

## THE EARLY DAYS OF PAUL'S MINISTRY

by Dov Avnon

The early days of Paul's ministry

**(The key to understanding the Dispensation of Grace)**

We read in Acts chapter 9 about how Christ saved Paul and told him:

**15 "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake"**

This study about the early days of Paul's ministry has the purpose to show that:

- **Christ gave Paul only one ministry and not two.**
- **Christ saved Paul to tell the world about the dispensation of Grace.**
- **Christ gave Paul a different gospel to that which He gave to Peter, James and John, the apostles from Jerusalem.**
- **Christ did not send Paul to preach the earthly kingdom to the nation Israel.**
- **Christ revealed to Paul "...the unsearchable riches of Christ;" not only at one time, but through different revelations.**

This study about the early days of Paul's ministry will help us to understand the change that took place in God's plan and the difference between the gospel of God's grace and the gospel of the circumcision.

The gospel of the Kingdom	The gospel of Gods grace The gospel of the uncircumcision	<i>The gospel of the circumcison</i> the everlasting gospel
<b>Matthew</b> <b>Mark</b> <b>Luke</b> <b>John</b>	<b>Romans</b>  <b>1 &amp; 2 Corinthians</b>  <b>Galatians</b>  <b>Ephesians</b>  <b>Philippians</b>  <b>Colossians</b>  <b>1 &amp; 2 Thessalonians</b>  <b>1 &amp; 2 Timothy</b>  <b>Titus</b>  <b>Philemon</b>	<b>Hebrews</b>  <b>James</b>  <b>1 &amp; 2 Peter</b>  <b>1, 2 &amp; 3 John</b>  <b>Jude</b>  <b>Revelation</b>

This study will also help us to understand why it is important to rightly divide between the ministry that Christ gave to the 12 disciples and later to Peter, James and John and the ministry that the same Christ from heaven gave to the apostle Paul.

### **EARLY DAYS OF PAUL'S MINISTRY or PAUL'S EARLY MINISTRY**

The early days of Paul's ministry is a big issue among those who know that Christ gave Paul the dispensation of Grace.

I am writing about the EARLY DAYS OF PAUL'S MINISTRY and not about PAUL'S EARLY MINISTRY because I believe and teach that Christ gave Paul only one ministry and not two. Terms like "early ministry" and "prison ministry" are man-made terms that can lead people to teach that we should divide between the letters that Paul wrote during the Acts period and the letters that he wrote later on.

When Paul tells the believers to rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2: 15,) he is calling them to follow his teaching and to commit it to others and not to make any difference in his letters to the effect that the later group of letters teaches much more than the earlier ones.

**1 Corinthians 4: 17 "For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church."**

The early days of Paul's ministry still puzzle many Bible believers. People see clearly that Christ saved Paul and gave him the dispensation of grace. They understand that there is a difference between the gospel of God's grace that Christ gave to the apostle Paul and the gospel of the kingdom that Christ gave to the 12 apostles.

Most people within the so-called grace movement see clearly that Paul's letters from Romans through Philemon contain the teaching for the Church, which is His body. They understand that water baptism, the signs of the kingdom (Mark. 16:16-17), circumcision or to keep the law that God gave to Moses are not a part of the dispensation of grace that Christ gave to Paul from heaven.

The main problems and the diversity of explanations (and confusion) usually begin when we come to study various truths in Paul's letters to the Romans, Corinthians and Galatians. These subject questions include:

Why was Paul still water baptizing?

Why was Paul using many Old Testament references?

Why did the Church still have spiritual gifts? (1 Corinthians chapters 12-14)

Why was Paul teaching ordinances like the bread and the wine of head covering ?

### **AN INCORRECT EXPLANATION**

The questions that I mention, above, and many others, lead some believers to put the line on Acts chapter 28 verse 28. The followers of E.W. Bullinger's teaching, amongst others, suppose that the dispensation of grace was revealed to Paul only while he was in prison and that this age of grace with the Church, the body of Christ, did not begin before Acts 28:28

This explanation leads many believers to wrongly dividing the word of truth and inspires others to teach that Christ gave Paul two ministries - an early ministry and a prison ministry.

**Acts 9: 15 "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."**

To teach that Acts 28:28 is the beginning of something new is totally unscriptural and it leads believers to teach that Acts chapter 28 is where the dispensation of grace started.

### **Paul letters to the Romans, Corinthians & Galatians**

It is widely known that **Paul's letters to the Romans, Corinthians and Galatians** were written earlier than his letters to the **Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians** but the word of God in itself does not make any distinction or implication of different ministries, as the truth about the revelation of the mystery is mentioned throughout ALL of Paul's letters, without the need to divide between them.

And so the following questions arise: Are the letters to Romans, Corinthians & Galatians contrary to the letters to the Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians? Does Paul contradict his own teaching? Did Christ give Paul two gospels? Are we asked by God to rightly divide the word of truth or, instead, to rightly divide Paul's letters?

