

[NB. *This is an archived article. The author no longer holds the view of Universal Salvation expressed herein, which is similar to the view of the renowned church father, Origen. See www.purposeoflife.org.uk for further information]*

THE EVANGEL OF GOD AND ITS SECRETS

By Gerry Watts

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures (commonly called the Old Testament), from the time of Abraham onwards, the one and only God revealed Himself as Yahweh (or Jehovah), the God of Israel. He chose one nation, the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (who was renamed Israel), and gave them unconditional covenants, which were based solely on God's choice and not on any human merit. These covenants ultimately promised them a land of their own, a King-Messiah and an age-long (or eonian) Kingdom, along with physical and spiritual blessings, which the whole world would also enjoy through them, as God's chosen instrument.

Israel was also given the Law of God through Moses, which included the divine service and the awesome Glory of God's visible presence. Also, they were entrusted with the written Word of God (as even the Greek Scriptures, i.e. the New Testament, were essentially written via the apostles of Israel). But above all, through this nation, God's Son, the Messiah, would be born according to the flesh and would become King of Israel and, subsequently, the whole world. (See Deuteronomy 7:7-8; 8:17-18; 9:4-6; Romans 3:1-2; 9:1-5; 15:9-12).

The Greek Scriptures continue with this theme in presenting four accounts of the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of the promised King-Messiah, Yeshua/Jesus of Nazareth (Heb. 'Yehoshua' i.e. Joshua, which means 'Jehovah-Saviour', which in Greek is 'Iesous' i.e. Jesus). Due to the nation of Israel's unbelief and overall rejection of their King-Messiah, represented by the Jewish nation occupying the land at that time, they were to receive God's righteous judgment and discipline. But first they would be given a gracious period of probation, which was in answer to Jesus' prayer in Luke 23:34.

During this period, the preaching of the evangel (meaning good message) of the kingdom would be continued through the twelve apostles chosen by Christ (or Messiah meaning 'Anointed'), with the proclaiming of the New Covenant promised to Israel, based on the sacrifice of Christ as the Lamb of God, and His subsequent resurrection to immortality. This probationary period is covered in the book of Acts. (AD 33-70) See Acts 1:6-11; 2:22-40; 3:12-26. For the New Covenant see Jeremiah 31:31-37; Ezekiel 36:24-32; Hebrews 8; Luke 22:20.

Paul's Ministry

In the early years of this era, an unlikely rabbi named Saul of Tarsus, who was an archenemy of the 'Nazarenes', was visited by the glorified Christ while on his way to persecute and arrest 'the heretics' in Damascus. This was the first of many appearances of Christ to Saul, who became the apostle Paul. Christ Jesus revealed to Paul that as the apostle and teacher of the nations, he was to proclaim a new evangel that was for all nations, which was related to Israel and its covenants, yet it also revealed something far greater.

This evangel, which Paul calls '*my evangel*', would also include some secrets, which would gradually be unfolded through installments. This evangel, and its accompanying secrets, would reveal a distinct part of God's plan for the present time, showing it in the light of His overall plan and purpose for creation within the Ages. (See Romans 16:25-27; 1 Corinthians 13:8-12; Ephesians 3:8-13).

For more information on the Ages (Greek 'Eons') see [The Concordant Version](#) article and the article entitled [God's Plan of the Ages](#).

The focus on Israel and its earthly kingdom would be postponed, and instead the focus would shift to all nations and the realm of spirit, that is, a celestial kingdom as opposed to an earthly kingdom, composed of a called out group of believers from both Israel and the nations (called the Ecclesia or Church of God). Jesus also prophesied about this era in the 'Secrets of the Kingdom' parables (Matthew 13).

During the Acts period, Paul proclaimed the evangel of the kingdom to Israel (who were known as the 'circumcision') in accord with the New Covenant, while gradually introducing through installments, the evangel for the nations (who were known as the 'uncircumcision'). Paul's ministry went from glory to glory (see 2 Corinthians 3:4 - 4:6). This process was completed at the end of this transitional era, when Paul wrote his prison epistles, especially Colossians and Ephesians (see Ephesians 2:11-22; Colossians 1:21-29). This probationary era was complete when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

Thus a new administration of God, the secret administration of grace, came into effect at that time and it will continue till the end of the age. Even though...

'all scripture is inspired of God and is beneficial for teaching, for exposure, for correction, and for training in righteousness'

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

...only Paul's letters, particularly his later ones, contain the mature truth for the nations that is directly applicable for today. Paul was truly chosen to complete the Word of God or bring it to fullness (Colossians 1:25-27).

