Israel's Great Commission & Ours

Israel's Great Commissions in contrast to our commissions

A 10-Lesson Study by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

These 10 lessons are Keith Blades' study of the commissions commonly called the Great Commissions — Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 and Acts 1. Keith says they really are Israel's Great Commissions, having to do with God's program and purpose with the nation Israel. Lessons 1 and 2 deal with a stumbling block: the Gentiles being mentioned in these commissions, which Keith says is not in view of a dispensation of Gentile grace. Lessons 3–8 examine five issues in these commissions; put together, Keith says, it ought to be abundantly clear that they are Israel's Great Commissions and not our commissions today in this dispensation of grace. The closing lessons turn to our commissions, in the epistles of the Apostle Paul: our ambassadorship to men especially, with the gospel of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5), and in connection with an impact God has designed for us to make in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3).

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Lesson Summaries

L1

Israel's Great Commissions and Our Commissions *Ephesians 2–3; Matthew 28: Time Past, But Now, and the Gentiles in the Commissions*

Israel's Great Commissions and Our Commissions

- The Great Commissions as commonly thought of are in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 and Acts 1; they are commissions in accordance with Israel's program
- They have to do with God's program and purpose with the nation Israel, and they really aren't our commissions today in this dispensation of grace
- If they are not the marching orders for the Church, the Body of Christ, we still have commissions: they are in the epistles of the Apostle Paul, very clearly spelled out, in II Corinthians 5 and Ephesians 3

Time Past and But Now

- The Gospel accounts and the opening chapters of Acts are Israel's program; God didn't usher in this dispensation until He raised up Paul — Acts 9, when the Lord Jesus Christ returned from heaven and raised up the Apostle Paul as the brand-new apostle
- The portion of God's Word that contains our instructions, promises and doctrines today is the epistles of the Apostle Paul; the portion for the believing remnant of Israel in that day is especially Hebrews through Revelation
- But now is the dispensation of Gentile grace, different from time past; Ephesians 2:11–12 is not what you were like before you were saved, but how Gentiles stood before God's great program change

A Mystery Revealed to Paul

- God revealed to Paul the mystery of Christ, kept hid in Himself since the world began; it has to do with a great program change
- A dispensation is simply a program someone administers to achieve a particular end; the dispensation of Gentile grace is based solely on God's grace, not on any covenant with us
- It was not the subject matter of the prophets; the twelve didn't know anything about it, and it didn't come into effect on the day of Pentecost
- God is making one new man today, the church the body of Christ, with Jew and Gentile both one; He wasn't forming the one new man in time past

Paul a Different Apostle; Israel's Program Interrupted

- Paul is a distinct and different apostle from the twelve, who are apostles for God's program with Israel; God gave him a different message
- This dispensation of grace is a temporary interruption in God's program with Israel: instead of beginning His day of wrath, God interrupted their program with this mystery; after the rapture of the church He resumes it

Five Parts of One Commissioning

- The five commissions are five parts of one overall commissioning the Lord gave the twelve following His resurrection, spoken over about forty days
- They can't be fulfilled in this dispensation of grace because they aren't for it; they will yet be fulfilled by the remnant of Israel when God resumes His program

The Gentiles in the Commissions

- Especially at issue is the Gentiles being mentioned in these commissions — oftentimes a disturbing thing; Israel's program has the salvation of Gentiles in view, but not a dispensation of Gentile grace
- Blessing Gentiles in Israel's program and the dispensation of Gentile grace are two entirely different things; today God has set His program with Israel aside and deals with Gentiles in spite of Israel

L2

Saving Gentiles Is Part of Israel's Program *Genesis 12:1–3; Isaiah 60; Ephesians 3: Defining the Dispensation of Gentile Grace*

Gentiles in Israel's Great Commissions

- Because the Gentiles are mentioned in the commissions, some Christians think that maybe the dispensation of Gentile grace really was in view in them
- Saving Gentiles is part of Israel's program; but the salvation of Gentiles in Israel's program and what Paul talks about as a dispensation of Gentile grace are two entirely different things

The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1–3)

- Everything about God's program with Israel sits on the covenant God made with Abraham; its end result is the blessing of the nations
- God's purpose is to establish His kingdom on this earth, vested in and administered through the nation Israel — great because God dwells in them as King of kings and Lord of lords
- The fulfillment of God's program with Israel according to the Abrahamic covenant is still yet to come; the dispensation of Gentile grace and the blessing of the Gentiles through Israel are two different things — Paul says the dispensation of Gentile grace was a mystery not known in ages and generations past, hid in God

The Prophets: Gentiles Blessed in Blessing Israel

- The prophets talked about God dealing with the Gentiles in fulfillment of His purpose with Israel — but not in a dispensation without Israel that interrupts and suspends Israel's program
- The church, the body of Christ, is not the mountain of the Lord's house — these passages are not being fulfilled today; in Isaiah 60 the Gentiles submit themselves to Israel and, in blessing Israel, get blessed, what the Abrahamic covenant calls for

Those Aren't Our Commissions Today

- Israel was designed to deal with the Gentiles in her program; the

administration of God's blessing upon the nations in Israel's program begins with the twelve apostles and the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, and is fulfilled in its entirety by the remnant of Israel in the kingdom once it's established

- The mention of the Gentiles in those Great Commissions is not in view of a dispensation of Gentile grace, and a Christian cannot fulfill the commission of Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 or Acts 1 today, because God's not behind it; those aren't our commissions today

