

15 Does Jesus End up Marginalized To Make Room For Paul?

Marcionism: The First Marginalization of Jesus

In 144 A.D., Marcion, a defrocked bishop, claimed that only Paul had the true gospel. Marcion insisted the twelve apostles, including Matthew and John, were legalistic. Marcion claimed they did not have the true gospel of grace of Paul. Marcion adopted as the sole correct narrative of Jesus' life an account similar to Luke's gospel. However, it omitted the first three chapters and had several other omissions. (Appendix B: *How the Gospel Was Formed* at page ix *et seq.*)

As Marcionism spread throughout the Roman Empire, and had its own churches and liturgy, the apostolic church rose up to fight Marcionism as heresy. The key spokesperson of the early church was Tertullian of Carthage, North Africa. In about 207 A.D., Tertullian wrote *Against Marcion*. He reminded everyone that Paul's authority was subordinate to the twelve apostles. Tertullian insisted Paul could not be valid if he contradicted the twelve or Jesus. Tertullian even noted that if we were being scrupulous, we must note that there is no evidence except from Paul's own mouth that Jesus made him an apostle.¹ Since nothing can depend on one witness

1. For example, not even Luke in Acts mentions Jesus ever said Paul was an apostle. See "Tertullian Questions In What Sense Paul Was An Apostle" on page 417.

(John 5:31 “If I bear witness of myself [alone], my witness is not true.”), Tertullian said we cannot conclude Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Tertullian’s points were designed to counter Marcion’s preference for Paul. Marcion blatantly marginalized Matthew, Mark and John’s Gospel to suit his preference for a Pauline Jesus. Marcion could see the contradictions between Paul and the writings of the twelve apostles. Marcion decided to choose Paul over Jesus as presented by the twelve. The early Christian Church felt compelled to rise up and brand Marcion a heretic.

For three hundred years, the apostolic church had to fight vigorously Marcion’s rival church system. The Marcionites had adherents in numerous cities alongside the early church. Marcion was not battling the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). Rather, Marcion was being fought by the universal Christian church that predated the era of modern Roman Catholicism. (The RCC as we know it today did not take hold until after 325 A.D.)

Where did Marcion go wrong? Rather than re-evaluate Paul because of the contradictions with the gospel accounts, Marcion assumed Paul had the greater insight. As E.H. Broadbent in *The Pilgrim Church* concludes:

Marcion’s errors were the inevitable result of his accepting only what pleased him and rejecting the rest.²

Marcionism once more has crept into the church. It has done so with stealth and cunning. We must go back to Tertullian’s sage advice from 207 A.D. It is Paul who must fit into the words of Christ in the Gospels. It is not the Gospel accounts which must be truncated to fit the words of Paul.

2. E.H. Broadbent, *The Pilgrim Church* (2nd ed.) (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1935) at 15.

*Luther Marginalizes The Synoptic Gospels
In Preference for Paul*

Luther's view was that the Synoptics (*i.e.*, Matthew, Mark & Luke) did not contain the pure gospel. Paul and the Gospel of John instead were all that you needed to know about the true gospel. Luther wrote in 1522 that Paul and John's Gospel "**far surpass the other three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke.**" Paul and John's Gospel are "**all that is necessary and good for you to know, even though you never see or hear any other book or doctrine.**"³ Luther also wrote even more bluntly elsewhere that Paul had the truer gospel than what is presented in the Synoptics:

Those Apostles who treat oftenest and highest of how faith alone justifies, are the best Evangelists. Therefore **St. Paul's Epistles are more a Gospel than Matthew, Mark and Luke.** For these [Matthew, Mark and Luke] do not set down much more than the works and miracles of Christ; but the grace which we receive through Christ no one so boldly extols as St. Paul, especially in his letter to the Romans.⁴

Thus, Luther like Marcion knew there was something different in the Synoptics. He did not acknowledge Jesus contradicted Paul's doctrine. Yet, if Paul's doctrine were true, then why would the Synoptics omit it? If Paul and the Synoptic-Jesus taught the same thing, then why do Luther and Marcion insist the *truer* gospel is in Paul's writings?

3. Martin Luther, "Preface to the New Testament [1522]," *Works of Martin Luther: The Philadelphia Edition* (trans. C.M. Jacobs) (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982) Vol. 6 at 439-444.

4. Martin Luther, quoted in G.F. Moore, *History of Religion* (Scribners: 1920) at 320. As Bainton says: "That this doctrine [*i.e.*, faith alone] is *not enunciated with equal emphasis* throughout the New Testament and appears denied in the Book of James did not escape Luther." (R. Bainton, *Here I Stand, supra*, at 331.)

Besides Luther's down-playing the Synoptic Gospels, Luther also rejected the Book of Revelation. He claimed it was uninspired. He dismissed it with a conclusory statement that he could not see the "Holy Spirit" in it. Luther declared it was "neither apostolic nor prophetic," and he claimed that "Christ is not taught or known in it."⁵ Yet, in Revelation Jesus is talking much of the time. Also, Apostle John is certainly the human hand involved.⁶

Luther's reason for rejecting the Book of Revelation is easy to deduce. Numerous Pauline thinkers have recognized the anti-Pauline emphasis on salvation by faith and works in Revelation. This is highly dangerous to their Pauline doctrine because Jesus' message was *freshly* delivered *after* Paul died. For that reason, modern Paulinists urge the rejection of Revelation as inspired canon. (See page 182 *et seq.*) It thus takes little to realize what caused Luther to reject the Book of Revelation. Christ was present in Revelation, but it is not the Christ of Paul.

**"And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things written in this book."
Revelation 22:19, KJV**

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5. Martin Luther, "Preface to the New Testament [1522]," *Works of Martin Luther: The Philadelphia Edition* (trans. C.M. Jacobs) (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982) Vol. 6 at 439-444 (or 1932 edition at 488-89.) See *The Canonicity of the Book of Revelation* (2005), available online at www.jesuswordsalone.com.
 6. Papias (ca. 100 A.D.), Bishop of Hieropolis, is the one witness who unquestionably was an associate of Apostle John. In an ancient text, *Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord*, which Eusebius frequently cites, we learn in section VIII: "With regard to the inspiration of the book (Revelation), we deem it superfluous to add another word; for the blessed Gregory Theologus and Cyril, and even men of still older date, **Papias**, Irenaeus, Methodius, and Hippolytus [of Rome], bore entirely satisfactory testimony to it."

This is corroborated by the fact Luther also concluded James' Epistle was uninspired. Luther freely admitted James' Epistle contradicted Paul on the same point that Jesus in Revelation contradicts Paul: James and Jesus in Revelation reject faith alone as the appropriate salvation formula.⁷

As a result of Luther's view, the Synoptics (*i.e.*, Matthew, Mark, & Luke), Revelation, and James were effectively put on the shelf by the Reformation's founder. These New Testament writings were too far afield of Paul to be given 100% validity on par with Paul.

Thus, we can see the banner of *Sola Scriptura* had quickly degraded into *Only the Scripture that Fits Paul*. Daniel Fuller correctly faults Luther's approach:

But when he set up his understanding of justification by faith as the basis for **suppressing such books as the Synoptic Gospels, Hebrews, and James**, he then made it impossible for these books to deepen or improve his understanding of this doctrine.⁸

Because Luther was blatantly marginalizing Jesus' words in the New Testament, the *Sola Scriptura* banner was quickly being taken down. In its place the reformed congregations re-established the banner of 'approved' church doctrine. This meant *de facto* that Paul's doctrines must triumph. Even though Jesus' words conflicted with Paul, Paul's words trumped Jesus' words every time.

This approach led eventually to an explicit abandonment of *Sola Scriptura*. The reformers quickly turned to *Catechisms* to give the right spin to things. Matthaeus Flacius (a Lutheran) said in his *Key to the Scriptures* (1567)—the first hermeneutics book to emerge from the Reformation—that:

7. See "Luther's Admission of James' Direct Conflict with Paul" on page 247.

8. Daniel Fuller, "Biblical Theology and the Analogy of Faith," *Unity and Diversity in N.T. Theology. Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd* (R. A. Guelich (ed.)) (Eerdmans: 1978) at 195-213.