The Book of Acts

To summarise at this point: Essentially, the book of Acts is a treatise on the kingdom promised to Israel through the prophets, whereby the original promise given to Abraham would be completely fulfilled, with the whole world sharing in the blessings of Israel. But it also reveals the transition that took place during that era,

whereby the kingdom and its accompanying signs and wonders; the focus on Israel as the elect, royal-priestly nation in the flesh; the New Covenant regeneration and other related matters, all faded into the background, being superseded by the gospel to all nations.

The letter to the Hebrews was primarily written to the Israelite/Jewish ecclesia, not only to show them the superiority of Christ and the New Covenant, but also to encourage and explain to them this change that was occurring in God's dealings with His chosen nation, which had largely been kept secret, until it was fully revealed through Paul's evangel. Many of the unlearned and unstable amongst them found it hard to grasp (see Hebrews 10:23-39; 11:3 (CV), 39-40; 12:1-29; 2 Peter 3:15-16).

In Acts, the Twelve apostles continue to proclaim the evangel of the kingdom to Israel, in the land and eventually outside it, slowly encompassing proselytes of the nations as well. All this was done in the light of the New Covenant based on the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul also proclaimed this evangel, initially, but eventually proclaimed a new or fuller evangel, going to the Jew first and then to the Gentile. This gospel also contained several unique secrets that were revealed through Paul as the apostle of the nations.

The book of Acts closes with an awesome statement, which is often overlooked.

"...God's salvation has been sent to the nations, and they will hear."

(Acts 28:25-28)

This doesn't mean, though, that God has completely rejected the descendants of Israel. There will continue to be a Jewish remnant in the Messiah chosen by grace until Christ returns, along with a large complement of the nations in Christ. Together we are the Body/Bride of Christ. The main focus of this Church Era, though, is to gather out a believing remnant from amongst the nations to complement the believing remnant of Israel. The Old Covenant era was primarily focused on Israel (in flesh), and the New Covenant era is primarily focused on the rest of the nations (in spirit) - leading to a complete chosen remnant of a spiritual Israel of God.

In Romans 9, 10, and 11, Paul explains the present situation concerning Israel and the nations (which was already taking effect at that time). He summarises by revealing the secret (commonly rendered 'mystery') that Israel, in part, has been hardened until the complement of the nations has come in. Thus, consequently, all Israel shall be saved, that is, the whole spiritual Israel of God, the believing remnant of Jews and Gentiles (11:25-26).

The present administration of grace will soon draw to a close, God's hand of friendship and peace to the world shall be withdrawn, and God's wrath will be manifested as He judges the whole world through the Man He has appointed - Jesus Christ. Then the full manifestation of the promised kingdom shall arrive with the establishing of a New Heavens and a New Earth.

Concerning the revelations and unique ministry of Paul, see Acts 9:15-16; 26:16-18; Romans 1:1-7; Galatians 1:1, 11-12; 2 Corinthians 12:1.

What follows is a more detailed analysis of the evangel of God as proclaimed by Paul as the apostle for the nations (the uncircumcision). See also Galatians 2:6-9; Romans 11:13-14; 16:25-27.

The Evangel of God

This evangel (or gospel), which focuses on the cross of Christ and everything that it stands for, is clearly laid out in Paul's epistles to the **Galatians** and the **Romans**.

It includes

- Justification by faith alone, apart from works of law - Romans 1 - 4 and Galatians 2:15 - 3:29.
- And the Conciliation of the world, known as the secret of the evangel (commonly rendered 'the mystery of the gospel'), which is a consequence of Israel's partial blindness - Romans 5:1-11; 11:1-32.

NB. In the Greek, the word for 'conciliation' is commonly mistranslated 'reconciliation' but there is a big difference between these two words. Conciliation is one-sided, and reconciliation is both sides at peace. See Concordant Version. Humanity as a whole is not *reconciled* to God as yet, but God is *conciliated* to humanity at present, refusing to reckon their offences against them and continually holding out His hand of friendship and peace to all who will believe. See 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. For further study, see article entitled ['The Conciliation of the World'](#).

- Also included in this evangel is the basis for the justification of all mankind, which will result in all being vivified (i.e. made alive beyond the reach of death; immortality) at the consummation of the ages (or eons). See Romans 5:15-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-28.

The bottom line is this:

One (i.e. Adam) disobeyed and the many (i.e. the rest) were made sinners.

One (i.e. Christ) obeyed and the many (i.e. the rest) shall be constituted just.

As in Adam, all are dying,

So in Christ, shall all be vivified. (CV)

For further references to the salvation of all mankind, see also 1 Timothy 2:1-7; 4:9-12; 6:13; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:18-20; 2 Timothy 1:8-14.

