

THE RIGHTLY DIVIDED GOSPEL | SESSION 1  
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A FUNDAMENTAL REQUIREMENT TO UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL

The most important thing to understanding the Gospel is also the most shocking thing there is for standard evangelicalism (as well as most of Christendom) to hear: *there is more than one Gospel*. Just those words themselves will get you a “heretic” label *quicker than a New York minute*. However, scrutiny of the Scripture really does require that we recognize this fact.

Immediately those who believe in “one Gospel for all time” will bring up one of two Scripture passages. Galatians 1:8-9 is the prime candidate with this pronouncement:

**8. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.**

**9. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.**

However, notice that Paul inserted a seemingly unnecessary phrase not once, but three times in these two verses: **unto you**. If there is only one Gospel for all dispensations, then there is no reason for this triply repeated phrase, and Paul is being superfluous. But if **All scripture is given by inspiration of God** (2 Tim. 3:16), then the words **unto you** are **given by inspiration of God**. And if we believe in *verbal plenary inspiration* (and I do), then we need to take these words seriously, concluding that Paul taught that *the Galatians should only be given one Gospel*. But this would not prohibit *two Gospels*.

In fact, just a few lines further in Galatians Paul says that **the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter** (Gal. 2:7). Note that the grammar requires a literal interpretation, **of the circumcision** and not *to the circumcision* as is found in many modern translations. The same grammar is found in Galatians 2:12 as well as Acts 7:8, 10:45, 11:2, Romans 4:11, 12, etc., where it is always **of the circumcision**. Further, the Greek grammar that would be translated as “to the circumcision” is used in verse 9, stating that that **we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision**. The only reason modern translations make verse 7 to be *to* rather than *of* is because their theology books have become more important than the Scripture itself. (Note also, for further confirmation, that the phrase “to the” followed by a noun is used in Galatians 1:4, 2:8, 11, 14, 19, 3:29, 4:9, 5:13, 17, 6:8, and in none of these places is the grammar of 2:7 used, nor could the 2:7 be used to say “to the.”)

A second Scripture that is often used to “prove” one Gospel for all time is Revelation 14:6, in which John says, **I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people**. Some surmise that if there is an **everlasting gospel** then there is *only one Gospel*. Logic, however, does not lend such a conclusion. One may have *that which is everlasting* beside *that which is temporary*. The **dispensation of the grace of God** (as Paul calls it in Eph. 3:2) is temporary, previously not being revealed and concluding with the rapture. In addition, this **everlasting gospel** proclaimed by the angel in midheaven is *not like the temporary gospel we preach at all*. Verse 15 announces that Gospel as, **Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea...** Such is *not* the Gospel we preach today.

I am convinced that unless a person recognizes that the prescribed manner in which mankind can be right with God changed with various revelations on God’s part, that person *does not understand the Gospel* and will mix various Gospels together, making a mess of God’s revelation. In fact, I am convinced that a survey of most Gospel presentations today will present a *mixed-up Gospel*.

Our study on *The Gospel Rightly Divided* will be--

- Examining The Gospel in The Gospels
- Examining the Gospel in Acts
- Examining the Gospel in Paul's writings
- Examining the Gospel in Gospel presentations
- Summarizing the Gospel Rightly Divided.

## FIRST, A LITTLE HISTORY

Dispensationalism in its earlier days as a movement never contested the idea of a new soteriology in the age of Grace. The famed *Scofield Reference Bible* has a note on John 1:17 which says –

(2) As a dispensation, grace begins with the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 3:24–26; 4:24, 25). The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ, with good works as a fruit of salvation (John 1:12, 13; 3:36; Mt. 21:37; 22:42; John 15:22, 25; Heb. 1:2; 1 John 5:10–12). The *immediate result* of this testing was the rejection of Christ by the Jews, and His crucifixion by Jew and Gentile (Acts 4:27). The *predicted end* of the testing of man under grace is the apostasy of the professing church (see “Apostasy,” 2 Tim. 3:1–8, *note*), and the resultant apocalyptic judgments.<sup>1</sup>

While I disagree with Scofield on *when* the dispensation begins, I think he is totally right that the requirement for salvation materially changed from the dispensation of Law and Grace. In fact, I think it is folly to try to argue otherwise.

Earlier dispensationalism recognized that dispensational truth goes beyond *Israelology, ecclesiology, and eschatology* and includes *soteriology*. Modern dispensational thinking has rejected *soteriological dispensationalism*, to its own demise. The thinking now is that the dispensation only made a difference in the living of the Christian life, and not the entrance to the Christian life.

In another example, Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, said this—

Whatever may have been the divine method of dealing with individuals before the call of Abraham and the giving of the law by Moses, it is evident that, with the call of Abraham and the giving of the law and all that has followed, there are two widely different, standardized, divine provisions, whereby man, who is utterly fallen, might stand in the favor of God, namely, (a) by physical birth into Judaism or (b) by spiritual birth into Christianity or the kingdom of God.<sup>2</sup>

Once again, I do not agree with the statement in full, but clearly Chafer taught *two ways of salvation*, and this thinking would be rejected today.

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<sup>1</sup> C. I. Scofield, ed., *The Scofield Reference Bible: The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments* (New York; London; Toronto; Melbourne; Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1917), 1115.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Dispensationalism*. (Dallas 4, Texas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1951), 41.