

## Episode #626 - The Why Question 11: The Second Major Turning Point in the New Testament

I. One of the most difficult questions we must ask ourselves regarding God, life, and the world is the “why” question. We who believe that there is a God Who is all-good and all-loving and Who made the world must answer why then this world is such a terrible place and in such a mess.

II. If Christ’s death on the cross, burial, and resurrection were all that was necessary for God to redeem the earth from the mess it is in and make it the way He always intended it to be, then why, now that Christ has done this, does God still delay in bringing in His kingdom? If Christ’s death was all that was necessary to fix everything, then why didn’t He do so long ago?

III. We discussed that the Bible reveals that we must rightly divide God’s work and His Word to discover just what it is God is doing today, as II Timothy 2:15 says. Christ did this in Luke 4:16-21, when He divided a sentence from Isaiah 61:1-2 in the middle and said the first part was currently being fulfilled. We have been seeing that the New Testament gives evidence that something changed, not just at Christ’s death and resurrection, but afterwards as well.

IV. A careful study of the New Testament indicates that there is a second major turning point in the New Testament after the cross.

A. Matthew 6:14-15 gives one great paradigm for forgiveness, but Ephesians 4:32 gives a completely different one!

B. Romans 11:13-25 says that the Gentiles are mere wild branches grafted into Israel’s good olive tree, yet Ephesians 3:6 says the Gentiles are joint and equal with Israel. Both must be true, being God’s Word, but both cannot be true of the same group of people at the same time.

C. In I Corinthians 7:7-9, Paul wishes that widows would remain unmarried as he was. Yet in I Timothy 5:14-15, Paul not only desires younger widows to marry, but suggests that some not doing so has caused them to turn aside after Satan!

D. All these passage point to a turning point in the New Testament: between Matthew and Ephesians, between Romans and Ephesians, and between I Corinthians and I Timothy. But what was the change, and when did it happen?

V. The initial New Testament plan completed.

A. Mark 16:15-18. God desired the gospel to be proclaimed to every creature (in every creation). The desire was for people to believe, be baptized, and be saved. Their part was to go and proclaim, whereas God’s part was to send signs to follow those who believe.

B. Mark 16:20. Before Mark even wrote his gospel, he indicates they DID go everywhere and proclaim the gospel!

C. Colossians 1:5-6. The gospel had already gone into all the world.

D. Colossians 1:23. Using the same language (in Greek as well) as in Mark 16:15, Paul tells us that the gospel WAS (past tense) proclaimed to every creature (in every creation) under heaven. This purpose of God was completed!

E. Now we have that the change was before Colossians. But when did it take place?

VI. One great thing defines God’s work today: how the gospel is proclaimed and the apostle that carries it.

A. Romans 10:11-15 gives us a picture of the gospel being carried in the Acts period. Most things are still true today. But what about verse 15?

B. “Sent” is the Greek word *apostello*, which means “sent as an apostle” or commissioned with authority. This verse is saying that no one could proclaim the

gospel unless God personally gave him authority to do so! This is why the book of Acts is the “Acts of the Apostles.”

- C. Acts 28:28. “Salvation” is actually an adjective in Greek, “salvation-bringing,” I think referring to the gospel, the “salvation-bringing message.” “Sent” here is the same word *apostello*. This tells us that the salvation-bringing message itself, the gospel, is now the apostle!
- D. If the gospel is now the apostle, then anyone can take it up and anyone can believe it. No longer does the proclaimer have to have authority, for the message itself has the authority. You don’t even have to believe it yourself; if you proclaim it, those who hear can believe and be saved.
- E. This statement in Acts 28:28 changed everything regarding the gospel and its proclamation. It explains why the Acts of the Apostles ends here. It is not sudden and unexpected, like many have thought. The Acts of the Apostles ended when the gospel itself became the apostle, not the men who proclaimed it!
- F. Acts 28:28 was the second major turning point in the New Testament. It marked the start of God’s work today.
- G. The point and purpose of Acts was to carry the gospel “to every creature.” Powerful miracles were used to help this purpose. But that purpose was completed! What then was the new purpose after Acts 28:28?

VII. God’s plan after Acts 28:28 is found in Ephesians 3:2: the Dispensation of the Grace of God. This is the work God is doing today: working with the world through grace.

VIII. Conclusion: The death of Christ on the cross was all that was needed to change the world and bring in God’s kingdom. However, a study of the New Testament reveals there was a second turning point after this, when God’s work changed. God interrupted His long program of working with Israel as His special people and started sending the gospel freely to all. Next time we will discuss what else this new work entailed and why God interrupted His kingdom program in order to introduce it.