The Secrets

As stated above, Paul's evangel was unfolded gradually, by installments, which eventually included the revelation of about 8 distinct secrets (commonly rendered 'mysteries'), though all of them are closely linked together. There are 3 primary secrets, which can be stated thus:

1. **The secret of the resurrection**; also known as the 'Rapture' or Snatch; salvation from the coming indignation (wrath) of God. This secret reveals that a living generation of believers shall be transformed into immortality at the return of Christ.

See 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13-5: 11; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-55; 2 Corinthians 5:4; Titus 2:13-14; Romans 5:9; Philippians 1:23-24; 3:11-12, 20-21; Ephesians 1:12.

2. **The secret of the evangel**; the grace of the conciliation of the world. This is the secret of secrets, hence Paul's designation '*the secret of the evangel*' (Ephesians 6:19-20). This is due to the fact that the conciliation of God to the world at present, not reckoning their offences to them, is the basis for the ultimate reconciliation of the whole of creation.

See 1 Timothy 1:12-17; 2:1-7; 3:8-9; 4:9-12; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Romans 5:1-11; 11:12-15; 16:25-27; Colossians 1:18-20; Ephesians 6:15-16, 18-20.

3. **The secret administration of grace**. This secret is revealed in full in the Ephesian circular letter and the Colossian epistle. It includes all of the following, which are fully applicable for the present:

- a) Believers of the nations, together with a remnant of Israel, are united as one, forming the distinct ecclesia (Gr. 'called out ones') - the Joint-Body of Christ. (Paul is the only one who uses the term *Body of Christ*, elsewhere the ecclesia is described as a *Bride*). It has a heavenly calling among the celestial beings, co-ruling with Christ, with such spiritual blessings as the special homing or indwelling (for permanent fellowship) and sealing (for security) by the Holy Spirit of God. This ecclesia also has the unique expectation of being saved from God's indignation at the return of Christ, and of partaking in the First Resurrection, which is a prior special resurrection that is out from the rest of the dead, who are not resurrected to immortality till a later point in time.
- b) The teaching on the New Creation, which places believers, in spirit, in the final Age of the New Heavens and the New Earth. This includes further teaching on the future spiritual resurrection body of the New

Humanity, spiritual warfare, and the completion of God's plan and purpose of the ages.

Attention needs to be drawn to a very important passage in 2 Corinthians 5:16-17,

*' So that we, **from now on**, are acquainted with no one according to the flesh. Yet even if we have known Christ according to flesh, nevertheless **now** we no him so no longer. So that, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: the primitive passed by. Lo! There has come new!' (CV)*

From the time that Paul revealed this truth to the ecclesia, the focus has been on the spiritual New Humanity and Christ's celestial glory and position. (This position in turn belongs to the figurative Body of Christ! We are seated among the celestials in Christ!)

- c) The secret of Christ as Ruler and Reconciler of the universe; the One who is God's Complement and Image. It also reveals that the future ministry of the Bride/Body, as Christ's Complement, will be to reconcile the universe to God through Christ's reign. This shall include all of humanity on the earth in the ages to come, as well as all of the spirit beings in the celestials (the spiritual dimension).

God's ultimate goal is that all those on the earth and all those in the heavens will be reconciled to Him by the blood of Christ's cross. God's Son is truly the Champion, and is the Saviour of all mankind, especially (not solely) of believers, because they experience His saving grace before everyone else does. The penalty of sin, which is death, has truly been **paid in full**.

Paul also completes the resurrection and judgment order, which is revealed throughout Scripture. God's plan involves severe judgment and condemnation upon unbelievers, but the Second Death, the Lake of Fire (commonly, but incorrectly, referred to as eternal hell) is not their final state. Also **death is death**, not some form of life in another sphere. Hence the need for resurrection.

The second death is not a sickening place of eternal torment for unbelievers, which would also be a gross injustice, not worthy of a God of love and righteousness. God's purpose is to save and reconcile **ALL**, so that He may be **ALL** in **ALL**.

The real purpose and meaning of life is God Himself - He is **LIFE** and **LOVE**, and the true fulfillment of our hearts desire. One day, everyone will see and know this to be so, melting the hardest and coldest of hearts. In fact, the Chief of sinners has already been saved - Paul himself! (See 1 Timothy 1:15-16).

