

Sunday, January 26, 2014—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 124
The Life and Ministry of C. Richard Jordan: The Formation of Grace School of the Bible

Introduction

- In our last study we looked at Richard’s decision to move from Alabama to Chicago to work for Stam at the BBS as well as the events surrounding the formation of Shorewood Bible Church.
- In this lesson we want to consider how Grace School of the Bible came into existence. In addition, we will begin looking at how the Grace Alternative doctrines came to be understood.
- Please note that the contents of this lesson are taken from a recorded personal interview I conducted with Pastor Jordan in my home on Friday, June 21, 2013.

The Pastoral Training Class (Grace School of the Bible)

- Richard had done some traveling prior to 1983 but began his traveling preaching ministry in earnest in that year. It was Oscar Woodall who prompted Jordan to begin a series of regional Bible Conference meetings around the country. These meetings were promoted in the *Berean Searchlight*.
- After attending Shorewood for a while in early 1983, Chuck Wilcher (and separately Ted Fellows around the same time) approached Jordan about training them for the ministry. Before Jordan would agree to do so, he had to get permission from Stam. Stam agreed as long as they held the classes at the Bible Society. Jordan arranged to meet with Wilcher and Fellows at the Spring Bible Conference in Genoa City, WI to further discuss the matter. By the start of the conference in Genoa City in the spring of 1983, the group of men interested in being trained had increased. Given all the time it would take away from his family, Jordan required a firm, on their oath, three year commitment that they would see it through to the end.
- What became known simply as “the class” and later “pastoral training class” (PTC) before it was called Grace School of the Bible began being filmed in September, 1983. Through his contacts at the Berean Bible Society, Richard had come to know Allen and Nancy Leach. In 1981 the Leach’s started the tape ministry for the BBS called Berean Lighthouse Tapes that was distributing about 10,000 to 12,000 audio tapes a year. It was Allen Leach who sent Jordan a video recorder and told him to video the PTC. Unknown to Jordan at first, the Leach’s began to distribute the school tapes to people as far away as the Philippines. When Jordan visited the Philippines years later he saw, in the home of a Filipino man, an album of the Romans tapes from GSB.
- During 1983-84, as Jordan was traveling around the country, eight different men came to him and told him that they wanted to preach and desired to be trained as well. Jordan’s prayer was for the Lord to send some preachers that could deliver the goods. Consequently, when Jordan started GSB, a great emphasis was placed upon preaching. John Versteegen agreed to be the first person

to go through the school on video. Once Verstegen proved that it could be done via video, a schedule was set up and tapes began being mailed all over the country. Initially, Nancy Leach was the one who oversaw that process and got the ball rolling and kept people supplied with video tapes. Eventually the work load became so strenuous that Jordan had to enlist help with grading papers as well as other aspects of administering the school.

- The curriculum is based on the Pauline Design for the Edification of the believer that Richard taught himself during the early 1970s while laboring at the church in Selma, Alabama. The school is not patterned after the standard systematic theology approach of most mainline Bible colleges and institutes.
- Offering “Bible Edification by Extension”, the PTC is now known as Grace School of the Bible (GSB). The published course catalog of GSB states the school’s purpose as follows:
 - Our main interest is in training men to teach and preach the Word rightly divided, with special focus on "the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery" (Rom. 16:25). To this end, emphasis is laid on three basic areas:
 - 1) An intensive study of the English Bible designed to provide a thorough knowledge of the Word of God according to the dispensational method set forth in II Timothy 2:15, thus giving an understanding of what God is doing in this age and preparing the student for useful and effective service for the Lord.
 - 2) Preaching, rather than on the executive and promotional branches and issues of the work. Classroom study plus practical tutelage and "on the job training" in getting the message out to others are combined to balance the student's growth.
 - 3) The Reformation text of the King James Bible rather than on the critical theories that have been used to destroy the authority of that text. The King James Bible is presented as the Word of God for the English speaking people and this position will be clearly taught and analyzed (both critically and historically).
- Students enrolling in GSB will complete the following course of study in order to be awarded a diploma. Please note that GSB is not an accredited institution of higher learning and does not desire to be. Receiving a diploma from GSB would be the equivalent to graduating from an unaccredited Bible Institute program. Courses include:
 - First Year
 - MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE (101, 102, 103): An in-depth study of the doctrines of inspiration and preservation of Scripture (101), followed by a survey of the history of the transmission of the Bible text (102) and the production of the English Bible (103). This course gives the student confidence in the Authorized Version as the English fruit of the process of preservation.

- ROMANS (101, 102, 103): The basics of "present truth" is provided in a foundational study in grace truth. Following Paul's design, this course covers the first foundation principle for the edification and establishment of believers in the dispensation of grace.
 - DANIEL (101, 102): An overview of the prophetic program is provided by a detailed study of Daniel's basic outline.
 - FUNDAMENTALS OF BIBLE STUDY (101, 102): A practical study of the basic fundamentals of hermeneutics with special emphasis on mid-Acts dispensationalism.
 - GENESIS (102, 103): A detailed study of the four divine institutions for the establishment and orderly maintenance of the human race as set forth in Genesis 1-11 along with an introduction to the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic and New Covenants.
- Second Year
- PREPARATION AND DELIVERY OF SERMONS (201, 202, 203): A practical study of the art of research and development of sermons with emphasis on expositional messages. Special interest is paid to "delivering the goods" in a clear and plain manner.
 - ROMANS (201, 202, 203): Completing a detailed study of Paul's design for edification and establishment by covering the final three foundation principles set forth in Romans. The Galatian and Corinthian Epistles are studied in conjunction with this course.
 - MATTHEW (103, 201, 202, 203): A continuation of prophetic studies by focusing on the earthly ministry and message of the Lord Jesus.
 - O.T. SURVEY (201, 202): A survey of the message and flow of each Old Testament book designed especially to focus on the history of the nation Israel.
- Third Year
- AMBASSADORSHIP (301, 302): A pastoral theology surveying the main issues of the work of the ministry. The Pastoral Epistles are also surveyed in this study.
 - EPHESIANS (301, 302, 303): Continuing to follow Paul's design for the believer's edification, advanced mystery truth is covered in this detailed study of Ephesians. Colossians and Philippians are studied in conjunction with this course.

