

Paul, Lost and Found

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The thirteen epistles of Paul (Romans to Philemon) form a distinct body of truth; and this realm of truth is about us, the Church, the Body of Christ, as no other Scriptures are. Thus Paul is the Father's special messenger to us.

The teaching that the choice of Matthias in Acts 1 was a blunder on Peter's part has arisen from failure to recognize the character of Paul's calling and work. And to fail to realize this is to miss the vital core of Paul's whole teaching. Terrible loss! For when the Church lost this it had left no defense against Judaism and its law on the one hand and worldliness on the other. When we consider Paul's teaching we soon see its special character; but it is plain, even before a study of his doctrine, that his apostleship was wholly distinct from and independent of that of the Twelve.

Israel was, and in God's gracious purpose is yet to be, His *earthly* people. That is, their calling is to represent God on the earth, as the chief nation of the earth, dwelling in a special country, in an earthly order of things, with earthly hopes, rewards, etc. Yet the *Church, the Body of Christ*, into which, in the Father's wondrous grace, we have been called, is *heavenly*. The Church has nothing to do with earth, except to witness in the name of the Lord, and then pass on into glory, into heaven, its eternal Home.

We will never be able to understand Scripture till we see sharply and clearly the distinction between *Israel*, the chosen earthly nation, and the *Church, the Body of Christ*. Paul is the Apostle of the *latter*. And, as such, he is the Apostle of a *totally new thing*. For Israel is constantly before us in the Old Testament *and in the Gospels*.

At first thought these distinctions will not seem important; but then we remember that the right understanding of our exact relation as the Church is absolutely necessary. If we are to apprehend and enter into our full rights, privileges and responsibilities as Christians, their most careful study will be seen to be imperative.

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