

Sunday, May 5, 2013—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 102 *Bible Study for Bereans: October, 1936*

Towards Mid-Acts Period

Bible Study for Bereans (October, 1936)

- This edition of the magazine contains two articles by O’Hair that merit our attention. The first one is titled, “The Book of Acts: Peter and Paul.” In this selection O’Hair contrasts the ministries of Peter and Paul during the Acts period. O’Hair maintains that Paul had a two-fold ministry during the Acts period. Furthermore, he asserts that just because Paul did not write extensively on the subject of the mystery during the Acts period does not mean that he did not know it.

- “During the “Acts” period Paul had a two-fold ministry and there was a two-fold Divine order. I Corinthians 9:20 to 24 and Acts 21:24 and 25. Paul was an able minister of the New Covenant. II Corinthians 3:6. But, at the same time he preached the gospel of glory and the ministry of reconciliation. II Corinthians 4:4 and II Corinthians 5:16 to 21. . .

Concerning the “Unsearchable Riches for the Gentiles” and the “Dispensation of the Mystery” hid in God when Israel’s prophets wrote, the Twelve knew nothing and therefore preached nothing. But Paul had a ministry of confirmation and revelation. . .

We again call your attention to the fact that Paul, in his “Acts” ministry, was telling Israel that Jesus was the Christ. This was contrary to the plain instructions of the command of Christ in Matthew 16:20. Therefore we must believe that Christ’s orders of Matthew 16:20 were rescinded and that His prayer on the cross meant the beginning anew with Israel, another chance for Israel. Read again Acts 2:36 and Acts 3:19 to 21. Compare Matthew 16:20 with Acts 17:3 and Acts 18:5.

However, we should not try to prove by Acts 26:22, the “none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come,” that Paul preached in his oral and written ministry during the “Acts” period nothing to the Gentiles except that which was foretold in Israel’s Old Covenant Scriptures. The words “revelation” and “mystery” disprove such a theory. Galatians 1:11 to 20, I Corinthians 2:6 to 8, I Corinthians 15:51 to 53, Romans 16:25 to 26.”

- O’Hair pulls no punches in calling the Acts 28 teaching that those saved under Paul’s teaching during the Acts period were part of a Jews kingdom church with Israel’s hope error.
 - “But the facts of the “oneness” in Christ and the “oneness” of the Body, as described in Galatians 3:26 to 28 and Romans 12:3 to 8, the ministry of reconciliation of II Corinthians 5:16 to 21 and Romans 5:12 to 20, and the program with the gospel of the uncircumcision before the restoration of the Kingdom (Galatians 1:11 to 17 and Galatians 2:1 to 9) and the death baptism into Christ and identified with Him, as described in

Romans 6:1 to 15, were wholly unknown to Israel's prophets and not one word of these facts was revealed by any one of them.

The teaching of a kingdom gospel or a "kingdom of heaven" program for Gentiles in Paul's messages to the Galatians or in Romans or II Corinthians cannot be proved by the Scriptures. But can be refuted by rightly dividing the Word of truth.

To teach that Gentiles, saved during the "Acts" period, were in an Israelitish kingdom church with Israel's kingdom hope, saved by a kingdom gospel, is error.

Philippians 1:3 to 6 should be sufficient evidence, conclusive proof, that the church established in Philippi, by Paul's preaching in Acts 16:11 to 31, and the Body of Christ at Philippi during Paul's imprisonment were one and the same Body. The Body did not change. The change was the spiritual program and the administration.

Carefully compare Romans 12:1 to 11 and Romans 6:1 to 11, with Ephesians 4:1 to 7 and Ephesians 3:6 and Ephesians 5:29 to 32, and surely you will not believe that the Body of Romans was a different Body from the Body of Ephesians. And surely it is not sound exegesis to declare that the spiritual program of the Body of Romans was a sample of the coming kingdom program. This is being taught by some brethren today. This means that in the coming kingdom age, Jews and Gentiles will be members of the same Body, members of one another; that they will be baptized into one Body and into Christ by a Divine baptism not made with hands. Surely the one death baptism of Romans 6:3 is the one death baptism of Ephesians 4:5. This means there must be in the coming kingdom age a Paul, an apostle to the Gentiles, to send salvation to Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy."

