

Sunday, May 19, 2013—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 104 *Bible Study for Bereans: February and March, 1937*

Towards Mid-Acts Period

Bible Study for Bereans (February and March, 1937)

- The February/March, 1937 edition is not only very long, it is a very important issue. The content, all written by Mr. O’Hair, is both very wide ranging and thoroughly dispensational in its content. At the end there are also extensive pages containing the text of new tracts that Pastor O’Hair had written.
- In “Strong Meat for the Perfect,” O’Hair teaches that a door was opened to the gentiles in 45 A.D. and that from Acts 13 to Acts 28 there is no record of the ministry of the twelve Apostles apart from the Apostle Paul.
 - “Surely we can learn when God opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles (about 45 A.D.). . . We do greatly err when we endeavor to make Peter’s Kingdom keys fit into Paul’s dispensation of the grace of God. We can understand why Paul mentions “my gospel” in Romans 2:16-Romans 16:25 and II Timothy 2:8.

Undoubtedly, we have observed that after James, the brother of John, was beheaded (Acts 12:1 and 2) no successor was chosen to keep the number of Apostles twelve. And we shall observe, also, by studying from the thirteenth chapter of Acts through the twenty-eighth chapter that there is no record of the ministry of the Twelve Apostles or of any other man except as they have dealings with the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul is the chief human actor in the last seventeen chapters of Acts. He is mentioned more than 100 times whereas Peter is mentioned very few times.

Moreover it is interesting and significant to observe that the Book of Acts came suddenly to a close before Paul finished his life and written ministry. Hence, Paul’s Epistles are divided into two periods, “The Acts Period” and “His Prison Epistles.”

- In “The True Bible Church and God’s Spiritual Program for Church Members,” O’Hair states that when Paul wrote Romans and Corinthians during the Acts period, God had already made no difference between Jew and Gentile.
 - “When Paul wrote to the Romans and wrote to the Corinthians about 25 years after Christ died, there was no difference between Jew and Gentile, they were both baptized by one Spirit into one Body. But before Christ died, when the Gentiles were dogs, there was a difference and Jews and Gentiles were not baptized into one Body by One Spirit. “The Holy Spirit was not yet (given).” John 7:39.”

- In this essay, O’Hair also outlines the differences between the “Plymouth Brethren Dispensationalism of the Fundamentals” and the “ultra-dispensational” corrective being offered by Bullinger and Welch. O’Hair calls the “Acts 28 remedy” worse than the problem.
 - “In general, what is called “the dispensationalism of the Plymouth Brethren” has been accepted as the standard for Fundamentalists, who are Premillenarians. According to this standardized interpretation, the Body of Christ had its historic beginning in Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, and then and there the dispensation of grace was ushered in and the same dispensation has continued right down to the present time. The dispensation of grace, which began on the day of Pentecost, will end abruptly, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, by the coming again of Christ to rapture the Church. These Premillennialists, of the Plymouth Brethren School of interpretation, agree that the Body of Christ was not foretold by Israel’s prophets and therefore was a “mystery” or “secret” during the days of the prophets and while Christ was on earth. And yet, strange to say, some of them preach the signs of Old Testament prophets as signs for the Body of Christ, in “the dispensation of the mystery,” which was unknown to any of those prophets.

In teaching the suspension, or interruption, of God’s covenants, guaranteeing to Israel their King and kingdom, these Plymouth Brethren “dispensationalists” teach that the kingdom is in abeyance and therefore the Body of Christ is a parenthesis; that is, the period of time from the day of Pentecost until the rapture of the Body of Christ, is a parenthetical age. If all of this is true, then why is not the spiritual program of the Book of Acts God’s program for the Church today, inasmuch as it has been one uninterrupted dispensation for about 1,900 years? Some tell us, that God was carrying on two purposes during the “Acts” period. While he was offering the kingdom to Israel, He knew they would not accept the King, therefore He began on the day of Pentecost to build the Church of Ephesians, in accordance with Matthew 16:16 to 19. These teachers have arbitrarily dropped the signs, visions, tongues and gifts, of the Church of the “Acts” period and elected to cling to water baptism and the Lord’s Supper, without offering explanation, apology or sound exegesis.

