

*Part 1: Addressing Claims That Paul's Teaching Is In Harmony With Those Before Him*

Most of Christianity outright rejects any claim of a uniqueness to Paul's message. Rather, they teach a continuity between the prophetic and the proprietary program.

In this session, we will explore some of the rationale that is used to make that which is totally different to be totally the same.

**CLAIM 1: THE CHURCH WAS STARTED BY JESUS**

Using Matthew 16:13-18, many dispensational (more than covenantal) theologians and preachers claim that Jesus promised to start His church. If this claim is accepted, then the church is built on the confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Both the Jewish assembly under Peter and the Gentile assembly under Paul are based on this claim. Therefore, the church that Jesus promised to build was started by Jesus sometime after Matthew 16. While most people place the starting point at Acts 2, the timing is irrelevant to the discussion because Jesus, not Paul, is the founder of the church.

This view is, by far, the majority perspective in Christendom, though covenant theologians have a slightly different perspective on timing.

If the church Jesus mentioned in Matthew 16 is the church we are in today, then Paul's claim of a previously unrevealed mystery must either be wrong or must not be about the establishment of a "church," whether called by that name or by the name of assembly, body, gathering, etc.

However, we should ask if the "church" Jesus promised to build could possibly be *something other than the body of Christ*. One interesting point is that nowhere in the words of Jesus is there even a hint of building something new, outside the covenants and commonwealth of Israel. Jesus came as "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises MADE unto the fathers" (Rom. 15:8). All of His words seem to "confirm the promises" rather than create something new. Any natural reading of His words indicates that the Kingdom is the only assembly He intends to establish, and that in fulfillment of prophecy. This is seen not only from the words of Jesus but from the reactions and expectations of His followers. Nowhere is there any indication that He will start a "church" that will be fully separate from Israel's promises, or that Israel's promises will somehow be transferred to this new assembly.

I contend, then, that the "church" referenced in Matthew 16 is actually the future assembly of saints that Jesus will build in the millennium. I further contend that any serious study of scripture, setting aside preconceived notions, will come to this conclusion.

To prove that Jesus, not Paul, was the founder of the church, those who reject a "proprietary program" idea point out that Paul "persecuted the church of God, and wasted it" (Gal. 1:13). How could Paul start something that was in existence before he was part of it? What those who use this argument fail to realize, however, is that what Paul persecuted was certainly (and correctly) called "church," but that it was certainly not "church" as it would be under Paul. In fact, even a cursory look at the church pre-Paul and post-Paul will show this to be true.

**CLAIM 2: ONLY ONE GOSPEL**

Galatians 1:8 states: "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."

Those who reject the proprietary program most often see this verse as Paul emphasizing the universal and unchanging nature of the Gospel. They typically assert that Paul's gospel is the same as Peter's, and hence, any deviation from this singular gospel warrants a curse.

However, from a "proprietary program" viewpoint, this interpretation overlooks significant distinctions. First, consider the context of "unto you." Paul is specifically addressing the Galatians. The emphasis on "unto you" indicates that Paul's warning pertains to the gospel he preached to the Gentiles in Galatia, not necessarily to the gospel preached to the Jews by Peter in

Jerusalem. We have argued that Peter's gospel (the gospel of the kingdom) and Paul's gospel (the gospel of the grace of God) are distinct. Peter's gospel focused on the coming kingdom and required adherence to the Law of Moses, while Paul's gospel emphasizes salvation by grace through faith, apart from works of the Law.

The nature of Paul's gospel also plays a crucial role. Paul received his gospel by direct revelation from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12). This gospel was specifically for the Gentiles and marked a distinct departure from the Jewish-centric gospel preached by Peter. Paul's ministry represents a new dispensation or administration in God's overarching plan, often referred to as the "dispensation of grace" (Ephesians 3:2). This dispensation was not revealed until Paul's conversion and commissioning.

The implications of the term "accursed" are also significant. The term "accursed" (Greek: anathema) indicates a severe condemnation. In this context, Paul is directly addressing the Judaizers—those who were compelling Gentile converts to adhere to Jewish laws and customs. These Judaizers were effectively preaching "another gospel" that was contrary to the grace-based gospel Paul preached. Importantly, Paul is not cursing Peter or his message per se, but rather anyone, including Judaizers or even an angel, who preaches a different gospel to the Galatians.

