

## Paul's Great Commission

### Introduction:

1. Many times you will hear preachers speak of "the great commission." Usually they are referring to Christ's commission of the eleven apostles in **Matthew 28:16-20**.
2. Unfortunately, when people use the term "the great commission" it can lead believers to some false notions.
  - It can lead them to believe that Christ only gave **one** great commission in the Bible.
    - Christ in fact gave the eleven apostles **five** commissions after His resurrection.
  - It can also lead people to believe that Christ only gave a "great commission" to the eleven apostles, and nobody else.
3. This of course is not true. There is another apostle who distinguished himself apart from the twelve apostles (**1 Corinthians 15:5-8**). He also saw the resurrected Christ, but he saw Him after His ascension into heaven. This of course was the apostle Paul.
4. Did Paul receive a great commission from Christ? Indeed he did.
  - Why do so many churches focus on Christ's commissions on earth to the twelve, and give little or no attention to Christ's commission from heaven to Paul?
  - Could there be something in Paul's commission that Satan does not want people to see? Could it be that the turning away from Paul in his own day (**2 Timothy 1:15**) has continued for centuries even until now?
5. In this lesson we will explore the commission of Christ to the apostle Paul and seek to understand how it applies to us today.

### First, Paul's commission involved an unlikely ambassador, Saul of Tarsus.

1. Any time a commission is given, it must have an ambassador to carry its message. There must be a spokesman to carry the message.
2. When the time came for Christ to give a special commission in Acts 9, He chose a most unlikely ambassador. A man known as Saul of Tarsus (Paul).
  - Saul was a devout religious Jew, a Pharisee. **Galatians 1:14**
  - Saul was zealous to keep the Old Testament Law. **Philippians 3:6**
  - Saul was the enemy of Christ. **Acts 26:9**
  - Saul was the enemy of believers in Christ. **Acts 9:1-2, 22:4, 26:10-11**
3. What an unlikely candidate to take the message of God's grace!
4. But, in another way, it makes perfect sense. Paul was the enemy of God who deserved God's wrath and judgment, but received the undeserved grace of God.
5. Who does this sound like? This sounds like all of us who have placed our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. All of us can relate to Paul. **Ephesians 2:11-13**
6. Who better to proclaim the message of grace than the person who has experienced grace?
  - Satan may convince you that you are unworthy to proclaim God's message of grace to others. He may use past sins and failures to persuade you that God could never use you.
  - Satan may even use others to cast doubt on your usefulness. **Acts 9:26**

- When this happens, remember Saul of Tarsus. He was an unlikely ambassador that God used mightily.

### **Second, Paul's commission involved a different focus, Gentiles.**

1. The kingdom program of Israel called for the conversion of Israel first. Israel would be converted, their earthly kingdom would be established by their Messiah in Jerusalem, and Israel would be a light and blessing to all nations. **Isaiah 60:1-3**
2. This is why Christ's commissions to the twelve required that they begin executing their commissions at Jerusalem. **Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8**
3. As soon as Paul was converted to Christ on the road to Damascus, Christ made it clear that His commission to Paul would be different. **Acts 26:14-18**
  - Paul's commission would be predominantly to the Gentiles.
  - In fact, when Paul attempted to go to Jerusalem to begin a ministry there, Christ commanded him to get out of Jerusalem quickly because Christ would send Paul far hence to the Gentiles. **Acts 22:17-21**
4. When Paul began his first missionary journey in Acts 13 (vs. 5, 14), Paul would always begin in the local Jewish synagogue. Paul did this for several reasons:
  - The local synagogue would have a copy of God's Word (the Old Testament).
  - Because Paul was in Gentile regions, there would be a combination of Jews and Gentile proselytes in the local synagogue.
  - Paul, being a Jew and Pharisee, would have opportunity to speak and show from the Scriptures that Jesus was the crucified and risen Son of God.
5. Invariably, whenever Paul would do this, the Gentiles eagerly received the message of Christ, but the Jews would bring persecution against Paul. **Acts 13:44-48**
6. Paul continued to try and reach his people, the Jews, throughout the book of Acts, but at the end of Acts, Paul makes a final declarative statement of judgment against Israel and announces that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles. **Acts 28:25-28**
7. Paul never addresses Israel again in any of the letters he wrote after the book of Acts (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon). Paul's focus was exclusively the Gentiles and called himself "*...the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.*" **Ephesians 3:1**

