

Sunday, May 12, 2013—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 103 *Bible Study For Bereans: November 1936 through January, 1937*

Towards Mid-Acts Period

Bible Study for Bereans, (November, 1936)

- The listing for the November, 1936 issue in the O’Hair Online Library contains the following note from the copiest: “In the October, 1936 issue, Pastor O’Hair said the November edition would be a message on “ISMS AND SCHISMS” I assumed this pamphlet was sent out as the November 1936 issue of “BIBLE STUDY FOR BEREANS”, hence I have given it that title.” Due to the fact that we don’t possess a hard copy of the November 1936 issue we will refrain from making any specific comments on the November issue at this time.

Bible Study for Bereans, (December, 1936)

- In December, 1936 O’Hair introduced his readers to a couple new authors. Hal Reed wrote, “The Mystery of the Incarnation And the Indwelling Christ,” and Pastor Holtorff penned an essay titled, “Christ our Life.”
- In “Born to Die,” Charles F. Baker outlines the two-fold purpose of God in the incarnation of Christ.
 - “To understand the full meaning of the birth of Jesus Christ, with its announcement of peace on earth necessary to consider that birth in relation to God’s purposes in the earth and those in the heavens, and to understand that we today as members of the body of Christ are related to that birth only in connection with God’s heavenly purposes. His birth in its earthly purpose was destined to bring about a government of peace and righteousness upon this earth, but we are not partakers of that earthly hope. We are partakers of a heavenly hope; our inheritance as well as our citizenship is in heaven; and we are distinctly told not to set our affections upon things upon the earth, but upon things above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. The earthly hope and its purposes were indeed announced at His birth, but they have been held in abeyance for the past nineteen centuries while God is completing His heavenly purposes. When these are completed, that same One who was born to bring peace to earth will come again to earth to complete that purpose.

In other words, our appreciation and understanding of the birth of Jesus Christ will depend largely upon whether we have our minds fixed upon an earthly or an heavenly hope; whether we are expecting material blessings and prosperity, or spiritual blessings in heavenly places; whether we are occupied more with Jesus upon earth as He ministered the earthly hope to His people Israel, than we are with Jesus in the heavenly places as He revealed Himself through the writings of the Apostle Paul, where He ministers as Head over all things to the church which is His body. It is evident that if we have our minds set upon earthly things, whether inside or outside of God’s earthly kingdom purposes, we are out of God’s will for this present economy. In either case our hopes will be sadly disappointed; for so long as the present dispensation endures, the hopes of earthly peace and prosperity, of material blessings for the people of God, and for the universal extension of Christ’s kingdom must remain unfulfilled.”

- Another important article from the January, 1936 issue is “A Reason for Hope” by J.C. O’Hair. In this essay Pastor O’Hair teaches that Paul was a steward of the mystery long before he was imprisoned for its proclamation in Acts 28. Furthermore, O’Hair argues that members of the body addressed in Paul’s post-Acts epistles were saved and made members of the body of Christ during the Acts period.
 - “Through the preaching of the gospel of the uncircumcision, which Christ revealed to Paul and which Paul revealed to the Twelve, (Galatians 1:11; Galatians 1:17; Galatians 2:1 to 11) Gentiles were saved by the “grace of Christ” without the practice of Israel’s religious program. Before the kingdom was restored to Israel and without coming to God on the grounds of circumcision, the believing Gentiles were baptized into Christ. They had put on Christ. They were one with Christ. They were joined to Christ. They were buried and raised with Christ. They were members one of another (both believing Jews and Gentiles in the same Body). Christ was in them. They were in Christ. They had been predestinated to this hope of glory. They were not under the law. They were saved by the gospel of unmixed grace. They had received eternal life as a free gift. They were sealed unto the day of redemption and they were waiting for Christ to come and to take them to heaven.

All of these facts were revealed in the Epistles that Paul wrote before he declared himself a prisoner of the Lord for the hope of Israel. All of these heavenly blessings for uncircumcised Gentiles were included in the grace message which Paul received by revelation from Christ in glory. The whole program was too much for the Jews that believed. To them it was a mystery. Indeed it was a mystery, that there was neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ, but that they were both in one Body, temples of the Holy Spirit, and joint-heirs with God’s Son. Paul wrote to the Hebrew believers that they were partakers of the heavenly calling. Hebrews 3:1. . .