Now the Pentecostalists are very much disturbed because Fundamentalists will not adopt the “Acts” program of repentance, baptism for remission of sins, the imposition of hands for Holy Spirit baptism, tongues, miraculous healings and visions. They have thrown tradition to the winds and they cry “back to Pentecost and apostolic power.” They say, if the Church began on the day of Pentecost and the same dispensation of grace, in which we now live, began on that day, we must look to the Scriptures, Acts 2, 8 and 19 for our Church program. In their zeal, but delusion, they seriously attempt to carry on in accordance with Acts 19:2 to 7.

The Plymouth Brethren dispensationalists have no Scriptural corrective. They offer only ridicule—which is neither a just nor an adequate antidote for the fanaticism and counterfeit movement which is bringing reproach upon the Church of Christ and causing many sincere people to fall into the snare and delusion of an undispensational religious

program, while the gospel of grace is frustrated, corrupted and perverted. “If any man preach any other gospel (than the grace of Christ) let him be anathema.” Galatians 1:8 and 9.

While the Lord is using the rod of “fanaticism” in an effort to cause the “Plymouth Brethren” Fundamentalists, which includes the teachers in our leading Bible Schools, to stop, consider, and correct their “dispensationalism,” another group of brethren are offering the extreme dispensational teachings of Dr. E. W. Bullinger and Mr. Chas. H. Welch as a cure for both “Pentecostalism” and “Plymouth Brethrenism.” But the remedy is worse than the malady. They declare that the Body of Christ of Ephesians and Colossians did not have its historic beginning until after Acts 28:28 . . . They declare that the Body of I Corinthians 12:13, was a separate, distinct and different Body from the Body which is mentioned after Acts 28:31. Therefore, the Body of Romans 12:3 to 5 is not the Body of Ephesians 1:19 to 22. Perhaps, or perhaps not, the members of the “Acts” period Church were transferred into the new Body. This was optional with all except any of the Twelve Apostles. None of the Twelve ever became members of the Body of Christ, according to this extreme teaching. They furthermore state that the Church of God, or Body, during the “Acts” period, was an “Israelitish Kingdom Church,” looking for the parousia (personal presence) of Israel’s Messiah to save them from the great tribulation and lead them into the realization of Israel’s hope, the Holy Land or the heavenly Jerusalem. They claim that, as members of the Body of Christ, we should not now wait for the coming of the Lord, as did the Corinthians, Thessalonians, Philipians and all the saints during the “Acts” period. They have turned the Mystery, which they say did not begin until after Acts 28:31, into such mysticism that they neither understand it, nor are able to make others understand; and still they claim to be custodians and dispensers of profound spiritual truths unknown to other dispensationalists.”

- O’Hair also argues in this article that Paul was no less a steward of the mystery when he wrote Corinthians than he was when he penned Ephesians or Colossians. In addition, after Acts 28 Paul makes known a new or different administration or phase of the mystery. In this same context, O’Hair also warns of the blunder of following Bullinger and Welch.
 - “The Greek, “oikononieo” is the verb, and means to manage or administer the affairs of a home. Therefore, “oikonomia” might well be translated, “administration.” Undoubtedly the Holy Spirit had this in mind in the expression contained in Ephesians 3:9, “the administration of the mystery.” Let us acknowledge the difference between “the mystery,” or the different phases of “the mystery,” and “the administration of the mystery.” The same Greek word is used in I Corinthians 4:1 and 2, “stewards” of the mysteries of God. Paul was no less the steward of the mystery, when he wrote Corinthians (I Corinthians 2:7 and 8) than when he wrote to the Ephesians and Colossians. However, after Acts 28:31, there was a new and different administration of the mystery. . .

But let us not be guilty of the blunder of those who follow Dr. Bullinger and Mr. Welch, teaching that there is nothing of God's eternal purpose set forth in Romans, because Abraham is there mentioned. We might say, that it is not mentioned in Paul's last Epistle, because there he calls Christ the Seed of David. II Timothy 2:8. The eternal purpose of God is mentioned in Romans 8:28 and the context in that Chapter proves that the truth contained in Romans is the truth of Ephesians.

