

Two Gospels?

It is clear from New Testament documents alone¹, that at the beginning of the Christian era, there were two different Gospels being preached - a Jewish Gospel and a Non-Jewish Gospel.

The proponents of the Jewish gospel held that faith in Jesus was in addition to keeping the Law of Moses (Torah compliant Christianity). The proponents of the non-Jewish gospel held that keeping the Law of Moses compromised Faith in Jesus.

There was substantial animosity between the heads of the two divergent positions, Paul and James. (Perhaps animosity is an understatement.)

The profound divisions between the two factions can be clearly seen in a careful examination of Paul's letters and the epistle of James.

It is also clear that at some point later, there were attempts at spin, with certain passages in Acts glossing the issues to present more of a smoother picture of the early church. But these attempts have created obvious contradictions between the book of Acts and the letters of Paul. (see Appendix 1)

In Paul's letters and the epistle of James there some amazing passages. The passages below are evidence of a clear and bitter Riposte between the two early Church leaders. These are just the beginning.

Paul	James
Rom 3:30 since <i>it is</i> one God who will justify circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.	Jam 2:19 You believe that there is one God, you do well; even the demons believe and tremble. 20 But will you know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?
Rom 4:1 What then shall we say that our father Abraham has found, according to flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has a boast; but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness."	Jam 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Do you see how faith worked with his works, and from the works faith was made complete? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God." 24 You see then how a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

A working paradigm

¹ There are additional early Church and other historical documents that can provide even more substantiating evidence – see Eisenman – James the brother of Jesus

If the state of the early church was as divided as I believe can be shown merely by unpacking the New Testament documents, what does this mean for our current versions of Christianity?

After the death of Paul and the death of James and the destruction of Jerusalem, there was a syncretism between the two positions, and the Catholic Church was born under a compromise 'retrospective Pope' in St Peter.

All churches since that time have incorporated this syncretism into their systems and theology.

The non-syncretised direct descendents of James (The Ebionites²) and Paul (Marcion, Valentinus) were all declared heretical by the Church of Rome, and died out within a few hundred years.

Perhaps Luther came close to threatening the syncretism in his rediscovery of St Paul's 'faith only' position and in his threat (not followed up) to expurgate the book of James from a Protestant New Testament. But he was still totally paradigm bound to ecclesiastical authority.

So is our compromise Judeo-Christian syncretism 'God's will' or should we go back to the first century?

How do we make sense of this early state of play, and who was right, Paul or James?

On thing is clear, neither Paul nor James would be happy with our current compromised position.

Where did the James Paul animosity come from?

The fallout appears to have occurred over areas of jurisdiction.

In the beginning there was apparently an agreement between James and Paul.³

Gal 2:7 ... I have been entrusted *with* the gospel of the uncircumcision, as Peter to the circumcision;

However problems arose because James' and Paul's gospels could not be mutually accommodating.

It seems that Paul's Churches received visits from James' people wanting to circumcise his Non-Jewish converts, i.e. have the Gentile believers conform to the law.

² Ebionim is Hebrew for the Poor. The Poor is a dominant theme in the book of James. The Ebionites believed Christ was only a man but exceeded other men in the practice of virtue, they required circumcision and adherence to the Law. Eusebius says "Paul they reject as a heretic and an apostate from their law"

³ It is clear from Paul's documents, and even Acts that James not Peter was the head of the Jerusalem church, and that Peter was in submission to James

And James in turn would have been less than happy with Paul's theology. A theology that not only argued that Gentile believers were not subject to the Law, but that the Law was redundant - full stop.

It was an accident waiting to happen. There could be two different mission fields, but in reality there couldn't be two gospels with two different messages.

There had to be a clash.

Apostolic Authority

Paul's position really blows the concept of temporal authority. Paul was not submitted to the mother Church in Jerusalem.

His gospel provides for direct experience of God and Christ through faith, unmediated by any human organisation or requiring any religious acts.

Gal 3:2 This only I would learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by works of *the* law, or by hearing of faith?

Paul claims no authority from apostolic succession, or the order of Authority from the Apostles in Jerusalem. His authority comes direct from heaven and his own revelation.

Gal 1:1 Paul, an apostle - not from men, nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead	
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2Co 3:1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, like some, epistles of commendation to you, or <i>letters</i> of commendation from you?	
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Gal 2:6 But from those who seemed to be something (what kind they were then does not matter to me; God does not accept the face of man), for those seeming <i>important</i> conferred nothing to me.	
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Law and Liberty

Paul's gospel of direct experience of God and Christ through faith is also about liberty from the yoke of bondage to the Law of Moses, and freedom from any ecclesiastical authority.

Gal 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and do not again be held with the yoke of bondage.

James however refers to the Law of Moses as the Law of Liberty. A liberty experienced in submission.

Jam 2:10 For whoever shall keep the whole Law and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all. 11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." But if you do not commit adultery, yet if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the Law. 12 So speak and do as those who shall be judged by *the* Law of liberty.

Food offered to Idols

At the Jerusalem conference, Acts records that James made a judgement on the extent to which Non-Jewish believers were required to keep the Law.