The answer is very simple. Christ gave Paul from the very beginning Acts 9:15-16 only one ministry and not two. It is also written very clearly that Paul taught the same message in all the churches:

**1 Corinthians 4: 17 "For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church."**

### **The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles**

When we talk about the Gospel of Grace that Christ gave to Paul, we are talking about God dealing with the Gentiles apart from the nation of Israel. We are thus talking about the gospel of God's grace going to the Gentiles and NOT the gospel of the circumcision.

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

**Acts 11:1 "And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the gentiles had also received the word of God."**

These verses above **are not** about the salvation of the Gentiles according to the revelation that Christ gave to Paul. They are about the Gentiles concerning the gospel of the circumcision that Christ gave to Peter, James and John.

**Acts 11:17 "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?"**

**Acts 11:18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."**

### **Paul and Barnabas**

**Acts 13:46 "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 13:47 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. 13:48 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."**

In the verse above, in Acts 13 Paul has already said that he is going to the Gentiles. How can some say, therefore, that Acts 28 is the borderline between the kingdom and the dispensation of grace ?

**Acts 28: 28 "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it."**

Is Acts chapter 28 the borderline? No! Does Acts chapter 28 teach or indicate that there are two bodies? No! Certainly, the theory of the "two bodies" leads to many extreme and unscriptural conclusions. Some say "Paul went first to the Jews at the synagogue, so also *his epistles, written during that same time must be written only for the Jews!*"

Such conclusions are unscriptural, for it is crystal clear that Paul, in the early days of his ministry, was talking *primarily to the Gentiles*, not the Jews,

## Paul in the book of Acts

The confusion concerning the book of Acts usually begins when we read:

**Acts 22: 17 "And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; 18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: 20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. 21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."**

Christ's words to Paul - "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" are in full agreement with:

**Acts 13: 46,47: "LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES FOR SO HATH THE LORD COMMANDED US..."**

**Acts 15:3: "And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, DECLARING THE CONVERSION OF THE GENTILES..."**

**Acts 18:6: "FROM HENCEFORTH I WILL GO UNTO THE GENTILES."**

**Acts 21:18,19: "And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.**

**19: And when he had saluted them, HE DECLARED PARTICULARLY WHAT THINGS GOD HAD WROUGHT AMONG THE GENTILES BY HIS MINISTRY."**

## PAUL'S EARLY EPISTLES

**Romans 11:13, "I SPEAK TO YOU GENTILES, INASMUCH AS I AM THE APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES, I MAGNIFY MINE OFFICE."**

**I Corinthians 12:2, "YE KNOW THAT YE WERE GENTILES, CARRIED AWAY UNTO THESE DUMB IDOLS . . ."**

**Galatians 1: 15,16, "... it pleased God ... to reveal His Son in me, THAT I MIGHT PREACH HIM AMONG THE HEATHEN [GENTILES]"**

**Galatians 4:8, "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, YE DID SERVICE UNTO THEM WHICH BY NATURE ARE NO GODS."**

**I Thessalonians. 2:14, "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which In Judaea are In Christ Jesus: for YE ALSO HAVE SUFFERED LIKE THINGS OF YOUR OWN COUNTRYMEN, EVEN AS THEY HAVE OF THE JEWS."**

In the light of these Scriptures, we know that in the early days of the Ministry that Christ gave to Paul, that he went primarily to the Gentiles and not primarily to the Jews. It is true that he went to the Jew first, but that is a very different matter. (please see my study <http://www.gracegospel.eu/Paul-Jews.pdf>)

**I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.**

**Acts 22: 17 "And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; 18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: 20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."**

Paul went first to the Jew at the synagogue, *not* because Jews or the nation of Israel might accept Christ as her King, but simply because :

**Acts 13: 46 "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."**

**Romans 3: 2 "Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."**

**Acts 15: 21 "For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day."**

The Children of Israel from old time received the oracles of God. They were the only group at that time that preached and read Moses. This meant that the synagogue was, at that time, the only place where people could know about the creation – Genesis and learn about the principle of forgiveness of sin through a blood sacrifice.

**Leviticus 17: 11 "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."**

Paul's visiting the synagogue has nothing to do with him having different ministries. It is while Paul first went to the synagogue that Christ told him:

**"for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles"**

God would not leave the Jews at the synagogues or the people at Jerusalem with any excuse for rejecting the Messiah. Therefore we read:

**Acts 13:46 ".....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."**

**Jesus is the Christ**

After Christ saved Paul, his preaching to the Jews confirmed what Peter was already preaching to the Jews: **that "Jesus is the Christ."**

**Acts 4: 10 "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."**

Paul did not tell those Jews anything new. After all, the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the mystery started with the basic truth that "Jesus is the Christ." It is some time later that he will tell those Jews that Jesus is not only the Christ but that He is also the end of the Law.

**1 Corinthians 1:3 "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."**

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

Paul even performed miracles when he preached that "Jesus is the Christ." He even performed greater miracles than Peter himself had wrought but, unlike Peter, Paul never offered the kingdom to Israel.

**Acts 9:20 "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God"**

**Acts 9:22 "But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ."**

**Acts 18:5 "And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ."**

**Acts 18:28 "For he mightily convinced the Jews, [and that] publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ."**

**Acts 20:21 "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."**

### **Miracles & the signs of an apostle**

When we are talking about the Apostle Paul, the gospel of God's grace, along with the miracles & the signs of an apostle, we are talking about something which is part of the dispensation of Grace and not because of the kingdom gospel.

