

No matter where we attend fellowship or Bible study, sometimes we come across conflicts or differences between some teaching, some Christian traditions and plain statements of Scripture. We might believe something but stumble across certain passages which say another. While this is confusing and maybe even threatening, it is actually healthy and we should face these things in faith and love of our Lord.

If you have discovered some conflicts or differing things, then congratulations, because this means you are reading your Bible with intent to learn. Being faithful to the Word of Truth brings rewards in understanding over time. We should never fear when apparent contradictions appear in our Bible study, the Bible will eventually explain itself and clarify all apparent contradictions and prove which traditions are in harmony with it. Only our Father's words are pure and purify;

Help, Jehovah, for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the sons of men. They speak vanity each one with his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. Jehovah shall cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that speaks proud things,

The Words of Jehovah are pure Words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Psa.12:1-3,6.

It is impossible to read the NT without noticing many references to the imminent return of the Lord to the earth. Indeed, Paul told the Corinthians they would not all die, John wrote in one of his letters that it was the last hour, and the Lord told Caiaphas he would see the Son of Man on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds. But the Lord didn't come 2000 years ago. In this matter we seem to have a conflict between plain statements of Scripture and history. This apparent conflict has certainly caused some consternation among believers over the centuries. It might surprise us to learn that only in the last 150 years have we accepted the literal return of the Lord to the earth as a Biblical fact and the traditional "rapture" is the majority view of His return.

Let us be very clear for the Bible is certain; the Lord will return and reign over the earth from Jerusalem;

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Psa 2:6-9

This Psalm is found in a few NT writings as we shall see, but even as the apostles wrote of this great second coming of the Lord, there were those creating discord among the brethren about it. Some were saying the resurrection had passed already, 2Tim.2:18 and Peter wrote about those who would scoff at the thought of the Lord returning to the earth even in NT times as here;

Beloved, I now write this second letter to you, in which I stir up your pure mind by reminder to remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of the Lord and Savior by us, the apostles. First, knowing this, that there will come in the last days scoffers walking according to their own lusts and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. (see Jude 1:17-18)

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a rushing noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. And the earth and the works in it will be burned up. 2Pe 3:1-4, 10

Peter was not looking way down the centuries to some far distant event, even an event beyond our lifetimes. Peter was expecting the Lord to return even as he wrote for he had already written that the Day of The Lord was close upon them;

But the end of all things has drawn near. Therefore be of sound mind, and be sensible to prayers. For the time has come for the judgment to begin from the house of God. And if it first begins from us, what will be the end of those disobeying the gospel of God? 1Pe 4:7, 17

There were scoffers in Peter's day, ridiculing the return of the Lord based upon their false assumption that things don't change, 2Pet.3:4, but things do change as Peter reminded them, 2Pet.3:5-6. Yes, the Lord had promised He would return to them, in fact Peter was the instrument of a re-affirmation of that promise when he preached to Israel in Acts 2. The scoffers were sowing seeds of doubt and Peter counted that by assuring his readers the Day of the Lord was a very near event.

Just as the scoffers were wrong in questioning the return of the Lord, so we should not doubt the fact of His return simply because it didn't happen when the Scriptures suggested it would.

In this series of lessons we shall see that God's purposes for Israel are immutable as to fact, but conditional as to time. In other words, the Lord was set to return way back in the NT era, but a condition wasn't met and it was postponed.

Understanding this conditional aspect of God's dealings with Israel will help us accurately find the change between the church Israel and our calling and will open up the NT in excitement of understanding.

Please open your Bibles and read each of these passages listed below when you can. Please read them as a believer back then. What would you understand as to time as you read them? Do you think they would have suggested to you that the Lord's return was thousands of years distant? These Scriptures will appear in our lessons to follow; Matt.10:23, 16:27-28, 24:9, 15, 33-34. John 21:21-22. Acts 3:19-20, 17:30-31. Roms.13:10-12, 16:20. 1Cor.1:4-8, 7:26, 29, 10:11, 11:23-26, 13:8-14, 15:51-52. 2Cor.3:15-16, 4:13-14, 5:8, 12:2-4. 1Thess.1:9-10, 3:12-13, 4:15, 17, 5:1-6, 9-10, 23. 2Thess.1:5-10, 2:1-5. Hebs.8:13, 9:24-28, 10:25, 31-39. James 5:8-9. 1Pet.1:3-10, 4:7. 2Pet.3:9-10. 1John 2:18. Jude 1:24. Rev.1:1, 3, 7, 3:11, 22:6-7, 10, 12 & 20.

Yes indeed, when Corinthians, Thessalonians, Hebrews, Peter, James, John and Revelation were written, the Lord was coming quickly. All those things which were to take place prior to His Coming were shortly to come to pass.

We all love traditions and we have many within our Christian sphere. Easter, Christmas and even marriages are rich in tradition, so much so that many believers accept them without question. Some of us are now asking questions and growing in the truth as we recognize that some traditions are actually not based upon Bible truth.

Here is the only occurrence of Easter in the New Testament;

[Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. \(Then were the days of unleavened bread.\) And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.](#) Act 12:1-4

The Jews don't celebrate Easter and when we read of Unleavened Bread in verse 3 we realize it was the time of Passover, now that is the Jewish Feast which was later called Easter. At Easter time, we are observing the Jewish Feast of Passover for that was when our Lord was crucified.

In the matter of marriage, it was only about 1653 that the church ruled people should be married in a church, by a priest. If you think about that, who was married in a church building or by priest or pastor in the Bible?

Some of us have also accepted the fact that our Lord was not born on Dec.25th. Now this doesn't mean we throw out that special time with family and friends, but it is best to align with Scripture which says this;

[And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, \(and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,\) full of grace and truth.](#) Joh 1:14

The word for dwelt is "tent" as in the tent or tabernacle in the Old Testament in which Jehovah dwelt among His people. The Lord came to dwell with Israel and was more likely born in September, the time of the Feast of Tabernacles.

These traditions, which have held sway for many years, need to be recognized as man-made ones; faulty in that they are not accurately based upon the Word of Truth. Where do you stand? What is important to you as a child of God?

