

CHAPTER ONE

THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL

The mystery of the gospel (Rom. 16:25, 26; Eph. 6:19; cf. Lk. 24:44-48; Jn. 3:13-16; Acts 2:22-36; 5:29-32; 10:36-43; 13:26-39; Rom. 1:1-5, 16, 17; 15:15, 16; 1 Cor. 1:23, 24; 2:1-7; 15:1-11 vv. 3, 4) where the same gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God or the word of Truth about Christ, and Him crucified, that is, His death, burial and resurrection remains the core Christological message (1 Cor. 1:23, 24; 2:1-5; 15:3, 4); wherein lies the power of God unto salvation to all that believe (Rom. 1:16, 17; Eph. 1:13). It is the proof of the magnitude of God's love who gave us His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ to be our perfect Sin-bearer and Saviour to redeem and save the world of lost and sinful humanity (Lk. 19:10; Jn. 3:13-16; Acts 4:12; 5:30, 31; Rom. 5:6-8; 10:6-17; 16:25-27; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 1:3-14; 3:4-6, 14-19; 6:15, 19-20; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; 1 Jn. 4:9-16). It is the gospel of the kingdom which Jesus Christ himself initiated, for which He was anointed and sent, and which first began to be spoken by Him in its inherent power and purity (Matt. 4:23; 13:33; Mk. 1:1, 14, 15; Lk. 4:18-21; Acts 2:22-32; 10:36-38; Heb. 2:3, 4).

It is the message confirmed to be the Scriptures and the message of the prophets including John the Baptist about Christ in His vicarious death for our sins and towards our great Salvation; and as handed down to us by credible witnesses, the early Apostles (Matt. 1:21; 3:1-17; Mk. 1:1-15; Lk. 3:16-23; 24:44-49; Acts 1:1-8; 5:26-32; 10:33-43; Rom. 1:1-17; 1 Cor. 15:1-11; Heb. 2:3, 4; 1 Pet. 1:1-12). It is the message about the kingdom and practical truths about Christ through the acts of the Holy Spirit; which both starts and concludes the open-ended book of Acts (Acts 1:1-3; 28:30, 31). Jesus, the only begotten Son of God is also the subject of the gospel as both Lord and Christ, the only Saviour of the world (Jn. 3:13-16; 4:41, 42; 14:6; 17:3; Acts 2:22-36; 3:19-26; 4:10-12; 5:30, 31; 10:36-43; 13:26-39; 28:30, 31; Rom. 1:3, 4; 1 Cor. 1:18-24, 30; 2:1-7; 15:1-11).

It, therefore, unveils the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ including His offices, righteousness, blood, atoning sacrifice more especially His death on the cross, burial and resurrection as final proof of Him being the only begotten Son, the Son of the living God, the only born but uncreated God-Man of the Universe (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:5; 5:5). It reveals Christ who is also the accredited Prince, Saviour and Judge of the World (Matt. 24:14; Jn. 3:1-18, 35-36; 4:41, 42; 5:19-30; 12:47, 48; Acts 5:30, 31; 10:30-43; 17:30, 31; 2 Tim. 4:1, 2, 8; Rev. 14:6; 19:11) as author and finisher of our faith (Acts 3:16; Rom. 3:22; Gal. 2:16, 20; 3:22, 26; Eph. 3:12; Phil. 3:9; Heb. 12:2) and of our great Salvation (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:6-13; Heb. 2:3, 4).

The gospel as mystery revealed

The gospel is thus referred to as a mystery because it was and is revealed only under the New Covenant (Rom. 16:25, 26; Eph. 6:19, 20). Its power acts as the *primary key* of faith (Rom. 1:16, 17; 10:16, 17) to be used by the Holy Spirit whose power is the *master key* for kingdom salvation, power and glory (Matt. 16:19; Acts 1:8; 5:29-32; 1 Cor. 2:1-12 v. 12; 4:15-20; 1 Thess. 1:5-7; 2:1-13 v. 12). Presently, therefore, the gospel is the means of providing the power as holy-fire from God through the merits of Christ unto salvation – eternal life having the same righteousness and faith of Christ to become and live as “just” or “righteous” or “saved people” with a prophetic and eternal destiny (Rom. 1:16, 17; cf. Acts 2:16-21; 1 Pet. 2:9-12; Rev. 1:5, 6; 5:9).

Just as there was a supernatural *hypostatic* union of the divine and human natures in the one Person, Jesus Christ through the Incarnation (Lk. 1:31-35; Phil. 2:5-11), God has supernaturally put the divine truths of the gospel that save us from sin (1 Cor. 15:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:14-21) in the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16). Thus, by means of the gospel, God is now able to save us and make us good people (Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 2:1-10; 5:1-2, 8-10; Tit. 2:10-14). He does this by creating a new man or new nature operating under the higher law of the Spirit of life in Christ in every believer after the nature of Christ to deal with the law of sin that breeds all forms of human sinfulness and corruption of the sin nature (Rom. 5:1-21; 6:23; 7:4-6, 22, 24-25; 8:1-17 v. 2; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:10-14; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4).

Defining and understanding the content of the gospel

Paul wrote; *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”* (1 Cor. 15:1-4). In 1 Cor. 15:1-11, therefore, “gospel” (v. 1) translated from the Greek word *euangelion* simply means “Good News”; and by scriptural definition, it is the message concerning the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (vv. 3, 4). Indeed, by His bodily resurrection, the only unique God-man Jesus Christ is proven to be the accredited eternal Son of the living God as earlier predicted in the book of Psalms (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:3, 4; Heb. 1:5; 5:5 cf. Ps. 2:7).

The surest testimony of Trinity about Jesus Christ referred to as the gospel when looked at from the point of view of His vicarious death is that the God-man Jesus who is Christ and also the eternal Logos, Word of God who became flesh is eternally also the Son of God (Jn. 1:1-5, 9-18, 29-34; 3:13-18; 10:36; 20:30, 31; Acts 17:3; 1 Jn. 3:8; 4:15; 5:5-12). The **gospel proper** is the message of first importance concerning the death, burial and

resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-11 vv. 3, 4). This gospel as mystery revealed (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 6:19) is sourced in the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ when God became man on earth (1 Tim. 3:16). The Virgin Birth of Jesus was foretold, demonstrated and prophesied in the Old Testament (Gen. 3:15, 21; Is. 7:14; 9:6) but fulfilled in the New Testament as Immanuel, meaning that all creation, especially humanity will see God with us in human flesh as the God-Man (Matt. 1:18-23; 2:10-12; Lk. 1:31-35; 2:10-18; Jn. 1:1, 14; Phil. 2:7; 1 Tim. 3:16). The Lord Jesus Christ will also be seen physically as the Lamb of God (Gen. 3:15, 21; 22:8; Is. 53:1-12; Jn. 1:29-36; Rev. 5:6, 8, 13; 6:16; 13:8; 19:7-10; 21:22-23; 22:1-5). **Gospel without the eschatological truth in the imminent Rapture of saints in Christ leading to the Return with the glorified saints as Bride at His Second Coming is not the gospel** (Jn. 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Rev. 19:7-16)!

Indeed, the gospel goes beyond the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment (Heb. 6:1, 2; 9:26-28), the marriage of the Lamb to the ready bride in heaven after the Rapture (Rev. 19:7-9) and the Millennial Reign of Christ (Rev. 20:4-6). The effects of the gospel even go beyond the Great White Throne Judgment when the last enemy death is destroyed in Hell Fire (Rev. 20:7-15) and the kingdom is handed to the Father as eternity rolls (1 Cor. 15:3-4, 21-28; 21:1-7, 8, 21-27; 22:1-5).

Presently, God who cannot be seen is now known through the only begotten Son Jesus Christ, the sinless God-Man **crucified, buried but risen, ascended, exalted, glorified and returning Lord** (Jn. 1:18; 5:37; 6:46; 14:5-11; Acts 1:1-11; 2:22-36, 3:13-26; 4:8-12; 5:30, 31; 10:36-43; 13:26-39 v. 33; 17:24-31; Rom. 1:4, 5; Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:1-12; 1 Jn. 1:1-3; 2:1, 2; 4:12; Rev. 1:1-20 vv. 5-8, 13-16; 19:11-16). Such true knowledge and belief in the Father and the Son is in the revealed mystery of the gospel (Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 6:18-20; see Acts 5:20, 29-32; 1 Cor. 15:1-28 vv. 3, 4; 1 Pet. 1:10-12) and this is eternal life (Jn. 3:16, 31-36; 17:3; Tit. 1:1-4 v. 2; 1 Jn. 2:24, 25; 4:12-16; 5:10-13, 20; Jd. 1:20, 21). This is how the gospel becomes eternal and everlasting power of God to give final proof by the resurrection that Jesus is the eternal Son of God (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:5; 5:5) and to be the only Saviour of the world (Jn. 4:10-26, 39-42; 1 Tim. 2:1-7 v. 5; 1 Jn. 4:12-16 v. 14).

In this way, God's eternal plan of Salvation from Creation to Consummation as prophesied towards our final redemption (Eph. 1:3-14) as the mystery of God for believers (Col. 2:2, 3), but as wrath with great judgment on sin and evil on earth is visibly validated during the Great Tribulation in the triune God, as the pending mystery of God (Rev. 10:1-15 vv. 7, 11). The mystery of God, Trinity which encompasses all other mysteries of God on our redemption through the gospel is revealed in the First Advent of Jesus Christ and made visible in the coming of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:1-26; Acts 2:1-4, 16-21, 31-36 v. 33).

However, God used it as way of mystery to reveal God's wisdom and glory, contrary to human or earthly wisdom (1 Cor. 2:1-16 v. 7). It had been prophesied that the Christ was to be crucified (Ps. 22:16-18; Is. 53:1-12; Zech. 12:10). Crucifixion was the method of capital punishment execution used by the Romans who were in power (and had legal rights not given to the Jews) to supervise His death (Jn. 18:31, 32; 19:6). This was part of God's eternal plan that caused events to be divinely and providentially shifted so there could be a Roman execution by crucifixion (Lk. 9:22-23; Jn. 3:14-16; 8:28; 12:32; Acts 13:33-39; Gal. 4:4-6; 5:11, 24; 6:12-17; Eph. 2:11-16; Phil. 3:18; Col. 1:20; 2:14).

The gospel, however, covers the entirety of the message about Jesus Christ, the Son of God beginning from God's testimony at His Water Baptism for identification with humanity (Matt. 3:16, 17; 4:17-23; Mk. 1:1-15; Lk. 3:21-23; 4:18-21; Jn. 1:29-49; Acts 10:36-38) and concluding with the death, burial and resurrection (Matt. 28:16-29; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:44-48; Jn. 19:5-30; 20:17-23; Acts 1:13-22; 2:22-32; 10:39-43; 13:26-39; 1 Cor. 15:3-8). This is how the gospel then leads us to the truth of the great mystery of godliness; "*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.***" (1 Tim. 3:16). This is how the gospel similarly leads believers in Christ to embrace all the sound doctrines and practice of the six foundational truths about Jesus Christ stated in Hebrews; namely: ***repentance from dead works and faith towards God, doctrine of baptisms and the laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment*** (Heb. 6:1-2).

From its peculiar nature, therefore, the Bible has several ways of describing the gospel – the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ which is the message of first importance according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4). It is called the: a) "*Gospel of the Kingdom of God*" (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mk. 1:14); b) "*Gospel of the Grace of God*" (Acts 20:24); c) "*Gospel of God*" (Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:, 8, 9; 3:2; 1 Tim. 1:11; 1 Pet. 4:7); d) "*Gospel of (Jesus or our Lord Jesus) Christ*" (Mk. 1:1; Rom. 1:16, 17; 15:19; 1 Cor. 9:12, 18; 2 Cor. 2:12; 4:4; 9:13; 10:14; Gal. 1:7; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 3:2; 2 Thess. 1:8); e) "*Glorious Gospel*" (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Tim. 1:11); f) *Gospel* (Matt. 11:5; Mk. 1:15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 16:15; Lk. 4:18; 7:22; 9:6; 20:1; Acts 8:25; 14:7, 21; 15:7; 16:10; Rom. 1:15; 10:16; 11:28; 15:20; 1 Cor. 1:17; 4:15; 9:17, 18, 23; 15:1; Gal. 1:11; 2:5; 3:8; Eph. 3:6; Phil. 1:5, 7, 12, 17, 27; 2:22; 4:3, 15; Col. 1:5, 23; 2 Tim. 1:8, 10; Heb. 4:2; 1 Pet. 1:25; 4:16); g) *Gospel of His Son* (Rom. 1:9); h) *Gospel of your salvation* (Eph. 1:13); i) *Gospel of peace* (Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15); and j) "*Everlasting Gospel*" (Rev. 14:6).

Due to its peculiar nature as revelation of the mystery or giving of the primary key of the kingdom to the Church (Matt. 16:16-21; Rom. 16:25-27; 1 Cor. 15:1-11; Eph. 6:18-20), it is also referred to as: a) *This gospel* (Matt. 26:13; Mk. 14:9); b) *That gospel* (Gal. 2:2); c)

This gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 24:14); d) *Our gospel* (2 Cor. 4:3; 1 Thess. 1:5; 2:4; 2 Thess. 2:14); and e) *My gospel* (Rom. 2:16; 16:25).

Describing the contextual meaning of the gospel

In the Scriptures, the gospel is further described by contextual meaning that simply reveals or embodies the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:3, 4). For instance the gospel is revealed by: a) *the preaching of the cross* (1 Cor. 1:18); b) *the preaching of the word, the Logos* (Acts 8:25; 10:36, 44; 14:25; 17:13); c) *preaching Christ* (Acts 8:5; 9:20; 1 Cor. 1:2); d) *the testimony of God concerning Jesus and Him crucified* (1 Cor. 1:6; 2:1, 2; Rev. 1:2, 9; 6:9; 12:11, 17; 19:10); e) *teaching and preaching through Jesus the resurrection of the dead* (Acts 4:2, 8-12); f) *speaking and teaching in the name of Jesus* (Acts 4:18; 5:28); g) *all the words of this life* (Jn. 17:17-21 v. 18; 20:19-23 v. 21, 28-31; Acts 5:20); h) *testifying of repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus* (Acts 20:21); i) *preaching the kingdom of God and teach the things pertaining to the Lord Jesus, Christology* (Acts 1:1-3; 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 30, 31); j) *redemption through His blood* (Acts 5:30, 31; 20:28; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Tit. 1:13-14; 1 Pet. 1:2, 18-21), and k) *many more*. When the gospel is preached, therefore, the elementary teachings about Christ and any of the mysteries of God stand out together in the six unchanging strands revealed in the Book of Acts (and the entire New Testament) as listed in Hebrews (Heb. 6:1, 2):

- a) Repentance from dead works (v. 1) (Acts 2:38; 3:19);
- b) Faith towards God (v. 1) (Acts 2:36-40; 20:21);
- c) Doctrine of Baptisms (v. 2) (Acts 2:38-41; 8:36-38);
- d) Laying on of hands (v. 2) (Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:6);
- e) Resurrection from the dead (v. 2) (Acts 24:15);
- f) Eternal Judgment (v. 2) (Acts 10:42).