Every understanding and exposition of Scripture is to be in agreement with the faith. Such [agreement] is, so to speak, the norm or limit of a sound faith, that we may not be thrust over the fence into the abyss by anything, either by a storm from without or by an attack from within (Rom. 12:6). For everything that is said concerning Scripture, or on the basis of Scripture, ***must be in agreement with all that the catechism declares or that is taught by the articles of faith.***⁹

Fuller aptly criticizes this view. Flacius was urging Christians “to conform their language and thinking about a passage of scripture to an *a priori* [*i.e.*, a presupposed] understanding of what God’s Word must be like.”

By such illogic and violation of reformed principles of *Sola Scriptura*, marginalization of Jesus became encrusted in official reformed confessions. These writings were quickly put above Scripture. They were put above challenge even if someone were quoting Jesus’ words.

The effort by Luther, Calvin and certain Protestant catechisms to marginalize Jesus’ words, giving preference to Paul, have now reaped their logical conclusion. Some put it bluntly: we cannot any longer view the four gospels as truly part of the New Testament—they reflect all ‘Old Testament’ principles. As one sincere Paulinist, Dr. Russ Kelly, put it:

Even though ***uninspired persons designated the four Gospels as ‘New Testament’ books***, most thinking Christians realize that, in reality, the New Covenant did not begin until the very moment Christ died on Calvary. The blood of Christ, the blood of the New Covenant, or testament, sealed and ratified the New Covenant and ended the Old Covenant, or Mosaic Law once for all time.

9. Kimmel, *History of Investigation*, *supra*, at 30.

Paulinists are thus so dedicated to Paul that no amount of contradiction of Paul by Jesus matters. It is all Paul, even if we must get rid of all of Jesus. They want the Jesus of the Synoptics to disappear.

Why Was John's Gospel Favored At All By the Reformers?

As mentioned elsewhere, the Synoptics (*i.e.*, Matthew, Mark & Luke) do not convey a gospel of salvation by faith alone. It is a very different gospel. See "What About Faith in the Synoptics?" on page 161.

However, Luther viewed John's gospel as consistent with Paul. If the verb tense for *believes* in John's Gospel is translated to convey a one-time faith for salvation, then John's salvation message can sound consistent with Paul. However, John's true meaning was that one who *continues to believe/trust* should have eternal life. It was not a one-time step of faith that should save, as we will soon discuss. However, Luther's conception of salvation could not easily incorporate the Greek progressive continuous tense which is in John 3:16. Why?

Because in the German language, Luther could not express the Greek *continuous* meaning. There is no German verb form equivalent to the Greek progressive tense, *i.e.*, the Greek Present Active tense. The German language "has no progressive mood."¹⁰ Thus, due to a weakness of the German language, Luther could not even unequivocally express a progressive meaning—*continues to believe*. (The King James translators in 1611 did a similar slight of hand to *believing* in John 3:16.)¹¹

However, the flaw in Luther's translation is self-evident to anyone who knows classical Greek. If John's meaning had been a one-time belief saves you, the corresponding Greek tense should have been the *aorist* for *believes*. Instead, in John 3:16 and all other Johannine salvation passages,

believe was in the Greek form of the *present participle active*. The meaning was a faith/trust that “continues” should save, not that a one-time expression of faith saves. (For a discussion of the Greek involved, see Appendix A: *Greek Issues*.)

Yet, Luther wanted John’s Gospel to fit Paul. Otherwise, there would have been no consistency whatsoever between Paul and any of the four gospel accounts. It may have been a subconscious bias. It may have been simple error. Regardless, the Greek issues involved in translating *believe* in John’s Gospel are rudimentary and beyond any dispute. The Greek present participle active in John 3:16 is continuous in meaning. Had it meant a one-time faith (which fits Pauline doctrine), an *aorist* tense in Greek would have been used to convey such meaning. ***Paul used the aorist tense in Romans 10:9 to identify a faith that saves is a single step.*** By contrast, John’s Gospel never chose to use the *aorist* tense to identify any faith-condition for salvation. Rather, John’s Gospel *always* used the continuous tense of the present participle active for *believes*. John’s Gospel is not Pauline; it is *anti-Pauline*. (See “What About Faith in John’s Gospel?” on page 164.) Luther’s translation of John 3:16 was misleading.

10. “German does not have the...progressive mood” (*i.e.*, ‘is believing’). (<http://io.uwinnipeg.ca/~oberle/courses/review.html#The Present Tens.>) See also, *Simple present or present continuous?* at <http://www.lingualearn.co.uk/learners/ge/tenses.htm> (“As German **does not have continuous tenses**, you just use the simple present for general statements, habits and future actions as well as present occurrences.”) See also *German Language Course* which explains English has the “Present Progressive,” *e.g.*, “are believing” but German “is able to do without the progressive forms.” (See, <http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Hall/1238/intro.html> (accessed 2005). The author explains thus “I go and am going would translate the same into German.” (*Id.*) Thus, in German, there is no ending that makes a verb correspond to the Greek present continuous/progressive tense. Instead, in German, the present tense can mean action in the present that continues or does not continue. Thus, unlike Greek, the German present verb tense has no endings to specify one way or the other whether action is one-time or continuous. This may have been a primary reason why Luther could convince others that John’s Gospel sounded Pauline. Until *Young’s Literal*, Luther’s rendition has dominated all English translations.

Yet, Calvin came along and perpetuated this misleading rendering of John 3:16 that Luther first proffered. As a result, to the same degree that Luther had done, Calvin insisted John's Gospel must be viewed as the lense to read and understand Matthew, Mark and Luke. The Synoptics were of a lesser character. Calvin wrote in his *Foreword to the Book of John*:

The doctrine which points out to us the power and the benefit of the coming Christ, ***is far more clearly exhibited by John than by the [synoptists]***. The ***three former*** [synoptic Gospels] exhibit [Christ's] body...but John exhibits his soul. On this account I am accustomed to say that this Gospel is a ***key to open the door for understanding the rest***...In reading [the four Gospels] a different order would be advantageous, which is, that when we wish to read in Matthew and others that Christ was given to us by the Father, we should first learn from John the purpose for which he was manifested.

Elimination of Synoptics in Modern Gospel Message

This perverse down-playing of Jesus' actual words in the Synoptics continues today. Even someone of Billy Graham's stature tells us that Jesus' gospel was not in the words spoken in His ministry. It was in nothing Jesus said. It was all in His death and resurrection, which is what Paul taught. If

11. The 1611 translators could have used the English Continuous Present ("is believing"). Instead, they arrived at a translation that effaced the original meaning by rendering the Greek for *is believing* in John 3:16 as *believes*. In English, this is the Simple Present tense. In this context, it implies a one-time faith saves. This would have been correct if the underlying Greek had been in the aorist tense. However, the Greek was *present participle active*. (See Appendix A: *Greek Issues*.)

you believe these two facts about Jesus (Romans 10:9), Paul taught you are saved. Here is what Billy Graham's Evangelistic Association said in 1980 in a tract entitled *The Gospel*. It says Jesus "came to do three days work, to die, be buried and raised" and that "He came *not primarily to preach the Gospel...* but He came rather that there might be a Gospel to preach."

To say this means that Jesus' message in the Gospel accounts is not important to know about in evaluating salvation doctrine. It is far more important to believe the two simple facts about Jesus being Lord and was resurrected. (Romans 10:9.) Paul said you will be instantly saved forever if you merely acknowledge these two facts. (Romans 10:9.)