### **Third, Paul's commission involved a new message, the gospel of Christ.**

1. After Paul was converted to Christ, he immediately went into the synagogue of Damascus and preached to the Jews that Jesus was the risen Son of God and Christ, the Messiah. **Acts 9:20, 22**
2. This is what the twelve had been proclaiming to Israel in the book of Acts. Paul calls it the gospel of God. **Romans 1:1-4**
3. But in **1 Corinthians 9:17**, Paul stated that "*...a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.*"
4. Why would Paul say this if he had been proclaiming the gospel of God since Acts 9 that the twelve had been proclaiming since Acts 2? What was this dispensing and when did it take place?

5. Paul basically fades out of sight in Acts 9 after preaching the gospel of God, but in Acts 13 he begins his first missionary journey and dominates the scene for the rest of the book of Acts.
6. We know that during this time (between Acts 9 and 13) Paul spent three years in Arabia and Damascus. What was he doing? He was receiving the special gospel message that the Lord would have him preach to the Gentiles. **Galatians 1:11-12**
7. We see Paul preaching it for the first time in **Acts 13:38-39**. It was the message that sinners could be totally forgiven and justified before God apart from the Law of Moses.
  - This would mean that people could be saved without becoming a proselyte into the Jewish religion. They could be saved apart from the rite of circumcision. Paul never mentions water baptism as a requirement.
  - People could be saved by faith alone in the finished work of Jesus Christ.
8. This was a new message and Paul calls it "*the gospel of Christ.*" **Romans 1:16; Galatians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 9:17-18**
9. This is the gospel that Satan is desperately trying to blind people from seeing. **2 Corinthians 4:4**
10. This gospel of Christ message was not given to Peter or any of the twelve. Paul had to go to Jerusalem and explain it to them. Galatians 2
11. Can you see why Satan would want to shift people's focus away from the commission of Paul? Paul's commission is **our** commission today.
12. As the former enemies of Christ, we are to take the gospel of Christ to people everywhere, without discrimination.

## Comparing Paul's Commission with the Twelve's

### Introduction:

1. When a person refers to "the great commission" they are inferring that there is one commission from our Lord that stands above all the rest.
2. What does the word "commission" mean? Webster's defines it this way:
  - An authorization or command to act in a prescribed manner or to perform prescribed acts.
  - Authority to act for, in behalf of, or in place of another; a task or matter entrusted to one as an agent for another.
3. It is interesting that the word "commission" is only used one time in God's Word.
  - In **Acts 26:12** Paul had authority and **commission** from the chief priests to go to Damascus and arrest believers in Christ.
  - A commission has to do with the authority to act on behalf of another. The one who grants the authority has the power to detail what he wants the other person to do and where they are to do it.
4. Nowhere in the Bible does God label a set of instructions as "the **great** commission." Mankind has sought to label certain passages of Scripture this way, but God never does.
5. As we study, we find that God's Word is a **series** of "great commissions."
  - John the Baptist received a great commission. **Luke 3:2-4; John 1:23, 33**
  - The twelve received a great commission in **Matthew 10:5-14**.
  - This one differed from the great commissions they received after Christ's resurrection. **Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8**
6. Many Bible teachers assume that Christ's words to the eleven after His resurrection and before His ascension were the final commissions He gave until now.
7. This is grossly incorrect and unscriptural. These were not Christ's **last** words. As we learned last week, Christ spoke, yet again (this time from heaven), and gave a great commission to a different person, the apostle Paul.
8. Was Paul's commission simply a reiteration of the commissions that Christ gave to the twelve? Is Paul's commission identical to the twelve's?
9. When one takes the time to truly examine the words of these commissions, they will find that they differ in many ways. Let's explore these commissions and seek to rightly divide the differences.

