

## A Kingdom Or A Cross?

1.

John the Baptist came preaching a kingdom:

Matthew 3:1-2 - *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.*

2.

Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom:

Matthew 4:23 - *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.*

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

Matthew 11:5 - *The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

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

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

Mark 16:14-15 - *Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.*

*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

3.

He sent the twelve also to preach the kingdom:

Matthew 10:5-8 - *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.*

*Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.*

4.

The twelve didn't understand the death, burial, and resurrection:

Mark 9:31-32 - *For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.*

*But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.*

Luke 18:31-34 - *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.*

5.

Neither did the eleven believe that Jesus rose from the dead when Mary Magdalene and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus told them that He was alive:

Mark 16:10-14 - *And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.*

*And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.*

*After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.*

*And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.*

*Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.*

The fact is unequivocal: the twelve did not understand the death, burial, and resurrection before it happened, and the remaining eleven did not believe in the resurrection when they heard about it after they witnessed the death. And yet a gospel was preached from as early as Matthew 3.

## 6.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 lays out what it calls *the gospel* in no uncertain terms:

*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...*

The Holy Ghost, by the apostle of the Gentiles, the preeminent apostle of the Body of Christ, tells us who are in the Body that the gospel by which we are saved *is* the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—that we believe on His death in place of ours for the forgiveness of our sins, that we believe He was placed in the tomb, and on the third day He rose for our justification (Romans 4:25).

The 12 *were* preaching a gospel, but did not understand the death, burial and resurrection. And yet 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 states that the death, burial and resurrection *is* the gospel. If the twelve didn't understand the death, burial, and resurrection, and John the Baptist and Jesus were

preaching a gospel, and commissioned the twelve also to go and preach... *What were they preaching?*

7.

What was John the Baptist preaching? What gospel was Jesus Himself preaching, if it wasn't the gospel of 1 Corinthians 15? The answer lies in the Old Testament.

All the way back in Genesis, God tells Abram,

*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.*

(Genesis 12:2-3)

God also tells him,

*For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.* (Genesis 13:15)

And,

*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.* (Genesis 17:8)

When God says *forever*, and *everlasting*—I think we can take that He means what He says and says what He means, and that forever means *forever*.

These promises are affirmed and reiterated to his son Isaac, and to Isaac's son Jacob.

God says to Isaac,

*Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed...* (Genesis 26:3-4)

And to Jacob,

*...I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed... (Genesis 28:13)*

That God does not say to Jacob *forever* is no problem; He's already made it clear by this point that the land of Canaan would be given to Abraham's seed forever. Now according to the mystery of Christ, in this age and economy, Christ Himself is The Seed, and in Him according to the revelation of the mystery all families of the earth can be blessed: this is true. Galatians 3 speaks of this. But God's promise is not only for a singular chosen Seed, but for a plurality of seed, an entire nation:

*And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.*  
(Genesis 15:4-5)

The seed, God says, shall be as the stars in number. This is not a promise only of a singular Seed, a promised heir from Abraham's lineage, but also a great multitude of offspring.

Now that we've considered some of these promises made to the patriarchs of the nation of Israel, we need to consider what the scriptures say about those promises in relation to the coming of Jesus Christ, the Seed, in the flesh.

Romans 15:8 - *Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers*

The point of Jesus Christ's personal ministry to Israel was to confirm the promises made to the fathers, that is, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What promises? All the promises we just reviewed, that they would be given a land *forever*, and be a great nation, and that through them all the world would be blessed. This sounds a lot like a kingdom.

This explains Galatians 4:4-5,

*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

Jesus Christ was born under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law; and of course the mystery purpose through Israel's rejection of their Messiah was that we, the Body of Christ, could receive the adoption.

Jesus said in Matthew 15:24,

*...I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

In Matthew 10, verses 5 and 6, Jesus tells His disciples,

*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.*

This should be starting to make sense why they were ministering to Israel only, since only the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were heirs of the promises. Of course not for their sakes only, but for the sake of the whole world, for,

*...in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*  
(Genesis 12:3B)

In Exodus 19, verses 5 and 6, God says,

*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.*

God offers Israel a covenant, and they accept the terms. Of course, they broke the covenant, and the kingdom was taken away from them. This is because the Old Covenant made nothing perfect, but rather, was a way to show them their sin and need of a savior. But, did God's plan for Israel change simply because they failed?