**Acts 19:11 "And God wrought special Miracles by the hands of Paul"**

**Galatians 3:5 "He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh Miracles among you, [doeth he it] by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"**

**Romans 15:19 "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."**

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

So why did Christ give Paul the ability to perform miracles and signs? Is it because he had to convince the nation of Israel that Christ is the Messiah and that the earthly kingdom is at hand? No! God's word gives us the clear answer: Paul had **the signs of an apostle**. Christ gave Paul this ability so that all the region "from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum" would know that there is a new apostle with a new gospel, in a new dispensation.

### **Kingdom, Paul and the Kingdom of God**

It is important for us to understand the context in which Paul was using the term "kingdom of God." Christ did not send Paul to preach to Israel about the earthly kingdom of God.

**Mark 1:14 "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."**

**Mark 10:15 "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."**

Every saved person who knows that Christ gave Paul the dispensation of Grace knows that there is great difference between Paul's ministry and the ministry that Christ gave to the 12 apostles. Many people know and understand that Christ saved Paul for a special purpose. He saved Paul because Israel refused to accept the preaching of the 12 apostles. So if this is very simple truth, how come that people teach that part of Paul ministry is to tell Israel about the earthly kingdom?

**Colossians 1:13 "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son"**

When Paul uses the term "kingdom of God" he is talking about **the kingdom of his dear Son**. Members of the body of Christ are **translated into the kingdom of his dear Son**

**Romans 14:17 "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."**

**1 Corinthians 4:20 "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."**

**1 Corinthians 15:50 "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."**

**1 Thessalonians 2:12 "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory."**

These verses, and others, will help us to know which kingdom Paul is talking about when he writes in his epistles.

### **For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink**

**Colossians 4:11 "And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me."**

This is a very important verse. While most of the circumcision at that time would work with Peter, James and John under the gospel of the circumcision, the contrary was true when it comes to the Apostle Paul: "**Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow workers unto the kingdom of God.**" Is this clear enough to show that Paul's kingdom preaching is not about the earth or to the nation of Israel?

Paul preaching **the kingdom of God** is the same Paul who preached "**and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.**"

**2 Timothy 4:18 "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom."**

Is the preaching about the heavenly **kingdom** under this dispensation of Grace the same as the preaching of the kingdom of heaven on earth? No! In order to understand this we need to rightly divided the word of truth 2 Tim. 2:15 and NOT to rightly divide Paul's letters.

### **THE CASTING AWAY OF THEM IF ISRAEL BE THE RECONCILING OF THE WORLD ...**

When did God cast Israel aside as a nation? Why is it so important to understand the place of Israel in God's program? The answers to these questions are found in the understanding of the dispensation of grace and the RECONCILING OF THE WORLD.

**Romans 11: 25 "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob"**

**that blindness in part -**

**until the fullness...**

**all Israel shall be saved....**

**There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer,**

Here we find the right schedule. When Christ saved Paul it was because Israel as a nation already was put into "**that blindness in part.**" We then read that Paul received the dispensation of Grace **until the fullness...** and after the end of this dispensation and when the Church will meet the Lord in the air, **all Israel shall be saved....**

**There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer,**

What was God doing here? He put the nation Israel in unbelief and disobedience and called Paul to minister to the Gentiles.

Israel's national rebellion against God had already begun and there was "*a great persecution*" against the church at Jerusalem.

**Acts 8: 1 "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles."**

Paul, who was the leading persecutor, now thought that perhaps *his* testimony might help (Acts 22:19-21).

But God was working differently. After Paul was saved, things were changed. Salvation goes now to the Gentiles, not *through the nation Israel or the kingdom on earth*, but through their fall. Not through the preaching of the 12 apostles but through Paul the apostle and the dispensation of Grace that Christ gave him.

**Romans 11:15: "... IF THE CASTING AWAY OF THEM BE THE RECONCILING OF THE WORLD ... "**

**Romans 11:32: "GOD HATH CONCLUDED THEM ALL IN UNBELIEF THAT HE MIGHT HAVE MERCY UPON ALL."**

**Ephesians 2:16: "AND THAT HE MIGHT RECONCILE BOTH UNTO GOD IN ONE BODY BY THE CROSS ... "**

So why are people still confused about the early days of Paul's ministry when the word of God is very clear? The answer is very simple: The casting away of Israel and the reconciling of the world happened with the conversion of the Apostle Paul in Acts chapter 9.

Did Paul receive the revelation of the mystery at once? No!

**2 Corinthians 12: 1 "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord"**

So what is the confusing part after Acts chapter 9?

Peter, James and John the apostles from Jerusalem

The letters of Hebrews through Revelation and the gospel to the circumcisions that was preached during a part of Paul's time

Paul goes first to the Jews at the synagogue

Paul uses verses from the Old Testament

Paul speaks about the Lord's Supper

Paul teaches head covering

Paul teaches about the spiritual gifts

These facts, and more, lead many to conclude that there must be a difference in ministries between Paul's earlier and later letters and therefore we should be rightly dividing between his letters.

