

# The Recovery of the All-inclusive Gospel

by Ron Kangas

One day, the religionists, with their usual insidious intent, tested the Lord Jesus with a question concerning marriage. “Is it lawful,” they asked, “for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?” (Matt. 19:3). In His answer the Lord referred to what God had ordained “from the beginning,” saying,

Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female...For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to his wife; and the two shall be one flesh...So then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has yoked together, let man not separate. (vv. 4-6)

When the religionists then asked why Moses commanded them to give the wife a certificate of divorce and divorce her (v. 7), the Lord explained, “Moses, because of your hardness of heart, allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so” (v. 8). We should ponder the significance of *from the beginning*, for it refers to God’s original intention, His determination and ordination from the beginning, that is, to His plan and arrangement regarding a particular matter. The expressions *from the beginning it has not been so* and *because of your hardness of heart* imply a contrast between God’s will from the beginning and God’s permissive will, which due to the hardness of the human heart, allowed the religionists to conduct themselves in a manner that was contrary to His purpose. As we consider the Lord’s word recorded here, we see that it unveils the principle of recovery—the principle that God wants His faithful people to return to His plan and intention made known *from the beginning*. At the beginning, God revealed certain great truths—for example, justification by faith—or particular practices—for example, having only one church with one eldership in a city; however, due to the hardness of the religious heart, those truths have been lost or misconstrued, and those

practices have been abandoned; thus, they need to be recovered.

Recovery means to go back to what God ordained or revealed in the beginning. To be clear about this is to understand that believers today need to go back to the beginning, receiving grace from the Lord to return to God’s original intention, to what He ordained in the beginning. The word *recovery* signifies that something was there originally and then was damaged or lost, and now there is a need to bring that thing back to its original state and to its normal condition. Recovery denotes the restoration or return to a normal condition after a damage or loss has been incurred. To be recovered is to simply be normal according to God Himself and according to His revelation in Christ and in the Word of God. This is the denotation of *recovery* in the title of this essay on the recovery of the all-inclusive gospel.

In a real and marvelous sense, the Reformation was a recovery, for it involved the restoration of the scriptural revelation of various divine truths, perhaps the most important of which was justification by grace through faith. D. M. Lloyd-Jones spoke eloquently of this in an address given in Edinburgh in 1960 entitled “Remembering the Reformation.” Understandably, our interest is in Lloyd-Jones’s remarks about going back to the beginning:

The greatest of all the lessons which the Protestant Reformation has to teach us is just this, that the secret of success in the realm of the church and of the things of the Spirit, is to go back. What happened in essence four hundred years ago was that these men went back to the first century, they went back to the New Testament, they went back to the Bible. Suddenly they were awakened to this message and they just went back to it. There is nothing more interesting, as one reads the stories of Luther

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and of Calvin, than to notice the way in which they kept on discovering that they had been rediscovering what Augustine had already discovered, and which had been forgotten. Indeed I suggest that perhaps the greatest of all the lessons of the Protestant Reformation is that the way of recovery is always to go back, back to the primitive pattern, to the origin, to the norm and the standard which are to be found alone in the New Testament. (13)

What a remarkable expression of the principle of recovery! “To go back,” “they went back to the Bible,” “they just went back to it,” “the way of recovery is always to go back”—this is the way of recovery. To be in the Lord’s recovery is therefore to go back to what was in the beginning, back to God’s original will, desire, intention, revelation, and arrangement. Contrary to what is supposed by many theologians, especially Calvinists with their intense focus on “the doctrines of grace,” this recovery did not end with the Reformation. From 1517 until the present, many precious divine truths and spiritual experiences in Christ have been recovered, and one of these is the recovery of the gospel as unveiled and proclaimed in the New Testament.

**Y**es, the truth concerning the full gospel of God, the all-inclusive gospel, needs to be recovered. Sadly, the so-called gospel that most Christians believe and preach is incomplete, shallow, low, and even distorted, and this deplorable situation is the issue of having a limited, superficial, and mistaken view of the gospel. Perhaps the primary cause of this situation is the failure to realize that the gospel of God, being the word of the truth (Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5), includes all the truths in the Bible; hence, the entire Bible is the gospel of God. We should not mistakenly think that the gospel is one thing and the truth is something else; the truth is the gospel, and the light of the truth is the light of the gospel. The unique commission of the church is to announce, to proclaim, to herald, the gospel, the content of which is the truth. Since the gospel of God equals the totality of revealed divine truth, my purpose here is to present an outline (or, offer a glimpse) of the all-inclusive gospel of God contained in the New Testament, delineating various vital aspects of this all-inclusive gospel.

### The Faith as the Gospel

In Galatians 1:23 Paul says of his fellow believers in Christ, “They only heard this: He who was formerly persecuting us is now announcing as the gospel the faith which formerly he ravaged.” It is of utmost importance for us to realize that in this verse *the gospel* equals *the faith* and *the faith* equals *the gospel*. The faith is the contents of the gospel and even is the gospel that was announced by Paul and that should be proclaimed without hesitation today. Since in Galatians 1:23 the gospel is synonymous with the faith, the

faith here must be objective, referring to what is believed and not to the subjective action of believing. In many other verses *the faith* bears the same objective significance: “A large number of the priests obeyed the faith” (Acts 6:7). This refers to the objective faith, that is, to what the believers believe in concerning the person and work of Christ. The entire revelation of the New Testament concerning the person of Christ and His redemptive work is the faith, which is the contents of the complete gospel according to God’s New Testament economy (1 Tim. 1:19; 2:7; 3:9; 4:1, 6; 5:8; 6:10, 12, 21; 2 Tim. 4:7). As Paul and Barnabas were proclaiming the gospel in Cyprus to the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, “Elymas the magician...opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul from the faith” (Acts 13:8), not wanting that Roman official to receive the objective faith as the contents of the gospel. Elsewhere in Acts the believers were exhorted “to continue in the faith” (14:22), and “the churches were strengthened in the faith” (16:5). While Paul was confined in Caesarea, Felix sent for him and “heard him concerning the faith” (24:24).

**T**his faith, the gospel as the faith, is the “one faith,” the oneness of which all believers need to arrive (Eph. 4:5, 13), and it is “the common faith” (Titus 1:4), which is the faith common to all believers (2 Pet. 1:1). This common faith denotes the crucial matters in which we must believe for our salvation—the one true and living Triune God, the Son of God Jesus Christ in His person and work, the Bible as the inspired word of God, justification as the free gift of God’s grace, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. Although we should not engage in vain disputes over minor doctrinal points, we must “earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Once again, this is not subjective faith as our believing but

objective faith as our belief, referring to the things we believe in, the contents of the New Testament as our faith...in which we believe for our common salvation. This faith, not any doctrine, has been delivered once for all to the saints. For this faith we should earnestly contend (1 Tim. 6:12). (Recovery Version, Jude 3, note 3)

Furthermore, on this faith, our “most holy faith,” we must build ourselves up (v. 20).

We have pointed out that in Galatians 1:23, Paul identifies the gospel with the faith. Throughout this Epistle Paul presents that basic truth of the gospel (2:5, 14), showing us that the faith, replacing the law, is the principle by which God deals with His people in the New Testament (3:22-24). This faith characterizes the believers in Christ and distinguishes them from the keepers of the law. In Galatians we have a revelation of the faith as the gospel in certain basic principles (1:11-12). These principles, which must impress us deeply, include the following:

- Fallen man cannot be justified out of works of law (2:16).
- Under God's New Testament economy we are not to keep the law; rather, we are justified out of faith in Christ (v. 16).
- As those who have been justified out of faith in Christ, we are dead to the law, we have been made alive to God, and we have Christ living in us (vv. 19-20).
- We have life and live by faith alone (3:11).
- The gospel was preached to Abraham, and the gospel as the faith announced by Paul was the continuation of what God spoke to Abraham (vv. 8-14).
- We have received the promise of the Spirit through faith (v. 14).
- By faith in Christ and His redemptive work, we are a new creation (6:14-15).

We respond to the gospel as the faith by believing in the gospel and thereby becoming believers. "Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). To believe in the gospel is to believe into the faith, into the things that we must believe concerning Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In other words, the objective faith, the gospel as the faith, must be matched by subjective faith, our action of believing in the gospel. It is a marvelous reality that, by God's grace, the objective faith produces subjective faith, our ability to believe in the gospel. "Knowing that a man is not justified out of works of law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, we also have believed into Christ Jesus that we might be justified out of faith in Christ and not out of the works of law" (Gal. 2:16). Such faith is the unique requirement for us to contact God, receive Christ, be saved (Acts 16:31), and obtain eternal life (John 3:15-16). Having been justified out of faith in Christ, we now "live in faith, the faith of the Son of God," who loved us and gave Himself up for us (Gal. 2:20).

