter kept up to date with Paul’s epistles and went so far as to class them with ‘the other scriptures’ in his second epistle, written several years after Paul wrote Romans.

“And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” (2 Pet 3:15-16 AV)

It is also clear by the word of God in the book of Acts that several Jews who had been members of Peter’s little flock were present at Antioch in the period reported in Acts 11. Barnabas, who was first mentioned in Acts 4 (5 chapters before Paul got saved), was among them.

“And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,” (Acts 4:36 AV)

Barnabas and several other members of Peter’s little flock were among those who were ‘first called Christians’ at Antioch.

"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." (Acts 11:26 AV)

John's gospel, written long after Paul had been martyred, is overwhelming evidence that John had also come to understand that belief or faith in Christ was the 'end of the law for righteousness'.

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12-13 AV)

"For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17 AV)

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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." (John 3:14-16 AV)

After Paul was well down the road of establishing the new corporation, he declared in his epistle to the Romans that the employees of the shut down company ISRAEL Ltd., now fell into one of two categories: they were either among the remnant according to the election of grace or they were blinded.

Who would dare include Peter, John and many of the other saints at Jerusalem among the blinded portion of Israel?

"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 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. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Rom 11:5-7 AV)

Who would dare tell Peter that he was not a Christian?

"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1Pet 4:15-16 AV)

Why did Paul rebuke Peter at Antioch?

Paul's action in rebuking Peter for his dissimulation (hiding his true feelings) at Antioch is very clear evidence of his concept of the body of Christ. Peter and Barnabas had

been mixing freely with the Gentiles until certain Jews came from James. The arrival of James' people caused them to remove themselves from among the Gentiles and eat in the 'Jews only' section. James' people retained a patronizing attitude toward Gentile believers and this infected Peter and Barnabas. They still had the old "wall of partition" in place in their minds.

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." (Galatians 2:11-13 AV)

Paul's rebuking of Peter would not have been necessary if he considered Peter to be in a separate church, or body, to the church, the body of Christ. But Paul strongly opposed Peter's actions thereby revealing that he considered Peter to be a member of the same church as he and the Gentiles - the church the body of Christ.

Note that Paul did not rebuke the "certain Jews who came from James". Why not? I believe it was for the same reason he did not argue 'law vs grace' with James on the occasion of his direct encounter with James and his multitude of believers in Acts 21. Paul was "walking circumspectly" and choosing his battles. James and his multitude were virtually indistinguishable from unbelieving Israel and were "old wine bottles" of law that would burst with the wine of the new dispensation of grace.

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:15-17 AV)

Is Christ divided?

The Church, the body of Christ, is constituted of all who have received the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, regardless of whether or not they had hands laid on them or were water baptized before or after receiving it. If these Jewish rituals are the determining factors then our apostle Paul does not qualify as a member of the body. Paul received the Holy Spirit through water baptism and the laying on of hands - not on the road to Damascus but three days later. The manner of his receiving of the Holy Spirit was in direct continuance of the spreading of the Holy Spirit among the Jews and Samaritans after the initial outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

*"And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." (Acts 9:17-18 AV)*

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” (Romans 8:9 AV)

We are right to believe that the grace dispensation did not begin until some time after Israel had rejected the Holy Spirit by killing Stephen in Acts 7. We are wrong to exclude any who have received the Holy Spirit (and continued in faith) from the body of Christ. If once having received the Spirit by the hearing of faith, members (such as James and his people) do not continue by the hearing of faith (but rather by the works of the law), they are excluded – not by a judgment of God as such, but because it is faith (not works) that GETS us into the body of Christ and it is faith (not works) that KEEPS us there.

“But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;” (Romans 10:8 AV)

“Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:” (Romans 11:20 AV)

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:1-3 AV)

The ministry of the Spirit changed over the time between Acts 2 and Acts 28, as establishment Israel’s hardening against the Lord became set in concrete. As the enemy of Christ (the spirit of antichrist) takes on different tactics and guises, so the Spirit of Christ ministers according to the circumstances believers are placed in and the Lord’s will for them.