What about the validity of the Billy Graham Association's claim that Jesus did not primarily come to preach a gospel? Of course, it is impossible to reconcile these statements with Jesus' declaration "I came to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom; that is the reason why I was commissioned." (Luke 4:43.) Roy Gustafson of the Billy Graham Association explains the reasoning behind the crusade tract's opposing view:

The word *Gospel* occurs over one hundred times in the New Testament...What then is the Gospel of the grace of God? **Let us ask Paul.** He would point us to I Cor. 15:1-4: 'I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you...that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day'...**Paul never discussed the earthly life of our Lord**...The fact that the Lord Jesus died to save is one half of the Gospel! The fact that he rose from the dead...is the other half of the Gospel.

As Gustafson defines the Gospel of Jesus, it is all contained in Paul's simple message about the death and resurrection of Jesus. (1 Cor. 15:1-4.). The Gospel is not found in anything Jesus said. You won't find it in His sermons or His parables. Jesus could not be proclaiming the Gospel because

had Jesus been doing so, Gustafson asks: ‘why then didn’t Paul ever mention anything Jesus said in that regard?’ Indeed! That is precisely the question I am posing! **Gustafson cannot see the issue right in front of his nose.** How could Paul be preaching the Gospel of Jesus if he never quotes Jesus? Furthermore, Gustafson’s reasoning ignores Jesus’ own statement that “I came to **preach** the Gospel of the Kingdom; that is the reason why I was commissioned.” (Luke 4:43). Jesus and Gustafson cannot both be correct.

Gustafson’s view that Jesus’ words do not matter and are unimportant to comprehend how to be saved is not new. It is what Luther was saying. Calvin too.

The purpose in defining the Gospel in this way is to focus only on Paul. Its aim is to exclude Jesus’ Gospel in the Synoptics. Why? Because Luther, Calvin and everyone else knows **Jesus’ Gospel in the Synoptics is a message of faith plus works, not faith alone.** As Jesus most bluntly put it: “every tree therefore that bringeth not forth [*i.e.*, “does not keep on producing”] **good fruit** is hewn down, and cast into the **fire.**” (Matt. 7:19.) The Gospel of the Synoptics is a message of the necessity of adding good fruit and repentance from sin to your faith. Jesus’ Gospel is not about just belief in facts about Himself. As Jesus likewise states, His Gospel message promises “eternal life” for denying oneself, taking up one’s cross and following Jesus. (Matthew 19:27-29 (“**shall** inherit eternal life”.) *See also*, Matthew 10:37-39.) The Gospel in the Synoptics contains the message of James.

What a dilemma! If Jesus’ Gospel in the Synoptics is *the* Gospel, we would have to re-write all these gospel tracts. For Jesus’ Gospel in the Synoptics is the *antithesis* to Paul’s Gospel.

So what are these theologians like Gustafson doing? As Bonhoeffer states, “theologians...simulate concern” for Jesus but try to “avoid the encounter” with Him, and thereby “Christ is still betrayed by the kiss.” (*Christ the Center* (1933

lectures) at 35.) Thus, those who deny Jesus even had a Gospel of His own so they can hold onto Paul have turned their backs on the only one who matters: Jesus.

Elimination of Jesus' Message of the Sermon on the Mount

The consequence of putting emphasis on Paul's Gospel over Jesus' Gospel is dramatic. Christians are blatantly told to dismiss Jesus' words in the Synoptics as "unimportant." For example, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount promises the kingdom to people with various characteristics. Without Paul weighing on us, Jesus would promise in the Sermon on the Mount salvation¹² for those who are humble, meek, merciful, peacemakers, and who hold their faith under pressure to disavow Christ, etc. With Paul in the mix, this must be dismissed. Walvoord is typical:

[The Sermon on the Mount] treats **not of salvation**, but of the character and conduct of those who belong to Christ...That it is suitable to point an unbeliever to salvation in Christ is plainly not the intention of this message...The Sermon on the Mount, as a whole, is **not church truth precisely**...It is **not intended** to delineate justification by faith or **the gospel of salvation**. [The Sermon involves] **unimportant truth**. (John Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come* (Moody Press: 1984) at 44, 45.)

Thus, even though Jesus promises *the kingdom* to persons exhibiting certain behaviors, Walvoord insists this is not about the promise of the kingdom for persons exhibiting cer-

12. Absent pressure to distort the Sermon, Jesus is teaching salvation principles. Matthew 5:3 *et seq.* promises the receipt of the kingdom of heaven, mercy, inheriting the earth, and being children of God in return for various behaviors.

tain kinds of behaviors. This is about the kingdom being given to persons who do not necessarily have these behaviors. Why? Obviously because Paul tells us the kingdom is for those who simply believe. Because Walvoord does not want us to see the incongruity, Walvoord must direct us promptly away from the Sermon. It is “unimportant truth.”

Walvoord actually leaves us puzzled. Jesus is promising the kingdom but then ties the promise to behaviors, making us doubt Paul's canonicity. Yet, that is unthinkable. So how do we cope? Walvoord's answer is that we are to abandon Jesus' words as 'unimportant' and stay on the path of following Paul. To me, *it just doesn't make sense that we can be a Christian, treat Jesus' words as “unimportant” and prefer Paul over Jesus.* A sickening feeling should overcome any true Christian. You are being told to ignore Jesus and listen only to Paul. This is the emerging mainstream Christianity of today.

Yet, Walvoord is in line with Calvin, Luther and Billy Graham's Evangelical Association. They insist we must see Jesus' words in Matthew are *secondary* to Paul's words in his epistles. They claim we need to put Jesus' Gospel aside as “unimportant truth” when compared to Paul's Gospel.

The True Meaning of the Sermon: Reading Paul through Jesus' Words

The lesson of the Sermon on the Mount is clear but is lost on our modern ears. The best description appears from the pastor who runs *Believe*:

Jesus concludes the sermon by setting up certain requirements that relate directly to one's being saved or lost. He divides mankind into three classes: those who (1) follow him (7:13-14, 17, 21, 24-25), (2) do not follow him (vss. 13-44, 26-27), and (3) pretend to follow him (vss. 15-20, 21-23). ***To be saved one must actually follow the teachings of the sermon,*** but

Jesus does **not** say they must be **performed perfectly**. The saved are those **who accept and actually attempt to direct their lives by the sermon**; the lost are those who pretend to follow or who reject these teachings....Mere profession of belief, without the following, will secure Jesus' condemnation, 'I never knew you. You evildoers, depart from me' (vs. 23).¹³

What about Paul's contrary teaching? This pastor accepts Paul, but he shares my outlook. He insists we must read Paul through the lense of Jesus' words and not the other way around. He explains:

An unfortunate feature of much post-Reformation Christianity has been **the interpretation of Jesus in light of Paul rather than the converse**. One of the contributions of Bonhoeffer's treatment of this sermon is **his insistence on reading Paul in light of Jesus** and, hence, his stressing the necessity of doing the sermon. Perfection is not demanded and aid is provided, but still the true disciple is 'the who does the will of the Father' (vs. 21).

The Misleading Suggestion by Emphasizing John's Gospel Account

Also, the elevation of John's Gospel by Luther and Calvin feeds an erroneous assumption. Those unfamiliar with John's Gospel are misled to assume there is no trouble for Paul anywhere in John's Gospel. Yet, John's Gospel is filled with problems for Paul.

13.<http://mb-soft.com/believe/txw/sermonmt.htm> (last accessed 5-24-05).

For example, John quotes Jesus saying that those who are following Him and losing one's life in this world to serve Him do so for "life eternal." (John 12:25-26.) Not for rewards, but for eternal life.

Another example is Jesus saying: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that *have done good*, unto the resurrection of life; and *they that have done evil*, unto the resurrection of damnation." (John 5:28-29 KJV) Jesus focuses the difference between the *saved* and *lost* on who did *good* and who did *evil*. It is not a contrast between those who *believe* versus those who *do not believe*.