The gathering of the elect at the sound of the trump of Matthew 24:31 must not be confused with the rapture at the sound of the trump of I Thessalonians 4:13 to 18 and I Corinthians 15:51 to 53. . . Some men teach that the believing Gentiles during the “Acts” period, although new creatures in Christ Jesus, and baptized into one Body with believing Jews, were not blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ as were the members of Christ’s Body after the close of the “Acts” period. Ephesians 1:4 is the same word as Hebrews 3:1. . .

We call your attention to the fact that members of the Body of Christ, described after the close of the “Acts” period, were saved by the washing of regeneration (paliggensia) and they were also new creatures in Christ Jesus. In fact, the members of the Body of Christ, addressed in Paul’s “Post-Acts” Epistles, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and II Timothy, were saved during the “Acts” period with the same regeneration and new creation as were the saints in the churches of Thessalonica, Corinth, Galatia, and Rome, and they were all rejoicing together in the very same hope. That was the hope of the glory of God. Romans 5:1 to 5. They were waiting for God’s Son from heaven; not to take them to Canaan, but to glory; to the very same glory with the Lord Jesus Christ about which Paul wrote in Colossians 3:3 and 4. The teaching that the hope of Titus 2:13 is a different hope than I John 3:1 to 3 is not sound Scriptural teaching. . .

That there will be different phases of the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, there should be no doubt. But surely this does not give any teacher of the Word the license, privilege or liberty to take from members of the Body of Christ the clear statements as to

just how the rapture of the Church will take place and leave them, as a few hyper-dispensationalists are doing today, with doubt and uncertainty as to how and where they are going, if indeed they are to escape death. This is being done in the name of “rightly dividing the Word of truth;” whereas, it is anything but that.

To teach that the hope of the Gentile believers, saved by Paul’s “my gospel” during the “Acts” period, that the hope of the One Body to which they belonged, was the hope of Israel, is not rightly dividing the Word of truth. When these “dividers” are pressed for a reason of the hope, that is, to explain Israel’s hope, they shift from Canaan to the New Jerusalem out of heaven and back again, until you learn that neither they, nor those who follow their teaching, know what Israel’s hope was. They have no idea what company of Jews is going to Canaan and what company of them is going to the New Jerusalem. They do not know how or when, the believers of today will get to glory or just where or what that glory is. They are full of doubts and are imposing their doubts upon Christians who are apparently unable to obey I Peter 3:15: “And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the HOPE that is on you with meekness and fear.”

Some of these Christians who think they have come into some higher truth known only to the very elect, will awake to their sorrow to learn that their supposed-to-be-glorious-truth was only a delusion. Paul, in Acts, was not primarily referring to the rapture and destiny of Israel, BUT TO THEIR HOPE CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION.

These teachers claim that John’s Gospel is Israelitish, a kingdom of the heaven message to the Jews and was not written to the members in the Body of Christ. If it is the message concerning Israel’s hope, in it Christ declared, “I am the resurrection”. So Christ is Israel’s hope and Israel’s resurrection. Christ is the hope of every member of the Body of Christ and He is our resurrection. The hope of believing Jews and believing Gentiles, united in one Body in Christ, during the “Acts” period, was the blessed hope of Titus 2:13.

Compare John 11:25 and 26 with Colossians 3:2 to 4, and you will be convinced of the absurdity, the unsound teaching, of those who claim that the hope of the saved Jews and saved Gentiles in the Body of Christ, mentioned in I Corinthians 12:13 and Romans 12:3 to 5, was the hope of Israel promised in Amos 9:11 to 15, the peaceful possession of the holy land.

We have spoken of this unsound teaching as “fantastic speculation”. Such it is, when a teacher declares that the hope of some of the believers, during the “Acts” period, was terrestrial, and the hope of others celestial; but the hope of believers in the church after the “Acts” period was “super-celestial” This is being taught today. These teachers seek to prove by Philippians 3:11 to 15 that the Apostle Paul had to do some real pressing to get out of the “Acts Church”, with its celestial hope, into the “Post-Acts Church”, with its super-celestial hope. They teach that some of the members of the Philippian church died in the celestial hope and some in the supercelestial. If the hope of the believers during the Acts period was the hope of Israel then the members of the church in Philippi who died before Acts 28:28 should come back in resurrection bodies to go to Canaan. Thus you can see the nonsense of such teaching. The Philippian saints, in Philippians 1:6 and Philippians 3:20, the Corinthian saints, in I Corinthians 1:7 to 9, the Colossians in 3:3 and 4, the saints, in I John 3:1 to 4, were all looking for the same coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the same blessed hope of Titus 2:13.”