Isaiah 60 verse 12 says of Israel,

*For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.*

This sounds much like *I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee*. Interestingly enough, we see this same principle in action at the sheep and goat judgment described in Matthew 25, of which Joel 3, verses 1 through 3, are corollary passages:

*For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,  
I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.  
And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.*

In prophecy, that is, outside of the mystery writings of the apostle Paul, gentile blessing comes through the Abrahamic covenant. The mission statement of Israel as a nation of priests never changed, that they should meditate between Christ and the nations.

Isaiah 61:6 - *But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.*

Here is again a future description of Israel which matches what God says in Exodus 19, that Israel would be a nation of priests.

There is much more that could be said about all of this, but let's move on.

## 8.

Let's look at some additional prophecies:

Daniel 7:13-14 - *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

A kingdom is going to be given to the Son of Man, where all nations and languages will serve Him. That all nations will serve Him indicates this is an earthly reign, not heavenly only. Of course the apostle Paul makes it known that Christ will not only reign on the earth, but will reign over the heavens as well, as the head of all principality and power, over His body of redeemed saints in the heavens. But, the Son of Man *will* reign bodily on the earth, on the throne of *His* glory (Matthew 25:31); after He ascended, He sat down with His Father on His Father's throne (Revelation 3:21), but when the Son of Man returns He will sit upon His own throne.

This vision comes on the heels of Daniel seeing four awful beasts, each representing an earthly kingdom. The same thing is expressed earlier in the book when Daniel is given the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream:

Daniel 2:44-45 - *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. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made*

*known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a statue with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet and toes of iron mixed with clay. In Daniel 2:38, Daniel says of Nebuchadnezzar, *Thou art this head of gold.*

Each section is representative of a physical kingdom on the earth (starting with the Babylonian kingdom), until the stone cut from the mountain without hands comes to destroy those kingdoms and sets up an everlasting kingdom. The fact that these are *earthly* kingdoms tells us that this everlasting kingdom that supplants them also must be an earthly kingdom.

In light of this prophecy, consider the words of Christ in Matthew 21, verses 42 through 44:

*Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?*

*Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

Jesus Himself is the stone which the builders rejected. He is the stone cut from the mountain without hands, who will crush the kingdoms of this world—He will grind them to powder. He here tells the chief priests and elders of Israel that this kingdom will be taken from them, and given to a nation bearing the fruit characteristic of the kingdom of God. This nation is not the Body of Christ, for the Body of Christ isn't a nation, nor does it have an earthly hope, calling, or destiny. The nation bearing the fruit and who will receive the kingdom on earth is the remnant of faithful and believing Israel. This subject matter is addressed at length in the Old Testament scriptures, and yet is largely neglected or unknown by Christianity today. Much like the prophecies concerning the kingdom, the subject of *the remnant* is not alien to the scriptures.

Isaiah 11:10-11 - *And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.*

*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.*

The context here is when Christ shall *judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked* (verse 4);

*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them* (verse 6);



*And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth (verse 12).*

If this doesn't clarify that the context is when the Lord Himself returns in righteous judgment, redeems His creation and sets up His kingdom, then consider that verse 11 says that the Lord will *set His hand again the second time* to recover the remnant of His people. Since the return of Israel from the Babylonian captivity, the Lord has not once brought back a remnant to the land. Man has established a Jewish homeland today, and surely many Hebrews have returned, but that is the work of man and not God—they have returned in unbelief and the nation is not ruled by Christ at all: nothing taking place in this present evil age is characteristic of the prophecies, regardless of what the traditional dispensational sensationalists say. There is a reason they are traditional—because they hold the traditions of men over the word of God while posing as literal expositors.

God says in Isaiah 11:11,

*...the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people...*

This calls to mind what the Lord says in Matthew 24:31,

*And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

Matthew 13 explains that the tares and wheat shall grow together until the time of the end, and then,

*The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;  
And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.  
Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.  
(Verses 41-43)*

The conditions for this remnant to return were stated early on, when God made the covenant with them in the wilderness, after delivering them from Egypt.

