

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND THE APOSTLE PAUL

Saul of Tarsus hated the Lord Jesus Christ as few men have ever hated Him. After Saul was converted he became the apostle Paul. He then loved and served the Lord Jesus Christ as did no other man. I Corinthians 15:10. Something of Paul's affection and devotion is expressed in his words in Acts 21:13: "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Concerning Paul (Saul) the Lord Jesus said: "he is a chosen vessel set unto Me . . . I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." Acts 9:15 and 16. After suffering for Christ for a few years Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Galatians 6:17. Some years later Paul wrote, "remember that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, according to my gospel, wherein I suffer trouble as an evil-doer, even unto bonds." II Timothy 2:8 and 9.

Note this interesting testimony of Paul; "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, Who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry . . . I obtained mercy that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern." I Timothy 1:12 to 16. Paul obtained mercy before Israel was set aside. The Gentiles obtained mercy after Israel was set aside. Romans 11:30. In I Corinthians 3:10 Paul declared that he was a wise masterbuilder, or architect. In Galatians 1:11 and 12 Paul wrote that the "grace" gospel he preached was received by the revelation of Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 3:8 Paul wrote that he was given grace to preach to Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. In Acts 22:17 to 21 the apostle Paul testified that he saw Jesus Christ in the temple at Jerusalem and heard Christ say, "I will send you far hence unto the Gentiles." When he gave this testimony at Jerusalem the religious Jews said it was not fit that Paul should live and they tried to tear him to pieces, but the Lord miraculously delivered Paul out of the hands of his would-be murderers. Later on Paul said the Lord stood with me and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion, "that by me the preaching might be fully known, and all the Gentiles might hear." At the time he wrote these words Paul was in jail for preaching a message, which he called "the mystery." Ephesians 6:19 and 20. Colossians 4:3 and 4. Therefore, he called himself "the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." Ephesians 3:1. Note the difference between the prophesied "gospel" of I Corinthians 15:1 to 4 and the unprophesied "mystery of the gospel" in Ephesians 6:19.

In Acts 13:46; Acts 18:5 and 6; Acts 28:25 to 28, and Romans 11:15 and 11:30, the apostle Paul wrote that he went to the Gentiles with the gospel when and because Israel refused his testimony concerning Christ. To Israel, Paul reasoned out of the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. Acts 17:3 and Acts 18:5. Then he wrote to Gentiles that the mystery among the Gentiles was Christ in them the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27. Quite at difference!

THREE INTERESTING AND SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS

In Romans 15:8 Paul wrote that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision (the Jews) with a “confirmation” ministry and message. In Romans 15:16 Paul wrote that he was Christ's minister to the Gentiles. In Romans 16:25 and 26 Paul wrote that his message for the Gentiles, which he called “MY GOSPEL,” was according to the revelation of the secret, and therefore not a “confirmation” ministry. Quite a difference! Confirmation ministry means a message prophesied in Israel's Old Testament Scriptures.

With these statements let us read Romans 11:13 and II Corinthians 5:16 and 17. Paul wrote in Romans 11:13, “I am the apostle of the Gentiles; I glorify mine office.” He wrote in II Corinthians 5:16, “henceforth we will not longer know Christ after the flesh; but if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation.” Alienated Gentiles were far off; dead in sins, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. Ephesians 4:18, Ephesians 2:12 and 13, Ephesians 2:5 and 6. Because Israel was cast away, because of Israel's unbelief, these far-off, alienated, dead Gentiles, were reconciled, created in Christ Jesus, made alive, and raised up and made to sit in the heavenlies in Christ. Romans 11:15 and 30, Colossians 1:21, Ephesians 2:10, Ephesians 1:13 and Ephesians 2:5 and 6. This was all by grace. Ephesians 2:8 and 9. Therefore, the unbelief, blindness and casting away of Israel, meant grace, reconciliation and new creation for Gentiles, and identification with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection and ascension: And this meant for the reconciled Gentiles membership in the Joint-Body of Christ, one flesh with Christ, the filling-up of Christ, and citizenship in the heavenlies, and all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. Ephesians 3:6; Ephesians 5:30 to 32; Ephesians 1:19 to 23 and Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 3:30 and 21, and Ephesians 1:3.

JESUS CHRIST . . . THE JEWS . . . THE GENTILES

In Matthew 15:24 to 28 we learn that Jesus Christ on earth said to the Gentile woman, it is not meet to take the children's bread and give it to dogs. “Let the children first be filled.” (Mark 7:27). When the twelve apostles saw that Gentile woman they did not have mercy on her, because of Israel's unbelief (Romans 11:30), but rather said to Christ, “send her away.” Matthew 15:23. Why? Christ told them not to go to Gentiles. Matthew 10:5. Christ said to the Gentile, “I am not sent but to Israel.” Matthew 15:24. Christ called the Jews, “children”; the Gentiles, “dogs.” “Let the children (the Jews) first be filled.” Years later we read in Romans 10:12, there is no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles; but surely there is a great difference between “children” and “dogs.” But read Ephesians 2:14 to 17. In Acts 13:46 Paul declared to the children (the Jews) it was necessary that the gospel should first be preached to them. He turned from the Jews (children) to the “Gentile dogs,” because the “children” would not receive the gospel. According to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Jesus Christ ministered to two Gentiles of “great faith,” while He was on earth. Matthew 15:22 to 27, Mark 7:22 to 27, Luke 7:1 to 12. Both of them were exceedingly humble and acknowledged that Christ belonged to Israel. But remember “great faith.” Compare this with Ephesians 2:3 and 4: great love for dead Gentiles.