As to the grace gospel, Romans 3:24 to 28 is as clear a grace message as is Ephesians 2:8 to 10; and surely the instructions to members of the Body of Christ in Romans, Chapters 12, 13, 14 and 15 are binding upon every member of the One Body mentioned in Ephesians 4:5. Neither is it optional with the individual saint, who has been erroneously taught that he is not a member of the Body mentioned during the "Acts" period, whether or not he obeys the instructions of Romans and Galatians. . .

Concerning "the mystery" of Paul's Prison Epistles, it is mentioned in Romans 16:25, but in no Pre-prison Epistle is the mystery clearly declared and emphasized as it is in Ephesians and Colossians. Moreover, Ephesians is addressed to members of the Body of Christ more than to a local assembly. If "the mystery" is truth not foretold by Israel's prophets and not promised in the Israelitish Covenants mentioned in Romans 9:3 to 5, surely the "mystery" truth had been revealed to Paul at the time he wrote Galatians, Romans and I Corinthians.

To teach, as some teachers are teaching, that during the "Acts" period the believing Gentiles were governed by Israelitish religion, whereas thereafter they were not, is to manifest a profound ignorance of facts.

On the other hand, to teach that "the administration of the mystery" was not a changed administration, after Paul's declaration in Acts. 28:28: "be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it," is also a manifestation of profound ignorance.

Since Paul wrote Ephesians and Colossians and II Timothy, Gentiles have occupied a unique place with high and holy privileges in the economy of God, never known in any period of time."

- "The Outcalling of the Gentiles," by O'Hair again stresses the following of calling Paul's Acts Period epistles, "Kingdom Epistles."
 - "It is difficult to disprove these facts with the Scriptures. But it cannot be proved by the Scriptures that the program of the coming kingdom dispensation will correspond to the spiritual program carried on by Paul in his ministry to the close of the Book of Acts and as set forth in his "Acts" Epistles: Galatians, Romans, Corinthians and Thessalonians. Let us remember that God did not send Peter to Cornelius with the gospel, to provoke Israel

to jealousy, as He sent Paul to the Gentiles. Cornelius confessed that Israel's God was the true God. Cornelius worshipped that God and loved the Jews and gave alms to them.”

- In the essay there is an entire section titled “Dr. Bullinger and Mr. Welch.” In this section O’Hair takes issue with the Acts 28 teaching that they could have repented until the close of the Acts period. He does this by arguing that there is no evidence in Paul’s Acts period epistles by pointing out that if Israel had repented God would have sent Christ to establish the Kingdom.
 - “In their attempt to prove that the Body of the mystery could not have had its historic beginning as long as the kingdom offer was being extended to Israel, these brethren argue that, inasmuch as the Jews in the Holy Land for several years had the kingdom offered to them (the restoration of all things spoken by the prophets since the world began; Acts 3:21), it was but just and equitable that the same offer should have been extended to the Jews scattered through Asia and Europe. Therefore, as the Lord sent Peter and his associates to witness to the Jews in the Land, He sent Paul to witness to the Jews outside of the Land. They seek to prove, by I Thessalonians 2:16, Acts 17:3 and Acts 17:7, that Paul was presenting the kingdom message and program to Israel, and by him the Lord was assuring Israel that He was waiting to come back to take David’s throne the very moment they would repent. . .

They declare that this kingdom offer was valid until God’s judgment was announced in Acts 28:25 to 28; and that during the thirty years of this kingdom program and offer, Christ was Israel’s High Priest and Advocate, in the heavens, but after the judgment pronounced in Acts 28:25 to 28, He abdicated so far as His High Priesthood was concerned; and after that He ascended to a higher place in heaven, even “far above all heavens.” Ephesians 4:10. Ephesians 1:21. . .

But now, concerning the teaching of Dr. Bullinger and Mr. Welch, that Paul went on with Peter’s kingdom program and message, offering Jews and Gentiles membership in an Israelitish Kingdom Church until the close of Acts, the Epistle to the Galatians shows the folly of their every argument. There is not the slightest suggestion in one verse of Galatians, Romans or Corinthians, all written before Acts 28:25 to 28, that had the Nation Israel repented, the saved Gentiles would have gone to Canaan under Christ on David’s throne: as was offered in Acts 3:19 to 21. This, these brethren call, “the hope of Israel,” which was the hope of the “Acts” Church, described in I Corinthians 12:13, Romans 12:3 to 5 and Galatians 3:25 to 29. Think of teaching that these Gentile saints were headed for the tribulation, the tribulation rapture and a home in the land of Canaan! . . .