*And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee,  
And shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;  
That then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee.*

*If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee:*

*And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.*

*And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*

(Deuteronomy 30:1-6)

This is the final return of Israel to the land, the return of the remnant, when God will fulfill His new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, when the Lord returns and forgives their sins.

The deliverance from Egypt can't count as a return of any remnant, for it was the birth of the entire nation:

*When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.*

(Hosea 11:1)

*And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn...*

(Exodus 4:22)

The entire nation, not a remnant, came out of Egypt, and was

*...baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea... (1 Corinthians 10:2)*

The return spoken of in Isaiah 11 is undoubtedly future. There are many more scriptures we could go to to demonstrate that there will be a remnant of Israel who will inherit the land and the kingdom when Christ returns to the earth in judgment. For the sake of time I will only give one more, and perhaps this one makes a more clear connection to what Christ says in Matthew 21 when He says *The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

*Micah 4:6-7 - In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted;*

*And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.*

Those that have been *halted*, that is, those who have been lamed or impaired physically, and those that have been driven out (by implication, of a homeland, i.e. Israel), and those that God has afflicted (such as in the time of Jacob's trouble)—from these will be made a remnant, and from the remnant a strong nation; and then the Lord Himself will reign over them in Mount Zion *forever*. Now no one can say that this has happened. Jesus is not reigning in Zion. The devil is currently the god of this evil world (2 Corinthians 4:4; Galatians 1:4).

But you see then that the nation to whom Christ will give the kingdom of God is not the Gentiles, nor the Body of Christ, but believing and obedient Israel who *keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus* (Revelation 14:12).

That is not to say that Gentiles will not inherit a place in the kingdom on earth. They most certainly will; and the criteria for how these Gentiles will inherit said kingdom is, as I mentioned before, described in the so-called “sheep and goat judgment” of Matthew 25, which is the Abrahamic covenant:

*And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee...* (Gen. 12:3)

That is not to say that blessing unbelieving Hebrews in the time of tribulation will count, because, as it is written,

*For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.* (Romans 9:6B-8)

Those Hebrews who believe not the gospel of the kingdom of Christ and who are disobedient to His commands, are not counted as the seed. In a time when to reject the mark of the beast is to subject oneself to starvation and poverty, those Gentiles of faith who care for the remnant of God's elect will be blessed with entrance into His everlasting kingdom on earth, similar to how Rahab was spared when she hid the spies in the city of Jericho. The same principle that operated then will be in operation after this dispensation ends, when God again turns His attention to Israel, for this principle is the eternal promise and covenant given to Abraham and his descendants.

## 9.

Consider the promise given to David in 2 Samuel 7:13-16:

*He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.*

This son of David is said to build a house for the Name of the Lord. This should shed light on Hebrews 3:6,

*...Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*

The audience of Hebrews will become a part of this house *if* they hold fast their confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. The end of what? The end of the time of Jacob's trouble, when Christ returns, and, as Matthew 25:31 tells us,

*...then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory...*

And just as 2 Samuel 7 says, His throne shall be established forever. He is the true King, and the earth is His kingdom. Consider what Christ says in Matthew 5:34-35,

*But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.*

What Christ says here is a direct reference to Psalm 48 verse 2:

*Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.*

And so we see here that Christ reigning on earth is an Old Testament subject that builds throughout the scriptures; it is not new or foreign to the Bible and it is not new or foreign to the Jews who studied the scriptures and yet it is foreign to the Christian who professes to believe the Bible and yet cannot understand that when the King comes, He should first offer that which was promised to those it was promised to.

It should be no surprise then when Jesus tells His disciples,

*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.* (Matthew 5:5)

Or when He teaches them to pray,

*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.* (Matthew 6:10)

This makes what Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:9 all the more clear,

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

The remnant of Israel, who is to become Christ's house, who will inherit the kingdom on earth, and who are the recipients of the New Covenant, are to be a *royal* priesthood—royalty implies a kingly estate, and it's no secret that Israel is to be a kingdom of priests to the Gentiles (Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6). They *will* be a holy nation and a great kingdom.

Let's briefly consider what the Angel says to Mary in Luke 1:

*And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.*

*He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:*

*And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*  
(Verses 31-33)

Notice that the angel says He is going to inherit the throne of His father David, and will reign over the house of Jacob *forever*. There are undoubtedly some who will try to spiritualize this; again I ask *why*? There is nothing to indicate this means anything other than what it plainly says. David's throne was a physical earthly throne, and the house of Jacob a literal people in an actual land. The same land promised to Abraham, Isaac's and Jacob.

