

ARE THERE TWO GOSPELS?

Angela Lall was given material by a good friend of hers who holds to "two different gospels, one for the Jews and one for the Gentiles."

Here is part of her answer to her friend after she had addressed the subject, thanking her for his concerns over her believing "another Gospel".

"I will share my thoughts concerning the material even as I realize I am considered (in light of Mark's understanding of the Word) to be advocating a different Gospel and thus needing to be saved from my state of being "accursed" because of it, and perhaps not to be so trusted in rightly dividing the Word. Again, I do appreciate his being willing and eager to try and help our understanding in such a loving way. Perhaps you would be willing still to consider my thoughts and observations for whatever they are worth.

The Word "Gospel"

Since we are conversing on the topic of Gospel, so that we are on the same page as far as terms, I will clarify what the word "gospel" means, as I understand it. The word "gospel" means, literally, "good news". The Good News, of course, is salvation that is available through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

The word "gospel", in and of itself, does not also contain a meaning that indicates what is pre-requisite to man receiving that salvation, such as hearing the Gospel and his subsequent faith in it. Does that make sense? The "good news" that there is salvation available through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ preached to the Israelites would be the same "good news" (salvation available through death, burial, resurrection of Christ) preached to the Gentiles/Greeks. There is no indication in **Galatians 2:7** that there are two different gospels, or two different "good news".



Two Gospels

Continuing on with the topic of the Gospel and going back to the KJV. One of the areas where I believe the KJV is not accurate is on the verse that would be foundational to your idea that there were two gospels (two different "good news"), one to the Israelites and another to the Gentiles (or Greeks). That verse, of course, "The gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter..." (**Galatians 2:7**)

If we approach this verse with the idea already in our mind that there are indeed two gospels, it certainly does seem to support that view. However, in the original Greek the verse reads much differently: "...I have been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter to the circumcision." If we come to this verse never having heard that there is such a concept as "two Gospels" I do not believe we would come to the idea on our own. We would assume that the Gospel that Paul is taking to one group is the same Gospel that is being taken by Peter to another group. The apparent difference is in the audience, not in the message.

Only when we take the K.J.V. as the translation for **Galatians 2:7** with its added "gospel of the circumcision" can we go to build upon it an entirely different soteriology for the Israelites and the Gentiles/Greeks.

Another evidence that supports only one gospel to both the Israelites and the Greeks/Gentiles is the fact that the early Church fathers, the ones living closest to the time of the apostles and their teachings, did not recognize more than one as far as I know. I would need to investigate this further.

This is a random paragraph, but I had nowhere else to place it. The parables of **Matthew 13** only make sense when the Kingdom of Heaven (I assume you believe this refers to Jews) is taken to be the Church. This is especially true when dealing with the parables of the mustard seed and yeast. The mustard seed and plant are very small and only a corrupted plant would be large enough for birds to nest in branches. Yeast is always a symbol of hypocrisy. The Catholic Church is both extremely corrupt (morally and doctrinally) and full of hypocrisy. It also had a political nature and thus fits the symbolism of "tree".

Eternal Security

As to "eternal security" there are several thoughts to consider. First, I understand from the Scripture that once we are in Christ nothing can separate us from our salvation. What a tremendous comfort and yes, security, this promise brings us! I also believe we have to look at this promise in the same general context as any other promise in the Bible.

However, I think sound hermeneutics would dictate that an interpretation of a particular passage should not violate an established, more general, principle. God's promises always respect the "free-will" He created in man. Man can choose to accept, reject, or turn aside from the promises. In the Garden of Eden, man and woman began life in a secure state. Their relationship with their Creator was perfect and intact. They chose of their own free will, and God allowed them, to remove themselves from the relationship and into a state of insecurity. This was a precedent that pre-dated the dispensation of Moses and there is no indication that it was nullified afterwards.

While the default spiritual state that Adam and Eve were created with was a right relationship with God and they had to make a free-will choice to get out of that right relationship, man now, in his fallen state has to make a free-will choice to enter back into that relationship by accepting the forgiveness offered by the offended party, God. Just as in the Garden, God allows us the free will to leave the relationship and thus our secure, saved state, any time. If we take the idea that God saves a person without considering his or her free-will to take themselves out of the relationship if they so choose then the logical outcome is Universalism, the belief that God will save everyone because of His great grace regardless of their accepting or rejecting Him. "Everyone" contains the Hitlers and Aleilster Crowley's of the world. Such a situation would lead to Heaven being populated with unrepentant unbelievers, Satanists, etc. I believe the concept of church discipline which Paul advocated is also indicative that people can be in Christ and later stray.

