

We concluded the previous chapter by noting that the Old Testament, the Gospels, and even early Acts (1–12) do not present the same “gospel” message that we proclaim today. These Scriptures teach truths about sin, repentance, and turning to God but do not feature the fullness of *salvation by grace through faith* (cf. *Ephesians 2:8–9*). Rather, God chose to unveil the “gospel of grace” later, through what Paul calls “the revelation of the mystery.” While sin, repentance, and belief run throughout Scripture, the clarity of a grace-based salvation—apart from works—emerges only through Paul’s distinct revelation. Recognizing this helps us see how God’s plan expanded beyond Israel’s covenantal framework to embrace a universal gospel message.

CHALLENGE TO THE READER

If you tried to present a “gospel of grace” from only the Synoptic Gospels or Acts 1–12, you would find references to sin and belief, but not the explicit teaching that we are saved **solely** by grace. This underscores that the fullness of the grace message came later, after Acts 1–12—shifting how God’s plan of salvation is proclaimed today.

INTRODUCING THE NEW DISPENSATION

KEY SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION

In *Ephesians 3:1–12*, Paul describes his unique stewardship—“the dispensation of the grace of God.” Although believers understood aspects of God’s plan before Paul, they did not grasp the complete unity of Jew and Gentile in one Body, free from any Mosaic-law requirements. Passages like *Colossians 1:26* reinforce this idea by declaring that the “mystery” was hidden from previous generations but is now revealed, signaling a major shift in God’s dealings with humanity.

IMPORTANCE OF IDENTIFYING THE START POINT

Few interpretive decisions matter more than pinpointing **when** the grace dispensation began. This timing affects our reading of the New Testament and guides us in separating the “kingdom gospel” (directed at Israel under the Law) from the “gospel of grace” (proclaimed by Paul). Understanding this shift helps prevent mixing instructions for Israel with the Body of Christ and keeps us centered on the pure message of grace.

WHAT THIS DISPENSATION MEANS FOR US

A UNIQUE GOSPEL

Paul’s gospel differs from what Jesus and the Twelve announced to Israel. While the kingdom message focused on national repentance and receiving the promised Messiah, Paul’s “gospel of grace” offers salvation to all—Jew or Gentile—by grace alone.

COMPLETE UNIQUENESS

Scripture teaches that Jesus initially ministered to Israel under the Old Covenant. Paul, however, emphasizes salvation without the works of the Law, bringing into view a fully gracious approach to redemption.

CONTRAST WITH THE KINGDOM GOSPEL

The “Kingdom Gospel” related to Israel’s covenantal expectations. In contrast, the “Gospel of Grace” announces immediate and unconditional justification for all who believe (*Ephesians 2:8–9*).

DANGER OF MIXING GOSPELS

Combining elements of Israel’s kingdom program (e.g., water baptism for salvation) with Paul’s grace message distorts the gospel. We must keep these teachings distinct, celebrating salvation as a free gift received by faith in Christ’s finished work.

A NEW PEOPLE OF GOD

Under the grace dispensation, God calls both Jews and Gentiles into a single Body: the Church (*1 Corinthians 12:13*). This unified community transcends ethnic or religious boundaries, standing apart from past or future arrangements involving national Israel. The Church is characterized by spiritual baptism through the Holy Spirit, not by adherence to Mosaic regulations.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE GRACE DISPENSATION

This dispensation will end with the rapture of the Church (*1 Thessalonians 4:17*), when believers are caught up to meet Christ. After this event, God’s prophetic focus shifts back to Israel and the nations, initiating the next phase of His redemptive plan.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

GRASP THE DISTINCTION

Recognize that Paul’s calling marked a significant dispensational change. In *Romans 16:25*, he speaks of “my gospel,” emphasizing that a **NEW** grace-focused program arose once Israel rejected the kingdom message.

SHARE THE PURE GOSPEL OF GRACE

Because salvation is “by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone,” we must avoid mixing it with legal requirements. Keep the good news untainted by works, so that its power and purpose remain clear (cf. *Galatians 5:2–4*).

VALUE THE CHURCH’S UNITY

Live out the reality that there is “neither Jew nor Greek” in Christ (*Galatians 3:28*). Resist the divisions that once separated people. Celebrate the Spirit’s unifying work, forging one family of believers.

LOOK FORWARD TO CHRIST’S RETURN

Finally, anticipate the rapture—“the Blessed Hope”—described in *1 Thessalonians 4:16–17*. Knowing our time is brief should encourage us to live with holiness and urgency, sharing Christ until He comes again.