Mary says in verses 54 and 55:

*He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;  
As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.*

The natural understanding of what God would do in the redemption of mankind on the earth Mary herself connects to what God spoke to Abraham and his seed, and that those promises are eternal.

We've already seen how dispensationally God could bless Gentiles in this age without the nation of Israel and still be true to His promise to Abraham—by counting Christ alone as the Seed. But that is only a dispensational truth while Israel has been laid aside, counted as the uncircumcision. In the future, when Israel is again chosen, and all of Israel is saved (the remnant), the seed is going to be a nation, just as the promise states, as innumerable as the stars in the sky.

Zecharias also testifies of God's faithfulness to the promises made to the fathers in verses 68 through 75:

*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,  
And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;  
As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:  
That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;*

*To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;  
The oath which he swore to our father Abraham,  
That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve  
him without fear,  
In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.*

Zecharias connects Jesus's birth to the redemption of Israel, as the fulfillment of the prophets, and to the mercy promised to the fathers, that is, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That they would be delivered from their enemies and that they would serve Him in the land in holiness and righteousness forever.

Many who would concede to some of the prior points assume however that after the cross God changed what He was doing. Let's just see.

Jesus prayed on the cross,

*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. (Luke 23:34A)*

Was that prayer answered?

To answer that, let's consider the following:

In Acts 2, Peter stands up and addresses the men of Israel, devout Jews from every nation under heaven (verse 5):

*Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.  
Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;  
He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.  
This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.  
Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.  
For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,  
Until I make thy foes thy footstool.  
Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.  
(Acts 2:29-36)*

Pricked in their heart, the men of Israel then asked,

*Men and brethren, what shall we do? (Verse 37)*

And in response Peter says,

*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

*For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

(Verses 38-39)

*For the promise, he says, is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off. What promise is unto the children of Israel?*

By now the answer should be clear. The promises made to the fathers of the nation, beginning with Abraham.

All who believed in that day on Pentecost were baptized and continued in the apostles' doctrine, selling all their possessions, as Christ had instructed before in His ministry.

What Peter was preaching was connected to the promises made to the fathers—nowhere in his preaching does he communicate the finished work and good news of the cross. Rather, he condemns Israel for killing their Messiah.

They received the word with gladness and were baptized, but *what word* did they receive? Was it the preaching of the good news of the cross? Or was it the promise given to the fathers of a land, multiplied seed, and blessing? Of a kingdom? Of the latter of course.

In Acts 3, Peter again preaches the content of the prophets, saying,

*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.*

(Verses 19-21)

The forgiveness of Israel's sins with the return of Christ, for the restitution of all things, spoken by the prophets since the beginning; and when they are forgiven, they are brought back to the land of promise.

Peter connects this also to the covenant made with Abraham,

*Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.*

*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.*  
(Verses 24-25)

There is no doubt that God was offering yet another chance of national repentance for Israel even after the cross, that they might inherit the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

## 11.

In this last section we're going to consider the meaning of the word "gospel," and look at a few examples to show how the word must be broader in application than customarily assumed. I was inclined to define the word at the beginning, but decided to first demonstrate that there must of necessity be a difference between what John, Jesus and the twelve preached and what Paul subsequently preached, that there would then be no question that the word "gospel" *cannot* always refer to the same thing.

The word gospel comes from the Greek word *euaggelion*, and simply means *good news*. In its verb form, *euaggelizo*, it means *good news preached*, or *declared*. "Good tidings" is a traditional translation of the word *euaggelion*, which is also the way in which the Hebrew word *basar*, which is found in Isaiah 52:7, among other places, is rendered, and which is quoted in Romans 10:15. In Romans 10 *basar* is rendered *euaggelizo* (to announce good news, to declare or bring good tidings). The good news spoken of in Isaiah 52 is the same good news spoken of in Romans 10, which is the same good news alluded to in the gospels and early Acts, but to determine that one must study the context. Context and content determines doctrine, not the use of a single transliterated word that isn't necessarily tied to one specific form of "good news." The gospel committed to Paul is not the same gospel that was preached to Israel regarding the fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers.