The extremists have blundered concerning the “Acts” ministry of the Twelve and Paul; as have the Plymouth Brethren: both claiming that Paul went right on, during the “Acts” period, with Peter’s grace message to the Gentiles. However, they reach entirely different conclusions as to what this proves concerning the birthday of the Church which is His Body.

There is no proof that the Body of Christ began historically in Acts 2, or after Acts 28. But there was a radical change after Peter had preached to Cornelius, when his message with the kingdom keys was no longer recorded and Paul took the chief place. . . The blunder in dispensationalism is carrying the kingdom of heaven program in Acts beyond the record of the spiritual activities of the Twelve Apostles.”

- “Israel’s Unpardonable Sin: Why Paul Turned to the Gentiles” by O’Hair is another important article found in this edition of *Bible Study for Bereans*. In this article O’Hair seeks to establish that the Unpardonable Sin was a national sin committed by the nation of Israel. Furthermore, it was on account of Israel’s committing this sin that salvation was sent to the gentiles, according to O’Hair.
 - “The unpardonable sin, mentioned in Matthew 12:32, was committed by the Nation Israel. Individual Gentiles today do not sin against the Son of man. Let us first compare Matthew 12:32 with Ephesians 2:4 to 8 and Ephesians 2:17. . . Here we note that Israel would be forgiven, if Israel sinned against the Son of man; but not, if they blasphemed or sinned against the Holy Spirit. In the case of the Gentiles saved by grace, they had been dead in sins. All of their sins were unpardoned, but none of them unpardonable. When they were made alive by grace, all their sins were for ever put away. No individual Gentile ever committed the unpardonable sin of Matthew 12:32. . . In Acts 7:51, Israel resisted the Holy Spirit. In Acts 13:45 and Acts 18:6 Israel blasphemed the Holy Spirit. The language of Acts 18:6 shows, that, up to that time Paul was a watchman to the house of Israel, in obedience to Ezekiel 3:18 and 19. When Israel blasphemed, Israel committed the sin of Matthew 12:32; which sin was not to be forgiven. Because Israel put it from them, Paul turned to the Gentiles. The Gentiles obtained mercy through Israel’s unbelief. Romans 11:30 and Romans 11:11 and Romans 11:19. . . Why did not Paul go to the Gentiles, under the orders of the great commission, rather than for the reason declared in Acts 13:46, 18:6, Romans 11:11 and Romans 11:30; that is, because Israel committed the unpardonable sin; blasphemy and unbelief? . . . In the light of the foregoing, can we not see the utter fallacy of having the dispensation of the mystery begin even before God sent salvation to the Gentiles because Israel committed the unpardonable sin? Some dispensationalists declare that the dispensation of the grace of God and the dispensation of the mystery began on the day of Pentecost, some time before Paul was saved. Answer: Perish the thought. The mystery had not even been revealed when Saul became Paul.”
- Also written by J.C. O’Hair, “The Mystery—The Fullness of the Gentiles,” also contains many dispensationally significant statements.
 - The student of the Word of God who misses the significance of Acts 28:25 to 28, the third pronouncement of Isaiah 6:9 and 10, after Israel had committed the unpardonable sin of Matthew 12:32, misses one of the most important dispensational keys to the Scriptures.

That Divine judgment pronounced by Paul brought to an end the Book of Acts except the brief statement of Acts 28:29 to 31. Why did the Book of Acts end before the acts of Paul ended? Paul lived several years after the Book of Acts ended. And many careful students of Paul's ministry have observed quite a difference in God's spiritual program, as presented by Paul in his Epistles written after the Acts 28:31, generally called, "Paul's Prison Epistles," and believed to be, Philippians, I Timothy, Philemon, Titus, Ephesians, Colossians and II Timothy. In these Epistles "the mystery" is mentioned 12 times, but not one mention is made of any advantage or priority rights of the Jews. Neither do we find any mention of "visions," "miracles," "signs," "tongues," and "water baptism." While Christ was on earth the order was "to the Jew only." Matthew 15:24. From the day of Pentecost (about 33 A.D.) to the salvation of Cornelius (about 41 A.D.) God's order was, "to the Jew only." Acts 11:19 and 10:28. Beginning with Paul's ministry to the Gentiles, and up to Acts 28:28, God's order was "to the Jew first and also to the Gentiles." Romans 1:16, Acts 13:46 and Acts 18:5 and 16. After Acts 28:31, God's order was "to the Gentiles and also to the Jews." Ephesians 2:17. This is God's order today. We are still in "the times of the Gentiles" politically and spiritually. . .