### The Twelve

Begin at Jerusalem

### Paul

Leave Jerusalem

1. When Christ commissioned the twelve, God made it very clear where they were to begin their work, Jerusalem. **Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8**
2. This was not a suggestion, but rather a command. It was one the twelve took very seriously and literally, despite great danger. **Acts 8:1**
3. Today, preachers allegorize this clear command by saying that these passages teach that we should always evangelize our hometown first. This is **not** the teaching or intended purpose of these Scriptures. Jerusalem was not their hometown. They were men of Galilee. **Acts 1:11**

4. How does this compare with Paul's commission? When Paul went to Jerusalem, Christ told him to get out quickly. **Acts 22:18, 21**
5. So clearly there were geographic differences in these commissions.

**The Twelve**

Received their commission on earth

**Paul**

Received his commission from heaven

1. It is only logical the twelve would receive their commission on earth. They had been taught by Christ during His **earthly** ministry for three years. His parting words were spoken to them before He ascended from earth to heaven.
2. They were given the promise that as Christ left the earth and went to heaven, He would one day return from the heavens to the earth. **Acts 1:9-11**
3. This of course was a confirmation to them that Christ would, in fact, return and set up an **earthly** kingdom for Israel as promised. **Matthew 19:27-28, 6:10**
4. Paul received His commission from Christ in the heavens (**Acts 9:3**). Paul called his commission "*the heavenly vision*" (**Acts 26:19**).
5. Paul's commission involved making known a new heavenly organism called the body of Christ, whose blessings are not earthly, but heavenly. **Ephesians 1:3, 2:6-7**

**The Twelve**

Go to Gentiles only after witnessing throughout the land of Israel

**Paul**

Go directly to the Gentiles

## Comparing Paul's Commission with the Twelve's – Part 2

### Introduction:

1. When a person refers to "the great commission" they are inferring that there is one commission from our Lord that stands above all the rest.
2. What does the word "commission" mean? Webster's defines it this way:
  - An authorization or command to act in a prescribed manner or to perform prescribed acts.
  - Authority to act for, in behalf of, or in place of another; a task or matter entrusted to one as an agent for another.
3. It is interesting that the word "commission" is only used one time in God's Word.
  - In **Acts 26:12** Paul had authority and **commission** from the chief priests to go to Damascus and arrest believers in Christ.
  - A commission has to do with the authority to act on behalf of another. The one who grants the authority has the power to detail what he wants the other person to do and where they are to do it.
4. Nowhere in the Bible does God label a set of instructions as "the **great** commission." Mankind has sought to label certain passages of Scripture this way, but God never does.
5. As we study, we find that God's Word is a **series** of "great commissions."
  - John the Baptist received a great commission. **Luke 3:2-4; John 1:23, 33**
  - The twelve received a great commission in **Matthew 10:5-14**.
  - This one differed from the great commissions they received after Christ's resurrection. **Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8**
6. Many Bible teachers assume that Christ's words to the eleven after His resurrection and before His ascension were the final commissions He gave until now.
7. This is grossly incorrect and unscriptural. These were not Christ's **last** words. As we learned last week, Christ spoke, yet again (this time from heaven), and gave a great commission to a different person, the apostle Paul.
8. Was Paul's commission simply a reiteration of the commissions that Christ gave to the twelve? Is Paul's commission identical to the twelve's?
9. When one takes the time to truly examine the words of these commissions, they will find that they differ in many ways. Let's explore these commissions and seek to rightly divide the differences.

### The Twelve

Begin at Jerusalem

### Paul

Leave Jerusalem

1. When Christ commissioned the twelve, God made it very clear where they were to begin their work, Jerusalem. **Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8**
2. This was not a suggestion, but rather a command. It was one the twelve took very seriously and literally, despite great danger. **Acts 8:1**
3. Today, preachers allegorize this clear command by saying that these passages teach that we should always evangelize our hometown first. This is **not** the teaching or intended purpose of these Scriptures. Jerusalem was not their hometown. They were men of Galilee. **Acts 1:11**

4. How does this compare with Paul's commission? When Paul went to Jerusalem, Christ told him to get out quickly. **Acts 22:18, 21**
5. So clearly there were geographic differences in these commissions.

