

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Supplemental: Romans Graphically Presented, pg 2

Faithful interpretation of any book of the Bible requires a statement of premises and assumptions, since everything rises and falls on the assumptions. I bring four assumptions into the book of Romans, and each of these will affect how I interpret the book.

First, I am assuming that the epistle is written to Jews living in Rome, to explain what God is doing in the world today, in the **dispensation of the grace of God** (Eph. 3:1). This is not the standard assumption of most Christian writers, who teach that Romans is written to Gentiles. As we progress, I will seek to defend my assumption. However, the student should recognize that *both assumptions affect interpretation*.

Second, I am assuming that Romans is “God’s position paper on Israel.” This fabulous book tells the reader what God has done, is doing, and will do in, with, and through His Chosen People, Israel. This being the case, I do not find a great deal of doctrine related to the Body of Christ, save that which is universal and thus includes the Body.

Third, these assumptions lead me to believe that when Christians apply the book of Romans directly to the Body of Christ, they are forced into theological positions which contradict other clear passages of Scripture. For example, the Calvinist “gospel” (it is anything but good news) is built largely upon passages from Romans 3, 6, and 9. But if these passages concern Israel, then they should not be forced upon the Body of Christ and doing so will cause conflict with passages that *do belong* to the Body.

Finally, I do believe that we see the Pauline mystery in the book of Romans. However, I do not believe that the book of Romans is primarily concerned with this mystery. Rather, the book of Romans is primarily concerned with Israel, and what is happening and will happen to Israel now that the mystery has been revealed.

With that bit of introduction, let’s begin interpreting *Romans, rightly divided and verse-by-verse*.

SECTION 1 | ROMANS 1:1-5:17 | A GOSPEL FOR ALL

ROMANS 1:1-17 | THE CASE STATED

Supplemental: Romans Graphically Presented, pgs. 3, 4

ROMANS 1:1-7 | JESUS CHRIST, THE SEED AND THE SON

Supplemental: Romans Graphically Presented, pg. 5

ROMANS 1:1-2 | WHO

VERSE 1 – BLACK

As typical in Pauline literature, Paul introduces himself briefly, often giving revealing theological information that should not be passed haphazardly.

Paul introduces himself both as **servant** and **apostle**. He stands then as one of 14 apostles. Of the original 12, Judas had died and was replaced by Matthias, and later Paul was appointed as an apostle **out of due time** (1 Cor 15:8).

The first 13 were directly appointed by Jesus or by the casting of lots (done according to the Law) under the will of God. In the selection of Matthias, there were only two candidates for apostleship. How

then could Paul, who was unqualified to take the place of Judas. It is essential to recognize that Paul's apostleship was wholly different from that of the others. The book of Acts explains the turn of events that brought about this new dispensation under Paul.

What is most interesting for our account is that Paul was **separated unto the gospel of God**. This seems to be of measurable importance for the interpretation of the epistle, since it is included so early on. But what is this Gospel? A standard approach would use a broad brush and only see one Gospel in the Scriptures, but even a cursory reading of the Word shows us the Gospel of the Kingdom, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Gospel which Paul called "my Gospel," and so forth. Are these all the same Gospel under a different name?

To answer that question, we must allow Scripture to speak to itself, defining itself. The phrase **gospel of God** is used seven times in Scripture, six of them being Pauline. But perhaps the clearest use is by Peter in 1 Peter 4:17, in which Peter speaks of the day of Judgment (something that relates to Israel and not the Body of Christ) and speaks of **the gospel of God** as something which should be *obeyed*. Clearly *our Gospel* is not one of obedience, but rather is **the gift of God** (Eph. 2:8).

Verse 2 elaborates on this Gospel, supporting the idea that the **gospel of God** is the apostolic, Kingdom Gospel.

VERSE 2 – BLACK

If the **gospel of God** (v. 1) is Paul's gospel (under which we live), then how does that reconcile with Ephesians 3:2-5? Either the gospel was **in other ages not made known unto the sons of men** (Eph 3:5) or it was **promised afore by his prophets** (Rom. 1:2). These two passages *require* that the gospel of verse 1 is *not* the gospel of the Body of Christ shared today.

To remedy the problem, we must understand that **gospel of God** (v. 1) was spoken from Genesis 3:15 onward. But "Paul's gospel," the gospel of Grace, was **in other ages not made known** (Eph. 3:5) but was kept a mystery until revealed to Paul.

Separating these gospels is part of **rightly dividing the word of truth** (2 Tim. 2:15) and is also of tremendous importance to interpreting the epistle to the Romans. Paul is *introducing himself as one connected with the apostolic / Jewish / Kingdom* gospel. This must be considered in order to avoid a misreading of his words.

ROMANS 1:3-5 | WHAT

VERSE 3 – BLACK

The **gospel of God** (v. 1) was **concerning his Son**. Christ was both the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15), the **seed of David according to the flesh** and the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16). As the seed of the woman, He fulfilled the promise of a Redeemer. As the seed of David, He fulfilled the promise of an earthly King (yet future). As the seed of Abraham, he fulfills the promise of blessing all the nations of the earth (present and future).

But here Paul focuses on Jesus as **the seed of David according to the flesh**, not mentioning the woman nor Abraham. This should be an announcement by the author that *the focus of his epistle will be Jesus as Messiah the coming King*.

VERSE 4 – BLACK

The **resurrection from the dead** was the ultimate declaration that Jesus was **the Son of God**. Peter used this argument on the Day of Pentecost - Acts 2:24-32.

There is an alternative futurist reading of verse 4. This is to say that the **the resurrection from the dead** is a reference to *the resurrection of the dead* at the Second Coming. This would take the

declaration to be future (a position allowed by the Greek grammar), when Jesus as Messiah will be “declared the Son of God powerfully in a spirit of holiness coming out of the resurrection of the dead.” While this alternate reading is not the “plain sense” (and thus should be seriously scrutinized), it does complete the thought begun in verse 3, going from the birth of Jesus to His reign.

VERSE 5 – BLACK

This sounds perfectly aligned with the so-called Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20, but not aligned with the age of grace. The age of grace has one apostle, and yet this verse speaks of a group of people (**we**) who have **apostleship**. The age of grace is not of works, yet this speaks of an **obedience to the faith**, which certainly calls for works.

The interpreter must deal with the identity of the pronoun **we**. It is plain logic that the **we** of verse 5 cannot be the **ye** of verse 6. From the plain sense of verse 5, I am going to interpret the first person plural pronouns of Romans as a reference to *those of the Apostolic order*. Paul’s apostleship is different from and separate from that of the twelve, yet when used in Romans it is coming *from Israel to Israel* and thus will be Jewish in nature.

ROMANS 1:6-7 | WHOM

VERSE 6 – BLACK

The recipients of the letter are from the **nations** (v. 5) and are also **among...the called of Jesus Christ**. The adjective **called** can be used both of Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:24). I take verse 6 in a “mundane” manner, simply stating that the recipients of the letter are *associated with Jesus Christ*.

VERSE 7 – BLACK

Clearly **all that be in Rome** are not **saints**, thus Paul is not writing to *all Romans*.

The verb insertion, **to be**, can be removed and the words simply read as **called saints**. Paul is writing to the **beloved of God, called...saints** who happen to **be in Rome**.

I am convinced that the standard evangelical interpretation of **saints** as “all believers” simply doesn’t have enough evidence to support. Rather, the **saints** of the New Testament are believers under the Kingdom mandate (i.e.: under Peter’s apostleship), as it is used in Acts 9:32, 26:10, etc.

Paul closes his introduction with a customary gracious blessing.