

## Gospel App 2.0 – *Galatians 4:4*

**Introduction** – Before the coming of Christ, the gospel was preached (i.e. Gen 3:15, Rom 4:13, Gal 3:8, Heb 1:1-2), and yet it was in shadows (1 Pet 1:10-11). Even the entire old covenant system of sacrifices and the temple was a gospel-tract-in-shadows of sorts (Col 2:17, Heb 8:5). There were no glitches in this Gospel App 1.0; it was perfect and served its purpose perfectly (Rom 7:7, 12). It served as a tutor to lead us to Christ (Gal 3:21-4:5). However, God, Who is completely sovereign over all of history, always planned and then prepared the release of a new version, a new ordinance, a new way that did not obliterate the old, but rather fulfilled it in every way.

**When the Fullness of Time Came** (Gal 4:4) – God, by means of His Word given through prophets, gave many timelines as to what He would oversee happening before the Messiah would come. He told Abraham his heirs would spend four hundred years in affliction (Gen 15:13) and they did after Joseph's time in the land of Egypt before the Exodus (Ex 12:40f). Isaiah, along with many other prophets, warned of another great exile on the northern and then upon the southern kingdoms. Isaiah named the future Persian king who would release the Jews to go and rebuild the temple (Isaiah 44:28f). While in exile, Daniel, interpreting the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, foretold of four kingdoms who would rise up before the kingdom of God would be set up (Dan 2:31-45); a similar vision was given to Belshazzar in his first year of reign, the last king of Babylon before their fall to the Medes (Dan 7). Following these and other prophecies of Daniel, with the establishment of the Roman Empire and the Caesars who claimed to be the manifestation of a divine kingdom, the time had come (Luke 2:1).

**Other Preparations** – Under the providence of God, several other key developments took place because of Israel's exile and the rise and fall of these pagan kingdoms. While many Jews returned to Jerusalem, still many Jews remained in scattered lands amidst various tongues and ethnic groups. Synagogues were set up all over the world by Jews who continued, as able, to follow their religious practices (*sans* the sacrifices which couldn't occur except at the Temple).

**Koine Greek** - Under the kingdom of Alexander the Great (and even following his fall), a "common" language (as opposed to the literary language of "classical Greek") was established for use in the marketplace throughout his Macedonian conquests. Even after many Roman conquests, Rome (whose first language was Latin) made no attempt to suppress the Koine Greek language. The New Testament would be written within this Koine period. Linguistically considered, it is united in a very close way with the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint which was made at Alexandria in the centuries just preceding the coming of Christ (*Machen*). For the first time, there was a common language for both Jew and Gentile.

**Pax Roman and the Roman Roads** – At the time of Christ, the Roman Empire was in a time of extended, relative peace, providing economic and (relative) political stability. Citizens and others had freedom to travel throughout the empire. Rome was also famous for building extensive roadways, originally to provide quick access for its military throughout the empire, which now provided unrivaled ease of travel for its citizens.

**Does This Matter?** – While these historic, linguistic, and political developments may not be primary in the mind of Paul, nevertheless, they occurred due to the fulfillment of the prophecies of the rise and fall of the kingdoms of Daniel's prophesies. Because of these "side" issues, after Pentecost and the beginning of the missionary movements of Paul and others, the gospel quickly spread throughout the Roman Empire. This allowed Christianity to become, within one generation, a thoroughly worldwide religion. The gospel came to them and in a language they could read, hear and understand. This made it far easier for the covenantal transition from the old administration under tutors, to the mature man Paul speaks of in Gal 4:5, "*to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*" Technological advances (even under the direction of pagans) made the gospel of Jesus Christ available to the world.

**The Blessings of Technology (Dominion-Taking)** – Think of it as taking dominion of the world in which God has placed us, something we are commanded to do (Gen 1:28). Consider what happened because of the Guttenberg Press in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, laying the foundation of getting the Word of God (and in common languages) into the hands of the people of God. Consider the difference in travel and communication abilities for Hudson Taylor heading to China versus today. Consider the blessing of technological advances in science, medicine, and under the influence of Christian ethics, the development of hospitals, orphanages, and care for the poor and dying – technological advances for the purpose of serving others. Universities (rightly understood) have a Christian heritage, all studies in submission to the Queen of Sciences, theology.

**Be on the Right Side of Advance** – In one sense, the Judaizers were on the wrong side of advance (Gal 5:1-6, and see the entire book of Hebrews). They were like those hanging on to Windows XP after all the warnings that there would be no more support and we would have to move on to Windows 8 (OK – maybe not the best illustration). Almost every advance by humans can and has been used for immoral purposes or to the exploitation of others. Quite right. But the sin is not in the technology, it is in our hearts. Meanwhile, Paul made use of the fastest transportation, the broadest means of publication, as well as political and economic opportunities to get the gospel to the world and to serve men. Gospel App 2.0 had been released.