As those who have believed in the gospel as the faith, we are now a special kind of person—believers (Acts 5:14; 10:45; 16:1; 2 Cor. 6:14-15; 1 Tim. 4:12; 6:2). Believers are those who have believed into Christ as the Son of God according to God's New Testament economy in faith (John 3:15-16, 36; 20:31; 1 Tim. 1:4). We believe in Christ as the Son of God (John 9:35-38). Because Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, we need to believe in Him as the Christ and then as the Son of God (20:31). *The Christ* is the title of the Lord Jesus according to His mission as the One appointed and anointed by God, and it denotes His work to accomplish God's purpose for the fulfillment of His heart's desire (Matt. 16:16). *The Son of*

*God* is the title of the Lord Jesus according to His person in the Godhead. As the Son of God, He is the embodiment and expression of God. Whereas the Lord's person is a matter of God's life, His mission as the appointed and anointed One is a matter of God's work. By believing in the Lord Jesus as the Christ and as the Son of God, we receive the life of God to become children of God (John 1:12-13). Our believing into Him is according to God's economy in faith (1 Tim. 1:4). To exercise faith means to cease from our efforts to be approved by God and to trust in the Lord and in all that He has accomplished for us. Thus, the principle of God's salvation is that of believing in Christ and receiving Him with all that He is, all that He has, and all that He has obtained and attained.

The believers have received Christ as their regenerating life for them to become children of God (Rom. 8:16). Believing in Christ equals receiving Him (1 John 5:10). When we believe in Christ, we receive Him; we receive Him by believing in Him. As the life-giving Spirit, the holy breath (1 Cor. 15:45; John 20:22), the Lord is receivable.

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Our human spirit is our receiving organ, for we receive the Lord Spirit into our spirit by believing in Christ and becoming one with Him (2 Cor. 3:18; John 3:15, 6). When we believed into Him, He, as the Spirit, entered into our spirit, and we were regenerated by Him and became one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). Furthermore, as the resurrected One, He is the authority for us to become children of God, because Christ Himself is the regenerating life that makes us children of God possessing the life and nature of God.

The believers are those who have believed into Christ as the Son of God to have an organic union with Him (John 3:15-16, 18, 36). John 3:15 and 16 speak of believing into the Son of God; the preposition *into* as used in these verses signifies union with Christ by believing into Him. When we believe in the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, we believe into Him, and by this believing into the Son of God, we enter into Him to be one with Him organically, to partake of Him, and to participate in all that He has accomplished for us. By believing into Christ, we are identified with Him in all that He has accomplished, attained,



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and obtained (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 2:11-13; 3:1-3). Furthermore, the way for us to be regenerated, born of God the Spirit in our spirit to become His children, is to believe in the Lord Jesus, even to believe into Him as the Son of God (John 3:3, 5-6). It is by faith in the Lord Jesus, by believing into Him, that we receive the forgiveness of sins and the release from God's condemnation (Luke 24:47). It is by faith in the Lord Jesus, by believing into Him, that we receive eternal life, the life of God, the divine life, for our regeneration. This brings us to the consummate issue of believing into Christ by believing the gospel as the faith. By believing into Christ as the Son of God, we have an organic union with Him, becoming one spirit with Him. Faith works to bring us into an organic union with the Triune God in Christ, and now we may live in this organic union as branches of the true vine, partaking of the vast spiritual wealth in the vine with its branches and experiencing the development of this organic union until we are fully and completely one with the Lord in our entire tripartite being (John 15:1, 4-5).

### The Gospel of the Grace of God

The gospel is the gospel of the grace of God. Regarding this, Paul's word is clear: "I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). Our eternal salvation is absolutely a matter of the grace of God, and Paul spoke emphatically and repeatedly about this. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). "The inheritance is out of faith that it might be according to grace" (4:16). "Through whom [our Lord Jesus Christ] also we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand" (5:2). "Where sin abounded, grace has superabounded" (v. 20). "To the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). "By grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (2:8). "The grace of our Lord superabounded with faith and love in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 1:14). "Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the times of the ages" (2 Tim. 1:9). "The grace of God, bringing salvation to all men, has appeared" (Titus 2:11). In God's salvation made known through the gospel, everything is of God's immeasurable, inexhaustible grace.

As every genuine believer in Christ knows, the common, traditional definition of grace is "unmerited favor." Underlying this definition of grace is the understanding that, as fallen human beings, we are sinners under the righteous judgment of God and are therefore doomed to perdition, but God in Christ has bestowed unmerited favor on us so

that through Christ we may receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life. No one can reasonably say that such a view of grace is erroneous; however, although this definition is true as far as it goes, it is elementary, superficial, and far below the standard of the divine revelation in the New Testament. According to the apostles' teaching, the grace of God is the Triune God doing everything for us and being everything to us in Christ.

Grace is not merely a thing called "favor"—grace is actually the Triune God Himself. Grace is the grace of God (Acts 14:26). As one who lived by the grace of God and the God of grace, Paul testified, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). The apostle Peter knew God the Father as "the God of all grace" (1 Pet. 5:10). Thus, grace is of God, and it is also "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 13:14). "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, for your sakes He became poor in order that you, because of His poverty, might become rich" (8:9). This is the grace that is sufficient for us (12:9). In Hebrews 10:29 the Spirit is called "the Spirit of grace." The grace of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the grace of which the Spirit is—this is the Triune God of grace. If we realize this, we will see that grace is not merely a thing called unmerited favor—grace is God Himself. "Grace in its highest definition is / God in the Son to be enjoyed by us; / It is not only something done or giv'n, / But God Himself, our portion glorious" (*Hymns*, #497). Hence, the gospel of the grace of God is the gospel of the Triune God Himself as grace.

Grace came when Christ came. "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us...full of grace and reality" (John 1:14). "Grace and reality came through Jesus Christ" so that of His fullness we may all receive, and "grace upon grace" (vv. 16-17). Although God's grace was given to us, bestowed on us, in eternity (2 Tim. 1:9), it was manifested and applied to us through our Lord's incarnation (v. 10). The grace of God appeared when Christ appeared (Titus 2:11) and became a "grace-man," a God-man filled with God as grace. "The little child grew and became strong, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him" (Luke 2:40). As the Son of Man, Jesus needed the grace of God in His humanity for His human life. "Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature and in the grace manifested in Him before God and men" (v. 52). He advanced

in grace before God because He was growing in the expression of God according to God's desire; in grace before men because He was growing in the divine attributes manifested in the human virtues, which were gracious to men. (Recovery Version, v. 52, note 2)

In His ministry the Lord Jesus spoke the word of God, and others "marveled at the words of grace proceeding

out of His mouth” (4:22). Even as He lived and ministered by grace, so also He died a redemptive death by grace, for by the grace of God He tasted death on behalf of everything (Heb. 2:9).

When we heard the gospel and believed in the gospel and believed into the Son of God, God surely bestowed grace as favor upon us, giving us what we could never earn and what we could never deserve. However, He did more than bestow favor; He gave Himself as grace to us, and now He lives in us as grace to be everything to us and to do everything for us. This grace formed Paul’s identity as an apostle and enabled him to labor. “By the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace unto me did not turn out to be in vain, but, on the contrary, I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I but the grace of God which is with me” (1 Cor. 15:10). *Not I but the grace of God* is reminiscent of *it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me* (Gal. 2:20). The grace that was sufficient for Paul in his afflictions was not merely unmerited favor but the Lord Himself.

The grace that motivated the apostle and operated in him was not some matter or some thing but a living person, the resurrected Christ, the embodiment of God the Father who became the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, who dwelt in the apostle as his everything. (Recovery Version, 1 Cor. 15:10, note 2)

The gospel of grace announced by the apostle Paul was, intrinsically and essentially, the Triune God Himself in Christ with all that He has done, is doing, and will do for us. This is the gospel of the grace of God.