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” (Ephesians 5:15-17 AV)

The supposed division of Peter’s Jewish remnant from the Church, as taught by most mid-Acts teachers, would have been in effect at the time Paul first wrote to the Corinthians, some of whom were ‘Peter’ Christians and some of whom were ‘Paul’ Christians. I will let the apostle have the final say on this matter. (No doubt most of you are aware that Peter is also referred to as Cephas in the NT.)

“For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. 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. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor 1:11-13 AV)

12. Rightly Dividing the 66 Letters from God

Rightly dividing the Bible from front to back.

Genesis 1 to 12 – **Mail for all the people of earth (no Israel yet) - Prophecy program.**

God's creation of heaven and earth, man and woman (Gen. 1). God's command regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2). The temptation of Eve, the fall, God's curses (Gen. 3) and the first prophecy (Gen. 3:15). The first sons, Cain and Abel, the first murder and the birth and generations of Seth (Gen. 4-5). The corruption of Seth's seed line (Gen. 6), Noah and the flood (Gen. 6-8), the Noahic 'rainbow' covenant made with 'all flesh of the earth' and more prophecy (Gen. 9). The generations of the sons of Noah and the tower of Babel (Gen. 10-11) and the ancestry of Abram (later Abraham, Gen. 11).

Genesis 12 to Malachi – **Mail for Israel - Prophecy program.**

Right back in Genesis 12, God spoke to Abraham and separated out from the Gentiles (everyone at that stage) a particular people (Israel) with whom he had a special relationship right through to and including the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The rest of the human race (Gentiles), were excluded from this arrangement.

The special relationship included a land covenant and token circumcision;

"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:" (Gen 15:18 AV)

"And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you." (Gen 17:11 AV)

the prophetic revelation that they were to be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation;

"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." (Ex 19:6 AV)

and a set of commandments or laws and hundreds of ordinances.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them." (Ex 24:12 AV)

The main focus of the unfolding prophetic program became the coming Messiah who would suffer and bear the iniquities of many;

“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. 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.” (Isa 53:11-12 AV)

returning later to establish a heavenly kingdom on earth with Israel being the source of blessing to all other (Gentile) nations.

“Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.” (Zec 8:3 AV)

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – **Mail for Israel - Prophecy program**

In case you hadn't noticed, the prophesied Messiah (the earthly Lord) when he arrived, was 'not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel' and also sent the twelve 'not into the way of the Gentiles';

“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. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Mat 15:22-24 AV)

“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: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Mat 10:5-7 AV)

Paul described him as a minister of the circumcision (Israel).

“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:” (Rom 15:8 AV)

It is important to see that the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John belong with all the other Old Testament books issued during God's covenant relationship with Israel. Christ was born under the law

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law;” (Gal 4:4 AV)

and was the fulfilment of many prophecies - too numerous to list them all here.

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isa 40:3 AV)

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isa 7:14 AV)

"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his* heel against me." (Ps 41:9 AV)

"For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look *and* stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." (Ps 22:16-18 AV)

"They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." (Ps 69:21 AV)

The first 43 books of the Bible, from Genesis to John, are all part of God's earthly prophecy program and except for the first 12 and a bit chapters of Genesis, they are all addressed to God's covenant people, Israel.

Gentiles could only receive a blessing from God by proselytising into the Jewish religion

"And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you." (Ex 12:48-49 AV)

or by blessing Israel in some way.

"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen 12:3 AV)

"And it came to pass from the time *that* he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field." (Gen 39:5 AV)

"And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." (Luke 7:4-5 AV)

Even the Lord himself suggested that giving a blessing to a Gentile woman would be like casting the children's bread to dogs. She got her blessing nonetheless, because of the humility of her reply.

"For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed." (Mark 7:25-30 AV)

The book of John would seem to be an exception.