Why the gospel is given to us

The gospel is given to the world through Church as custodians to hear and believe to be saved (Mk. 1:14, 15; Lk. 8:12, 13; Jn. 3:16; 12:47; 17:19-21; 20:21-23, 30, 31; Acts 2:37-41; 10:34-44; 15:7; Rom. 1:16, 17; 10:9, 10, 14-17; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 1:13). This is what is involved in believing to call on the name of the Lord to be saved (Jn. 20:31; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 16:31). It is avenue for hearers who believe to be granted repentance and forgiveness of sins by Christ or God unto life (Acts 5:30, 31; 11:13-14, 18). It is the only message of faith for believing with heart unto righteousness and confessing with the mouth to be saved (Rom. 1:16, 17; 10:6-17 vv. 9, 10; 1 Cor. 15:1-11 vv. 3, 4). The gospel is hence given to be preached, believed and obeyed with the active presence of the Holy Spirit for eternal life or salvation (Acts 5:20, 29-32; Rom. 10:14-17; 1 Pet. 1:9-12). There is no eternal life without believing and obeying the gospel (2 Thess. 1:3-12 v. 8; 1 Pet. 4:12-19 v. 17).

Obedying the gospel must follow immediately after repentance and faith in any new believer to imply that the person has believed the gospel and confessed Christ as Lord (Rom. 10:6-17 vv. 9, 10; Heb. 6:1-2). The new believer readily obeys Christ or God to undergo water baptism to confirm salvation in the Church (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:37-41; 8:35-38; 16:30-35; 22:14-16). The implication is that the new believer who was dead in trespasses and sins from birth (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13) is now converted or saved and made alive in Christ (Rom. 6:14-16; 1 Pet. 2:21-24). There is the believer's inner assurance of salvation (Rom. 8:14-16; 1 Jn. 5:9-13) and requiring water baptism has accepted that he is alive in Christ through the gospel and the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 20:21; Rom. 1:16, 17; 6:1-13; 10:9, 10; 1 Thess. 1:3-9; Heb. 6:1, 2; 1 Pet. 3:21, 22). Hence, he or she is by the faith of Christ become dead to or unto sin (Rom. 6:2, 11; 1 Pet. 2:24) and alive in Christ unto righteousness (Rom. 5:21; 6:11, 13; 1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:14-21).

In the Church Age, the new convert or believer readily further obeys Christ or God to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit with outward sign of speaking in tongues as in Bible days (Acts 2:1-4, 11-12, 33; 8:12-20; 19:4-6). Such biblical visible evidence serves as public witness to the believer, the Church and other onlookers (Acts 2:1-4, 11-12, 33; 8:12-20; 19:4-6). In the Bible, the evidence of the receiving of the Holy Spirit serves as the public witness by the triune God to our salvation to be the same biblical salvation of the early apostles and believers (Acts 2:1-4, 33, 38, 39; 15:6-11 v. 8; Eph. 1:13-15). This is the only way to start enjoying kingdom of God or eternal life in full (Jn. 3:14-17; 10:10; 17:3; Rom. 14:17-19; 15:18, 19, 29; Tit. 1:2; 1 Jn. 1:2; 2:24, 25; Jd. 1:20, 21).

The gospel is given to be preached, believed and obeyed as the only message of obedience of faith with righteousness for our great salvation in every generation and locality (Matt. 28:16-20; Rom. 1:1-17; 6:17-23; 16:25-27; Heb. 2:3, 4; 1 Pet. 1:1-12, 18-25). It holds the foundational teachings about Christ towards being faithful stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1-20 vv. 1, 2; 15:1-28, 45, 50-58 vv. 3, 4; Eph. 6:18-20; Heb. 6:1, 2).

All such new believers or converts or convicted and repentant hearers of the gospel to gain faith by the gospel must first believe to be saved and become committed to Christ, the Word, the Church, the faith and disciplines of the faith (Acts 2:38-47; Rom. 10:15-17; Heb. 6:1, 2). This brings the assurance that comes from both the gospel and the indwelling Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:3-7, 13-16; Rom. 8:1-16 v. 15; 1 Thess. 1:3-10 v. 5; Gal. 4:4-6; 1 Jn. 5:10-13). And thus believers gain confidence in the Lord continue in faith to obey the gospel for eternal life promised to believers by God (Jn. 3:16; Tit. 1:1-4; 1 Jn. 2:20-27) and to escape God's wrath (2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17). This is to enjoy eternal life not in meat and drink but as faith, righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:16, 17; 14:17). Eternal life comes with authority and power (Matt. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 4:15-20; 1 Thess. 1:5-6) to deal with original sin of Adam (Rom. 5:10-21; 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Eph. 2:1-10) and

personal sins (Rom. 3:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Eph. 2:1-10; Tit. 2:1-14; 3:1-8; 1 Jn. 2:1-11, 3:1-16; 5:14-21) in His kingdom and glory (Acts 2:37-41; Eph. 1:13, 14; 2:8-10; 1 Thess. 1:3-10; 2:8-14; 2 Thess. 1:3-11).

The gospel is thus given to believers after hearing and believing to be saved (Rom. 10:6-10, 16-17) to be obeyed to lead to growth in the faith and maintain eternal life as escape from wrath (2 Thess. 1:3-12 v. 8; 1 Pet. 4:12-19 v. 17). Thereafter, however, the gospel is to be held in trust (1 Thess. 2:3-13; Rev. 1:9, 10) by all believers as bond-servants of Christ (1 Thess. 1:3-10 v. 9; Rev. 1:1-6 v. 1), who have received as mystery revealed (Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 6:19-20). This is the message of first importance (1 Cor. 15:3, 4) of all the mysteries of God for faithful stewardship as the only means of being born again (Acts 5:29-32; 1 Cor. 4:1-20 vv. 1-2, 15; 1 Pet. 1:1-12, 17-25 vv. 3, 23, 25).

What must believers do with the gospel?

Believers after believing the gospel to be saved are to hold the gospel in trust (1 Thess. 2:4) so as to also: a) *hold fast and keep it* (2 Tim. 1:10-14), b) *preach it for others to hear and be believe to be saved* (Mk. 16:15; Acts 5:20; 10:33, 44; 15:7; 28:30, 31; Rom. 10:11-17; 1 Cor. 9:16), c) *strive together for the faith of it* (Phil. 1:27), d) *serve God in it with your spirit* (Rom. 1:9), e) *suffer for it* (Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:12-17), f) *walk uprightly according to the truth of it* (Gal. 2:24), g) *fellowship in it* (Phil. 1:5), h) *teach it* (Acts 4:18; 5:28, 42; 2 Tim. 18-11), i) *obey it as proof of the faith, our salvation and eternal life* (Rom. 1:1-8, 11-12, 16-17; 16:25-27; 2 Tim. 1:3-12 v. 8; 1 Pet. 4:12-17 v. 17), and j) *defend it* (Phil. 1:7, 17).

Believers are thus also to hold the gospel in trust (1 Thess. 2:4) and not to: 1) *be ashamed of it as the testimony of Christ* (Rom. 1:16, 17; 2 Tim. 1:8), 2) *hinder it* (1 Cor. 9:11, 12), 3) *pervert it* (Gal. 1:6, 7), 4) *preach it with guile, deceit, flatter as to seek glory or please men but God* (1 Thess. 2:4-6), and 5) *use good words and flatteries to deceive the simple* (Rom. 16:17-19).

The mystery of the gospel as the eternal plan and provision of God for salvation

God made the provision and then purposed, designed and packaged everything in the eternal plan of salvation through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ by the gospel (Jn. 1:1-5, 9-18; 3: 13-16; 10:10; 17:1-6; 20:20-23, 26-31; Acts 1:1-11) and then followed it with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 7:37-37; 16:7-15, 23-31; 17:17-26; 20:20-23, 26-31; Acts 2:1-4, 16-21, 32-36; 38, 39; Eph. 1:3-14). The gospel has since become the testimony of Jesus Christ or God about the Son (1 Jn. 5:1-21 vv. 6-8 see 1 Cor. 1:6; 2:1; Rev. 1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10) through the active presence of the Holy Spirit to manifest Christ to be the wisdom of God in a mystery in the Church as eternal life in believers (Acts 5:29-32; 1 Cor. 2:1-16 vv. 1-7, 10-13; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; 1 Jn. 5:9-12, 20; Rev. 1:9-11).

‘The plan of salvation through the vicarious death of the Lord Jesus Christ has effectively granted believers repentance and forgiveness of sins and the very life of Christ unto eternal life (Acts 5:20, 29-32; 11:13-18; 1 Pet. 1:1-12). The plan of salvation in the gospel works through the intermarriage of two main graces from God to make eternal salvation possible and attainable in the Church Age (Acts 1:1-15; 2:16-21, 38-39; 5:29-32; 11:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:1-11; Eph. 6:18-20; Rev. 1:1-20).

Some of these two main graces acting as our eternal salvation journey wheels, sources, means, bases, fountains, rails, pillars, platforms, accesses, supplies, attainments and destinations that are the divinely intertwined: **A) wheels of grace and faith** (Acts 15:6-11; Eph. 2:8, 9), **B) platforms of grace and mercy** (Eph. 2:4-7; Heb. 4:14-16), **C) sources of grace and truth** (Jn. 1:14-17; Col. 1:5-6), **D) bases of righteousness and true holiness** (Eph. 4:23, 24), **E) fountains of wisdom and prudence** (Matt. 11:25-30; Lk. 10:17-24; Eph. 1:3-14 v. 8; Js. 1:5-6; 3:17-18), **F) rails of God’s Sovereignty and human responsibility** (Jn. 3:13-18; Eph. 1:3-14; Phil. 2:12-16), **G) pillars of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and love towards all the saints** (Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4; 1 Jn. 3:23, 24), **H) means of grace and peace** (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; Phm. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 1:4), **I) accesses of humility and the fear of God** (Acts 9:31; Eph. 5:18-21; Phil. 2:5, 5, 12-13; Heb. 5:5-9; see Prov. 22:4; Eccl. 12:13, 14), **J) supplies of authority and power** (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:1-8), **K) availabilities of God’s life and godliness with divine nature** (2 Pet. 1:1-11 v. 3; see Matt. 5:3-16; Eph. 5:1-2), **L) propellers of boldness and accesses** (Eph. 3:12; see Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 1 Tim. 3:13; Heb. 10:19-22), and **M) attainments to glory and virtue with divine nature** (2 Pet. 1:1-11 v. 3), and **N) destinations of kingdom and glory** (1 Thess. 2:12; see Matt. 6:9-13; Col. 1:13, 26, 27; 2 Tim. 4:8; Tit. 2:11-14).

All such divine provisions (and more not listed here) with all other promises come together to provide believers eternal life as salvation promised by God in Christ through the gospel (Gal. 3:11-17, 22, 29; Eph. 3:4-6; Tit. 1:1-4; 1 Jn. 2:24, 25). The twin **pillars of faith in the Lord and love for all saints** give proof of salvation or the mysteries of God, notably the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:9-10, 15-16). This is why sound or good doctrine and good theology (1 Tim. 4:6, 16; 6:3, 5, 11; Tit. 1:9) rooted in the gospel is the only way to promote the practical truth of doctrine according to godliness (1 Tim. 6:3) in the Church (Eph. 4:11-16).

The salvific mysteries of God and the gospel

The gospel (1 Cor. 15:1, 3, 4) when truly revealed by God through the Holy Spirit, the source of divine Revelation (Jn. 14:26; 16:26, 27; 1 Pet. 1:10-12) becomes the primary mystery (Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 6:18-20) that unfolds and explains through the Scriptures all the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1-20 v. 1; 15:1-11 vv. 3, 4). The gospel is the means of

declaring Jesus Christ to be the eternal Son of God by His resurrection (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:5; 5:5). The gospel, the message of first importance (1 Cor. 15:3, 4) indeed gives credence and meaning to all the other salvific mysteries of the many mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1, 2). The *mystery of the gospel*, therefore, serves as the primary key of the keys of the kingdom of heaven given by Christ to the Church and all believers through the early Church with the help of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 16:16-19; 1 Cor. 2:1-16; 15:1-11).

Some of the other main salvific mysteries of God from the Scriptures are; namely: *the mystery of God* (Col. 2:2, 3); *the mystery of Christ* (Col. 4:3); *the mystery of the faith* (1 Tim. 3:9); *the mystery of godliness* (1 Tim. 3:16); *the mystery of His Will* (Eph. 1:9-11); *the mystery of His Wisdom* (1 Cor. 1:18, 24, 30; 2:6-13); *the mystery of Christ in forming the Church* (Eph. 3:4-6); *the mystery of Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Col. 1:26, 27); *the mystery of the spiritual kingdom of God on Earth* (Lk. 17:20, 21 cf. Matt. 6:10; 12:28; Lk. 2:11; Jn. 18:36; Acts 1:1-3; 28:30, 31; Rom. 14:7-17); *the many mysteries of the kingdom of God or heaven* (Matt. 13:10, 11, 52); *and the mystery of the Rapture of the Church saints* (1 Cor. 15:50-55; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

The gospel was packaged during the earthly ministry of Christ in the Gospels (Matt. 3:2; 4:17, 23; Mk. 1:15) but fully revealed after His death, burial and resurrection and through the preaching of the early Apostles (Matt. 17:1-9; Lk. 24:44-49; Acts 1:1-11; 2:22-36; 10:34-43; 28:30, 31; 1 Cor. 1:18-24, 30, 31; 2:1-10; 15:3-5; Heb. 2:1-4; 2 Pet. 1:16-21). So, the gospel was a mystery because it was the message of the cross, which revealed the hidden wisdom and power of God to save man through the atoning and substitutionary death of Christ by crucifixion (1 Cor. 1:17-31; Gal. 2:20; 3:13-17, 20-29; 5:24-26; Eph. 3:4-6; 6:19).

The preaching and teaching of the gospel as the Word committed to faithful Apostles, Teachers and Preachers is the primary means by which God usually establishes his people in faith and holiness (Col. 1:23-28). The gospel is and has, indeed, an act of divine power and there is reason to hope and believe that the same power will always be exerted (Matt. 13:33; Jn. 17:19, 20; Acts 2:37, 41; 10:44; Heb. 4:12). This is because words which express the power of God to do this, also generally import willingness and ability to do it, as the Word does here (Col. 1:29; see also Acts 10:36-44). However, this is commonly done in the adoption of a means: and that is the gospel. Other than which nothing has a greater tendency to. For it is better calculated for and, with a divine blessing always issues in the establishment of the saints (Rom. 1:16, 17).

It may be needful to state that man was created essentially to reveal God's eternal glory (Is. 43:7; Rev. 4:11). To accomplish this, man was to share in God's eternal life and glory (Jn. 17:1-10). However, when man disobeyed God and died, he lost God's *shekinah* glory

with eternal life (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-19); and fell short of His glory (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Man had acquired the state of knowing good and evil but was banished from the Garden of Eden and totally barred from the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24 v. 24). To regain eternal life and glory for all humanity (Jn. 17:3; Rom. 7:22; 8:1-4, 29-30; Eph. 4:22-24), the unique God-man Jesus Christ was born to die (Gen. 3:15-24; 1 Tim. 2:3-6). Jesus died as the only Saviour, the God-man Mediator by symbolically passing through the guarding flaming sword of the Cherub as the seed of the Woman through the lineage of Abraham and David (Gen. 3:15-24 vv. 15, 19, 24; see Acts 2:22-32; 13:26-39; Rom. 1:1-7 v. 3; Gal. 4:4-6; Heb. 2:9-18).

Resultantly, it has become possible in Christ's Incarnation through His atoning and vicarious or substitutionary death, to pay the price for our sin (s) (1 Pet. 1:18-25; 1 Jn. 2:1, 2) in order remove any barrier and to regain for us access to the symbolic tree of life in the heavenly paradise (or presence) of God (Gen. 3:24; Ps. 68:18-26; Mk. 15:15, 37-39 v. 38; Jn. 18:40; 19:5; Eph. 4:8-10). This is explained in Scripture as the elements listed under the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16) and as the believers' confession of faith in the mystery of the faith (Rom. 10:6-10; 1 Tim. 3:9).