In fact, John 3:16 becomes another example when we reveal the subjunctive tense in the verse. It reads: "whosoever keeps on believing in Him *should* not perish but *should* have eternal life." There are two subjunctives in the verse—the subjunctive tense in Greek being used to show *uncertainty* and conditionality. (The NIV, without support in a textual variant, has it "*shall* have eternal life.")¹⁴ Faith alone, Jesus

14. The Greek *have* is *echêi*. It is in the subjunctive. However, the NIV's translation is defended because it conforms better to salvation supposedly purposed by God based on faith alone. See, Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Zondervan: 1997) at 461, 473. Wallace claims we may vary the translation where the Divine will is involved, claiming that in such cases, "*ina* [so that] is used to express both the divine purpose and result." (*Id.* at 473.) Wallace explains: "The fact that the subjunctive is *all but required* after *ina* does not, of course, argue for *uncertainty as to the fate of the believer*. This fact is obvious, *not from this text*, but from the use of *ou mh* in John 10:28 and 11:26, as well as the *general theological contours of the gospel of John*." What Wallace is doing is claiming *ina* creates a purpose clause that defeats the subjunctive meaning because we know from doctrine that God guarantees He will achieve His purpose of saving those who believe. (The proof he offers is utterly circular, as we shall see.) No one has ever explained why the purpose conjunction of *hina* would justify changing *should* into *shall*. In Greek, the contingency has actually a purpose of explaining the continuous tense that precedes it. Also, Wallace even concedes that there are over a dozen future indicatives after *hina* in the New Testament. (His footnote 71.) Thus, Jesus' use of the subjunctive must be deliberate in John 3:16, designed to differentiate the result from a future guaranteed result. Why is Wallace's proof circular? Because for support of the NIV translation, he cites two examples which are more of the same use of subjunctives conditioned on continuous verbs. (John 10:28 and 11:26.) Thus, to cite these two passages to support translating *should* as *shall* is simply to use the same error in the other verses as proof. That is the essence of circular proof!

implies in John, is not the sole criterion for judgment. You *should* be saved, but it is not necessarily going to be the case. Example in chief: the “believing” rulers who were too cowardly to confess Jesus. (John 12:42.) As cowards, their fate is in hell despite their *believing*. (Rev. 21:8, “cowards, unbelievers” are in hell.) (For further discussion of them, see page 450.)

Another example, assuming the NIV translation as correct, is we find in John’s Gospel a competing formula for eternal life that depends on obedience. Jesus says: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, If one *keeps my word*, he *shall* never see death.” (John 8:51, NIV) A better translation of *keep my word* is “*obeys my teaching...*” (GNB.) (On page 501, we will see 3:16 and 8:15 provide a synergistic path to salvation.)

Next, John 3:36 is another very significant problem passage in John’s Gospel for the Paulinist. John the Baptist (whom Jesus calls the greatest prophet) is quite clearly amplifying John 3:16 to say that a faith that *should* save is destroyed by disobedience to Jesus’ commands. Thus, John 3:16 does not have Paul’s meaning. John 3:16 has been quoted insufferably countless times *out-of-context* (besides being grossly mistranslated to fit Paul.) The Prophet John clearly is amplifying 3:16 in 3:36 by evoking the salvation formula of John 3:16 but modifies it. John contrasts *believing* with *disobeying* as a warning to the one-time believer about the impact of disobedience. Here is what John 3:36 says literally in a correct translation:

He that keeps on believing/trusting on the Son keeps on having everlasting life [*cf.* the 3:16 formula], and he that keeps on **disobeying** [*apeitheo*] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God keeps on remaining on him.

This means a faith that *should* save is destroyed by disobedience. As John MacArthur says in *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Zondervan: 1994), John 3:36 teaches that salvation depends on a lasting obedience to Christ’s authority, not on a one-time obedience to believe. (*Id.* at 39 fn.) A saving faith is one that “produces obedience.” (*Id.* at 53.)

Hence, disobedience to Jesus' commands means God's wrath rests on you regardless of your subjective experience of a one-time *belief*. (Paulinists deflect this verse by the simple step of mistranslation.)¹⁵

A final example, although not the last, is Jesus in John says a branch "in me" that does not produce fruit will be cut off, and is thrown outside the vineyard. It is as a branch that is withered (died). It will be burned. (John 15:1-6.) Faith without works is dead. The branch is the Christian, not the fruit on the branch. The burning is of *you*, not some *poor fruit* (i.e., defective works) as Paulinists try to spin this passage. Thus, in John 15:1-6, Jesus is explaining that works are crucial to add to one's connection to Christ, even though the connection is how one produces fruit. Otherwise, faith (connection) without fruit (works) makes you withered (dead), to be thrown "outside" to be "burned." Jesus agrees with James 2:14!

Thus, Paulinists ignore the many passages in John's Gospel that contradict Paul. They emphasize John 3:16 as if it is saying the same thing as Paul's Gospel. However, it does not. John's Gospel, correctly translated, is the antithesis to Paul's gospel.

Even C.S. Lewis Is In The Primarily-Paul Camp

One of my favorite fiction writers is C.S. Lewis. He was a brilliant author. Yet, even C.S. Lewis revealed himself to be a Paulinist who marginalized Jesus. Listen to his reasoning:

15. *Apeitheo* only has one Greek meaning: *disobey*. (Lidell-Scott.) This is followed in ASV, RSV, NASV, WEB and GNB. *Cfr.* KJV and Luther's Bible ("not believe"). Why the difference in the KJV & Luther? Because Pauline dictionaries of ancient Greek, while admitting "not believe" is a meaning "not found outside our literature," claim the word *apeitheo* must mean *disbelieve* when used in Christian literature. (*Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (eds. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker) at 82.) But why? Because unless we adopt a Pauline and idiosyncratic meaning 'just for us Christians,' then John 3:36 undermines our favorite notions about salvation by faith alone, and our favorite verse to prove it: John 3:16.

The epistles are for the most part the earliest Christian documents we possess. The Gospels came later. They are not ‘the Gospel,’ the statement of the Christian belief...In that sense **the epistles [of Paul] are** more primitive and **more central than the Gospels** — though not of course than the great events which the Gospels recount. God’s Act (the Incarnation, the crucifixion, and the Resurrection) comes first: the earliest theological analysis of it comes in the epistles [of Paul]: then when the generation which had heard the Lord was dying out, the Gospels were composed to provide the believers a record of the great Act and of **some of the Lord’s sayings**. (C.S. Lewis, “Introduction” to J. B. Phillips’ *Letters to Young Churches* (Fontana Books n.d.) at 9, 10.)

Thus, Lewis is saying that Paul’s epistles are more primary than the Gospel accounts. The key facts are the death and resurrection of Jesus. If we believe these two facts, we are saved. (Romans 10:9.) Beyond that, Lewis acknowledges we can find “some sayings” of Jesus in the gospel accounts. However, they are not the *gospel* message. Then what of Jesus’ contrary claim? Jesus said: “I came to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom; that is the reason why I was commissioned.” (Luke 4:43.) Lewis is confident that, to the contrary, the Gospel Jesus preached is not the Gospel we must obey. Instead, Lewis believed Paul had the Gospel we must follow.

Again, Lewis is saying nothing new. It was Luther’s view. It was Calvin’s view. It was or is the Billy Graham Association’s view. It was Marcion’s view two millennia ago. (See Appendix B: *How the Canon Was Formed* at page ix.) Yet, how can a Christ-centered life be based on de-emphasizing Jesus to accept Paul? It just doesn’t make any sense.

*A Better Explanation Why the Gospel
Accounts Came Second*

May I suggest an alternative to Lewis' view which better explains why Paul's epistles came first and then the gospels? God did not make Paul's writings come first to prove the primacy of Paul over Jesus' words. Nor did God make Paul silent on Jesus' preaching to prove how irrelevant Jesus' words were on salvation doctrine. Rather, the gospel accounts were recorded after Paul to address partly the problem of Paul's written letters. ***The gospel accounts were to correct Paul's views and give us Jesus' words lacking in Paul's writings.*** Jesus thus was able to set forth the ***correct nature of salvation.*** That is why Jesus' views conflict so directly with Paul. Jesus says you can go to heaven maimed or hell whole in Mark 9:42-47. Repentance from sin is crucial; belief is just one step. Jesus in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, Matt. 25:32 *et seq.*, also said you can do works of charity for Jesus' brethren and thus go to Heaven. Alternatively, you can fail to do so and go to Hell. There is no third option of pleading a covering of Christ and skating the personal obligation. Jesus had clearly a faith-plus-works formula as the correct teaching on salvation.