It is because of carnal reasoning that we are not always able to take God at His word and accept things just as they are written.

The main issue is Paul's conversion in Acts 9 and the time afterwards. If we read from Acts chapters 9-28 we will see much of the relationship between Paul and the apostles in Jerusalem. It is now Paul's letters and not the book of Acts that makes it clear that we should follow his teaching, just as he was teaching in all the churches.

**1 Corinthians 4:17 "For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church."**

### **PETER, PAUL AND ISRAEL**

Many people understand that there is a difference between the Gospel of God's grace that Christ gave to Paul and the gospel of the kingdom that Christ gave to the 12 apostles when he was on earth. (for more about these distinctions, you can read in the book by C.R Stam Thing that differ

<http://www.gracegospel.eu/Stam13.pdf>

The most questions that arise are concerning the period after Paul was saved.

Peter's ministry before Paul was saved was to the nation Israel about Jesus the Messiah ([Acts 1:6, 2:30, 38,39,3:17-26](#)),

Paul was saved by God *in view that Israel rejected Christ and the coming kingdom.*

The salvation of Saul was God's answer to the stoning of Stephen and the persecution of [Acts 8:1-3](#).

So after Paul was saved "the blessing of the Gentiles" [in the book of Acts] is no longer dependent on the Jews' acceptance of Christ. This was also true during Peter's ministry, as we read in Acts 3:25, 26.

**25 "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts 3**

Paul's ministry is different and Acts 13:46 explains it very well:

**Acts 13: 46 "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."**

This verse, along with Paul's teaching in Romans chapters 9-11, shows us very clearly that after the conversion of Paul in Acts 9, the promise of the Spirit to the Gentiles and the heavenly blessing in Christ does not depend on Israel as a nation or on the Jews at the synagogues. On the contrary: the Gentiles are blessed because the Jews/The nation of Israel rejected the Word of God.

**"... SEEING YE PUT IT FROM YOU ... LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES."**

Peter's ministry was about the blessing of the Gentiles through the *rise* of Israel. Paul's ministry is about the blessing of the Gentiles through the *fall* of Israel.

Peter's ministry is about the fulfilment of prophecy to the nation of Israel and the world. Paul received the gospel of Grace directly from the Lord. Paul was preaching Christ according to the revelation of the mystery.

### **ISRAEL in the book of ACTS**

There is much to say about the position of the nation Israel and the Jews at the synagogue after Paul was saved. (I already shared some of my thoughts about it in the study <http://www.gracegospel.eu/Paul-Jews.pdf>)

Is it right to teach that after Paul was saved he had special ministry to the nation of Israel? No!

Is it right to teach that after Paul was saved in the period that is covered by Acts chapters 9-28 that Israel as a nation and the Jews in particular were still pre-eminent before God and that God was still offered them the earthly kingdom? No!

Reading Christ's words through Paul in Romans chapters 9-11 explain to us what really took place during that time. These are Paul's letters which explain to us what happened from the time that Paul was saved until the word of God was complete, and this truth is not found only the book of Acts.

**Romans 11: 7-32 "ISRAEL HATH NOT OBTAINED THAT WHICH HE SEEKETH FOR ... THE ELECTION HATH OBTAINED IT, AND THE REST WERE BLINDED... THEIR FALL ... THE FALL OF THEM ... THE DIMINISHING OF THEM ... IF BY ANY MEANS I ... MIGHT SAVE SOME OF THEM ... THE CASTING AWAY OF THEM ... BLINDNESS [or DULLED) PERCEPTION] IN PART IS HAPPENED TO ISRAEL, UNTIL THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES BE COME IN ... THEY ARE ENEMIES ... GOD HATH CONCLUDED THEM ALL IN UNBELIEF ..."**

Before the stoning of Stephen, Peter preached that Christ will return to earth only if Israel, as a nation, would repent.

After God saved Paul, (Acts 9) Paul never made such an offer. Paul visited Jerusalem and the synagogues but never preached to them about the return of Christ to the earth to established His kingdom.

Acts chapters 1-8 explains the story of the fall of the nation Israel and the stoning of Stephen marks a crisis point.

Acts chapters 9-28 explains the story of the beginning of the dispensation of Grace and the relation between Paul the apostle for the Gentiles and Peter, James and John the apostles and Prophets from Jerusalem.

## THE JEW FIRST

Here we consider Paul's famous statement in Romans 1:16:

**"FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST: FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH; TO THE JEW FIRST AND ALSO TO THE GREEK."**

Paul was NOT ashamed of this gospel. This is the gospel of grace that Christ gave to him. When we come to Paul's letters and the dispensation of Grace we begin to clearly understand that salvation is based only on the finished work of Christ on the Cross. Salvation is no longer obtained through believing and keeping the law of Moses or believing and following Christ in water baptism. No! It is only by faith and forgiveness of sin through the blood of Christ.

Paul's statement here is very simple. When Christ gave Paul the Gospel of Grace he went FIRST to the Jewish synagogues. This is why the scripture says "to the Jew first."