- ACTS (302, 303): A study of the offer of the kingdom to Israel, the fall of Israel and the subsequent transition to the dispensation of grace. This important transition book is studied in detail.

- It is important to note that those taking GSB today are sent the same video that was shot when the classes were originally taught by Jordan in the mid-1980s when it was still known as the PTC. The school was not called GSB until after Jordan resigned his position at the BBS in 1987 and struck out on his own. I (Bryan Ross) first began taking GSB courses in the fall of 1997 while still a student at Grace Bible College. I watched the entire first year of the school on the video equipment in the media room located in the basement of the Bultema Library on the campus of Grace Bible College. This was a deliberate decision on my part so that I could gain a multiplicity of perspectives on the Grace Message. While I graduated from Grace Bible College in 2002 with a Bachelors of Religious Education, I never progressed beyond half way through the second year of GSB. Trying to navigate the course load of both schools at the same time proved to be a great challenge. In addition, it was in the summer of 2000 at the age of 24 that I began preaching weekly at West Side Grace Church in Muskegon, MI while still trying to finish my education. Suffice it to say that family, ministry, and work demands on our time have not yet afforded me the time to complete GSB. Members of Grace Life Bible Church who are graduates of GSB include: Craig Holcom (Ordained Elder) and Ernie Schierbeek (Sunday School Teacher). Our assembly has benefited greatly having these men, who are graduates of GSB, be a part of the work of the ministry with us.

Addendum

Added Tuesday, January 28, 2014

The following information did not originally appear as part of Lesson 124 when it was taught at Grace Life Bible Church on Sunday, January 26, 2014. These details were added to Lesson 124 after the fact, upon receipt of two emails on Monday, January 27, 2014 from Debbie Keable (RJ's home office secretary) and Richard Jordan. For the sake of accuracy and completeness we will present this information in print here at the end of Lesson 124 as well as in the Introduction/Review section at the beginning of Lesson 125. When Lesson 125 is taught publicly on Sunday, February 2, 2014 at GLBC this information will be included for the benefit of our viewers and listeners.

Tuesday, January 21, 2014, I sent an email to Pastor Richard Jordan and Debbie Keable asking the following questions regarding GSB.

- How many countries worldwide have outlets of GSB?
- What are the names of these countries?
- Do you know approximately how many people have graduated from GSB over the years?

Monday, January 27, 2014 email reply from Debbie Keable

- “We have not been answering you about how many GSB students there have been, because we don't really have an answer. How many hundreds (or maybe one or two thousand?) over 30+ years is hard to say. Many have come and gone off our mailing list, but we currently have 700 on our U.S. mailing list.”
- “We also have at least a few hundred students studying GSB in prisons, either as a group or individually and do not have applications on file for the majority of them. We have, or have had, students in other countries as well: Canada, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Scotland, Switzerland. Des Strydom has students studying under his direction in a few countries in Africa. Bob Barlow had some GSB classes translated into Mandarin and has students studying in China, some in English and some in Mandarin. Johny Varghese has his Grace India website and has a few hundred Indian students studying there in English and Malayalam. There may be a group studying in Belize but we are not sure, and we just found out that a believer hopes to start a group in Haiti once classes are translated into Haitian Creole (whether that will ever happen we can't say).”

Monday, January 27, 2014 email reply from Richard Jordan

- “We currently have about 700 active units in the US. The difficulty knowing the exact number of students is that a good number of these are group classes. For example, Rick has a group in his church: it is his branch; he operates it to fit his needs, we simply provide the curriculum; individual students are overseen by/responsible to him and the leadership there. Because of our conviction that training should be local church based, this has always been our vision for the school. When there is no local church, we of course oversee students from our office.

By the way, I don't recall if we discussed this paradigm at any length, but the Pauline Ministry Model of local - church - based - training is at the heart of what I have sought to do in this ministry. Moving away from this pattern, in my mind at least, is a major unnoticed factor in the fractured and dysfunctional nature of what once was called the grace movement.”

- “Our first foreign graduate was in Singapore. The country with the most is the Philippines, with over 100--here again the above class structure issue is involved, as we have provided at least a dozen sets of the class to various churches there. . . Canada, New Zealand, Australia, England, Switzerland, Netherlands, Scotland, Germany, Ireland, India, Dubai, Israel, Lithuania, South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, Puerto Rico, Belize, Mexico, Guatemala, Fiji can be added as of now. Most of these are individual students but at least six are multiples.”
- “And how do we count China. Over 10,000 sets of the Romans class alone has been distributed through the house church network, Bobby Barlow reached (this is his figure give to me a couple of years ago). I gave them three sets of the whole school to use as they thought best. Obviously we are not statistic driven. But this should give you some idea of what the trail looks like.”