



ZWTF

Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

Volume 7, Issue 38

Protecting the two gospels.

Let no one remove your celestial expectation in Christ—or Peter's terrestrial call for that matter.



In the early days of the human race, it pleased God to divide humanity into two sexes: male and female. Some might say, “I wish that God hadn’t done that. I’ve never understood this ‘two sexes’ nonsense. Wouldn’t it have been easier to have had only one sex?”

Anyone who would level this objection against God can take it up with Him the next time they see Him,

although I would not recommend it. God divided humanity in this manner for the purpose of contrast, for the purpose of parable, and for the purpose of personal spiritual development. The friction between the sexes is sometimes trying, yes, but perhaps this is the point. It is admittedly difficult for each gender to understand the other. To solve this problem, some would seek to unnaturally meld the sexes, that is, to pretend that the differences between men and women do not exist.

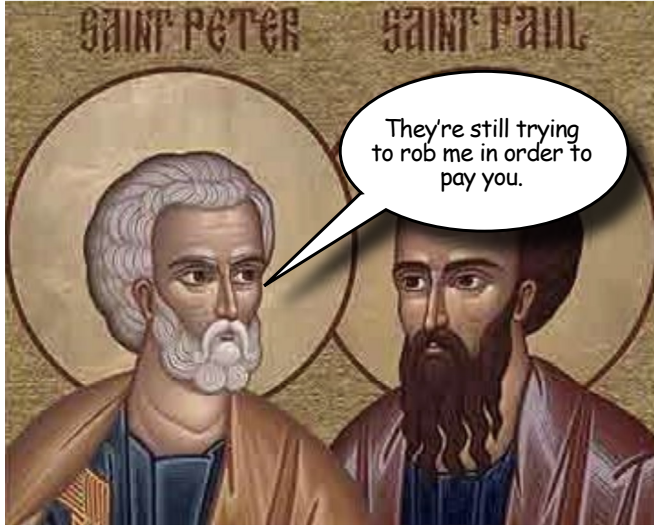
I press for understanding rather than melding.

We are all aware of modern political movements that would go so far in seeking “equality” between males and females so as to force women to be more like men and vice-versa. This, of course, is a recipe for disaster that results only in confusion. If you think that the so-called “battle of the sexes” is a hard war on its own, it only gets harder (and—in the process—stupid), when we close our eyes, fight against our natures, and pretend that no differences exist in the first place.

TWO GOSPELS

In the course of the human race and its relationship to God, it has pleased God to present to humanity two gospels: the gospel of the Circumcision and the gospel of the Uncircumcision (Galatians 2:7). Some might say, “I wish that God hadn’t done that. I’ve never understood this ‘two gospels’ nonsense. Wouldn’t it have been easier to have had only one gospel?”

I would not recommend asking God this question, for you might get the same answer that Paul gave to the protester of Romans 9:19 who “just couldn’t understand” why God would still judge people whom He, Himself, had hardened—or, indeed, why God would make vessels of honor and dishonor in the first place. *Wouldn’t it have been easier to create only one kind of vessel?* Paul’s answer to the protester is curt yet profoundly simple: “O man! who are you, to be sure, who are answering again to God?” (Romans 9:20).



A NEW THEORY

There is currently, among us, an effort to teach that, subsequent to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is only one gospel, and it is the gospel of the transcendent grace of God. This sounds simple and pat on its face (“how nice; only one gospel”) but it is far from it, for it goes so far as to say that this “one gospel” began at the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, meaning that Peter himself (the chief of the Circumcision gospel to Israel) then taught Paul’s gospel and is in the body of Christ. I will finish this ZWTF by explaining to you why there are two gospels in the first place and why they both exist even today (let alone in Peter and Paul’s day), but first I must set before you the provable error of the new teaching (it’s more like a theory), the unwanted results of teaching it, and the personal dangers of believing it.

“The most dangerous error is that which would use words belonging to truth as a springboard.”

It behooves me to disclose the name of the person disseminating this error simply because, in the case of so serious an error, this is the example of Paul. You, my fellow members of the body of Christ, need to know who is forwarding this error so that you can avoid it. Besides, the new theory has been announced publicly as well as vehemently and thus I must respond in kind. If this were a small departure from truth, I wouldn’t

care about it. If the person disseminating it had no one listening to him, I’d let it self-destruct. But the fact that this is a matter of great consequence, and that the person teaching it is well-known, likeable, loved, is the pastor of a thriving ecclesia, and is the chief presenter on his own YouTube channel watched by a few hundred people each week, I am left with no choice—no choice, that is, if I want to defend Paul’s gospel.

Back in the day, Paul called out two men who were teaching that the resurrection had already occurred. Let’s listen to Paul himself from 2 Timothy 2:15-18—

Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth. Yet from profane prattlings stand aloof, for they will be progressing to more irreverence, and their word will spread as gangrene, of whom are Hymeneus and Philetus, who swerve as to truth, saying that the resurrection has already occurred, and are subverting the faith of some.

The most dangerous error is that which would “swerve from the truth,” that is, which would use words belonging to truth as a springboard for error. A modern way to say this is: “So near and yet so far.”

Alan Hess is teaching that the era of grace began with the death and resurrection of Christ, so that even Christ’s twelve disciples, who were Paul’s contemporaries subsequent to the resurrection of Christ, were automatically transferred to the body of Christ. How is this possible? Because, according to Alan, “There is only one gospel”—and it’s not Israel’s. Where does this leave Peter? We shall soon see.

The most obvious problem with this teaching is that there is *not* one gospel, but two. Galatians 2:6-9—

Now from those reputed to be somewhat—what kind they once were is of no consequence to me (God is not taking up the human aspect)—for to me those of repute submitted nothing. But, on the contrary, perceiving that *I have been entrusted with the evangel of the Uncircumcision, according as Peter of the Circumcision* (for He Who operates in Peter for the apostleship of the Circumcision operates in me also for the nations), and, knowing the grace which is being given to me, James and Cephas and John, who are supposed to be pillars, give to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we, indeed, are to be for the nations, yet they for the Circumcision.