Here is another tradition that has seriously impacted us for centuries without most of us knowing about it. We accept without question that when the New Testament opened, something new and different began, but is this true? How often have we heard that the Old Testament was for the Jews but the New is about us. Yes, we know there was a change at some point, but was it at the opening of the Gospels? We will compare the Scriptures to find out what they say.

The writer of the Hebrews says this;

[... but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.](#) Heb 9:26

According to this passage, Christ offered Himself without spot to God at the end of the world or age and most Christians could agree with this. However, a tradition says that once the Lord died on that cross, then God changed His plans from Israel to the church and the new thing; the church, began, but is this true?

One time, when the disciples sat with the Lord on the Mount of Olives, they asked him a question about "the end of the world" as found here;

[And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?](#) Mat 24:3

While two things are asked, the disciples understood that both of them belonged very close together, the Lord's coming was to happen and then "the end of the world" or ages. The end of the world is the very phrase used in Hebs.9:27 so two things were to take place at the end of the world, the Lord's suffering and His coming in glory. Hebs.9 says the Lord was crucified at the end of the world, so how can the Lord be crucified at the end of the world, and come at the end of the world as well? The answer is simple; He was crucified at the end of the world and was to come back soon afterwards. The end of the world continued past the cross. When we go back to Hebrews we find this confirmed;

[Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.](#) Heb 10:35-37

Hebrews, written many years after the cross, tells us the Lord was crucified at the end of the world, then it tells us the Lord was about to return in a very little while.

If we are to believe Hebrews and we certainly do, the Lord died, rose again and was about to return when Hebrews was written. In other words, it was still the end of the world many years after the Gospels, well into the Acts period. The Gospels and Acts were not the beginning of something new, so when did the change take place, what happened to the end of the world?

When we divide the Old Testament from the New by placing the separation line between Malachi and Matthew we break apart things which should be together. Our tradition is in error when it says our Lord Christ came to start "the church". No, John the Baptist and the Lord came in perfect harmony with Malachi's prophesy which is not about "the church";

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in:

behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Mal 3:1-6 (Matt.11:10-11).

We are not the sons of Levi to be purged, our calling has nothing to do with the restoration of the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem. The restoration of Israel was dependent on the abolition of sin and death and the righteous judgment of God against the enemy. Israel, as a nation, will be redeemed by the Lord's shed blood just as they were delivered out from under Gentile dominion in Egypt by the typical shed blood. When Israel entered the Promised Land, it was the blood that enabled them to dwell with God and He with them in His tabernacle.

Can we separate Malachi from Zechariah? Can we separate Matthew from Malachi? No! We cannot. Can we start our calling with Malachi? No! Can we start our calling with Matthew? No! Malachi and Matthew are a continuation of the purpose of God through Israel to the world. Israel who were not consumed because the Lord changes not in regards to them, but later in the New Testament Israel was put aside for a time, then the purpose changed, then our calling was revealed to Paul alone. The change did not take place at Matthew or Acts.

Malachi declares that despite Israel's sinfulness, they are not consumed because the Lord is faithful. He does not change in regards to His promises to them (cp.Roms.3:1-4 & 11:29). Israel by wicked hands crucified their Messiah, but Israel was not cut off at the cross, or Pentecost, or anywhere in the Acts period, see Roms.10:21-11:5.

Malachi was very specific. He was told to write of the great cleansing of the priestly order in Israel and this did not take place during the Gospels. So, when Malachi wrote "who may abide the Day of His coming", we know he was writing of the Lord's second coming which was to closely follow His resurrection.

The Gospels and Acts were a record of the Lord's first coming for sin and sins and He was crucified the King of the Jews. They also recorded the imminent coming of the Lord the second time when that great cleansing would take place as the Temple cleansing of Jn.2:14-17 anticipates. No wonder Paul used Habakkuk to warn the Jews in Acts 13:40-41 and wrote similarly in 2Cor.6:11-17. The writer of Hebrews was also very clear; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; Heb 2:3

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

For our God is a consuming fire. Heb 12:25-29 (see also Matt.3:10, 12 & 2Thess.1:8).

It was Hebrews which confirmed that the second coming of the Lord was in a very little while back in the Acts period, and note the warning in this context as well;

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Heb 10:31

For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Heb 10:37

The Gospels and Hebrews were both written in the end of the world or age. The Lord died for sin and sins in the end of the age and was coming back at the end of the age to purge the sons of Levi and to rule the world in righteousness from His throne in Israel's Temple.

God's purposes did not change at the cross, they did not change during Acts because not only Hebrews, but other N.T. books also spoke of the imminent return of the Lord which was at the end of the world:

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 1Co 10:11-12

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

Malachi, Matthew, Corinthians and Hebrews are inseparable. They all belong or speak of those things which will take place at the end of the world and the end of the world was possible 2000 years ago. What happened? Does the end of the world run for 2000 years? Were those apostles misguided? Did they get it wrong? NO! Perhaps something happened to postpone the end of the world and the Lord's return which was so imminent way back then? Before we answer these questions we need to see more proof that most of the NT was written at the end of the world.

Learning from the Word of God is such an exciting, spiritual, never ending journey. However, it can be a little scary if it means some things need to be unlearned.

Discarding a tradition which we felt so sure was truth, and which is embraced by a majority, can be perplexing and not without personal discomfort. We might also feel very alone, but the Lord is with us and in faith we take the steps Scripture demands.

So far we are finding scriptures which cast serious doubt on our tradition that the Gospels and Acts were the beginning of something new. In fact we are finding that it says clearly within those books and the letters written at that time that it was the end of the ages; something was coming to an end.

Our Lord died in the ends of the ages but we also read that He was going to return at the very same time, the ends of the ages. What was to end at His return and what was to begin?

Whatever the answer to these questions, we have found His first coming for sin and sins had occurred and His second coming in glory was expected 2000 years ago, in the time of the Gospels and Acts. Remember these verses from Hebrews which put both events together way back then?