There are brethren who teach that the Church of God, mentioned in Acts, was the Body, mentioned in Romans 12:3 to 5, and an Israelitish Church: that the ax was laid to the root with Acts 28:28, and Israel was cut down. Then and there God began a new Divine movement, an entirely different Church, the Body of Christ, mentioned in Ephesians 1:19 to 22, with a new and different hope, calling and destiny. There were changes in the program and a new Divine order but there is no Scriptural proof that an entirely new Body began.

- In "The Hope of Israel: None Other Things," O'Hair outlines the arguments of the Acts 28 position and calls them illogical and unsound exegesis. He then goes on to offer an extensive list of verses to explain his reasoning.
 - "Moreover, inasmuch as the Body of I Corinthians 12:13 and Romans 12:3 to 5 had been described by Paul before his utterance of Acts 26:22 and 23, therefore the "Body" mentioned in I Corinthians and Romans, could not be the mystery, mentioned in Colossians 1:25 to 27 and in Ephesians 1:19 to 22. Such argument is not only faulty, but it is both illogical reasoning and unsound exegesis. . . To state that Paul wrote to the Corinthians, Romans and Galatians only such things as had been prophesied, shows an ignorance of the contents of those Epistles. Paul's defense of his grace message, in Galatians 1:11 to 2:11 should convince any student of the Word that the program presented in Galatians was not a part of the kingdom of heaven program, foretold by Israel's prophets. The ministry of reconciliation, in II Corinthians 5:17 and Romans 5 and 6, and the truth of Romans 8, was never foretold by Israel's prophets. The truth of the Body of I Corinthians 12:13 and Romans 12:3 to 5, was not made known to, or by, Israel's prophets. Nor was the Divine baptism of the believer in that Body, or their identification with Christ, made known by Israel's prophets. Romans 6:3 to 12 and Ephesians 2:6 and 4:5."

- “Judas, Matthias, and Paul,” attacks the Roman Catholic doctrine of Apostolic Succession and argues for the uniqueness of Paul’s message and Apostleship.
 - “Thus we see, that while Peter is the chief human actor in the first eleven chapters of Acts, and Paul is the chief human actor in the last sixteen chapters of Acts, Paul was not Peter’s successor, or the successor of Judas, or of any other man. Paul was the chosen, specially appointed apostle of the risen Christ to a unique ministry not given to any other man, except as it was passed on in accordance with II Timothy 2:2. . . In rightly dividing the Word of truth, we should certainly know the difference between the commission and ministry of the Twelve and those of “the Apostle to the Gentiles.”

- The final essay in the February/March, 1937 edition of the *Bible Study for Bereans* that merits our attention is titled, “The Administration of the Mystery.” In this essay, O’Hair is clear that further revelation about the mystery was given in Ephesians and Colossians; however, he still maintains that the body of the Acts period is the same body being addressed in the prison epistles. These later epistles communicate new operating instructions for the body of Christ but not an entirely new and different body.
 - “At once we should acknowledge, as all intelligent students of the Word of God do, that Twelve Apostles had preached; for their message was in fulfillment of Israel’s Scriptures; to confirm promises that God had made to Israel by Israel’s prophets. It was something different from the great commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20 and Mark 16:14 to 18. It was something different from Peter’s message to Cornelius; for if that was sufficient light and Divine authority, there would have been no necessity for the superabundance of revelations which Paul had given to him by the Lord. Moreover, Paul would not have been so presumptuous and egotistical as to refer to “my deposit” and “my gospel”, or use all the “I’s” and “me’s” that he used in declaring the special authority given him by revelation. He magnified his office as the Lord’s messenger to Gentiles and disclaimed any authority or information received from those who were apostles before him. Romans 11:13 and Galatians 1:11 to 2:11. Paul preached a message of confirmation and a message of revelation.

