

Sunday, April 28, 2013—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 101 *Bible Study for Bereans: July 1936 through August/September, 1936*

Towards Mid-Acts Period

Bible Study for Bereans (July, 1936)

- There are many interesting articles in this edition of the magazine. For example, in “Water Heretics” O’Hair mentions having preached in Altoona, PA on the subject of baptism a few years earlier. In addition, he also mentions many other Fundamental periodicals: *Moody Monthly*, *Serving and Waiting*, *Just a Word*, *Our Hope*, and *Revelation*. Charles F. Baker’s essay titled, “The Second Coming of Christ” is quite good as he discusses the difference between the last days of Israel and the Church. Despite the good information contained in these essays, they cover much of the same ground we have already seen.
- However, there is one article by O’Hair titled “When, How, Where, and Why Did Paul Receive What?” in which we begin to see the first movement towards what would ultimately be the articulation of the mid-Acts position. In this essay, O’Hair teaches that during the Acts period Paul became a Jew to the Jews, and that his gospel of the uncircumcision was given to him before the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.
 - “In Acts 28:25 to 28 we have the Divine Record of the Divine judgment upon Israel (the nation); but the armies of Matthew 22:7 did not besiege Jerusalem until several years after Paul pronounced the judgment of 28:25 to 28. All during the “Acts” period Israel’s temple stood in Jerusalem. During that period Israel was preserved and protected by the Covenant-keeping God and Father; because of the prayer of Christ on the cross, Luke 23:34. During the 37 years from Calvary to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus (about 70 A.D.) Israel had access to the temple, enjoying the favor of the Roman government for more than 30 years of that time, and they continued their “Judaism” in temple worship under the leadership of their high priest. Acts 20:16; Acts 23:3 to 7.

During that period, up to Acts 28, Paul became a Jew to the Jews (under the Law), and God’s order was “to the Jew first”. I Corinthians 9:20 to 24; Romans 1:16; Acts 13:46; Acts 3:21.

Paul, in his ministry, called himself the apostle, or teacher, or preacher, or minister, or the Lord’s prisoner “to the Gentiles”, more than a dozen times. He mentioned himself in the first-person pronoun more than 1300 times. He was neither deluded, presumptuous nor egotistical. He had many revelations from the Lord. II Corinthians 12:1 to 12. He had a special deposit from the Lord. II Timothy 1:12 (Greek—“my deposit”). Christ sent him to preach riches to the Gentiles never hinted at in the Old Testament Scriptures (“unsearchable”—“not to be tracked”). Ephesians 3:8. He had committed unto him, “the Dispensation of the Grace of God, “the Dispensation of the Mystery” for the Gentiles. Ephesians 3:9. In his Prison Epistles “the Mystery” is mentioned twelve times.

Paul did not receive his “uncircumcision” gospel from Peter and the Eleven (apostles before him, Galatians 1:17). Neither did they give him any authority to go to the Gentiles. Christ gave him that authority. Unlike the Eleven, in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20, Christ sent Paul, not to baptize. I Corinthians 1:17. Neither did Paul in his Prison Epistles tell anyone to obey or preach the message of Mark 16:15 to 18. . . . Fourteen years after, by revelation, Paul went again to Jerusalem and told them of a

revelation he had received from the risen Christ, “the gospel of the uncircumcision”. Galatians 2:7. Note, the Twelve learned it from Paul and not from Christ. Let us not confuse the faith which Saul, the persecutor, destroyed with the gospel of the uncircumcision about which he, nor the Twelve, knew nothing when he was persecuting the Church of God. Neither let us confuse the “gospel of the uncircumcision, foreseen in Abram’s call (Galatians 3:8) with the ministry of reconciliation. II Corinthians 5:16 to 21.”

- O’Hair also expounds upon the following terms in this essay: 1) The Faith Paul once destroyed; 2) The Gospel of the Uncircumcision; 3) The Dispensation of God; 4) The Ministry of Reconciliation; 5) The Dispensation of the Grace of God; 6) The Eternal Purpose of God in Christ; and 7) The Dispensation of the Mystery. In addition, O’Hair maintains that Peter and the Twelve never labored under the dispensation of Grace and that the dispensation of grace cannot be found in Acts 1-9. Meanwhile, he is still uncertain about exactly when the revelation of the mystery was given, Acts 2 is too early but Acts 28 is too late.