#### **The Twelve**

Received their commission on earth

#### **Paul**

Received his commission from heaven

1. It is only logical the twelve would receive their commission on earth. They had been taught by Christ during His **earthly** ministry for three years. His parting words were spoken to them before He ascended from earth to heaven.
2. They were given the promise that as Christ left the earth and went to heaven, He would one day return from the heavens to the earth. **Acts 1:9-11**
3. This of course was a confirmation to them that Christ would, in fact, return and set up an **earthly** kingdom for Israel as promised. **Matthew 18:27-28, 6:10**
4. Paul received His commission from Christ in the heavens (**Acts 9:3**). Paul called his commission "*the heavenly vision*" (**Acts 26:19**).
5. Paul's commission involved making known a new heavenly organism called the body of Christ, whose blessings are not earthly, but heavenly. **Ephesians 1:3, 2:6-7**

#### **The Twelve**

Go to Gentiles only after witnessing throughout the land of Israel

#### **Paul**

Go directly to the Gentiles

1. Christ made it very clear to the twelve that their message must go the land area of Israel first. God even specified the order in which they were to preach to Israel: Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. **Acts 1:8**
2. They would eventually get to the Gentiles with their message, but not until the land area of Israel received it first. **Matthew 28:19** must be viewed in light of **Matthew 10:23, Luke 24:47, and Acts 1:8**.
3. What about Paul's commission? As we already saw, Paul began his ministry by going into Arabia and then Damascus (**Galatians 1:17**) and when he went to Jerusalem, Christ told him to **leave** Jerusalem. Paul was only there 15 days. **Galatians 1:18**
4. Paul then went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia (modern Turkey). Paul said he was unknown by face to those in Judea. **Galatians 1:21-22**
5. Paul's first recorded ministry was not in Israel at all, but in Antioch of Syria (**Acts 11:25**). All of his missionary journeys were to Gentile countries.
6. Paul certainly had a passion to see his people (Israel) receive his gospel (**Romans 10:1**), but Christ made it very clear that the focus of Paul's commission was not the conversion of Israel, but rather to reach Gentiles with the gospel of Christ. **Acts 22:21, 26:17-18**
7. The focus of Paul's commission was clearly different than the twelve's. The twelve recognized this distinction. **Galatians 2:9**

## **The Twelve**

Preach the gospel of the kingdom  
and the gospel of God

## **Paul**

Preach the gospel of Christ  
and the gospel of grace

1. Paul received a gospel by direct revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven.  
**Galatians 1:11-12**
  - This revelation had previously been kept a secret. It was a mystery.  
**Ephesians 3:1-9**
  - This is why Paul refers to it as "*my gospel.*" **Romans 2:16, 16:25; 2 Timothy 2:8**
  - Paul said he had to go to Jerusalem and communicate to the twelve "*that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.*" **Galatians 2:2**
2. Paul calls this gospel "*the gospel of Christ.*" This is a phrase that is unique to Paul.  
**Romans 1:16; Galatians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 9:17-18**
  - This gospel simply proclaims that a Gentile can be saved by faith alone in the finished work of Jesus Christ. **Romans 3:21-22**
3. Paul also refers to his message as the gospel of the grace of God. **Acts 20:24**
  - This simply states that Jew or Gentile alike can be saved and completely forgiven of all sins by simple faith in the gospel of Christ, and are placed by God's Spirit into one body - the body of Christ. **Ephesians 3:6-8**
4. When Christ commissioned the twelve in **Matthew 28:18-20** and told them to go and teach all nations, what gospel were they to proclaim? It could not have been Paul's gospel because it hadn't been revealed yet.
  - **Matthew 24:14** identifies it as "*the gospel of the kingdom.*"
  - In context, this was the good news that Christ is returning to earth and will establish a literal, physical, visible kingdom on earth.
5. They were instructed to pray for this (**Matthew 6:10**), and to proclaim this message.  
**Matthew 24:27-30, 25:31**
6. This is exactly what the twelve did in the early part of the book of Acts. They told Israel that they had crucified their Messiah, but that He had risen, and they should repent and prepare themselves for His return to earth. **Acts 3:19-21**
7. We must understand that both Paul and the twelve preached the gospel of God (**Romans 1:1-4**). Christ died, was buried, but rose again. But what did they teach that should be the response to this good news?
  - The twelve told Israel to repent and be water baptized; they would then receive the Holy Spirit, and remission of sins at Christ's Second Coming.
  - Paul said to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. **Acts 16:31**