In **1 Corinthians Chapter 5** Paul advocated turning over to Satan a church member who was persistent and unrepentant of public sin, in order to purge the church of immorality. Of course we could contend that the individual was not a Christian in the first place, but the fact that he was being *turned over* to Satan sounds as if he was *formerly* a child of God.

I believe that the following comment by Paul indicates one can "fall away" from the faith. "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have *fallen away it*, is impossible to again renew them to repentance." (**Hebrews 6:4-6**)

Faith Only

As to "Faith Only" ... According to James, faith goes hand in hand with obedience to result in the salvation that is the free gift of God's grace. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, the Apostles- all demonstrated a living faith *by their obedience*. James also wrote, "You believe there is one God, good! Even the demons believe that, and shudder!" (**James 2:1.9**) Obviously faith is not enough. There must be obedience. Noah would not have been saved no matter how much faith he had in God if he had not also been obedient in building the ark. Does this mean Noah saved himself? Obviously not. Only God could have provided the way. Noah only responded in obedience to the way God provided. Abraham was credited with righteousness because of his faith, ... but surely would not have been if his faith had not been demonstrated by obedience. Would Hebrews have exalted Abraham for his faith had he not been obedient? His faith would have been worthless. As James writes, "Faith without works is dead" and "What good is it my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such a faith save him?" Implied "no." (**James 2:1:4**)

"You see, a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone." (Trying to anticipate your approach, I wonder, do you suggest these verses, being written by James, a Jew, were intended only for Jews, and non-Jews do not have to obey, only believe? If so, we are back to Universalism, which cannot be biblically sound.)

I trace the origin of "Faith Only" theology in a small book I have written that is being edited. The following is an excerpt. (I realize not everything will seem to apply to this topic at first.)

One doctrine that originated with the Catholic Church is Original Sin/Total Depravity. It asserts that mankind is too corrupted even to believe in God. God must give a supernatural faith to a person in order for him or her to be able to believe in Him and be saved ... [However the Scripture teaches that]. Non-believers are fully capable of understanding the truth of God and responding in faith themselves when taught by the Scriptures.

"Faith comes by hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ." (**Romans 10:17**)

" .. from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation. (2 Timothy 3:15 NAS)

{Jesus said}, "Go ... and teach all nations ... to obey." (**Matthew 28:19**)

"For without faith it is impossible to please God, for anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him." (**Hebrews 11:5**)

Another false teaching of the Catholic Church is the idea that a person can "work off their sin-debt" by certain acts of restitution called "penance." These works are prescribed to the sinner by a priest.

Protestants, who sought to reform the Catholic Church during the European Middle Ages, saw this practice as unbiblical, as it certainly is: there is no work a person can do to *earn forgiveness of sins or salvation!* Unfortunately, instead of redefining their views in accordance with the Bible, certain Protestant leaders responded with their doctrine of salvation by "Faith Only".

The Catholic doctrine of Total Depravity of Original Sin was carried over into the Protestant groups where it was quite at home alongside "Faith Only." When taken together, "Faith Only" and "Total Depravity of Original Sin" result in the idea that as fallen as man is, no human actions of *any kind* can have *anything at all* to do with salvation. Only faith "counts." This of course contradicts clear teaching to the contrary not only by James in his book, but also the teaching of Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles.

When we bring to the Scripture the Protestant idea that Faith Only counts, it forces us to then find ways to explain away clear teachings of the Bible that do not fit this theology. Paul's admonition "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling" and Peter's "Strive to make your calling and election sure" are hard to harmonize with "Faith Only" theology. Another of those teachings that does not fit "Faith Only" theology is Christian immersion, often referred to by the name of its Catholic imitation, "baptism". (You knew I'd get around to this, huh?!

It might come to mind that verses in **Acts** such as **2:38** that pertain to baptism often refer to Israelites. This might seem to support your idea that Christian Immersion (or baptism as it is commonly called) was a condition of a gospel that was for Jews only. However, Paul himself, who was sent to the Gentiles/Greeks, and who you believe preached a different gospel that did not require baptism, was himself baptized. Cornelius the Gentile and his household were all baptized into Christ as well. Additionally, there are several very weighty points that Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles/Greeks, makes concerning baptism, when writing to the Gentiles/Greeks.