Defining the Dispensation of Gentile Grace

- Keith wants to give at least seven things that ought to be part of your definition of this dispensation of Gentile grace
- First: God is now administering this dispensation, which He had kept secret until He revealed it to the Apostle Paul — not to Moses, Abraham, Noah, Adam, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel or the twelve
- God made the Gentiles fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of promise in Christ by the gospel — not by submitting to Israel, but by believing the gospel of Christ's death, burial and resurrection as their substitute redeemer
- Second: the administration of this dispensation of grace is through a brand new apostle, Paul
- Paul says God ushered it in in connection with Israel's fall; God deals with Gentiles today in a mystery manner, with Israel blinded, and has Jew and Gentile on the exact same level
- In this dispensation God is holding back the day of wrath scheduled in Israel's program; Gentiles who respond to His message today become part of the one new man, the Church, the body of Christ
- In those commissions, by contrast, Jew and Gentile are not on the exact same level at all; the Gentiles don't get dealt with till the end

L3

Still the Gospel of Israel's Kingdom *Mark 16; Matthew 10 and 24: the First of Five Issues*

Five Commissions: the Total Commissioning

- Keith calls Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 and Acts 1 the so-called Great Commissions; they aren't the Lord's last instructions, and they don't pertain to us in this dispensation of grace
- The five commissions make up the total commissioning of the apostles following the resurrection, given over a 40-day period: Mark 16 on the day of His resurrection, Acts 1 on the day He ascended back to the Father

Who Fulfills Them; Our Commissions

- This dispensation of grace will end by the Rapture of the Church, another aspect of the mystery found only in Paul's epistles; then God resumes His program with Israel — the day of the Lord's wrath, then Israel's kingdom
- The fulfillment of the Great Commissions awaits the resumption and fulfillment of God's program with Israel; we're not the fulfillers of those things, contrary to popular theology
- Our commissions are the ministry of reconciliation committed unto us (II Corinthians 5) and making all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery (Ephesians 3)

Five Things to Examine in These Commissions

- First: the gospel to be proclaimed in these commissions is still the gospel of Israel's kingdom
- Second: the time frame for their fulfillment is the last days of Israel's program; the Gentiles get dealt with in the day of the Lord's wrath and once the kingdom is established
- Third: the Gentiles are taught to be submissive to Israel and her program; Jew and Gentile are not on the exact same level, because Israel's program is still in effect
- Fourth: the blessing offered to the Gentiles is being blessed in Israel's earthly kingdom — not going to heaven when you die, nor being made part of the new creation, the body of Christ
- Fifth: these commissions fulfill Old Testament passages set forth by the prophets about the last stages of Israel's program — so they aren't part of the mystery revealed to Paul, which the prophets knew nothing about

More Than One Gospel; the Kingdom at Hand

- Gospel simply means good news; there are over ten different kinds of gospels in the Bible, and they're not all the same — the gospel of these commissions is still Israel's kingdom gospel, and that's not the gospel we proclaim today
- Missionaries are a bona fide thing, in line with this dispensation of grace; but Mark 16:15–18 is the first aspect of the commissioning the Lord gave them, and at this time He is still a minister of the circumcision, confirming the promises made unto the fathers
- When John the Baptist came, 480 of the 490 years spoken about to Daniel had transpired, so the kingdom was at hand — within your grasp; the kingdom of God is God establishing His kingdom on this earth, not heaven itself

Matthew 10 and 24; Mark 16:16

- Matthew 10:5: they're to go exclusively to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; the Lord didn't give them a commission He indicated was going to be changed, altered or suspended before He came back. He is mapping out the rest of His program with Israel minus a dispensation of grace, because that's a mystery
- Matthew 24 has nothing about this dispensation of grace and no rapture of the church; Matthew 24:14, "this gospel of the kingdom," gets fulfilled by the commission in Mark 16 — the message hasn't changed
- The response in Mark 16:16 is believing and being baptized in water for the remission of sins, a prescription for cleansing God was administering upon Israel; water baptism has no place in this dispensation of grace

L4

The Gospel of the Commissions Is Israel's Message *Mark 16:15–18; Luke 7; Luke 24; Acts 1: Baptism, Signs, Beginning at Jerusalem*

Still the Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 16:15)

- The message to be proclaimed in those commissions is Israel's message — the message about Israel's program coming to its fulfillment and culmination, not the gospel we proclaim in this dispensation of grace
- When Mark 16:15 says "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to

every creature," that gospel is still the gospel of the kingdom

"He that believeth and is baptized" (Mark 16:16; Luke 7)

- The response is the same as the response demanded with John the Baptist's preaching of the gospel of the kingdom — the same response because it is the exact same message
- Belief in the gospel of the kingdom demanded water baptism; in Israel's program, belief plus the water baptism equals salvation. That is not the way things work today, but Mark 16 is Israel's program
- John administered to the nation a prescription for cleansing God spoke about in the prophets; one part of it was submission to water baptism, separating the remnant out from the apostate element in the nation
- In Luke 7 the Lord declares water baptism part of the positive response: the people and the publicans justified God, while unbelief was manifested by not being baptized of John
- The same gospel is being preached and the same response demanded; verse 16 shows it is still the gospel of the kingdom and still Israel's program, because water baptism is part of Israel's program

A Wet One, a Dry One and a Hot One

- Matthew 3 has three different kinds of baptisms in one verse: John's water baptism, the Messiah's baptism of the remnant with the Holy Ghost, and His baptism of the rest of the nation with fire to purge out the apostate element — a wet one, a dry one and a hot one, all part of Israel's program
- Water baptism is not part of this dispensation of Gentile grace; the only baptism for it is one God performs, with no water — the baptism by the Spirit of God into the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13)
- Paul was not sent to water baptize (I Corinthians 1:17), and the church epistles give no instructions about water baptizing anybody

