

The letters of Paul

The apostle Paul is the only one identified as the Apostle of the Gentiles or Nations and as such his words are the Word of Christ and vital for us today. Those who demand we study the “words of Christ”, in other words, draw most of our lessons from the Gospels are directing attention away from the Words of Christ for today.

[For this cause, I, Paul, am the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you nations, Eph 3:1](#)

compare Roms.15:8 and 15:16

Discussion abounds as to the authorship of Hebrews but I believe it is to be included in the letters of Paul making a total of fourteen (14). Many have tried to date these letters, but the most important thing for us is their content.

Paul tells us we must distinguish things that differ and rightly divide the Word of Truth (Phils.1:9-10 & 2Tim.2:15). If we ignore these Bible study rules we will be ashamed and unapproved. These rules must be applied to Paul’s writings as being the words of truth. During Acts for example, the Gentiles partook of Israel’s spiritual things, after Acts 28 the believing Jews and Gentiles enjoyed things previously hidden in God, compare Roms.15:27 and Eph.3.

There are teachings in Paul which do not change and can be found in all his writings such as, Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and we should all strive to run the race with patience. See 1Cor.15:3-4, Gal.1:3-4, Eph.1:7, Heb.10:4, 12, Acts 13:39 & Titus 3:7. But there are some blatant differences in our Apostle’s letters and these we should note very carefully.

During the period covered by the book of Acts, Paul was proclaiming our Lord Christ Jesus as the One in whom forgiveness of sins and righteousness could be found, but at the same time he was presenting the Lord as Israel’s coming Messiah. The soon coming Kingdom on the earth was the expectation before believers at that time. Not only so, back then, the Gentiles were saved to provoke Israel and the figure of the Olive tree in Roms.11 cannot be understood any other way as a figure of Gentiles salvation prior to Acts 28, see Roms.11:11-28 and 15:27 again.

After the book of Acts closed, Paul wrote of forgiveness of sins and righteousness in the Saviour but now, the Lord is seated at the Father's right as the Head of the church which is His body and we, members of that calling are the fullness of Him who fills all in all. We have been raised and seated with Him, and in that Day will appear with Him there.

Here is a chart showing the two groups of Paul's letters. These are not date stamped by the Holy Spirit, but they are stamped with a completely different purpose by the Holy Spirit. May He bring enlightenment to the Word for those who study to show themselves approved.

Acts 28 The great dispensational boundary Paul's Ministries

Acts 28:25-28 Israel nationally was put to one side for a time. The salvation of God was then sent to the Nations independent of Israel. Post Acts 28 a new dispensation was given to Paul alone. Eph.3:1-10. Col.1:23-29 and 2Tim.1:8-12.

test things differing (Phils.1:9-10) in these two groups of letters

<p>Paul's Acts period statement about his ministry and the letters which harmonize with it. Acts 26:6-7, 22.</p> <p>"witnessing ..saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said was going to happen"</p>	<p>During and up to Acts 28 the dispensational purposes of God relate to the earth and the N.J. At Acts 28 these purposes were put to one side with Israel until a future date. During Acts time Christ is Saviour, King and Bridegroom, the believers are a prophetic remnant, chaste virgins to judge the world.</p> <p>Approx. 190 OT quotes Jewish themes and hope</p> <p>1&2 Thessalonians 1&2 Corinthians Hebrews Romans</p> <p>Acts 28-Israel set aside for a time.</p>
<p>Paul's post Acts period statement about his ministry and the letters which harmonize with it. Eph.3:7-9.</p> <p>.. the unsearchable riches of Christ... the dispensation of the mystery which .. has been hidden in God.....</p> <p>After Acts 28 the dispensational purposes of God changed and relate to the heavenly places where Christ sits at God's right hand. This dispensation of Grace is parenthetical. Christ is Saviour, Head, the believers are His Body, seated in the above heavens, some might reign with Him there.</p>	<p>We live on this side of Acts 28</p> <p>Approx. 8 OT quotes Non Jewish themes and new hope</p> <p>Ephesians Philippians Colossians Titus, Philemon 1&2 Timothy</p>

The Gospels, the letters of James, Peter, John, Jude and Revelation fit here

The great dispensational boundary is made clear by rightly dividing the Word of Truth; by testing things that differ; Phils.1:9-10, 2Tim.2:15. Most Christians are dispensationalists and draw a line between the purposes of God for the earth through Israel and the present age of grace involving us Gentiles. Some draw it between Malachi and Matthew, in the Gospels, at the cross or at Acts 2, 9 or 13. We believe it must be drawn at Acts 28. Please enjoy the dispensational differences in Paul's two groups of letters which fall either side of Acts 28. Some eternal truths, like redemption through His blood, remain on both sides; they are common.