Remember Romans 15:8 and Romans 11:13. . . Jesus Christ, the Minister and Apostle of Israel . . . Paul the apostle of the Gentiles. Read concerning Paul's ministry in I Timothy 2:7 and II Timothy 1:11. Paul declared that Christ was born to be Israel's Saviour. Acts 13:23. Hebrews 2:16 and 17. He declared that Christ was made under the law to deliver them that were under the

law. Galatians 4:4 and 5. Both Peter and Paul declared that Christ was raised from the dead to be Israel's Saviour. Acts 5:29 and Acts 13:31 to 37. The Word is very clearly stated: "Christ came unto His own." John 1:11. His own was Israel. They were the builders: Christ was the Stone rejected by the builders. Matthew 21:42 and 43. The gospel of grace was sent to the Gentiles because of Israel's unbelief and rejection. Romans 11:30. When Israel rejected Christ, in resurrection as well as in incarnation, God rejected Israel and began a new Gentile program.

After the builders rejected the Stone, in incarnation, He prayed on the cross that His Father would forgive them. Luke 23:34. For this reason, and the reason stated in Acts 3:18, we read the "therefore" in Acts 3:19. If we do not understand the efficacy of Christ's prayer on the cross for Israel (Luke 23:34), we cannot reconcile Matthew 23:33 with Acts 3:17 and Acts 3:25 and 26, and the meaning of the "therefore" in Acts 3:19. If God did not give Israel the opportunity to reject Christ, in resurrection, as well as, in incarnation, then there is no sense to Acts 5:29 to 32, Acts 3:19 to 26 and Acts 13:30 to 41; and the "therefore" of Acts 3:19 is meaningless.

While Christ and His twelve apostles were on earth they preached "the gospel of the kingdom" Matthew 4:23, Matthew 10:5 to 9, Luke 9:1 to 12. This was before the twelve apostles had the slightest knowledge of the gospel of I Corinthians 15:1 to 5. Read Luke 18:31 to 35 and John 20:9. There was much grace in "the gospel of the kingdom," but there is a difference between "grace" in the gospel, and "the gospel of grace." Acts 20:24, Ephesians 3:1 to 4, Romans 4:4 and 5 and 3:24. "The gospel of the kingdom" was preached when Israel was in favor with God. "The gospel of the grace of God" (reconciliation) was preached, and is preached when Israel was, and is, in disfavor with God.

During the first eleven chapters of Acts we read that God chose one mouth of the twelve mouths of the twelve apostles to preach to a household of Gentiles. Acts 15:7, Acts 10:1 to 46. Peter did not preach to the household of Cornelius to provoke Israel to jealousy, because of Israel's unbelief. Romans 11:11 and Romans 11:30. The other apostles condemned Peter for preaching to Cornelius. Acts 11:1 to 5. Peter and the Eleven had the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 16:18 and 19. For some reason the twelve apostles, during the period covered by the Book of Acts, remained in Jerusalem and the land of the Jews. Acts 8:1, Acts 15:1 to 13. In Acts are recorded no missionary journeys of the Twelve out of the land of the Jews. But in that Book are recorded, several missionary journeys of Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, to whom Christ said, "I will send you far hence to the Gentiles." Acts 22:17 to 21.

Paul was born out of due time. He was the only unbeliever who was permitted to see Christ on earth after Christ was raised from the dead. This is most significant. Note the agreement between Paul and Peter, in Galatians 2:9; that Peter and his fellow-apostles were to go to the Jews and Paul was to go to the Gentiles. In Matthew 28:19 and 20 Christ told Peter and his fellow-apostles to disciple all nations. How could they do this by remaining in the land of the Jews, preaching to Jews, and only one mouth speaking to one company of Gentiles Compare Peter's message to that one Gentile, in Acts 10:32 to 37, with Paul's message to Gentiles, in Romans 4:4 and 5, and you will say "what a difference!" Then compare Galatians 3:8, and Romans 4:8 to 11, with Acts 3:12 to 26 and learn the difference between Peter's gospel of the circumcision and Paul's gospel of the uncircumcision. (Galatians 2:7). Then compare Acts 17:11 and Ephesians 3:8 and learn the difference between the searchable (prophesied) riches of Christ

and the unsearchable (unprophesied) riches of Christ, and you will learn why Paul was in jail for the mystery and why Peter was not; and why Paul is the only apostle who wrote of the Church as “the Body” of Christ, the fulness, or filling-up of Christ.

Thus we see the great importance of developing and connecting John 1:11 and Romans 11:30. His own received Him not, in incarnation. But not until His own received Him not in resurrection did God usher in the wonderful, glorious dispensation of grace in which we now live. Let's never frustrate the grace of God or pervert the “grace” gospel by adding anything to the perfect redemption work of the perfect Christ. Salvation is God's free gift to every sinner, who will come by faith to Christ on Calvary.