## **The Twelve**

Teach the commandments Christ  
gave them while on earth

## **Paul**

Teach truth revealed by  
Christ from heaven

1. What did Christ commission the twelve to teach? They were to teach people to observe the commandments that Christ had given them. **Matthew 28:20**

2. This would include the commandments of the law (**Matthew 5:17-19**), as well as other righteous commands that Christ gave them in view of His coming kingdom to earth. For an example, read **Matthew 5:39-44**, **6:19-34**, and **Luke 12:32-34**.
3. Many preachers teach from these passages devotionally, but Christ meant them literally (**Matthew 7:24-27**), and the twelve took them literally.  
**Acts 2:44-45, 4:33-35, 5:41**
4. What about Paul's commission? Was he simply to teach truth that had already been revealed to the twelve as part of their commission?
5. When Paul was converted, Christ made it clear that Paul was to preach according to what Christ had shown him from heaven and the special revelations that Christ would give him in the future. **Acts 26:16**
6. This is why Paul says that he did not confer with flesh and blood after his salvation (**Galatians 1:16**). Christ would give to Paul special revelation that had previously been kept secret. **Colossians 1:25-26**
7. The twelve were to proclaim Christ's words that He spoke to Israel while on earth. Paul was to teach Christ's words that He spoke to the body of Christ from heaven.

## Comparing Paul's Commission with the Twelve's – Part 3

### Introduction:

1. When a person refers to "the great commission" they are inferring that there is one commission from our Lord that stands above all the rest.
2. What does the word "commission" mean? Webster's defines it this way:
  - An authorization or command to act in a prescribed manner or to perform prescribed acts.
  - Authority to act for, in behalf of, or in place of another; a task or matter entrusted to one as an agent for another.
3. It is interesting that the word "commission" is only used one time in God's Word.
  - In **Acts 26:12** Paul had authority and **commission** from the chief priests to go to Damascus and arrest believers in Christ.
  - A commission has to do with the authority to act on behalf of another. The one who grants the authority has the power to detail what he wants the other person to do and where they are to do it.
4. Nowhere in the Bible does God label a set of instructions as "the **great** commission." Mankind has sought to label certain passages of Scripture this way, but God never does.
5. As we study, we find that God's Word is a **series** of "great commissions."
  - John the Baptist received a great commission. **Luke 3:2-4; John 1:23, 33**
  - The twelve received a great commission in **Matthew 10:5-14**.
  - This one differed from the great commissions they received after Christ's resurrection. **Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8**
6. Many Bible teachers assume that Christ's words to the eleven after His resurrection and before His ascension were the final commissions He gave until now.
7. This is grossly incorrect and unscriptural. These were not Christ's **last** words. As we learned last week, Christ spoke, yet again (this time from heaven), and gave a great commission to a different person, the apostle Paul.
8. Was Paul's commission simply a reiteration of the commissions that Christ gave to the twelve? Is Paul's commission identical to the twelve's?
9. When one takes the time to truly examine the words of these commissions, they will find that they differ in many ways. Let's explore these commissions and seek to rightly divide the differences.