If we would be faithful to proclaim such a gospel of the grace of God (as opposed to dead, impersonal doctrines of grace), we need to receive the abundance of grace, grow in grace, come forward to the throne of grace, and experience grace reigning in us unto eternal life (John 1:16; Rom. 5:17; 2 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 4:16; Rom. 5:21). We have seen who and what this grace is; now we need to see where grace is. On two occasions Paul spoke explicitly concerning the location of grace in the experience of believers. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers” (Gal. 6:18). “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit” (Phil. 4:23). Yes, the grace of our Lord is with our regenerated human spirit, which is indwelt by the Spirit and which is one spirit with the Lord Himself (1 Cor. 6:17). The God of all grace through the gospel of grace has brought us into grace (Rom. 5:2) and has brought grace into us. It is most fitting that Paul’s last word, written to Timothy, was, “The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you” (2 Tim. 4:22). Yet the concluding word, the consummate word of grace, the last word in the entire Scriptures, is reserved for the apostle John: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints” (Rev. 22:21). If we

consider this alongside John 1:14—“the Word became flesh...full of grace”—we will see that the New Testament age begins and ends with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel of grace brings us not only to the grace of God but, even the more, into the God of grace. This understanding of the gospel of grace certainly needs to be recovered.

### The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

The gospel of God is not only the gospel of the grace of God but also the gospel of the kingdom of God. Whereas the gospel of grace emphasizes forgiveness of sins, God’s redemption, and eternal life, the gospel of the kingdom emphasizes God’s authority and rule over His subjects. The kingdom of God is a divine sphere for God to work out His plan; it is a realm where God can exercise His authority to accomplish what He intends, carry out His will, and fulfill the desire of His heart (John 3:3, 5; Matt. 12:28; Rom. 14:17; Rev. 11:15). The gospel of the kingdom not only brings people to God’s salvation but also

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brings them under God’s rule so that they may be under the reigning of God with its blessing and enjoyment. Through the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, God has called us to enter into His kingdom, into the realm for us to worship God and enjoy God in Christ under the divine rule (1 Thes. 2:12). In this kingdom, this divine sphere, God works out His plan and exercises His authority to ensure that His will is done on earth.

In order to participate in the recovery of the all-inclusive gospel, we need to be deeply impressed with the fact that the New Testament preaches the gospel in the way of the kingdom. The gospel is for the kingdom. The fundamental problem in the universe is rebellion against the authority of God (Isa. 14:12-14). On the one hand, Satan intends to violate God’s sovereignty, usurp God’s authority, overthrow God’s throne, and establish his own authority (Matt. 12:26; Eph. 2:2); on the other hand, fallen human beings rebel against God, deny God’s authority, and reject God’s rule (1 John 3:4). The gospel of the kingdom of God is proclaimed so that fallen, rebellious sinners might be saved and qualified to enter into the kingdom of

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God and live under God's rule (Mark 1:14-15; Matt. 4:17; Acts 8:12). Thus, through the gospel of the kingdom, God brings people under the ruling of divine authority so that they may become His kingdom, those who are ruled by Him and live under His authority (Rev. 1:5-6).

God commands everyone to repent for the kingdom (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Acts 17:30). To repent means that originally we were rebellious against God but that now we turn back to Him in submission. This is to have a change of mind issuing in regret and a change in purpose (Luke 3:3, 8; 5:32; 17:3; Acts 17:30-31). Although salvation by grace is an absolute necessity, repentance is mainly for us to enter into the kingdom of God. Unless we repent—that is, have a change in concept—we cannot enter into the kingdom of God (Matt. 3:2; 4:17).

The fact that the Lord Jesus and the apostles announced the gospel of the kingdom is evident to even a casual reader of the New Testament. "Jesus went about in all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23; 9:35). "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come" (24:14). Mark 1:14-15 indicates that the Lord's preaching of the gospel was His preaching of the kingdom. We are told that "Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God" (v. 14). In His proclamation He declared, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and believe in the gospel" (v. 15). To repent in this way is to repent for the kingdom (Matt. 4:17). When the crowds sought to hold on to Him so that He would not leave them, He explained, "I must announce the gospel of the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this I was sent" (Luke 4:43). "Soon afterward He journeyed from city to city and village to village, preaching and announcing the gospel of the kingdom of God" (8:1). In His ministry the kingdom of God was proclaimed as the gospel (16:16). As the record in the book of Acts reveals, the apostles followed the Lord Jesus in proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God. To them the resurrected Christ had "presented Himself alive after His suffering by many irrefutable proofs, appearing to them through a period of forty days and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God" (1:3). This indicates that the kingdom of God would be the main subject of the apostles' preaching in their commission. In Samaria Philip announced the gospel of the kingdom of God (8:12), and in Ephesus Paul "entered into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them in the things concerning the kingdom of God" (19:8). Later, he reminded the elders of the church in Ephesus how he had "gone about proclaiming the kingdom" (20:25). After Paul arrived in Rome, he testified of the kingdom of God and proclaimed the kingdom of God (28:23, 31).

In a general sense, the kingdom of God is God's rule over the entire universe with everyone and everything in it; in the particular sense emphasized in the New Testament, the kingdom of God is not only the reign of God but also the realm of the divine life where this life moves, works, and governs so that the divine life may accomplish the divine purpose (John 3:3). In the sense of being the realm of the divine life, the kingdom of God is actually God Himself (Mark 1:15; Matt. 6:33), for God's kingdom has God as its content; God is everything as the content of His kingdom (1 Cor. 4:20). God Himself is life with its nature, ability, and shape. The divine, eternal life forms the realm of God's ruling in life (Eph. 4:18; John 3:3, 5, 15). In actuality, therefore, God's present ruling over the believers in Christ is not an outward matter but a matter of the innate ability of the divine life, that is, the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2). Central to this understanding of the kingdom of God is the realization that the kingdom of God is an organism constituted with God's life as the realm of life for His ruling, in which He reigns by His life and expresses Himself in glory in the divine life. The unique way for human beings to enter into the kingdom of God as a realm of life is to receive God in Christ as life and thereby gain God Himself; this is regeneration (John 3:3, 5; 15:1-8, 16, 26). The kingdom of God is a divine realm to be entered into, a realm that requires the divine life, and if we would see and then enter into this realm, we must be regenerated. If we would enter into the kingdom, we must be born of God, born of the Spirit in our spirit, thereby receiving eternal life. From God's point of view, repentance and regeneration through believing in the Lord Jesus are not first for salvation but for entering into the kingdom of God (Matt. 4:17). Because through regeneration we receive the life of God, regeneration is the unique entrance into the kingdom of God. We have been born into the kingdom of God, and now the divine life in our regenerated spirit knows and honors the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God in the sense of life is the Lord Jesus as the seed of life sown into His believers and developing into a realm over which God can rule as His kingdom in the divine life (Luke 17:20-21; Mark 4:3, 26; Matt. 1:18, 20-21, 23; 13:3-8). God's life is this seed of the realm of the divine life that develops into the kingdom for His ruling (Mark 4:3, 26-29). This means that Christ, as the seed of the life of the kingdom of God, sowed Himself into His believers in order to grow in them, live in them, and be developed from within them. The kingdom of God is thus Christ Himself as the seed of life sown into us, growing in us, spreading in us, and maturing in us until there is a full harvest, the manifestation of the kingdom (Matt. 13:43). From this we see that Christ establishes the kingdom of God by sowing Himself as the seed of life into repentant and believing people so that the kingdom may grow within them. This reveals that the

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establishing of the kingdom of God is absolutely a matter of the growth, development, maturity, and manifestation of the divine life, the life of God embodied in the Son of God (1 John 5:11-12), within the believers in Christ.

**T**he kingdom of God for which we have repented and into which we have entered through regeneration is a realm of blessing and delight. Through redemption and regeneration we have been delivered out of the authority of darkness and have been transferred into the delightful kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:13). In this pleasant realm we are ruled in love, with life, and under light. Because the Father delights in His Son (Matt. 3:17; 17:5), the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love is a pleasant realm, a sphere of joy and delight. The Son of God is the embodiment and expression of the divine life, and for this reason, the kingdom of the Son is a realm of life (1 John 5:11-12). To be transferred into the kingdom of the Son, who is the embodiment and expression of the divine life, is actually to be transferred into Christ the Son, who is life to us (Col. 3:4; John 11:25; 14:6). Moreover, the fact that we are in the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love indicates that this realm of life is in love, not in fear. Here we are ruled in love, with life, and under the shining of God in Christ as light (1 John 1:5; John 8:12).