..... but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Heb 9:26

For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Heb 10:37

Here are some other Scriptures, written before Acts 28, which show this same united testimony, that our Lord's death burial and resurrection were soon to be followed by His second coming;

But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, ... And killed the Prince of life, ... Act 3:14-15

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: Act 3:19-20

Peter did not say the Lord would come back in 2000 years. He said to Israel, you repent and Christ will be sent back. Look at Paul in Corinthians again;

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world (age) are come. 1Co 10:11

... Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 1Co 15:3

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: ... 1Co 15:51-52

Paul was not saying "they" who would be alive 2000+ years in the future, he said "we" would not all die. "We" included the Corinthians and Paul. Corinthians was written in the ends of the age (world) so maybe that is why he urged them to stay single. In Corinthians, Christ had recently died and was coming back very soon so that not all of them (not us) would die. The ends of the ages, the Trumpet return of the Lord was in view; it was expected when Corinthians was written. Paul in Thessalonians includes himself as one of those who would be alive and remain to the coming of the Lord;

.... we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord 1Th 4:15

Then we which are alive and remain 1Th 4:17

Now look at John in his letter and the plural pronoun "we";

And the world passeth away..... (cp 1Cor.7:31)

Little children, it is the last time (last hour): and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now it is the last time (last hour). 1Jn 2:17-18

..... when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 1Jn 3:2

John wrote that the world was passing away, it was the last hour and the Lord's coming was immediate and he and his readers would see Christ. It was John who wrote the book of Revelation and in that we have the same combination of the Lord's death and His imminent return thus;

.. things which must shortly come to pass.... Rev 1:1

Blessed is he that readeth ... for the time is at hand. Rev 1:3

from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; Rev 1:4

from Jesus Christ .. that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, Rev 1:5

.. behold, I come quickly; Rev 22:12

He .. saith, Surely I come quickly. Rev 22:20

John's letter said it was the last hour, John's Revelation said the Lord's return was shortly to come to pass. There is no change as to the fact of the Lord's imminent return in his letter or the visions given him. But a tradition says Revelation was written many years after the close of the Gospels and Acts, yet is this so? When Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians, he mentioned someone who had a vision of some of the same things recorded in Revelation;

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago,.. such an one caught up (away, not necessarily up) to the third heaven. 2Co 12:2

How that he was caught up (away) into paradise, 2Co 12:4

The new heaven and paradise are features of Revelation and if Paul was speaking of John, then John had the visions of Revelation fourteen years before Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Another point about John, the Lord had confirmed that James and John would drink the same cup as He would, namely suffer untimely deaths, Mark 10:35-40. James was killed by Herod in Acts 12 and if the Lord said both would suffer martyrdom, then it would be counter to that if John lived to be a ripe old age.

Something to think about, the Gospels and Acts were the recorded ends of the ages for the nation of Israel and the earthly redemptive purpose, not the beginning of the church which is His Body and the heavenly purpose.

Much of the New Testament is full of passages which tell us clearly that the events recorded in it were events in the end of the age or world. How is it that such plain statements are lost to our understanding and our tradition holds sway that Christ came to start something new for us.

Perhaps the answer lies in our misconception that everything in the New Testament is directed to and is all about us today. The Bible study rules demand we ask, who, what, where, when and why? If after asking these questions we find that our calling was not in operation during the Gospels and Acts, we have not lost anything but rather gained clarity about our calling.

What if our Lord had to die on that cross for some people who would not be going to heaven with us but who would dwell with the Lord on the earth and New Earth? What if we have lumped together all of God's redeemed and imagined all going to heaven when in fact, God has different families or fatherhoods for different places. Here are some passages from Ephesians & Colossians to ponder prayerfully;

[For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in Heaven and on earth is named](#), Eph. 3:14-15 (LITV).

The Father has families destined for the earth and our family for the heavenly places.

Ephesians reveals the plan and purpose of God for us today which plan goes back before the foundation of the world. Through a secret or mystery given to Paul alone, the Father tells us of His plan to head up in Christ all of these families, whether they are families on the earth, or families in heaven. Eph.1:10 isn't about everyone going to heaven, it is telling us our Lord will head up families on earth and families in heaven;

[making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, for the administration of the fullness of the times to head up all things in Christ, both the things in the heavens, and the things on earth, in Him](#), Eph 1:9-10 (LITV).

[And He is the Head of the body, the assembly, who is the Beginning, the First-born out of the dead, that He be preeminent in all things; because all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him, and through Him making peace by the blood of His cross, to reconcile all things to Himself; through Him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens](#). Col 1:18-20 (LITV).

When our Savior died on that cross, he bore the sin and sins for all the members of the different families. Those appointed to an inheritance on the earth are as much tainted with sin and sins as we who are heirs in the above heavens. We make a grave assumption that simply because we are reading of Christ's shed blood in every passage in the NT, that we are the family being addressed.

Let us take the 12 disciples as an example. The Lord chose them (Judas was replaced in Acts1) and even though they did not understand before the cross, they certainly did after that He had to suffer for sin and sins. Look at Peter after he had his mind opened to understand the Scriptures, Lk.24:45;

[Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:](#), 1Pe 1:18-20

Peter knew the Lord was that Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and Peter knew that on that cross the penalty of his sin was paid;

[Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed](#). 1Pe 2:24

Peter and we Christians today have something in common, we have the same Savior. However, what did the Lord promise Peter? He was promised that he would sit on a

throne judging one of the tribes of Israel. Peter was saved by the shed blood of Christ but Peter has an inheritance in the earthly part of our Lord's Kingdom;

Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. Mat 19:27-29

When the Lord returns to sit on the throne of His glory then Peter will sit on a throne judging a tribe of Israel where lands are part of his glorious future. Peter's throne will be on the earth in the Promised Land and the throne of the Lord's glory in the Gospels and Acts will be in the same location. This is precisely the promise to Mary in Lk.1:32.

Peter was an Israelite, but what about those of other nations who had faith? Simply because Gentiles believed back then does not mean our family or church existed in the Gospels and Acts. Look at a Gentile who had faith back in the Gospels;

When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. 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. Mat 8:10-11

The Centurion was one of the other nations who would come and sit down with Israel's fathers in the kingdom on the earth. Peter and the Centurion belonged to an earthly family and perhaps all others of faith during the Gospels and Acts were part of that earthly family as well. Could it be that it was this earthly family, not ours, which was waiting for that imminent return of the Lord at Trumpets at the end of the age?