### The Twelve

Begin at Jerusalem

### Paul

Leave Jerusalem

1. When Christ commissioned the twelve, God made it very clear where they were to begin their work, Jerusalem. **Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8**
2. This was not a suggestion, but rather a command. It was one the twelve took very seriously and literally, despite great danger. **Acts 8:1**
3. Today, preachers allegorize this clear command by saying that these passages teach that we should always evangelize our hometown first. This is **not** the teaching or intended purpose of these Scriptures. Jerusalem was not their hometown. They were men of Galilee. **Acts 1:11**

4. How does this compare with Paul's commission? When Paul went to Jerusalem, Christ told him to get out quickly. **Acts 22:18, 21**
5. So clearly there were geographic differences in these commissions.

#### **The Twelve**

Received their commission on earth

#### **Paul**

Received his commission from heaven

1. It is only logical the twelve would receive their commission on earth. They had been taught by Christ during His **earthly** ministry for three years. His parting words were spoken to them before He ascended from earth to heaven.
2. They were given the promise that as Christ left the earth and went to heaven, He would one day return from the heavens to the earth. **Acts 1:9-11**
3. This of course was a confirmation to them that Christ would, in fact, return and set up an **earthly** kingdom for Israel as promised. **Matthew 18:27-28, 6:10**
4. Paul received His commission from Christ in the heavens (**Acts 9:3**). Paul called his commission "*the heavenly vision*" (**Acts 26:19**).
5. Paul's commission involved making known a new heavenly organism called the body of Christ, whose blessings are not earthly, but heavenly. **Ephesians 1:3, 2:6-7**

#### **The Twelve**

Go to Gentiles only after witnessing throughout the land of Israel

#### **Paul**

Go directly to the Gentiles

1. Christ made it very clear to the twelve that their message must go the land area of Israel first. God even specified the order in which they were to preach to Israel: Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. **Acts 1:8**
2. They would eventually get to the Gentiles with their message, but not until the land area of Israel received it first. **Matthew 28:19** must be viewed in light of **Matthew 10:23, Luke 24:47, and Acts 1:8**.
3. What about Paul's commission? As we already saw, Paul began his ministry by going into Arabia and then Damascus (**Galatians 1:17**) and when he went to Jerusalem, Christ told him to **leave** Jerusalem. Paul was only there 15 days. **Galatians 1:18**
4. Paul then went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia (modern Turkey). Paul said he was unknown by face to those in Judea. **Galatians 1:21-22**
5. Paul's first recorded ministry was not in Israel at all, but in Antioch of Syria (**Acts 11:25**). All of his missionary journeys were to Gentile countries.
6. Paul certainly had a passion to see his people (Israel) receive his gospel (**Romans 10:1**), but Christ made it very clear that the focus of Paul's commission was not the conversion of Israel, but rather to reach Gentiles with the gospel of Christ. **Acts 22:21, 26:17-18**
7. The focus of Paul's commission was clearly different than the twelve's. The twelve recognized this distinction. **Galatians 2:9**

## **The Twelve**

Preach the gospel of the kingdom  
and the gospel of God

## **Paul**

Preach the gospel of Christ  
and the gospel of grace

1. Paul received a gospel by direct revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven.  
**Galatians 1:11-12**
  - This revelation had previously been kept a secret. It was a mystery.  
**Ephesians 3:1-9**
  - This is why Paul refers to it as "*my gospel.*" **Romans 2:16, 16:25; 2 Timothy 2:8**
  - Paul said he had to go to Jerusalem and communicate to the twelve "*that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.*" **Galatians 2:2**
2. Paul calls this gospel "*the gospel of Christ.*" This is a phrase that is unique to Paul.  
**Romans 1:16; Galatians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 9:17-18**
  - This gospel simply proclaims that a Gentile can be saved by faith alone in the finished work of Jesus Christ. **Romans 3:21-22**
3. Paul also refers to his message as the gospel of the grace of God. **Acts 20:24**
  - This simply states that Jew or Gentile alike can be saved and completely forgiven of all sins by simple faith in the gospel of Christ, and are placed by God's Spirit into one body - the body of Christ. **Ephesians 3:6-8**
4. When Christ commissioned the twelve in **Matthew 28:18-20** and told them to go and teach all nations, what gospel were they to proclaim? It could not have been Paul's gospel because it hadn't been revealed yet.
  - **Matthew 24:14** identifies it as "*the gospel of the kingdom.*"
  - In context, this was the good news that Christ is returning to earth and will establish a literal, physical, visible kingdom on earth.
5. They were instructed to pray for this (**Matthew 6:10**), and to proclaim this message.  
**Matthew 24:27-30, 25:31**
6. This is exactly what the twelve did in the early part of the book of Acts. They told Israel that they had crucified their Messiah, but that He had risen, and they should repent and prepare themselves for His return to earth. **Acts 3:19-21**
7. We must understand that both Paul and the twelve preached the gospel of God (**Romans 1:1-4**). Christ died, was buried, but rose again. But what did they teach that should be the response to this good news?
  - The twelve told Israel to repent and be water baptized; they would then receive the Holy Spirit, and remission of sins at Christ's Second Coming.
  - Paul said to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. **Acts 16:31**

