

Sunday, March 24, 2013—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 98 *Bible Study for Bereans, January 1936 A Critical Month*

Anti-Acts 2 and Anti-Acts 28 Period

- January 1936 was a critical month in the historical development of O’Hair’s dispensational thought. During this issue of *Bible Study for Bereans*, O’Hair and his companions write some of the clearest anti-Acts 2 statements to date. In addition, they begin to question some of the Acts 28 thinking that characterized the issues from August 1935 through December 1935.

Bible Study for Bereans (January, 1936)

- In “Is the One Body of Romans the One Body of Ephesians,” O’Hair begins to take issue with the Acts 28 notion that the mystery was not found in Paul’s Acts period epistles.
 - “I have tried to see a new Body beginning after that important climax in Acts 28:25 to 28; but I have seen too much spiritual disaster result from unsound exegesis and fanciful speculation of well meaning brethren, who have not only distinguished between things that differ, but between imaginary differences. Many of them begin by eliminating all that pertains to the New Covenant and they proceed to eliminate some things that they imagine are exclusively associated with the New Covenant, dropping the Lord’s Supper, the rapture of I Thessalonians 4:13 to 18, the judgment seat of II Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10, the believer’s need of a high Priest, Intercessor, or Advocate. These eliminations are only stepping stones toward other eliminations. . . Beginning the Body of Christ, of which we are members, this side of Acts 28:25 to 28, it leaves it optional with the individual member, according to his judgment or inclination, as to what orders he accepts from Romans, Galatians and Corinthians. The selections and rejections may be according to the peculiar fancies of the different individual Christians. By such an unwise, unsound and unscriptural procedure many unconsciously and unintentionally use the pen-knife of so-called dispensationalism joining with Jehudi. I am satisfied that the Enemy is responsible for these “extremists” to hinder the progress that has been made in recent years to uncover the glorious message of salvation by grace so long covered up in denominational creeds and religious traditions, and recover the blessed truth of the One Body.”
- O’Hair takes issue with the Acts 28 teaching that the mystery is not found in Paul’s Acts period epistles.
 - “To teach that all that the Holy Spirit wrote by the pen of the Apostle Paul in Romans and II Corinthians was known to Moses and the prophets and is mentioned in their writings, is certainly not the mark of intelligent and careful Bible searching. And likewise, to agree that the mystery refers to that which was “unprophesied” but revealed by the risen Christ, and then teach that that mystery is not found in some of Paul’s Epistles, written during the “Acts” period, is teaching wholly unworthy of any Christian who passes for a

competent and spiritual Bible teacher. On the other hand, to teach that there are not glorious truths presented in Paul's prison Epistles, not found in his other Epistles, regardless of the time he received the revelation of these truths is just as absurd."

- O'Hair summarized the known positions at that time (Acts 2/Acts 28) as to when the church began and then seems to indicate that they are both wrong.
 - "Most of these aggressive Fundamentalists state dogmatically and positively that that Body had its birthday on the day of Pentecost, about fifty days after the resurrection of the Son of God. There are a number of objections to this date. Some of these aggressive Fundamentalists, very much in the minority, state with the same degree of dogmatism and positiveness, that that Church, the Body of Christ did not have its historical beginning until after the events, recorded in the Book of Acts, had come to an end. They teach that the Body of Ephesians is altogether different from the Body of Romans. Let us now examine the Scriptures to see whether these things are true.

That the Church of Christ, which existed before Paul reached Rome, was called "one Body", no intelligent person would think of denying; for no language could be more simple than this statement found in Romans 12:4 and 5; "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one Body in Christ, and every one members one of another." But these brethren, who fix the date of the beginning of the Body of Ephesians and Colossians after Paul's arrival at Rome, state that the Body of Romans is a different Body, although it was the Church of God in Christ.

No student should deny that in Ephesians and Colossians there is a position; that there are possessions; that there are glories; that there is a ministry belonging to the Body of Christ, not mentioned in Paul's pre-prison Epistles. But let us show, by stating the blessings which are common to the Body of the "Acts" period and the Body of the later period, that the two Bodies are identical; at the same time agreeing with the "later-date" brethren that there is a new administration and order in the "Post-Acts" Church. This is quite different from teaching that there are two separate, different, or distinct Bodies.