His proclamation was recorded in Acts as:

Act 15:29 that you abstain from meats offered to idols, and *from* blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which, if you keep yourselves, you shall do well. Be prospered.

If this was in fact what the outcome of the Conference was, Paul never indicates this in any of his letters. He simply states:

Gal 2:10 Only *they asked* that we remember the poor, which very thing I was eager to do.

The Acts 15 account of the Jerusalem conference does come across as a little unrealistic.

Act 15:7 And after much disputing, Peter rose up and said to them, Men, brothers, you recognise that from ancient days God chose among us *that* through my mouth the nations *should* hear the Word of the gospel, and believe. 8 And God, who knows the hearts, bore them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit even as to us. 9 And He put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore why do you tempt God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples, a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that through the grace of *the* Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, according to which manner they also *believed*.

Luke describes a Peter speaking with authority in front of James and the whole Law keeping Jerusalem elders stating that the Law was a yoke which neither their fathers nor they were able to bear? I don't think so!

This doesn't seem like the Peter that Paul describes.

Gal 2:11 But when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed *him* to his face, because he was to be blamed. 12 For before some came from James, he ate with the nations. But when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those of the circumcision. 13 and the rest of the Jews also dissembled with him, so as even Barnabas was led away with their dissembling. 14 But when I saw that they did not

walk uprightly with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before all, If you, being a Jew, live as a Gentile, and not as the Jews, why do you compel *the* nations to judaize?

Paul's position

On the content of the proclamation, we can clearly see where Paul stood from his letters.

The first issue was abstaining from fornication:

1Th 4:2 For we know what commands we gave you by the Lord Jesus. 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification, for you to abstain from fornication

No difficulties there. But what about meats offered to idols?

Paul has no problems with this at all.

1Co 10:25 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no question for conscience' sake; 26 "for the earth *is* the Lord's, and the fullness of it."

He does suggest abstaining however so as not to offend the 'weaker brothers'!

Rom 14:1 And receive him who is weak in the faith, *but* not to judgements of *your* thoughts. 2 For indeed one believes to eat all things; but being weak, *another* eats vegetables.

Rom 14:21 *It is* good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *anything* by which your brother stumbles, or is offended, or is made weak.

Who are these weaker brothers? These weaker brothers are the Apostles in Jerusalem! These Apostles are still keeping the Law as led by James the brother of the Lord.

The expression weak in the faith would clearly be offensive to James, especially when Paul has just aligned the strong with Abraham in a previous chapter

Rom 4 v 19 And not being weak in faith, he (Abraham) did not consider his own body already dead (being about a hundred years old) or the deadening of Sarah's womb.

This is certainly a broadside by Paul, but compared to the following, this is very tame.

Paul's curse

This is a very uncomfortable one.

Gal 1:6 I marvel that you so soon are being moved away from Him who called you into *the* grace of Christ, to another gospel, 7 which is not another, but some are

troubling you, and desiring to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from Heaven preach a gospel to you beside what we preached to you, let him be accursed.

James gospel is clearly another Gospel. And again Riposte?

<p>Gal 5:10 I have confidence in you in the Lord, that you will think nothing else, but that he troubling you shall bear the judgement, whoever he may be. 11 And I, brothers, if I yet proclaim circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the offense of the Cross has ceased. 12 I wish that those causing you to doubt will cut themselves off.</p>	<p>Jam 3:8 But no one can tame the tongue, <i>it is</i> an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 By this we bless God, even <i>the</i> Father. And by this we curse men, who have come into being according to the image of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.</p> <p>Jam 4:11 Do not speak against one another, brothers. He who speaks against <i>his</i> brother, and who judges his brother, speaks against the Law and judges the Law. But if you judge the Law, you are not a doer of the Law, but a judge. 12 There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you who judges another?</p>
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Enemy of God – Friend of the World

Paul’s modus operandi is at odds with James. James was interested in maintaining a ritual purity, that extended as far as Jewish believers being unable to share food with non-Jewish believers who were not Torah compliant.

<p>1Co 10:33 even as I please all <i>men</i> in all <i>things</i>, not seeking my own profit, but the <i>profit</i> of the many, so that they may be saved.</p> <p>1Co 9:22 To the weak I became as the weak, so that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all <i>men</i>, so that I might by all means save some.</p>	<p>Jam 4:4 ... Do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity <i>with</i> God? Therefore whoever desires to be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.</p>
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Liar

Paul makes a habit of declaring that he is telling the truth and not lying.

Do these passages infer that he may well have been labeled a liar by the Jerusalem Church?

There is little reason for him to repeat his innocence otherwise.

Rom 9:1 I tell <i>the</i> truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience also bearing me witness in <i>the</i> Holy Spirit,	Jam 3:14 But if you have bitter jealousy and strife in your hearts, do not glory and lie against the truth.
2Co 11:31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I do not lie.	
Gal 1:20 And what I write to you, behold, before God, I do not lie.	

Were the visiting Judaizers authorized by James?

Acts clearly states they were not:

Act 15:5 But some of those from the sect of the Pharisees, having believed, rose up, saying, It was necessary to circumcise them and to command *them* to keep the Law of Moses.