Any barrier to the tree of life (such as separation from God, curse, rejection, nakedness, death, shame, guilt, Satanic hindrances, fear, etc) was to be dealt with in a divine exchange in Christ's death at all levels (Rom. 8:31-37) i. e. a) **God-ward by Propitiation** (1 Jn. 2:1, 2), b) **Man-ward by Reconciliation** (Rom. 5:8-11; 2 Cor. 5:21) and c) **Satan-ward or Sin-ward by Redemption** (Gal. 3:13, 14). To this end, the kingdom of God on earth is intended to reveal the glory of God vested in Jesus through the gospel (Jn. 17:1-26; Acts 1:1-11; 2 Cor. 4:4-7). This glory is now the authority and power packaged through the gospel in the Name of Jesus by the coming of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:13-14; 16:23, 24; Acts 2:16-21; Phil. 2:5-11). Believers are to maintain the light and salt which comes from the gospel so that all may glorify God in heaven in every generation and locality (Matt 5:13-16; 2 Cor. 4:4-7; Eph. 5:8-21; Col. 4:2-6; 1 Thess. 5:5-13; 1 Tim. 6:10-19; 2 Tim. 1:10, 11; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Jn. 1:7).

The resurrected Jesus remains our Lord and Saviour (Acts 2:32-36; 10:36-44; Rom. 4:25; 5:8-10). Paul gives a recorded list of the resurrection appearances of Jesus; where he included other foundation laying apostles, the over 500 disciples in Galilee within the 40 days; and add His appearance to him Paul which was quite sometime after His ascension and even Pentecost (1 Cor. 15:1-11). He asserted the primary role of the resurrection to the gospel (1 Cor. 15:3, 4) and emphasized the importance of the resurrection of Jesus to the Christian faith (1 Cor. 15:12-22). The resurrection is the supreme sign of His Divine Sonship (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:5; 5:5). It signifies Jesus' power and victory for all believers over all enemies, notably: *death* (1 Cor. 15:28, 50-58), *the flesh* (Rom. 6:1-7), *the*

world (Jn. 16:33), *the devil* (Jn. 12:31; Heb. 2:9, 10). The Lord Jesus also can raise His followers from the dead at the final resurrection (Jn. 5:21, 28, 29; Rom. 6:9; 1 Cor. 15:25ff; 2 Tim. 1:10). Jesus controls time and eternity together with death and life for all believers (Eccl. 3:11; Acts 1:1-11; Rev. 1:17, 18).

By His resurrection and our adherence to the gospel, believers need not fear life or death, time or eternity, the present or the future, the known or the unknown, today's Church and its human failures or successes or anything else (Rev. 1:16-20; cf. Acts 2:16-21; Rom. 8:31-39). We must bear in mind that Christendom is fragmented because we have lost the gospel which is the basis for unity in the one body of Christ, the Church (Jn. 17:17-26; Acts 2:40-42, 47; 9:31; 1 Cor. 1:10-17, 21-31; Gal. 3:20-29; Eph. 1:15-23; 4:1-16 vv. 3, 13). Believers are born again through the gospel (1 Cor. 4:15; 1 Pet. 1:1-12, 25) and the Church is thus born as promise to Christ by the gospel (Eph. 3:4-6). Indeed, wherever the gospel is preached, devils or demons must be cast out by the Spirit of God (Mk. 1:35-39; 16:14-20 v. 17; Lk. 10:17-19; Acts 8:5-12) and kingdom of God comes into repentant or believing hearts (Matt. 12:28; Mk. 16:15-17; Acts 8:5-8; Rom. 14:17, 18). Chronic sinful habits and ambitions must immediately be dealt with the same gospel and the washing of the word as true repentance unto life that embraces faith and love (Acts 8:12-22; 11:13-18; 19:1-20; Eph. 1:13-15). These and much more results must be the evidences among believers of foundational doctrine about Christ and practices of repentance from dead works and faith in God (Acts 15:6-11; 26:18-20; Heb. 6:1, 2). Therefore, the initial evidences of genuine gospel results are obedience to Christ's commands to undergo Water Baptism and then receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-41; 10:34-48; 11:15-18; 19:1-6).

The gospel was and is a mystery (Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 6:18-20) for it included and continues to include also the calling and conversion of the Gentiles by the preaching of it towards the formation of the Church (made up of both Jews and Gentiles) as fellow-heirs, one body and partakers of promise in Christ, in the mystery of Christ's incarnation and redemption by Him (Eph. 3:4-6). The whole of the details of "gospel" - all the truths of it is often in Scripture called a "mystery", because the reason of many of its important ensuing doctrines do not clearly appear to the carnal reason of men (1 Cor. 2:6-12 v. 7). Indeed, the "modus" of several of the resultant sound doctrines would still ever remain inexplicable by us without the infallible proofs of the resurrection (Acts 1:1-3) and the ongoing agency of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:12; 1 Cor. 1:17; 2:9-12). For instance, without the Holy Spirit, the revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity, the Sonship of Christ, and his incarnation, the resurrection, the basis for faith, etc., would remain mysterious to believers (Matt. 17:9; Jn. 16:12-15); though these things themselves were already clearly revealed to the early Apostles and Prophets (1 Cor. 4:1, 2; Eph. 2:20; 3:5). Here "revelation" as dispensation of Biblical Truth is ascribed unto the early Apostles and Prophets only (Eph. 3:1-3, 5, 7-13). It was in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures by

which they have made known the mysteries of God in the external verbal and written ministry of the word of prophecy through the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:12-21).

Presently, however, the Holy Spirit supplies us the spirit of revelation and wisdom necessary for the right understanding of the Scriptures being internalized in a spiritual manner (Eph. 1:8, 15-17; Col. 1:9-13; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27; 3:23, 24). Therefore, the Church today must know the Canon Scriptures firsthand without excuses as a pattern from the Lord and the early Church (Matt. 4:4-10; Lk. 24:25-32, 44-48; Jn. 5:39; Acts 17:11; 18:24; Rom. 16:26; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Tim. 3:15-17)! Thus, our assurance of Salvation depends on both the objective witness of the gospel, the Word or the Scriptures as handed down by the early Apostles (1 Jn. 5:11-13) and the subjective direct and immediate witness of the Holy Spirit residing within us (Rom. 8:15, 16; Gal. 4:4-6).

From all the ages of the former dispensations until the Church Age, or from the beginning of the world; it is not that the gospel was entirely unknown, nor that any hints not given of it in those ages; it was rather shrouded in mystery. Hints certainly were given, to our first parents immediately after the Fall (Gen. 3:15), to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3, 7), Moses (Deut. 18:18), David (2 Sam. 7:14), Isaiah (Is. 7:14), and others and even John the Baptist (Mk. 1:5). Scripture emphatically says that the gospel was preached to Abraham the father of all them that believe in the one true and living God, the God of glory (Matt. 22:29-32; Acts 7:2-4; Rom. 4:11, 12, 16; Gal. 3:5-11 v. 8 cf. Gen. 12:3; 18:18). Jesus Himself began and concluded His earthly ministry declaring the gospel as the foundational truth of the Messianic kingdom (Mk. 1:15; Lk. 4:18; Acts 1:1-3; Heb. 2:3, 4). But the true gospel about the Messiah, the Son of God was obscurely revealed; only some dark intimations were given of it until after the resurrection and on the day of Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit to begin the dispensing of these Truths (Matt. 16:19; Acts 2:16-39; 1 Cor. 2:1-12; 15:1-11). In the Old Testament, it was exhibited in types, shadows, and sacrifices; and, in a comparative sense, was wrapped up in darkness and silence, in contrast to the clearer discovery and open exhibition of it under the New Testament Gospels and especially demonstrated from Pentecost throughout the Church Age as the vital truth dispensation (Matt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:15-20; Lk. 24:25-49; Rom. 1:1-7; 16:25-27; 1 Cor. 15:3-6; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:9-11; 3:4-10; 6:19; Col. 1:23-27; 1 Tim. 3:9, 16).

This gospel which sums up our faith confession that Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9, 10) is comparable to the Jewish *shema* that the Lord is one God (Deut. 6:4-6). With the revelation of the gospel, the Law only now acts as a schoolmaster to bring us to faith in Christ (Gal. 3:24, 25). Being the message that conveys the primary mystery of God (Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 6:19) as the final declaration of Christ's eternal Sonship by the resurrection (Acts 13:33, 34; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:5; 5:5) and then also undergirding all the other salvific

mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1, 2), the gospel must be well guarded and tailored such that it is always the same, not “another gospel” (Gal. 1:6-9) such that:

- a) The core eternally unchanging message of the gospel is always Jesus and Him crucified - His proven death, burial and resurrection; the message of the cross of Jesus (Lk. 24:44-49; Acts 1:1-3; 2:22-36; 4:1, 2; Rom. 1:1-4; 1 Cor. 1:17-31; 2:1-7; 15:1-19),
- b) The message of the gospel is the preaching of the kingdom and teaching about the Lord Jesus (Acts 1:1-3; 8:5-11; 28:30, 31), especially doctrine in His Name as the crucified, risen, ascended and living One (Acts 2:21, 38; 3:6, 15-16; 4:7-12, 17-20, 23-31; 5:20-25, 28-32, 40-42; 8:12; 9:14, 15, 21, 27, 29; 10:43; 15:17; 19:17; 21:13; 22:16),
- c) The message is that which brings or grants and generates repentance with forgiveness (Lk. 24:44-47; Acts 5:30, 31; 11:18; 13:38, 39) from dead works towards (serving the true and living) God and faith towards the Lord Jesus (Acts 20:20, 21; 1 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 6:1, 2),
- d) The message that reveals the light of God in the knowledge of Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light (Acts 8:26-38; 1 Cor. 4:15-17; 2 Cor. 4:4-7; 2 Tim. 1:8-11; 1 Jn. 5:1-5),
- e) The message of life, peace, hope and salvation in Jesus and which is the incorruptible seed of the Word, both the *Logos* and *Rhema* as power of God for saving souls if preached and believed through agency of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:6; 17:20; Acts 3:12-16; 4:8-12; 5:20; 10: 36-44; Rom. 1:16, 17; 10:6-10, 16, 17; Js. 1:18-25; 1 Pet. 1:23-25),
- f) The message which activates the life of Jesus that is in His blood (Lev. 17:11) and Name (Acts 3:15) for forgiveness of sins and our redemption (Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:2, 18, 19); towards our being washed, sanctified and justified together with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:2, 18-25); and the blotting of all handwritten codes (Col. 2:14, 15),
- g) The truth that saves is the eternally accredited gospel of the kingdom as the only unstoppable message for every generation until the end (Matt. 24:14; Jn. 3:16; 14:6; Rom. 1:16, 17; Rev. 14:6),
- h) The only message of reconciliation for the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:14-21; Eph. 2:11-18),
- i) The message is that which provides an intermarriage between grace and faith for the Christian faith (Acts 15:7-11; 18:23; Rom. 1:5; 3:21-25; 4:16; 5:2; Eph. 2:8-10; 4:7; Col. 2:6, 7; 1 Tim. 1:14; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 1:4; 2:11-15; Heb. 4:16; 11:6),
- j) The message that makes available both grace and mercy at the throne of grace set up by King Jesus as Apostle and High Priest of our faith for divine exchange (Heb. 4:14-16),

- k) The gospel is the message from which all the teachings or doctrines of the Bible as the whole counsel of God derive (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:1-3; 2:22-42; 9:15-22; 22:14-16; 20:27; 28:30, 31; Rom. 1:1-17; 16:25-27; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Heb. 6:1-3; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21; Jd. 1:3-14).
- l) The gospel of Jesus Christ as the message of eternal Salvation, eternal life for all humanity (Matt. 1:21; 28:18-20; Jn. 1:1-5; 3:16; 5:24-29; 10:10; 14:6; 17:3; 1 Jn. 20:26; 5:20; 2 Jn. 1:1-11 v. 9), to know and believe in Jesus as the Son of God (1 Cor. 15:1-28 vv. 3, 4; 1 Jn. 5:1-21 vv. 1-5, 18-20) is to truly know and serve eternally the true and living God, Trinity (1 Thess. 1:1-10 v. 9; 1 Jn. 2:8, 23-25; 2 Jn. 1:9). Thus, to know the Son as the embodiment of Truth of the salvific mysteries of God (Jn. 18:36-40 v. 38) is first and foremost to know the Father (Jn. 17:3; 20:17) as our adoptive heavenly Father (Matt. 6:9; Jn. 1:12, 13; 14:1-26; 15:1-17; 17:1-23; Rom. 8:14-16; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 1:3-14 v. 5) and then to bear witness to Truth of salvation with the third Person of Trinity, the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:1-26 vv. 20-26; 15:26, 23; Acts 1:8; 5:30-32; Eph. 1:13, 14; Phil. 1:5-18; Rev. 22:6, 7, 17).

The gospel as the call to faith

The gospel from the Greek word *euangelion*, the good news of Christ and Him crucified, the message of His death, burial and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-11) is the centre or pivot of the six elementary doctrines of the faith (Acts 2:42; 5:28; Heb. 6:1, 2). It is basic message and basis of our all Christo-Centric Teaching of the faith, Christology. In the book of Acts the biblical Christology of Jesus who is Christ, the proven Son of God (Acts 2:22-36; 5:42; 8:12, 37; 10:36-38; 17:3; 18:5, 24-28; 20:21; 28:31) by His bodily resurrection (Acts 13:33 see Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:5; 5:5) is indeed that Jesus Christ is the - **Saviour** (Acts 2:21, 38, 47; 3:19; 4:12; 5:30, 31; 10:43; 13:23; 15:11; 16:30, 31), **Healer** (Acts 3:6, 16; 4:7, 10, 17-18, 30; 9:34), **Giver of Holy Spirit Sanctifying and Working Power** (Acts 1:4-8; 2:33; 4:29-31; 5:30-32; 11:15-18; 15:8), **Builder, Apostle, High Priest, Intercessor and Defender of the Church** (Acts 5:19, 20; 8:26-40; 9:1-9, 31; 10:1-7; 12:5-23; 14:1-3; 18:8, 9; 27:23 see Rom. 8:34; Eph. 4:8, 11-13; Heb. 3:1; 7:25) and **Returning or Soon Coming King** (Acts 1:1-11; 2:22-36; 3:19-26; 10:38-42; 17:23-31; etc).

The gospel is the bedrock to the confession of our Christian faith, by believing that Jesus Christ and Him crucified is the Son of God (Acts 2:23, 24, 36; 3:26; 8:36-38; 9:20; 17: 3; Rom. 1:16, 17; 10:9, 10; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 15:3-5) and confessing same as faith declaration, the **believer's "shema"** or the **believer's "call to faith"** in the triune God (Matt. 16:16, 17; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9, 10). This is what we must become witnesses to, that is, His dead on the cross, burial and the bodily resurrection of Jesus (Lk. 24:44-48; Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39; 13:31; 1 Cor. 15:1-11 vv. 3, 4; Rev. 1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10)! This is what later gave the early Church the four or five essentials to the Christo-Centric message of Acts in the context of the six foundation laying truths about Christ in the book of Hebrews

(Heb. 6:1-2). In the course of Christian history after the Reformation, the Christo-Centric message of Acts now gives the founding fathers of any true Christian Church in any generation the same Full Gospel but sometimes differently captioned as the “Four-square Gospel” or “Fivefold Full Gospel”. The “Four-square Gospel” or “Fivefold Full Gospel” has been simply captioned as “**Jesus Christ** is the – **Saviour, Healer, Baptizer (and Sanctifier)** and **Returning King**”

The “gospel” itself, according to the Scriptures, is not Four-square or Fivefold has been earlier held among some of us Evangelical and Pentecostals but rather the centre of the all-inclusive Christo-Centric message (1 Cor. 15:1-28 vv. 3, 4; Heb. 6:1, 2). It is the only message of salvation (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:9, 10; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 1 Pet. 1:1-12; 1 Jn. 5:1-5) which by the resurrection asserts that Jesus of Nazareth (the Son of man) is the Holy One, the eternal Son of the living God (Matt. 16:17; Acts 2:27, 32; 3:14, 15; 13:33; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:5; 5:5). With the gospel – the death, burial and resurrection and the subsequent ascension to the throne of the Father in heaven, Jesus of Nazareth has become both Lord and Christ for being glorified (Acts 2:22-36 v. 36; 10:30-44 v. 36; see Phil. 2:5-11). This is the mystery of the revelation of Jesus Christ as the words of life who now has been exalted to the original glory with the Father as the Almighty and to be the saving wisdom, power and testimony (of God and Jesus) for humanity (Jn. 17:1-26 v. 5; Acts 5:20, 27-32; 11:13, 18; 1 Cor. 1:4-10, 18-24; 2:1-7; Rev. 1:1-20 vv. 2, 8, 9; 12:1-17 vv. 11, 17; 4:1-11 v. 8; 19:4-13 v. 10).