- Based upon I Corinthians 4:1-5, O'Hair argues that Paul was already a steward of the mysteries of God before he reached Rome at the end of the book of Acts. He also speaks of more than one mystery as well as various aspects of the mystery.
 - "There is more than one mystery mentioned in Paul's Epistles and there is more than one aspect to "the mystery" mentioned twelve times in Paul's Prison Epistles. Paul was a faithful steward of God's mysteries before he reached Rome. I Corinthians 4:1 to 5."
- In a lengthy section on signs and healing, O'Hair quotes from the July, 1936 edition of *Moody Monthly; Tongues, Signs, and Visions: Not God's Order for Today* by A.E. Bishop; and *The Silence of God* by Sir Robert Anderson. This is done to prove that, despite having known the mystery when Paul wrote I Corinthians during the Acts period, a significant change occurred in God's dealings with men at the close of the book of Acts. None of the Jewish signs are spoken of as being enforced after Acts 28. In addition, Paul is no longer able to physically heal his friends and companions.

- “Surely Acts 28:25 to 28 marked the crisis with Israel. The Book of Acts suddenly closed before the acts of the Apostle Paul were ended. Israel’s standing with God changed and the “administration of the Mystery” began after the Divine judgment of Acts 28:25 to 28. The student who misses the signification of Acts 28:25 to 28 will miss one of the important dispensational keys to intelligent Bible study.”
- O’Hair is very clear that Peter was not sent by God to Cornelius in Acts 10 until after Paul was saved and sent to the Gentiles in Acts 9. A careful reading reveals tension in some of O’Hair’s statements. The quotation above makes it seem like O’Hair viewed Acts 28 as the time when God closed his dealings with Israel. In contrast the quotation below reveals that O’Hair thought that Paul was ministering among the gentiles by special revelation (Galatians 1:11-17) well before the close of the book of Acts (Acts 13:12, 46).
 - “Before Cornelius received from Peter the message whereby he and his house were saved (Acts 11:14) Saul (Paul) was chosen by the Lord to be His witness to Gentiles. Acts 9:15. In Acts 13:12 we have the first record of a Gentile salvation by Paul’s message. Note these words in Acts 13:12: “Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.” Sergius Paulus believed and was saved when he saw the Divine judgment fall upon Bar-Jesus; blindness. Bar-Jesus was the child of Jehovah-Saviour. Israel was the child of Jehovah-Saviour. Israel’s blindness brought salvation to Gentiles. Israel’s present blindness should cause many Gentiles to do what Sergius Paulus did; believe. Saul became “Paulus” or “Paul”. By Paul God sent salvation to the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy. Gentiles have obtained mercy because of Israel’s unbelief. Note in Acts 13:46 why Paul turned to Gentiles. Note result of Paul’s first missionary journey. . . Something of Paul’s authority for this ministry is mentioned in Galatians 1:11 and 12 and Galatians 1:15 to 17. He did not confer with flesh and blood. He received no authority from the Twelve. His authority and message were from heaven.”
- Despite rejecting aspects of the Acts 28 view, O’Hair still continued to maintain that Israel was not set aside until Acts 28.
 - “In this dispensation of grace, when we are to “make all men, see what is the dispensation of the mystery”, if we obey Ephesians 3:9, if anything, the Gentile now has the advantage over the Jew, because Israel has not only been deprived of the priority rights which they had even to the end of the “Acts” period, when they were set aside, but they are under judgment with little or no spiritual authority. During the “Acts” period God’s order was “to the Jew first”. Romans 1:16, Acts 3:26, Acts 13:46. While God’s order was “to the Jew first”, Paul carried on a two-fold spiritual program: I Corinthians 9:20 to 25. The Twelve, with Paul and Barnabas, adopted and practiced one order, to the Jews that believed, and another, to the Gentiles that believed. Acts 21:18 to 28, Acts 15:13 to 25. It was for this reason that Paul circumcised Timothy; but would not permit Titus to be circumcised. Acts 16:3 and Galatians 2:1 to 5. Compare Paul’s conduct in the Jerusalem temple (Acts 21:26 to 30) and his apologetic ministry to Israel, his seeming compromise

in Acts 23:1 to 7, with his uncompromising attitude toward the Jews' religion and ceremonies after the "Acts" period had come to an end. Read Philippians 3:4 to 10. By this we should know that a most radical change in God's attitude toward Israel took place between Acts 21:24 and 25 and the time when Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Timothy from the Roman prison. The Bible student who misses the significance of Acts 28:25 to 28 will fail to obey II Timothy 2:15."