This verse is one of Paul's most misunderstood verses. On the one side we have many so-called Christians who do not know much about the dispensation of Grace that Christ gave to Paul (Eph. 3:1-9.) They are often teaching that the gospel should go first to the Jews. They are involved in teaching prophesy concerning the present state of Israel and world politics. They do not realise that the "Jew first" is a statement that Paul made because he first went to the synagogue of the Jews. (please see my study <http://www.gracegospel.eu/Paul-Jews.pdf>)

The "Jew first" is a statement because Israel, as a nation, had a special place in God's plan for this earth. Jews, or the nation of Israel, were chosen by God for a special purpose, not because they were in any way better than other people on this earth but:

**Deuteronomy. 4:37 "....because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt"**

The "Jew first" or the nation of Israel is because according to God's plan they will be the channel of blessing to the world:

**Isaiah 2: 2 "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."**

When later we read :..... "for salvation is of the Jews" John 4 it is because Jesus = Yeshua God's first born into the seed of David.

**Romans 1: 4 "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, Gal. 4 3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh"**

Even when Christ was on earth, he told His disciples to go only to the house of Israel. He made it clear to them that they were NOT free from sin.

**Matthew 10:5 "...."Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."**

**John 8:31 "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, [then] are ye my disciples indeed; 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. 8:33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? 8:34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."**

So once again, we are learning from the word of God that "the JEW FIRST" **does not mean** that the seed of Abraham, the children of the covenant, are free from sin and do not need a saviour or forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

### **PAUL and the JEW FIRST**

On the other hand, we have many who do know much about the dispensation of Grace and yet they have missed the very point of this passage by taking this one verse out of its context.

Some say that "to the Jew first" has to do with a different ministry or a different body of believers. They conclude that from "to the Jew first" that this means "a Jew only" ministry which it does not. They take Christ's words through Paul about the Jews in the body of Christ and make them into a different ministry. The result of this incorrect exegesis is that many think that Paul's letters, such as those to the Galatians, Romans and Corinthians, are not fully for us today.

"The Jew first" – is about Paul who went first to the Jews in order to teach them the shame of the Cross, because on the cross God put all of us to shame. "To the Jew first" is not a commission or ministry that indicates that we must start preaching to Jews.

Even now, under the new dispensation of Grace, Christ, through Paul, has much to say to the Jew in the new body:

**Romans. 3:9 "Are we better ? .... No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin"**

**Romans 2: 9 "Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;"**

You are called a Jew and then?

**Romans 2: 17-25 "Behold, thou art called a jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God"**

**Romans 2: 24 "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written."**

**Romans 2: 25 "For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision."**

**Romans 2: 28 "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither [is that] circumcision, which is outward in the flesh"**

These are very hard words for all Jewish people in all generations. These are not Paul's words but Christ's words, and yet Paul became for many the enemy of the Jewish nation and many see him as the one who made the foundation for the so-called Christianity. Not at all ! Even those Jews

who came out of the synagogue understood that no one can be justified through the works of the Law, and had to know that in the new body there is no more a difference and that all are the same before God.

**Acts 13: 38 "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."**

**Ephesians 2: 14 "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;15 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;16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."**

### **Paul and synagogues**

In order to understand the real meaning of "TO THE JEW FIRST" we need to go back to the word of God and just take God at His word.

**Acts 15: 21 "For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day."**

**Damascus; Acts 9: 20 – Salamis; Acts 13: 5 – Antioch in Pisidia; Acts 13: 14 – Iconium; Acts 14: 1 – Thessalonica; Acts 17: 2 – Berea; Acts 17: 10 – Corinth; Acts 18: 4 – Ephesus; Acts 18: 19**

**Acts 17: 17 "Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him."**

**Acts 13: 46 "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."**

**Romans 3: 1 "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. 3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?"**

The Word of God at that time was read every Sabbath in the synagogues of the Jews and NOT at the temple of the Greeks. The purpose to go there first was that **"It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you:"**

All this give clear light on Romans 1:16. Paul does not teach that the gospel should continue to be sent to the Jew first as we read in the same letter:

**Romans 10: 12 " For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."**

The word in Romans 11: 7 and 25 gives us enough information that Paul at that time understood that God had already put Israel as a nation under blindness.

**Romans 11: 7 "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded"**

**Romans 11: 25 "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."**

Paul's gospel at the synagogues was, from the very beginning of his ministry, straight and clear and had nothing to do with any earthly kingdom promises like the 12 apostles before him had and preached.

Paul's preaching at the synagogues was thus:

**Acts 13: 38 "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."**

### **Paul and the Gentiles**

When Paul first visited the Jews at the synagogue, he also was preaching to the Gentiles.

**Romans 1: 13 "Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. 15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."**

What Paul is saying here is that he is not ashamed to go to the Gentiles at Rome with the gospel, since it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

**14 "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians;"**

Paul preached the good news concerning Christ **to the Jew first**, but now, through the same Paul the same good news is also preached "at Rome"

The same gospel of Christ that Paul preached first to the Jews went also to the **Greeks and the Barbarians (at that time some one who was not Greek was considered a Barbarian)**

Rom. 1:16, **to the Jew first** - when we read it in the light of its context, It does not conflict in any way with the rest of the letter to the Romans.