Let us consider the book of Romans as an example of an Acts period epistle.

It is widely acknowledged that Romans was written late in the Acts period (about Acts 20). The reader might like to consider the wonderfully fundamental passages of Romans 1:16-17 and 3:1-2, 9-23, then compare the hope of the Acts period as found in Romans 15:4-13.

This hope in Romans includes the destruction of Israel's enemies and the reign of Christ out of Jerusalem as found in Deut.32, Psalm 18 and Isaiah 11. We are assuredly forgiven and made righteous in Christ today as were the believers of the Acts period but we are certainly not looking for the Kingdom of God on the earth, as they were during that time. The hope of Romans is earthly and millennial. Romans contains continuing truths that cross over into today's dispensation, but contains truths which were postponed at Acts 28 and which will be resumed at a future date. Romans is a book full of O.T. prophesy and promise.

If Romans was written at about the time of Acts 20, then we note carefully Paul's word spoken after the writing of that book in Acts 26;

And I said, Who are you, lord? And He said, I am Jesus whom you persecute. But rise and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of what you saw, and in what I shall appear to you; delivering you from the people and the nations, to whom I now send you in order to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the authority of Satan to God, so that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me. After this, king Agrippa, I did not disobey the heavenly vision. Then having obtained help from God, I stand until this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said was going to happen; whether the Christ was liable to suffer, whether first by a resurrection of the dead He was going to proclaim light to the people and to the nations. Act 26:15-23

During Acts Paul was preaching none other things than had been previously declared. Please consider these passages also; Acts 24:14, 25:8, 26: 6-7,27-28, 28:17, 20, 23. Paul's teaching during the Acts period was according to Old Testament teaching, prophecy and purpose (and the Feasts are prominent).

The popular misconception that Israel was put aside at either the cross or Pentecost is a clear contradiction of Paul as found in these passages;

But to Israel He says, "All day long I have stretched forth My hands to a disobeying and gainsaying people." I say then, Did not God put away His people? Let it not be said! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God did not thrust out His people whom He foreknew. Rom 10:21-11:2

Paul's testimony in the Acts period was not offensive to the nation of Israel. Paul worshipped the God of his father's believing all things written in the Law and in the Prophets. Paul declares that he and the 12 tribes were waiting for the hope of the promise made to their Fathers which is the Kingdom on the earth. Paul tells us that his preaching only included that which the Law and the Prophets said was going to happen. The following letters are perfectly in harmony with these claims; Galatians, 1&2Corinthians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Hebrews and Romans.

These letters are full of the Acts period teachings of Paul and were written before Israel was "let go" at Acts 28:25.

There is not one shred of evidence that these letters show a gradual reduction of Old Testament references. In total there are about 190 references in these 7 Acts letters as well as being rich in Jewish subjects and themes. In Romans, the last written during Acts, there are 70 plus references and as we have seen, the hope is entirely O.T. earthly.

Some claim Paul had a progressive revelation and supported they believe by Paul's gradual reduction of OT usage in these Acts period epistles. The statistics do not support such a concept, in fact, Paul's use of the OT increases;

Galatians (written early in Acts ministry):	About 8 O.T. references.
1Corinthians (written mid Acts ministry):	About 15 O.T. references.
2Corinthians (written mid Acts ministry):	About 16 O.T. references.
Hebrews (written later Acts ministry):	About 30 O.T. references.
Romans (written last in Acts ministry):	About 70 O.T. references.

In the above letters of the Acts ministry, the number of OT references actually increase towards the close of Acts. These figures are contrary to the progressive revelation theory. He quotes the Old Testament incessantly and in Romans alone he uses the phrase "as it is written" 14 times. Romans also contains around 70 Old Testament quotes leaving us in no doubt that Paul's Acts period ministry was precisely as he said it was, the purposes and doctrines found in the OT Scriptures.