For further study, here are the passages that cover 3) above:

1 Timothy 1:3-4; 1 Corinthians 1:17; 4:1-3; 13:8-13; Titus 3:4-7; 2 Timothy 1:8-12; Colossians 1:21-29; Ephesians 1 - 3.

- a) 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 21-23; 12:12-13; 15:50-57; 2 Corinthians 1:20-22; Colossians 1:3-11, 18; Ephesians 4:1-16; 5:25-33; 2 Timothy 1:14.
- b) 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 6:15-20; 7:18-21; 15:35-49; Galatians 3:25-29; 4:6-11; 5:1-6, 16-18; 6:15-16; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 4:7 - 5:17; 10:3-6; Romans 8; 12:1-2; Philippians 3:3-21; Colossians 1:12-14; 2:10 - 3:11; Ephesians 4:17-32; 6:10-20.
- c) 1 Corinthians 6:2-4; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-17,19-20; 2:2-3,8-9; 1 Corinthians 15:22-28 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

Conclusion

The apostle Paul was set apart by God to be Christ's unique chosen instrument. Even his new name, Paul, seems to come from a root meaning 'cease', hence a pause or interval, which clearly describes his ministry. See Acts 13:2-3,9; Romans 1:1-7; Acts 9:15-16; 26:16-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-7.

He was called to complete God's written Word with the fullest and highest revelation ever given to mankind, the pinnacle of all truth. See Colossians 1:21-29. Whereas Jesus chose the twelve apostles while he was on earth, declaring the kingdom message to Israel in the land of Israel, He chose Paul miraculously, by appearing to him in glory outside the land of Israel. Paul's calling and ministry was unique. (Compare Matthew 19:28 and 1 Corinthians 6:2-3; Ephesians 1:3-10).

And yet towards the end of Paul's life, all the ecclesias in the province of Asia, i.e. Ephesus, Colosse and others, had deserted virtually everything that Paul's teaching and apostleship represented. See 2 Timothy 1:15.

The apostasy from the truth for today had already begun, and it continues to this day within Christendom, having gained many myths and false teachings through the centuries. The incredible thing is that, today, these myths and false teachings are fiercely defended as orthodox, biblical truth! I was guilty of this myself for many years, until God's Spirit opened my eyes to the truth, after much searching and study.

So to appeal to early church history and the 'early church fathers' for the search for 'orthodox' truth, as many do to establish the teaching of eternal hell, is not always the wisest thing to do. Yet having said that, there is much within these ancient writings that confirm the truth that Universal Salvation was indeed taught and believed during the early centuries of the Church. But ultimately we must search the Scriptures in accord with Paul's instructions to Timothy, in his final letter, to

"Have a pattern of sound words, which you hear from me...Endeavour to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth.... Be remaining in what you learned and verified, being aware from whom you learned it...For the era will be when they will not tolerate sound teaching, but...they will be turning their hearing away from the truth, yet will be turned aside to myths."
(CV)

See also 2 Timothy 1:8-14; 2:1-10, 15-19, 24-26; 3:10-17; 4:1-8.

We must have accurate words (that is, accurate translations) of the Scriptures, and those who are called to be teachers of the Word should work hard as an unashamed worker, searching for the truth at all costs, learning to divide between soul and spirit, the soulish and the spiritual, the relative and the absolute, persevering in the truth and teaching it correctly with wisdom and maturity. May the Lord raise up those of such calibre in these dark days.

As an aid to this study, see [Paul's Letters](#)

Some of the Scripture references contained in this study can only be understood accurately through reading them in the Concordant Version (CV). This is due to the fact that most other versions obscure the original, intended meaning. These references have been underlined for clarity. For more information on Bible translations see [The Concordant Version](#) article.

May God give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation to enlighten us in the truth that He has revealed through His chosen apostle, Paul, who is a pattern for all believers saved by pure grace, particularly the blind and hardened ones of Israel (Ephesians 1:15-23; 1 Timothy 1:14-16).

Closing Thought

In Ezekiel 47:1-6, the prophet is given a vision of a river, that begins as a stream, in which a heavenly messenger leads him through, in stages. Each time the messenger measures off a thousand cubits, the water becomes deeper. The prophet begins in ankle-deep water, but after four thousand cubits, it is deep enough to swim in.

This pictures beautifully the wonderful grace of God, not only in our individual lives, but also as it is revealed throughout Scripture in God's plan for mankind. At the beginning, the grace is minimal, but at the pinnacle of revelation, in Paul's later epistles, it is deep enough to swim in. One day, all will be swimming in the gracious river of abundant life, as four is the number for the world, universal. The 4000 cubits could also be indicating the 4000 years that cover the time from Abraham to the end of this age, resulting in the full manifestation of the Kingdom at Christ's return.

Bibles used in this study: Concordant Version and the New International Version