

“Comparing spiritual things”.

Science divides the whole field of research into three great kingdoms, and all things must belong either to the *animal*, *vegetable* or *mineral* kingdom. Sub-division is continued until at length we reach the individual of the species, and this classification depends upon observing likenesses and differences. In this leaflet we wish to draw attention to the value of the principle of “trying the things that differ”, as the marginal reading of Philippians 1:10 suggests. Before proceeding to the Scriptures we desire that every reader should appreciate the value of this principle, and ask him to notice the difference in the two definitions of man given below:

1. Man is an animal that eats, drinks and sleeps.
2. Man is an animal that reasons, speaks and wears clothing.

In the first description man differs nothing from the household cat; in the second, with three items of difference, he stands out in marked separation from all creation. Many of God’s children have no clearer views of the teaching of Scripture than No. 1 above gives of man. If they read the word “gospel” or “apostle” in Matthew and Ephesians, it is all one and the same to them. We propose therefore considering a very well-known passage in this light, and believe that by trying the things that differ the purpose of God for ourselves will be more clearly seen:

“When He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils (demons)” (Matt. 10:1-8).

We have here the following items that will repay attention:

1. A GOSPEL.- The apostles are sent to preach.
2. A DEFINITE ORDER OF APOSTLES.- The twelve are appointed.
3. A RESTRICTION.- Go not into the way of the Gentiles.
4. AN ACCOMPANIMENT.- Miraculous powers over disease and death.

1. THE GOSPEL.- The gospel which the twelve were sent to preach was “the gospel of the *kingdom*”. This gospel, accompanied by the self-same signs, was preached by the Lord Himself before this commission, as a reading of Matthew 4:23 and 9:35 will show. We quote the latter passage:

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the *gospel of the kingdom*, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matt. 9:35).

Before proceeding we would ask the reader a question. It is this: “Would you consider a gospel, which knew nothing of Jesus Christ crucified and risen, to be the gospel of God to be preached today?” We trust that the reader will say “No! A gospel without Christ crucified and Christ risen has no message of salvation to sinful men, and could not be owned of God”. Well then, without binding ourselves to any existing chronology of gospels, we shall

all agree that Matthew 16 must come after Matthew 10, and that a subject revealed in Matthew 16 *for the first time* could not possibly have formed a part of the gospel preached earlier. Now in Matthew 16 we read:

“*From that time forth began* Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matt. 16:21).

When Peter heard these words he gives added proof that they were heard for the first time. There is but one conclusion, and that is that the *gospel of the kingdom* must be kept distinct from the *gospel of the grace of God* as preached by Paul to the Gentiles.

2. THE APOSTLES.- We read in Galatians 2 that after the apostle Paul had been preaching the gospel without reference to Jerusalem for fourteen years, he went up by revelation and communicated to them that gospel which he preached to the Gentiles:

“When they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (for He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles)” (Gal. 2:7,8).

Here there is a difference acknowledged not only in gospel, but in apostleship. Not only is a distinction observable between the apostleship of Peter and Paul, but this distinction is definitely stated as between the *earthly* ministry of Christ, and His *heavenly* ministry through His servant Paul:

“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy ... That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God” (Rom. 15:8,9,16).

That the apostle Paul must be distinguished from the twelve, his own words in 1 Corinthians 15:5 and 8, “of the twelve”, “of me also”, are evidence. The most conclusive proof however of a different order of apostles to those of Matthew 10 is found in Ephesians 4:8-11, “When He *ascended* up on high ... He gave gifts unto men ... and He gave some, *apostles*”. Here is an order of apostles, the gift of Christ, “when He ascended on high”, which cannot possibly refer to those appointed before He had even revealed his death and resurrection.

3. THE GENTILES.- Both in Galatians 2:7,8, and in Romans 15:16, also in Ephesians 4, the gospel and the apostleship of Paul is most definitely directed to the Gentiles. In Matthew 10 the way of the Gentiles was forbidden, and, moreover, the Lord declared that He had been sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This limitation to Israel is not confined to Matthew 10. We find it repeated in Matthew 15: 21-28, also at Pentecost and after.

Some reader may be under the impression that Pentecost altered all this exclusiveness, so we must turn to the passage to see. Pentecost was a feast of the Jews. No Gentile, unless a proselyte, had either the right or necessity to travel great distances from home to keep the feast. Although the assembled multitude were astonished to hear men speak in their own tongues, they were not Gentiles, but Jews who had been born in or migrated to these other lands. “Jews, devout men, out of every nation” (Acts 2:5) is their title, and Peter addresses them as “Men of Judaea” and “Israel” (Acts 2:14,22,36). *See also* Acts 3:13 and 25 in this connection. Peter’s attitude toward Cornelius in Acts 10:28, and the parallel attitude of “the apostles” and church at Jerusalem (Acts 11:1,2), completely dispel the idea that under Peter’s ministry and at the day of Pentecost Gentiles equally with Jews were “added to the church”.

God, by the hand of Paul, opened the door of faith to the Gentiles (14:27), and it is Paul who was commissioned to show that the believing Gentile, being “Christ’s”, was “Abraham’s seed” as much as was the believing Jew (Gal. 3:29). Later, Paul received the dispensation of the grace of God to the Gentiles (Eph. 3:1,2), and then both Jew and Gentile pass away in the creation of a new man (Eph. 2:11-22).

4. MIRACULOUS GIFTS.- If God never interposed in the affairs of His children now, prayer itself would be useless. We do not say that *miracles* have ceased, but we do say that miraculous gifts as “signs” do not belong to the church of the one body, nor to the dispensation of the mystery. When we read of the miracles that were wrought by Peter and Paul, and those with them during the Acts period, not even an enemy could call one miracle into question. We have such miracles as raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, cleansing lepers, immunity from the effects of poison, etc..

Much that passes for miracle today comes under the heading of psychology and hysteria. We are not, however, writing to criticise others, but merely comparing Scripture with Scripture. The church at Corinth had a plenitude of these gifts (1 Cor. 12), and Paul exercised them up to the last chapter of the Acts (28:1-9). A handkerchief even sent from Paul effected a cure. Yet Trophimus is left at Miletum sick (2 Tim. 4:20), Epaphroditus is mourned as sick in Philippians 2:25-27. A prescription, not a handkerchief, is sent by Paul to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:23. The reason is not far to seek. While Israel remained as a nation before God, “signs followed” the preaching; when they were set aside in Acts 28:23-28 signs ceased.

We find, therefore, that by trying the things that differ, such terms as “*gospel*” and “*apostle*” may imply widely differing messages and commissions, and the absence of sign gifts are thereby scripturally explained.