Throughout the book of Acts, therefore, Jesus Christ is thus, known as the **only Saviour** (*Sin-bearer through His granting of repentance and forgiveness of sins and Life Giver leading to His permanent indwelling by the Holy Spirit at the New Birth of the believer and deliverance from the Evil One's Territory as Eternal Life to the Called, Justified and Glorified by being instantly Washed, Sanctified and Justified*), the **only Healer** (*Deliverer providing healing, restoration and deliverance for the believer from the Evil One and the Evil in the World*), the **only Baptizer with the Holy Spirit** (*who baptizes with the dynamic Sanctifying and Working Power of the Holy Spirit for believers to become effective witnesses unto Him, so the Christ is the only Builder, Head, Provider, Defender, Governor, Intercessor, Apostle and High Priest of the Church*), and the **only Soon Coming or Returning King** (Acts 1:1-11; 2:22-39; 3:19-26; 4:8-10; 5:29-32; 10:34-48; 11:15-26; 13:14-39; 15:6-11;; 28:30, 31).

The gospel as the primary mystery of God

The gospel as the primary mystery of God is also the primary means (as key, seed, sword, water, light, spirit, life, power of God, etc) for providing the holy-fire for the faith (Rom. 1:16, 17; 16:25, 26; 1 Cor. 2:2; 4:1, 15-20; 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 4:3-7; Eph. 6:17-20; 1 Pet. 1:23-25). Without the gospel, therefore, there will be no evidence of the grace and faith (Acts 10:34-43). In the same vain there will be no basis or tools for the activity of the Holy Spirit

without the gospel to lead anyone to Christianity (with evidence of New Birth or eternal life or repentance unto life) (Jn. 3:3-6; 16:8-11; Acts 2:38-41; 10:36-44; 11:13-14, 18) through the presence of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9-11, 14-16). The Holy Spirit works with the gospel as the Word to produce salvation beginning with saving faith, saving grace, and through washings, justification, positional or instant sanctification, etc.,) where we receive the righteousness of or from God (Rom. 1:16, 17; 4:11, 22-25; 1 Cor. 1:17, 18, 23-30; 4:15-20; 6:11, 16, 19, 20; 15:1-11; 1 Pet. 1:2, 18, 19, 23-25; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4).

The gospel has become the only means as divine truth for faith by which the active presence of the Holy Spirit can save believers (Rom. 10:6-10, 15-17; 1 Pet. 1:2-3, 10-12). The gospel and the active presence of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1-17) will then assist the truly saved believer to be able to **delight in with the inward man** (7:22), **serve with the mind** (7:25) and **obey or be subject to** (8:7) the **law of God** (Rom. 7:22-8:17).

The gospel provides two stages and also two of the three phases in the packaging of salvation for our earthly living. The **two Stages** of the Salvation plan is evidenced in the gospel that provides the righteousness of God for each believer as: a) **Imputed Righteousness** (Rom. 4:11, 16-25), and b) **Imparted Righteousness** (Rom. 14:17). The **three different Phases** of the Salvation plan is evidenced in the Scriptures for each believer as: a) **I am saved** (Rom. 10:9, 10), b) **I am being Saved** (Acts 2:40, 41), and c) **I shall be saved** (Heb. 9:28). The two stages and the two phases of imputation and impartation of righteousness of or from God as eternal life take place in the believer with the receiving of Christ as the love gift of God (3:16). This is why in salvation we need both the second and third persons of the Trinity (Rom. 5:1-5; 8:1-16; 1 Cor. 6:11). The imputation of righteousness of or from God implies justification by faith as the first stage with the first phase of salvation through Christ (Rom. 3:21-25; 5:1, 2). This imputation of righteousness as justification by faith also amounts to God's forgiveness and the granting of repentance unto life (Acts 5:30, 31; 11:18). This usually covers peace with God and the removal of condemnation from the repentant sinner (Rom. 5:1-2, 16-18; 8:1). Then there is impartation of righteousness of or from God as instant and ongoing sanctification (1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Pet. 1:2). This impartation of righteousness of or from God as instant and ongoing sanctification by faith as the second stage in the second phase of salvation is through the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:2; see 1 Thess. 5:23, 24; 1 Jn. 3:1-3, 11-24).

Without the gospel, therefore, there will only be the knowledge of eternal judgment as condemnation of sin but not redemption from sin in humanity (Jn. 3:16-19; 5:22-24; 16:7-11; Rom. 1:16-18; 2:1-6; 3:10-23; 1 Cor. 1:18-24, 30; Eph. 2:1-10; Heb. 6:1-2). Similarly, without the gospel, there would also not be a basis for knowing and receiving the gift of the Person of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:15-26; Acts 2:38-39). We know the Holy Spirit first for

salvation (Jn. 3:3-8, 13-16; 4:10-14; 14:1-6, 17; 16:7-11; 20:21-23) but we also receive Him as the third Person of the triune God, Trinity to be the believers' Advocate, sealing and anointing upon for power (Jn. 7:37-39; 14:15-17, 20-26; 16:7-15; Acts 1:4-8; 2:38-39; Eph. 1:13-14). Furthermore, in the Christian journey from earth to glory, any additional day to day impartation of divine virtues and repositories through grace and faith like righteousness, peace, joy, godliness, kingdom, glory and virtue, power, gifts, faith and love from God (above) through the permanent indwelling and then filling with the Holy Spirit would be lacking without the evidence of the gospel as basic testimony of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:16-21; 4:23-33; 5:20, 29-32; Rom. 5:1-5; 14:17-19; 1 Cor. 1:4-10; 2:1-16; 12:4-11; Gal. 5:22, 23; Eph. 6:17-23; 1 Thess. 2:8-14; 2 Tim. 1:5-14; 1 Pet. 1:1-5; 2 Pet. 1:3-11; Rev. 1:1-6, 9-11, 18-20; 12:9-11; 19:10)!

The reasons are that right from the day of Pentecost, and through the gospel there is power, life and doctrine in the Name of Jesus Christ that (Jn. 7:16, 17; Acts 5:20, 28; 13:12; 17:19; 1 Tim. 6:3; Tit. 2:10; Heb. 6:1, 2; 2 Jn. 1:9):

- a) Saves from sin (Matt. 1:21; Acts 2:38; 4:12; 10:43; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; cf. Acts 2:21)
- b) Heals the sick (Acts 3:6; 4:10; cf. Acts 2:21);
- c) Places eternal life, capacity for abundant life and other supernatural resources in believers (Jn. 3:14-16; 10:10; 14:12-14; 16:7-15; 17:3, 20-27; 20:31; Acts 2:21; 16:30, 31; Rom. 8:28-32; 1 Jn. 2:21-25; 5:18-20; 2 Jn. 1:3, 9);
- d) Gives Holy Spirit as a seal through power and purity or fire baptism (Lk. 24:29; Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4; 4:7, 8; Eph. 1:13, 14);
- e) Places believers into His eternal kingdom and glory (Acts 2:32-36; 4:13, 19, 20; 5:29-32; cf. 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 2:14).

The resurrection of Jesus as the heart of Christo-centric teaching (Acts 4:1-12, 17-20; 5:27-33) is the ultimate proof of Him being the Son of the living God (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:5; 5:5). The gospel, therefore, explains the mystery of the Godhead or the Trinity – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the mystery of both the faith and godliness (Jn. 14:20-23; 16:7-15; Acts 2:22-36 v. 33; Rom. 10:6-10; 1 Tim. 3:9, 16). From the gospel as the message of first importance (1 Cor. 15:3-4), the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) is taught to the Church from the precepts of the Word as revealed salvific mysteries of God (Rom. 16:25-27; 1 Cor. 2:1-7; 4:1, 2; 15:45-55; Eph. 1:3-15; 3:4-6; 6:19, 20; Col. 1:26, 27; 2:1-7; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; 1 Tim. 3:9, 15, 16; Rev. 1:1-20).

It is, however, vested and precedent on the good news (*euangelion*) of the Virgin Birth through the Incarnation (Matt. 1:1, 16-25; Lk. 2:1-14; Gal. 4:4-7) and especially from the beginning His earthly ministry after His baptism by John termed the beginning of the gospel (*euangelion*) of Jesus Christ (Mk. 1:1-15 vv. 1-2, 14-15; see Matt. 3:16-25; Lk. 3:22f; Jn. 1:29-34). Thus, Jesus of Nazareth is the accredited Son of God, who in His

Incarnation became the God-man from above and lived a sinless life that guaranteed His resurrection (Jn. 8:12-59 vv. 4, 23, 58; Acts 2:22-36 vv. 27, 31, 32; 3:13-15; 10:34-43; 13:26-39 v. 33; Heb. 1:5). His death was hence an atoning, vicarious or substitutionary death (Acts 13:30-39; Rom. 5:1, 2, 6-21; 1 Cor. 1:18-24, 30; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Gal. 4:4-6; Heb. 2:9-18).

May I say it again and again, that the gospel we preach is the same anytime, anywhere – 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 15:3-5 - Jesus Christ and Him, crucified; the Good News of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. The preaching of the gospel is the same as preaching and teaching through the Name of Jesus Christ the doctrine of resurrection from the dead (Acts 1:1-3; 4:2, 17-20; 5:20, 27-32, 40-42; 13:26-33; 28:30, 31). It is the gospel that introduces and unites us to the eternal life the true and living God (Jn. 1:1-5; 4:41, 42; 8:19, 42-47; 17:3; 20:30, 31; Rom. 6:17, 23; 1 Cor. 4:15-20; 1 Thess. 1:9, 10; 1 Jn. 2:23-25; 5:1-13, 20, 21). This gospel is the only message that has power to save and propel faith life and holy living in Christ, as it turns the unjust to become just (Rom. 1:16, 17; 1 Cor. 4:15-21; 6:9-11; 1 Thess. 1:5; 2:12, 13; 1 Jn. 2:21-29; 5:18-21).

It leads us to true repentance and faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ (Lk. 24:44-48; Acts. 2:32-39; 3:19-21; 4:12; 5:30, 31; 10: 36-44; 13:37-39; 20:21). Besides, the Christ-centered message, which provides the full confession of our faith (Rom. 10:9-10) has the same gospel as the central fulcrum for belief and faith (Rom. 1:11-17; 10:6-17). This gospel is timeless, everlasting and of first importance in all the Scriptures (Matt. 24:14; 1 Cor. 15:1-11; Rev. 1:8, 11, 18; 13:8; 14:6). Paul states; *"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures"* (1 Cor. 15:3-4 ESV). It is important to note the nature of the saving power at work in the gospel: *"that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* (Rom. 6:4).

The local Churches that Jesus is building as His Church must always hold forth the light of the glorious gospel, the light as truths of the knowledge of God through Lord Jesus Christ and as the testimony of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:16-21; 13:47; Rom. 15:18, 19; 1 Cor. 1:6; 2:1; 2 Cor. 4:4-7; Eph. 5:8; Phil. 2:15; 1 Thess. 5:5; Rev. 1:2, 9; 6:9; 12:11, 17; 19:10). The Lord Jesus Christ would walk amid the candlesticks, the Churches as the Head, Owner and Source of life, light of the Church; and work with the leaders with kingdom keys managed by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Matt. 16:16-19; Acts 2:16-19; 1 Cor. 3:9-11; Jn. 1:4-14; 8:12; 9:5; 2 Cor. 4:4-6; Eph. 3:4-12 v. 10; 6:10-20; Rev. 1:9, 10; 19:10; 22:17). Anything which bears testimony to Christ revealing an aspect of the gospel in our mouths energized by the Holy Spirit to magnify only God in preaching or teaching or utterances or worship is the spirit of prophecy (Jn. 15:26, 17; Acts 2:4, 11, 16-18, 33; 1 Cor. 12:3; Rev. 19:10).

The demands on Adam as his required obedience to the gospel

The Gospels and the entire New Testament also are dependent on the Old Testament commands and promises of God (Matt. 19:16-27; 22:37-37). And this started in God's original dealings with humanity since the days of Adam (Gen. 2:7, 15-17; 3:1-24), who was created with his wife Eve to obey the law of God as an innocent human being but with moral free will to make responsible choices and reasoning (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7-24). Adam became the first human being to be created and to also sin through disobedience thus corrupting his seed which required the seed of the Woman to bruise the head of Satan through a vicarious death (Gen. 3:15-22; Lk. 3:23-33; Gal. 4:4-6; Rev. 13:8). The commands and promises foreshadowed the demands of the gospel in its dispensational form with typologies of life and death through Christ (Gen. 3:15, 21; Rom. 5:12, 17-21). Adam and Eve enjoyed the very life of God in Eden but by being dependent on their innocence and only externally sourced from the very life and glory of God as vested in voice of God (Gen. 1:27; 2:4-7, 15-17; 3:1-8).

After the Fall, however, the image and glory of God in man was now permanently distorted, deformed and lost to corruption (Gen. 2:7, 15-17, 25; 3:7-9; 6:1-13; 9:6-16; Rom. 3:23; 1 Cor. 11:7; 2 Pet. 1:4; 2:12, 19), Adam could only enjoy transient life in an immortal soul but in shame, fear and death (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-22). So, Adam and Eve who heard God's voice but were driven from the tree of life needed to know about mercy of God in the blood-shed animal to cover their nakedness (Gen. 3:8, 15-24 v. 21). It is the gospel to Adam and Eve presented in the crimson trail and tide of the blood of Jesus to provide righteousness (Gen. 3:21; 1 Jn. 3:8; Heb. 9:14).

The gospel preached to Abraham and others as the faith

The gospel as the only means of both temporary or earthly and eternal or heavenly blessing in eternal cum abundant life is of eternal and yet a beginning nature (Mk. 1:1, 15; Rev. 14:6). And so the gospel was preached to Abraham in advance for faith before the Incarnation of Christ (Gen. 12:1-7; Jn. 8:56-58; Rom. 4:1-3; Gal. 3:5-9 v. 8). Abraham believed God and received the righteousness which is of faith; and even became a friend of God (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; Js. 2:23; cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 15:6; 2 Chron. 20:7). **But the gospel is more of an everlasting nature because having started it is always credible to provide eternal salvation even during the Tribulation** (Matt. 24:14; Rev. 14:6). There is only one such gospel (1 Cor. 15:3, 4), but it is presented and described in diverse ways in the Bible; especially from the time of the Incarnation but more importantly after the resurrection until the return of Christ (Acts 1:1-11; 1 Cor. 15:1-19). It means that Abraham as the father of our faith knew and believed Christ as the only Saviour through the gospel by faith to be a blessing to all nations (Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 18:18, 19; Acts 7:2-4; Rom. 4:11-16; Gal. 3:8, 9). Israel was also to know and believe God by faith in the covenant-keeping God to become His witnesses to all the nations (Ex. 3:1-14; 19:4-6; Deut. 6:4-6; Is. 43:10; Rom.