Now when I say that there are different gospels, what I am *not* saying is that there is any other way to be saved other than *through Christ*. That is the common way people take that statement, but that is not what I'm saying. Salvation is *only* through Christ.

*...in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him...* (Ephesians 1:10)

All things, whether earthly or heavenly, whether Israel and the earth or the Body of Christ and the positions of authority in the heavens, will be reconciled by His blood, and by the obedience of faith in Him.

*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.* (Colossians 1:20)



That is the common objection to the idea that there are different gospels, but it's from the misunderstanding that what's being said is that you can be saved some other way than through Christ.

But there is a preaching of Jesus Christ according to that which the prophets have spoken since the world began (Luke 1:70; Acts 3:21), and which pertains to the covenants that God made with Israel, and then there is the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery (Romans 16:25), which is salvation without Israel, apart from covenants. One pertains to the prophecies regarding Israel, and their promised redemption on the earth, and one was hid in God, not to be found in the prophets, and pertains to the Body of Christ and the redemption of the heavens.

The object and obedience of faith has and will again change dispensationally, but for a more thorough treatment on that subject see my work, *The Object And Obedience Of Faith*.

In Hebrews 3, the writer is exhorting his audience, and is drawing a parallel between them and the Israelites in the wilderness after being delivered from Egypt.

*But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?*

*And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?*

*So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

(Hebrews 3:17-19)

I wanted to include enough of the passage so that the context is unmistakably clear. The writer continues:

*Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*

*For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*

(Hebrews 4:1-2)

*Unto us was the gospel preached*, it says, *as well as unto them*. The writer of Hebrews, writing in the first century AD, says that the good news was preached to them as well as to the Israelites who were delivered out of Egypt, over a millennium before. This gospel was preached before Jesus was even born, not to mention having died on the cross and risen from the dead. What gospel could this be? What good news could have been preached to the Hebrews then and was subsequently preached to those in the first century AD?

Consider what God tells Moses as His Angel appears in the midst of the burning bush:

*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.*

*And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. (Exodus 3:6-8)*

God tells Moses He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The significance of this goes over the heads of those who don't take God's promises to them literally, or who are ignorant of them altogether. God made unilateral promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that they and their seed would inherit the land of promise forever; this is why God tells Moses that He is going to bring them to the land flowing with milk and honey. God is saying He is going to fulfill the promises made to the fathers.

This is the same good news preached to Israel in the first century AD. For,

*...Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers... (Romans 15:8)*

And so when Jesus came preaching the good news of the kingdom, the Hebrews who believed Him would have understood that to them was promised a land, and that a King would sit on the throne of David *forever*, and that through them all the families of the earth would be blessed.

Jesus says to the centurion in Matthew 8,

*And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 8:11)*

Are we to believe that people are to come from

The east and west *of heaven* to sit down with these men, who were promised to dwell in *a land* forever?

Jesus again says,

*But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. (Matthew 26:29)*

Are we to believe that people will be fermenting grapes in heaven? This is conjecture of course and not an actual argument, but we have already made the case, that these people are promised to dwell in the land forever, not in the heavens.

Consider Moses, who connects the Israelites to the promises of the land to their forefathers:

*Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.*  
(Deuteronomy 1:8)

And if any confusion should still remain about the phrase, *kingdom of heaven*, consider Moses yet again:

*Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes...*  
*...That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.*  
(Deuteronomy 11:18,21)

*As the days of heaven upon the earth...* days without end then. And this is exactly what Isaiah 45 says:

*But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.*  
*For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else.*  
*I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.*  
(Isaiah 45:17-19)

I just don't see how it could be made any clearer.

With all of this in mind, the subject matter of the book of Hebrews takes form and begins to make sense.