Any one should be able to study carefully the oral ministry of Paul, in the Book of Acts, and compare his written ministry in his Epistles of that period with his prison Epistles, and inventory the additional facts concerning the mystery mentioned in Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and II Timothy, that is, truth not found in the Divine record previous to Acts 28:31. But who is able to dogmatically affirm that we have the record of all that Paul said before Acts 28:31, concerning the mystery, when we know that we have no record of at least 900 words out of every 1,000 that Paul spoke or wrote?

The ministry of reconciliation is in the very heart of the mystery of the gospel. Colossians 1:20. This reconciliation message is in II Corinthians 5:16 to 21, and in Romans 5:11 to 20. We learn in I Corinthians that Paul could speak certain things concerning the mystery

of the gospel “to them that are perfect.” (I Corinthians 2:6). In the verses following we learn that this was “in a mystery”, “ordained before the world.” To say that Paul did not receive the revelation of the mystery before the close of Acts is to speak in darkness. But who can say that Divine revelations to him had ceased when he said, “I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God?” Acts 20:27.

Certain gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:8 to 13 were given and exercised so that “we be no more children.” In I Corinthians 13:11, Paul admitted that Christians, during the “Acts” period, were children. From this we should recognize the change from a child to a man, and advance in truth.

In this connection there are brethren who follow the dispensationalism of Dr. Bullinger and Mr. Welch, and state that the word in Ephesians 4:12, translated “perfecting”, should be “readjusting.” We quote it, using their word: “For the READJUSTING of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ.” The Greek word is “katartismos” and may be translated “adjusting” or “fully qualifying.” Their argument is that a complete readjustment of the saints had to take place after Acts 28:31, because they had been transferred from an Israelitish Kingdom Church into a new Body of Christ.

There is but little doubt that there was somewhat of a change in God’s spiritual program and order after Acts 28:31, and most assuredly a change in administration. But when did Christ ascend to heaven and give the gifts to men? Surely not after Acts 28:31. The Holy Spirit put in the words of Ephesians 4:8: “wherefore He saith,” quoted from Psalms 68:18, to safeguard from the “far above” teaching of the hyperdispensationalists. Note, this quotation is in connection with the words in Ephesians 4:10, “far above”, about which there is so much mystical extreme teaching today. The teaching of these “extremists” is, that the “far above” of Ephesians 1:21 and Ephesians 4:10, has nothing to do with the heavenly calling of Hebrews 3:1, or the heavenly image of I Corinthians 15:49. This very deep secret has been made known to a very small and very special, exclusive group.

We repeat, that there is high and heavenly truth made known in Ephesians and Colossians not made known in any Epistle Paul wrote prior to Acts 28:31. But there is not one suggestion that a new and different Body, with a new sphere of blessing (supercelestial), began after Acts 28:31.

As we have stated in another message in this pamphlet, the Epistle to the Galatians is the refutation of the claim that the saved Gentiles in the Church of the “Acts” period were under obligation to practice the religious program given them by Israel. They were not even required to submit to circumcision, given long before the law and religion were given John 7:22). The Gentiles were linked up to uncircumcised Abram, who was justified long before the law was given (430 years later). Galatians 3:17 and 19. How childish then to teach that after Acts 28:31, the saved Gentiles were delivered from Israel’s religious program. They were all one before Acts 28:31. Galatians 3:26 to 29.

Romans 12:3 to 6. These brethren, who thus teach, are so fearful that they might be called “Abraham’s seed.” Abraham had no seed when he was Abram, and our relation is to uncircumcised Abram. Romans 4:9 to 16. Galatians 3:6 to 17. We are blessed with the blessing that he received, in uncircumcision. The natural seed of circumcised Abraham is different. Isaac was not born until after Abraham was circumcised.

During the “Acts” period the administration of the circumcision gospel for Israel, the uncircumcision gospel proclaimed by Paul, the ministry of the reconciliation, in fact, all authority over spiritual affairs in the Body of Christ, was in the hands of Israel. All of the apostles and prophets, with Divine authority, were Israelites. Some Gentile fellow-labourers worked under the authority of Paul. While there was neither Jew nor Gentile in the one Body, positionally, there was, so far as authority was concerned.