The Signs That Follow Them That Believe (Mark 16:17–18)

- Verses 17–18 are part of the natural response to the gospel of the kingdom, not a provision of God in the response to the message we proclaim today; you are not the "ye" of verse 15
- The signs accord with Israel's program, because Israel's program has signs in it: two are the hallmark signs of the kingdom, manifested since the Lord began preaching the gospel of the kingdom; drinking deadly things and handling serpents are designed to deal with the judgments of the Lord's day of wrath

Luke 24 and Acts 1: Beginning at Jerusalem

- The cross has not thwarted Israel's hope but paved the way for it: the sufferings are the means of Israel's redemption, and the five mandates to the Davidic Covenant run Redeemer, then Deliverer and Avenger, then King and Blesser
- "Beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47) is a matter of program, not practicality: Israel has the priority, and until they are dealt with, no one else is
- "Let the children first be filled" (Mark 7:27) is why the order is there in Luke 24 and Acts 1: Jerusalem, then Judaea (who stuck with the Davidic Covenant), then Samaria (rebels against it, but still Israelites)
- There is still a difference in the great commissions, but no difference in this dispensation of grace; the commissions are given in accordance with Israel's program as it enters its final stage

L5

The Time Frame of the Great Commissions *Matthew 24:14; Mark 16:17–18; Revelation 6:7–8 and 7: the Day of the Lord's Wrath*

The Second Issue: the Time Frame for the Gentiles

- The first of the five issues took at least the last two lessons; the second is the time frame in which the Gentiles would hear anything under these commissions
- That time frame is the day of the Lord's wrath, the last seven years on the time schedule; the dispensation of Gentile grace was still a mystery, not anticipated or expected
- This dispensation of Gentile grace is a divine interruption in God's program with Israel; no one can fulfill these commissions today, because God is holding back the time for going to the Gentiles under them
- If Gentiles today were dealt with on the basis of these commissions, we would be in the day of the Lord's wrath; in this dispensation God is holding back that day and dealing with the Gentiles in spite of Israel

Fire on Israel, War Proclaimed to the Nations

- What goes on in the day of the Lord's wrath is the third and final part of Israel's prescription for cleansing — the Messiah's baptism with fire, especially upon the nation, to purge out the apostate element; John the Baptist began to administer that prescription according to Ezekiel 36
- The wrath also brings judgments on the nations as God avenges His cause with Israel; the prophetic message to the nations was one to proclaim war, while today God is preaching a message of grace to the nations
- While avenging His cause with Israel, God offers the nations an opportunity to submit themselves to Israel; if they did, they would be delivered and could go into the kingdom, blessed under the Abrahamic covenant

Matthew 24 Maps Out the Rest of Israel's Program

- In Matthew 24 the Lord follows the outline of Daniel 11 and 12, keeping the dispensation of Gentile grace a secret; everything in it concerns the extension of mercy and forbearance and the last seven years on Daniel's time schedule
- The wars and rumors of wars are specific ones on the prophetic program for Israel's last days; from them the 10-nation confederacy headed by the man of sin is put together (Daniel 11:5–20)
- Earthquakes in this dispensation of grace are not "the beginning of sorrows"; Israel's time schedule and program are not in effect in this dispensation of grace, and God interrupted Israel's program before those things really got underway

Verse 14: the Sign of the End

- There is one sign of the end: the gospel of the kingdom being preached among all nations — and it is not preached among all nations at the beginning of the seven years either
- Matthew 24:14 tells when the commissions of Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 and Acts 1 are fulfilled with respect to the Gentiles — and the gospel is the gospel of the kingdom
- No Christian claiming to fulfill the Great Commission is fulfilling it: he would have to preach the gospel of the kingdom and not go to a Gentile until Jerusalem, Judaea and Samaria have heard and the Lord's day of wrath is down to its end

The Signs of Mark 16 and Revelation 7

- The signs of Mark 16 testify to the time the commissions are fulfilled; three signs are new because Israel's program has advanced to where they are necessary — one so that the gospel of the kingdom is preached among all nations in the languages of those nations
- Two signs show the day of the Lord's wrath is in view: God has described serpents of the dust biting Israel and poisoned waters as judgments in that day; Revelation 6:7–8, the fourth seal, tells when the Mark 16 commission is fulfilled
- Revelation 7 shows the fulfillment: the Lord will kickstart Israel's program, when this dispensation of grace is over, with the 144,000, and the Gentiles are dealt with in the last half of the Great Tribulation, fulfilling Matthew 24:14

L6

Taught Submission to Israel, Blessed with Israel *Matthew 28:19–20; Revelation 7; Zechariah 14; Matthew 25: the Third and Fourth Things*

Five Aspects of One Commissioning

- The five separate commissions in the gospel accounts and Acts 1 are really five aspects of the commissioning the Lord gave the apostles after His resurrection, before He went back to the Father; every one is a command as well as a commission
- This final aspect of the commissioning generally focuses on the end result of Israel's program and the influence on the nations once the kingdom is established

The Third Thing: Taught Submission to Israel

- "Teach all nations" is more than proclaiming the gospel to them: it is teaching them, making disciples of them, and bringing them in line with Israel's program; making disciples of them is especially what goes on once the kingdom is established
- The nations, when dealt with under these commissions, are taught submission to the nation Israel; the baptism of them makes that clear, and so does the last thing the Lord says in verse 20
- The Gentiles were unclean by nature; under Israel's program, in accordance with that law contract, there is a water baptism for their cleansing — and water baptism has nothing to do in this dispensation of Gentile grace