Accordingly, the Gospel accounts come after Paul precisely to remind Christians of Jesus' warnings about the coming false prophets *after Jesus' crucifixion*. Jesus' warning covers the period of Paul's preaching. Jesus warned prophets would come to teach in His name but be false. (Matt. 7:15 *et seq.*) They would preach *a-nomia*, which literally means "negation of the (Mosaic) Law." Jesus says 'I will tell them on Judgment Day that I never knew you.' Jesus warns also these same preachers will do signs and wonders, and will have prophecy to deceive you into falsely trusting them. Jesus says their signs and wonders prove nothing. All that matters is that they are workers of *a-nomia*. If they are workers who seek to negate the Mosaic Law, flee from them, Jesus warned.

(For a full discussion on this passage, see the chapter “Did Jesus Warn of False Prophets Who Would Negate the Law?” on page 59.)

Thus, the sequence that Lewis is citing as proof of Paul’s primacy is actually proof of the opposite. It is more likely explained by the problem of Paul. The gospel accounts were intended to correct Paul. *Without their documentary existence, no one could expose Paul as a false apostle.* No one could prove Paul was coming with another gospel than that of Jesus Christ Himself!

In fact, all this effort to dismiss the Synoptics by Luther, Calvin, C.S. Lewis, Billy Graham, and Walvoord *is itself proof that Paul must have come with another gospel.* Otherwise, why all this effort and spin to dismiss the Synoptics? If the gospel in them were the same as Paul taught, why would one have to say Paul has primacy at all over them?

The truth is one cannot make Jesus’ words serve Paul’s doctrines. The effect of this primacy given to Paul over the Synoptics has destroyed the integrity of commentators. As discussed next, when confronted by a contradiction of Paul by Jesus, they presuppose Jesus must fit Paul. They admit this by the most blatant illogic.

Circular Logic to Obscure Jesus’ Words

The following are examples of circular logic made to force Jesus’ words in the Synoptics fit Pauline interpretation. The authors insist boldly, openly but illogically that Jesus must be interpreted to fit Paul’s theology. Never once does the fact of contradiction draw the commentators to question Paul’s validity in canon.

“The interpretation of the parable [of the Prodigal by Jesus] requires deduction **compatible with known doctrine** [i.e., Paul].” (R.B. Thieme Jr., *The Prodigal Son* (1974) at 1.)

“In other words, once [eternal] security [primarily deduced from Paul] is established, there really are ‘no problem passages.’ There are only Scriptures [*i.e.*, statements by Jesus apparently to the contrary] to properly interpret in light of ***an already established doctrine*** [*i.e.*, Paul’s teaching.]” (*Ankerberg Theological Research Institute News Magazine* (Vol. 4 No. 7) (July 1997) at 16.)

“In Mt. 25:34, we find that inheriting the kingdom is conditioned [by Jesus] on obedience and service to the King, ***a condition far removed from the New Testament [i.e., Pauline] teaching of justification by faith alone for entrance into heaven.*** [Thus, it must mean something other than what it appears to mean.]” (Dillow, *Reign of the Servant Kings* (1992) at 72.)

These statements all share blatant illogic. The commentator interprets what Jesus is saying from the theological system of Paul. Thus, the very point of whether Paul is valid or not is avoided by rewriting Jesus’ words to fit Paul. It is known as the bootstrap fallacy. Instead, the very issue raised by the contradiction is whether Paul belongs among inspired canon. Rather than face the unthinkable, bootstrap illogic is used to demand the reader accept any spin of Jesus that erases Jesus’ contradiction of Paul.

Dispensational Strategy To Avoid Jesus

A more intellectual effort to displace Jesus with Paul was developed in what is called Dispensational Theology. It has given this Jesus vs. Paul division a theological basis. The fact people have had to devise a theological explanation for

the division is proof that it is otherwise impossible logically to keep Jesus and Paul in the same canon. One or the other must go.

What some Christians have done, trying to be faithful to both Jesus and Paul, is take all the tension away by a theological crutch. They deem Jesus' conflicting statements as addressing the *era of Law*. All Paul's contrary teachings were addressed to the present *era of Grace*. The conflict is resolved elegantly because Paul and Jesus conflict for good reason: they are talking to different people who are subject to different covenants. These different covenants are described as different *dispensations*.

As a result, Jesus' words are deprived of any ongoing relevance. As John MacArthur says in *The Gospel According to Jesus*:

This lamentable hermeneutic [*i.e.*, Jesus' words were for a different dispensation] is widely applied in varying degrees to much of our Lord's earthly teaching, emasculating the message of the Gospels.¹⁶

Any doctrine that tells us to ignore Jesus' words should raise an immediate red flag. If we take this route, we have a legitimized barrier, however well-intentioned, *against* listening any longer to Jesus on salvation issues. Jesus' words on how to be saved and have eternal life no longer interest us (unless, of course, we think they agree with Paul). Jesus' statements lose their *ongoing* validity after His death on the cross. Only Paul thereafter is left to address us on how to be saved. With this kind of reasoning, Paul trumps Jesus every time.

Yet, to the contrary, Jesus said "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matt. 24:35.) Jesus was saying His words were not only valid now, but

16. John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Zondervan 1994) at 33-34.

remain continuously valid in the kingdom up through the passing away of the heaven and earth. (Rev. 20:7-10.) Dispensationalism ignores this. Instead, it gives Jesus' words only a brief continuing validity on the doctrine of salvation. Once the Law was abolished at the crucifixion, as they interpret Paul's Gospel, Jesus' words on salvation became all moot. Jesus' words were meant for those under the Law. Because Jesus nailed the Law to a tree in His crucifixion, Jesus did away with the Law. Thus, all Jesus' statements no longer have any bearing on how God will deal with us who live under Grace, and who no longer are under the Law.

Can you see how the dispensational argument has an obvious logical flaw when used as a harmonization instrument? Essentially, this argument depends on the presupposition that Paul is inspired and he could define a covenant of Grace that excludes relevance of the Law (*i.e.*, repentance from sin, obedience, works, etc.) Yet, the very issue that Jesus' words raise is the legitimacy of this point of view. Only a presupposition that Paul is correct would force you to *marginalize* Jesus by claiming His words cannot possibly apply to those under a new covenant of Grace. ***Absent this bootstrapping, this conflict in salvation messages is proof itself that Paul is uninspired.*** It actually proves Paul is a false apostle. Thus, a crucial assumption of the dispensational/covenant argument is the same as its conclusion. The bootstrap is the *a priori* assumption that Paul is inspired to declare a covenant of grace that excludes repentance, obedience, and works. (Deut. 6:25.) Instead, that is the very issue at stake. This is discussed in more detail below at page 394.

Paul's Flawed Covenant Theology

Of course, there is also a Biblical flaw in Paul's presentation of a New Covenant of Grace that excludes the Law (*Torah*). It contradicts the Bible prophecy of a New Covenant. This prophecy appears in Jeremiah 31:31 *et seq.* This prediction about the New Covenant expressly says the New Covenant *continues the Torah* and *continues God's special*

relationship with the seed of Israel. The New Covenant of Grace is specifically mentioned in that passage too, saying it is based on God “forgiving sins.”¹⁷ Thus, despite a New Covenant of Grace, God told us already some things will never change: the *Torah* and God’s covenant partner is Israel. Please read Jeremiah 31:31 *et seq.* right now if you have any doubt. For a fuller discussion, see page 397.