How does Alan sidestep this inspired revelation in order to reach the conclusion that even the chief of the Circumcision gospel (Peter) had to join Paul’s message to become

a member of the body of Christ—because, really, Peter had no other gospel left? Alan insists that this verse, as it reads here from the *Concordant Literal New Testament*, is mistaken. He swerves from the truth of this definitive passage by insisting that the word “of” can be (and should be) substituted with the word “to,” even though the word “to” changes the truth of the passage into a lie.

If Peter is entrusted with “the evangel *of* the Circumcision” and Paul is entrusted with “the evangel *of* the



Uncircumcision,” then we are clearly considering two different evangels, each with its own representative caretaker. This we learn from the word “of,” which reflects the genitive case of the nouns “Circumcision” and “Uncircumcision.” The genitive case denotes character and kind. For instance, if I play “the music *of* the Mexicans,” and “the music *of* the Japanese,” I am clearly playing different music. But if I were to substitute the word “to” for the word “of,” then the entire meaning is changed, for playing the music “to the Mexicans” and “to the Japanese” could very well be a playing of the same music to these disparate groups.

Thus also with the two evangels. Alan Hess, insisting that this word should be “to” instead of “of,” forwards the theory that Peter and Paul took the same gospel to different people. This would apparently satisfy the objections of certain people (and perhaps of Alan himself), that the presence of two gospels in the New Testament is just too complicated, too troublesome, and too confusing. (“How much simpler if there is only one gospel!”) But I insist

to you that the attempt to force every New Testament epistle (the Greek Scriptures) into a one-gospel construct is as confusing, foolhardy and dangerous as attempting to turn men into women and women into men—for the expressed reason that the existence of two sexes is “just too hard to figure out.”

I will tell you what is “just too hard to figure out.” It’s too hard to figure out how law aligns with liberty, works with faith, national advantage with no racial distinction, earth with heaven, pardon with justification and a “fearful waiting for judgment” (Hebrews 10:27) with “being justified gratuitously in His grace” (Romans 3:24). Too hard to figure out? These things would be *impossible* to figure out were there only one gospel in the New Testament.

But don’t worry. There is not only one gospel. There are two.

In his video titled, “Peter and Paul” (linked to below), Alan says that “of” and “to” are interchangeable. *It can be read either way*, he says. (The version Alan referenced in the video—the KJV—translated correctly with “of.” Admittedly, some versions make this “to,” but they are in the minority.) On a whim (in the face of no grammatical evidence) Alan decided that Galatians 2:7 ought to be translated “to” instead of “of.” From this capricious springboard, Alan launched into his theory that there is “only one gospel” in the New Testament, and that reading Peter’s two letters (1 and 2 Peter) are the same as reading Paul’s letters, for “there is only one gospel.”

“Let’s turn from whimsy to a sound principle.”

If Peter is alive, and if there is “only one gospel” in his day, and if the “only one gospel” is the Uncircumcision gospel, and if believers in the Uncircumcision gospel are termed members of the body of Christ, then doesn’t it follow—according to this strange new theory—that Peter is a member of the body of Christ?

Whimsy is no way to translate. Let’s turn from whimsy to a sound principle. In other words, let’s not guess. Rather, let’s find out if the Concordant Version (and other versions—even the KJV) is correct. It’s not as hard as one might think, for there *is* grammatical evidence that the translation “of” is correct, and so we don’t have to flip a coin or fashion our teaching in accord with personal preference. Personal preference ought to have

nothing to do with this. There is indeed an ironclad, objective way to be certain that Galatians 2:7 *must* read “of” rather than “to.” I delve into the details of this in a video recorded last week, which is also linked below. But because I want my points in print also, I offer the following—

GREEK TO ME

Pertaining to nouns, the ancient Greek language (the language of the New Testament) has five cases: 1) nominative, 2) vocative, 3) accusative, 4) genitive, and 5) dative. “Case” refers to the way a word functions in a sentence and how it relates to other words. In English, we determine word function by the order of a word in a sentence; the Greeks do it by adding suffixes to words. Rather than define for you each of these cases, I want to define only the genitive and dative, for these are the cases under consideration.

The genitive case speaks of possession, character or kind—the nature of the thing: “the letter *of* Sally”; “the music *of* the Japanese.” The dative case, on the other hand, speaks of direction—where something is going: “the letter *to* Sally”; “the music *to* the Japanese.” Thus, the genitive case comes over into English with “of,” and the dative case with “to.”

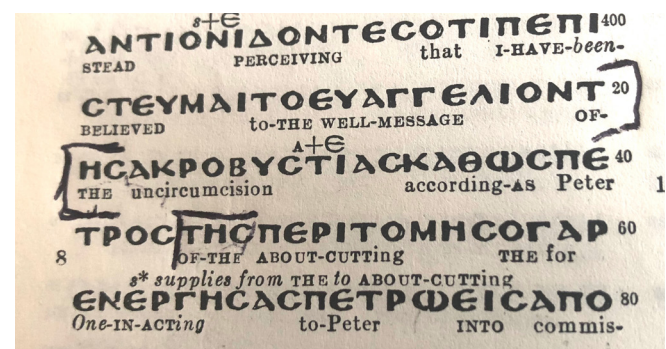
Is there a way to tell which case is being used in the Greek in Galatians 2:7? There is.



Besides case, when considering Greek nouns and their declension there are two considerations: 1) gender, and 2) number. Greek nouns are either masculine, feminine or neuter (gender), or singular or plural (number). These considerations determine which letters are added to words in order to indicate case.

To signify the genitive case of a noun—when the

noun is feminine/singular (as are the nouns “Circumcision” and “Uncircumcision”) and the noun is preceded by the definite article (i.e. “the evangel of *the* Circumcision)—the Greeks add the letters “Epsilon” (which looks like this: “H”) and “Sigma” (which looks like this: “C”) to the definite article, which in this instance starts with the Greek letter “Tau” (which looks like this: “T”). When they want to indicate the dative case, the Greeks simply drop the “Sigma.” In Galatians 2:7, the three most ancient Greek manuscripts (Vaticanus; Alexandrinus; Sinaiticus) all use the “THC” construction (the “Sigma” is present). Here is Galatians 2:7 from my *Concordant Greek Text*—



That settles that.