"Teaching them to observe all things" — Under the Law

- For forty days the Lord gave the apostles commandments pertaining to the Kingdom of God, its establishment — in perfect line with Israel's program — and they will teach the nations to observe those things
- In Matthew 23 the Lord commanded His disciples to follow what the scribes and Pharisees said as they sat in Moses' seat; that is included in "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" — He commanded them to observe the law
- The law going forth from Zion to the nations in Isaiah 2 describes the fulfillment of Matthew 28 especially

Not Under the Law, but Under Grace

- In Romans 6 Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, says what the Lord Jesus Christ told him to say in this dispensation of grace — the exact opposite of Matthew 23: "ye are not under the law, but under grace," which Moses never could have said
- The Matthew 28 commission teaches the Gentiles to observe the law, to

submit to a rudiment of that law, and to observe a feast of it; in this dispensation of grace God has none of those things on us for observation

- God is not treating us as children under that law, utilizing the rudiments of the world, but as sons — and Matthew 28 shows the exact opposite of that

Palms in Their Hands — the Feast of Tabernacles

- The multitude of Revelation 7 did not come out of the dispensation of Gentile grace; they have "palms in their hands" because of the feast on Israel's calendar connected with palms, the Feast of Tabernacles
- When the kingdom is established the nations, made disciples of Israel and the Kingdom of God in Israel, will keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14) — which is why those in Revelation 7 have palm branches in their hands

The Fourth Thing: the Gentiles Are Blessed

- A positive Gentile response to the gospel of the kingdom under those commissions results in blessing in accordance with the Abrahamic Covenant once the kingdom is established — the opportunity to be blessed with Israel in that kingdom
- In Matthew 25 He deals with the nations on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant, blessing them that have blessed Abraham and his seed — they blessed Israel by a positive response to the gospel of the kingdom preached by an Israelite
- That is not the basis on which God deals with the Gentiles today; He gave us the blessings described in Ephesians 1, "all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ"

L7

The Great Commissions Fulfill Prophetic Utterances *Matthew 24:14; Psalm 2; Jeremiah 31:10–12; I Peter 2 Introduced*

The Fifth and Final Issue

- The fifth and final issue is that the commissions fulfill what is spelled out in the prophets; commissions fulfilling prophetic passages can by no means be part of a mystery program that no prophet knew anything about
- The dispensation of Gentile grace was a mystery, but Israel dealing with the Gentiles in their last days was not; the prophets set forth in general terms that the nations would be dealt with in the day of the Lord's wrath
- Put all five issues together and it ought to be abundantly clear they are Israel's Great Commissions, not our commissions today in this dispensation of grace

Matthew 24:14 in Its Context

- In Matthew 24 the Lord maps out the rest of Israel's program until He comes back and establishes the kingdom, taking Daniel 11 and 12 as the general outline and adding the details
- Everything said in Matthew 24 is sitting back there in the prophets — maybe not every detail — and the issue the Great Commission provides for the fulfillment of is something the prophets had set forth in a general way
- Depending upon their response, positive or negative, God deals with the nations on the contractual basis of the Abrahamic covenant: they are either blessed with participation with Israel in the kingdom, or cursed

Psalm 2: the Sweep of the Days of the Messiah

- Psalm 2:1 has two classes of people — the heathen, the Gentiles, and the

people, Israel; the Psalm takes in the whole sweep of the days of the Messiah, beginning with the rejection culminating in the cross

- In Acts 4 verses 1 and 2 of the Psalm have taken place and they are living during verses 3 and 4; verse 5 is the day of His wrath — with no dispensation of Gentile grace and no indication of interruption to Israel's program
- Verse 7 is the coronation decree of the Messiah: He has the right to the whole earth, not just the land of Israel
- Verses 10–12 are an appeal to the kings of the earth, not to Israel; His "wrath is kindled but a little" at the beginning, with an intensification of wrath to the end of the Lord's day
- The remnant fulfilling the Great Commission given to them and fulfilling Matthew 24:14 is part of what works to produce this exhortation; dealing with the Gentiles at the time of the end is an anticipated, prophesied issue

Jeremiah 31: the Word of the Lord to the Nations

- Jeremiah 31:10 takes place in the day of the Lord's wrath, and Keith believes it is and will be fulfilled by those Great Commissions; the nations are to hear that the one who scattered Israel will gather them again
- Verse 11 tells where to place the fulfillment of verse 10: the cross work is the redemption and ransoming of Israel; the nations will hear it through the scattered remnant of Israel, as part of the gospel of the kingdom
- Jeremiah 31 has in view a message the nations are to hear when God deals with them in the day of His wrath; the message God wants the nations to hear today is that He has a dispensation of grace in effect for them

I Peter 2 Introduced

- Hebrews through Revelation especially focuses on the resumption and fulfillment of God's program with Israel; I Peter 2:9 is a perfect description of the remnant of Israel; the nation did not fulfill God's purpose to make an impact on the nations, but the remnant will
- The day spoken about by the prophets is the day of God's visitation upon the nations, in the last part of the day of His wrath; Peter realizes the commissioning they operate under is designed to have an impact at that time

L8

The Day of Visitation and Our Twofold Ambassadorship *I Peter 2; Psalm 59; Jeremiah 46; II Corinthians 5; Ephesians 6 and 3*

Peter and the Day of Visitation (I Peter 2:11–12)

- In I Peter, Peter is dealing with the resumption and fulfillment of God's program with Israel; the whole package of Hebrews through Revelation deals with God's program with the nation Israel
- An honest manner of life is so that in the day of visitation the Gentiles will glorify God; that day is within the day of the Lord's wrath — the time when God visits the Gentiles to avenge His cause with Israel upon them