- 1) “Paul had a Divine deposit. How did he receive it? “By revelation”. Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 3:3. It was for Gentiles. He magnified his office as the Apostle to the Gentiles. Romans 11:13. The risen Lord instructed Paul to give the salvation message to Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy. Romans 11:11; Acts 13:46; Acts 18:6. Christ committed to Paul the gospel of the uncircumcision. Galatians 2:7. The Twelve Apostles learned this fact when Christ sent Paul to Jerusalem by revelation (fourteen years after Galatians 1) Galatians 2:1. Paul revealed in Ephesians and Colossians, written several years after he wrote Galatians, deeper and higher truths concerning Christ and His Church than he revealed in Galatians. Many of the glorious riches of the members of Christ’s Body, declared in Ephesians and Colossians, are not recorded in Paul’s messages written before he arrived at Rome as the prisoner of the Lord. As to when he received the revelation of these riches we have no Divine Record. But we surely have sufficient information to refute the assertion of some men of God that THE DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD, mentioned in Ephesians 3:1 and 2, was inaugurated by the risen Lord on the day of Pentecost, perhaps two years before Saul of Tarsus was converted. . .

When was it committed to him? It certainly was not committed to him before he was converted. Therefore, THE DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD for Gentiles is not in the first nine chapters of Acts. This is so evident that even the babe in Christ should see it at a glance. Therefore, we have learned a very simple but important lesson in rightly dividing the Word of truth and rightly understanding the Book of Acts. Let us repeat and emphasize that the Dispensation of the Grace of God is not to be found in Acts 1 to 9. And let us not be so stupid as to teach that the DISPENSATION OF THE MYSTERY or the Unsearchable Riches of Christ was the program and message which was proclaimed by the Twelve either on or after the day of Pentecost. That was Paul’s deposit and not Peter’s. Remember II Timothy 2:15 and obey it. . .

The DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD FOR GENTILES is mentioned by Paul in connection with THE MYSTERY which Christ revealed to him. Ephesians 3:1 to 5. THE MYSTERY has to do with the JOINT-BODY (Sussomos) of Ephesians 3:6. Although in Acts 9:15 (about 34 A.D.) Paul was told that he was to be a witness to Gentiles, he never mentioned the GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD until Acts 20:24 (about 59 A.D.). Remember that Paul received his abundance of revelations about 46 A.D., about the same year the door of faith was opened to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27; II Corinthians 12:1 to 12). Surely there is no intimation that Paul received the revelation

of Ephesians 3:3 and 5 before that time, if that early in his ministry. Certainly not one of the Twelve knew the first thing about that mystery before Galatians 2:1 to 2 (not earlier than 46 A.D.).”

Bible Study for Bereans (August and September, 1936)

- This issue of the periodical combined two months into one, as a result it is lengthier than other issues of the magazine. The majority of this issue is taken up by “A Dispensational Study of Bible Characters.” In addition, O’Hair lays out various dispensations from Adam through Paul. His system is very Scofieldian until he gets to a discussion of Peter and Paul and when the mystery was revealed. Regarding the mystery, O’Hair writes the following:

- 1) “The very first step toward the understanding of the truth concerning THE MYSTERY is to believe the plain statement in God’s Word that the dispensation of God, to fulfill (or fill up) the Word of God, was given to Paul; and that this dispensation was given to him by revelation. Colossians 1:25 and 26. Ephesians 3:3; Ephesians 3:8.

The truth of this revelation cannot be found in any Scripture, revealed or concealed, from Genesis to Malachi. This truth of THE MYSTERY has nothing to do with the gospel of the circumcision, the gospel of the kingdom, or the keys of the kingdom of heaven, committed to Peter and the Eleven. Galatians 2:7 to 9. Matthew 16:16 to 18. Matthew 10:5 to 8. Acts 2:5 to 38.

It is obvious that THE MYSTERY is not a part of the so-called “Great Commission,” of Matthew 28:19 and 20; for that was neither given to Paul nor given by revelation. That was the confirmation of the confirmation ministry of Jesus on earth. Romans 15:8 and Hebrews 2:2 to 4.