With this possibility to consider, please look carefully at Peter's gospel to those at Pentecost. Not once in Acts 2 or 3 did Peter assure anyone they were going to heaven but rather IF they repented and turned back to God, Christ would be sent back to them; But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, ... And killed the Prince of life, ... Act 3:14-15 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: Act 3:19-20

The imminent Trumpet return of the Lord back in the Gospels and Acts was the hope of that family with an inheritance on the earth. It is not the hope of our family going to the heavenly places.

The Christian community is divided on various doctrinal issues, but unanimous that our Lord came to start the church to which we belong today. Ultimately this means accepting that the books we call the Old Testament are about Israel and the earth, but as soon as we open the first page of the New Testament our church has been revealed and the hope is a heavenly one. Most of Christianity is united in the view that all believers will go to heaven when the Lord returns at the Trumpet, second coming.

However, we have seen in the Matt.8 that a Centurion of great faith is one of those who would sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven along with the 12 disciples who would sit on thrones in the very same place. If we accept the promise of the Lord to these believers, then not all the New Testament is about every believer going to heaven because the Kingdom of Heaven in the Gospels and Acts is not in heaven.

The Kingdom in Matt.8 is the Kingdom out of heaven, not in heaven. The Lord said this; [Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would fight so that I might not be delivered to the Jews. But now My kingdom is not from here. Joh 18:36](#)

The Lord assured Pilate that His Kingdom did not have its origins out of this world; its origins and nature were “out of” or “from” heaven. The Kingdom of God or of Heaven in the Gospels was not in heaven, it was on the earth but heavenly in all qualities, rules, regulations and disposition. The prophets spoke of this; [Also I have set his seed forever, and his throne as the days of the heavens. Psa 89:29](#)

[A Give the King Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness to the King's son. He will judge Your people in righteousness, and Your poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people; He shall save the children of the needy, and shall crush in pieces the cruel one. They shall fear You as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth. In His days the righteous shall flourish; and abundance of peace, until the moon is not. He shall also have the rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. Psa 72:1-8](#)

[For, lo, the days come, says Jehovah, that I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, says Jehovah. And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave their fathers, and they shall possess it. Jer 30:3](#)
[And you shall be My people, and I will be your God. Jer 30:22](#)

[Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, your King comes to you. He is righteous and victorious, meek and riding on an ass, even on a colt, the son of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem. And the battle bow shall be cut off, and He shall speak peace to the nations; and His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.](#)
[You also, by the blood of Your covenant I have freed Your prisoners out of the pit in which is no water. Zec 9:9-11](#)

The words “blood of Your covenant” in Zechariah are not linked with heaven, but our Lord’s dominion “from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.” The blood shed on that cross does not insist that the earthly program has changed and a heavenly one introduced. Not all the New Testament is about us.

The Old Testament and most of the New is about Israel, and Gentiles blessed with her in the Promised Land. In the Old Testament, Joshua (Jesus) led Israel into the Land at Trumpets, see Joshua 6. In most of the New Testament, Israel, and Gentiles blessed with

her, will be gathered into that same Land when The Lord comes again to the earth at Trumpets.

When our Savior rode into Jerusalem to face that cruel cross, and on which cross He shed his blood to ratify the New Covenant, what purpose was in view, an earthly one or our heavenly one? Here is Zechariah in Matthew;

All this was done so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your King comes to you, meek, and sitting on an ass, even a colt the foal of an ass." Mat 21:4-5

The shed blood of the Lord is the basis upon which salvation and the re-gathering of Israel is based. Israel will be redeemed and made righteous in their Messiah, see Is.45. It is therefore a terrible mistake to assume that Israel was put aside at the cross, when that cross was at Passover, the first step in Israel's national deliverance.

Let us tie some loose ends together.

During the Gospels and Acts period, the Lord's second coming at the last Trumpet and the shout of the arch angel was imminent.

The Lord shed His blood and died on that cross so that Israel and Gentiles blessed with her might be saved and gathered into their earthly Kingdom. The Kingdom governed by heaven but on the earth where the Lord will reign from the river to the ends of the earth.

The disciples were promised 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel, and believers from other nations would sit down in that earthly Kingdom with Israel's fathers.

With these facts before us, is it possible that the Trumpet return of the Lord, which was so near at hand in the ends of the ages way back then, is in fact an earthly hope? I believe it is.

The dispensational truths about our calling were only revealed after this earthly program was postponed at Acts 28. Yes! The Lord died on that cross for our sin, sins and justification, but these redemptive truths are not evidence that our calling had been revealed when He died on that cross, or anywhere during the Acts period.

So far we have seen that the return of the Lord was something the believers of the Gospels and Acts period were expecting. The preference was for single believers to stay single, married men were to live as though they did not have any wives at all and were certainly not to seek wives and all this advice was based upon the fact that when these words from Paul were written, the time was short;

[But this I say, brothers, The time is short. It remains that both those who have wives should be as not having one. And they who weep are as though they did not weep. And they who rejoice are as though they did not rejoice. And they who buy are as though they did not possess. And they who use this world are as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world is passing away. 1Co 7:29-31](#)

The time was short until what? What was it Paul was expecting? We find the easy answer in 1Cor.15 thus;

[Behold, I speak a mystery to you; we shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in a glance of an eye, at the last trumpet. For a trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed. 1Co 15:51-52](#)

The believers were to stay single because the triumphant return of the Lord was very near and they would be changed into their new bodies. Not all of them would die. The fact of the Lord's imminent return way back when much of the New Testament was written sheds light on Matt.19:21, Acts 2:45 and 4:33-35 and other Scriptures.

However, we have also discovered that our traditions have relocated the Kingdom of Heaven out of its correct place. The word Heaven does not demand we transfer this heavenly Kingdom on the earth, up into heaven. The Lord Himself was promised the throne of His father David Lk.1:32 and the prophets spoke of the heavenly control over this earthly Kingdom as we saw in Ps.72, 89, Jer.30 and Zech.9.

So then, if the Kingdom of Heaven was not in heaven, what were the believers of Corinthians expecting to happen when that last Trumpet blew and the Lord came in the clouds? Were they expecting to go to heaven? Was the "rapture" a snatching away into heaven? These are essential questions and we might be shocked to find we have built tradition upon tradition.