The Psalms and Psalm 59

- The Book of Psalms is not put together haphazardly but with doctrinal flow; it focuses on the Messiah, and especially on the Davidic Covenant, whose mandates are Redeemer, Deliverer, Avenger, King and Blesser
- The Psalms are broken into five books because each focuses on one of the mandates of the Davidic Covenant: Book 1 (Psalms 1–41) the Redeemer; Book 2 (42–72) the Deliverer; Book 3 (73–89) the Avenger; Book 4 (90–106)

the King; Book 5 (107–150) the Blesser

- Psalm 59:5, "awake to visit all the heathen": David understood there is a time when God will visit the heathen in wrath; that visiting of the heathen goes on not at the beginning of the day of the Lord's wrath but at the end of it

Jeremiah 46: The Day of Visitation

- Jeremiah 46:1 is a message against the Gentiles describing what the Lord will do in His day of wrath, and in the passage the day of visitation is spoken of at least six times; this dispensation of Gentile grace is not that day of visitation — that day is the time the Great Commission has in view for dealing with the Gentiles
- The time frame for the commissions is the day of the Lord's wrath, more particularly near its end for the Gentiles; that day of wrath is being withheld in this dispensation of grace, which has interrupted God's program with Israel

The Five Issues: Israel's Commissions

- (1) The gospel of the commissions is the gospel of the kingdom; (2) the time frame for dealing with Gentiles is the Lord's day of wrath; (3) the commissions teach the Gentiles to be submissive to Israel's program, including the law
- (4) Gentile blessing is participation in Israel's kingdom on this earth, fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant; (5) the commissions are given in accordance with the prophets on dealing with the Gentiles at the end of the Lord's day of wrath
- We don't operate on the commissions in the Gospels and Acts 1 — they are Israel's commissions, clearly not ours; they are great commissions, but great in Israel's program

The Word of Reconciliation (II Corinthians 5)

- Paul talks about our commissions in the context of our ambassadorship; the message is not Israel's kingdom gospel but the word of reconciliation, in view of God putting Jew and Gentile at the exact same level
- Anybody proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom today is wrong — the kingdom of heaven is only at hand when God's program with Israel is in effect
- An ambassador is the representative of a country in a foreign land; the earth is foreign land to us — we're citizens of heaven — and God didn't take you there right away because He had an ambassadorship for you to fulfill

The Twofold Aspect of Our Ambassadorship

- The commission to proclaim the word of reconciliation is only one half of your great commission; the first part of our ambassadorship is to proclaim a message to men
- In Ephesians 6 Paul is an ambassador in bonds in connection with the mystery of the gospel — the full-blown explanation concerning the reasons why this dispensation of Gentile grace was brought in
- Its ultimate aim is an impact upon the principalities and powers in heavenly places, to whom the mystery of Christ is their great doom; the first aspect affects men with the word of reconciliation, the second those powers with the mystery of the gospel

L9 Our Ambassadorship, Part One: The Gospel of Reconciliation

II Corinthians 5:12–21; I Timothy 2:4–7: the Great Dispensational Change

Founded on the Great Dispensational Change

- Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 and Acts 1 are five aspects of the commissioning the Lord gave His apostles during the 40 days; they pertain to God's program with Israel and are not the marching orders for the body of Christ today
- Our ambassadorship is composed of two parts — to men especially, with the gospel of reconciliation, and an impact God has designed for us to make in the heavenly places; both are based upon the great dispensational change
- With the raising up of Paul, God suspended His program with Israel and revealed to Paul the mystery of Christ and the information about this new and different dispensation of grace; it ends with an unexpected, unprophesied appearing of the Lord, and then He resumes His program with Israel

A Dispensational Passage — and the Charges Against Paul

- II Corinthians 5 is a tremendous dispensational passage, yet many Christians don't recognize it; what Paul has been saying is the foundation upon which our ambassadorship is built, and the issues he brings out are the things we're to talk about
- Paul defends himself against unjust charges — that he is fickle and can't be trusted (chapter 1), and that he is dishonest with a hidden agenda; the particular charge in verse 13, that he is beside himself, came because he was saying things never heard of before
- If we fulfill our ambassadorship as Paul did, the same kind of charges will be brought against us; say that Matthew 28 through Acts 1 aren't our commissions and you'll be looked upon as peculiar

A Due Time Testimony (verse 14; I Timothy 2)

- Paul is talking about the love and grace of God now manifested to all men alike, no difference; in I Timothy 2:4 God has an all men outlook today
- "to be testified in due time" shows that what Paul is talking about was not always the testimony of God; this dispensation of grace is something God kept secret since before the world began — His plan and purpose all along
- In time past the only ones God spoke of Christ giving Himself a ransom for were Israel — the Gospel accounts say "for many," not "for all"; it was committed to Paul to make the due time testimony

Henceforth — and a New Creature

- Henceforth means things have been one way until now but won't be that way from now on; in time past a man was known after the flesh and one got priority over the other — even the Lord Jesus Christ was known after the flesh
- Time past had Gentiles afar off, a middle wall of partition and two classes of people (Ephesians 2:11–12); II Corinthians 5:16 declares the great dispensational change, and we're to operate upon it today
- Verse 17 is often quoted for the changes within a person at salvation; without denying that, the verse is talking about the new creation God is creating now — the church, the body of Christ; the man in Christ is part of it, not a member of the nation Israel
- The new things are in connection with this new program and new dispensation God is administering; they are all of God, not made up by Paul — He put us under grace, not law, and made us sons