Some of these brethren seek to prove by I Timothy 4:13, Philemon 22 and II Timothy 1:15, that between Paul's two imprisonments in Rome he went back to Asia (perhaps Europe also) and preached a message which superseded the message he had preached in the same cities before the "Acts" period closed. This was a new revelation from Christ and was the dispensation of the mystery", the "untraceable riches of Christ", guaranteeing to members of this new Body, a hope and a calling different from the hope and calling of the members of the Body in Romans.

These brethren are divided as to whether the entire living membership of the Body of Romans was transferred into the new Body, or only those members who were willing to receive the new teaching; or whether all of the members of the first Body were left in the

first Body, and only new converts were baptized into the “Post-Acts” Body. Of course, with this last theory, they have trouble getting Paul and Timothy and Luke and Titus into the new Body, but this does not seem to bother some of them. They are willing to leave them out, if this is necessary to prove their theory. . .

It is the teaching of the brethren, who fix the historical beginning of the Body of Ephesians after Acts 28:31 that there was a “Kingdom” Church during the “Acts” period superseded by the Body, which began after that period. Because they teach that the Church of the “Acts” period was the “Kingdom” Church and the Body of Ephesians did not begin with Acts 2:41, but after Acts 28:31, those whom we call the “Pentecost Body” brethren, call the “Post- Acts Body” brethren, “ultra-dispensationalists.”

But now to the question: Is there Scriptural authority for calling the Body of Romans 12:4 and 5 a “Kingdom” Church altogether different from the Body of Ephesians 1:19 to 22?”

- In addition, O’Hair is equally clear that Peter was not forming the one new man during the early Acts period.
 - “From Acts 1:21 to Acts 12:3, we learn how God held all of the Twelve Apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). He did not let one of them die until the household of Cornelius (the religious Gentile who was seeking Israel’s God) received from Peter, with his kingdom keys, the Word which God sent to Israel, the gospel of the Kingdom. Acts 10:34 to 48. After Acts 13:2, “separate unto me Barnabas and Saul”, nothing more of Peter’s preaching is recorded in Acts, except his statement of what took place from Acts 2:22 to Acts 11:18. Here is the order, “Christ, in fulfillment of the Scriptures, raised to take David’s throne”. Acts 2:27 to 33. “The residue of Israelites”. Acts 2:41 and Acts 4:4; Acts 6:7; Acts 11:19. “Then the seeking Gentile.” Acts 10:31 and 32. Peter did not preach reconciliation, or the gospel of glory, to any of these converts. That was not committed to him. He had the keys of the kingdom. Mark 16:16 to 18.

Now observe, that Peter declared that all of this was in fulfillment of Amos 9:11 to 15; and as Amos was ignorant and silent concerning the Body of Christ, what the Lord was doing by members of the Body after Acts 11:19 is another matter; but this is certain: Peter’s declaration concerning the taking out of Gentiles was not the mystery. This was made known to the sons of men in other ages.”

- Regarding what gospel Paul was preaching during the Acts period O’Hair states:
 - “What gospel did Paul preach in his Epistle to the Romans and other pre-prison Epistles? It is true that he was accused of saying that there was another King Jesus. Acts 17:7. But was the gospel of the uncircumcision of Galatians 2:7 to 9; Galatians 3:6 to 8, the gospel of the Kingdom? Was the gospel of the glory of Christ of II Corinthians 4:4, or the gospel of reconciliation of II Corinthians 5:17 to 21, or the gospel of righteousness by grace

without a cause of Romans 3:24, the gospel of the Kingdom? Was the gospel of the grace of God, of Acts 20:24, the gospel of the Kingdom? Think of how we have had to contend against Pentecostalism for the great difference in these two gospels; and now let us not preach the negation of what we have stood for so uncompromisingly by stating that Paul was preaching the gospel of the Kingdom to get believers in the Kingdom Church. This is not the Berean method.”

- This article represents a drastic change in thinking when compared with the statements O’Hair was making in 1935. O’Hair concluded this article by including a list of twenty reasons that prove that the body of Romans 12:4-5 and Ephesians 4:5 are the same body.
 - See Appendix A for a complete listing of all twenty reasons.
- The January, 1936 issue also contains an important article from the pen of Charles F. Baker, titled “Were the Last Days the First Days?” In this article Pastor Baker presents the most convincing and complete argument to date for why the church did not begin at Pentecost. Mr. Baker essentially argues, “How can the last days of Israel be the beginning of the church?”
 - “What would you think of an exegesis which made the last mean the first? Would it not be much akin to saying that black means white, or that yes means no? But, it may be asked, who teaches that last means first? It must be admitted that no one claims to teach this, but it will be left for you to judge in this study of Pentecost whether or not this is taught by those who claim that the Body of Christ began on that Jewish feast day.