The distinctions between Peter's and Paul's gospels are clear. Peter's gospel is kingdom-oriented, focused on the imminent establishment of the Messianic Kingdom on earth, and centered around Israel and the Jewish people, requiring repentance, baptism, and adherence to Mosaic Law. In contrast, Paul's gospel is grace-oriented, emphasizing salvation by grace through faith alone, apart from the Law. It is broadly inclusive of Gentiles, forming the "Body of Christ" which transcends ethnic and cultural boundaries.

#### CLAIM 3: THE GOSPEL WAS PREVIOUSLY PROPHESED AND PREACHED

In Galatians 3:8, Paul says that "the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham." Those who reject the proprietary program claim that this demonstrates the continuity of the gospel message from the Old Testament to the New Testament. However, the verse goes on to state precisely and clearly what that gospel preached to Abraham was: "In thee shall all nations be blessed."

Who today would claim that this Abrahamic gospel is the same gospel preached in faithful Christian pulpits around the world? It is good news (and thus a gospel), and it does have to do with the nations, and with faith. But this does not make it the Pauline program. Rather, it is the good news that one day God would allow the nations to be blessed through Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant. But the Pauline Gospel is wholly independent of Abraham (it is neither Jew nor Greek). It is a gospel of faith alone (unlike the Abrahamic gospel, which required the sign of circumcision).

I challenge anyone who claims that Galatians 3:8 is our gospel to present our gospel using only the Abrahamic account. It can't be done because the foundational elements of our gospel are not present in the Abrahamic account.

#### CLAIM 4: THE HEBRAIC EPISTLES HARMONIZE WITH PAULINE EPISTLES.

The Hebraic Epistles, also known as the General Epistles, are letters in the New Testament that were written to a general audience rather than specific individuals or churches. These include the books of Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude. They are often called "Hebraic" because they are addressed primarily to Jewish followers of Jesus Christ and focus heavily on themes and concerns relevant to the Jewish-believing community.

Those who insist that there is no proprietary program claim that the Hebraic Epistles stand in perfect harmony with the Pauline Epistles, as such harmony is a requirement of their assumption. However, several key contradictions can be identified between these epistles and Paul's writings:

1. **Faith and Works:**

- **James 2:24:** "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

- **Romans 3:28:** "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."
  - **Contradiction:** James asserts that justification is by works and not by faith alone, while Paul emphatically teaches that justification is by faith apart from works.
2. **The Role of the Law:**
- **James 2:10-11:** "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."
  - **Galatians 3:10:** "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."
  - **Contradiction:** James emphasizes the importance of adhering to the law, while Paul teaches that those who rely on the law are under a curse and that the law is not the means of righteousness.
3. **Salvation Security:**
- **Hebrews 6:4-6:** "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."
  - **Romans 8:38-39:** "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
  - **Contradiction:** Hebrews warns about the impossibility of renewal to repentance for those who fall away, suggesting a potential loss of salvation, whereas Paul assures believers of the inseparable love of God and the security of their salvation.

These contradictions indicate significant theological and practical differences between the teachings of the Hebraic Epistles and those of Paul, challenging the notion of their complete harmony.

#### CONCLUSION:

In reality, Paul is at odds with a great portion of both content and tone of prophetic scriptures, which include the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the Hebraic Epistles. While they agree on the person and work of Jesus Christ, the future Kingdom of God, and all the prophetic elements of Israel's gospel, they do not agree on the individual elements of salvation, the Body of Christ (i.e., the church as we know it), and day-to-day Christian living. It is fully reasonable to assume that there is not a continuity between the prophetic and the Pauline, and then look for reasons why. A fairly cursory reading of Paul's works gives a quick and comprehensive understanding why there is no continuity, for it is Paul's very clear claim that he brings something new to the table. Rather than a continued attempt to harmonize, why don't we just do what Paul asks us to do: rightly divide the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).