NAME DROPPER

The reason that Paul called out Hymeneus and Philetus by name for the “the-resurrection-has-already-occurred” teaching is that they were the men peddling it. Paul wanted the saints to know that, when they heard the names “Hymeneus” and “Philetus” in the context of a teaching on resurrection, they were to perk up their ears and be on their guard. What was Paul’s criteria for calling out a certain teaching? The teaching would have to be 1) provably wrong, 2) capable of spreading like gangrene, and/or 3) capable of subverting faith.

I have already seen that some are being swayed by Alan’s theory because they “never understood this two-gospel nonsense” in the first place. Alan’s new teaching, then, appeals (apparently) to those who think that one evangel sounds easier than two. On such a primitive and emotional level, the theory appeals to the flesh. Once a teaching appeals to the flesh, it naturally tends to spread like gangrene—that is, unless it is stopped in its tracks by a strong antiseptic.

I fail to see how the teaching of the resurrection having already occurred could appeal to the flesh, but I can definitely see how it could “subvert the faith of some”—as Paul

Watch my two videos refuting Alan’s theory:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1YG4YrpzBI>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFGCkfkfTk4>

puts it. If the resurrection had already occurred, how would you feel to find yourself—with Paul—still standing in the middle of a wicked eon? It would not only ruin your day, it might make you discard the faith.

But what about this “there’s-only-one-evangel” theory? Does it carry the potential of subverting the faith of some? Most definitely, and here’s how.

THE DANGER OF IT

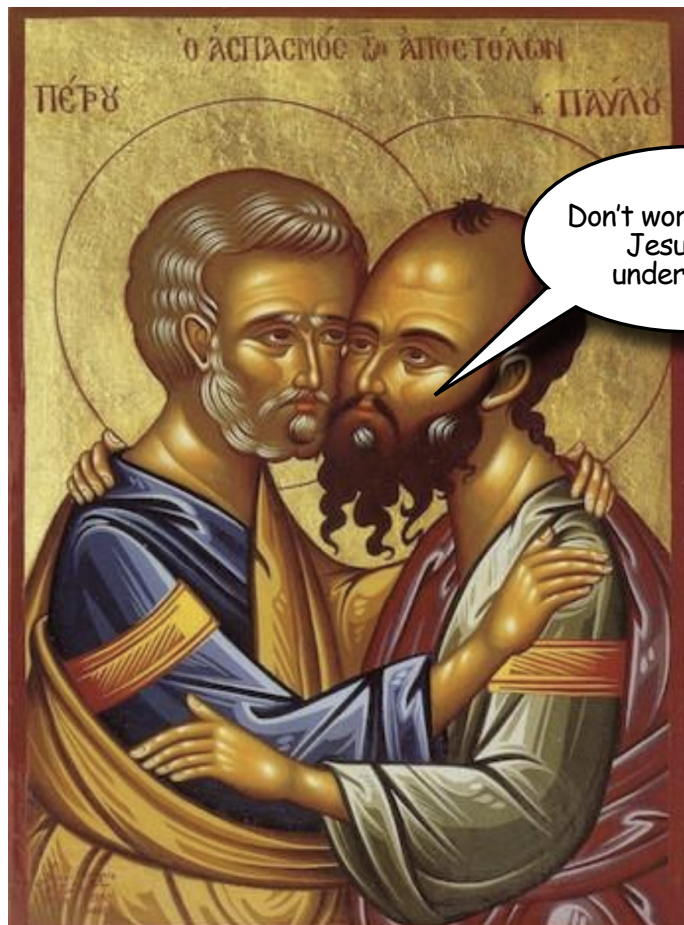
If, beginning with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the gospel of the Circumcision (heralded by Jesus Christ while He was on Earth) ends and the gospel of the transcendent grace of God begins—so much so that Peter himself is transferred from the Circumcision gospel into the body of Christ—then what of the letters that Peter wrote subsequent to this time? Are Peter’s two epistles then heralding the same gospel heralded by Paul? Alan says, “yes.” (Because Peter uses the word “grace” in his letters—as does Paul—and does not specifically mention following the law—and neither does Paul—Alan assumes that Peter must be teaching Paul’s gospel and spends part of one whole video trying to prove it. This is as flawed an argu-

ment as an insistence that, because plants and animals both utilize sunlight, and because neither plants nor animals drive cars, then therefore plants are animals.)

Why stop with Peter? If Peter is in the body of Christ, then James must also be in the body of Christ. And John. And Jude. And Matthew. Alan admits that Jesus Christ, while on earth, taught the Circumcision gospel. But to whom did He teach it? Did He not teach it to the aforementioned men? But would not a reasonable person understand that these men would *retain* the gospel taught them by Jesus Christ (as Jesus Christ told them to do) and that Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection would in no way cancel His teaching to them, but rather confirm it?

Would not a reasonable person understand that, even though a different gospel had come to the Earth via Paul, and even though Peter gave Paul the right hand of fellowship, and even though Peter recognized that God was doing a mighty work among the Gentiles, that Peter could befriend Paul, befriend the nations—and retain his Circumcision/covenant relationship with the terrestrial Jesus Christ at the same time? Most certainly. This is why Paul wrote in Galatians 2:7-8—

But, on the contrary, perceiving that *I have been entrusted with the evangel of the Uncircumcision, according as Peter of the Circumcision* (for He Who operates in Peter for the apostleship of the Circumcision operates in me also for the nations).



Don't worry, Peter.
Jesus will
understand.

THEY WROTE

But here is the worst part: If Peter and the other disciples of Christ—including James—are now in the body of Christ (because, after all, there’s “only one gospel”), then the epistles that these men wrote subsequent to their involuntarily transfer into Christ’s body would be equally as applicable to us of the nations as the letters of Paul. Right?