As those who have been born into the kingdom of God as a realm of life and who have been transferred into the kingdom of the Son of God's love, we must be faithful to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom. The Lord Jesus prophesied that the gospel of the kingdom must be preached throughout the whole inhabited earth before the end of this age (Matt. 24:14). Because all authority has been given to the resurrected Christ, He sends us forth to disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the Triune God (28:18-19). To disciple the nations is to make ungodly persons citizens of God's heavenly kingdom. The purpose of our preaching of the gospel is to bring others into the Triune God in order that they may become people of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God cannot be formed with human beings of flesh and blood (1 Cor. 15:50). On the contrary, the kingdom of God is constituted solely with those who have been born of the Spirit and immersed into the Triune God and who live under the rule of God in the kingdom of the Son of His love.

### The Gospel of Peace

In his gospel message to those assembled in the house of Cornelius, Peter said, "The word which He sent to the sons of Israel in announcing the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ (this One is Lord of all)" (Acts 10:36). The gospel of peace is the gospel of the God of peace, the good news of the Triune God of peace. God is a God of peace. "Now the God of peace be with you all" (Rom. 15:33). "Now the God of peace will crush Satan under

your feet shortly" (16:20). "The God of peace will be with you" (Phil. 4:9). "The God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thes. 5:23). Peace is also Christ Himself, for "He Himself is our peace" (Eph. 2:14), "having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:20). In the world we have affliction, but in Christ we have peace (John 16:33), because His own peace He leaves with us (14:27). In 2 Thessalonians 3:16 Paul refers to Him as the Lord of peace: "Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace continually in every way." We have received the gospel as the gospel of peace and realize that we have been called to the peace of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:3), and now we should allow the peace of Christ to arbitrate in our hearts (Col. 3:15).

**P**ace is found only in Christ and through the redemptive death and life-imparting resurrection of Christ. Because of the fall and division of humankind, among human beings there are many ordinances, customs, habits,

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rules, and ways to live and worship, all of which have served to increase the confusion, enmity, and hatred among the various peoples and nations on earth. As a result, there are partitions between every nationality and race, and thus among humankind there is no genuine peace but only enmity, discord, and war. Apart from Christ there is no peace—no peace with God and no peace with one another. Because there can be no peace on earth without Christ, the Peacemaker, we need Christ as our peace offering (Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 1:20; Lev. 3:1-11; 7:11-37). As the fulfillment and the reality of the type of the peace offering, Christ is our peace; through Him and in Him we have peace with God and with one another (Eph. 2:14; Col. 3:15; 1 Thes. 5:13). Without Christ and His redemptive death and life-imparting resurrection, we cannot have peace with God or with others; we can have such peace only through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ (Rom. 5:1; 12:18; 15:33). The Christ who is our peace offering—the Peacemaker and peace itself—is illustrated in Luke 15:23-24 by the fattened calf as a peaceful enjoyment between the receiving father, God, and the returning prodigal son, a sinner. "Bring the fattened calf;



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slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry, because this son of mine was dead and lives again; he was lost and has been found. And they began to be merry.”

According to the revelation given to the apostle Paul, Christ is peace, Christ has made peace, and Christ came to announce peace as the gospel (Eph. 2:13-17). Christ Himself is “our peace”; He is the One who, in Himself as peace, has made both the Jews and the Gentiles one (v. 14). On the cross Christ abolished the law of the commandments in ordinances and broke down the middle wall of partition, the enmity; in particular, He died to remove the partition between the Jews and the Gentiles (vv. 14-15). Peace is possible only when everything contrary to God and His purpose has been terminated and when all enmity and rebellion have been defeated (Col. 1:20; 2:14-15; 3:15). Through the blood of Christ we have been brought near both to God and to God’s people. “Now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have become near in the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:13). We were far off not only from God and His blessing but also from the commonwealth of Israel (v. 12); now, in Christ and through the blood of Christ, we are near to God and His blessings and to the people of God. Through Christ both Jews and Gentiles “have access in one Spirit unto the Father” (v. 18). Through God the Son, who is the Accomplisher, the means, and in God the Spirit, who is the Executor, the application, we have access unto God the Father, who is the Originator, the unique source. Positionally, we were reconciled to God; experientially, we have access unto the Father (vv. 16, 18). To be reconciled to God is to be saved; to have access unto the Father is to enjoy God. Both the Jewish and the Gentile believers have access unto the Father through Christ (John 14:6). Both the Jewish and the Gentile believers were reconciled in one Body to God; this was a positional matter. Now we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father; this is experiential, and in order to enjoy experientially what we have positionally, we need to be in the Spirit. To have access unto the Father is to contact God for our enjoyment; having been reconciled to God once for all, we now have access unto the Father for continual enjoyment. When we contact God, we come to Him through Christ in the Spirit unto the Father; this is the Triune God in our experience and enjoyment.

In resurrection Christ came as the Spirit to announce peace as the gospel (Eph. 2:17). Significantly, when the resurrected Christ manifested Himself to the apostles, He said, “Peace be to you” (John 20:19, 21, 26). The Christ who died as the Peacemaker, shedding His blood in order to reconcile us to God, came to us as the life-giving Spirit, even as the preaching Spirit, to announce peace as the gospel, to proclaim the gospel of peace (Col. 1:20; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17; John 20:19, 26; 14:27; 16:33). In so doing, He was the fulfillment of the prophet Jonah, who

typifies Christ in resurrection preaching peace as the gospel (Jonah 1:1; 3:2). In Hebrew the name Jonah means “dove”; this indicates that God wanted Jonah to go out like a dove to preach the gospel of peace. Thus, Jonah typifies Christ preaching the gospel of peace to the Gentiles (v. 2; Matt. 12:41).

In the Body life and for the Body life, we need Christ as our peace (Eph. 2:14; 4:3; Col. 3:15). In order to live the Body life in the local churches as expressions of the universal Body of Christ, we must keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. Christ abolished on the cross all the differences among humankind due to ordinances, and in so doing, He made peace for His Body; this peace should bind all believers together and thus become the uniting bond of peace. If we remain on the cross in our practice of the church life, the peace that Christ made on the cross will become the uniting bond in which we keep the oneness of the Spirit (Matt. 16:24; Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20). The uniting bars of the tabernacle signify the mingled spirit—the divine Spirit mingled with the regenerated human spirit—becoming the uniting bond of peace; in our experience, the uniting bond of peace is the cooperation of our spirit with the uniting Spirit, the crossing-out Spirit (Exo. 26:26-29).

For the Body life we need to allow the peace of Christ to arbitrate, to adjust, to decide, all things in our hearts in our relationships with the members of His Body (Col. 3:15). We have been called to the peace of Christ in one Body. If we allow the peace of Christ to arbitrate in our hearts, this peace will settle all the disputes among us; then we will have peace with God vertically and with the saints horizontally (1:20).

Through the arbitrating peace of Christ, the friction between the members of the Body disappears, and the church life is preserved in oneness and sweetness (3:12-15; Rom. 12:4-5, 18; 14:19; Heb. 12:14). Then, as the Body of Christ, we will be able to participate in the spiritual warfare, having our feet shod with the firm foundation, the establishing, of the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:11, 14-15). On the cross Christ made peace for us with both God and man, and this peace has become our gospel (2:13-17). This gospel of peace has been established as a firm foundation, with which our feet may be shod; being thus shod, we will have a firm footing so that we may stand to fight the spiritual warfare, standing in peace and proclaiming the gospel of peace.