- Immediately following the above quotation, O'Hair states that the gospel of Romans 3:19-39 is sufficient proof that Paul preached the gospel of the grace of God to both Jews and Gentiles during the Acts period.
 - "But surely Romans 3:19 to 28 is sufficient evidence that Paul preached to both Jews and Gentiles during the "Acts" period the grace gospel. Ephesians 2:8 should read "by grace were ye saved. But we should know not only that the things that accompany salvation have differed under different Divine dispensations; but that the gospel of the kingdom differs from the gospel of the grace of God. . . Although Paul, during the "Acts" period, repeatedly testified to Israel that Jesus was the Messiah, and while the Nation Israel, during that period, was preserved and protected in their land by the covenant-keeping God, yet Paul preached justification by faith, the ministry of reconciliation, righteousness by faith without works, to both Jews and Gentiles during the "Acts" period. It cannot be proved by the Scriptures that Paul preached the kingdom gospel or presented a kingdom program to Gentiles during the "Acts" period."
- Despite arguing repeatedly for the significance of Acts 28 in God's dispensational dealings with mankind, O'Hair is adamant in his rejection of the Acts 28 view that the body of the Acts period was a different body from the body spoken of in Ephesians.
 - "In Ephesians 3:5 and 6, let us first emphasize the fact that the expression "same body" is, in the Greek, one word, "Sussomos", meaning literally "Joint-Body". Although this word is not found in the messages of Paul, during the "Acts" period, the same thought is expressed in Galatians 3:28; "ye are all one in Christ Jesus." "Neither Jew nor Greek." The "one in Christ Jesus" of Galatians 3:28 is called in Ephesians 2:15, "the ONE NEW MAN". Galatians and Romans seem to teach that God was making one new man of believing Jews and Gentiles, in the "Acts" period.

Because in the original text the article is missing in I Corinthians 12:13, written during the "Acts" period, and because during the "Acts" period members of the Church of God were called "the children of Abraham", there are some preachers who teach dogmatically that the Body of I Corinthians 12:13, into which Jews and Gentiles were baptized, was a different Body from the "joint-Body" of Ephesians 3:6. They say that the members of these two different Bodies enjoyed different spheres of blessings; with different hopes and callings, with different destinations. They teach that, inasmuch as Abraham was the father of believing Gentiles as well as of Jews, during the "Acts" period, the children of Abraham had the same hope as father Abraham, who looked for a city; and that city is the

heavenly Jerusalem of Revelation 21 and 22. Therefore, the “Acts’-period Body” will be in the New Jerusalem; whereas the Joint Body of Ephesians 3:6 will appear with Christ in glory. The hope of the first Body, they call “celestial” or “heavenly”; and the hope of the second Body, they call “supercelestial” or “superheavenly”. They teach that the rapture of I Thessalonians 4:13 to 18 and I Corinthians 15:51 to 55 was the hope of the celestial Body of I Corinthians and the “Acts” period, and will be the hope of the tribulation saints; whereas, the “outresurrection” of Philippians 3:10 to 21 is the hope of the Joint Body of the Post-Acts period.

These brethren who separate the “Acts” Body and the “Post-Acts” Body endeavor to prove by the “now” of Colossians 1:26 and Ephesians 3:5, that not the slightest suggestion of the Body of Ephesians is in the message of Paul dated before the close of the “Acts” period.

Colossians 1:25 and 26: “Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God: Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but NOW is made manifest to His saints.

Ephesians 3:5: “Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is NOW revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”

The “NOW” of these revelations was after Paul was in prison at Rome, after his “Acts” ministry had ceased.

But there are two other “nows” that disprove this theory of two different Bodies. However, they prove different dispensations or administrations for the One Body.