If the Kingdom of Heaven is heaven's rule on the earth, the heavenly country of Hebrews 11:13-16, then could it be that the Trumpet return of the Lord was associated with the earth, and the new earth and not heaven itself. If our view is correct that our Lord was coming back to the earth at Trumpets, then isn't this passage, written when the Lord's return was imminent, clear and simple;

[.. to wait \(Is.25:9\) for his Son to come back from heaven.1Th 1:10 ISV.](#)

It means what it says, the Lord was coming back to those believers during the Gospels and Acts, but after Acts28 we will go to Him. There is a huge difference and a huge mistake if we put our going to Him in passages which speak of The Lord coming to them.

Returning to Corinthians written during the Acts period, Paul advised those believers to remain single because not all of them would die before the Trumpet coming back to them of the Lord. So what was in Paul's mind when he wrote about that Trumpet in 1Cor.15? Was Paul writing about heaven? The answer is clearly no, and if we are indeed sola scriptura, then the following Scriptures must be noted very carefully indeed. Here is Paul writing way back then, to the faithful in Corinth.

First he preaches the same gospel we preach today:

[For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, 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; 1Co 15:3-4.](#)

Christ died at Passover, a Jewish earthly Feast, see 1Cor.5. Then Paul writes of the Lord fulfilling another aspect of those Feasts, namely the first fruit of Unleavened Bread; But now Christ has risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruit of those who slept. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first-fruit, and afterward they who are Christ's at His coming; 1Co 15:20, 22-23

Then Paul writes of the Lord's coming (back to them) at Trumpets, another Jewish Feast; Behold, I speak a mystery to you; we shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in a glance of an eye, at the last trumpet. For a trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and when this mortal shall put on immortality, then will take place the word that is written,

"Death is swallowed up in victory. (ISAIAH 25:8)

O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" (HOSEA 13:14) 1Co 15:51-55

When Paul wrote about the Lord's (second) coming in Corinthians, he did not have heaven in his mind, but referred back to the OT earthly hope. Paul clearly says, when the Lord returns at Trumpets "THEN will take place the word that is written", not the word of our traditions. If the Word written is about the earth, then who of us can change it to heaven? Here are the Words written that will be fulfilled at Trumpets. If Isaiah and Hosea are writing about the earth, then so is Paul in Corinthians;

And in this mountain Jehovah of Hosts shall make a feast of fat things for all the people, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of refined wine on the lees. And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering which covers all people, and the veil that is woven over all nations. **He will swallow up death in victory;** and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from all faces. And He shall take away from all the earth the rebuke of His people. For Jehovah has spoken. And one shall say in that day, Lo, this is our God. We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is Jehovah; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation. For the hand of Jehovah shall rest in this mountain, and Moab shall be trampled under Him, even as straw is trampled in the water of a dung pit. Isa 25:6-10

Paul also used Hosea who, like Isaiah, knows nothing of anyone going to heaven;

Yet I am Jehovah your God from the land of Egypt, and you shall know no God but Me. For there is no Savior besides Me.

O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help.

I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, where are your plagues; O Grave, where is your ruin! Repentance shall be hidden from My eyes. Hos 13:4, 9, 14

How did God save Israel from Egypt? He saved them through the steps of the Feasts. What is Paul writing about in Corinthians? The fulfillment of those same prophetic Feasts; that greater, earthly salvation for Israel and those blessed with her, see Gals.3. When the OT Trumpet blew Joshua (Jesus) led Israel into the Land and when Paul wrote 1Cor.15, the imminent hope back then, was the coming back to that same Land at Trumpets by the greater Joshua. Not all the NT is about us today.

When Paul wrote to the churches up until Acts 28, the Feasts given to Israel were prominent in his letters and there is a reason for this: Israel's feasts were prophetic and were unfolding before them, at that time.

Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and Trumpets were steps taken to deliver Israel out of a foreign land, Egypt, into the Land of Promise. The first step included the shed blood and death of the Lamb and the end result was Israel gathered into the Land. These things anticipated Israel's future glory; they do not foresee the glory of our church which is His Body. It was Israel's glory during the Gospels and Acts period. Our glory was not revealed until after Israel was set aside at the announcement of Isaiah 6 in Acts 28. At that announcement Israel was nationally let go. After Acts 28 the purposes of God changed from earthly ones to heavenly ones and we must know these differences.

We have seen in 1Cor.15 that they, at that time would not all die, and at the fulfillment of Trumpets there would be a resurrection to the earth. Back in the Acts period, believers were not expecting to die and their resurrection was not to heaven as we have imagined. How can these things be? Because we have read back into that passage and time our hope, which had not been revealed at that time and is not in the passage.

Another classic example of reading into an Acts period passage things of the post Acts purposes is 1Thessalonians 4. This is commonly referred to as the "rapture" passage. It is widely held that at this event the Lord comes into the air, snatches the bride up to him and He turns back and returns to heaven. This is taking an earthly hope given prior to Acts 28 and reading into it a post Acts hope foreign to the passage.

Thessalonians, like Corinthians, was written in the Acts period when the return of the Lord to the earth was imminent. Like Corinthians, the resurrection of Thessalonians is at the fulfillment of Trumpets and Paul is very clear again that he, along with others living at that time, would not die but live until that coming;

[For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord 1Th 4:15](#)

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

The context of these two letters will not allow our tradition that we are going to heaven. Thessalonians is about another company of believers going to the earth. Our post Acts inheritance is in heaven, but the means whereby we arrive there and the timing of our hope is not found in Thessalonians written before Acts 28. The Thessalonians were waiting for God's Son out of heaven to return TO them; Thessalonians is not about us. [... you turned from idols to God..and .. wait for His Son from \(out of\) Heaven..1Th 1:9-10](#)

This event regarding Israel and the earthly program is clearly found in prophesy. Let us look at one passage from 2Thess., and link it back to prophesy;

[and to give rest .. at the revealing of the Lord Jesus from Heaven with.. angels.. 2Th 1:7](#)

See Matt.16:27, 25:31, Acts 1:11 and Dan.7:9-10,13-14, 22, 27.

[in flaming fire taking vengeance who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 2Th 1:8-9](#)

See Deut.4:11,24, Numb.11:1, 16:35, Ps.50:2-6, Is.66:15-16 and Dan.7:10.