### The Gospel of the Glory of Christ

Glory is an attribute of God; glory is the expression of God—God expressed in splendor—and the glory of God is manifested in the gospel of God, causing the gospel to be the gospel of the glory of God in Christ. Paul speaks of



this explicitly: “In whom the god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelievers that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ...might not shine on them” (2 Cor. 4:4). In 1 Timothy 1:11 Paul speaks of “the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, with which I was entrusted.” Through the preaching of this gospel, God shines “in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

**T**he glory of God is intrinsically related to the economy of God, the divine plan and arrangement whereby He dispenses Himself into us in Christ so that we might become His corporate expression (Eph. 1:6, 10, 12, 14; 3:21; 5:27). The Triune God is a God of glory (Acts 7:2; Eph. 1:17; 3:14, 16; 1 Cor. 2:8; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Pet. 4:14), and God’s eternal goal is to bring His many sons into glory (Heb. 2:10; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5-6, 12, 14). Man was created by God in His image in order that man may express Him in His glory (Gen. 1:26; Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4, 6). In particular, God created us as vessels unto honor prepared unto glory; we were predestinated in His sovereignty to be His vessels to express what He is in glory (Rom. 9:21, 23). However, humankind fell into sin. To sin is to fall short of God’s glory and thus to express sin and the sinful self and to love the glory of man more than the glory of God (3:23; John 5:44; 7:18; 12:43). Yet there is good news. Christ’s redemption has fulfilled the requirements of God’s glory (Rom. 3:24-25; Heb. 9:5; cf. Gen. 3:24). Through the gospel of the glory of God, God has called us by and into His eternal glory (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Tim. 1:11; 1 Thes. 2:12; 1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:3). We believed into Christ, the Son of God, and He came into us to become our life, making us children of God in the divine life and divine nature. Now the all-inclusive Christ dwells in us as the hope of glory (Col. 1:27; 3:4, 11; 1 Cor. 15:45). As we behold and reflect the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into the Lord’s image from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). The goal of God’s organic salvation, and the last stage of this salvation, is glory—our glorification (Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:17, 21, 30). When we are strengthened with power by the Father of glory through His Spirit into the inner man, when Christ makes His home in our hearts, and when we are filled unto all the fullness of God, there is glory to God in the church (Eph. 3:14-21). This is related to the Lord’s prayer recorded in John 17, where He prayed that we would enter into the highest stage of oneness—the oneness in the divine glory for the corporate expression of the Triune God (v. 22). In answer to His Son’s prayer, God in Christ is working Himself into us as life in order that we may express Him as glory. The building of God is the Triune God wrought into us so that we may become His glorious corporate expression (Eph. 2:21-22; 3:17, 19, 21; 4:16; 5:27; cf. Exo. 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10-11; Ezek. 43:4; Hag. 2:7, 9). Since the kingdom of God and the glory of God are inseparable, the glory of God will be manifested in the coming kingdom (Matt. 6:13; 16:27; 26:64; 1 Thes. 2:12;

Rev. 5:13). The ultimate consummation of God’s economy is the New Jerusalem, and an outstanding feature of the New Jerusalem is that it has the glory of God, His expression; the entire city of New Jerusalem will bear the glory of God, which is God Himself shining out through the city (21:10-11). Thus, the goal of God’s economy is that we all shine forth His glory (vv. 11, 23-24).

The glory of God is involved with Christ’s incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, coming again, and His being the lamp in the New Jerusalem.

**T**he Word became flesh, and the glory of His divinity was concealed within the shell of His humanity, yet the disciples beheld His glory (John 1:14; Matt. 17:2). In His life and work the Lord Jesus did not seek His own glory but the glory of the One who sent Him (John 7:18; 8:50, 54). The glory of Christ’s divinity was released through the breaking of the shell of His humanity by His death (12:23-24). Christ was glorified in His resurrection (Luke 24:26; John 7:39; 17:5; Acts 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:21).

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Christ was glorified in His ascension; the Lord Jesus is the model of a person who has entered into God’s glory, where He is crowned with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9-10; 6:19-20; 9:24). The Lord as the Son of Man will come in the glory of the Father (Matt. 16:27; Luke 21:27). In the New Jerusalem for eternity, Christ, the Lamb as the lamp, will shine with God as the light to illuminate the New Jerusalem with the glory of God, which glory is the expression of the divine light (Rev. 21:11, 23; 22:5).

Christ is the image of God and the effulgence of His glory; hence, the gospel of Christ is the gospel of His glory that illuminates and shines forth (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; Rev. 6:2). The gospel of the glory of Christ is the gospel of the glory of the blessed God (1 Tim. 1:11). The expression *the gospel of the glory of the blessed God* refers to God’s economy in verse 4. The gospel with which the apostle Paul was entrusted is the effulgence of the glory of the blessed God (Heb. 1:3; Rom. 1:25; 9:5). By dispensing God’s life and nature in Christ into God’s chosen people, this gospel shines forth God’s glory, in which God is blessed among His people (2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3, 6, 12, 14).

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The gospel is the gospel of the glory of Christ, which illuminates, radiates, and shines in our hearts (2 Cor. 4:4, 6). God's shining in our hearts results in the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that is, in the enlightenment that causes us to know the glory of God in the gospel of Christ. In verse 4 *God, image, Christ, glory, gospel, and illumination* are all in apposition, referring to the same wonderful person; God is the image, the image is Christ, Christ is the glory, the glory is the gospel, and the gospel is the illumination. The illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ; this indicates that the gospel of the glory of Christ is a lovely person on whose face we can see the glory of God (Matt. 17:2). The glory of God manifested in the face of Jesus Christ is the God of glory expressed through Jesus Christ, who is the effulgence of the glory of God; to know Him is to know the God of glory (Acts 7:2; Heb. 1:3).

**T**hrough the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, the Christ of glory as the excellent treasure is received by the believers; now the shining reality of Christ, the embodiment and expression of the Triune God, is the treasure within us (2 Cor. 4:7). God's shining, which is God's dispensing, in our hearts brings into us a treasure, the all-inclusive Christ, who is the embodiment of the Triune God as the life-giving Spirit to be our life and everything (Col. 2:9; 3:4, 11; 1 Cor. 15:45). This treasure, the indwelling Christ, is the divine source of the supply for the Christian life (2 Cor. 13:5; 4:7; Phil. 4:13).

God shines in our hearts that we may shine on others so that they may have the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that is, the knowledge of Christ who expresses and declares God (2:15; John 1:18). The gospel of the glory of Christ first shines into us, and then it shines out from within us (Matt. 5:16). In our preaching of the gospel, there should be an illumination; we need to shine forth the gospel of the glory of Christ from within us (Phil. 2:15). Christ as the treasure within us is the source of the power energizing us and enabling us to manifest the truth. If we would live for the manifestation of the truth, we must renounce the hidden things of shame, not walk in craftiness, and not adulterate the word of God (2 Cor. 4:2). In proclaiming the gospel of the glory of Christ, we should not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, who is the content of the gospel (v. 5). The content of the gospel of the glory of God is Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever (Rom. 9:5), the eternal Word incarnated to be a human being, Jesus (John 1:1, 14), who was crucified as a man to be our Savior, resurrected to be the Son of God (Acts 4:10-12; 13:33), and exalted to be the Lord, even the Lord of all, who is the image of God, the effulgence of God's glory (10:36; Rom. 10:12; John 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:3; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). Those who receive the gospel of glory through our shining will have Christ as the precious treasure

dispensed into them; then, like us, they will be earthen vessels containing this priceless treasure.

If we survey the New Testament revelation of the glory of God in relation to the gospel of the glory of God and then compare this gospel to what is commonly preached today, it should become apparent that there is an urgent need of the recovery of the all-inclusive gospel in general and also of the gospel of glory in particular. In order for there to be such a recovery among believers today, two crucial things must take place. First, the veils that keep us from seeing this gospel of glory need to be taken away, and then ministers of the word need to be brought to the place where they no longer preach themselves but Christ Jesus as Lord.

### The Unsearchable Riches of Christ as the Gospel

"To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel" (Eph. 3:8). These riches are untraceable, immeasurable, and unfathomable.

The apostle announced not doctrines but the riches of Christ. The riches of Christ are what Christ is to us, such as light, life, righteousness, and holiness, what He has for us, and what He accomplished, attained, and obtained for us." (Recovery Version, v. 8, note 3)

**T**he apostle Paul enjoyed and announced the person of Christ with His unsearchable riches as the gospel to produce the church as the fullness of Christ, the expression and overflow of Christ, for the exhibition of Christ as the multifarious wisdom of God according to the eternal plan of God (vv. 8-11, 16-19; 1:22-23; Acts 17:3, 18; 26:22-23; 13:47; Gal. 1:15-16; Phil. 1:18; Col. 1:27-28; 1 Cor. 1:24, 30). In our preaching of the gospel, we should concentrate on enjoying and ministering Christ so that we might dispense Him into others as the unique treasure of untold wealth in the universe. We should not focus on any persons, matters, or things other than Christ (vv. 9, 30; 2:2; 4:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:3, 6; 4:7). The proper preaching of Christ Jesus as the glad tidings, the gospel, causes others to realize that they are nothing and that Christ is everything (Isa. 40:15, 17; cf. Phil. 3:7-8).

The unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel are revealed in all twenty-seven books of the New Testament; this wonderful, heavenly Christ is the very embodiment of the processed Triune God, reaching us as the consummated life-giving Spirit, so that we can continually receive Him as grace upon grace to be renewed day by day for serving our God in newness of spirit in the gospel of His Son (John 1:14, 16; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 4:16; Rom. 1:9; 7:6):

- In the Gospels is the Christ who lived on the earth and died on the cross for the accomplishment of redemption.

- In the Acts is the resurrected and ascended Christ propagated and ministered to men.
- In Romans is the Christ who is our righteousness for justification and our life for sanctification, transformation, conformation, glorification, and building up.
- In 1 and 2 Corinthians is the Christ who is everything in the practical church life.
- In Galatians is the Christ who enables us to live a life that is versus the law, religion, tradition, and forms.
- In Ephesians and Colossians is the Christ who is the life, the content, and the Head of the Body, the church.
- In Philippians is the Christ who is lived out of His members.
- In 1 and 2 Thessalonians is the Christ who is our holiness for His coming back.
- In 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus is the Christ who is God's economy, enabling us to know how to conduct ourselves in the house of God.
- In Hebrews is the present Christ, who is now in the heavens as our Minister and our High Priest, ministering to us the heavenly life, grace, authority, and power and sustaining us to live a heavenly life on earth.
- In the Epistles of Peter is the Christ who enables us to take God's governmental dealings administered through sufferings.
- In the Epistles of John is the Christ who is the life and fellowship of the children of God in God's family.
- In Revelation is the Christ who is walking among the churches in this age, ruling over the world in the kingdom in the coming age, and expressing God in full glory in the new heaven and new earth for eternity. (Recovery Version, Heb. 1:3, note 4)

Such a wonderful, all-inclusive, all-extensive, and universally rich Christ is the Christ announced, unveiled, received, experienced, and enjoyed through the proclamation of the complete gospel of God.

God's goal in His economy is not merely to redeem His chosen people and save them from the world, typified by Egypt, but to bring them into Christ, typified by the good land, so that they may possess Him and enjoy His unsearchable riches (Exo. 3:8; Col. 1:12; 2:6-7; Eph. 3:8). The riches of the good land typify the unsearchable riches of Christ in different aspects as the bountiful

supply of the Spirit to His believers, as seen in Deuteronomy 8:7-9:

- The waterbrooks, springs, and fountains signify Christ as the flowing Spirit (John 4:14; 7:37-39; Rev. 22:1).
- The valleys and the mountains signify the different kinds of environments in which we may experience Christ as the flowing Spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 6:8-10).
- Wheat typifies the incarnated Christ, who was crucified and buried to multiply Himself (John 12:24), and barley, being the first-ripe grain (2 Sam. 21:9), points to the resurrected Christ as the firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20).
- Vines typify the Christ who sacrificed Himself to produce wine to cheer God and man (Judg. 9:13; Matt. 9:17).
- The fig tree speaks of the sweetness and satisfaction of Christ as the life supply (Judg. 9:11).

*Paul announced Christ with His unsearchable riches as the gospel to produce the church as the fullness of Christ for the exhibition of Christ as the multifarious wisdom of God according to the eternal plan of God.*

- The pomegranates signify the fullness, the abundance and beauty, and the expression of the riches of Christ as life (Exo. 28:33-34; 1 Kings 7:18-20; S. S. 4:3, 13).
- The bread signifies Christ as the bread of life (John 6:35, 48).
- The olive tree typifies Christ (Rom. 11:17, 24) as the One who was filled with the Spirit and anointed with the Spirit (Luke 4:1, 18; Heb. 1:9); olive oil typifies the Holy Spirit, by whom we walk to honor God and whom we minister to honor man (Gal. 5:16, 25; 2 Cor. 3:6, 8; Judg. 9:9).
- Milk and honey speak forth the goodness and sweetness of Christ (Deut. 6:3; Exo. 3:8).
- Stones signify Christ as material for building God's dwelling place (Isa. 28:16; Zech. 4:7; 1 Pet. 2:4).
- The iron and copper are for making weapons (Gen. 4:22; 1 Sam. 17:5-7) and typify our spiritual warfare



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by which we fight the enemy (2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:10-20); iron also signifies Christ's ruling authority (Matt. 28:18; Rev. 19:15), and copper, Christ's judging power (1:15); the mountains from which copper is mined signify Christ's resurrection and ascension (Eph. 4:8).

...By enjoying the riches of the land, the children of Israel were able to build up the temple to be God's habitation on earth and the city of Jerusalem to establish God's kingdom on earth. Likewise, by enjoying the unsearchable riches of Christ, the believers in Christ are built up to be Christ's Body, the church, which is Christ's fullness, His expression (Eph. 1:22-23), and which is also the habitation of God (Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Tim. 3:15) and the kingdom of God (Matt. 16:18-19; Rom. 14:17). Ultimately, God's habitation and God's kingdom will consummate in the New Jerusalem in eternity for the fulfillment of God's eternal economy (Rev. 21:1-3, 22; 22:1, 3). (Recovery Version, Deut. 8:7, note 1)

This miraculous structure of treasure is the goal of our enjoying and ministering the unsearchable riches of Christ as the treasure of the gospel.

If we would announce the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel, we need to obtain what Paul denotes as "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8). The excellency of the knowledge of Christ is derived from the excellency of the wonderful person of Christ revealed in wonderful detail throughout the New Testament. The more we have such knowledge, the more we will experience Christ, enjoy Christ, be one with Christ, be constituted with Christ, magnify Christ, express Christ, glorify Christ, and minister Christ as the gospel in His unsearchable, untraceable, unfathomable riches.

### The Mystery of the Gospel

The basic revelation in the Bible is the unveiling, the bringing to light, of God's mystery; for this reason, the Bible speaks of the revelation of the mystery. In Romans 16:25-26 Paul says,

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel, that is, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which has been kept in silence in the times of the ages but has now been manifested, and through the prophetic writings, according to the command of the eternal God, has been made known to all the Gentiles for the obedience of faith.

This mystery was revealed to Paul in spirit. "That by revelation the mystery was made known to me,...which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men,

as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit" (Eph. 3:3, 5). There are five great mysteries unveiled in the Bible. The mystery of the universe is God, who is the meaning and purpose of the universe (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; Eph. 3:9). The mystery of man is also God (Gen. 1:26; Zech. 12:1; 1 Cor. 2:11). The mystery of God is Christ (Col. 2:2). The mystery of Christ is the church (Eph. 3:4, 10; Col. 4:3), and the mystery of the church is the organism of Christ, the Body of Christ as the enlargement of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4, 16; 5:30, 32). The gospel is the proclamation of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery; thus, Paul could speak of the mystery of the gospel: "[Pray] for me, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known in boldness the mystery of the gospel" (6:19).

In Ephesians *mystery* is a crucial word. In eternity past God planned a will, but it was hidden in Him; hence, it was a mystery—the mystery of His will (1:9). God's hidden purpose is the mystery, and the unveiling of this mystery in the mingled spirit is the revelation of the mystery (3:3, 5). God's mystery is His hidden purpose, and with this mystery there is an economy—the economy of the mystery (v. 9). Christ is a mystery, the mystery of God, and the church, as the Body of Christ to express Him, is the mystery of Christ (v. 4; Col. 4:3). Christ and the church as one spirit are the great mystery (1 Cor. 6:17; Eph. 5:32).

The all-inclusive Christ who indwells us is the mystery of God's economy (Col. 1:26-27). God's New Testament economy is like a great wheel, having Christ as its every part—He is the hub (the center), the spokes (the support), and the rim (the circumference) of the divine economy (Ezek. 1:15; Col. 1:17-18). God's intention in His economy is to work Christ into His chosen people so that Christ may be all and in all (3:10-11; Gal. 1:16; 2:20; 4:19). Christ is the mystery, the secret, the crucial focus, of the divine economy; this means that the secret of the dispensing of the Triune God into God's chosen people is Christ Himself (Col. 1:25-28, 17-18; 2:9). Christ is the Head of the Body and the Body of the Head; He is all the members and in all the members of the new man (1 Cor. 12:12; Col. 1:18; 3:10-11).

The mystery hidden from the ages and from the generations has been made manifest to the saints; this mystery is the all-inclusive Christ as the indwelling hope of glory (1:26-27). The hope of our calling is the hope of glory, which is the transfiguration of our body and our manifestation as the sons of God (Eph. 1:18; 4:4; Rom. 8:19, 23-25, 30; Phil. 3:21). The Christ who dwells within us is the mystery full of glory, with countless riches; we are being strengthened into our inner man according to the riches of God's glory, which are being wrought into us (Eph. 3:8, 14-17). Christ as the mystery of God's economy is indwelling us as the hope of glory for our transformation

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from glory to glory unto the full expression of God (2 Cor. 3:18; Rev. 21:10-11). The all-inclusive Christ who indwells us is the mystery of God's economy.