I Corinthians 13:13: “And NOW abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Philippians 1:5 and 6: “For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until NOW; Being confident of this very thing, that He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”.

The “now” of I Corinthians 13:13 suggest a changed spiritual program for the same Body. This program was to go on, without signs, under “the dispensation of the mystery.” Ephesians 3:8 and 9. The teachers of “two bodies” have the problem of transferring from the first Body to the second Body, all believers who were saved before the close of Acts, but who lived after the close of the “Acts” period. Of course, this would mean that those members who died between 45 A.D. and 62 A.D. (or Acts 28:25 to 31) will not be in the same heaven as the believers who lived before the “Acts” closed but died after Paul made known the revelation of the Body of Ephesians.

Now all of this is disproved by the “three days” of Philippians 1:5 and 6:

1. The “first day”;
2. “Now”; the day Paul wrote to Philippi, which epistle was from the Roman prison.
3. “Until the day of Jesus Christ.”

This day of Christ is the same day for which the Corinthians waited. I Corinthians 1:7 and 8. The same Philippians who were saved under Paul’s preaching at Philippi, in the year 43 A.D. (Acts 16:16 to 31), were in the year 64 A.D., when Paul wrote Philippians, in the very same Body and still waiting for the same coming of Christ. The Philippian saints living when Paul wrote to them had not been transferred from one Body to another later Body. This is proved all through Philippians. We must learn that the Body is one thing and the dispensation of the mystery another thing.”

- O’Hair views Paul as having known the mystery during the Acts period.
 - “Paul’s revelations and mysteries are mentioned in Galatians 1:11 to 17, II Corinthians 12:2 to 5; Romans 11:25; Romans 16: 25 and 26 and in I Corinthians 15:51. In I Corinthians 2:6 to 8 we learn that Paul had received the revelation from the Lord concerning the truth, designated “the mystery”, truth which he called in II Timothy 1:12 “my deposit” (Greek text). Just how much Paul knew but did not reveal to others before the close of the “Acts” period, we have no way of proving. The risen Lord may have restrained Paul from revealing to saints, in his ministry during the “Acts” period, the high and glorious truth revealed in Ephesians and Colossians, but the “nows” of these Epistles give us no positive proof as to when Paul received the revelation.”
- A second article from the October, 1936 edition of *Bible Study for Bereans* is titled “Much Ado About Something: Transfer From One Church to Another.” In this article, Pastor O’Hair takes on the teachings of EWB and Welch in a very direct manner and uses the book of Philippians to argue that the body of Ephesians and Colossians is the same body spoken of in Paul’s Acts period epistles.
 - “The brethren who follow the teachings of Dr. E. W. Bullinger and Mr. Charles Welch teach dogmatically that the “Body of Christ” did not begin until after the close of the “Acts” period, or about 63 A.D. So they have the transfer of saints from the “Church of God” to the “Body of Christ” after 63 A.D. Some of these brethren teach that it was optional with members of the “Church of God” of the “Acts” period as to whether they were transferred into the “Post- Acts” “Body of Christ”. This teaching is what is being termed, “Ultradispensationalism” or “Hyperdispensationalism”. It is frequently mentioned as “Bullingerism”.

The Epistle to the Philippians is undoubtedly the Scriptural refutation of this teaching, as Paul, at the time he wrote to the Philippians from Rome, was a member of the same “Body of Christ” to which the Philippian converts were added when Paul was in Philippi, about 20 years before he reached the Roman prison. Read Acts 16:11 to 31.

Now, again concerning the twelve apostles, certainly the Twelve will be together in the coming kingdom age. And certainly Paul was not one of the Twelve and will not be with them when they shall sit on the twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Therefore, we see that if James, at the time of his death, was not a member of the “Body of Christ”, none of the twelve apostles were members of that “Body”.

It makes no difference at what point we fix the transfer, we have some difficult problems. Certainly we have some very serious problems if we set the time of the beginning of the “Body of Christ” on the day of Pentecost. But the problems are far more serious if we have the historical beginning of the “Body of Christ” after the close of the “Acts” period.”

Works Cited

Bible Study for Bereans. October, 1936