## **The Twelve**

Teach the commandments Christ  
gave them while on earth

## **Paul**

Teach truth revealed by  
Christ from heaven

1. What did Christ commission the twelve to teach? They were to teach people to observe the commandments that Christ had given them. **Matthew 28:20**

2. This would include the commandments of the law (**Matthew 5:17-19**), as well as other righteous commands that Christ gave them in view of His coming kingdom to earth. For an example, read **Matthew 5:39-44, 6:19-34, and Luke 12:32-34**.
3. Many preachers teach from these passages devotionally, but Christ meant them literally (**Matthew 7:24-27**), and the twelve took them literally.  
**Acts 2:44-45, 4:33-35, 5:41**
4. What about Paul's commission? Was he simply to teach truth that had already been revealed to the twelve as part of their commission?
5. When Paul was converted, Christ made it clear that Paul was to preach according to what Christ had shown him from heaven and the special revelations that Christ would give him in the future. **Acts 26:16**
6. This is why Paul says that he did not confer with flesh and blood after his salvation (**Galatians 1:16**). Christ would give to Paul special revelation that had previously been kept secret. **Colossians 1:25-26**
7. The twelve were to proclaim Christ's words that He spoke to Israel while on earth. Paul was to teach Christ's words that He spoke to the body of Christ from heaven.

### **The Twelve**

Water baptism was a crucial part of their commission and message

### **Paul**

The emphasis is on Spirit baptism, not water baptism

1. Water baptism was a crucial part of the message that Christ commissioned the twelve to proclaim. **Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38**
2. No person would enter the kingdom on earth unless they had believed the twelve's message and identified with this message through water baptism.
3. This was part of Israel's prophetic program. Israel had polluted themselves among the nations of the earth and this baptism with water spoke of Israel's need for divine cleansing. **Ezekiel 36:16-29 (notice especially vs. 25)**
4. But water baptism is never mentioned in Christ's commission to Paul (**Acts 26:16-18**). In fact, Paul said that "*Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.*" **1 Corinthians 1:17**
  - The twelve could have never made a statement like that. Paul obviously didn't think he was operating under the same commission as the twelve.
  - Water baptism is never mentioned once on Paul's first missionary journey.
5. Paul did baptize a few people during the transitional period of Acts, but we do not see him baptizing anybody after his statement in 1 Corinthians, nor does he mention it in any of his epistles he wrote after the book of Acts.
6. Paul revealed that every person that believes on Christ is immediately baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27; Ephesians 4:4-6**

### **In Conclusion:**

1. You may ask, "Why are Christ's commissions to the twelve and to Paul so different?"

2. It is very simple. With the rejection of the twelve's message by Israel, God would now usher in a time period that had been kept secret - a time of grace unrevealed previously.
3. The unfolding of this mystery and its truths would require a new apostle, with a new message, and a new commission.
4. The commission to the twelve has simply been interrupted, but will continue in the future after the body of Christ has been taken up to heaven.

# GOD'S PROPHETIC PROGRAM