Historical Background of Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism has its modern roots in the covenant theology which was first set forth in the Calvinist Westminster Confession of 1647. Prior to that date, it only appeared in Marcionism. It never appeared in any mainstream Christian writings, including those of Luther and Calvin.¹⁸

Gradually covenant theology gave way a hundred years ago to a method of analyzing Jesus’ words called *Dispensationalism*. It is a doctrine whose most significant purpose is to resolve conflicts between Paul and Jesus.

This doctrine is quite forthright: once a verse from Jesus is deemed too difficult to reconcile with Paul, the explanation is Jesus was talking to a different dispensation. We are safe to ignore Jesus’ words for we are in the dispensation of grace. Jesus’ words were meant in that instance for those under the dispensation of Law (*i.e.*, the Jews). The Law after

17. See “The Biblical Basis to these Charges Against Paul” on page 233ff.

18. Dr. Ryrie points out: “It [covenant theology] was not the expressed doctrine of the early church. It was never taught by church leaders in the Middle Ages. It was not even mentioned by the primary leaders of the Reformation. Indeed, covenant theology as a system is only a little older than dispensationalism.... Covenant theology does not appear in the writings of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, or Melancthon... There were no references to covenant theology in any of the great confessions of faith until the Westminster Confession in 1647....” It should be noted that Agricola was a follower of Luther who taught dispensationalism.

the cross supposedly had now become a curse and was abrogated. Therefore, Dispensationalists reason that Jesus' words at issue no longer involve any important truth for us.

For example, Dispensationalists do not ignore the inconsistencies between Jesus and Paul in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus emphasizes works to enter the kingdom. Jesus called us to have a "righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees," absent which "you shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:20.) Jesus is making obedience a condition of entrance into heaven. This is clear from the verses that follow in the Sermon. Jesus explains what it means to have a righteousness that exceeds the Pharisees. You must not call your brother a fool (5:21-26); you must not lust after a married woman (5:27-30); you must not divorce your wife absent certain circumstances (5:31-32); you must not make false vows (5:33-37);¹⁹ and you must not return evil for evil (5:38-48). The Pharisees obviously committed all these sins. Jesus was promising "entry...into the kingdom of heaven" (5:20) for obedience to His principles.

The Dispensationalists began their modern movement by insisting there is nothing to worry about in the Sermon on the Mount. Their leading text, still cited today, is by Clarence Larkin, *Dispensational Truth* (Philadelphia: Larkin, 1918). Based on dispensational logic, Larkin explains Jesus' teach-

² 0.98 Tueek text against *any oath-taking* is a corruption of the original Matthew. George Howard published the Hebrew Matthew which, when differences exist, often show the underlying original text. Here, the Hebrew Matthew reveals a single but crucial word was missing in the Tueek translation: the word *falsely*. A Jewish scholar, Nehemiah Gordon, admires Jesus and shows Jesus' command against *any oath* would have Jesus contradict Scripture, but the command against *falsely* taking an oath would be consistent with it. He notes the significant variance in the original Hebrew Matthew that has the word *falsely*. He then explains how this makes perfect sense in what Jesus says in context about various oaths. Jesus was saying 'do not ever testify falsely in an oath, whether taken in Yahweh's name or otherwise.' .98 Pharisees' doctrine was that a false oath was permissible as long as not in God's name, such as if 'by the gold in the Temple.' See Nehemiah Gordon, *Hebrew Yeshua v. the Tueek Jesus* (Jerusalem: 2006).

ings in the Sermon on the Mount “have no application to the Christian, but only to those who are under the Law, and therefore must apply to another Dispensation than this.” (*Id.*, at 87.)

Thus, beginning in 1918, dispensationlists demonstrated how easily one could eliminate the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was talking to Jews under the Law. Paul is talking to everyone else who exists in the ‘era of grace.’ The era of the Law died at the cross. Thus, this Sermon on the Mount’s message died there too. Dispensationlists proclaim victory for Paul’s words over Christ’s words. They are not troubled in the slightest. To them, it is simply grace triumphing over Law.

As a result, for the modern Dispensationalist, the following principles of Jesus are inapplicable to us:

- Jesus’ mention of the Law’s ongoing validity and how crucial it is to teach every command, small and large. (Matt. 5:18-19.)
- Jesus’ promise of justification for repentance from sin. (Luke 18:10 *ff.*)
- Jesus’ salvation principles in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 5:1 *ff.*)
- Jesus’ hell-whole or heaven-maimed statement. (Mark 9:42 *ff.*)
- Jesus’ emphasis on works for salvation in the Parable of the Sheep & The Goats without which one will go to hell. (Matt. 25:32 *ff.*)
- Jesus’ emphasis on works in Revelation without which Jesus will spew you out of His mouth. (Rev. 3:16 *ff.*)

All such principles have been carved out of the essential values necessary for New Testament Christians. They are no longer applicable in the “Era of Grace” as defined by Paul.²⁰ They are wholly irrelevant.

Thus, even though Jesus said His words would remain valid even though “heaven and earth pass away” (Matt. 24:35), dispensationalism harmonizes away Jesus’ teachings as invalid. They were only valid for another two years after

Jesus spoke them, *i.e.*, they expired at the crucifixion. “It is finished” for Paulinist-dispensationlists means *all of Jesus’ lessons are cancelled* unless they fit Paul’s doctrines.

This conclusion was driven by the necessity to harmonize Jesus with Paul. The founders of dispensationalism such as Dr. Chafer were fully aware of the tension between Jesus and Paul. Miles J. Stanford became a renown proponent from Dr. Chafer’s university. He expressly recognized contradictions between Jesus and Paul.

However, this was not a problem, he claimed. Stanford insisted Paul had a different gospel from the other apostles. Thus, Stanford taught that when they do not line up, we must realize Jesus and the twelve were directed at a different dispensation—Jews under the Law. Paul was directed at humanity in the “era of grace.” There is nothing therefore to reconcile when we find conflict. God just has different covenants with Jews than with the world after Jesus’ ascension.²¹

20. Sometimes this is explained as an Israel vs. Christian dispensation. For example, Lewis Spencer Chafer (who founded Dallas Theological Seminary) in *He That is Spiritual* (rev. ed.) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967) claimed that the dispensation to Israel is *distinct* from the Christian church. He then contended the era of “pure law” is exclusive of our current era of “pure grace.” Thus, before Christ died was the law. Now we are in grace. In the Millennial kingdom, the Law will be restored. In this manner, only Paul’s teachings have current validity. The Book of Revelation, with its emphasis on repentance, has no applicability in salvation doctrine until the Millennium. Chafer is wrong on all points. First, as MacArthur says, “both law and grace are part of the program of God in every dispensation.” (J. MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, *supra*, at 31-32.) Furthermore, it is a false dichotomy to separate the church from Israel in dispensations. The New Covenant is with the “House of Judah and Israel.” (Jer. 31:31.) We are the Gentiles who, if righteous sojourners, share in that covenant, but we are not the main target of Jeremiah 31:31.

21. For more on Stanford (whose doctrine harkens to Marcion), see his work *Pauline Dispensationalism* reprinted at <http://withchrist.org/MJS/index.htm>.

That such a theology would ever arise reflects how impossible it is to reconcile Jesus with Paul on too many points. How can Paul fit in with a ‘hell-whole or heaven-maimed warning’ of Jesus? In Mark chapter 9, Jesus gives no quarter to Paul: you can go to hell whole (unrepentant) or heaven-maimed (after severe repentance from sin). There is no third option of refusing to repent *from sin* and enjoy a covering of Christ based on mere belief. *Cfr.* 1 Cor. 5:5. In line with Jesus, John tells us the covering applies to a Christian *only after* confessing and repenting from sin. (1 John 1:7-9.)

Jesus and Paul are certainly at odds. Paul and Apostle John are also at odds. John thinks the covering of Christ only applies upon confession of sin. However, Paul says it permanently happens upon *belief* that Jesus is the Lord and He rose from the dead. (Romans 10:9. *See also*, Romans 8:1.)