9:4-6) and the early disciples saw Christ and believed Him as the embodiment of the gospel by faith to be saved (Mk. 1:15).

Now, after the resurrection and the glorification, believers know and believe God and Christ to be saved, blessed and His witnesses by revelation and power of the truth of the gospel as mystery fully revealed by the Holy Spirit and by its inherent faith (Rom. 1:1-17; 16:25-27; 1 Cor. 15:1-11 vv. 3, 4; Eph. 1:1-14; 6:18-20). The faith of Abraham, David and all of the hall of faith in the Old Testament and in the Gospels looked forward to the fullness of the blessings of the gospel - the death, burial and resurrection – in the drama of Jesus Christ as His-story (Rom. 15:14-19, 29; Heb. 11:39-12:2). They also waited for and desired the reality of saving perfect faith of the saints in Christ to deal with sin, enter the kingdom, possess eternal life and also form the Church (Matt. 13:10-17; Lk. 10:17-24; Jn. 14:12-26; 16:7-15, 23, 24; Eph. 3:4-6; Heb. 11:39-12:2; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). The gospel as the message of Christ's death on the cross, His burial and resurrection must be the subject of our preaching and teaching today in the Church with the Holy Spirit as the testimony of Jesus Christ (Jn. 15:26, 27; Rom. 15:18, 19; 1 Cor. 1:6, 18; Rev. 1:9, 10; 19:10). We must understand that the Holy Spirit or His dynamic power does not and cannot work in a vacuum to save souls but always with the gospel as the word (Acts 1:1-8; 2:16-39 vv. 18-19, 21, 37, 41; 10:33-44 v. 44).

Abraham has become the father of the faithful (Gen. 12:1-3, 7; Rom. 4:11-18, 21-25; Heb. 2:9-18): Abraham has become the father of all the faithful by faith and obedience in the God of promise (Rom. 4:13-16; Gal. 3:6-9, 11-14). God honoured that faith followed by obedience and imputed righteousness to Abraham (Rom. 3:22-24; Js. 2:23). Besides, the promise of God has been fulfilled in Christ as the unique seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:14-16; Heb. 2:16-18) for the Church by the gospel (Eph. 3:4-6). God made the gospel culturally relevant to Abraham to deal with all humanistic and culturally negative traditions as he left on God's command "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house". (Gen. 12:1-3 v. 1; see Acts 7:2-4; Heb. 11:16).

Whenever the gospel is not traced to Abraham among Jews, the Law of Moses becomes the standard of Christianity held amongst Judaizers and that is bondage from Jews through Judaism, the Jewish Religion. Similarly, whenever the gospel is not traced to Abraham among Gentile nations of any kind, religious pluralism or syncretism or eclecticism or cultural relativism or secular humanism becomes the standard of Christianity held amongst Gentile believers and that is bondage from traditions Gentiles through varying forms of idolatry.

We know that Abraham met the God of glory and left idolatry and religious pluralism to serve the one true and living God, the Lord God Almighty. Through Abraham's faith,

Judaism and Islam though seem to proclaim the God of Abraham all fall through to give way to Christianity in Christ, the gospel and the heavenly inheritance (Gal. 4:4-7, 19-31). Equally, through Abraham's faith, all forms of Idolatry or relativistic and pluralistic religions fall through to give way to Christianity in Christ, the gospel and the eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:13-19). Our calling of God to the faith of the gospel which is irrevocable (Rom. 11:29) is also of the triple high, holy and heavenly calling (Phil. 3:14; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 3:1).

The gospel and the Prophets regarding the faith

The Scriptures have a lot to say about the Old Testament Prophets until John the Baptist with regard to the faith of the gospel towards God's salvation and eternal judgment (Matt. 2:23; 5:12; 11:13, 17; Lk. 11:49-52; 24:27; Jn. 1:45; Acts 3:18-25; Rom. 1:16-18; 2:1-16; Col. 2:2-3; 2 Pet. 3:2; Rev. 10:5-7). The gospel as the only drama of salvation through Jesus Christ was the promise of the seed of the Woman (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4-6) about which the Prophets spoke throughout the Scriptures by the Spirit of Christ in them until the preaching of the gospel was done by the Church from the day of Pentecost (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Peter says; *"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."* (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

Thus, though the gospel became operative after the resurrection, it was to be preached and taught after the Holy Spirit came (Lk. 24:44-49; Acts 1:1-8); so that believers could own it as their gospel (Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). *"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:"* (Rom. 16:25-26).

The Holy Scriptures spoken by the prophets (2 Pet. 1:20-21) are, therefore, written **in the law of Moses, in the prophetic writings, in the psalms, in the Gospels and in what was received by the early Apostles towards explaining the gospel** (Lk. 24:44-48; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). *"And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and*

remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Lk. 24:44-47).

The two great commandments on loving God supremely and neighbour as self are the epicenter of all the law and the prophets in all matters regarding the faith of the gospel. The Scriptures recall; *“Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”* (Matt. 22:36-40). The gospel as the conclusive evidence that Jesus is the Son of God, by believers who hold the testimony of Jesus which is the spirit of prophecy for worship (Rev. 19:10; see 1 Cor. 1:6; 2:1; Rev. 1:1-2, 4-6, 9-10; 12:11, 17) since the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 16-21, 38-39) supersedes all the Christological predictions of the prophets (Matt. 17:1-9; 28:16-20; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 1:13-18, 20-21).

The gospel and holy angels

While only believers know the mystery of the gospel (Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 6:18-20) and preach it with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 5:32; 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:12), holy angels only still desire to look into the salvation it brings (1 Pet. 1:12). Concerning special needs as a result of the gospel, though Holy angels do not understand its mystery; yet as kingdom ministering spirits (Heb. 1:7, 14) they announce its coming or direct receptive and pious unbelievers to meet gospel preachers (Acts 10:1-3, 7, 22; 11:13). They also minister special help to Spirit-filled believers (Acts 5:19, 20; 8:26; 12:5-10, 18-24; 27:23) towards the preaching of the gospel (Acts 5:29-32; 1 Pet. 1:10-12).

Hitherto, for the sake of Christ, holy angels who must not receive worship (Heb. 1:6, 7; Rev. 19:10; 22:9) may sometimes be seen and heard visibly to the spiritual man’s eye and ear; but often they are not recognized (Heb. 13:2; cf. Gen. 18). This gospel, the everlasting gospel will be preached also by all the Tribulation evangelists and saints (but this time with the visible direct added help of angels) after the Rapture of the Church during the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:8-14; Rev. 6:17; 10:5-11; 12:11, 17; 14:6, 7).

The gospel, the only generational unchanging call to faith

The gospel is both eternal and everlasting! Why, so? Jesus has always existed from eternity to eternity with God (and hence is eternally God) before all creation, as the eternal Logos or Word which is the expression of, the whole mind that subsists in God (Jn. 1:1). He is still called the Logos of God (Rev. 19:13). Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, as a Lamb (and the eternal Word, Logos) was slain from before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8); and He was thus visibly, humanly slain in His Incarnation (Rev. 5:5, 6, 9, 12).

The message of the gospel of Jesus remains the everlasting Word to be preached in every generation, tangibly and evidentially from the time of His resurrection into the Great Tribulation as a testimony to all nations (Matt. 24:14; Lk. 24:44-49; Jn. 20:19-23, 26-31; Acts 5:20-32; Rev. 14:6; cf. Matt. 24:14; 28:1-9, 16-20; Acts 2:16-21). It is the eternal testimony of God in heaven and on earth (1 Cor. 2:1-7 v. 1; 1 Jn. 5:6-13 v. 9) that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 13:33; 1 Jn. 5:1-13, 20); the only means to gather all things in heaven and on earth together in Christ is through the gospel (Eph. 1:3-23 vv. 10-13; 3:1-21 v. 6; see 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 5:17).

The gospel together with the teaching of the kingdom and about Christ (Acts 1:1-3; 28:30, 31) must, therefore, be aggressively preached by all believers with the power of the promised Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 16-21, 32; 5:29-32; 1 Cor. 2:1-7; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Rev. 1:2, 9, 10; 19:10). No human or earthly or even Satanic wisdom can grasp its mystery without the revelation by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:1-16 v. 8; Eph. 3:1-12 v. 10). The gospel is the only primary message as tool of the Holy Spirit for making genuine converts in fulfilling the Great Commission of the Lord (Matt. 28:18-19; Mk. 16:14-16; Lk. 24:44-49; Jn. 17:20; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2:41; 6:7; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; Rom. 1:16, 17; 1 Cor. 4:15-20; 1 Thess. 1:5-10; 2:8-14; 2 Tim. 1:8-14; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). The gospel is the voice of God through Jesus, the Logos that speaks in these last days since the day of Pentecost (Heb. 1:1-14 see Acts 2:1-4, 14-21, 33; 2 Tim. 4:1-8).

Through the preaching and hearing of the gospel we receive the grace and faith to be saved (Acts 15:6-11; Rom. 1:16, 17; 4:16; 5:2; 10:6-17; Eph. 2:8-10) by the belief and confession that:

- a) Jesus is the proven Son of God by His resurrection (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:5; 5:5 cf. Ps. 2:7) and whose death, burial and resurrection is the only call to faith, the believers “shema” (Rom. 10:9, 10; cf. 1 Cor. 15:3, 4). The mystery of the gospel is to clearly explain the other salvific mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1, 2), especially the mystery of God as Trinity (Col. 2:2, 3 see Matt. 28:19; Jn. 14:20-26; 16:7-15; 17:20-26; Acts 2:33; 2 Cor. 13:14). The believers’ faith confession gives meaning to the Old Covenant “shema” under Judaism (Deut. 6:4-6; Rom. 3:19-31 v. 30; Gal. 3:7-29 v. 20);
- b) Jesus is both Lord and Christ, the only God-man, the promised Messiah of the Universe (Acts 2:36; 10:36; Col. 4:3 see Jn. 4:19-26, 41, 42), about whom all the prophets spoke and whom we preach as the gospel (1 Pet. 1:10-12), having Himself clearly explained and given to us all things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:1-3; 28:30, 31 see Matt. 24:14; Acts 5:20, 28, 42; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 1:12-21). Thus, in the Book of Revelation, Jesus Christ who is Lord and Christ and hence the only King of kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16), is still both “the Son of God” (Rev.

2:18) and “the Son of Man” (Rev. 1:13; 14:14) and called “The Word (Logos) of God” (Rev. 19:13);

- c) Jesus having been made or become both Lord and Christ, is the only accredited Saviour of the world by faith in Him or His Name; is also the Healer (Deliverer), Holy Spirit Baptizer and the Returning (soon coming) King or Judge (Acts 2:21-36; 3:14-26; 4:1-13; 10:34-44; 17:18-31 see Jn. 5:21-29).

The gospel, the kingdom and the Rapture

The gospel is both kingdom and Christ oriented as the means to proclaim the kingdom of God and teach the things about Christ in the Church Age and even beyond into the eternal kingdom (Acts 1:1-3; 2:16-21; 28:30-31). The gospel proper, that is, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ Jesus as the primary mystery (1 Cor. 4:1-2, 15-20; 15:3-4) is what is entrusted to the Church for ministry and as stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 2:1-16; 4:1-20; 15:1-23). The gospel as kingdom message is to promote the teaching of the mystery of the **imminent Rapture** of the saints in Christ (1 Cor. 15:50-55; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:1-3; 1 Pet. 1:1-5, 9-12; Rev. 1:1-7). The gospel remains credible to kingdom of God and the Return of Christ only as the mystery of the Rapture is held in view in the context of all true Christological preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 3:9, 15-16; 4:1-8; Heb. 6:1-2).

The gospel has dealt adequately with sin (1 Cor. 15:3-4, 50-58) when the sin problem of all humanity was judged in the vicarious death Christ on the cross (Jn. 12:30-31; 16:7-11) and produced the message of life by the resurrection (Acts 5:20; 13:46, 48; 1 Pet. 1:2-3, 10-12; 1 Jn. 1:1-3). The gospel provides and promotes victory over all sin (Col. 2:13-15; Heb. 2:9-18; 1 Jn. 3:1-3, 8-10) and our inheritance in the kingdom of God (Matt. 16:15-21; Jn. 3:3, 5, 13-16; Acts 26:18-20; 1 Jn. 2:1-2, 23-25).

The gospel and the coming of the Holy Spirit declare the imminence of the Rapture that is also deeply rooted in the basic truths of Christ as one of the mysteries of God revealed after the resurrection as the evidence of the truth of the mystery of the gospel (Matt. 16:15-21; Jn. 14:1-26; Rom. 16:25-27; 1 Cor. 15:1-28, 45-55). The Rapture is not only imminent but certain (Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7; 22:17); occurring before the Tribulation and hence before the Millennial Kingdom (2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 19:20-20:6). The gospel in the Church Age always looks to the Rapture (the catching up of the saints in Christ) as preceding the Tribulation (Matt. 24:14; Rev. 14:6), the final Return of Christ with His glorified saints (Rev. 19:10-19) and the Millennial Rule of Christ on earth (Rev. 20:1-6).

Thus, the gospel presents and supports the teaching of an imminent Rapture of the saints in Christ in a mystery becoming a **pre-Tribulation Rapture** cum a **pre-Millennial** Return (Jn. 14:1-3; Acts 1:1-11; Rev. 19:11-16; 1 Cor. 15:51-55; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:1-5).

The final Return of Christ with His saints in respect of the kingdom of God is not a mystery (Jn. 14:1-3; Acts 1:1-11; Rev. 19:11-16). It will, however, involve the very many different kinds of resurrections of the dead and eternal judgments as part of the basic teachings about Christ (Heb. 6:1-2). There is first the resurrection of dead (or sleeping) saints in Christ at His appearing in the Air which is the Rapture of the saints in Christ and it's a mystery (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-17). Then afterwards there are various resurrections at Christ's final Return to the earth from heaven with His glorified Bride including the resurrection of Old Testament saints and other saints like Tribulation saints that together form the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6).

There is, thus, the clear teaching of the catching up of saints in Christ called the Rapture as mystery that is associated with the final Return of Christ (1 Cor. 15:50-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11). There is, even, the clear teaching of the judgment on sin on our current earth by God in the Tribulation (Rev. 9:20-10:11 v. 7), followed by final removal of sin, Satan and all evil plus death and hades into Hell Fire after the Millennium (2 Pet. 3:10-12; Rev. 20:7-15). The final creation of the eternal universe, the New Heavens and New earth will take place (2 Pet. 3:13-18) as is associated with the gospel and the Church in the eternal kingdom of God (Rev. 21; 22). After the Rapture, everything about the kingdom of God is no more mystery to the Church but until the Rapture the Church must make herself ready while holding the testimony of Jesus beginning at the gospel with the Holy Spirit to comprehend the mysteries of God and of His kingdom (Rev. 1:2, 9-11; 12:11; 19:7-10). Anytime, the Church loses focus on the Rapture as imminent, the gospel loses its fervour and power to save from sin where kingdom gospel preaching and passion for souls from the Holy Spirit as the essence of Pentecost is maintained (Acts 1:1-8; 2:1-4, 16-21, 32-39; 5:29-32; 1 Pet. 1:1-5, 9-12).