[when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all those who believe \(because our testimony among you was believed\) in that Day. 2Th 1:10](#)

The Lord is coming back to them, to be glorified among them. Not one word or phrase of 1Thess.4 remotely suggests anyone is going back into heaven at the last Trumpet.

Those saints back then, before our calling was revealed to Paul, were waiting for the Lord to come back to them in the same way He went from them, Acts1:11. He went up in the clouds and He was coming back to them in the clouds and they, like Moses, would go up and meet Him as He returned. See Ex.19.

The word for “meet” is very specific. This word only occurs four times in the New Testament and not once does it imply that those going to meet the dignitary were expecting to travel to that place from which the dignitary came. The word for coming, “parousia” as in 1Thess.4:15, means “to arrive” not to take away. The words “bring with Him” in 1Thess.4:14 do not mean “take away with him”. Here are the other occurrences of the word meet;

[Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be likened to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Mat 25:1](#)

[And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes! Go out to meet him. Mat 25:6](#)

As in the east, the Bridegroom comes to the Bride, not for her. The Virgins went out to meet Him as He came to them. And after He had arrived, He sat upon His throne as Matt.25 goes on to say;

[But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He shall sit on the throne of His glory. And all nations shall be gathered before Him. And He shall separate them from one another, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. Mat 25:31-32](#)

See Joel 3, Zeph.3 and Zech.14:4-9.

“Meet” also occurs when those from Rome who came to meet Paul, did not return with him to Caesarea in Israel, but turned and returned with Paul to Rome;

[..... And so we went toward Rome. And the brothers from there hearing of us, they came to meet us And when we came into Rome, Act 28:14-16](#)

During the Gospels and Acts, the believers were waiting for the Lord to come back to them, and the Lord would have returned at the Trumpet blast approximately 2000 years ago if a condition had been met. That condition was not met, and at Acts 28 that imminent return of the Lord was postponed and a new dispensation was revealed for the believers through Paul alone. In this new dispensation our hope is not the fulfillment of the feast of Trumpets, but the glorious appearing of Christ which takes place before He descends from the Father’s right hand.

Our traditions have discolored our eyes to the gospels and Acts period. We have been taught that once the Old Testament closed the New introduces something new and different, but this creates monumental problems. Much of the New Testament is a continuation of God's purposes for Israel and when we mix the heavenly purpose with Israel's earthly one, confusion results.

In the OT, the Feasts were the steps by which God delivered and gathered Israel into their Promised Land. At Trumpets the Lord gathered Israel into their Land, Joshua 6, and earlier at another Trumpet blast, He came to them with angels and in the clouds and some went up to meet him there, see Ex.19 & 24. This is the God given pattern for the NT. If we read into the Gospels and Acts our calling instead of the OT calling for Israel, we have problems.

All the way to Acts 28 the believers were waiting for the fulfillment of this earthly festive hope. During Acts this Trumpet return of the Lord to the earth was imminent and so they were not expecting to die, they were selling their possessions and living communally; Acts 4:34-35 and 6:1-2.

However, those things did not take place back at that time. They will take place in the future, but what happened; what caused them to be postponed? The answer is very simple, the obligation was upon the nation of Israel to repent and believe in Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah, and then the Lord would have returned way back then.

Look at Peter's gospel to Israel at Pentecost, one more time;

[And now, brothers, I know that you did it through ignorance, as also your rulers did. But those things which God before had shown by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He fulfilled in this manner. Therefore repent and convert so 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, who before was proclaimed to you, Act 3:17-20](#)

The first and second coming of the Lord are evident in this passage. The first coming had just taken place as recorded in the Gospels and His second coming was to follow shortly thereafter, if Israel repented and turned back to the Lord. Notice "send....to you", nothing could be plainer here. If the nation repented and turned back to God, Christ would have been sent back to them to enjoy His earthly glory. The first coming was to suffer for sin and sins but the second coming was to ascend Zion and be installed on the throne of His father David. Suffering before earthly glory was the OT theme as the Lord confirmed in Luke 24:26-27.

Look at the conditional aspect of John the Baptist and Malachi's prophesy about Elijah. That Prophet was expected before the coming of the Lord in fiery judgment; that is His second coming. Malachi spoke of these things;

[Behold, I am sending you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Jehovah. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers, that I not come and strike the earth with utter destruction. Mal 4:5-6](#)

The Lord shows the conditional timing of Israel's blessings in restoration when he spoke of John here:

[For this is the one \(John the Baptist\) of whom it is written, "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who shall prepare Your way before You." Mat 11:10](#)
[And if you will receive it, this is Elijah who is to come. Mat 11:14](#)

If they, Israel, will receive it; that is the message of repentance John and the Lord preached. The call to repentance was to Israel for that Kingdom they desired had drawn near.

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Mat 3:1-2 (:3 = Is.40)

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent! For the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

Mat 4:17

Then He began to upbraid the cities in which most of His mighty works were done, because they did not repent. Mat 11:20

Repentance, then the Kingdom but Israel rejected the message of John and of their own Messiah and crucified Him, but for this they were forgiven, Lk.23:34. The kingdom of heaven was not withdrawn; Israel was not cast aside at the cross or Pentecost.

The call to repentance was resumed at the beginning of Acts and had Israel obeyed the message, then the Lord's return would have taken place. This call to repentance to the nation of Israel continued through Acts, both to those in the land and those outside.

Moses was read every Sabbath day and here are Moses' words to the nation. Notice the condition;

And it shall be when all these things have come on you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and when you shall call them to mind among all the nations where Jehovah your God has driven you, and shall return to Jehovah your God and shall obey His voice according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, with all your heart, and with all your soul, then Jehovah your God will turn your captivity. And He will have compassion on you, and will return and gather you from all the nations where Jehovah your God has scattered you. If you are driven out into the outermost parts of the heavens, Jehovah your God will gather you from there, and He will bring you from there. And Jehovah your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. And He will do you good, and multiply you above your fathers.

And Jehovah your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed, to love Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. Deu 30:1-6

Israel's blessings were dependent upon their obedience; Israel's salvation is not dependent upon their obedience. The Lord will return to that nation sometime in the future, but had they repented so long ago then that earthly Kingdom governed out of heaven would have been established as the Lord had promised.