In particular, the mystery of the gospel is Christ and the church for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose (Eph. 6:19). The mystery of God is Christ, the Head (1:22; Col. 1:18):

- As the mystery of God, Christ is the history of God; the whole "story" of God is in Christ and is Christ (John 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:45; Rev. 4:5).
- As the mystery of God, Christ is the definition, explanation, and expression of God—the Word of God (John 1:1; Rev. 19:13; Col. 2:2-3).
- As the mystery of God, Christ is the Firstborn of all creation (1:15).
- As the mystery of God, Christ is the Firstborn from the dead (v. 18).
- As the mystery of God, Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God (2:9).
- As the mystery of God, Christ is the life-giving Spirit dwelling in our spirit to be one spirit with us (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Tim. 4:22; 1 Cor. 6:17; Col. 3:4; Eph. 3:16-17).
- As the mystery of God, Christ is the constituent of His Body, the church, which is the one new man (Col. 1:18; 3:10-11, 15).
- As the mystery of God, Christ has the first place in all things (1:18; 1 Cor. 2:2).

The mystery of Christ is the church, the Body of Christ (Eph. 3:4, 6, 10). Christ, the embodiment of God, is the expression of God, and the church, as the Body of Christ, is the expression of Christ (1:22-23). In God's economy mystery produces mystery: Christ, the mystery of God, brings forth the church, the mystery of Christ (Col. 2:2; 4:3). As the hidden mystery in God's eternal purpose, the church is a mystery within a mystery, for the church is the third stage of one mystery (Eph. 3:4, 9-11). The first stage is God Himself as the mystery of the universe, the second stage is Christ as the mystery of God, and the third stage is the church as the mystery of Christ (John 1:18; Col. 2:2; 4:3). The church is the mystery of Christ, who is the mystery of God, who Himself is the mystery of the universe (Eph. 3:4, 9; Col. 2:2; Rev. 4:11). The church is according to God's eternal purpose, and God created all things so that He could have the church (Eph. 3:9, 11; Rev. 4:11). The church is a constitution of the riches of Christ enjoyed and assimilated by the believers (Eph. 3:8).

Through the church the multifarious wisdom of God is made known to the rulers and the authorities in the heav- enlies. "In order that now to the rulers and the authori- ties in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church, according to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord" (vv. 10-11).

Related to the mystery of Christ, the church, there is the economy of the mystery. God's economy is His plan and arrangement to dispense Himself in His Divine Trinity into His chosen people in order to produce the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem for the eternal corporate expression of the Triune God; this is the greatest mystery in the universe; nothing is greater or more important than this (v. 9; 1:22-23; 4:16; Rev. 21:2, 10-11). All these mysteries are related to the gospel; thus, the mystery of the gospel refers to the entire New Testament economy, and through the gospel we may become persons of meaning and enjoy God as the mys- tery of the universe (Eph. 6:19; Ps. 36:8-9).

*The mystery of the gospel refers to the entire New Testament economy, and through the gospel we may become persons of meaning and enjoy God as the mystery of the universe.*

#### Announcing Jesus and the Resurrection as the Gospel

"It pleased God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me that I might announce Him as the gospel" (Gal. 1:15-16). In preaching the gospel of God, Paul did not put forth a set of doctrines or a series of theological for- mulations; on the contrary, he announced as the gospel a wonderful person—Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God. Such a proclamation of Jesus as the gospel is emphasized in the book of Acts, where we are informed constantly that the believers in their gospel preaching presented a person, the Lord Jesus Himself. In Samaria Philip announced the word as the gospel (8:4), proclaiming the Christ to the people there, and those who believed "the gospel of the kingdom of God and of the name of Jesus Christ" were baptized (v. 12). Later, in his contact with an Ethiopian who was reading Isaiah 53, "Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he announced Jesus as the gospel to him" (Acts 8:35).

It is worthwhile to follow this line of announcing Jesus as

the gospel throughout the book of Acts. The Lord told the apostles that they would be His “witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (1:8). Thus, Peter in his first gospel message, spoke of a person, “Jesus the Nazarene, ...delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God,” who was “nailed to a cross and killed; whom God has raised up” (2:22-24). “This Jesus,” Peter went on to say, “God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses...God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified” (vv. 32, 36). Later, Peter spoke of “His Servant Jesus” (3:13), “the Author of life” (v. 15), “His Christ” (v. 18), “that Prophet” (vv. 22-23), “His Servant...sent...to bless you” (v. 26), “the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene” (4:10), and “the stone which was considered as nothing...the head of the corner” (v. 11). Despite persecution, the apostles “did not cease teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ” (5:42). After Saul of Tarsus encountered the resurrected Christ, he “proclaimed Jesus...that this One is the Son of God” (9:20) and proved “that this One is the Christ” (v. 22). In his message to those gathered in the house of Cornelius, Peter declared,

Jesus, the One from Nazareth, ...this One, God raised on the third day; and He has made Him manifest, ...the One who was designated by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. To this One all the prophets testify that through His name everyone who believes into Him will receive forgiveness of sins. (10:38, 40, 42-43)

**T**his One”—He is the content of the gospel; the gospel is focused on Him. Through the spreading of the word of God, the believers announced “the Lord Jesus as the gospel...and a great number who believed turned to the Lord” (11:20-21). In Pisidian Antioch Paul announced “the gospel of the promise made to the fathers” (13:32), the promise that the seed of David would become the Son of God, that is, that a human seed would become a divine Son. “From this man’s seed, God, according to promise, brought forth to Israel a Savior, Jesus,” for “God has fully fulfilled this promise to us their children in raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; this day have I begotten You’” (vv. 23, 33). The proclamation of Jesus as the gospel continued until the end of the record in Acts, where we are told that, although under severe limitation, Paul was “proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ” (28:31).

As the apostles proclaimed Jesus as the gospel, they also preached the resurrection as the gospel. While Paul was in Athens, he aroused attention “because he was announcing Jesus and the resurrection as the gospel” (17:18). Actually, Jesus, resurrection, and the gospel are inseparable in Acts; they are intrinsically one. For this reason, the one selected

to replace Judas was to become “a witness of His resurrection with us” (1:22), and because the apostles were such witnesses, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was actually the key, the vital center, of their gospel preaching: “This man...whom God has raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, since it was not possible for Him to be held by it” (2:23-24). David, “being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him to seat One from the fruit of his loins upon his throne, ...spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ” (vv. 30-31). Referring to David’s expectation recorded in Psalm 16, Peter declared, “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:32). Elsewhere Peter continued to witness of the resurrected Christ by saying, “God...has glorified His Servant Jesus...the Author of life...whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses” (3:13, 15). The religionists were “greatly disturbed because they [the apostles] were...announcing in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (4:2). To this, Peter responded, “Let it be known to you all and to all the people of Israel that in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified and whom God has raised from the dead, in this name this man stands before you in good health” (v. 10). No matter how intense the opposition was, “with great power the apostles gave testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (v. 33). This great power was exhibited in the apostles’ testimony in chapter 5:

The God of our fathers has raised Jesus, whom you slew by hanging Him on a tree. This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things. (vv. 30-32)

Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer on behalf of the Lord’s name, “they did not cease teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ” (v. 42). Eventually, through Peter this announcement reached the Gentiles: “Jesus, the One from Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power...This One, God raised on the third day” and made Him manifest “to witnesses appointed beforehand by God,” to the apostles, “who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead” (10:38, 40-41). Later, Paul began to participate in announcing Jesus and the resurrection as the gospel, telling the Athenians, “God now charges all men everywhere to repent, because He has set a day in which He is to judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has designated, having furnished proof to all by raising Him from the dead” (17:30-31).

**A**s we reflect upon the accounts of gospel preaching in Acts and compare them with what is commonplace today, we find a tremendous discrepancy. The apostles announced a wonderful person—Jesus Christ, the Son of God—as the gospel, and in their proclamation they, as



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persons of resurrection, testified that God has raised “this One,” “this Jesus,” from the dead. Surely, this gospel, the all-inclusive gospel, needs to be recovered among believers in Christ today.