The MYSTERY means THE SECRET. God had a secret. He kept it to Himself, away from any prophet, priest or king of Israel and from the apostles to Israel, the Twelve. Christ in heaven gave it to the Apostle to the Gentiles. It particularly concerns the Gentiles. Romans 11:13. I Timothy 1:11. I Timothy 2:5 to 8. II Timothy 1:9 to 11. This SECRET has to do with God’s eternal purpose in Christ. It has to do with the joint-Body mentioned in Ephesians 3:6. It has to do with the Church, which is the Body of Christ. It has to do with the mutual inheritance of the Father of Glory and Christ the Head of that Body on the one hand, and members of the Body on the other. It has to do with the unique calling, possessions, position and hope of members of Christ’s Body. Christ in the heavens far above has been seated by the mighty power of God; and by the same power members of Christ’s Body have been seated there in Christ. Ephesians 1:19 to 22— Ephesians 4:10. in the heavenlies members of Christ’s Body have been blessed with all spiritual blessings. Ephesians 1:3 and 4. Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, these members, saved by grace, are to be displayed in the ages to come as the recipients of God’s Grace.

“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:6 and 7.

As the Law dispensation was parenthetical, added to the Abrahamic promise, confirmed in Christ, till the promised Christ came and took the Law out of the way (Galatians 3:17 to 19— Colossians 2:11 to 15.) so the “Dispensation of the Mystery” is a parenthesis.

This Dispensation is not the fulfillment of prophecy. This Dispensation was not made known to the sons of men in other ages. Colossians 1:25 to 26. This Dispensation is not to be confused with establishing on earth the kingdom of the heavens, the Messianic Kingdom, promised to Israel and for Israel's glory, by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began. Luke 1:67 to 80. Acts 3:19 to 25.

Christ's relationship and ministry as Israel's Messiah and King on David's throne, is not THE MYSTERY. The Mystery does not refer to Christ on David's throne as a reigning King in the midst of Israel. THE MYSTERY has to do with Christ in glory as the Head of the Church of this Dispensation. God is making "One New Man." Christ and the Church, one flesh, is a MYSTERY. Ephesians 2:15 and Ephesians 5:29 to 32.

Members of the Body of Christ are united to Him, identified with Him in death, burial and resurrection, seated with Him in the heavenlies. Ephesians 4:3 to 7. Romans 6:2 to 6.

Paul called THE MYSTERY, "MY DEPOSIT." II Timothy 1:12. (Greek.) In his ministry oral and written, Paul mentions himself by the first person pronoun more than 1300 times. He was the chosen vessel of the risen Christ to give us the revelation of THE SECRET. He has given it to us. It, therefore, no longer should be a secret. We should know it. We should make it known to others. We should make all to see what is the administration of the mystery." This is connected with the Unsearchable Riches of Christ.

We quote again Ephesians 3:8 and 9:

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE MYSTERY, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

The word "unsearchable" is literally "not to be tracked." This message was a secret in the mind of the Lord, though purposed in Christ before the foundation of the world. The Lord made it known to Paul.

The "Administration of the Secret" does something more than bring Gentiles to the same privilege as Jews in the, kingdom promised. It has nothing to do with the promised Kingdom. In it Israel is not recognized as having any Divine authority over Gentiles. That is why the Dispensation of the mystery." Israel's advantages gone—Israel's priority rights gone—Israel's signs gone! Israel's baptisms gone—Israel's hope postponed—Israel's kingdom in abeyance!

We are living in a period of special Divine grace for Gentiles; the reign of unmixed grace. Those who are trying to show the fulfillment of Israel's Kingdom prophecies in Europe's politics and history do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures. The United States is a foremost nation, holding a prominent place, wielding an extraordinary influence. The United States is not fulfilling any specific Old Testament prophecy. The fulfillment of kingdom prophecies is not for this dispensation. This is a dispensation quite different from the kingdom dispensation; hence it is called, "THE MYSTERY."

Let us pray that God may answer Ephesians 6:19 and 20, Colossians 4:3 and 4 and Ephesians 1:16 and 18 in behalf of many sincere Christians who are so bungling things by mixing Israel's kingdom program into the Dispensation of the Mystery.

No matter what the cost, our duty, as members of the Body of Christ, is clearly set forth in Ephesians 3:8 to 11. Obedience to II Timothy 2:15 “rightly dividing the Word of truth” means that we should first know the difference between Peter’s circumcision gospel and Paul’s uncircumcision gospel (Galatians 2:7 to 9—Galatians 2:2 and 3) and then the difference between Peter’s kingdom keys of Matthew 16:16 to 19 and Paul’s dispensation of the grace of God for Gentiles. Ephesians 3:1 and 2; the difference between the great commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20 and the “MY DEPOSIT” of Paul (II Timothy 1:12), given to Timothy for us to pass on. II Timothy 1:14 and 2:2.