Indeed, in his video titled, “Paul’s Gospel is the Only Gospel” (linked below), Alan strains to show how Peter’s two epistles reflect body of Christ truth. In this video, Alan makes no distinction between Peter’s letters and Paul’s, except that Peter is teaching Paul’s gospel to a different audience. According to Alan, the difference with Peter is not in content (“of the”) but in direction (“to the”). Do you now see the dramatic consequences of mistranslating (*guessing at*, basically) Galatians 2:7? *Paul’s letters are no longer the only place to find body-of-*

Christ teaching; the other New Testament writers are all teaching the same thing.

And again, why stop at Peter? We must also—it seems to me, on the basis of new theory—count the letters of James, John and of Jude as equally applicable to the body of Christ as the letters of Paul.

Away with this! This theory is illogical, illegal, irresponsible and—most importantly—unscriptural. This teaching potentially leads many members of the body of Christ astray.

If I took it upon myself to detail for you every difference between the letters of Paul and the letters of the Circumcision writers, then I would have to write a book. Oh, wait. I already *have* written a book; it's called, *The First Idiot in Heaven*. I encourage everyone to read it. I wish that Alan had read it.

Paul pronounced an “anathema” (a curse; “devoted to destruction”) on anyone who would distort the evangel of Christ. I am not saying that Alan Hess, personally, is distorting it (in his own mind, apparently, he is able to distinguish between law and grace), but this new theory lays the theological groundwork, rolls out the red carpet, tears down the walls of Paul's thirteen epistles, and extends an embossed invitation to anyone wanting to distort it, for it opens the door for every element of the Circumcision gospel (law, works, rites, judgment) to be mixed in with Paul's epistles.

People who have lost their peace due to Alan's new theory are writing me to complain about this. It bothers them that there could be no other gospel in the New Testament except one. Why? Because they are loathe to have their grace compromised by law, their faith compromised

by works, and their assurance in Christ compromised by “a fearful looking for judgement” (Hebrews 10:27). This edition of the ZWTF, along with my two videos, and along with four articles by Aaron Welch (links upcoming) will assure these people who have been disturbed by the new theory that, indeed, there are two gospels. And no one in my circle (most of them with years and even decades of study under their belts) will allow these two gospels to be mixed or even potentially mixed.

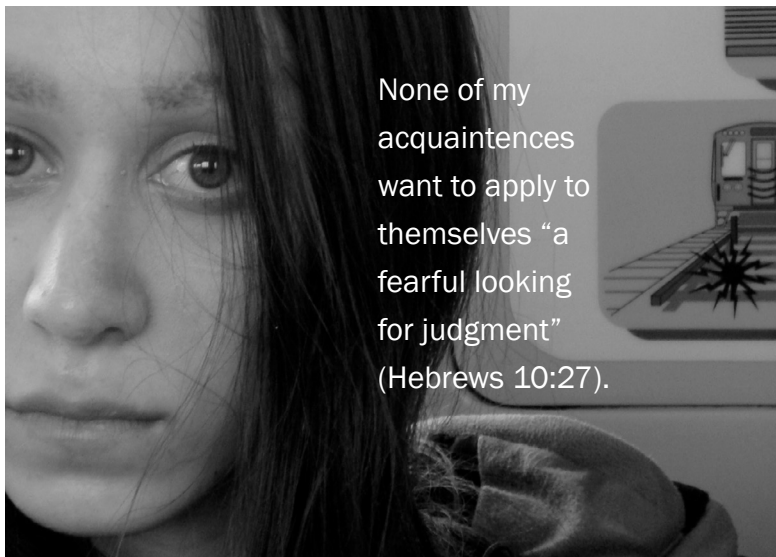
To anyone rocked by this new theory, I say this: It's not true. Don't worry. It's only a theory and it has no Scriptural backing. (Wait until you read Aaron's articles.) There are two gospels in the New Testament; Peter had one, Paul had the other one. One concerns the covenant that God gave Abraham, the other does not. One demands faith *and* works, the other does not. One requires you to confess your sins to God, the other justifies you gratuitously in grace. The *only* place where you will find Paul's gospel is in Paul's thirteen epistles. You will *not* find Paul's distinct message in Peter's epistles, nor in John's epistles, nor in Jude's epistle, nor in the epistle of James. These men wrote to Israelites (to the people of the covenant) and forwarded the evangel given to them by Jesus Christ while He was on Earth. And we all know (or at least we should know) that “Jesus Christ was a minister of the Circumcision, to confirm the patriarchal promises” (Romans 15:8).

I will fight with my last breath to protect the walls of Paul's gospel and will not allow a different gospel, or another gospel—or any foreign element whatsoever—to seep into it. My friend Alan is careless along this line, but I am not. I take seriously Paul's statement to the Galatians in 1:6-9—

I am marveling that thus, swiftly, you are transferred from that which calls you in the grace of Christ, to a different evangel, which is not another, except it be that some who are disturbing you want also to distort the evangel of Christ. But if ever we also, or a messenger out of heaven, should be bringing an evangel to you beside that which we bring to you, let him be anathema! As we have declared before and at present I am saying again, if anyone is bringing you an evangel beside that which you accepted, let him be anathema!

“DRAGGING THE LINE”

There have been many arguments over the years about where to draw the line that



marks the end of the announcement of Peter's gospel. Most people draw this line somewhere around the death of Paul; as soon as Paul left the scene, then only Paul's gospel held sway (that is, the teaching for the body of Christ) and Peter's gospel was suspended completely until the snatching away of the body of Christ and the return of the glorified Messiah to Earth to inaugurate the fabled Millennium. At least, in this scenario, the men who followed Christ are allowed the courtesy of retaining the evangel taught them by Jesus.