Bible Study for Bereans (January, 1937)

- “The Judgment Seat of Christ” by Charles F. Baker is the most important article from this edition of the magazine. In this essay Pastor Baker uses the book of Philippians to argue that the body of the Acts period is the same body of the post-Acts period.
 - “The principle, common to all of Paul’s epistles of the judgment of the believer’s works for rewards, is just one of the many evidences that in all of them the same body or church is addressed. Philippians, a prison epistle, gives proof that believers, after the “Acts”, had the same expectation as they did during the “Acts period” (“from the first day until now”—Philippians 1:5), and were thus instructed along with the Corinthians and Romans that they must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. God began the good work in them in Acts 16, and was going to perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6). The Corinthians, saved later, had a similar hope that they would be presented “unreprovable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ”. (I Corinthians 1:8). Thus before and after the close of the “Acts” Paul was pointing believers forward to the same day of reward and manifestation. See also Philippians 1:10; 2:16; and compare 4:1 with I Thessalonians 2:19.

Philippians 3:8 to 14 is the strongest portion of the Epistle for rewards in the day of Christ. Paul speaks of gaining, winning, attaining, obtaining, and pressing on toward the goal unto the prize. Failure to recognize the true character of this passage has led to some very foolish speculation. Some have Paul here striving and working for salvation, after he had been preaching for 20 years that no one could ever get it by works (Romans 3:19; Romans 4:5; Galatians 2:16 and 21), and others try to make us believe that although saved, Paul was not yet in the Body of Christ, but was striving to get in. If this be true, then membership in the Body is not by grace but by works, and if Paul was not sure, then who dares to presume to have merited that high calling? Paul was not here speaking of himself only, as though he had a different case from the others; for if a new Body began after “Acts” closed, every Philippian along with Paul needed to be transferred to it. Besides, after telling them for what he was striving, he immediately said; “Brethren, be followers together of me”.”

- Pastor Baker also addresses the Acts 28 notion of the “out-resurrection” in Philippians 3:14. As one might expect he does not accept this view as being viable.
 - “The attaining unto the resurrection (Philippians 3:11), and the prize of the high or upward-calling (Philippians 3:14) claim special attention. This word resurrection is literally “out-resurrection”, and occurs only in this verse. Many interpret it to mean a resurrection prior to another: one group of dead raised out of the whole company of the dead, although this thought is sufficiently stated in the words that follow: “out of the dead.” What ever it is, it must be admitted that it is to be attained by works, and that Paul was striving for it, and told the Philippians to do likewise. It could not be that resurrection which will be the lot of every believer; for Paul could not have missed that if he wanted to. It is hard to believe that God has set aside His gracious purposes in the unity of the Body, and will raise the especially meritorious members of the Body in a special resurrection. In the light of Hebrews 11:35, certain of the Hebrew saints of old are going to receive “a better resurrection”, which seems to refer, not to a separate resurrection; for they will all be raised in the first resurrection, but to a special place of honor in that resurrection. Now since the “out-resurrection” is spoken of as a prize to be attained by some who are raised “out of the dead”, it seems only logical that Paul by the Spirit coined

this word to describe that special place of honor in the Body which some will attain unto. If this view is correct, then it harmonizes this passage with the entire Pauline revelation upon the subjects of resurrection, rewards, grace, and membership in the Body. Thus the “upward calling” (Philippians 3:14) which is the hope of the Body of Christ has a prize attached to it, and evidently not all members of the Body, will receive that prize. This reward is not to be attained by merely giving mental assent to certain dispensational teachings, as some today are asserting, and as some are even claiming that only those who acknowledge their particular brand of dispensationalism will get into the Body. This prize is won by suffering, and by being conformed to His death. May God help us to press forward as Paul did toward that goal for the prize of the upward calling of God.”

- Another important article from the January, 1937 issue of *Bible Study for Bereans* is “Peter—Paul—and Circumcision,” by J.C. O’Hair. In this essay, O’Hair addresses the two-fold nature of Paul’s Acts ministry. In addition, he talks about the revolutionary nature of the book of Galatians in terms of its teaching regarding Gentile salvation.
 - “During the “Acts” period Paul was becoming a Jew to the Jews to gain the Jews. But after that nation was given up by the Lord in Acts 28:25 to 28, Paul ceased his two-fold program. This is clearly set forth in Philippians 3:1 to 9. In his “Post-Acts” ministry, Paul declared for spiritual circumcision. “For we are the circumcision which worship God in spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” Philippians 3:3. “In Whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, Who hath raised Him from the dead.” Colossians 2:11 and 12. Yes, he also declared for baptism not made with hands.