Those who use this passage "...**to the Jew first**" to teach Jewish precedence today, miss one of the basic lessons of the book of Romans: that there is no longer any difference, in the sight of

God, between the Jew and the Gentile and that both alike must now approach God as the fallen sons of Adam.

The great motive for Jewish missionary work in this dispensation of grace is given to us, not in Romans 1:16, but in Romans 11: 30-33:

**"For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: 31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. 32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. 33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out"**

In order to understand the early days of Paul's ministry it is important to know the revelation of the mystery that Christ gave to Paul.

There are some believers who see distinctions everywhere. They take Paul's major teaching letters such as Romans, Corinthians, Galatians on the one side and Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians on the other.

Did Christ reveal to the apostle Paul in one single revelation or in a series of revelations? Let us see what the Scriptures have to say:

**Acts 26: 16: "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness BOTH OF THESE THINGS WHICH THOU HAST SEEN, AND OF THOSE THINGS IN THE WHICH I WILL APPEAR UNTO THEE."**

**Acts 22: 17,18: "And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; AND SAW HIM SAYING UNTO ME . . ."**

**2 Corinthians 12:1: "... "I WILL COME TO VISIONS AND REVELATIONS OF THE LORD."**

**2 Corinthians 12: 7: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through THE ABUNDANCE OF THE REVELATIONS, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh . . ."**

Paul is talking about revelations. He did not receive the knowledge about the dispensation of grace at one single time. While we read in the book of Acts that even after Paul was saved, God still worked with Peter, James and John the apostles from Jerusalem with the gospel of the circumcision. God raised up Paul for ONE great purpose: to declare the gospel of His grace during this present dispensation.

### **Two Bodies?**

What was Paul's message during the early days of his ministry? Was it the gospel of the kingdom? I do not mean the fact that Paul use the word kingdom in his letters.

**Acts 19: 8 "And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God."**

**Acts 20: 25 "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more."**

**Acts 28: 23 "And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening."**

**Colossians 4: 11 "And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me."**

There is a great different between using the term KINGDOM OF GOD in preaching God's earthly purpose as Christ first gave to the 12 apostles or later to Peter, James and John the apostles from Jerusalem with the gospel of the circumcision.

Christ sent Paul with "the gospel of the UNcircumcision," which is "the gospel of the grace of God," and this is the very heart of the revelation of the mystery right from the beginning of the early days of Paul's ministry.

**Ephesians. 3: 1-3 "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 . . ."**

Does this mean that Paul had "a special temporary ministry" during the Acts period? No! Whether we are talking about the "gospel of the uncircumcision" or "the gospel of the grace of God" we are talking about the same gospel that God is using during the present "dispensation of grace."

**Acts 20: 24 "THAT I MIGHT FINISH MY COURSE WITH JOY AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I HAVE RECEIVED OF THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD"**

**In the beginning of the above verse, Paul is looking ahead to the close of his ministry and in the latter part he is looking back to the beginning of his ministry.**

What we must recognize is that Paul was saved while Peter, James and John were preaching the gospel of the circumcision. The gospel that Christ gave to Peter, James and John is written in the letters from Hebrews through Revelation. Paul, during the same time, went first to the Jews with the gospel of the uncircumcision. Those are Christ's words to Paul that tell us very clearly about the distinctiveness of his ministry from the very beginning.

**Acts 9: 15 "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."**

It is not according to the scripture to teach that Paul received the revelation of the mystery and started to fulfill the words of Christ in prison at Rome. It is not according to the Scripture to teach that those allegedly new revelations after Acts 28 marked the historical beginning of the body of Christ.

Paul talking about "the mystery" "the body of Christ" in all the letters that were written during the early days of his ministry. Paul became a prisoner FOR the mystery ([Eph. 6: 20](#), [Col. 4:3](#)) which he was already preaching in the early days of his ministry.

Our "two body" brethren say that in Acts 21 there are two distinct groups -- "the Jews which believe" and "the Gentiles which believe," while in the Body of Christ this distinction disappears.

### **Thousands of Jews there are which believe**

**By: Dov Avnon**

**Acts 21: 18-21 "And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. 19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. 20 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: 21 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."**

Paul, while visiting Jerusalem, still puzzled many. Was Paul faithful? Were those people "in Christ?" Are those Jews members of the Church, which is His Body? Did Paul preach another gospel? and many other questions have been created by all kinds of theories among those who have heard about the dispensation of grace.

If we just leave all our questions for a moment and let the Word of God do the talking, we will be much more closer to the truth. I am saying this because the written word of God will not answer all of our man-made questions and carnal reasoning.

It is true that during the early days of Paul's ministry that we still find a geographical distinction between Jews and Gentiles. When Paul was saved, Jews were still worshipping God in Jerusalem according to the Jews religion, i.e: the temple worship.

During the early days of Paul's ministry in the book of Acts, we see that Paul had much contact with Peter, James and John the apostles from Jerusalem. Does this mean that those meetings affected the preaching that Christ gave him? No! Do we read that during that time Paul preach another gospel? No!

**Acts 21: 18 "And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present."**

Paul has already informed us in his letter to the Galatians about the different gospels that he and James were preaching.