The word 'world' appears about eighty times in his gospel and the word 'believe', over fifty times. It was written long after the mystery was revealed to Paul and so has much more of a grace message than the three synoptic gospels.

*"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."
(John 1:17 AV)*

Those who exclusively get their doctrine from John are likely to see themselves as 'born again' rather than 'saved'.

"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. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." (John 3:5-7 AV)

Note that to be 'born of water' probably does not refer to water baptism. The Lord often used the term 'living water' when speaking of the Spirit. My earlier conclusion that to be 'born of water' was to be born of the water of our mother's womb (i.e. to be born of the flesh), was probably incorrect. The Lord is most likely contrasting being 'born of the flesh' with being 'born of the living water' (the Spirit). That I have hopefully got it right this time seems in accord with the following scripture.

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (John 7:38-39 AV)

In spite of the determination of many mid-Acts teachers to make being 'born again' exclusive to Israel and somehow different to being 'saved', I am not buying into it at this time. Our apostle Paul was 'born of the Spirit' (i.e. born again) in true Jewish fashion through the laying on of hands by a member of Peter's little flock (Ananias). He

never spoke of his salvation as being somehow different to that which we Gentiles experience in the current grace dispensation. To be saved (Paul's preferred term) has a broader meaning but includes being 'born of the Spirit' or being 'born again'. Paul was not replacing being 'born again' with something else. He uses similar phrases to the Lord's 'born of the flesh'/'born of the Spirit' in his letter to the Galatians.

*"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, even so *it is now*. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free." (Gal 4:28-31 AV)*

The Jews had had a covenant relationship with God for about two thousand years at the time of the writing of John. Let's not forget that we are not Jews and that John was an apostle of the circumcision. No doubt many souls have been saved through believing the magnificent words of John's gospel. But I have come to see that Romans is a far more comprehensive instruction manual for Christianity. And let's face it - New York, London or Sydney are much more like the Rome of the first century than the holy city of Jerusalem. It was to Paul that the Lord gave the gospel of the uncircumcision and the revelation of the mystery. We have been disobeying God since Eden. Must we keep on doing it by ignoring our God-delegated apostle?

Book of Acts - **Israel fades the scene - Prophecy program**

And it is also very important to understand that the body called "the little flock" – the Jewish believers led by Peter, James and John, were at the tail end of God's special covenant arrangement with Israel. After the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they were expecting the prophesied tribulation, the day of the Lord, to follow soon after.

*"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 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: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:16-21 AV)*

They were still hopeful that the Lord would return at that time in glory to restore the kingdom to Israel.

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 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." (Acts 1:6-7 AV)

"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; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: 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." (Acts 3:19-21 AV)

Because of the rejection and persecution of the little flock by establishment Israel, the Lord instead saved the little flock's chief persecutor Saul, (who became the apostle Paul) and sent him to the Gentiles. Salvation for those saved by the little flock required water baptism, repentance and adherence to the law. Their story fades the scene part way through the book of Acts (the last mention of Peter is in Acts 15) and Israel (as a vehicle for God's purpose) is fully set aside by the end of the book of Acts.

"And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their eyes*, and hear with *their ears*, and understand with *their heart*, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it." (Acts 28:25-28 AV)

"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. 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? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:" (Rom 11:11-13 AV)

Although James (not the apostle James who had already been martyred - this is James the 'brother' of Jesus) boasted of his multitude that they were "all zealous of the law" as late as Acts 21,

"And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:" (Acts 21:20 AV)

I think we have to beware of generalizing too much about 'the little flock' after God elevated our apostle Paul to prominence. James became dominant among the Jewish believers in Jerusalem and they were not at all 'with the program'. His people remained aloof from us Gentiles (Galatians 2:12) and were not impressed with the 'freedom

under grace' that Paul preached (Acts 21:21). James insisted that Paul demonstrate that he also "keepeth the law". (Acts 21:24)

There is much evidence that Peter and John (and whatever remnant of the little flock remained loyal to them) went in a different direction to James. They read Paul's epistles (2 Peter 3:15-16) and proclaimed salvation on the basis of belief alone (e.g. John 3:16). I believe them to be the Jewish "remnant according to the election of grace" of which Paul spoke (Romans 11:5) who continued on in the household of God under grace.