God Was in Christ Reconciling the World

- Reconciling the world is changing the world's status from time past to now — to reconcile simply refers to a change of status; this is a dispensation of the

reconciled world, and the casting away of Israel did not take place at the cross

- Not imputing trespasses is God holding back His day of wrath; He is administering an amnesty program to Jew and Gentile alike who deserve the day of His wrath

We Are Ambassadors for Christ: Part One

- Verses 20–21 are our ambassadorship, part one — the message we're commissioned to herald to men, Jew and Gentile alike, not dealing with men on fleshly distinctions; it can't be proclaimed without an understanding of this dispensation of Gentile grace

L10

A Designed Impact in the Heavenly Places *Ephesians 3:9–11: the Second Aspect of Our Ambassadorship*

The Second Aspect of Our Ambassadorship

- There are two aspects to our commissioning as ambassadors; with the commission in connection with II Corinthians 5 — the word of reconciliation committed to us — we beseech men, Jew and Gentile alike, to be reconciled to God
- The second aspect gets little notice or treatment — a shame, for it is an equal issue in our ambassadorship with proclaiming the gospel of reconciliation to men
- In Ephesians 6 Paul is an ambassador in bonds in connection with the mystery of the gospel; a member of the body of Christ does this by talking about, reveling in and heralding forth the news about the mystery of the gospel

"to the intent" (Ephesians 3:9–11)

- "what *is* the fellowship of the mystery" means more than the fact that the mystery dispensation is in effect — it is talking about what it's all about and why God has brought it in
- To do something "to the intent" is the purpose behind it, the goal you're after; God wants an objective achieved that goes beyond simply men seeing it
- It is designed to make an impact upon the angelic beings occupying the positions of governmental authority in the heavenly places — the principalities and powers; that impact is the glory and grandeur of His manifold wisdom
- As an ambassador for Christ you have the privilege of making this impact; God wants it made and expects you to make it

Israel's Vocation and the Parallel (Deuteronomy 4)

- In view of Israel's vocation on this earth, God designed for them to make an impact among the nations; as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation they were to function as a mediator between God and the nations
- There is a parallel: Israel is God's means for reconciling the earth back to Himself; the church, the body of Christ, is God's means for reconciling the heavenly places back to Himself
- Satan took possession of the governmental authorities in the heavenly places and became the prince of the power of the air; God kept a secret — through Christ He would also provide for reconciling the heavenly places — keeping it secret from Satan himself

- We will be the ones God puts into those positions of principality and power when He kicks the present occupants out; it is when we make men see what is the fellowship of the mystery that the impact is made to God's honor and glory

The Princes of This World (I Corinthians 2)

- The princes of this world in I Corinthians 2 are principalities and powers in heavenly places; keeping the mystery a mystery was part of God's wisdom in taking them, and their leader Satan, in their own craftiness
- God kept it a mystery so they would go ahead and crucify the Lord of glory; He used that very crucifixion to seal the doom of their plan of evil both on the earth and in heaven

Head Over All Things to the Church (Ephesians 1:19–23)

- The Lord Jesus Christ won a battle on the cross and came forth from the dead victorious, with the right to repossess what Satan had usurped as the prince of the power of the air; God gave Christ to be head over all those things to the church, to the benefit of the church
- He will use the members of the body of Christ to fill up the positions of governmental authority in the heavenly places; we will get a heavenly body (I Corinthians 15), fit to exist and function in the heavenly places; as one new man you are a new species of humanity that can function there

Triumphing Over Them (Colossians 2:15)

- The impact keeps before the principalities and powers that God has triumphed over them — in what they thought was their triumph over Him; this aspect we ought to pursue as zealously as witnessing to men with the gospel of reconciliation

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Israel's Great Commissions vs. Our Commissions

Keith says a Christian cannot fulfill the commission of Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 or Acts 1 today, because God isn't operating on those commissions today; their fulfillment awaits the resumption and fulfillment of God's program with Israel. Those Great Commissions will yet be fulfilled by the remnant of Israel when God resumes His program after this dispensation of grace is over; our commissions are found in our epistles, Romans through Philemon. Keith says the only time those Great Commissions can be fulfilled is in the Lord's day of wrath, because they anticipate it, provide for it, expect it, and have it as part of their message that it's in effect.

Gentiles in Israel's Program vs. the Dispensation of Gentile Grace

Keith says Israel's program has the salvation of Gentiles in view, but not a dispensation of Gentile grace; the prophets talk about the Gentiles being blessed, but not in a dispensation without Israel that interrupts God's program with Israel and suspends it. The commissions are commissions in accordance with Israel's program, and in the details of those commissions Jew and Gentile are not on the exact same level; in this dispensation God deals with us Gentiles in spite of Israel and has put Israel and the nations

on the exact same level. Gentiles blessed in Israel's program don't become members of the new creation, the Church, the body of Christ, which is what God is forming today in the dispensation of grace.

Prophesied vs. Mystery

Keith points out that Paul says the dispensation of Gentile grace was a mystery, not known in ages and generations past, hid in God; the blessing of the nations, the end result of God's program with Israel, which sits on the covenant God made with Abraham, was made known back in Abraham's day and has been the subject of God's prophets ever since. Because the commissions are fully in accordance with the prophets, they aren't part of the mystery revealed to the Apostle Paul, which the prophets knew nothing about. God dealing with us Gentiles today in this dispensation of grace was a mystery; Israel dealing with the Gentiles in their last days, in their final installment on their time schedule, was not.