The Scripture is Acts 2:17. The scene is the day of Pentecost. The Apostle Peter is the mouth piece of the Holy Spirit, who is giving a specific account of what is transpiring upon that notable day. Now the majority of pre-millenarians, if asked to relate what happened on that Pentecost, would say that the Church which is the Body of Christ came into existence at that time. It was the birthday of the Church, or in other words, Pentecost marked the first days of the Church.

Now ask the Holy Spirit what took place, and hear Him answering “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: “And it shall come to pass in the last days” God says that the events of Pentecost were described by Joel some 800 years before, and that these events marked the last days. You are now face to face with the problem which has confronted many true Bereans. They had been taught, and for that reason had taught others, that Pentecost marked the first days; God said it marked the last days. Who was right?”

- For his readers who might think it heretical to teach that the church did not begin at Pentecost, Baker quotes the work of Hodge’s *Systematic Theology* to prove what many theologians have maintained that the church began before Pentecost. Baker was very clear that the Holy Spirit teaches through the mouth piece of Peter that the events of Acts 2 were the beginning of the “last days” of Israel’s prophetic Scriptures.
 - “Whereas it is plain that the Holy Spirit teaches that Pentecost began the last days in the consummation of God’s prophetic program; it is just as evident that the same Spirit through Paul teaches that the Church which is the Body of Christ was a secret truth

hidden in God, never before made known to the sons of men (Ephesians 3:1 to 9), and therefore in no way connected with God's prophetic program. How could that which was foretold by all the prophets since the world began (Acts 3:21), be the same as that which was kept secret from the beginning of the world until made known to Paul (Ephesians 3:5 and 9)? And in what sense could the last days of the Body of Christ have taken place before God even revealed that the Body was in existence?

Pentecost ushered in the last days, which have to do wholly with the nation Israel. Israel was expecting a new age, but not a new church. Pentecost was bringing the old age to its consummation and making possible the realization of the Millennial hope of the return of Christ to establish the kingdom. It should be noted that Peter did not say: "It shall come to pass in the last day, but in the last days." All of Joel's prophecy was not to be fulfilled in one day, but was to cover a period of days, of which Pentecost was the beginning. Therefore all of Joel's prophecy was not fulfilled on Pentecost, but there was the beginning. There was the pouring out of God's Spirit; but it was no secret that God would do this; for it is plainly foretold in Proverbs 1:23; Isaiah 44:3; Joel 2:28, 29; Zechariah 12:10; and, Malachi 3:10. These last days did not come to completion, however, because the offer of the Kingdom which began on Pentecost was rejected, and God interrupted the Kingdom program with His secret dispensation of the Body of Christ. When God ends this secret dispensation, we have every reason to believe that He will bring to completion Israel's last days.

It is necessary to see the difference between the last days of Israel and the last days of the Church. The Apostle Paul who was made the depository of the truth concerning the Body of Christ never says that either the first or the last days of that Church began on Pentecost, but instead, some 36 years after Pentecost, points us on to some future time for its last days. II Timothy 3:1. Nowhere will it be found that in the last days of the Church there will be any of the miraculous sign demonstrations which belonged to Israel's last days. . .

In conclusion, it may be said that it is difficult to see how or why one is not saying that last means first, although perhaps unwittingly, who places the birthday of the Body or Christ on Pentecost, or who follows the Pentecostal program for today, or who preaches the fulfillment of Israel's signs in the present Dispensation of the Mystery."

- "Gleanings from the Book of Acts, Lesson 5" by O'Hair contains the following dispensational statements.
 - "In the first nine chapters of Acts it was not lawful for the apostles to go to the Gentiles with the Word of God. Acts 10:28. So they preached to none but Jews only. Acts 11:19. Peter did not preach the unsearchable, or untraceable, riches of Christ to the Israelites, if indeed anyone did. But God wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision. Galatians 2:7 to 9. Peter preached to Israel none other things than Moses and the prophets said should come. Joel—David—Moses—Samuel—all the prophets—Amos. Acts 2:16; Acts 2:25 to 33; Acts 3:21 to 26; Acts 10:43; Acts 15:14."
 - "Acts 3:14 to 21. In these verses we learn that God was willing to consider Israel's crime of killing the Prince of Life an act of ignorance (in answer to Christ's prayer on the cross) and because God had foreordained that Christ should appear at the end of the ages and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Therefore "repent" was God's message to the nation and God will send Christ back to earth to restore the kingdom to Israel. This is

quite a different message from the fact stated in Ephesians, that sinners, redeemed by grace, were raised up to be seated where Christ is in the highest heavenlies. Where in the Acts is it recorded that Peter and the Eleven told the Nation Israel to believe in the grace gospel, and by believing in the shed blood of Christ they would be justified and reconciled?”