My teaching (which reflects Paul's teaching in Romans, chapter 11; and, in fact, *is* Paul's teaching) insists that the Circumcision gospel never has gone away, and that although it is not the active evangel and is presently "on hold," it can still be believed and waited for by faithful Jews and proselytes. Thus, I draw the line at Paul's "current era," a phrase coined by Paul himself in Romans 11:5 and heralded by yours truly in Paul's absence. Paul says that there is a Circumcision remnant "in the current era." If we're still in this current era (and we are, as I will prove to you in an article in this very edition—after a brief intermission), then there is still—and always has been—a believing Circumcision remnant. There has *always* been, since the time of Paul, two gospels.

Thus, I draw the line later than most. But in all my years, I have *never* seen anyone draw the line at the resurrection of Christ—before even the *call* of Paul—with the unavoidable result that even Peter, James and John are in the body of Christ. This is a new one. It's kind of like looking at the bearded woman at the circus sideshow. You can only stare at it and wonder how such a thing came to be. Then you remember: *Oh, yes. Now I remember. Galatians 2:27 was guessed at instead of believed as translated.*

AARON WELCH

Whether he has written specifically in response to Alan's recent teaching, I don't know, but our brother Aaron Welch has written four articles proving that most of the believing Jews of the first century were, indeed, Circumcision believers. Not only did Peter, James and John retain the Circumcision evangel given them by Jesus Christ (there are two gospels, not one), but there were tens of thousands of Jews who not only believed in Jesus Christ but who were legitimately zealous for the law and for the covenantal promises God made to Abraham. These tens of thousands of Jews were decidedly *not* members of the body of Christ.

These four articles are four shoulder-launched bazooka shots that Scripturally blow up Alan Hess' theory. In one

of his videos, Alan complained that those who wrote him to say that he was mistaken did not bring Scripture to the fight. Well, that complaint can no longer be registered. Aaron's articles *bury* Alan's theory in a mountain of inspired evidence. These articles are so sound and so packed with Scriptural evidence that I don't see how any open-minded person can read them and still come away thinking that every first-century believer—even Circumcision Jews once faithful to the covenantal promises—was necessarily and automatically transferred into the body of Christ. "There's only one gospel!" shouted Alan Hess repeatedly to his congregation. Well, no. He missed it by one. There are *two* gospels.

Here are Aaron Welch's articles. They are well-researched, well-written and Scripturally sound. I commend them to everyone who has entertained even a hint of a doubt that two gospels (not one) indeed went forth in the time of Peter and Paul—

1.

<http://thathappyexpectation.blogspot.com/2018/09/gods-covenant-people-why-most-believing.html>

2.

http://thathappyexpectation.blogspot.com/2018/09/gods-covenant-people-why-most-believing_27.html

3.

http://thathappyexpectation.blogspot.com/2018/09/gods-covenant-people-why-most-believing_83.html

4.

http://thathappyexpectation.blogspot.com/2018/09/gods-covenant-people-why-most-believing_95.html

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INTERMISSION

It is time now for you to go to the bathroom, let the dog out, pop some popcorn or grab a beer. Because now I am going to tell you why there are two gospels to begin with and why there has been a remnant of Circumcision believers from Paul's day all the way to the present.

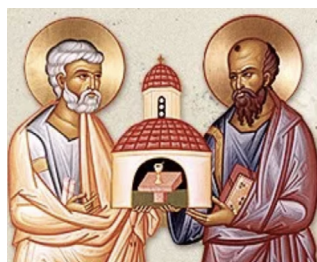
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Please feel free to listen to this Intermission music while you wait for the rest of the show to begin; click on the link below, then toggle back to this page as you contemplate the coming, state-of-the-art literary content and stare at this lifelike artistic rendering of Peter and Paul:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xy_](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xy_NKN75Jhw)

[NKN75Jhw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xy_NKN75Jhw)



The time of the current era.

Romans 11:1-5

by Martin Zender



I am saying, then, Does not God thrust away His people? May it not be coming to that! For I also am an Israelite, out of Abraham's seed, Benjamin's tribe. 2 God does not thrust away His people whom He foreknew. Or have you not perceived in Elijah what the scripture is saying, as he is pleading with God against Israel? 3 Lord, Thy prophets they kill, Thine altars they dig down, and I was left alone, and they are seeking my soul. 4 But what is that which apprises saying to him? I left for Myself seven thousand men who do not bow the knee to the image of Baal. 5 Thus, then, in the current era also, there has come to be a remnant according to the choice of grace.

The identity of the Circumcision remnant, first of all, must be Circumcision. This has to be a small group of people loyal to the message that God gave Abraham. Imagine someone saying to Paul, "Paul, all seems lost for the Israel of God. Prove to us that God has not thrust away His people," and then Paul produces a company—including himself—who have abandoned the Circumcision message for a different evangel. Absurd. This would serve only to cement the initial suspicion. If Paul is using himself as an example of the remnant, then surely the conclusion could be reached, "Yes, God certainly *has* thrust away Israel," for Paul himself, in the letter to the Philippians, thrust away his nationality, his tribe, his Pharisaic pedigree, even the value of his own circumcision. (Philippians 3:4-8). My goodness. If Paul is an example of God staying true to His ancient promises, then those promises are doomed indeed.

May it not be coming to that! Paul's statement, "For I also am an Israelite," is simply the apostle explaining, in one simple sentence, his vested interest in the answer to the critical question. It is certainly not Paul offering himself as an example of why God still honors His word to Israel. No, the Circumcision remnant *must* be true to the Abrahamic covenant. God has not forgotten His promises, and neither is He offering these promises to another people. Neither is God frustrated by the new

calling of the nations, as though this would sidetrack Him and curtail His original plan. This *is* His original plan.

THE ORIGINAL PLAN

Think of it: God calls a special people primarily to prove to all humanity, by practical experience, the incapability of flesh and blood to inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50). Israel is first and foremost a guinea-pig nation—a nation of demonstration—proving to all humanity, for all time, that apart from God's enabling power and grace, humanity never can attain righteousness, especially not through law (Romans 3:19-20). God doesn't need this evidence, but the world does.