Book of Acts - [apostle to the Gentiles raised - Mystery program](#)

The book of Acts is an historical account and it is during this book that a major dispensational transition takes place - from God's covenant dealing with Israel under the law program to his putting Israel aside and dealing with all the people of earth (for the first time since Genesis 12) under a new dispensation revealed to the apostle Paul and called the dispensation of the grace of God.

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 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; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 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."
(Eph 3:1-7 AV)

Paul was saved in Acts chapter 9 and began his ministry to the Gentiles in earnest in Acts chapter 13.

"But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts 13:45-48 AV)

This has given rise to the term mid-Acts dispensationalism.

Romans to Philemon – Mail for all the people of earth - Mystery program

Paul was the thirteenth apostle and wrote thirteen epistles for the Gentiles and probably wrote the book of Hebrews for Israel. Although he was a Jew,

“Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;” (Php 3:5 AV)

and was water baptised by Ananias after the risen, glorified Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus,

“And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.” (Acts 9:17-18 AV)

he was sent to preach the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles and was given progressive revelations by the Lord as to the specifics.

“But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) 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.” (Gal 2:7-9 AV)

He had some contact with Peter’s little flock but got his gospel directly from the risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ.

“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Gal 1:11-12 AV)

“But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man’s person:) for they who seemed *to be somewhat* in conference added nothing to me:” (Galatians 2:6 AV)

He was totally authenticated and affirmed as an apostle by Peter, James and John. In his second epistle Peter warned that some of ‘our beloved brother Paul’s’ teachings are ‘hard to be understood’, thus indicating that he fully acknowledged Paul’s ongoing revelation from the risen, glorified Lord.

“And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." (2Pet 3:15-16 AV)

Paul also dealt extensively with Israel, particularly in his early ministry, so his epistles must be rightly divided with care as to which audience he is speaking to at any given time (e.g. most of Romans 9 through 11 is directed at Israel).

Hebrews to Jude – **Mail for Israel (mostly) - Mystery and Prophecy programs**

I was initially taught that all of these books are targeted at Israel after the resumption of the prophecy program with the great tribulation. Greater familiarity with them has revealed that they were written to address the particular needs of Jewish Christians, from soon after Pentecost right to and through the great tribulation (about two thousand years). The Jews long, prior relationship with God required Christian salvation to be explained to them with a lot of 'back story' that most Gentiles did not require. They were (and still are) also under extreme pressure from their countrymen to conform and doomed to become outcasts from their own nation if they did (do) not.

Paul's teachings of 'freedom under grace' were (and still are) too radical for most of them. We Gentile Christians can learn a great deal from these books but bear in mind that Peter required a severe reprimand from our apostle regarding his aloofness from us Gentiles (Galatians 2:11-16) and James tried to put our apostle back under the law (Acts 21:18-24). We should stand firmly in the books of our own apostle and abide by his teaching when in doubt.

Peter later exalted Paul's epistles along with 'the other scriptures' (2 Peter 3:16) and there is tradition that puts John in Ephesus in his later years. As John's gospel was addressed to 'the world', I like to believe that he became an apostle to us Gentiles after our beloved apostle's martyrdom. Where else could a true Jewish Christian go but to the predominantly Gentile Christian churches? John and any other surviving Jewish Christians were totally despised and persecuted by their own nation and cast out of the synagogues. The Jewish historian Josephus reports that even law-zealous James and some of his company were stoned to death after being brought before the high priest Ananus (the younger) and the Sanhedrin, soon after the events of Acts 21.