The Gospel of the Kingdom vs. the Message We Proclaim Today

Keith says the gospel of the so-called Great Commissions is Israel's kingdom gospel, the good news about the fulfillment of God's program and purpose with Israel being at hand — not the gospel of the grace of God given unto us to proclaim today. No one can tell anybody today that the kingdom of God is at hand and be telling the truth, because it isn't; in this dispensation of grace Israel's program is temporarily suspended. Keith says that if any Christian is going to honestly fulfill the Great Commissions today (honestly from their perspective; no one can from God's perspective), they can't be preaching the gospel of God's grace or the mystery of the gospel, each a message for the dispensation of grace; they've got to be preaching Israel's gospel, the gospel of the kingdom.

Israel's Baptism, Signs and Law vs. Grace Today

Keith says in Israel's program belief plus water baptism equals salvation; that is not how God deals with us today in this dispensation of grace. The only baptism that pertains to this dispensation is one God performs, with no water: the baptism by the Spirit of God into the body of Christ. The signs of Mark 16 are in perfect accordance with Israel's program, because Israel's program has signs in it; they make no sense at all in this dispensation of grace, because nothing in it calls for them. The commission in Matthew 28 is operating under the law, and the Gentiles are taught that they're under the law in it. In this dispensation of grace we are not under the law, but under grace — something Moses never could have said. God is not treating us as children under the law, utilizing the rudiments of the world; He is the one that has made us sons.

The Day of the Lord's Wrath vs. Wrath Held Back Today

Keith says that if Gentiles today were dealt with on the basis of these commissions, we would be in the day of the Lord's wrath; in this dispensation of grace God is holding back that day of His wrath and dealing with the Gentiles today in spite of Israel. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" is the base upon which this dispensation of grace is brought in; not imputing their trespasses is the issue of God holding back His day of wrath. This dispensation of Gentile grace is not the day of visitation of I Peter 2 or Psalm 59:5; that day of visitation is the time the Great Commission has in view for dealing with the Gentiles.

Our Twofold Ambassadorship

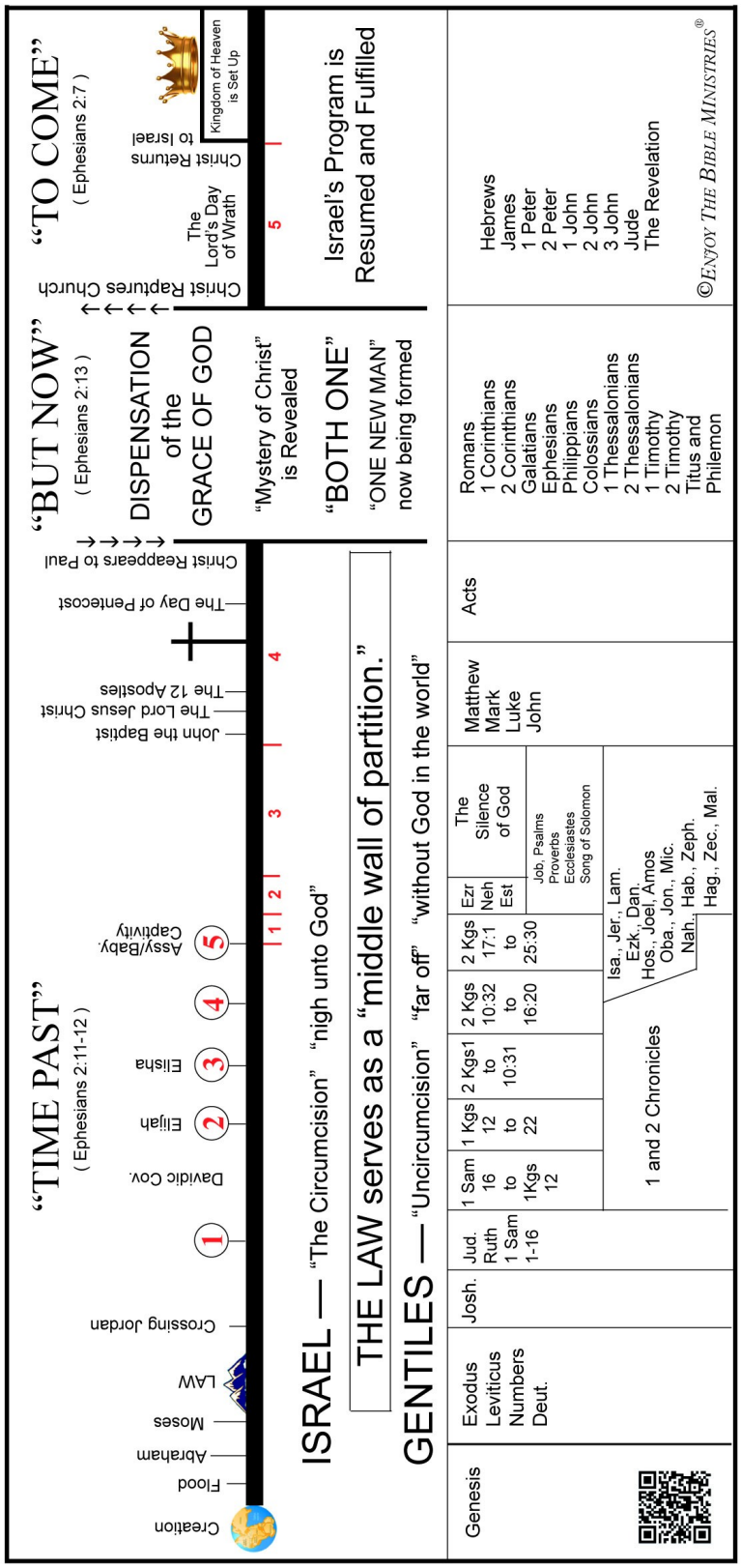
Keith says the commission to proclaim the word of reconciliation is only one half of our great commission. The first aspect has to do with affecting men with the word of reconciliation; the second has to do with

affecting the principalities and powers in heavenly places with the mystery of the gospel. The second aspect is an equal issue in our ambassadorship with proclaiming the gospel of reconciliation to men, and ought to be as zealously pursued as witnessing to men. The vocation of the nation Israel pertains to the reconciliation of the earth and its repossession; the vocation of the Church, the body of Christ, pertains to the reconciliation of the heavenly places and its repossession.