One gets the feeling, when Paul is sent to the nations with a message of pure grace, that this was "meant" to be the original message all along. In a sense, this is correct. Speaking as a man, this was the gospel that God would have pleasantly shocked the world with straightaway. Who isn't tempted to unveil a special Christmas present the day they buy it, three months before Christmas? It's hard for us to wait to bless people. Grace is God's heart, but it cannot be properly displayed or appreciated without the necessary preparation of works and subsequent failure. Grace must stun. Without centuries of public failure in the pleasing-of-God department, grace can't do that. God had yet to go to a lot of trouble (and I do mean a lot of trouble) to demonstrate humanity's inherent helplessness (works and failure).

Who wants to mutilate a bunch of penises? Who wants to thunder down from Sinai in full grouch mode with a bunch of laws carved in stone? Who wants to watch the blood of a million sheep trickle down into the Gihon Spring? Not God. This was not His heart. God Himself admits later that He took no delight in the blood of sacrifices (Psalm 51:16). The fact that "in Christ, neither circumcision is availing anything, nor uncircumcision" (Galatians 5:6) tells us that God wasn't too crazy about circumcision either. But again, He had to do it for a demonstration. A demonstration of what?

Humanity needs to know God's majesty. When Paul says later that we have access to the Father with confidence (Ephesians 3:12), this has no context (for appreciation) apart from the realization of how great and mighty—and, really, how unapproachable—God truly is. God must set up a Wizard of Oz-type fear-and-respect display (fire, smoke, lots of reverb), carried on for years, so that when humanity at last receives its backstage pass, it will truly revel in the access. The thrill thrills proportionately to the initial grasp of divine awe and greatness. Fire, smoke and lots of reverb testify to how magnificent ("great and powerful") God truly is.

This is an imperfect example. Were it not for the investigative derring-do of Toto, the Wizard of Hollywood fame would have carried the charade into infinity. The power and might of the poser from Kansas was essentially fake. God's power and might is real. That's the difference. Other than this difference, the example stands. God really is this magnificent and fire-breathing. He could destroy everything with a breath. But no. He's love. How to get everyone eventually and eternally basking in grateful hob-nobbery with the Sovereign of the Universe? Deny their presence for about four-thousand years—save for a select few who You threaten with instant death if they so much as look at You funny.

God loves to shock people with grace. He would rather have left everyone's reproductive organs intact, foregone Sinai completely, spared a lot of sheep the slaughter block, and come out of the gate throwing candy from His golden limousine. But He had already done that with Adam and it didn't work. Adam ho-hummed every blessing God passed beneath his nose; Adam had never experienced the opposing phenomenon.

The fact that God has bided His time with humanity this long while setting the dual stages of futility and frustration, testifies to His patience. I would have broken down about three-thousand years ago and said, "I can't take it any more. Here! Here's your candy! I'm loaded with it!"

It is not until sin enters the world that Adam lunges toward God in awe, thanksgiving, and longing. (Adam lunges similarly toward Eve later. He watched all of the animals copulating and found none of them attractive—especially not the hippopotamus. The only reason Eve attracted him was because God removed Adam's femininity, which Adam had never seen before because it was secreted away invisibly inside him. God gave it to Eve, and there she stood displaying it like nobody's business. Adam then realized how great it was and he was glad that he no longer had it. But he sure wanted it back—if you know what I mean.) Likewise, it is not until Israel has struggled for centuries between the rocks of Sin and her own inability that humanity as a whole becomes prepared for Someone Else to conquer flesh. (Behold, the pure grace message.)

The surprising thing is that God follows through with His plans for Israel. Paul writes about it here; somebody had to write about it because almost everyone doubted it. Once the example was finished, the world-at-large figured that God would scrap the example. (Preterists, today, still think that God has scrapped the example, that is, Israel.) When Israel as a guinea-pig nation had served its purpose (around the time of the calling of Paul), no one would have blamed God for calling off the engagement, especially if

He compensates Israel for the trouble. God could have said, "Well done good and faithful guinea pig nation," and then rewarded Israel handsomely for the ignoble role foisted upon her. He could have tossed Israel in a happy heap onto the lap of Paul's gospel, or at the least relegated Israel to the lake of fire (which is the second death, i.e. unconsciousness; Revelation 20:14), and given it blessed immortality at the consummation of the eons (1 Corinthians 15:21-28). No one in Israel would have complained about any of that, especially not about the "Paul's lap" scenario.

But no. God actually follows through with the covenant He made with Israel, the one that they could in no way fulfill. The covenant God fulfills is somewhat modified in that God does His part *and* Israel's part when He changes that nation's heart from one of stone to flesh. This is purely God's act; it's a miracle. The nation shall be born in one day. Because this isn't really a covenant anymore (God fulfills both ends of it), God re-names it. He decides to call it the New Covenant. (No one had ever heard of a nation being born in one day; no one had ever heard of a covenant involving only one party. This was all stunning news.) God is consistent as the sunrise and as gracious as can be with a people who have looked forward to running the Earth since God whispered the plan to Abraham in 1926 BCE.

It is slightly embarrassing, however, that the consummation of Israel's promise to run Earth lasts only 1,000 years. I may be the only one who thinks this to be absurdly short. This time period, compared to the eons, is a blip. Compared to Israel's history, it's a blip and a half. What it tells me is that God wants to get the Millennium over with. He's champing at the bit for the next development, which is to create the third earth, to bring down the New Jerusalem upon it, to eliminate funerals, and to finally jettison the awkward arrangement of priesthood. On the new Earth, God Himself dwells with humanity and priesthood has been relegated to the ash heap of history.

THE REMNANT ISN'T PRETTY

Sometime last year, I shared this quote with you by A.E. Knoch from his article titled, "Refuse the Refuse, Anglo-Israelism" in Volume 27 of *Unsearchable Riches* magazine—

Why make a main issue out of a matter of no importance? We all know that there are Jews, but these lose all that distinguishes them the moment they believe.