After the judgment of Acts 28:28, “salvation is sent to the Gentiles,” a new “times of the Gentiles” began; not politically governmental, but spiritually governmental. This has continued to this day. During these years Israel has had no priority rights or privileges, as expressed in Romans 1:16 and Romans 3:1 to 4. The method of authority is stated in II Timothy 2:2. Not a new Body began after Acts 28:31, but a new dispensation of the mystery; that is, a new administration no longer under Israelitish apostolic authority, or authority of Jewish believers.

Certainly there are new phases of truth mentioned. For instance, we quote literally Ephesians 3:6: “That the Gentiles (nations) should be JOINT-HEIRS of the JOINT-BODY and JOINT-PARTAKERS of his promise in Christ by the gospel.” We acknowledge that it is more than unfortunate that this verse is not correctly translated from the Greek, in the authorized version. Three times we find in that verse the prefix “sun” or “sus,” meaning “union” or “joint.” There was a union in Romans 12 and Galatians 3; but the Holy Spirit certainly added that prefix to emphasize the change that is indicated by the fact that Gentiles are sometimes mentioned before the Jews in Paul’s prison Epistles.

Then the question is asked, “how about the statement in Paul’s Prison Epistles, that our hope and calling were purposed in Christ before the foundation of the world, and is called God’s eternal purpose in Christ; whereas Peter and the Eleven referred to a purpose “spoken by the prophets” “since the foundation of the world?” Ephesians 3:11 . . . Ephesians 1:3 and 4 . . . II Timothy 1:9 . . . Titus 1:2 . . . Acts 3:21. Who would deny that there is a difference? But Paul referred to this eternal purpose in I Corinthians 2:6 to 8 and in Romans 8:12 to 28.

Note the orders of God’s programs. In the synoptic Gospels God’s order was “to the Jew only.” Matthew 15:24. Matthew 10:5. Acts 2 to Acts 10, “to the Jew only.” Acts 11:19. After Paul began, in Acts, “to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.” After Acts 28:31, “to the Gentile and also to the Jew.” By comparing I Corinthians with Ephesians, we can certainly see that the sign-gifts of I Corinthians were to pass away; and they did. And,

even the superficial student of the Word of God should see that there were several baptisms during the Book of Acts and “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5; although there is the plain statement of Paul, in I Corinthians 1:17, that, even during that earlier period, Christ sent him not to baptize. Saul was told to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins; but that was some years before the risen Christ revealed the gospel of the uncircumcision and the ministry of reconciliation to him. Saul was saved long before he received the revelation of reconciliation and the mystery.

Then someone asks, if we drop signs and water-baptism, because they are not mentioned in the Prison Epistles, why not drop the Lord’s Supper, which is not mentioned in them? The Lord’s Supper is to be observed “till He come.” I Corinthians 11:26. The feast that is to be observed after Christ comes to Israel, in accordance with Luke 22:15 to 20, has nothing to do with the memorial given to saved Gentiles and saved Jews in the Body to observe till the Lord come. There is a great difference between “after He comes” and “till He come.”

Moreover, there are many things mentioned in Paul’s earlier Epistles as in Romans 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15, not mentioned in his Prison Epistles, which are most certainly binding upon members in the Body described in Ephesians and Colossians. Moreover, Colossians 2:12 and Ephesians 4:5 specifically deal with the spiritual baptism which supersedes other baptisms. And I Timothy 5:23, Philippians 2:26 to 29, and II Timothy 4:20 prove that the signs ceased. “The day of Christ,” of Philippians 1:6, and “the coming of Christ,” out of heaven, of Philippians 3:20 and 21, and the day of His coming in II Timothy, all refer to the same coming of Christ found in Corinthians and in I Thessalonians. Therefore, we have no scriptural authority for dropping the Lord’s Supper.

We do have a sacred obligation to “make all see what is the dispensation (administration) of the mystery.” This we will be able to do, if we study Luke 21:24 with Romans 11:25 and see that a new Gentile movement began after the Divine judgment of Acts 28:28.”

Works Cited

Bible Study for Bereans. February and March, 1937.