- “Acts 5:29 to 31. God had raised Christ from the dead to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. And the Holy Spirit was sent down from heaven to witness to this fact. This is quite different from the witness of the Holy Spirit concerning the Divine sonship and special inheritance of members of the Body of Christ. No mention is made of a message of salvation for Gentiles. The Holy Spirit was sent in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy.”
- “Acts 7:1 to 53. The message of Stephen to Israel ended with the statement that they were resisting the Holy Spirit, or committing the unpardonable sin, mentioned by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 12:31 and 32. Stephen saw the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. Christ called Himself the “Son of man” when ministering to Israel on earth. Stephen saw in heaven the same Son of man who warned Israel against the sin they were now committing, namely, rejecting the Holy Spirit, or committing the unpardonable sin.”
- This issue also contained articles by Harry Bultema and Vincent Bennet of Muskegon, Michigan.
- The *Grace History Project* believes that January 1936 was a significant month in the historical development of mid-Acts dispensationalism. Pastor Baker’s “Were the Last Days the First Days?” argues forcibly for the folly of viewing Acts 2 as the “Birthday” of the church. Moreover, O’Hair’s “Is the One Body of Romans the One Body of Ephesians” reverses course on some of the Acts 28 statements he had been making in 1935.
- Throughout the rest of 1936 one observes major refinement of ideas as O’Hair and his companion began to work on the implications of the truths observed in January 1936.

Works Cited

Bible Study for Bereans. January, 1936.

Appendix A
Taken From
“Is the One Body of Romans the One Body of Ephesians”
Bible Study for Bereans (January, 1936)
By J.C. O’Hair

THE PROPHETS AND THE BODY OF ROMANS

Now let us cover these two points in our answer. 1. Can we find in Moses and the prophets all the doctrines of Paul proclaimed in Corinthians and Romans, written before Paul spoke the words of Acts 26:22 and 23? 2. If the “Kingdom” Church of the “Acts” period is to be revived and continued in the coming tribulation or kingdom age, will all that Paul wrote in those pre-prison Epistles be God’s order, program and message in that coming Kingdom age?

We are herein under presenting some messages, ministry, positions or blessings which are to be found in the Scriptures belonging to the Body in Romans 12:4 and 5 and also to the Body in Ephesians 1:19 to 22 and Ephesians 4:5. These common blessings seem to prove that they are not different Bodies, but the same Body:

1—Both of these Churches are described as Bodies, made up of members, who are sinners saved by grace, and who are in Christ. “We are one body in Christ.” Romans 12:5 Did the prophets foretell a Body in Christ? Will there be a Body in the next dispensation, such as is described in Romans 12:4 and 5?

2—The members in the Body of Romans and the members in the Body of Ephesians were saved without religion or works of righteousness. Romans 3:24 and Romans 4:1 to 6. Titus 3:5 to 7. Ephesians 2:8. II Timothy 1:9. Will sinners be saved without religion or works of righteousness during the coming Tribulation or Kingdom? Is there a difference between the gospel of the kingdom of Matthew 24:14 and the gospel of the grace of God in Acts 20:24.

3—Members of the Body of Romans and members of the Body of Ephesians were sealed with the Holy Spirit, as the earnest, and were sealed in both churches unto the day of redemption. II Corinthians 1:22. Romans 8:23. Ephesians 1:13, 14 and Ephesians 4:30. Where do we find in Old Testament prophecy anything concerning members of a Kingdom Church who will have the Holy Spirit earnest of a redemption body

4—One outstanding truth concerning the Body of Ephesians is that members of that Body are IN CHRIST. It is just as much true concerning members of the Body of Romans. Romans 8:1; II Corinthians 5:17 and 21.

5—Believing Jews and Gentiles in both Bodies were one in Christ. This might be considered the truth of John 17:9 to 20. But where is the prophecy that these two groups would be baptized into one Body, baptized into Christ, in whom there was neither Jew nor Greek. They had put on Christ. Galatians 3:26 and 27. Ephesians 2:13 to 18.