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*  
(Hebrews 11:13-16)

Without being acquainted with the promises and prophecies one could easily mistake this passage to mean that these faithful men simply desired and longed to be with God in the heavens. But that is not what it's saying; the author of Hebrews tells us plainly what the subject is:

*For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.*  
(Hebrews 2:5)

*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come...*  
(Hebrews 6:4-5)

The author here states plainly that he is speaking of the world to come, which is not put in subjection to the angels, but to the Son of Man, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory, who is seated at the right hand of the Father until He makes His enemies His footstool, that is, until He returns in fiery judgment bringing vengeance upon His adversaries, but bringing justice and grace to the faithful and righteous. Wherein the world that then was will perish, and the kingdom of God on earth will be realized, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Hebrews 6 states that the powers of the Holy Ghost, with whom they were baptized, are the powers of the *age to come*. Perhaps, being baptized with the Holy Ghost by Christ (who was at the right hand of the Father, as opposed to being baptized *into* Christ by the Holy Ghost, as in the case of the Body of Christ), these kingdom saints will be given a Law written in their hearts, and will keep the precepts of the Lord, for, *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.* (1 John 3:6)

If the heavens and earth are to be renovated, regenerated, at the times of refreshing, God Himself also must reform Nanking from the inside out. Eschatologically, this hasn't occurred yet—we still abide in this body of death, with the law of sin still present with us in our members.

My point in all this is only to show that what Hebrews is teaching is the fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers, and to David.

We see from Hebrews that a gospel was preached to the Hebrews after the exodus, and in no sense can this be taken to mean the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. His own twelve apostles didn't understand the need for Him to die, or that He would resurrect from the dead.

We have only a few more examples to look at:

Revelation 14:6-7 - *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*

This occurs in the latter half of the seventieth week of Daniel, in the Day of the Lord. This certainly doesn't sound like good news from where we're currently sitting, but for the inhabitants of the earth in that time, to fear God, to give Him glory and to worship Him, rather than to fear the antichrist, and to take his Mark and be damned, is the only good news available. Some try to insert Paul's gospel into these verses, but that form of hermeneutics is why so much confusion abounds at present. We cannot force ideas onto the text that simply are not there. Nowhere in these scriptures does it mention the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, especially as a finished work received by faith for the forgiveness of sins. It's simply not there.

God is not, at that time, offering grace to a sinful world—no, He is judging it in righteousness. And yet He still extends mercy to fallen humanity, by having an angel preach the everlasting gospel. Following this angel are two more, the second which announces the fall of Babylon, and a third warning humanity that if any man worship the beast or his image, or receive his mark in their right hand or forehead, they would be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and the presence of the Lamb forever.

The everlasting gospel—to fear God and give Him glory, and to worship Him—is not the gospel of the grace of God. The gospel which Paul preached was not everlasting: but the fear of the Lord, and to give Him glory and worship will never change. Even in this dispensation, the fear of the Lord, and the worship of the Lord, are undeniable realities for those with a conscience of God. Paul himself writes,

*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...* (2 Corinthians 5:11)

And of course this is in the context of the judgment seat of Christ, for in verse 10 he writes,

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ...*

This is written specifically to the Body of Christ, the church of the mystery, in this dispensation of grace, but it's true for all people of all ages that we shall all stand before the throne of Christ and be judged, by whichever standard was revealed to us in our respective ages, according to the revelation of God. This is the everlasting gospel, to know that we *all* stand before God, who is alone creator, redeemer, and judge, and to fear Him alone, to worship Him alone, and give Him all the glory and honor. This is true for all men of all ages, and will forever be true.

One last point to end..

In Galatians the apostle Paul tells his audience,

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

*Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

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

*As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

(Galatians 1:6-9)

The grace of Christ unto *another gospel*... The implication here being that the grace of Christ *is the gospel*, the vicarious atonement through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, by grace, through faith.

When he says, *another gospel*—this was not some unknown, vague or arbitrary thing, it was the kingdom gospel already in place, which required circumcision and the Law, and which is why Galatians was written, to explain that the gospel of the kingdom was in abeyance and was no longer *the gospel*. The entire point of Galatians is that we are not justified by the Law whatsoever, and are not under the covenants given to Israel in this dispensation.

If there were not another gospel, why would Paul warn his audience regarding one?

It's interesting that what God commands in one dispensation, is disobedience in another. To understand God's will dispensationally is the difference between being condemned or being justified.

The Kingdom saint only knew what had been revealed to them, but were trying to force circumcision and the Law of Moses (which were required for them) on the Body of Christ.