Suppose that others are Israelites. Is it worthwhile even telling them this? If we make out that this is the least advantage to them, then we are in irreconcilable conflict with God's Word...It is no advantage whatever to be an Israelite today. In practical effect it is an immense hindrance, for it breeds fleshly pride and national hypocrisy, and distorts the Scriptures to drag God's grace in the dust. It is earthly, soulish, and counter to the cross, so that they glory in their shame.

In spite of Paul's testimony that there is a remnant "in the current era," A.E. Knoch clearly denies its existence. Jews *would* lose all that distinguishes them as Jews the moment they believe, but only if Paul's is the only gospel available *to* believe. Knoch's argument assumes his premise. If there is a contemporary Circumcision remnant, however, then certainly a Jew could believe it and retain that which distinguishes him or her, just as Peter and many others did in the first century. If those of the first century occupied "the current era" but we do not, then when did "the current era" end?

Secondly, one would only be in "irreconcilable conflict" with God's Word on the matter of Israelite national advantage if, again, Knoch's premise were true. If the Circumcision remnant mysteriously (I say "mysteriously" because no proof is cited) died off, then when did it happen? This question is never asked, let alone answered. Every argument forwarded by Knoch in this paragraph depends on the death of the Circumcision remnant long before our present day.

Another of Knoch's assumptions is that the presence of a Circumcision remnant necessitates that remnant being a channel of blessing in this, the administration of God's grace. Here may be Knoch's Achilles heel. I quote again from the article—

No one who grasps the great truths which are given us in Paul's epistle to the Romans or that to the Philippians will ever concern himself with his place in the flesh or imagine that Israel has already become a channel of blessing in this administration of God's grace, for this is diametrically opposed to its character and purpose.

Who is imagining that Israel has already become a channel of blessing in this administration? Paul is certainly not insisting upon it, even while declaring the existence of the remnant. The presence of a Circumcision remnant in no way requires members of that remnant to be actively administering Kingdom duties. In fact, the very term "remnant" defies such a conclusion. Israel performing Kingdom functions during the Millennium

can certainly not be called a remnant. Even in his day, Peter—still holding fast to the Circumcision promises—did not presume such a thing. Certainly the man was not functioning in his kingdom capacity when we find him in Babylon (of all places), from whence he writes his first letter (1 Peter 5:13) in 58 AD, the same year that Paul wrote Romans. Had he "already become a channel of blessing," Peter would have been in Jerusalem, not Babylon. We would have been able to admire his throne (Matthew 19:28). At this late date, however, Peter's throne was still pending.

Not a single New Testament Circumcision letter written during the era of Paul, either from the pen of Peter, John, James or Jude, finds its writer exercising Jewish kingdom prerogatives, not the least of which would include ruling the other nations with a rod of iron. Rather, these men are all suffering various degrees of abuse. They are all writing letters from desperate outposts to fairly desperate people. But of course. They were then part of the remnant, not of the ruling class.

Clearly, the Circumcision remnant, even in the first century, is doing nothing more exotic than holding fast to promises. Peter addresses his first letter to "the chosen expatriates of the dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, the province of Asia, and Bithynia." Have the expatriates in these cities "already become a channel of blessing" (Jewish blessing) during the administration of God's grace, which was already then imposed via Paul? The very description of these folks as "expatriates" defies any such understanding.

The entire book of Hebrews, especially chapter 11, is written to geographical and spiritual expatriates (Hebrews 11:13). Even in that early day, Israel was a people in waiting. They had seen the kingdom withdraw to an undetermined time in the future on the heels of the new administration inaugurated by Paul, and now they were supposed to—*what?* Certainly not rule or reign, but rather to wait and endure. As Paul writes to them in Hebrews 10:35-39—

You should not, then, be casting away your boldness, which is having a great reward, for you have need of endurance that, doing the will of God, you should be requited with the promise. For still how very little, He Who is coming will be arriving and not delaying. Now, My "just one by faith shall be living," and "If he should ever be shrinking, My soul is not delighting in him." Yet we are not of those shrinking back to destruction, but of faith for the procuring of the soul.

That Paul instructs Israel to exercise faith proves that Israel has not yet come into the promises, or any semblance of them. Faith is “a conviction concerning matters which are *not* being observed” (Hebrews 11:1).

THE CASE OF ELIJAH

The qualification of the remnant in Elijah’s day, cited here in Romans by Paul, was simply that, “I left for Myself seven thousand men who do not bow the knee to the image of Baal.” Where is the implication that anyone among such a company was “already [becoming] a channel of blessing” in the national sense? It simply implies—states, rather—that there were people in Israel who did not bow the knee to the false god Baal. Not very fancy attainments there, but certainly enough to be called a remnant. The logical conclusion is that the remnant, having avoided the premier false deity of the day (Baal), was yet faithful to the true God. In Elijah’s day, this meant the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. On the heels of this, Paul writes, “*Thus*, then, in the current era also, there has come to be a remnant according to the choice of grace.” The presence of “*thus*” in this sentence tells us that the remnant of the current era believes *in the same manner* as the remnant of Elijah’s day; in spite of opposition, they still hold true to God’s promises. That these promises could be anything but the promises made to Abraham flies in the face of not only context but common sense.

“GRACE”

That “there has come to be a remnant according to the choice of grace” could tempt some into thinking that this must be an Uncircumcision remnant, for isn’t grace the keynote of Paul’s gospel? Yes, but Paul’s is a message of the “*transcendent* grace of God” (2 Corinthians 9:14), as opposed to the regular kind of grace which had been around a long time.

The Greek word translated “grace” in the New Testament is *charis*. This word and its various forms occurs seventy-nine times in the Septuagint, which is the Greek version of the Old Testament. Grace is no stranger to divine writings outside of Paul’s. Here are some notable Old Testament examples—

- ▶ “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Genesis 6:8).
- ▶ “Grace is poured upon Your lips” (Psalm 45:2).
- ▶ “The Lord will give grace and glory” (Psalm 84:11).
- ▶ “[Esther] obtained grace and favor” (Esther 2:17).