DEALING WITH THE "ANOTHER" GOSPEL AS ERRONEOUS OR FALSE DOCTRINE

It is important to note that any erroneous or false belief about the Trinity, the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and then also about God's redemptive plan for man is likely to twist the gospel. For instance, since the gospel is meant to witness to the resurrection evidence as proof of the Sonship of Jesus through the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:5; 5:5), any false belief about Christ and the Holy Spirit will naturally falsify the gospel. Judaism and many present-day gospels do not uphold the full New Testament view of the three co-equal but distinct Persons of the triune Godhead (Gen. 1:1, 26; 2:7; 3:22; Deut. 6:4-6; Matt. 28:19; Jn. 14:15-23; Acts 2:33; 2 Cor. 13:14) and do not produce the fullness of the blessing of the gospel as in the New Testament (Rom. 15:29). They may not be entirely erroneous but often overload or deplete the power of the gospel that is evidenced as grace through faith by the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:45-48; Acts 1:8; 2:38, 39; 5:29-32; 10:34-44; 11:19-26; Eph. 1:13, 14; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Judaism for instance also

teaches salvation by works of the law which cannot justify (Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 2:13-16; Gal. 2:20-26) and not by faith in the Person and Work of Jesus, more importantly the message of first importance, which is the gospel (1 Cor. 2:1, 2; 15:3, 4).

Since the gospel carries light, immortality and power to save (Rom. 1:16, 17; 1 Cor. 4:20; 2 Cor. 4:4-7; 2 Tim. 1:8-14), wisdom and prudence (Eph. 1:8) are inevitably displayed in it for salvation by faith in Christ alone (Rom. 10:6-13; 2 Tim. 3:15). The primary goal of the gospel is, eternal life to all believers and the formation of body of Christ, the Church on earth towards her eternal destiny (Jn. 6:27-29, 39, 40; 17:3; Rom. 1:16, 17; 16:25-27; 1 Cor. 4:15-20; Eph. 2:11-22; 3:4-6, 15-19; 6:19, 20; 1 Jn. 2:23-25; 5:1-5, 20; 2 Jn. 1:1-12 vv. 3, 9). Any other gospel then, is not to be preached nor taught to the body of Christ, the Church (2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6-9); for it will not provide the promised eternal and produce its works and fruits (Acts 26:18-20; Rom. 1:11-17; 6:21, 22; Eph. 2:8-10; Phil. 1:9-11; Tit. 1:1-4; 1 Jn. 2:24, 25).

Only the gospel produces grace, righteousness, mercy, life, faith and love

The gospel is the only means of producing saving faith for eligibility into the kingdom of God and hence distinguishing the just or righteous from the unjust or unrighteous (Jn. 3:14-18; Rom. 1:16-23; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). It is also the basic means for establishing believers in the faith in Christ (Rom. 1:11-13; 16:25, 26; 1 Cor. 4:15-20; 15:1-22 vv. 3, 4; 2 Cor. 13:1-5; Col. 1:23; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 3:2) and the standard for all manner of eternal judgment (Rom. 2:1-16). It is the only means to be born again where the gospel is seed or water of the word through the activity of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:3, 5; 4:10-14; 14:6; 16:7-11; 1 Cor. 4:15; 6:11; 1 Thess. 1:5; Tit. 3:4-7; 1 Pet. 1:1-5, 18-25). It guarantees the believers victory over the sin nature by first imputing righteousness inside us (Rom. 5:1-5, 17; 2 Cor. 5:17, 21; Eph. 4:22-24; 2 Tim. 1:5-7; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4) and introduces a higher law in Christ which the Holy Spirit activates imputed righteousness, life, godliness, love, etc and imparting more and more virtues (Rom. 6:1-7, 17, 18, 23; 7:14-8:5; Gal. 5:16-26; Col. 3:1-17; 2 Tim. 1:5-14; 2 Pet. 1:1-11). It draws a line between authentic worship from false worship by setting aside *kingdoms of the world and their glory* (Matt. 4:8-10 v. 8; cf. 1 Jn. 2:15-17) as against the gospel revealing *the kingdom of God and its glory* (1 Thess. 2:8-14 v. 12; cf. Jn. 4:23-26; Acts 1:1-3; 28:30, 31; 1 Jn. 5:20, 21).

Any other gospel then, regardless of its religious appeals but without the centrality of emphasis on the gospel – the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:3, 4), is not to be preached nor taught and believed (2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6-9). According to the Scriptures, any form of another gospel, including seeking to be justified by the law or other forms of legalism even after salvation is bondage, absence of faith with love and a fall from a level of grace (Rom. 4:1-13, 16-25; Gal. 2:4; 3:1-12; 4:21-25; 5:1-6; Eph. 6:18-23; 1 Tim. 1:5-14). Hence Paul says; “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are

justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4 KJV). The implication is that some forms of gospel may save people but will not make them enjoy the full benefits of grace and faith which come together only through Christ by the gospel and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church (Acts 15:6-11 vv. 9, 11). It is this grace and faith intermarriage working with the two pillars of faith and love (Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:3, 4) that propel faith, hope and love in our calling to the kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 1:3-5 v. 3; 2:8-14 v. 12) in the entire Church spectrum (Acts 1:1-11; 2:16-21; 1 Cor. 13:13).

Listing of the “another gospel” yet popular gospels

Today, we notice many such pseudo or adulterated or false gospels as the popular gospel messages which in effect are no gospels at all, but only promote forms of “Christless” or non-Christ-empowered and Holy Spirit directed Christianity! Namely:

- a) Success or prosperity or affluence or **“consumer-ism”** gospel - Which sees the gospel as merely for earthly success or prosperity (such as progress in life and other benefits of the gospel such as health, deliverance from evil, and so on alone) without majoring on Christ as Saviour and Lord for eternal life of first importance with all earthly benefits of the gospel only considered as secondly and supportive (Jn. 3:14-18; 4:10-14, 22-26, 41, 42; 10:10; Acts 2:22-36; 10:34-44; Rom. 16:17-27; 3 Jn. 3 Jn. 3 Jn. 1:2). The loss of eternal life, God’s kind of life (Jn. 17:3) from the disobedience of man and the effects of sin on humanity were numerous but the most critical is death (Gen. 2:15-17 v. 17; 3:1-25 v. 19; Rom. 6:23). This death means separation though never means extinction, annihilation, non-existence, or inactivity operates in all human beings on three levels (Rom. 3:23; 5:12) – spiritual death (Lk. 15:32; Jn. 6:53; Eph. 2:1; 4:18, 19; 5:14; Col. 2:13; 1 Tim. 5:6; 1 Jn. 5:12; Rev. 3:1), physical death (1 Cor. 15:21, 22; Heb. 9:27) and eternal (the second) death (Rom. 6:23; 8:6; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 20:14-15). The gospel refers that Jesus tasted death (spiritual – 2 Cor. 5:21; physical – Matt. 27:50; and eternal – Matt. 27:46) for all men (1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 2:9, 10); by believing we gain eternal life (Rom. 6:23; 1 Jn. 5:1-5, 11-13, 20) and pass from death to life (Jn. 3:36; 5:24).
- b) Salvation by additional works or the semi-legalism or **“completion-ism”** gospel - Where circumcision and obedience to other ceremonial laws (Gal. 5:1-11) or the obeying of societal norms, myths and rules or fasting or the breaking of curses and omens or other such acts are required as additional requirement to faith in Christ (Col. 2:6-23). This negates the intermarriage of grace and faith (Rom. 4:16; 5:1, 2; Eph. 2:8-10) as the only basis for justification (Gal. 5:4-6). We (all believers) are complete in Christ (Acts 4:12; 16:31; Rom. 8:29-32; Eph. 1:3-14; Col. 2:10; 1 Jn. 5:1-5, 11-13, 18-21).
- c) Salvation by human achievements or **“celebrity-ism”** gospel - That honours and rewards achievements by so-called Christian stars or celebrities based on humanistic and idolatrous standards of ungodliness and unrighteousness but not

the standard of the faith of the gospel (Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:23; 1 Thess. 3:2) that produces the “just” by grace to live by faith (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38; cf. Rom. 1:16-23; 2:1-16 vv. 4, 16; 1 Cor. 4:1-7; 6:9-11).

- d) Salvation by works only or the pure legalism gospel - Where the law is not just a school-master to faith in Christ; but that rather the means of salvation as in Judaism which requires works as the only means of gaining righteousness from obeying the law of Moses (the 613 laws of the Mosaic Law - moral, ceremonial and civic); yet forgiveness of sins comes only through the gospel of Jesus (Lk. 24:44-47; Acts 10:34-44; Gal. 3:13-29; 6:12-17; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 Tim. 1:5-11).
- e) Salvation by religious Traditions or doctrines or commandments of men - Where obedience to rules, religious traditions, cultural hang-ups and fables of men are additional practices or requirements to faith in Christ (Matt. 15:1-20 vv. 1-9; Mk. 7:1-23 vv. 1-9, 13; Gal. 1:14; Col. 2:8, 22; 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7). This negates the gospel and divine Traditions of the Word as the basis for Christianity (2 Thess. 2:13-17 vv. 14, 15; 3:6; 2 Tim. 4:1-8 v. 4; Tit. 1:1-14 v. 14; 1 Pet. 1:1-12, 18-25; 2 Pet. 1:12-21 v. 16).
- f) Salvation by human effort obedience of the Word or gospel only – Where the Word or gospel as message believed is without added consideration to the Holy Spirit’s direct conviction or voice as direct and immediate witness (Jn. 16:7-11; Rom. 8:14-16; Gal. 4:4-6). This is the kind of popular gospel, but which leads people to adherence only to the objective truth of the written Word (1 Jn. 5:11-13); but the lack of the subjective truth as direct and immediate voice of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14-17). This approach to the gospel and the Person of the Holy Spirit may lead to lack of assurance of salvation and even inability to ascertain heaven in the heart with the faith, hope and love gained from the intermarriage of grace and faith (Jn. 16:7-11; Acts 19:1-6; Rom. 8:1-4, 9-13, 15-16; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 13:13; 15:4-11; Gal. 4:4-6; 5:16-26; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 Thess. 1:3-5).

This is like the partial Christo-centric teaching of Apollos that is only based on the baptism of John which did not know about the receiving of the Person and multiple distinct functions of the Holy Spirit in Salvation (Acts 18:24-28; 19:1-12; Eph. 1:13, 14; 1 Thess. 1:5). Such people though saved like the English Puritans led by Perkins who were good self-disciplined genuine Christians but who knew not of the assurance of their personal salvation. The English Puritans it is said mainly dwelt on the off and on kind of assurance of salvation from: a) *the Word yet by only an appeal to conscience or reflecting on their consciences based on their believing*; and b) *not with the added witness or voice of the indwelling Holy Spirit*.

When such believers live right, they are saved but when they miss the mark, it is like they are not certain of their salvation. The full assurance of salvation from the interplay of the gospel and the Holy Spirit towards the believer’s holiness and

righteousness in salvation is our salvation certainty (1 Thess. 1:5). The believer's certainty occurs in the New Birth processes of washing, sanctification and justification (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Certainly, being born again leads into eternal life with redemption in the blood, the Name of Jesus and the receiving of the promised Holy Spirit (Jn. 1:11-18; 3:3-8; Acts 2:1-4, 16-21; 38-39; Eph. 1:3-14; 4:23, 24; 1 Pet. 1:1-25 v. 2, 12, 23). There is also the adoption believers as sons of God in Christ through the gospel (Word) and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1-16; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4; 1 Jn. 1:1-3; 2:20-27; 3:1-11, 15, 21-24; 4:12-16).

- g) Self-esteem gospel - That now addresses self-worth wrongly by just improving self-images (personal security, self-worth and significance) while overlooking or negating that man is born a sinner and no amount of self-improvement solves that human sin problem (Rom. 3:20-23; 5:12).
- h) Anti-Trinitarian gospel - That does not see and present each member of the triune God - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as owner and dispenser (in concert) of the truth of the gospel which is mystery (Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 6:19) because only the Holy Spirit can reveal to us (Rom. 1:1-5; 1 Cor. 2:12; 4:1, 2; Rom. 1:1-5; 16:25-27; 1 Cor. 2:12; 4:1, 2; Eph. 6:18, 19; 1 Thess. 1:5; 2:8-14; 1 Tim. 1:8-15; 2 Tim. 1:8-14; 1 Jn. 2:6-24; 5:6-8).
- i) Cheap grace or/and hyper-grace gospel - The gospel rooted in the belief that makes professing Christians or Church-goers and attendees or nominal Christians behave as Antinomians who live against any governing law of God; they become lawless and sinning Christians on the pretext of unlimited atonement or another gospel without regular biblical repentance or confession (1 Jn. 1:7, 9). The outcome of such misconception for continual fellowship with the holy but loving triune God who is Light (Love and Righteous/Holy) is discussed in 1 Jn. 1:5-2:2. These negative or faulty arguments are three misconceptions from faulty or another gospel that operate in three levels or stages down the faith drain in John's First Epistle in these three verses (1 Jn. 1:6, 8, 10).

John writes; *"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:"* (1 Jn. 1:6). ... *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."* (1 Jn. 1:8). ... *"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."* (1 Jn. 1:10).

There is: first **hypocrisy** (lying to others about sin, thinking that you can live in sin and still have fellowship with God v. 6), then **duplicity** (lying to yourself about not having sin nature v. 8) and finally sometimes **apostasy** (trying to make God a liar by self-righteousness thinking we are living right even though we continue in sin like unbelievers, and thus making His word seem untrue v. 10).

- j) Universalism gospel - The gospel rooted in the belief that all people will eventually be saved because the Loving God will not take people into the Hell fire. They do not understand that God is Love, Holy and Righteous whose Justice must be met only in the God-Man, the Ideal Person of Jesus Christ.
- k) New Age Philosophy cum Eclectic or Syncretistic gospel – Which permits pluralism of any religious thought or worldview simply based on tolerance for human behavior and not based on repentance needed because of man’s sin and total depravity. This caution is especially appropriate today for Christians in a multi-faith global village society, faced with the subtle infiltrations of so-called New Age teaching. Jude raises the alarm at the two effects of false gospel teachers: they have made the grace of God an excuse for 'permissiveness' and they have denied the uniqueness of Christ and his salvation (Jd. 1:3, 4).
- l) No suffering for Christ gospel - That presents the gospel in such a way that suffering was for Christ and the early Apostles only. Thus, making the baptism of suffering and the possibility of thorns in the flesh as bearing the stigma or marks of Christ foreign to today’s Christianity (Gal. 6:15-17; Col. 1:28-30).
- m) Human goodness and effort for morality or Pelagianism gospel - Where Pelagianism is heresy named after Pelagius, who was active in Rome around A. D. 400. It is said that Pelagius held the belief that man is born with no bias to evil and is capable of freedom from sin and of salvation by works. He taught that man sins because of his environment alone and not at all because of his nature. This gospel sets only humanistic standards for morality, not the standard of our gospel that proclaims Christ Jesus as Lord and Saviour, the “son of man” who is also the Judge (Matt. 5:17-20; Jn. 5:21-29; Acts 2:22-36; 10:34-43; Rom. 2:16; 2 Tim. 4:1, 2).
- n) Positive Thinking gospel – Which presents a gospel that makes positive thinking (and positive outlook or self-image) alone without true repentance as a change of heart condition from sin to be the equivalent of salvation (Rom. 12:1, 2; Gal. 5:1-6; 6:15, 16; Phil. 4:4-8). Positive thinking as a way of life is good but only for mature believers towards healthy personality lifestyle (Ps. 4:1-8; Is. 26:3, 4; Phil. 4:6-9). On its own, it has no salvific effects outside the gospel (Rom. 1:16, 17; 10:6-10, 16, 17; 1 Cor. 15:1-11 vv. 3, 4). Positive thinking may be used among believers to gain positive kingdom mentality in the balance of character and charisma towards healthy personality development (**security, self-worth or dignity and significance**) unto maturity in the faith and the full stature of Christ (1 Cor. 1:10; 14:20; Eph. 4:1-16 v. 13).
- o) The Contemporary gospel - Starting just after the period of the Renaissance (1350 to 1650) into the Postmodern times with various philosophies outside the scope of true biblical repentance and forgiveness (Lk. 24:44-47; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 18:18; 13:38) like *Enlightenment, Idealism, Realism, Liberalism, Existentialism, Charismatic skewed views on character and charisma, blatant Cessationism, emergent Ecumenism*