**Galatians 2: 7: "But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter"**

We need to remember that James was not one of the 12 apostles, even though he is together with Peter and John

**Galatians 2: 9 "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me"**

So, the meeting in Jerusalem with James is a meeting that occurred after Paul had already informed them about the change that had taken place in God's plan.

How then, can some teach that Paul, at that time, was teaching another gospel to another body of believers while Paul himself says:

**Galatians 1: 6 "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel"**

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

According to these words, and the teaching that we have in Paul's letter to the Galatians, we know that God's purpose for the dispensation of grace was already known when Paul met James:

**Acts 21: 19 "And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. 20 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"**

We thus see that Paul is starting with his account - **"things that God had wrought among the Gentiles"** by his ministry, note: HIS MINISTRY and not the ministry that Christ gave to Peter James and John. So whatever Paul did in Jerusalem by visiting the temple will not change the basic fact that his ministry is different to the ministry that Peter, James and John were preaching at that time.

**Acts 20: 24 "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."**

**2 Corinthians 5: 18 "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation"**

It is already at that same time that Paul was writing about: [1 Cor. 12:13](#) and [Gal. 3:27,28](#)).

**1 Corinthians 12: 13 "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."**

**Galatians 3: 27-29 "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."**

So while there was, at that time, still a geographical distinction between Jews and Gentiles, according to the Word of God that Christ gave to Paul, the Jews who believed the gospel were baptized into the same body with the believing Gentiles.

**Acts 21: 20 "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: 21 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."**

Was there, at that time, any difference between the many thousands of Jews of James and the Jews which are among the Gentiles? as far as I understand it I will say no! If we will go by the scriptures we will get the answer.

**Jews and Gentiles receive the spirit only by faith**

**Galatians 3: 2: "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"**

**Many as are of the works of the law are under the curse**

**10 "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."**

**Every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law**

**2 "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. 3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."**

**11 "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 12 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. 13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. 14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"**

Paul's letter to the Galatians shows us that Paul's gospel was also to those Jews at Jerusalem.

The Jewish believers at Jerusalem were also in Christ, members of one body. That Gal. 3:27, 28 included the Jewish believers at Jerusalem as well as those saved through Paul's ministry is further confirmed by 2 Corinthians 5:16,17:

**"HENCEFORTH know we NO MAN after the flesh .... Therefore if ANY MAN be in Christ, he is a new creature."**

Even Peter knew this and was rebuked when later he went back on the light he had received ([Acts 15:9](#), cf. [Gal. 2:11,12](#)).

**First – who was first?  
By: Dov Avnon**

According to the prophetic plan, our Lord had instructed the apostles to make disciples of all nations "beginning at Jerusalem"

**Matthew 28: 19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"**

**Luke 24: 47 "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."**

The twelve apostles began their work there. Peter declared to the "men of Israel" in Jerusalem's temple:

**Acts 3: 25 "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. 26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."**

Acts 11: 19 further makes it clear that, until Peter was sent to Cornelius, that even the scattered disciples had preached the Word "to none but unto the Jews only."

**Acts 8: 1 "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles."**

**Acts 11: 19 "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only."**

You may probably have heard people discussing about who was first to go to the Gentiles. Was it Peter or was it Paul? Is it so important? Well yes! It is important to understand what happened in the time between the Stoning of Stephen in Acts 7 and the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 in order to know that members of the body of Christ should follow Paul as the pattern of Christ's longsuffering in this dispensation of grace, which we read in Paul's letters from Romans through Philemon.

**1 Timothy 1: 16 "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."**

Those who became tired of teaching the gospel of God's grace and of rightly dividing the word of truth will always try to put Paul and Peter on the same commission. But why do people who say that they understand the Grace of God want to confuse God's purpose ?

The warfare is not about people. It is like Christ through Paul tells us:

**Ephesians 6: 12 "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers"**

It is Satan's purpose to confuse members of the Body of Christ so that they will lose focus of the fact that we only have one gospel - the gospel of the grace of God that Christ gave to Paul.

**Colossians 2: 2 "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; 3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."**

People all over the world come together as a church for many reasons. They will open the Bible and study all kind of subjects. God's word tells us that the most important subject that believers in Christ should talk about, read and study is about **"the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;"**

Satan's main goal is to spread confusion so that the believer will not grow and become established in the faith. Teaching that Paul and Peter had the same commission is spreading confusion regarding the right foundation that believers should build upon in this dispensation of grace.

**Ephesians 2: 19-22 "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [stone]; 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."**

**And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,**

**Ephesians 3: 5 "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit"**

Christ, through Paul, tells us that the holy apostles and prophets of the dispensation of grace teach a truth that was never known before. So, if we put Peter and Paul together in the same dispensation and same gospel, this will confuse the ministries of Peter James and John the prophets from Jerusalem, and that of Paul, the apostle of the dispensation of grace.

### **Who Was First?**

The question "who went first to the Gentiles" has been a source of confusion to many students of the word of God. There are those who started to confuse between the gospel of the uncircumcision and the gospel of the circumcision because they could not distinguish between the words of Christ on earth to Peter and the words of the same Christ in heaven to Paul, as part of the dispensation of grace. Many believers have a hard time to see how different are the separate ministries of Peter and Paul.