Thus, this dispensational doctrine is necessary to *cope* with the conflict within Christianity between Paul and Jesus. Also, it is used to cope with the conflict between Paul and the other apostles’ teachings. Dispensationalism is an old solution, going back to Marcion. The early church defeated Marcion’s attempt to marginalize Jesus in preference for Paul. Will we?

The Circular Reasoning Involved in Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism and Covenant theology as pertains to the Jesus-Paul conflict rests upon circular reasoning. It reconciles the two by making an assumption that Paul is inspired and correct. Yet, that is precisely the challenge involved that they are hoping to resolve. The illogic involved is not evident to its proponents apparently because they never have done a logic diagram of their argument.

First, let's review some basic logic about what a conflict between Jesus and Paul *should* mean. This will help unlock rather easily the illogic of how dispensationalism and covenant theology reconcile Jesus and Paul.

Everyone knows if Jesus is inspired and Paul is inspired that they cannot contradict. If they do, either Jesus is not inspired or Paul is not inspired. Between the two, only Jesus proved to be a prophet (and more than a prophet). Paul was just a person with a vision of Jesus. So if we were forced to concede Jesus and Paul contradict, then Paul would be found *uninspired*.

Dispensationalism agrees that Jesus and Paul contradict but points out their audiences may have materially varied. Dispensationalism seizes on this point to resolve the apparent dilemma of a contradiction. Dispensational theology says Jesus was *not* talking to those under a covenant of grace when He taught justification by repentance from sin. Jesus aimed at Jews His Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee and His *heaven-maimed-or-hell-whole lesson* in Mark 9:42-48. Thus, Jesus was supposedly talking to Jews under their old and now expired covenant relationship which did depend on repentance. However, this notion that Jesus brought a new covenant-of-grace which excludes repentance from sin for salvation comes exclusively from Paul.²²

Thus, the solution proposed to reconcile the conflict between Jesus and Paul is to assume the validity of Paul's teaching of the covenant of grace. Paul's doctrines (a) exclude repentance from sin as necessary for salvation and (b) exclude Jews as the principal partner. Yet, the validity of Paul as an inspired teacher to teach these two ideas is the very question at issue. To derive the dispensational solution that Jesus was talking to those under the covenant of Law and not grace, one has to assume Paul's validity. This assumption is

22. See Gal. ch. 4, the Jews now correspond to Ishmael and are cursed to follow the Law in the desert; we are children of grace, freed from bondage to the Law, etc.

the same thing as your conclusion. Paul alone teaches a break between the seed of Israel and God in forming a New Covenant people. (See Galatians 4:22 *ff.*) The Dispensational theory at issue overcomes the question of Paul's inspiration by assuming Paul is inspired despite the contradictions. The conclusion of Paul's inspiration is hidden in the discussion as a premise. Hence, dispensationalism as a tool to reconcile Jesus and Paul is based on circular logic.

You can diagram the fallacy rather easily:

- Premise #1: If Jesus and Paul would truly contradict then Paul is uninspired.
- Premise #2: Jesus and Paul addressed different audiences.
- Premise #3: Jesus and Paul have direct contradictions in talking to different audiences.
- Premise #4: **Paul is inspired** in expounding on a new covenant of grace to one audience.
- Premise #5: Jesus was inspired in expounding to a different audience who are under the covenant of Law but not under Paul's covenant of grace.
- Conclusion: Therefore both Jesus and **Paul** are **inspired**.

It is premise number 4 that contains the bootstrapped-conclusion. When one of your premises contains your conclusion, we call the conclusion a bootstrap fallacy. Thus, but for that assumption in premise number 4, you would have Jesus expounding principles of the kingdom applicable to a New Covenant member at odds with Paul. Premise number 4 marginalizes that truth, puts it in doubt, and bootstraps the conclusion. If you fallaciously contain your conclusion in a premise, you cannot help but reach the conclusion you desire. To repeat, this is known as the bootstrap fallacy.

Irreconcilable Differences in Paul's New Covenant Theology

Furthermore, there are certain contradictions between Jesus and Paul that refute the whole idea that Jesus and Paul can be reconciled on the covenant-of-grace explanation.

Jesus taught that anyone who would teach against the keeping of the least command in the Law would be least in the kingdom of heaven. Not *until heaven and earth pass away*, Jesus says, will one little letter of the Law cease until all things are accomplished. (Matt. 5:18.) If Jesus intended that the Law would be accomplished in *toto* six months later when He died on the cross, He made an incongruous statement that the Law would continue until "heaven and earth pass away...." And Jesus would have made the further incongruous remark that a New Testament kingdom member must keep "the least command in the Law."

Obviously, Jesus sees the New Covenant precisely as Jeremiah 31:31 explained. The New Covenant continued the *Torah* (Law). And as Isaiah said, Servant-Messiah "will magnify the Law (Torah), and make it honorable." (Isaiah 42:21.) (For more discussion, see page 233 *et seq.*) The New Covenant in Jeremiah and Isaiah is thus just as Jesus sees it: the Law continues forward in the New Covenant, reinforced but never done away with until the heavens and earth pass away.

Paul clearly contradicts Jesus in this respect. Paul says the Law is nailed to a tree, abolished, etc., by Christ's death on the cross. (See chapter entitled, "Did Paul Negate the Law's Further Applicability?" on page 73.)

Also, Paul sees Israel is displaced as covenant partner. Paul says Israel now corresponds to the cursed child of Hagar, in bondage to keep the Law which cannot save. Paul insists Israel can reap no blessing from obeying the Law given Moses. Paul continues and says we under the New Covenant are free to live without the Law. We are analogized to be Isaac's children. We live instead under a covenant of grace. (Gal. 4:28 *ff.*)

However, this means Jesus and Paul contradict on one of the core premises upon which hangs the validity of the Dispensational Jesus-Paul solution.

Remember Premise #5? It said:

- Premise #5: Jesus was inspired in expounding to a different audience who are under the covenant of Law but not under Paul's covenant of grace.

Jesus would not agree that persons of the New Covenant are free to disregard the Law. Remember Jesus said the one who teaches against the validity of the least command in the Law would be *least in the kingdom of heaven*. Jesus then reiterates that not a jot will depart from the Law of Moses *until heaven and earth pass away*. (Matt. 5:18.) Jesus is obviously warning a member of His New Covenant community to follow the Law. For Jesus, there is no such thing as a Covenant of Grace that throws out the Law two years later. Jeremiah 31:31 *et seq.* expressly promises a New Covenant of “forgiveness and mercy” in which the Law *continues* and the covenant relationship with Israel's seed *continues*. That is why there is no such thing as a dual audience of different covenant partners—one under law and one under grace—as covenant theology adopts to protect Paul's validity.

As Pastor John MacArthur says, “both law and grace are part of the program of God in every dispensation.” (J. MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus, supra*, at 31-32.)

Thus, dispensationalism/covenant theology, in its explanation of how to reconcile Paul to Jesus, insists Paul is correct on a key premise at odds with Jesus and Jeremiah 31:31 *et seq.* and Isaiah 42:21. *See also* Isaiah 59:21.

The Consequences of Dispensational Ideas

Dispensational theory has now drastically reduced the New Testament applicable to us. Our New Testament that applies after the ascension of Jesus is, in effect, *only the words of Paul*. We have now returned 100% to the position of

the early heretic Marcion of 144 A.D. He said only Paul had the message of Jesus. He rejected the salvation message of the twelve apostles. Marcion claimed their gospels were at odds with Paul. He circulated a gospel narrative that had much in common with Luke, but was much shorter. (See Appendix B: *How the Canon Was Formed*.)

It has taken almost nineteen-hundred years, but everything has come full circle back to Marcion's doctrine and his truncated gospel account. The early church branded him a heretic. Marcion was forgotten. The four gospels were later joined to canon. They appeared safely ensconced as valid until the rise of covenant theology and dispensationalism took over. By these doctrinal developments, we have come back to a Marcion heresy enveloping Christianity day by day.