- and many more “gospels” found their way to challenge, water down and even sometimes deny aspects of Christian orthodoxy and the true gospel of the Scriptures – Jesus, and Him crucified by His death, burial and resurrection (1 Cor. 2:2, 15:3, 4).*
- p) Emergent gospel - Plurality of voices competing with the only true biblical gospel (1 Cor. 15:3, 4); also referred to as the mystery of the gospel, since it is revealed by the resurrection of Jesus and preached with the Holy Spirit (Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 6:19, 20). This is the game of the deceiver, where he cannot stop the preaching of the *words of this life* (Acts 5:20, 21, 29-32, 39-45); he attempts to discount the power of the only gospel by watering it with “another gospel” (Rom. 1:16, 17; 1 Cor. 4:15-20; 2 Cor. 11:1-4; Gal. 1:6-9).
 - q) Social justice only gospel - Preaches the gospel as non-Salvific but only as a means for social justice. This is dangerous because social inequality of any kind is resolved only by the gospel that saves (Gal. 3:25-28; see Rom. 1:11-18; 2:4-16) and proven by faith in the Lord and love for all saints among all classes of believers (Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4; Phm. 1:5; 1 Jn. 3:23, 24).
 - r) Repentance and Rapture only gospel - Preaches a new kind of John the Baptist type human effort repentance followed by some ascetic dress code, weird public lifestyle activities, and unending repenting as sin effacement unto holiness but which is not based on the gospel of Jesus Christ preached with the Holy Spirit; and only with readiness to a Rapture timing already shown as 11.59 pm to the proponents. True Biblical Repentance that imputes Christ’s righteousness is always produced from the gospel preached with the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:12); and does not require any human effort for salvation but faith and grace (Lk. 24:44-49; Acts 2:38, 39; 3:19; 5:30-32; 10:34-44; 11:18; 15:6-11; Rom. 1:16, 17; 4:11, 16-25); salvation is a gift of God’s grace as a product of faith in the gospel that does not depend on human works (Rom. 10:9, 10, 16, 17; Eph. 2:8, 9; Tit. 2:11-14; 3:5-7).
 - s) Other Strange-fire (unholy, unauthorized, destructive) gospels – Christless gospels from the roots of *Open Theism, faulty beliefs about Christ and the Holy Spirit and any other philosophies of Humanism and Demonism such as Secular Humanism with Human Rights Activists, Pantheism, Panentheism, Religious Pluralism of Postmodernism and other Syncreticisms or Eclecticisms* that thrive on itching ears cum lust (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

So, at least, we know that we are called to proclaim, “Christ and Him crucified” – His death, burial and resurrection (1 Cor. 2:1-5; 15:3, 4). Presently, we may track the history of the Christian Church, from Pentecost to date, along marked denominational lines: *from the context of Apostolic Fathers, the Church fathers, Catholic cum Orthodox Churches, the Medieval Scholastics, the Reformers, the Anabaptists, the Puritans, the early Methodists, the holiness Movements, the neo-orthodox theologians of the twentieth century (Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals and evolving Charismatics, Independent, the Third Wavers and along with*

the emerging ecumenical Church adherents) and even twenty-first century contemporary and emergent Scholastics Churches.

Within the numerous denominations, the gospel as the standard of eternal life is to be preached, believed and obeyed in all generations and localities (Jn. 17:1-3, 19-26; Rom. 2:4-16; 10:6-10, 14-17; 2 Thess. 3:12 v. 8; 1 Pet. 4:12-19 v. 16). We may learn from other credible preachers or gospel-believing denominations to testify the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24; Rom. 16:16-20, 24-27; 1 Thess. 1:1-10 vv. 6, 7). But we must not borrow from any doctrine or school of thought that is not foundational for salvation in Christ in the context of the Church (1 Cor. 3:9-17; 4:1-2, 15 Eph. 2:19-22; Heb. 2:3, 4; 6:1, 2). Foundational truth (Jn. 14:6; Acts 2:22-42; Eph. 1:13-15) must always be rooted or based on the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4) termed the mystery of the gospel (Rom. 16:16-27; Eph. 6:18-23). We know that unity of the faith for salvation is based on the gospel preached with the Holy Spirit who testifies with us (1 Pet. 1:1-12 vv. 9-12; see Jn. 15:26, 27; 17:19-26; Acts 2:32-36; 5:29-32).

The gospel as the message of first importance preached with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 15:1-11 vv. 3, 4; 1 Pet. 1:12) is the only way to engage, dismantle and overcome sin in the heart, cultural taboos or negatives and socio-cultural influences in society, worldviews, wrong mental attitudes to Christ as the Son of God and all demonic or Satanic strongholds (Acts 20:24; Rom. 1:11-18; 8:29-32; 2 Cor. 10:1-6). **Every believer's encounter with God or Christ through the gospel and the Holy Spirit to merit a taste of the glory of God is the most important part of the Christian journey** (2 Cor. 3:17-4:7an). It is only thereafter that the Holy Spirit can now use the word of grace as doctrine (Acts 2:38-42; 10:44-48; 20:32) to transform the soul life of believers (Rom. 12:1-3; Eph. 1:13-19; 5:1-10, 18-21, 25-27). This is the saving or salvation of the soul by the word (Jn. 1:17-21; 1 Pet. 1:6-9, 21-23; see Ps. 62:1; Is. 61:10).

There are also Spiritualistic Churches that are purely syncretistic and sown by the enemy, Satan in the world (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). Within genuine Churches, the enemy will often infiltrate the true Church to cause havoc (Acts 20:28-32) through spirits of antichrists or doctrines of demons and seducing spirits (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 1 Jn. 2:18-22; 4:1-6; 2 Jn. 1:7-10). There is also the selfish ambition of men powered by deception in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1-17 vv. 1, 5, 13) that will always attempt to undermine the truth of the gospel (Gal. 2:5, 14; Eph. 1:13, 14; Col. 1:5).

Now, Scripture says that in the Church Age until her Rapture, the emphasis must be the gospel preached with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17-18, 22-36; 5:20, 29-32; 1 Pet. 1:2-5, 9-12). The Church Age is the period from Pentecost until her Rapture before the sun turns into darkness and moon into blood to usher in "the great and terrible day of the Lord" at mid-

Tribulation for Israel (Acts 2:16-21 v. 20; see Joel 2:28-31 v. 31; Mal. 4:4-6 v. 5). The mystery of the gospel must be upheld so that men in every generation and locality on earth until Christ returns (see Matt. 28:3-20; Rev. 9:20-10:11; 11:15-19) can call on the name of the Lord and be saved (Acts 2:16-21 v. 21; 3:14-26; Rom. 10:10-17; Eph. 6:10-20 vv. 18, 19; Rev. 14:6, 7).

THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION AND TODAY'S CHURCH

Sad, you see, many people and Churches across the Christian divide are today not preaching, living, and serving in the gospel (Rom. 1:9, 15-17; 1 Cor. 2:2; 15:3-5; Gal. 1:6-16, 23, 24; Phil. 1:5, 7, 12, 27; 2:19-22; Col. 1:5, 23) but forms of the gospel that only serve the mostly belly (Rom. 16:17, 18; 1 Cor. 6:12, 13; Phil. 3:17-19). This is the way to the "another gospel" or messages as add-ons to the gospel (2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6). In this way, there is the introduction of an entirely different or another gospel or 'Christless' gospel or even messages from devilish sources that pervert the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6, 7). This is the way of making Christianity of our time almost 'Christless' and Holy Spirit deficient (Acts 2:1-4, 16-21, 27-36, 38-47; 20:28-30; Rom. 16:17-20; Phil. 3:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:1-16).

Psalm 103:1-5, David says; *"Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."*

The Psalmist lists a summary of five-fold benefits or part of the fullness of the blessing or benefits of the gospel of Christ (Rom. 15:29; cf. Jn. 10:10; Eph. 1:3-15, 17-23). They are listed as (Ps. 103:3-5):

- 1) *Forgiveness of sin(s) and provision of eternal life (v. 3),*
- 2) *Healing of the body and mind (v. 3),*
- 3) *Deliverance and Protection from evil (v. 4),*
- 4) *Crowned with favour before God and men (v. 5), and*
- 5) *Satisfied with spiritual and other abundance, prosperity or blessings in heavenly places (v. 5).*

In the New Testament, the benefits of the gospel are numerous and encompasses eternal heavenly blessings as well as earthly blessings toward living the abundant life from Christ on earth (Jn. 10:10). The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God with His kingdom is known and believed from the book of Acts and elsewhere to be the: **Saviour, Healer, Baptizer with power of the Holy Spirit, Apostle and High Priest and Returning or Soon Coming King** (Acts 1:1-11; 2:22-39; 3:19-26; 4:7-12, 23-31; 10:33-44; ... 28:30-11). Jesus

Christ as Lord and Christ, is thus the only accredited Saviour of the world by faith in Him or His Name (Acts 4:1-13). He is also the Healer (Deliverer), the Holy Spirit or power Baptizer and the Returning (soon coming) King or Judge (Acts 2:21-36; 3:14-26; 4:1-13; 10:34-44; 17:18-31 see Jn. 5:21-29).

Eternal life in the gospel is the priority over earthly gains

The tendency of believers in the militant Church on this groaning, dying earth is to seek for temporary, earthly things instead of the eternal from the gospel (Rom. 8:17-25; 2 Cor. 4:2-7, 13-18). This is when we place ministry of tables over and above the ministry of the Word and Prayer (Jn. 6:26-29, 38-40, 63-69; Acts 6:1-8 vv. 1, 4). But the gospel must be believed as the message of first importance of our great Salvation (1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Heb. 2:3, 4; 6:1, 2). The Holy Spirit works with the gospel as the Word to produce salvation and oversee the overthrow of sin by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ beginning with saving faith and saving grace (Rom. 4:11-16; 8:1-4; 1 Cor. 1:17, 18; 4:15-20; 6:16-17; 15:1-11; 1 Pet. 1:12, 23-25).

Hitherto, salvation is understood from the two main Greek words *soteria* (meaning safety, deliverance, preservation from danger or destruction in general) and *sozo* (meaning to save, deliver, make whole, preserve safe from danger, loss, destruction) as used in the New Testament to explain salvation or being saved. Wherever, each of the two words *soteria* (Acts 4:12; Rom. 1:16; 10:10; Eph. 1:13) and *sozo* (Jn. 3:14-17; Acts 2:21, 47; Rom. 10:9) are used in connection with eternal life, the idea of biblical salvation is evident. The two words *sozo* (meaning saved v. 9) and *soteria* (meaning salvation v. 10) go together in the believers' faith confession in Romans (Rom. 10:9, 10). In verse 12 of Acts 4:7-12, we see that both salvation *soteria* and saved *sozo* used, while in verses 9 and 10, made whole *sozo* and whole *hugies* implying healed are used, respectively.

However, since Christ was sealed by God to give eternal life to believers (Jn. 6:26-29 v. 27), we must set out priorities right to seek God's kingdom and His righteousness in the gospel (Matt. 6:33; Rom. 1:16, 17; 14:17). Saved *sozo* and *soteria* for righteousness involving eternal life must always preoccupy us more than divine healing or any other form of deliverance (Acts 2:21; 4:9, 12; Rom. 10:9, 10). The death of Christ was the purpose of the Incarnation; Jesus Christ was born to be crucified for all humanity (Matt. 1:21; Mk. 10:45; Heb. 2:9, 14; 1 Jn. 3:5). The death of Christ on the cross is the guarantee of all blessing and the removal of all cursing on planet earth (Jn. 12:31-35; Gal. 3:11-14).

When Christ was made a curse for us on the cross, the fullness of the blessing of the gospel to believers was conceived through the intermarriage of grace and faith and born by the resurrection (2 Cor. 5:14-21; Gal. 3:11-17, 25-29; 1 Pet. 1:1-5; see Matt. 28:16-20; Jn. 20:17-23). The Church that confesses the Son of Man to be the Christ, the Son of the living

God was hence conceived at the cross, incubated in the grave in hades and born by the resurrection to inherit kingdom blessing (Matt. 16:17-21; Eph. 1:3-14; 3:4-12, 14-21). Such blessing to the Church is the eternal blessing of God which goes beyond the blessing of Abraham to include the receiving of the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39; 3:19-26; Gal. 3:11-17; Eph. 3:4-6).

The Church which was conceived and born through the gospel was openly or visibly then inaugurated on the day of Pentecost with abundant life in Christ (Jn. 10:10) or supernatural blessing (Acts 2:1-4, 33; 1 Pet. 1:7-12).

- a. We are saved from the wrath of God (Rom. 1:16-18; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Thess. 1:10);
- b. We are saved from all our sins (1 Cor. 15:3-4; 1 Jn. 1:5-2:2; 3:4-10);
- c. We are saved from the rudiments of the Law and all curses to be just and to receive only blessing (Gal. 3:11-17; Col. 2:14, 15);
- d. We are saved from the wickedness and darkness of the world (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13; 1 Jn. 1:1-3, 5-7; 2:15-17; 5:1-5, 18-21);
- e. We are saved from the powers of Satan, as the evil one (Jn. 12:31, 32; Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:18-23; 6:12-20; Col. 1:15-18; 2:14, 15; Heb. 2:14, 15; 1 Jn. 2:12-14; 3:4-8);
- f. We are saved from the power of death (Heb. 2:9-18; Rev. 1:18-20).

Salvation (Gk: *soteria* and *sozo*) meaning deliverance from sin and its spiritual consequences, and granting of forgiveness with eternal life in the kingdom of God, all come from God by our Lord Jesus Christ through the gospel (Jn. 3:14-16; 6:68; 17:3; Rom. 1:16, 17; 6:23; 10:6-10; 1 Cor. 4:15-20; 1 Jn. 2:20-25; 5:10-13, 20; 2 Jn. 1:9; Jd. 1:20, 21). Salvation comes in the process of new birth or regeneration by the gospel or word and the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:3, 5). Salvation as atonement for sin comes from God's initiative and provision packaged in the gospel by:

- a. God's eternal purpose (Eph. 1:9, 11; 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9);
- b. God's Will (Eph. 1:3-14 vv. 9, 11);
- c. God's grace (Eph. 2:8, 9; Tit. 2:11-14);
- d. Christ's blood (Rom. 5:9);
- e. Christ's life (Rom. 5:10).

So when humanity gets clouded with earthly needs by the love for the belly and the world (Rom. 16:17-20; 2 Tim. 4:10; 1 Jn. 2:15-17; Rev. 9:20, 21), the salvific effects or benefits of the gospel are easily thrown overboard as was implied in the question of Peter to Jesus. Mark writes; *"Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, **with persecutions**; and in the world to come*

eternal life (Mk. 10:28-30). Believers may easily turn or settle to enjoy only the material blessing of Abraham instead of the spiritual and eternal life as blessing through Christ by the gospel for those who receive the Holy Spirit by faith. In Galatians we read; ⁸*And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.* ¹⁴*That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith* (Gal. 3:1-29 vv. 8, 14).

The eternal benefits of the gospel

It is natural or easy to look for healing and other earthly benefits than to appreciate and value eternal life vested in the Name of Jesus; even among believers. This is because the Greek word *sozo* meaning saved also means being healed. Scriptures says; *“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Gk: sozo).”* (Acts 2:21). Furthermore, we read; *“And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole (Gk: sozo); Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole (Gk: hugies). This is the stone, which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Gk: sozo)* (Acts 4:7-12).

