

Paul's Gospel? Half of the New Testament?

This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as **my gospel** declares (Romans 2:16 NIV).

Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with **my gospel**, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past (Romans 16:25 NIV).

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is **my gospel**, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained (II Timothy 2:8-9 NIV).

My gospel? Isn't it rather arrogant of Paul to write about Jesus Christ as if this gospel belonged to Paul?

Let's go back to Stephen. Stephen died because he taught that the temple was no longer necessary for our salvation and that the Law of Moses is no longer binding on followers of Jesus!

Saul understood these charges because he was probably a member of the Synagogue of the Freedmen and was present at his execution. After his conversion, the teaching of Stephen bore fruit because Paul held tenaciously to both of these principles.

However, Paul was not alone in following the teaching of Stephen. Luke recorded that many were scattered by the persecution associated with Stephen (Acts 11:19). To me, this means many people were following Stephen's new understanding of this teaching -- this gospel.

So how does Paul's gospel differ from the gospel proclaimed by other apostles, especially Peter and James (see Galatians 2:6-9)? The logical

extension of Stephen's understanding of the gospel would break down any barriers between Jew and Gentile (no temple, no law).

This gospel was not universally accepted by Jews and Jewish Christians! Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia and the first council in Jerusalem (Acts 15) are obvious evidence that an immense struggle was fought in the first century (and to think that so many people want to go back to the era of the apostolic church).

In his circulating letter to the church, (Ephesians), Paul proclaimed how the barrier between Jew and Gentile was gone (Ephesians 2:11 - 3:13). He called this truth a mystery (Ephesians 3:3 & 4) and insisted that he was given the task to proclaim this truth (Ephesians 3:2 & 8).

In his epistles to the Corinthians, Paul addressed why his leadership as an apostle was questioned (1st Corinthians 9 and all of 2nd Corinthians).

Paul's letter to the church at Rome explained why Jews were not responding to "his" gospel and Luke wrote his gospel and the Book of Acts to explain why the Jews were so opposed to "Paul's" gospel. It is not a stretch to see that the tone of Luke's gospel addressed a gentile world.

If we combine the writing of Paul and his partner, Luke, then nearly half of the New Testament addressed issues dealing with Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles with a gospel for Gentiles.

175,149 = total number of words in the New Testament (NIV)

24,180 = total number of words in the Gospel of Luke (NIV)

22,973 = total number of words in the Acts of the Apostles (NIV)

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47,153 = total number of words written by Luke (26.9% of New Test.)

44,569 = total number of words written by the Apostle Paul in all of his
13 epistles (25.4% of the New Testament)

91,722 = total number of words written by both Luke and Paul
(52.4% of the New Testament)