In Galatians 2, Paul recounts how he “went up by revelation” to Jerusalem, to communicate to the kingdom saints there that gospel which he preached among the Gentiles. If they were preaching the same *good news*, what necessity would there be to communicate anything to them? *They would already know it.*

We know the kingdom saints we're trying to push circumcision on the Body of Christ because Paul, by the Holy Ghost, writes,

*But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised...*

(Galatians 2:3)

These that Paul met with, them which were of reputation (Gal. 2:2), in conference added nothing to him, but contrariwise, that is, conversely, Paul added something to them:

*...they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me (Paul), 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:)*

(Galatians 2:7-8)

The gospel—*the good news*—of the uncircumcision was committed unto Paul, just as the gospel of the circumcision was committed unto Peter.

The gospel of the uncircumcision harkens back to Abraham, when he was yet Abram, how that when he was yet *uncircumcised*, and *without the Law*, was counted as righteous by God, *because he believed what God said*, namely, that God would give him a seed from his own body to be his heir, and that his seed would be as the stars in number (Genesis 15). We find out in Galatians 3 that God preached the gospel to Abraham before, having foreseen that God would justify the heathen through faith, saying to him, *in thee shall all nations be blessed* (Gal. 3:8).

This is why Paul writes in Romans 4, verses 1 through 5,

*What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

Romans 4 explains at length our connection to Abraham, and uses him as a legal precedent, if you will, of how God can justify men by faith alone, without circumcision, and without the Law, and how he can bless humanity without Israel, as in our present age of grace, which is concurrently an age of Israel's blindness.

The gospel of the circumcision then relates to the covenant of circumcision, given to Abraham later, in Genesis 17.

He tells Abram to *be thou perfect* in verse 1. This is repeated in Deuteronomy 18:13,

*Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.*

This is repeated again by Christ Himself in Matthew 5:48 in the sermon on the mount, which is yet another stating of the Law prior to entering the promised land, similar to Deuteronomy, but Jesus here is revealing the heart of the Law, revealing that outward observances alone do not fix the inner man, but that even the desire of men's heart can defile them:

*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

God tells Abram in Genesis 17 his name will be Abraham, for he will be the father of many nations, and that kings will come from him (and also the King of Kings Himself). He says He will establish His covenant with him and his seed forever, an everlasting covenant, and that they would possess the land. God then proceeds to instruct Abraham that every male child shall be circumcised on the eighth day, or they will be cut off from their people.

In the gospel of the circumcision, the Hebrews are required to observe circumcision, or else be cut off from their people and the promises; they are required also to obey the covenant given to Moses, or else they will be cut off from the blessings, which include the promised land.

And so we see the gospel of the circumcision and the gospel of the uncircumcision—if we simply read the words of the Bible and believe what they say—*cannot* be the same thing.

One relates to the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24), which is the gospel of Christ committed to Paul, found in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, and explained elsewhere in Paul's letters, such as in Ephesians and Romans; and the other relates to the gospel of the kingdom, the promise that the true Israel of God would inherit the promises of a land, and multiplied seed, and blessing, and that through them the nations would be blessed, and that the Seed Himself, the Son of David, would sit on the throne of His everlasting kingdom on the earth, as the King of kings and High Priest of a nation of priests.

One gospel relates to prophecy, and the redemption of the earth, and requires that there be both Jew and gentile. The other relates to a hidden purpose that wasn't spoken of in prophecy, in which God will redeem and restore the powers in the heavens, through the Body of Christ, by the preaching of the cross, and in which there is no Jew or gentile, but one new creature.

We, in this age, share in God's unsearchable riches (Ephesians 3:8)—heavenly blessings which cannot be searched out in the scriptures except in Paul's epistles; Paul, who was the first in the Body of Christ (1 Timothy 1:16), and who was the apostle to the gentiles (Romans 11:13).

Paul himself writes in 2 Timothy 2:7,

*Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.*

If we are to understand God's plan for the ages, and the reconciliation of the heavens, we must consider what Christ committed to Paul. To follow Paul is to follow Christ:

*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.* (1 Corinthians 11:1)

And so,

*If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I (Paul) write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.*

And so we should heed what the apostle of Christ writes to us, Christ's Body, and believe the gospel committed unto him,

*...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 Corinthians 15:3B-4)



Of course,

*...the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)*

If we are to be faithful witnesses for Christ, we must consider what Paul writes, that we might 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: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord...* (Ephesians 3:9-11)