### The Book of Romans as the Gospel of God

The realization that the complete gospel of God revealed in the New Testament must be recovered both in understanding and in proclamation is reinforced by a careful reading of the book of Romans. The subject of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans is the gospel of God. In fact, the entire book (not only the first several chapters) is the gospel; that is, everything—from sinners to churches—in Romans is part of the all-inclusive gospel. The aim of this gospel, Paul’s gospel, is, through God’s redemption and salvation, to make sinners sons of God to constitute the Body of Christ, which is expressed as local churches. Redemption, salvation, justification, sanctification, renewing, transformation, the children of God, the sons of God, glorification, the Body of Christ, the receiving of the believers, the genuine one accord, the local churches, the fullness of the blessing of Christ—all are included in the gospel of God unveiled in Romans.

As in Acts, this gospel is not a thing, and it is not a set of doctrines. On the contrary, “the gospel of God” is “concerning His Son, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 1:1, 3-4). God’s intention is to cause His Son, whom He sent “in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin” (8:3) and who “was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father” (6:4), to become “the Firstborn among many brothers” (8:29). According to Paul’s gospel, “the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery” (16:25), through God’s complete salvation with judicial redemption and salvation in life (5:10), sinners may be justified, reconciled, regenerated, sanctified, and transformed to become sons of God (8:14), who are simultaneously the many brothers of Christ as the firstborn Son of God. In order to understand this process, we need to probe the deep divine thought in the book of Romans.

This involves what we may call the highest point of the divine revelation in the Holy Scriptures. As the totality of all the divine truths, the gospel of God includes the highest truth—the high peak of the divine revelation—that in Christ God became man in order that in Christ man might become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead to produce and build up the organic Body of Christ, which consummates in the New Jerusalem (1:1, 3-4, 15; Eph. 1:13, 22-23; Col. 1:5, 18; 3:10-11, 15; Rev. 21:2, 9-10). According to the desire of His heart and His eternal purpose, God wants

to make Himself man and to make man God so that God and man may be the same in life and nature (Eph. 1:4-5, 9, 11). The highest point of God’s gospel is God becoming man so that man may become God in life, nature, and constitution for His corporate expression (John 1:12-14; 12:24; Rom. 8:3; 1:3-4; 12:4-5). God became man through incarnation; man becomes God through regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification (John 3:5-6; 1:12-13; Rom. 6:19, 22; 12:2; 8:29-30). It is only by God’s becoming man to make man God that the Body of Christ can be produced and built up, that the bride can be prepared, and that the New Jerusalem can be consummated; this is the high peak of the vision given to us by God in the Holy Scriptures (Eph. 4:16; Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9-10). The New Jerusalem is a composition of God’s chosen, redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed, and glorified people who have been made God in life and nature but not in the Godhead (vv. 2, 7, 9-10). On God’s side, the Triune God has been incarnated in Christ to be a man (John 1:1, 14; 14:10-11). On our side, we are being

*The gospel of God includes the highest truth that in Christ God became man in order that in Christ man might become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead to produce and build up the organic Body of Christ.*

constituted with the processed and consummated Triune God so that we may be made God in life and nature to be His corporate expression for eternity (Eph. 3:16-17; 4:4-6, 16; Rev. 21:9-10). This is the highest truth and the highest gospel (Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5).

The deep divine thought in Romans concerning the gospel of God is that God became man so that, in God’s complete salvation, sinners may be redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed, and glorified to become the sons of God, who are the same as God in life and nature, to be the members of the Body of Christ (8:3; 1:3-4; 3:24; 5:10; 8:14, 29-30; 12:2, 4-5; 16:25-27). In Romans we can see the high peak of the divine revelation: God became man (8:3) so that man may become God (1:3-4) for the producing and functioning of the Body of Christ (12:4-5) as the organism of the Triune God.

Romans explains how the individual Christ becomes the corporate Christ and how we, who were once sinners and enemies of God, become parts of Christ and form His one Body (9:5; 8:3; 1:3-4; 3:23-25; 5:10, 18; 8:2, 11, 32; 12:4-5).

God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and condemned sin in the flesh so that sinners—serpentine beings, children of the devil—could be reconciled to God and justified by Him in order to receive eternal life and thus become children of God (8:3, 16; 5:10; John 1:12-14; 3:14; 8:44; 1 John 3:1, 10). Jesus Christ our Lord, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead (Rom. 1:3-4). The firstborn Son of God, the first God-man, is the prototype for the production of the many sons, the many God-men, who, as members of the Body of Christ, are exactly the same as the firstborn Son in life, nature, and expression (8:14, 29; Heb. 1:6; 2:10-12). The purpose of God's salvation is to have Christ reproduced in millions of believers so that they may become the members of His Body (Rom. 12:4-5). Through God's organic salvation carried out by the divine dispensing of the Triune God as life into the tripartite man, the children of God are growing in life to become sons of God led by the Spirit (5:10; 8:2, 6, 10-11, 14). The sons of God, the many brothers of Christ as the firstborn Son of God, are the members of the Body of Christ (12:4-5).

As the result of this marvelous process in God's organic salvation, we are one Body in the organic union with Christ (vv. 4-5). The Body of Christ, a great revelation in the Bible (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16; 1 Cor. 12:13, 27), is the focal point of Romans. The will of God is to obtain a Body for Christ to be His fullness, His expression (Rev. 4:11; Eph. 1:5, 9; Rom. 12:2, 4-5).

We are one Body in Christ, having an organic union with Him; this union makes us one in life with Christ and with all the other members of His Body (vv. 4-5). The Body is an organism produced and held together by the union in life that we have with Christ (John 15:1, 5), and the actuality of the Body is in our remaining in the organic union with Christ (Rom. 12:4-5). The local churches are the practical expression of the Body of Christ, for the unique Body of Christ is expressed as local churches (16:1, 4-5). Although the churches appear in different places, they are not separate, and although they are local, they are still part of the unique, universal Body of Christ (12:4-5; 16:16). In Romans 16 we see that all the churches and all the saints live in the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ and that all the saints in all the churches are in the blending life of the entire Body of Christ (vv. 1-23). The key to living the Body life in the local churches is to walk according to the mingled spirit—the divine Spirit mingled with the regenerated human spirit as one spirit (8:4; 1 Cor. 6:17). The mingled spirit is the unique organ for God to bring forth and build up the Body of Christ (Rom. 1:9; 7:6; 8:16; 12:4-5). If we walk according to the mingled spirit, we will be sons of God in full, and as such sons, we will be living

members of the Body of Christ for the corporate expression of the Triune God (8:14; 14:17).

All this—everything from redemption and justification to transformation and the Body of Christ expressed as local churches—is the gospel of God concerning His Son revealed in the book of Romans. May the light of this gospel shine in our hearts.

The gospel of the totality of divine truth, the faith as the gospel, the gospel of the grace of God, the gospel of the kingdom of God, the gospel of peace, the gospel of the glory of Christ, the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel, the mystery of the gospel, Jesus and the resurrection as the gospel, the entire book of Romans as the gospel—this is the all-inclusive gospel that is revealed in the New Testament. This all-inclusive gospel must be recovered among faithful believers today. Concerning this, the Lord's word about marriage and divorce is applicable: "From the beginning it has not been so" (Matt. 19:8). In the beginning, there was the all-inclusive gospel of God unveiled by the Lord Jesus and through the apostles, but throughout the centuries much of this complete gospel has been lost, distorted, neglected, misunderstood, or misapplied. What will we do in light of the Lord's revelation in the Scriptures? Will we care for what was "from the beginning" and return to God's original intention and ordination, or, due to "hardness of heart" and the influence of tradition, will we remain content with what God allows, proclaiming a shallow gospel, not the all-inclusive gospel? Recall the words of Lloyd-Jones: "The way of recovery is always to go back, back to the primitive pattern, to the origin, to the norm and the standard which are to be found alone in the New Testament" (13). The way of recovery is to go back to God and to the Word of God. Only by going back to the beginning can we properly go forward to fulfill the Lord's word in Matthew 24:14: "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." For too long, "the nations" have heard a fragmented gospel, a shallow gospel, and a traditional gospel, not the complete gospel of God presented in the New Testament. Now, in the way of recovery ordained by the Lord, is the time for the all-inclusive gospel to be received, understood, and proclaimed throughout the earth. Only when this gospel is announced to all the nations will God's purpose be fulfilled, and then the end of the age will come. **A<sup>c</sup>**

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