The Scriptures of the New Testament are very exciting indeed, when we see the differing things within it. The Lord requires us to recognize the things differing in His Words so we can compare and learn from these differences.

Why did those early believers sell and distribute their possessions but later Paul exhorts us to work with our hands to have to give to those in need? Why did Paul advise against marriage and encourage the widows to devote themselves to the Lord, but later marriage was a requirement for the bishops and deacons and the younger widows were encouraged to marry? We believe the answer is that up until Acts 28, the Lord's return was imminent, but once Israel was nationally set aside, that imminent return was set aside for a future date as well and changes were introduced.

When we trace the witness from Matt.1:1 to Acts 28, we see clearly it was directed first and foremost to the children of Israel. John the Baptist, the Lord, Peter and Paul during the Acts period, witnessed to those people and that witness was accompanied with supernatural signs and wonders. These divine credentials demanded a response from God's chosen people Israel. We saw last time Moses already warned them that disobedience brought punishment, but a positive, repentant response brought blessing. See Deut.4:30-31 and 30:1-6. Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand is understood more clearly with this message from Moses understood.

Down through the years, the Lord used other prophets to speak to this special people but for the most part these prophets were ignored and Israel suffered. However, if they did repent and convert (turn back) then blessing followed. See 1Sam.7:3, 2Ch.15:4 and Jer.7:21-27. Blessing was promised when that nation turned from its rebellious and disobedient ways. Here is a passage from Zechariah sent by the Lord during the captivity years;

In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the Word of Jehovah came to Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, Jehovah has been very angry with your fathers.

And you say to them, So says Jehovah of Hosts: **Turn to Me, says Jehovah of Hosts, and I will turn to you,** says Jehovah of Hosts.

Be not as your fathers, to whom the former prophets have proclaimed to them, saying, So says Jehovah of Hosts: Turn now from your evil ways and your evil doings. But they did not hear nor listen to Me, says Jehovah.

Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But My Words and My statutes which I commanded My servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? And they returned and said, As Jehovah of Hosts planned to do to us, according to our ways and according to our doings, so He has done with us. Zec 1:1-6

So the angel who talked with me said to me, Cry out, saying, So says Jehovah of Hosts: **I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.** Zec 1:14

Cry out again, saying, So says Jehovah of Hosts: My cities shall yet be spread abroad through good, and Jehovah shall again overflow with goodness, and **Jehovah shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.** Zec 1:17

The Lord will do for Israel according to His promises made to the fathers, but the timing of that was contingent upon Israel turning from their evil ways in repentance. Other prophets had made the same plea to Israel; they were to turn back to the Lord and He would turn back to them;

O Israel, return to Jehovah your God, for you have fallen by your iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to Jehovah. Say to Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, that we may repay with the calves of our lips. Hos 14:1-2

I will heal their backslidings; I will love them freely; for My anger has turned away from him. I will be as the dew to Israel; he shall grow as the lily and cast out his roots like Lebanon. Hos 14:4-5

And again;

Yet even now, says Jehovah, turn to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. Yes, tear your heart and not your robes, and turn to Jehovah your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and He pities because of the evil. Who knows if He will turn and have pity and leave a blessing behind Him, a food offering and a drink offering to Jehovah your God? Joe 2:12-14

The Lord has a wonderful purpose for Israel; that great kingdom of heaven on earth they longed to see, but that kingdom was to appear when they turned back to Him. Consider this passage from the gospels;

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to her, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not! Mat 23:37

How often I would have gathered you? That means opportunities were given even before John, Our Lord, Peter and Paul cried repent. The Lord's purpose will be a reality one day, but the timing was conditional during the Gospels and Acts. He wanted to gather them, but they would not be gathered by repenting and turning back to Him.

At the cross, the Lord sought Israel's forgiveness and their sin of ignorance was pardoned. The Acts period was yet another gracious opportunity for Israel to repent, turn back and receive the blessing of the Kingdom, but like their fathers before them, "they would not". Thus the nation was set aside at Acts 28 and our calling introduced through Paul alone. This change of dispensation explains the different sets of conditions obvious to us who read God's Word carefully.

The Lord and Israel were in a covenant relationship; they were bound together by an agreement. This Old Covenant contained blessings and curses upon the entire nation dependent upon their faithfulness or otherwise. Moses gave them these in Lev.26 and Deut.28. When the nation moved away from the Lord they were called upon to repent and convert or turn back to Him see, Deut.30:1-6, Joel 2, Zech.1 and Hosea 14:1-2.

Deut.30 speaks to those who had been scattered outside the Land and during the time covered by the book of Acts we have the witness taken to these scattered Israelis. The book of Acts is not the "early church"; it is the message of salvation in the Lord Jesus the Messiah taken to the dispersion of Israel. Had they repented the Lord would have returned and the earthly kingdom established. Would they repent and turn back to the Lord? Sadly the response is consistently bad; rejection and persecution of the Lord's servants marks this book as an historic disaster for Israel and the imminent return of the Lord is postponed at Acts 28.

Acts begins with a question of hope from the disciples who knew exactly what they were asking, see Lk.24:45 and Acts1:3;
[Then, indeed, these coming together, they asked Him, saying, Lord, do You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?](#) Act 1:6

The Lord recognizes the question as legitimate, but his answer shows the timing was conditional upon Israel's response to the message.

Peter indicts the nation, including those of the dispersion who had journeyed to Jerusalem for the Feast, of the wicked hands which had crucified their Messiah but offers them hope if they repent. God promised that if they turned back to Him, He would turn back to them, this was the agreement;
[Therefore repent and convert so 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, who before was proclaimed to you,](#) Act 3:19-20

Some responded but the leaders and majority did not. At Acts 12 the record of the witness in the Land concludes with the martyrdom of James and the Lord's striking down of Israel's King; enter Paul. Paul who had witnessed in the Land as per Acts 9, is now the primary agent to the dispersed Israelites and Acts 17 sums up his witness during Acts;
[And according to Paul's custom, he went in to them and reasoned with them out of the Scriptures on three sabbaths, opening and setting forth that Christ must have suffered, and to have risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach to you is Christ.](#) Act 17:2-3

The Jews refused to heed the message and so according to the agreement between God and Israel; the Father introduces Gentiles as a provocation;
[They have moved Me to jealousy with a no-god. They have provoked Me to anger with their vanities. And I will move them to jealousy with a no-people. I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.](#) Deut.32:21