Act 15:24 Because we have heard that certain ones who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, Be circumcised and keep the law! (to whom we gave no such command);

Paul in Galatians doesn't see these people as an unauthorised rogue element however:

Gal 2:12 For before some came from James, he ate with the nations. But when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those of the circumcision.

Gal 2:13 And the rest of the Jews also dissembled with him, so as even Barnabas was led away with their dissembling.

Gal 2:14 But when I saw that they did not walk uprightly with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before all, If you, being a Jew, live as a Gentile, and not as the Jews, why do you compel *the* nations to judaize?

Conclusion

Much of the content of this paper is not something most Christians want to address.

Our religion is the idealised gloss of Acts, and as such, lacks reality and truth.

But it is far better to face the truth, and have a faith that is real. Test what I have written, if you can avoid its inevitable consequences, all the best to you.

Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Kingdom of heaven is not an add-on to either Judaism or a syncretised Christianity.

If a Christian can come to this place of deconstruction and disposal of old wineskins, they are in a position to receive the Kingdom paradigm.

I believe that there is no other foundation than Christ, and Paul's gospel of direct revelation, direct experience of God through the Holy Spirit.

It's not viable to have any other foundation, be it either infallible Scriptures or infallible Church leaders.

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Appendix 1

Contradictions between Pauls letters and Acts

Timelines - Acts versus Paul

This is where we run into some very glaring contradictions between Acts and Pauls letters.

Pauls History in Acts 9 (and 26) is at odds with Galatians 1 and 2.

Act 26:20 But to those first in Damascus, and **Jerusalem, and to all the country of Judea**, and to the nations, I made known *the command* to repent and to turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance

Act 9:19 And taking food, *he* was strengthened. And Saul was certain days with the disciples in Damascus.

20 And immediately he proclaimed Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. 21 But all who heard *him* were amazed and said, Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem and came here for that reason, that he might bring them bound to the chief priests? 22 But Saul increased the more in strength and confounded the Jews who lived at Damascus, proving that this One is the Christ. 23 And after many days had been fulfilled, **the Jews took counsel to kill him.** 24 But their plot was known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night in order to kill him. 25 Then the disciples took *him* by night and let him down through the wall in a basket. 26 **And arriving in Jerusalem, Saul attempted to join himself to the disciples. But they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.** 27 **But Barnabas took him and brought *him* to the apostles and told them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had spoken boldly in Damascus in the name of Jesus.** 28 **And he was with them, coming in and going out in Jerusalem.** 29 **And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and argued with the Hellenists.** But they seized him in order to kill him.

30 But knowing, the brothers brought him down to Caesarea and sent him forth to Tarsus. 31 Then, indeed, the churches had rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and having been built up. And having gone on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they *were* increased.

Gal 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and having called *me* by His grace 16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the nations, immediately I did not confer with flesh and blood 17 Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those apostles before me, but I went into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. 18 Then after three **years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and stayed with him fifteen days** 19 **But I saw no other of the apostles, except James the Lord's brother.** 20 And what I write to you, behold, before God, I do not lie. 21 **Then I went into the regions of Syria and of Cilicia,** 22 **and was unknown by face to the churches of Judea in Christ.** 23 But only they were hearing that he who

then persecuted us, now preaches the faith which he once ravaged. 24 And they glorified God in me. Gal 2:1 Then through fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also. 2 And I went up by revelation. And I put before them the gospel which I proclaim in the nations, but privately to those *seeming to be* pillars, lest I run, or I ran, into vanity. 3 (But not even Titus, the *one* with me, a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.) 4 But because of those false brothers stealing in, who stole in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus; they desiring to enslave us; 5 to whom not even for an hour did we yield in subjection, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. 6 But from those who seemed to be something (what kind they were then does not matter to me; God does not accept the face of man), for those seeming *important* conferred nothing to me. 7 But on the contrary, seeing that I have been entrusted *with* the gospel of the uncircumcision, as Peter to the circumcision; 8 for He working in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision also worked in me to the nations. 9 and knowing the grace given to me, James, and Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, gave right hands of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we *go* to the nations, but they to the circumcision. 10 Only *they asked* that we remember the poor, which very thing I was eager to do.

Acts is also at odds with Paul's version of the Damascus basket episode. It was not Jews who were after him but an Arab King

2Co 11:32 In Damascus **the governor under Aretas the king guarded the city of the Damascenes, desiring to lay hold of me.** 33 And I was let down in a basket through a window through the wall, and escaped their hands.

Peter – Acts versus Paul

Again we have contradictions between Paul's letters and Acts.

Act 15:7 And after much disputing, Peter rose up and said to them, Men, brothers, you recognize that from ancient days God chose among us ***that through my mouth the nations should hear the Word of the gospel***, and believe.

Gal 2:7 But on the contrary, seeing that I have been entrusted *with* the gospel of the uncircumcision, as **Peter to the circumcision; 8 for He working in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision** also worked in me to the nations. 9 and knowing the grace given to me, James, and Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, gave right hands of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we *go* to the nations, but they to the circumcision.