The question that continues to present itself is this, “If ‘Galatians’ was written before Paul’s experience recorded in Acts 21:18 to 28, how are we to reconcile Paul’s submission to the urge of James and the Jewish brethren to prove that he (Paul) had not instructed Jews to give up circumcision, with those words of Paul, in Galatians 6:15: “for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature”?”

... Paul’s teaching was revolutionary teaching. This revolutionary teaching—and such it was when Paul first presented it—caused much commotion, controversy, separation and bitterness; just as water baptism does today. Paul declared it to be the gospel of the uncircumcision, given him by special revelation from Christ in heaven. Peter and the other original apostles got the truth concerning this from Paul in person when he visited them in Jerusalem more than fourteen years after he met the Lord on the way to Damascus. Galatians 2:1 to 4. Again we would urge you to see the importance of this. The result: Peter, James and John gave their sanction and hearty endorsement to Paul’s unique ministry, the gospel of the uncircumcision for the Gentiles; and they gave to Paul the right hands of fellowship. Galatians 2:9. But did this change their ministry? Not at all. They went right on with the gospel of the circumcision for Israel: for Christ had so instructed them. Two gospels are mentioned in Galatians 2:7 to 9. There is only one for this dispensation.

This revelation from Christ to Paul was one of the mysteries given to Paul. That Gentiles were to be included with Israel, in the Abrahamic Covenant, was no secret. But it was to

be on the grounds of circumcision and in Israel's kingdom program: in which program the Gentiles were to be subject to the circumcised Jews.

But Paul, in Galatians, gave out the information that a different program has been revealed by Christ, namely: that before God restored the kingdom to Israel, the same gospel of grace that was preached to Abram in uncircumcision was to be preached to Gentiles. Instead of being blessed with Israel's kingdom blessing, Gentiles were blessed with faithful Abram: being declared righteous without the deeds of the law and without any religious ceremony or ordinance. Justified without a cause by God's grace, the uncircumcised Gentiles that believe are to be one in Christ with the circumcised Jews which believe.

This was indeed a secret that had to be made known by special revelation. By the pen of Paul the question for believing Gentiles, "TO BE OR NOT TO BE CIRCUMCISED", was settled. Settled? Yes! But not accepted by many prejudiced legalists and religionists.

By the same pen the question should be settled today, as to believing Gentiles, "TO BE OR NOT TO BE BAPTIZED". But Alas! Other prejudiced legalists and religionists are here to oppose this blessed truth. If Colossians 2:11 settles physical circumcision, then Colossians 2:12 should settle physical baptism. Be a Berean.

As the religionists of Paul's day were circumcised to take away the offense of the cross, religionists today take away the offense of the cross with water-baptism which has nothing to do with the gospel of grace."

- In "Far Above All Heavens," Charles F. Baker defends the notion of two future spheres of blessing: 1) millennial earth (Israel), and 2) the heavens (body of Christ). This teaching is defended against the notion that the body of Christ will experience a different future, "far above all heavens." According to Pastor Baker this notion is rooted in the Acts 28 notion that those in the prison epistles possessed a different hope from believers during Paul's Acts period epistles.
 - "Christians, generally speaking, believe that there will be two places of future blessing for God's people, namely: heaven and the millennial earth, or the new heavens and the new earth. Recently, however, a teaching has been put forward by some that this is only part truth; for they claim that the members of the church which is Christ's body are bound neither for a new earth nor a new heaven, but for a third sphere which is far above all heavens. Going to that place, of course, is supposed to be much better than merely going to heaven. The writer is always willing to give what he has for something better; so he eagerly searched the Scriptures to see if these things were so. The search was somewhat simplified, since the theory demands that those addressed in Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Thessalonians, and Hebrews were bound for heaven, and that the ones in Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Timothy, and Titus belonged to an altogether different church or body and were on the road to an altogether different place which is far above all heavens. In other words, the theory of the three spheres falls down if it can be proved that the same body of believers is addressed in all of Paul's epistles, or that believers in all are bound for the same destination.