**Galatians 2: 7 "But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;"**

When we are studying the ministry of Paul, the main issue is not in the issue of who went first to visit a Gentile but who is our PATTERN= MODEL? The answer is Paul and the teaching that Christ gave him, as we find in the letters of Romans through Philemon. It is Paul who first went to the Gentiles with the gospel of God's grace. It is Paul who was appointed by the Lord to be the

apostle to the Gentiles. So if we ask who was first to establish churches where Jews and Gentiles are baptized in one body the answer is Paul.

**Colossians 1: 25 "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; 26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory"**

It is in Paul's letters that we find our model teaching and how to live the spiritual life as a saved person under the dispensation of grace.

### **Do we worship the person of Paul?**

**"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"**

**Of course not**

**Philippians 4: 8 "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. 9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."**

The above words of Christ to Paul are the answer to the question "in what way is Paul our FIRST – PATTERN – Model."

The scripture says: **"that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering"**

This is the answer. It is first in Paul's letters that we find how the Lord Jesus Christ shows LONGSUFFERING in a new way that was never known before as it is revealed first to the Apostle Paul.

### **Peter is First**

Who was first to go to the Gentiles? Is this an issue about who went first to talk to a Gentile like Philip did in Acts 8:26 to a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch? Or is it about Peter talking to Cornelius in Acts chapter 10 ? No! it is about the difference between Peter talking to a Gentile as part of the Gospel of the uncircumcision while Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles as part of the dispensation of grace.

In order to understand this issue it is important to understand what took place regarding Peter in the period after Paul was saved. It is important that we go only by the scriptures.

1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, 3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. 4 But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, 5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it

had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

**Acts 8: 14 "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John"**

**Acts 10: 44 "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God."**

So the issue here is that the Gentiles received the gift of the Holy Ghost. We need to note that it is not about Gentiles being put into the body of Christ. It is not about Gentiles who are sealed with the Holy Spirit. It is about the gift of the Holy Ghost as John the Baptist already spoken about. They could speak in other tongues. All of this happened in the light of what John the Baptist had already said. Peter did not have to recall what he said in Acts 2:37,38 and God had already given them the gift.

**15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. 16 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.**

If we look to what happened there in the light that Christ had already saved Paul (Acts 9) then we can understand that what happened there was not fully in accordance with the kingdom program.

**Acts 1: 8 "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."**

According to the kingdom program, Christ told them to begin in Jerusalem. The nation Israel did not accept this witness and Christ did not return and instead they rejected and even persecuted the believers.

Was Peter's testimony about a new revelation like what we learn later from Paul? Did Peter say that the Gentiles are now baptized through the same spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) in one body like Paul started to teach later? No!

**Acts 11: 17 "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? 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."**

Those people were glorifying God because they knew that even according to the Old Testament, or the earthly kingdom, Gentiles could also repent.

**Matthew 12: 18-21: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. .... And in his name shall the Gentiles trust."**

## The meeting at Jerusalem

**Acts 15: 14 "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name."**

As I have already mentioned earlier, we are not just talking about who first visited a Gentile. We are speaking here about a meeting in Jerusalem regarding Peter's witness that has nothing to do with Paul's conversion. Yes, Paul was already saved and things were going to change, but it is most important that in order to understand this subject that we just read it as it is written.

**Acts 15: 5 "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. 15:6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter 7 "And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them..."**

When talking about this Jerusalem meeting, we should read it as it is written even that we know that all of this happened after Paul was saved. Peter's defence is not about the gospel that Christ gave to Paul. He does not even mention anything about it. We ought not to read things into the scriptures that are not there. To continue with verse 7...

**"Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. 15:8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;**

All of this controversy is about the Holy Ghost, in accordance with the gospel that Christ gave Peter and not Paul. The gospel of the circumcision is the word of God that was given to Peter James and John, as we read in Hebrews through Revelation. Let us not forget that those letters were written during Paul's lifetime but are not directed to members of the Church which is the Body of Christ.

**This is the reason that we should read Peter's testimony in Acts 15 only in the light of what Peter himself says.**

**15: 9 "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.**

**15: 10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 15:11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."**

It is very easy to explain these words in the light of what we know today through the words of Christ to Paul but this is NOT how Peter explains it.

**And put no difference between us and them – It is not about the one body of believers as Christ revealed to Paul. This "no difference" is about receiving the Holy Ghost. It is about "that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe".**

About which gospel is Peter talking? The gospel of the kingdom, which became the gospel of the circumcision! This is the gospel which will be fully preached after the Church will be taken away (1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18) and which is written in the letters from Hebrews through Revelation.

Peter went first to a Gentile after Paul was saved. Peter went to a Gentile not with a new gospel or dispensation like Paul will later do. Peter went to a Gentile because God choose to give them the Holy Ghost under the gospel of the circumcision, like He gave first to Israel.

The Gospel of the circumcision = Hebrews through Revelation

The Gospel of the uncircumcision = Romans through Philemon

If we ask ourselves, as members of the body of Christ, which of the two - Peter or Paul - is of the first importance, there is only one answer: It is Paul who is our PATTERN, not Peter

**1 Timothy 1: 16 "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."**