Revelation – **Mail for Israel - Prophecy program**

After the mystery church has been caught up with the Lord, God's prophecy program for the earth will resume. People love to guess when it will start up again. Could be next week or in a thousand years, but it will happen, and Revelation describes God's great end game on planet earth - the great tribulation, the millennial kingdom and the new heaven and new earth.

After the rapture, the earth will initially be devoid of Christians and the Holy Spirit. This is the time that the spirit of antichrist will reach its zenith and "all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26). I believe that our apostle's salvation is a pre-type of the salvation of all

Israel. Paul was the epitome of an enemy of Christ and required a devastating and mind-blowing personal appearance by the Lord, in all his glory, before he could be brought to his knees to worship him. Paul was a fragment of antichrist Israel, born prematurely.

“And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.” (I Corinthians 15:8 AV)

It may be that the Lord’s return in glory, in the midst of the great tribulation, will cause all Israel to fall to their knees and worship him, just as hardened enemy Paul did.

“And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.” (Mark 13:26 AV)

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (Matthew 24:30 AV)

“For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.” (Luke 17:24 AV)

Sixty-nine of Daniel’s seventy weeks of prophecy have passed. Each week is a week of years. The prophecy covered a period of 483 years from the command to rebuild Jerusalem to the cutting off of Messiah. Prophecy was interrupted when the current mystery program commenced and when it resumes it will pick up where it left off, at Daniel’s seventieth week - seven years of very bad times called the great tribulation, the day of the Lord or the day of vengeance.

“Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 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.” (Dan 9:25-27 AV)

Next comes the binding of Satan and the thousand year reign of Christ.

“And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till

the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season." (Rev 20:2-3 AV)

After the 'little season' loosing of Satan; his final demise, the great white throne judgement, the passing away of heaven and earth and the creation of a new heaven and earth.

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Rev 20:10-12 AV)

"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever *in that* which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." (Isa 65:17-19 AV)

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is with men*, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be their God*. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev 21:1-4 AV)

13. The church of what's happening now

There is a great deal of confusion as to what the God of the Bible is doing now and what he expects of us now – in other words his current dispensation. If we clearly know this, we can approach God in the way he wants us to approach him and be amazed at the way he responds.

- The nation Israel is currently not in the household of God. Because of unbelief they were broken off. God is not finished with them. They will get another chance to believe and be saved in the coming tribulation and will fulfil their prophesied role as his holy nation of priests on this planet.
- All that God asks of us today is that we believe in our hearts Paul's gospel of Christ – that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again the third day. We are saved by the grace of God, not by any good works on our part.
- Saved believers are not in the midst of anything that was prophesied. We are in the mystery dispensation of grace, members of God's new creature – the church, the body of Christ.
- We preach Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery – the preaching of the cross.

"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," (Rom 16:25 AV)

"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. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." (1Cor 1:17-18 AV)

- The church are his ambassadors on this sin-cursed planet ruled by Satan, will be caught up with Christ in the air when the grace dispensation ends and will live with him forever in heavenly places.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (2 Cor 5:20 AV)

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess 4:17 AV)

- As we are saved, so we walk - in grace and truth and love and thanksgiving.

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein

with thanksgiving.” (Col 2:6-7 AV)

“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.” (2Cor 13:11 AV)

I hope this brief introduction to salvation by grace through faith, rightly dividing, mid-Acts dispensationalism and progressive revelation will serve to give your Bible belief a quantum leap and hopefully save your soul.

I was saved during an argument with the preacher at the Grace Family Church in Hamilton, New Zealand on February the 5th, 2006. I was angrily proclaiming my ‘sermon on the mount’ and ‘twelve-step program’ doctrines and he was quietly informing me that these things are all very well but that the doctrine given to Paul by the risen, glorified Christ is the doctrine for today. I listened and then a thought came to me – ‘Maybe he’s right’. That was all it took on my behalf. God took over from there.

John Bisset, December 2006 (rewrite June 2008).