

# Galatians 1-2

## An Outline

- I. Paul's Authority and True Gospel Declared (1:1-5).
- II. The Galatians' Openness to a False Gospel Exposed (1:6-10).
- III. Paul's Authority to Preach the True Gospel Validated (1:11-2:10).
- IV. Paul's Consistent Witness for the True Gospel of Faith Affirmed (2:11-21).
- V. The Galatians' Inconsistent Reliance on Faith Versus Law Questioned (3:1-5).

## Is Acts 2:1ff referring to Acts 11/12 or Acts 15 (Jerusalem Council)?

I started out thinking that Galatians 2 coincided with Acts 15, but a careful consideration of the evidence directs me to equate it with Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> visit to Jerusalem in Acts 11:29-30; 12:26. Here are the reasons:

1. Paul's chronological testimony in Galatians would be somewhat discredited if he omitted to mention a visit to Jerusalem, which would be the case if Galatians 2 is equated with his 3<sup>rd</sup> visit in Acts 15.
2. Paul says his 2<sup>nd</sup> visit (Gal 2) was private, but Acts 15 Jerusalem Council was very public, before "the whole church."
3. Paul says that nothing was added to his message, but the Jerusalem Council did have requirements for Gentile believers to follow to keep the peace with the Jews. And Paul mentions nothing of the conclusions of this Council in Galatians, which suggests that it had not happened yet.
4. Paul was sent to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:2-3), but Galatians 2 suggests Paul went of his own accord in response to a revelation (Acts 2:2). This may be in reference to the prophecy of Agabus and other prophets from Jerusalem regarding the worldwide famine, which coincides with Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Visit in Acts 11:27-30.
5. The apostles' request that Paul remember the poor in Galatians 2:10 also coincides with Paul's revelation-led visit, because the revelation had to do with a famine and impoverished believers in Jerusalem.
6. Paul's confrontation with Peter in Galatians 2:11ff makes more sense in view of an earlier visit as Peter may still have been wrestling with the inclusion of Gentiles (just after conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10), which seems less likely after the apostolic declaration in Acts 15.
7. This would mean that some 10-14 years transpired between Acts 9-11, which Luke does not provide much detail and where Paul would have primarily ministered in the regions of Syria and Cilicia (Galatians 1:21). In light of this chronology, Galatians was probably one of the 1<sup>st</sup> NT books written, around AD 48, after the 1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey and before the Jerusalem Council in AD 49.

Who cares? If Galatians 2 happened after Acts 15, he mentions none of its conclusions, which specifically dealt with the issue he addresses in Galatians, namely, should Gentiles be compelled to be circumcised. It would be a major diss to the Council's authority of which he had a major role.

## In what way did Paul lay out his credentials?

Paul testified that his credentials were established on divine revelation from Jesus Himself. His calling and training were by God, perhaps over 3 years in Arabia. His credentials were demonstrated over fourteen years of laboring and preaching the Gospel to Gentiles in Syria and Cilicia. His message and calling were then affirmed by the inner circle of leaders in the Jerusalem Church. Through all of this time, Paul did not change or compromise in one bit the true Gospel message he received by revelation from the start.

**Observation:** Do you notice that Paul speaks of himself as equal to the other apostles? In Galatians 1:17 he writes, "I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles **before I was.**" He even speaks of himself equal to Peter, who was chief among them: "For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, **was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles**" (Gal. 2:8). Paul declared that he has no less authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ than the chief of apostles. In the next chapter, he will even rebuke this chief of the apostles for acting hypocritically.

Why did Paul go to such lengths to prove his credentials? Why didn't he simply say, "Don't listen to them, who are teaching you a false gospel. Listen to me!" I think he wanted his readers to be like the noble Bereans, who tested everything they heard from Paul with the Scriptures.

Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men (Acts 17:11-12).

We need to be like the Bereans and test everything we hear with the Scriptures. And we should commend those who test our preaching and teaching with the Scriptures. Today, the Scriptures are the only infallible authority we have. **What if Paul gave no evidence or argument but simply said, "Believe me!" as some seem to be encouraging today as the litmus for truth.**

## How do we differentiate Scripture from preaching or commentary?

Paul says that His message did not come from man but from God. It was by REVELATION from Jesus Christ. Paul makes a distinction between the teaching of people, even Christians, and a revelation from God. Peter acknowledged this of Paul in 2 Peter 3:15-16:

Just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the **wisdom that God gave him...** His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the **other Scriptures**, to their own destruction.

In the same letter, Peter wrote of the authority of these other Scriptures of which Paul's writings are equal:

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Paul would write in a similar way in 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is God-breathed." Consequently, the Bible is not the interpretation of man but the revelation of God. Sometimes, when we cannot make the Scriptures clear by our commentary and explanations, it is best just to recite it verbatim and allow God's Word to do its work in its own way:

So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:11).

There is a place for commentary and listening to preachers; however, there is no substitute for deep and long personal meditation on the Scriptures themselves.

How can you protect yourself from believing a counterfeit gospel? Paul told his readers to remember the Scripture that he gave them from Christ.

Jesus, when the devil tried to tempt him with a false path for the Son of God in Matthew 4, answered him with the Scriptures. Jesus recited God's Word to Satan three times. Even when Satan quoted Scripture, Jesus answered with other Scriptures, showing the Scripture can give clarity of itself.

So Paul also writes in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" This text is the basis of the AWANA (Approved Workman Are Not Ashamed) program, which trains young believers to memorize God's Word. I strongly recommend your children be in this program. Consider these stats:

AWANA Alums vs. the National Average (from Awnana Clubs International 2013)

- Trust the Bible as God's Word: 94% vs. 58%
- Attend church regularly: 93% vs. 36%
- Read Scripture several times a week: 61% vs. 17%
- Serve in a local church: 74% vs. 15%
- Share their faith at least once a month: 70% vs. 35%