6—The members of the Body of Romans and the Body of Ephesians and Colossians were rejoicing in the hope of glory; and Jesus Christ was within that hope. II Corinthians 13:5; Galatians 2:20; Romans 5:2;

Colossians 1:27. If this is called the mystery in Colossians 1:27, why was it not a mystery in II Corinthians and Romans?

7—In the Body of Romans members were predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son, to be God's children, to be joint-heirs with Christ, all witnessed by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Romans 8:14 to 28. Compare with Ephesians 1:2 to 18.

8—In Romans 6:13 and in Ephesians 2:1 to 7, members of both Bodies were alive from the dead; and the members of both Bodies were not under the law. They were all saved wholly by grace; and were raised to walk in newness of life Romans 6:1 to 14. What about members in the coming Kingdom age?

9—Believers, as members of the Body of Romans, were cut off from Adam; their old man was crucified. Romans 5:14 to Romans 6:8. Now note that the members of the "Romans" Body and of the Body of Ephesians were identified with Christ in death, burial and resurrection. Romans 6:2 to 15; Colossians 3:1 to 4.

10—Note the same baptism and burial in Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12. Compare the language very carefully to see that they are identical. This baptism burial links the two Bodies together. It is conceded by those who teach that the Church of Romans is different from the Church of Ephesians and Colossians, that the baptism is identical, having reference to a Divine death baptism, having nothing whatever to do with water.

11—If the water baptism of the Great Commission is to be God's program in the coming Tribulation or Kingdom age, and that was neither the commission nor the baptism of Romans 6:4 for the Body of Romans, it must be admitted that the two Churches differ as to baptism, and the Church of Romans was no "kingdom" church. It has already been conceded by the teachers of "Two Bodies" that the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5 is the one baptism of Romans 6:3 and 4. And these same teachers say that water baptism will be practiced in the coming age. What confusion to prove an unscriptural theory!

12—The ministry of reconciliation and the glorious gospel were the messages for both Bodies. II Corinthians 4:3 and 4. II Corinthians 5:17 to 2; Colossians 1:14 to 21; I Timothy 1:11. Will this be the kingdom gospel, referred to in Matthew 24:13? Surely the gospel for the Tribulation period will be the gospel of the kingdom.

13—Will there be an Apostle to the Gentiles, with the gospel of the uncircumcision during the coming kingdom age; and if so, will he receive a commission by revelation different from the Great Commission? Where is the prophecy telling of this?

14—The Body of Romans with the members are spoken of as a new creation in Christ, the work of God. II Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15. The members of the Body of Ephesians are the same. Ephesians 2:9 to 11. Where in the Old Testament prophecy is the new creation of II Corinthians 5:17 mentioned?

15—In the "Romans" Church and the Church of Ephesians the members are told that their old man had been put off, and that they were to put on the new man. Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; Romans 13:14.

16—Compare the "my gospel" of Paul, preached in Romans, with the Gentile salvation prophesied in Zechariah and Micah and Ezekiel and Isaiah. Read Romans 2:16 and Romans 16:25, Romans 3:24 with Zechariah 8:23.

17—Will salvation in the coming kingdom age be sent to Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy, with blindness upon Israel, as was the case when Paul wrote Romans?

18—A—Let us compare “the day of the Lord Jesus” in II Corinthians 1:14, “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” in I Corinthians 1:8, “the day of the Lord Jesus” in I Corinthians 5:5, and “the day of Jesus Christ” in Philippians 1:6, “the day of Christ” in Philippians 1:10, Philippians 2:16 and II Timothy 1:12-1:18-4:8, and prove by the Scriptures that the members of the two Bodies were not waiting for the same event. B—Also compare the believer’s judgment in II Corinthians 5:10 with his judgment in Colossians 3:24 and 25:

19—Compare the “absent from the body, at home with the Lord”, with the “depart to be with the Lord”. II Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23. Also “the house from heaven” of II Corinthians 5:1 to 8, “the incorruptible body of I Corinthians 15:25, with the “body like unto His own glorious body” of Philippians 3:20 and 21, and show wherein they differ.

20—Compare the Lord Jesus Christ as Intercessor in Romans 8:34 with the Lord Jesus Christ, the one Mediator, in I Timothy 2:5 and state whether you agree with the teachers of two Bodies that the members of the Body of Ephesians have no intercessor or Advocate to represent them in heaven?