These developments should disgust any *true* Christian. As John MacArthur correctly states about this aspect of Dispensationalism:

It is no wonder that the evangelistic message growing out of such a system **differs sharply** from the gospel according to Jesus. If we begin with the **presupposition** that much of Christ's message was intended for another age, why should our gospel be the same as He preached?²³

23. John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Zondervan: 1994) at 33. MacArthur does not share my view of Paul. Instead, he tries valiantly to claim his view of Jesus' gospel is *consistent* with Paul. To do this, MacArthur argues that "repentance" (which Jesus preached) is no more a work than faith. However, because MacArthur defines repentance as "active submission" to Jesus (*id.*, at 34, 113), it just cannot wash with Paul. I tried that path myself. I found Paul is just too plain-speaking. For example, in Romans 4:4, Paul says if salvation is by *works* then it would be by a "debt." Paul then clearly says in Romans 4:5: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness." Clearly Paul is excluding all kinds of *effort*, including *active submission*. Paul thus eschews *repentance* from sin as part of salvation. By doing so, Paul clearly contradicts Jesus.

*Dispensationalist Admits Jesus' Words Are
No Longer Relevant Because of Paul*

Some Christians are unfamiliar with the streak of Dispensationalism invading the churches. You have never heard this viewpoint boldly proclaimed in a sermon. Yet, its influence is growing because the contradictions between Jesus and Paul do not go away by mere spin.

Here is a very blunt but yet accurate and sincere summary of Dispensational theory. It is from a sermon by Pastor Mike Paulson of Touchet Baptist Church in Touchet, Washington. In a sermon entitled *What Would Jesus Do or What Would Paul Do?* Pastor Paulson boldly dismisses the *What Would Jesus Do* bracelets as heretical. He bases this squarely on mainstream dispensational teaching today. Pastor Paulson explains why this bracelet is heretical: it is wrong to teach anything that Jesus taught; we should instead only teach what Paul taught. Dispensational truth justifies this conclusion.

To avoid any claim that I am misleadingly taking his words out of context, I include almost all of Pastor Paulson's points. He says:

In regards to that heretical piece of jewelry and money-making modern Christian symbol based on the mentality of modern Christianity, *What Would Jesus Do*, we should know that ***it really doesn't matter what Jesus would do in any specific situations these days***. In fact, the question is not even what Peter would do, or Mary either! The question should be, ***What Would Paul Do!....***

When most people start to read their 'bible,' they usually don't get very far; in fact, most just read up to the Gospels and ignore the rest claiming they don't understand it all.

[T]hen [they] put ***their itching ears to their 'modern scholarly educated Greek/Hebrew trained' pastor and let him...***teach the teachings of Jesus*** according to the Gospels

thus ***making them 'feel' like they are a good Christian following Jesus' teachings!***

Well, what's wrong with that, you ask? ***It goes against the Scriptures!!!!***

Keep in mind as you read this sermon, Acts is a transitional book. We go from Jew to Gentile; Jerusalem to Rome; Law to Grace; and Peter to Paul!

Let's remind ourselves about the proper place of Peter in today's Christianity:

According to Matthew 10:5-7, Peter, as were the rest of the twelve, was an apostle to Jews only.... ***In fact, Jesus is not even our spokesman for today!*** His 'target' was the lost sheep of Israel. Matthew 10:5,6.

Jesus' teachings in the Gospels were geared to the Jews—if they had accepted Him as their Messiah. They killed Him instead—thus the teachings in the Gospels will become the 'constitution' when He is on the earth again—however, this time He will enforce those teachings! That is what the Millennium is all about.

Unfortunately, most 'modern' Christians follow those teachings today—I call them Beatitudinal Christians and a simple reading of the Sermon on the Mount should [show] them that they can NOT live that sermon completely today—no way, not at all—not even close! ***The stuff in the Sermon on the Mount actually contradicts Paul's teachings in everything from salvation to doctrinal belief!*** You would think folks would see this—but like Jesus said of them, ye err not knowing the Scriptures...

So now, let's consider the proper place of Paul in today's New Testament Christianity:

He is our one and only apostle. Jesus really came to be the Messiah to the Jews! But as they killed Him, we now are the 'target' from God....

Jesus sends us our own apostle to follow—Paul!

.... The Apostle Paul instructs us how to live as Christians. He instructs us to do those things we have learned, received, heard, and seen him do....‘Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.’ Philippians 4:9.

“Whoever is ashamed of me and my words... of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”
Mark 8:38

If you want to understand the differences associated with the various instructions given in the scriptures (sometimes referred to as ‘*contradictions*’), then we must consider what Paul says—*any instructions contradicting his writings apply to a group other than the Church*—other than the Christian today.

We shouldn’t follow Peter...

We really shouldn’t even follow Jesus’ Millennialistic-Gospelic teachings...

We are to follow Paul!

We shouldn’t care what Peter would do!

We shouldn’t care what Jesus would do!....

We should only care WWPD [i.e., What Would Paul Do?]:²⁴

What Paulson, a Baptist Pastor, admits is that Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount contradicts Paul on general doctrines as well as salvation doctrine. Rather than this being proof that Paul is a false apostle, Pastor Paulson sees this as proof that

24. The sermon quoted is entitled *WWJD v. WWPD?* and is reprinted at <http://www.touchet1611.org/PeterPaulMary2.html> (last visited 2005).

Paul alone is valid for our times. He insists all Jesus' words are invalid until the Millennium. Pastor Paulson says that it is heretical to ask 'what would Jesus do' in the era of grace. The only commands to search out are those in Paul's writings. We not only *can* ignore Jesus' words. We *must* ignore Jesus' directions and salvation theology. If we follow Jesus' words, Paulson insists we are the heretic! Oh My!

Pastor Paulson is a symptom of a much larger problem. Paulinism is taking over the churches. Jesus' words are being diminished and marginalized. The question of Paul's canonicity thus is becoming more and more urgent to resolve. If we wait too long, it may soon be regarded as heretical to teach anything Jesus taught about salvation or morality.

People's salvation is at risk. People will lose the promise that Jesus gives them that if you "kept guard" of His word you "should never taste death." (John 8:51.)

If we wait too long to re-examine Paul, John tells us that if anyone accepts any writing that *transgresses* a teaching of Jesus Christ, that Christian loses God ("doesn't have God"). John writes in 2 John 1:8-11 (Websters' Bible):

(8) Watch yourselves, that we [*i.e.*, the twelve apostles] don't lose the things which we have accomplished, but that we receive a full reward.

(9) Whoever transgresses [*i.e.*, goes beyond] and ***doesn't remain in the teaching of Christ, doesn't have God [i.e., breaks fellowship with God]***. He who ***remains in the teaching [of Jesus Christ]***, the same has both the Father and the Son.

John clearly warns that if you *go beyond* and *transgress* the teachings of Jesus Christ, you do not have God any longer. Yet, if you *remain* in the teachings of Jesus, you have both Jesus and the Father. Dispensationalism is precisely what John is warning about. Dispensationalism removes any relevancy to any teaching of Jesus. It is fundamentally misguided. It risks breaking our relationship with God upon

which our salvation depends. For what benefit? Just for the opportunity to quote Paul's very different gospel from Jesus Christ? It is not worth the risk.

Conclusion

Jesus' words were marginalized by Marcion in 144 A.D. The early church recognized this as heresy. History has repeated itself. Will we recognize Marcionism of today as heresy?

We have to go back to the same solution as used in early Christianity. We could simply republish *Against Marcion* by Tertullian, and find all the lessons we need. Tertullian re-examined in what sense Paul's words could be read. Tertullian said Paul was not an inspired person, and we have no *adequate* proof he was even an apostle of Jesus Christ. Tertullian respected Paul and regarded him as edifying. But for Tertullian, his respect for Paul neither proved inspiration nor true apostleship. Can we make this leap and adopt Tertullian's 207 A.D. view of Paul as the true basis upon which Paul was placed in the New Testament? Can we dispense with our comfortable paradigms and return to the early church's view of Paul? Can we finally accept Jesus' Words Only as the *true* inspired NT canon?