Paul's seven letters written during Acts describe the imminent return of the Lord, expected in the lifetime of the Acts period believers. Please consider these passages; Romans 13:11-12, 16:20, 1Cor.1:7-8, 7:29-31, 10:11 (ends of the ages), 15:51 ("we" includes Paul as also in 1Thess.4:15), Hebrews 10:35-37 and Acts 14:22.

Paul's Acts period ministry is neither overlapping nor progressive as suggested by some who do not clearly see the differences in Paul's two groups of letters. A cursory reading of Acts will show that Paul went to the Jew first and only when they rejected the message did Paul turn to the local Gentiles. Paul's Acts period ministry was to the Jews among the nations north and west of Israel. His missionary journeys are traditionally seen as spreading the gospel to the world, but really, this is not the case. The book of Acts is a record of God providing Israel with another opportunity to accept their Messiah.

On arriving at Rome Paul calls the chief of the (dispersed) Jews and proclaims the Lord Jesus as their Messiah out of "both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning till evening", Acts 28:23.

Instead of responding to this wonderful message, these Jews in Rome were like the majority of their countrymen; some believed, some didn't and they argued among themselves, there was disharmony;

And some indeed believed the things that were said, others did not believe. And disagreeing with one another, they were [let go](#), Act 28:24-25

The words "let go" translate the same verb in the original which is first found in the New Testament in a marriage context;

But Joseph, her husband to be, being just, and not willing to make her a public example, he purposed to [put her away](#) secretly. Mat 1:19

Let us see these English words in Acts 28;

And disagreeing with one another, they were [put away](#), Act 28:25

In Acts 28:25-27 Paul pronounces the prophet Isaiah chapter 6, a condemnation prophecy which was against the nation of Israel, not just the few Jews in Rome. Then God through Paul declares that the salvation of God is sent to the Nations (Gentiles); [Therefore be it known to you that the salvation of God is sent to the nations, and they will hear.](#) Act 28:28

At the end of the book of Acts, the Nation of Israel was put aside, and God's offer to restore Israel as a great and mighty nation under Christ was withdrawn. His purposes for the earth through Israel were put aside until a future date. The hope of their great kingdom on the earth was postponed, the imminent return of the Lord was put aside and Israel's advantages were put aside with them. We shall see more of this later.

After Israel was put aside at Acts 28, the Lord revealed to Paul the present set of conditions or economy which has continued to this day. Forgiveness of sins, righteousness by faith, sanctification and eternal life as God's gift remained the blessed portion of the children of God, however, instead of an earthly kingdom in view; the second group of letters of Paul point our hearts and minds to the heavenly places where Christ is seated at God's right hand. See Ephesians 2:4-7 and Colossians 3:1-4.

This present dispensation given to us through Paul was never part of Old Testament revelation as clearly declared by Paul in these passages:

[This grace is given to me \(who am less than the least of all saints\) to preach the gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ among the nations, and to bring to light what is the fellowship of the mystery which from eternity has been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; Eph 3:8-9](#)

[of which I became a minister, according to the administration of God given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God; the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. Col 1:25-26](#)

These later seven (7) letters of Paul fall naturally into a group manifesting the elements of this wonderful new administration coupled with a scarcity of Old Testament references. These are;

[Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Titus, Philemon, 1&2Timothy](#)

These letters proclaim the wonderful inheritance for the newly revealed calling which is the Church which is His Body and are significantly different to the Acts period group in that they are limited to about eight (8) Old Testament quotes. If in fact our present economy was hidden in God, Paul cannot use the OT as a means of affirming the ministry given to Him about it.

The first group was written during the Acts period when Israel remained as God's people and the Gentiles were blessed with faithful Abraham.

The second group was written after Israel was set aside and is about the present dispensation of the grace of God in which all believers are blessed in Christ alone in the heavenly places where Christ is seated at God's right hand.

My prayer is that my readers will consider these things and study very carefully the content of the letters of our Apostle Paul. The failure to distinguish things differing in Paul is the very basis of the rapture error.

The differences in Paul's writings are the key to understanding the New Testament.

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