Our message for today is a message of unmixed Grace—nothing of religion, legalism, Judaism, Ritualism, tongues, sign gifts and visions.”

- Another significant article from the August/September issue is “How to Study the Bible” by Charles F. Baker. At the beginning of the article, Pastor Baker lays out six general principals of Bible study. His sixth principal is the dispensational principal: “Sixth the Bible, because it is a dispensational Book, must be rightly divided in order to be rightly understood, II Timothy 2:15. Miles Coverdale, the first man to translate the entire Bible into the English language, wrote: “It shall greatly help ye to understand Scripture, if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before and what followeth.” ”
- Baker then outlines the following “simple historical outline of the Bible.”
 - 1) “The original creation - “in the beginning”- no one knows how long ago this was, Genesis 1.2.
 - 2) The state of chaos which came upon creation, Genesis 1.2.
 - 3) The remaking of the universe and the creation of plant, animal, and human life, Genesis 1:3 to 2:25.
 - 4) The Temptation and Fall of Adam and Eve. Sin and death entered the world. Genesis 3.
 - 5) From the Fall to the Flood, about 1650 years, Genesis 4 to 8.
 - 6) From the Flood to the Tower of Babel, about 100 years, Genesis 9
 - 7) From Babel to call of Abram, about 300 years, latter half of Genesis 11.
 - 8) From Abram to Moses, including lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons, and the story of the Egyptian bondage, and deliverance about 500 years, Genesis 12 to Exodus 18.
 - 9) From Moses to Christ, about 1500 years, Exodus to Matthew.
 - The Law given at Sinai, Exodus 19—Leviticus 27;
 - 38 years of wilderness wanderings because of unbelief, Numbers. Deuteronomy gives a review of Israel’s history and a restatement of the Law;
 - Israel brought into Canaan by Joshua;
 - Israel under the judges, about 300 years, judges and Ruth;
 - Israel under kings Saul, David, and Solomon, I Samuel—I Kings 11; I Chronicles—II Chronicles 9;
 - Israel divided into two kingdoms. Ten tribes carried captive by Assyria after 250 years; Judah endures 400 years until Babylonian captivity.

I Kings 12—II Kings 25; II Chronicles 10:36. Prophets of this period were Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah.

- The 70 years of Babylonian captivity, Esther, Ezekiel, Daniel;
- The restoration of Judah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi;
- The 400 silent years until the birth of Jesus. Period of Persian, Graeco—Macedonian, and Roman servitude.

- 10) From birth to death of Jesus Matthew through John. Jesus ministers only to Israel and not to Gentiles.
- 11) Ministry of the 12 Apostles Israel, Acts 1 to 12.
- 12) Ministry of Paul to Jews and until nation of Israel is divinely set aside, Acts 13 to 28. Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Thessalonians written during this period.
- 13) Further ministry of Paul to the Body of Christ until his death at Rome, covered in Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon.
- 14) Prophecy of future tribulation and Kingdom at Second Coming of Christ, Revelation.”

- Please note in the simple historical outline presented above that Pastor Baker divides Paul’s ministry into two sections beginning with Acts 13. Baker concludes the essay by stating the absolute necessity to study the Bible dispensationally and to acknowledge Acts 13 as a significant beginning for Paul’s gentile ministry.
 - “Apart from a dispensational approach the Bible will appear to be filled with contradictions. A dispensation is a divine stewardship or economy in which God deals with man in a certain manner. If God imposes or removes restrictions or commands, or changes His purposes, it may be said that the dispensation has changed. If one persists in doing a thing which God has changed, although he is obedient to an earlier command or order, he is disobedient to a later one, and is therefore undispensational. Some things remain the same in all dispensations, others are radically changed. Careful study and rightly dividing the Word alone will reveal which. There is disagreement as to the number of dispensations, but dispensational changes should surely be recognized at the Fall of man, at the Flood, at Babel, at the call of Abraham and the giving of Circumcision, at the giving of the Law, at the Cross and Pentecost, at the beginning of Gentile ministry in Acts 13, at the setting aside of national Israel at Acts 28, and in the future at the rapture of the Church, at the Second Coming of Christ, and at the New Heavens and the New Earth. We are at present living in the Dispensation of the Mystery and of the Grace of God. (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25, 26).”

Works Cited

Bible Study for Bereans. July, 1936.

Bible Study for Bereans. August and September, 1936.