"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Galatians 3:27) Here we find the spiritual garment that makes us presentable before God, it is Christ Himself. It is acquired through the waters of baptism only. *"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead ... we too may live a new life. If we have been united with Him like this in His death,*

we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection." (Romans 6:3-5; See also Colossians 2:12) Baptism is the only occasion through which the believer actually participates in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Surely when Paul wrote "we" here, he was including himself and those baptized Gentiles to whom he was writing. This shows that baptism was not exclusively for Jews.

'eight in all were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also, not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. (1 Peter 3:21)

When one's faith leads him or her to a test of obedience, the building of an ark to carry him through the water in the case of Noah, or submitting to N.T. baptism which carries the believer through a watery grave and into a new life, this faith demonstrated with obedience, unlike the faith of demons, results in salvation. The water of baptism does not wash dirt from our physical bodies but the obedience it occasions makes our conscience clear before God. Baptism is never presented as a meritorious "work" one does to earn salvation.

The Jews and Dispensations

I agree fully that there are different dispensations or ages in the Bible. According to my understanding, one of those, the dispensation of the Law of Moses, was in effect until the resurrection of Christ at which point began the Age of Grace or the Church Age. I do not believe there was a Kingdom Dispensation of the Jews. Evidence suggests to me that with the Cross, the age of the Jews came to an end. Christ Himself spoke of this when He said to the Jewish leaders, "The ax is already at the foot of the tree." (Trees were symbolic of political kingdoms). Is also alluded to this when He said, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" predicting the final destruction of Jerusalem that would take place in 70 A.D.

Also, I believe it is very significant that on the Jewish holy day, the Day of Pentecost, when the Jewish apostles spoke in tongues, the crowd did not hear Hebrew! This was the holy language of national Israel, used in all the Jew's religious occasions. On that day, however, upon the foundation of the Church, the languages heard were Gentile languages.

John the Baptist had spoken to the leaders of national Israel earlier, telling them: "He [Jesus] will baptize with the Holy Spirit (which did take place to the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost) and with fire. Fire is a symbol of judgment and refining. On the day of Pentecost, not only were Gentile languages present, tongues of fire also marked the occasion. It was a day of signs and symbolism.

The tree [national Israel] that had had the ax blade at its root, was now replaced by a new kingdom, one that is not of this world. (Christ's kingdom-the Church) It is also significant that when Peter went to the home of the

Gentile Cornelius, God poured out the Baptism of the Holy Spirit once more, again as a sign, this time to the Jewish Church indicating God's acceptance of Gentiles into the Church. "Then Peter said, 'Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They received the Holy Spirit just as we (Apostles) have. So he ordered that they [Cornelius and his household, who were Gentiles) be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. (**Acts 10:47-48**) Here we see very clearly that baptism was not for Jews exclusively.

The last evidence I submit that there was no Jewish Kingdom post resurrection (or will be again) lies in the fact that the Jewish nation existed for reasons that have been fulfilled. The purpose of the Israelites as God's chosen people was to provide a pure race and line through which the Messiah might come. (That gets into the Nephilim, "Noah was found perfect/untainted/uncorrupted) in his generation. (Another whole discussion!) According to the **Galatians 3:24**, the Law was given to this people to be a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. We had to know what sin and judgment were before we could understand grace.

The N.T. always fulfills O.T. shadows and types (if you are familiar with typology). In fact, every aspect of the Dispensation of Moses, the age of Israel, has been fulfilled in Christ and the New Covenant. Circumcision is of the heart. (**Romans 2:28-29**) Our Sabbath-rest is Christ. We are His temple. (Why rebuild the old one? Would sacrifices be offered when the perfect Lamb of God has already been sacrificed? There would be no Holy of Holies: The veil of separation has been rent into!) Heaven is the Promised Land. (Why return to the Middle East?)

The Church is now the Kingdom of His chosen people. The fulfillment is always superior to the shadow and never to be returned to. This explains why God no longer considers the Jews as a separate people to be spiritually significant. "There is neither Jew nor Greek ... ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (**Galatians 3:28**) " ... you (Gentiles) were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel ... but now ... Christ Jesus ... made both groups into one ... (**Ephesians 2:12-14**) See also **Romans 9:6, 25, Romans 2:29, Galatians 3:28,29, Romans 10:1-2; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Ephesians 2:11-19** One new man made up of Jews and Gentiles.

Rather than there being a separate kingdom for Jews, both Jew and Gentile have been "translated into the kingdom of His dear Son." (**Colossians 1:13**)

The End.