- ▶ “The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be *gracious* to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26).

It was an act of the grace of God that kept anyone in Israel—subsequent to the coming of Paul’s evangel and the temporary withdrawal of the kingdom—from abandoning the Circumcision promises.

THE CURRENT ERA

An era is defined in the Greek-English Keyword Concordance of the CLNT as “a distinct portion of time having special characteristics.” What portion of time did Paul mean when he wrote “the current era” in Romans 11:5? What were the special characteristics of that portion? Wouldn’t it be helpful if we could discover that Paul used this phrase “current era” elsewhere? Then we could investigate these other places and understand, from the context, what Paul had in mind when he used this phrase. Even better if Paul used the phrase in this very letter. Wouldn’t that be something? Well, I have great news for you. Paul uses the phrase “current era” only three times in all of his letters—and *all three times are here in Romans*. If we can identify the time period of the current era in these other two places (besides Romans 11:5) *in this very letter*, then I would insist that anyone wishing to make the “current era” of Romans 11:5 anything different from the other two “current eras” has an agenda other than discovering truth. I now print these other two passages in context—

- ▶ Romans 3:24-28

Being justified gratuitously in His grace, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus 25 (Whom God purposed for a Propitiatory shelter, through faith in His blood, for a display of His righteousness because of the passing over of the penalties of sins which occurred before in the forbearance of God), 26 toward the display of His righteousness *in the current era*, for Him to be just and a Justifier of the one who is of the faith of Jesus. 27 Where, then, is boasting? It is debarred! Through what law? 28 Of works? No! But through faith’s law. For we are reckoning a man to be justified by faith apart from works of law.

- ▶ Romans 8:16-18

The spirit itself is testifying together with our spirit that we are children of God. 17 Yet if children, enjoyers also of an

allotment, enjoyers, indeed, of an allotment from God, yet joint enjoyers of Christ's allotment, if so be that we are suffering together, that we should be glorified together also.¹⁸ For I am reckoning that the sufferings *of the current era* do not deserve the glory about to be revealed for us.

In the first passage, Romans 3:24-28, "the current era" is the time during which Christ 1) displays His righteousness, 2) justifies ones who are of His faith, 3) operates by means of faith, and 4) justifies a human by faith, apart from works of law. In the second passage, Romans 8:16-18, the "current era" is the time during which holders of an allotment from God suffer.

Before I take you back to Romans 11:15, tell me if you think that any of these characteristics of "the current era," listed above, died with Paul. Is not Christ still displaying His righteousness in the lives of members of His body? Are we not still justified? Are we not still holding on to our call by faith? During this time of Israel's casting away, are we not still justified by faith apart from works of law? Have any of us with an allotment from God stopped suffering for the sake of that allotment? All of these things began with Paul and they have continued as long as there have been body of Christ members upon the Earth. Were Knoch to take his "limited-to-Paul's lifetime" view of "the current era" from Romans 11:5 and transplant it into these other passages, he would not only be denying a Circumcision remnant, but a body of Christ remnant as well. I would not want to cut off my nose to spite my face, yet this is just what Mr. Knoch would unwittingly accomplish should he take his understanding of "the current era" in Romans 11:5 and apply it to the same phrase in other parts of the same letter.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Armed with this information, let us return to Romans 11:5. Our default setting must now be, "the current era is the era of the justification, faith, and suffering of the body of Christ, which will run its course until the body of Christ is no more upon the Earth." Does this fit the Romans 11:25 context? Perfectly. The pressing question is, "Has God thrust away His people?" The motive behind the question is the faithlessness of Israel (she crucified her own Messiah) and the calling of the body of Christ. In light of these alarming facts, the question is more than justified: "Has God thrust away His people?" (Romans 11:1). Paul's answer is more than plain: "God has not thrust away His people!" (Romans 11:2). Being an ex-lawyer/Pharisee type, Paul does not leave it there. He offers proof. He references a similar time of distress, the time of Elijah. Baal-worship

was so rife then that Elijah considered himself the last man standing. Surely he alone was devoted to God. God told Elijah that He had reserved to Himself "seven thousand men who do not bow the knee to the image of Baal" (Romans 11:4). "Thus, then," Paul says, "in the current era also there is a remnant according to the choice of grace" (Romans 11:5).

The presence of the remnant is Paul's proof that God has not thrust away His people *during the time in which the body of Christ is on the Earth and Israel is in apostasy*. This time period is still upon us. If there is no remnant during this unique time period, then anyone could accuse God of having thrust away His people. The remnant can only exist during the time of Israel's national apostasy and the nations' blessing. When the body of Christ is snatched away, the existence of a remnant becomes moot because God will have taken up again with Israel. As Paul writes in Romans 11:25—

For I am not willing for you to be ignorant of this secret, brethren, lest you may be passing for prudent among yourselves, that callousness, in part, on Israel has come, until the complement of the nations may be entering.

The callousness of Israel exists contemporaneously with the presence, on Earth, of the body of Christ. Only when the body of Christ is removed from Earth does God remove the callousness from Israel. The phrase "callousness, *in part*" allows for the remnant. The whole nation is not calloused. By the grace of God, the remnant escapes this fate. Therein lay the vital importance of the two-word phrase, "in part." As long as there is a body of Christ upon the Earth, then there will be a Circumcision remnant among Israel. It is the presence of the body of Christ that casts doubt upon God's Israel-based intentions. Our very presence here behooves God to continually testify that He has not forgotten Israel. He does not leave Himself without testimony, without witnesses. The testimony and the witness is a Circumcision remnant. Paul explains the result of the removal of the body of Christ in the following verse, verse 26—

And thus all Israel shall be saved, *according as it is written*, Arriving out of Zion shall be the Rescuer. He will be turning away irreverence from Jacob.

The salvation of the context is an "according-as-it-is-written" salvation. This can be none other than a fulfillment of the ancient, covenant promises God made to Israel. These promises are the *topic du jour* in Romans 11. The remnant never forsake the promises.

The rest come later. —MZ