The lame man at the Beautiful Gate was made physically whole before being saved through the name of Jesus (Acts 3:1-18). It must be clearly understood that while healing was effective through Christ’s Messianic duties and in the atonement (Is. 53:1-5; Matt. 8:16, 17; Acts 10:36-38; 1 Pet. 2:24), remission of sins has become effective only after the resurrection (Is. 53:6-12; Lk. 24:44-48; Acts 5:30, 31; 10:39-43; 13:26-39; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4). Today’s Church being at ease and not engaging the culture of the people trapped in the gates of hades with the gospel has forgotten that we must suffer for the gospel to enter the kingdom; *“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”* (Acts 14:22). Let John now remind us of our heritage as servants of Christ as follows: *“I John, who also am your **brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ**, was in the isle that is called Patmos, **for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ**. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet* (Rev. 1:9, 10).

Presently, because of the multiplicity of blessings in the gospel, Churches over time tend to enjoy the temporary earthly benefits including health as part of abundant life through Christ (Jn. 10:10; 3 Jn.3 Jn.3 Jn. 1:2). However, the salvation of the soul as eternal life (Rom. 6:23; 1 Jn. 5:20) is the paramount reason why God gave His Son as the gift (*dorea*) of life to the world (Jn. 3:14-16; 4:10-14, 19-26, 41, 42) and with Him subsequently also the gift (*dorea*) of the Holy Spirit to the Church (Acts 2:38, 39). This gospel, the eternal or everlasting gospel, which is Jesus Christ and Him crucified - His death, burial and resurrection is the only means of saving humanity from sin (1 Cor. 2:1-5; 15:3-5; cf. Gen. 3:15; Matt. 1:21; 24:14; Lk. 24:44-48; Acts 1:8, 15-16; 2:22-36; 4:11, 12; Rom. 1:16, 17; 16:25-27; Eph. 6:19, 20; Heb. 2:9-18; Rev. 14:5). The gospel is the central message of the written and spoken Scriptures that saves us from sin (1 Cor. 15:3, 4) and the living and abiding Word that gives us eternal life (1 Pet. 1:23, 25).

Pelagianism and other beliefs introducing falsehood against the gospel

Today, the gospel of Pelagianism, discounting the sin nature of humanity and blaming evil only on the environment, aided by secular humanism has subtly invaded Christendom (Rom. 1:16-18; 5:12-21; Eph. 2:1-10). The gospel hence seems not so much needed to address the sin nature as the only means of providing saving grace with authority and power for justification by faith in the finished work of Christ (Rom. 3:19-26; Gal. 2:16-21). There are even those that join the Church but do mix the gospel preached with faith to enter the rest of God who exists and rewards our faith in Him (Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4:1-3; 11:1, 6). This may be because they do not receive it as the word of God but only as the word of preachers (1 Thess. 2:8-13 v. 13) or ignorantly continue acting in unbelief (1 Tim. 1:3-17 v. 13; Heb. 3:12, 19; 4:6, 11).

The bare truth is that much preaching among Christians, in the context of Church today, merely enhances efforts at serving on tables and improving our lives on earth through social action without the gospel that deals with sin (1 Cor. 15:1-28 vv. 3, 4, 19). This social gospel approach in Church life and business is quite possible and on high demand today with the exclusive humanistic administrative skills and teaching from people of high intellectual and affluent social standing. However, the church has inbuilt personnel resources regardless of its social standing to handle social needs (Acts 2:16-39, 42-47; 4:23-35; 6:1-8) rather than sacrifice the salvific ministry of the Word or the gospel (as "words of this life - Acts 5:20) and Prayer in the kingdom (Acts 1:1-11; 6:1-8 vv. 1, 4).

Satanic attempts to stop the teaching of the gospel that projects the resurrection has been the challenge of the Church from its earliest beginnings (Acts 4:1-13, 17-18). Paul had to defend the gospel and emphasize the resurrection as the basic truth of the Christian faith, hope and love (1 Cor. 15:3-4, 13-18, 21-28, 45, 50-55). Yet, the mystery of the gospel as power unto salvation to be the primary key and the power or active presence of the Holy

Spirit as the master key are not the main emphasis of the Church today (Matt. 16:13-21; 28:16-20). Thus, if the Church today will follow the example of the early Church, then it must utilize all the keys of the kingdom given by Jesus to effectively engage and overcome (sin, cultural negatives and demonic or Satanic strongholds and others as) gates of hell or hades (Matt. 16:18, 19).

Knowing the keys of the kingdom

Scripturally, the keys of the kingdom are the knowledge and use of the authority and power vested in the presence of:

- a) *the gospel as the primary key or the message of first importance according to the Scriptures* (1 Cor. 4:1-2, 15, 20; 15:3, 4),
- b) *the Holy Spirit as the Master key* (Jn. 16:7-15; Acts 1:4, 5; Eph. 1:13, 14),
- c) *the Name of Jesus as the embodiment of the work of Salvation* (Matt. 1:21; Jn. 14:13, 14; Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 6:11; Phil. 2:11),
- d) *the Blood of Jesus as divine life given* (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; cf. Lev. 17:11),
- e) *the Word, the Scriptures as sound teaching of the whole counsel of God* (Acts 2:42; 6:4; 10:36, 37; 20:27; 1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 4:1-8; Tit. 1:9; Heb. 4:12, 13; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21), and
- f) *praying in the Spirit and with fasting* (Matt. 6:10; Mk. 2:19, 20; Acts 6:4; 14:21-23; Eph. 1:15-17; 6:18) *and forgiving spirit* (Matt. 6:12; Mk. 11:2-26; 2 Cor. 2:10, 11).

These keys given to the Church work in concert with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Mat. 16:18, 19) who activates and supplies divine power to all the other salvific kingdom keys given after the resurrection and the glorification of Christ (Jn. 7:37-39; 16:12-15; Acts 2:33; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). We must never lose sight of the fact that the gospel as the message of first importance (1 Cor. 15:1-11 vv. 3, 4) to hold the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1 Cor. 1:6; 2:1, 2; Rev. 1:2, 9; 6:9; 12:11, 17; 19:10) must always or only be preached with the power and active presence of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:48, 49; Acts 1:1-8; 2:16-21; 4:29-31; 5:29-32; 1 Pet. 1:12; Rev. 1:9-10; 19:10; 22:17).

Today, among believers, living, serving and suffering as obedient servants of Christ to exclusively serve in the Word and especially in the gospel with the power of the Holy Spirit for obedience of faith in the Church have been reduced to nothing in practical life and business (Acts 2:16-19; Rom. 1:5, 9, 11-17; 16:25, 26; Rev. 1:9-11; 19:10). Yet biblical Christianity is that which is based solely on the faith of the gospel and active presence of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:7-11; Col. 1:23-28; 1 Thess. 1:1-10 v. 5; 1 Pet. 1:1-12 v. 12). The true truth is that Christianity is not just about the teachings of Jesus but about the Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Jn. 7:16, 17; Acts 1:1-11; 2:22-36; Rom. 6:17-23). This is the doctrine of Christ, the foundational teachings for both doctrine and practice towards

eternal life and godliness based on the gospel (1 Tim. 3:14-16; 6:1-11 vv. 1, 3, 12, 19; Heb. 6:1, 2; 2 Jn. 1:1-11 v. 9).

We believe in Jesus not just for His great teachings but to prove that He is the Christ, the Son of God (Acts 8:35-37; 9:20; 17:2-4) and that is by the bodily resurrection from the dead (see Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:5; 5:5 cf. Ps. 2:7). The gospel (the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus – Lk. 24:44-49; Acts 3:13-16; 5:29-32; 10:36-44) is the message of first *protos* importance for salvation (1 Cor. 15: 1, 3-4) and the proof of the doctrine of Christ (Acts 1:1-3; Heb. 6:1, 2; 2 Jn. 1:9, 10). This is the way to deal with all false teachings and false prophesying or predictions, spewed by antichrist spirits in the world, that deny Christ (1 Jn. 2:18-29 vv. 18, 22; 4:1-6 v. 3; 2 Jn. 1:5-11 v. 7). While the gospel per the resurrection reassured the early disciples of the living Christ, it did not remove fear and inferiority from them (Jn. 20:19-23). To manifest Christ through the gospel the Holy Spirit was needed as the abiding Comforter (Jn. 14:15-21). They still needed the visible presence and power of the Holy Spirit to provide Christ's manifest indwelling and filling for boldness to become aggressive and lifestyle witnesses (Mk. 16:14-20; Lk. 24:44-49; Jn. 14:12-26; 15:26, 27; 16:7-15; Acts 1:1-8; 5:29-32).

WHY WE MUST OBEY THE GOSPEL TODAY

The gospel which is believed to generate saving faith and salvation (Rom. 10:6-10, 13-17 see Acts 10:36-44; Rom. 1:16, 17) is to be obeyed to sustain grace, saving faith and all the provision God made for eternal salvation (Rom. 1:1-5; 6:16-18, 22-23; 16:19, 25-27; 2 Thess. 1:3-12 v. 8; Heb. 5:9; 1 Pet. 1:2-5; 4:12-19 v. 16; 1 Jn. 2:20-27). In the Scriptures, obedience and belief are synonymous terms when dealing with the gospel (Jn. 2:23, 24; Rom. 10:6-17). To believe in Christ is to obey Him, and to obey Him is to believe in Him (Jn. 8:31-36). A person who truly believes in Jesus Christ will obey Him (Jn. 14:6-23). In Christianity, there is no such thing as:

- a) *belief or faith without obedience* (Jn. 14:15-26; 15:1-14; Acts 5:29-32; Heb. 5:9; 1 Jn. 3:23, 24),
- b) *believing that Jesus Christ has forgiven one's sin and yet still living in sin* (Rom. 6:1-7; 1 Cor. 15:33, 34; 1 Jn. 3:4-10),
- c) *believing in Jesus Christ and not following or abiding in Him* (Jn. 15:1-7; 1 Jn. 2:3-11, 23-27),
- d) *believing the gospel and living like the world* (Jn. 17:9-21; 1 Jn. 2:15-17) and
- e) *believing in Jesus Christ and not loving Him and one another* (Jn. 13:34, 35; 15:8-13, 19, 23; Eph. 1:13-15; Col. 1:3-8; 1 Jn. 2:8-11; 3:15, 18-24; 4:10-21).

Without the gospel, there is no revelation of the truth (Matt. 16:19-21 v. 20; 17:1-9 v. 9; Eph. 3:1-13) that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16; 26:63; Jn. 6:69;

20:31). It's only the resurrection (Acts 1:1-3; 2:22-36; 10:36-43) as the central truth of the gospel (Acts 2:22-36 vv. 27; 4:1-12; 10:36-43; 13:26-39) that provides final evidential proof that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:5; Heb. 5:5). The implication is that outside the gospel, there can be no permanent indwelling of the triune God in the heart of the believer with subsequent filling or fullness through the agency of the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:10-12). This is the mystery of the gospel (Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 6:18-20) and all the mysteries of God for kingdom authority and power (Matt. 16:16-19; 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 4:1-2, 15-20) revealed to the Church as eternal life and godliness (1 Tim. 3:15-16 see Rom. 1:1-5, 11-17).

Presently, after the resurrection of Jesus and His glorification in heaven leading to the coming of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 7:37-39; Acts 2:33), it is the gospel as the central message of the Word that the Holy Spirit working in the Church and through believers uses to regenerate the repentant sinner (Jn. 3:3, 5; 16:7-11; Acts 2:38-41; 10:38-44; 1 Cor. 4:15). It is also the gospel that serves as the basis for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit by faith by new believers (Acts 2:38-39; 3:19-21; 10:34-44; 19:4-6; Gal. 3:5, 14; Eph. 1:13-15). It is, therefore, the gospel that guarantees the unity of the seven-fold oneness of the Church (Jn. 17:19-23; Acts 2:40; 10:44; Eph. 3:4-6; 4:4-6) towards the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and unity of the faith unto the full measure of the stature of Christ (Eph. 4:1-16 v. 3, 13).

Hearing, believing and obeying the gospel in true repentance will lead to total salvation to provide eternal life in Christ to believers as repentance unto life (Mk. 1:14-15; 16:15-16; Acts 2:38-39; 5:29-32; 10:33-44; 11:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:1-11; 2 Thess. 1:3-12 v. 8; 1 Pet. 4:1-19 v. 17). Total salvation for members of the Church will include New Birth with forgiveness of sin and attendant spiritual re-birth for eternal life, initial obedience to undergo Water Baptism, and must have the witness of God by the giving of the Holy Spirit from heaven to those who obey Christ and God, the Father (Matt. 28:18-20 v. 20; Mk. 16:15-20; Lk. 24:46-49; Jn. 14:15-26; Acts 1:1-8; 2:38-39; 4:19-20; 5:29-32; 15:6-11; 19:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:12).

The giving, or falling upon and receiving of the Holy Spirit through baptism by Jesus is not for new birth but to make all believers become power witnesses (*martus* – Acts 1:8) unto Christ (Acts 1:4-8; 2:32-33; 5:29-32; 8:18-22; 1 Pet. 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:23, 24). Power witnesses unto Christ is where witnesses are eyewitness (*autoptes* – Lk. 1:2; *epoptes* – 2 Pet. 1:16) or experiential witnesses *dokime* to the faith of what we experience, taste, see and hear (Acts 26:16; Rom. 5:1-5 v. 4; 15:1-7; 1 Jn. 1:1-3). And this is how believers become power witnesses *martus* unto Christ (Acts 1:8; 10:39, 41; 1 Jn. 1:2) to hold the testimony of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:6; 2:1; 2 Tim. 1:8; Rev. 1:2, 9-10; 12:9-11, 17; 19:10) beginning from the gospel preached with the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:29-32; 1 Cor. 1:4-9; 2:1-12; 2 Tim. 1:3-14; 1

Pet. 1:10-12). So, the receiving of the Holy Spirit is not just for salvation which is based on grace and faith that work through the gospel and the regenerating activity of the Holy Spirit but to authenticate the genuineness of our salvation (Acts 15:6-11). Additionally, the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity comes to oversee the provision of all divine gifts *dorea* or distribution *merismos* (Acts 8:20; Heb. 2:3, 4) and *charisma* gifts as resources (Jn. 16:12-15; Eph. 1:13-19; 2 Tim. 1:5-7).

Church aggressive evangelism and lifestyle witnessing

Aggressive evangelism and lifestyle witnessing for establishing healthy multi-national cross-cultural Churches have already been modeled in the early Church, especially the Antioch Church, as a pattern for the Church today (Acts 5:28-32; 8:4-17, 25-40; 9:10-22, 31; 11:19-26; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). It is the means of declaring the testimony of Jesus Christ and the Word of this life (Acts 5:20, 29-32; Rev. 1:2, 9, 10; 19:10). This is to allow the Lord to prepare the Church, His Bride (Eph. 5:25-27) to be “caught-up” home in our gathering together unto Him (Jn. 14:1-3; Acts 1:1-11; 2:16-21; 11:19-26; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:1, 2; Rev. 1:7) and get her to be ready for the marriage feast in heaven (Rev. 19:9-10)!

We must preach and teach or serve in the gospel (Rom. 1:9; see Phil. 1:5, 7, 12, 17; Gal. 1:4-24), so that others will believe in and live out the gospel in our generation (Phil. 1:27, 28). When the survival of the early Church was threatened, they cried to the Lord God for another Pentecost and were visited from heaven with gospel zeal, power and grace (Acts 4:23-33). Now that we (the Church and individual believers) have the gospel in hand as at Passover, we need another Pentecost as a new beginning of living water to gather in souls for all to merit the glorious up-coming imminent Rapture of the Church as at the feast of Tabernacles (Jn. 7:1-17, 37-39; Acts 2:1-42; 3:1-6, 14-26; 5:20-32, 41-42; ...; 20:20-32; ...; Rev. 22:17). Hallelujah!