Key Scripture References

Genesis 12:1–3	The Abrahamic covenant: Israel's program has the nations, the Gentiles, in view as its end result
Deuteronomy 4:5–8	The impact God expected Israel to make upon the nations in view of their vocation
Psalm 2	The whole sweep of the days of the Messiah, with no dispensation of Gentile grace; verses 10–12 an appeal to the kings of the earth
Psalm 59:5	"awake to visit all the heathen" — the Lord's day of visitation on the nations at the end of His day of wrath
Isaiah 2:1–4	Fulfilled when the kingdom is established; the church is not the mountain of the Lord's house; the law goes forth from Zion
Jeremiah 31:10–12	"He that scattered Israel will gather him" — a message for the nations in the day of the Lord's wrath, not today's message
Jeremiah 46:1, 20–21	A message against the Gentiles, describing what the Lord will do in His day of wrath against them; the calamity against the nations is the time of their visitation
Matthew 10	Commissioned exclusively to the nation Israel, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; the Gentiles not even mentioned as to be dealt with, so no dispensation of Gentile grace in view
Matthew 24:14	Tells when the commissions are fulfilled with respect to the Gentiles; the one sign of the end they have to be concerned with
Matthew 25:31–46	The nations blessed or cursed on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant — not how God deals with the nations today
Matthew 28:19–20	Gentiles taught submission to Israel's program; "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" includes the law
Mark 16:15–16	The gospel to every creature is still the gospel of the kingdom; belief plus water baptism, as in Israel's program
Mark 16:17–18	Signs in accordance with Israel's program; two of them show the day of the Lord's wrath is in view
Luke 24:26	The sufferings the means of Israel's redemption so the glory can come: first the Redeemer, then deliverer and avenger, then king and blesser
Luke 24:47	"beginning at Jerusalem" — a matter of program, not practicality

Acts 1:8	Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, then the uttermost part — a matter of program
Acts 9	The Lord raises up Paul as a brand-new apostle; the dispensation of grace brought in
Romans 6:14–15	"not under the law, but under grace" — true only in this dispensation of grace
Romans 11:11, 25	This dispensation ushered in in connection with Israel's fall; Israel blinded
Romans 15:8	Christ in His earthly ministry "a minister of the circumcision"
I Corinthians 2:6–8	The princes of this world: principalities and powers who would not have crucified the Lord of glory had they known
II Corinthians 5:16–17	"henceforth know we no man after the flesh" — the great dispensational change; the new creature is the new creation God is forming
II Corinthians 5:18–19	The ministry of reconciliation; God reconciling the world — the base on which this dispensation of grace is brought in
II Corinthians 5:20–21	"we are ambassadors for Christ" — our ambassadorship, part one: the message to men
Ephesians 2:11–13	Time past and "But now": our Gentile status before God raised up Paul, and now
Ephesians 3:1–6	The mystery revealed to Paul; the Gentiles "fellowheirs, and of the same body"
Ephesians 3:9–11	"the manifold wisdom of God" made known to the principalities and powers — the second aspect of our ambassadorship
Ephesians 6:19–20	Paul "an ambassador in bonds" in connection with "the mystery of the gospel"
Colossians 2:14–15	God through Christ spoiled the principalities and powers, triumphing over them
I Timothy 2:4–7	"to be testified in due time" — the due time testimony committed to Paul
I Peter 2:9–12	The remnant of Israel; the Gentiles to glorify God "in the day of visitation"
Revelation 7	The 144,000, and those with palms in their hands: the fulfillment of the Great Commissions in the day of the Lord's wrath


"TIME PAST"
(Ephesians 2:11-12)
"BUT NOW"
(Ephesians 2:13)
DISPENSATION of the GRACE OF GOD
"TO COME"
(Ephesians 2:7)
Creation
Flood
Abraham
Moses
LAW
Crossing Jordan
Davidic Cov.
Elijah
Elisha
Assy/Baby. Captivity
John the Baptist
The Lord Jesus Christ
The 12 Apostles
The Day of Pentecost
Christ Reappears to Paul
Christ Raptures Church
The Lord's Day of Wrath
Christ Returns to Israel
Kingdom of Heaven is Set Up
"Mystery of Christ" is Revealed
"BOTH ONE"
"ONE NEW MAN" now being formed
Israel's Program is Resumed and Fulfilled
ISRAEL — "The Circumcision" "nigh unto God"
THE LAW serves as a "middle wall of partition."
GENTILES — "Uncircumcision" "far off" "without God in the world"
Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deut.
Josh.
Jud.
Ruth
1 Sam 1-16
1 Sam 16 to 1Kgs 12
1 Kgs 12 to 22
2 Kgs1 to 10:31
2 Kgs 10:32 to 16:20
2 Kgs 17:1 to 25:30
1 and 2 Chronicles
Ezr
Neh
Est
Job, Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon
The Silence of God
Isa., Jer., Lam.
Ezk., Dan.
Hos., Joel, Amos
Oba., Jon., Mic.
Nah., Hab., Zeph.
Hag., Zec., Mal.
Matthew
Mark
Luke
John
Acts
Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus and
Philemon
Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
The Revelation
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