This teaching is founded upon only one verse of Scripture in reality, although other verses are mustered to support it. That verse is Ephesians 1:10: "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." The expressions, "on high" (Ephesians 1:8), and "heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:3; Ephesians

1:20; Ephesians 2:6; Ephesians 3:10; Ephesians 6:12), are supposed to describe this place far above all heavens. Christ is supposed to have ascended into heaven just prior to Pentecost and to have remained there as Highpriest, Advocate, and Intercessor until the end of the “Acts” period and then to have left heaven and to have ascended up far above all heavens. The word translated “heavenly places” is a Greek compound, “epouraniois”, composed of “epi”, upon, plus “ouraniois”, heavens, and is therefore supposed to mean that place which is upon the heavens. The following ten points of inquiry have caused the writer to conclude that the Bible does not uphold this new theory.”

- As eluded to at the end of the above quote, Baker provides ten points to justify his conclusion that this theory is incorrect. Time and space will not permit us to recount all ten points. Consequently, we will quote some of Baker’s more important points as well as his conclusion. Interested parties are encouraged to consult the free electronic version of the document available on the O’Hair Online Library.
 - “9) The next significant fact is that it is not stated in Ephesians that we are going to be in the epouranion in the life to come, but that we are seated there NOW. Christ is now seated at the right hand of God in the epouranion (Ephesians 1:20), and we are seated there in Him. But Christ is not going to sit forever on His Father’s throne, but only “until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Hebrews 1:13). We know that He is going to leave that place where He is now seated and return to this earth. He is going to take His own throne and reign, and Paul states in his last epistle that if we endure with Him, we shall also reign with Him. (II Timothy 2:12). Even after the Millennial reign upon earth we know that Christ will be in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:22, It is unthinkable that the Body of Christ will be left in one place while the Head is in another, and if the Body will be with the Head, then it is evident that the Body will not be in the same place in which the Head is now bodily seated.

10) The last important point to be taken into consideration in this discussion is the relation of the Body to the Bride. Since those who hold the Three Spheres Theory also hold that the Body is not the Bride, this argument is valid. Dr. Bullinger in his book, “The Church Epistles”, wrote:

“Christians, in their usual selfishness, attempt to rob others of their place as the Bride, and thus lose their own still “better” place (Hebrews 11:40) as part of the Bridegroom”. (pg. 146).

“What is clear and certain is that the Church is the Body of Christ Himself, and that the members of that Body being “in Christ” (mystical), are PART OF THE BRIDEGROOM, and cannot possibly, therefore, be the Bride herself.” (pg. 148).

Assuming that Dr. Bullinger is correct, one can see the queer picture that the Three Spheres Theory presents. It is claimed that the Bridegroom is, so to speak, going to be living in the penthouse while the Bride will be living far below on perhaps the ground or second floor. If the Bible teaches anything, it teaches that husband and wife are to cleave together and that they are one flesh and one body (Ephesians 6:31; I Corinthians 6:16), and surely any teaching which separates the Bridegroom from the Bride is unscriptural. If an election of Israel is the Bride and we are part of the Bridegroom, then it is clear that we are to be made one with that Bride and to be in the same place in which the Bride will be.

CONCLUSION:

It is important to keep in mind that the Scripture plainly teaches that there is more than one heaven. There is the “heaven of heavens” (II Chronicles 2:6; II Chronicles 6:18; Deuteronomy 10:14) which may or may not be what Paul calls the “third heaven” (II Corinthians 12:2). The tabernacle was a type of the heavens (Hebrews 8:5; Hebrews 9:1 to 15, 23, 24), and no doubt its three parts, courts, holy place, and holiest of all, correspond to the three heavens. If so the three heavens are not separated any more than the parts of the tabernacle were separated. The holiest of all is the third heaven where the throne of God is.

When Christ ascended up far above all heavens (Ephesians 4:10), we are not to suppose that He went to a place outside of the heavens; for Paul’s prison epistles directly state that He is in heaven, but that He was given an exalted position of power and glory above all beings in the heavens, or as Scripture says: “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above (above in the same sense as He is exalted above the heavens) every name” (Philippians 2:9) ; “and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named” (Ephesians 1:20, 21), “that in all things He might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18). It is just another way of stating the Headship of Christ. He is now Head of the Church which is His Body, and in the dispensation of the fullness of times God is going to literally “head up” all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10). Heaven is many times used for the inhabitants or powers of heaven, just as we say that Maine voted for Landon, meaning the inhabitants of Maine. Roosevelt, however, was elected, and he is now exalted by reason of his position above the United States. His being above is one of position and not of place. He is above whether in South America or in the lowest altitude in the world. In much the same manner, I believe, my Saviour has been exalted above the universe, and no matter where He may be locationally, He will ever keep that exalted position.”

Works Cited

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