[But I say, Have they not heard? Yes indeed, their voice went out into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses says, "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you." But Isaiah is very bold and says, "I was found by those who did not seek Me, I became known to those who did not ask after Me." But to Israel He says, "All day long I have stretched forth My hands to a disobeying and gainsaying people."](#) Rom.10:18-21

[And so I ask, "They have not stumbled so as to fall, have they?" Of course not! On the contrary, because of their stumbling, salvation has come to the gentiles to make the Jews jealous. Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their fall means riches for the gentiles, how](#)

much more will their full inclusion mean! I am speaking to you gentiles. Because I am an apostle to the gentiles, I am glorifying my ministry in the hope that I can make my people jealous and save some of them. Rom.11:11-14 ISV

The Gentiles believers of the Acts were not the church which is His Body, they were by faith, in Christ and thus the seed of Abraham and heirs of the Land given to him by promise, see Gal.3:17-29. The Gentile believers of Acts were graft into the Olive Tree, partaking of Israel's fatness and were thus obliged to financially support them, see Roms.15:27 and 11:17-26. In this context, the wild Olive branches were to stimulate the tree with all Israel being saved as a consequence. However, while Israel was moved to jealousy it was not a productive form and they remained obstinate and unrepentant.

The words of the Lord to them were about to come to pass yet again;

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Deu 28:15

The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. Deu 28:25

At Acts 28 Paul preached the message to the dispersed Jews in Rome but they argued amongst themselves and as a nation were let go;

And disagreeing with one another, they were let go, Act 28:25

Over a period covered by the Gospels and Acts, Israel heard and rejected the message and according to the agreement, Israel was once again scattered into all the kingdoms of the earth. The Romans dispersed the Israelites and by 130AD the Land was bereft of the people destined to be a great and mighty nation.

Sometime after the pronouncement of Isaiah 6 in Acts 28, the Lord revealed to Paul the present dispensation of the grace of God and our calling, the church which is His Body.

We have now tied together two very important elements of the Gospels and New Testament times. These clearly show our traditions have misinterpreted the purpose of God during them. The Gospels and Acts were not the beginnings of anything new; our church did not start or was revealed at that time. The Gospels and Acts were a continuation of God's earthly purpose through Israel.

Firstly, Israel had an agreement/Covenant with God, they were to obey Him, if not they would suffer. The suffering included being ruled by foreigners, Deut.28:25. Secondly however, if Israel turned back to the Lord in true repentance, then He would turn back to them and deliver them under the terms of that same covenant, Deut.30:1-6. This deliverance for Israel was found in the "second coming" of their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, He would be sent back as their King and thus the Kingdom restored, Deut.30:7. His return was expected all the way to Acts 28 but that return was conditional upon Israel turning back to God which they nationally refused to do. Acts was Israel's opportunity; if they turned back, the Lord would return and so during Acts God waited. The Gospels and Acts period can be summed up by the Roms.10:20-21 quote from Isaiah thus;

I am sought by those who asked not for Me; I am found by those who did not seek Me. I said, Behold Me, behold Me, to a nation not calling on My name. I have spread out My hands all the day to a rebellious people who walk in the way not good, after their own thoughts; a people who without ceasing provoke Me to anger to My face.... Isa 65:1-3

Even the inclusion of the Gentiles during the Acts period, Deut.32:21, did not have the desired effect, namely the conversion of the Israelis. Finally, at Acts 28, the witness to a group of dispersed Israelis in Rome is recorded. The same message of the earthly kingdom hope in The Lord Christ Jesus was given, but the response was non-committal.

From Jerusalem to Rome and all points in between and afar, the Lord sent His messengers to Israel but without success. Some individuals responded, but the nation remained obstinate and uncircumcised in heart and ears. In Acts 28 through Paul, the judgment prophesy of Isaiah 6 is pronounced upon the entire nation thus:

And some indeed believed the things that were said, others did not believe. And disagreeing with one another, they were let go, Paul saying one word: Well did the Holy Spirit speak through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, "Go to this people and say: Hearing you shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see and not perceive. For the heart of this people was fattened, and they have heard with their ears dully; and they closed their eyes; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Therefore be it known to you that the salvation of God is sent to the nations, and they will hear. Act 28:24-28

Here is a structure/précis of this Isaiah judgment, please note the conditional aspect, the basis upon which Israel was not "healed" with the return of Christ at that time;

Acts28:25b-:26a

The word of the Holy Ghost (Is.6) unto our (Israel's) fathers,

Acts 28:26b-:27

this people (Israel) they hear ... not understand. They see ... do not perceive, for their hearts fat, ears dull of hearing and eyes closed

least at any time they should have eyes they see, they should have ears to hear and hearts to understand **and be converted**

I should heal (cure, save) them

Acts28:28.

The salvation of God is SENT unto the Gentiles

Isaiah 6 is about Israel and the three key phrases are set in bold; “this people”, “least... at any time, be converted” and “I should heal (cure, save) them”. Israel had closed their eyes and this is instrumental in the “least at any time, the Lord should heal or save them.” Israel did not see and repent and they were not healed with Christ’s return.

Acts started with the question in 1:6, “Will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?” The book of Acts closes with answer, not at this time or “least at any time” because the people who were obliged to repent and turn back refused to do so. They did not turn back to Him; He did not turn back to them and send Christ back.

The word for converted in Acts 28:27 is the same word in Acts 3:19 which says, “repent and be converted...and He shall send Jesus Christ.” But in Acts 28, Isaiah says they have calloused hearts, dull hearing, closed their hearts and thus did not repent and turn back, and consequently Christ was not sent back. The Lord stretched out His hands to this people over a 40 year period, waiting for them to respond to Him, they did not and the imminent return of the Lord we read about in the letters written during that time was postponed to a future date.

It is Israel prior to the announcement of Is.6, it is the Nations afterwards. At this announcement, Israel lost their position, the purpose of God for the world through that Nation was put to one side and a new purpose for the Nations and heaven, independent of Israel was introduced through Paul. This is found in those wonderful prison epistles; Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 2Timothy and Philemon.

Brian R Kelson

brianacts28@gmail.com

www.Acts28.net