

BIBLE STUDY FOR BEREANS

NOVEMBER, 1935

INSIDE FRONT COVER

THE PURPOSE OF THE MAGAZINE

Since our October edition was sent out, we have received many letters from Christians expressing their gratitude to God and thanks to us for the teaching we are setting forth, helping them to understand and enjoy their Bibles, by “rightly dividing the Word of truth.”

Concerning the eternal Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, His sacrificial death, providing an all-sufficient remedy for sins, His glorious resurrection and God’s all-sufficient grace for the believer’s walk and godly life, all orthodox Christians are agreed, whether they are numbered with the Postmillenarians or the Premillenarians. We have no controversy with Bible teachers concerning these Christian fundamentals, but we have a decided controversy with our Premillenarian brethren who are teaching “Plymouth Brethren” dispensationalism and with the Bible Institutes and Fundamentalist Bible teachers who make no distinction between the ministry, message and program of the Church during the “Acts” period and in Paul’s Prison Epistles.

We regret exceedingly that too often these differences in Scriptural interpretations cause ungracious criticisms and unpleasant divisions among the members of the Body of Christ, who are instructed to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:3. This unity can be kept well pleasing to God only on the basis that God has set forth in Ephesians 4:3 to 5. One Divine condition is “one baptism.” One baptism is not two baptisms. If water baptism identifies the sinner with the glorious Christ, that is the one baptism. If that identification is accomplished by a Divine baptism not made with hands, then the water baptism of the “Acts” dispensation is eliminated. Satan has used water baptism more than any one thing to divide the Body of Christ, whom God instructs to keep unity on the basis of one baptism.

As to the One God, one Lord, one Spirit, all grace preachers are agreed. They are all agreed as to the one hope and one faith of Ephesians and Colossians, but they are not agreed that Paul preached two hopes, the hope of Israel and the hope of the Body. There is more than an element of uncertainty with some faithful saints of God as to whether the Body of I Corinthians and the Body of Ephesians are identical. There needs to be much searching of the Word to settle this. Be a Berean.

Many Bible teachers who have been mixing the two hopes, thereby corrupting the Scriptures and confusing Christians, are either unwilling to be convinced as to their blunder, or unable to distinguish between things that differ, by separating Israel’s hope and calling from the hope and calling of the Body of Christ in Ephesians and Colossians.

No careful, intelligent student of the Word of God can deny that the hope and calling, the position and possessions, the blessing and administration of the members of the Body of Christ in Ephesians and Colossians, given by special revelation from Christ in heaven to Paul, were not

clearly presented either in the Book of Acts or in Paul's Epistles, written during the "Acts" period.

As we continue to study to show ourselves approved unto God, let us manifest the fruit of the Spirit and be careful to maintain good works, remembering that love worketh no ill to his neighbor. Let us by all means refrain from ungracious and uncharitable condemnation of other brethren.

J. C. O'HAIR, Pastor and Editor

DIFFERENT GOSPELS

That we may see another example of "testing the things that differ" we quote several verses of Scripture for comparison and contrast

"THESE TWELVE JESUS SENT FORTH, AND COMMANDED THEM, SAYING, GO NOT INTO THE WAY OF THE GENTILES, AND INTO ANY CITY OF THE SAMARITANS ENTER YE NOT:

"BUT GO RATHER TO THE LOST SHEEP OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL.

"AND AS YE GO, PREACH, SAYING, THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND.

"HEAL THE SICK, CLEANSE THE LEPERS, RAISE THE DEAD, CAST OUT DEVILS; FREELY YE HAVE RECEIVED, FREELY GIVE," Matthew 10:5 to 8.

"AND YE SHALL BE HATED OF ALL MEN FOR MY NAME'S SAKE: BUT HE THAT ENDURETH TO THE END SHALL BE SAVED." Matthew 10:22.

"And they departed and went through the towns, preaching the Gospel, and healing everywhere." Luke 9:6.

"According to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." I Timothy 1:11.

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities". I Timothy 5:23.

"WHO HATH SAVED US, AND CALLED US WITH AN HOLY CALLING, NOT ACCORDING TO OUR WORKS, BUT ACCORDING TO HIS OWN PURPOSE AND GRACE, WHICH WAS GIVEN US IN CHRIST JESUS BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN,

"BUT IS NOW MADE MANIFEST BY THE APPEARING OF OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, WHO HATH ABOLISHED DEATH, AND HATH BROUGHT LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT THROUGH THE GOSPEL." II Timothy 1:9 and 10.

The Scriptures quoted from Matthew and Luke tell us of the Gospel message and Gospel program of the twelve apostles while their King and Messiah was in their midst. The Gospel which they were commanded to preach is called, in Matthew and Luke, "the Gospel of the kingdom." "And they departed and went through the towns, preaching the Gospel and healing everywhere". The Gospel, was the fact that Israel's King had arrived with kingdom blessings and national deliverance for that people, preserved and protected by the Abrahamic Covenant.

The covenants that God made with Israel guaranteed to them peaceful possession of Canaan, under the reign of the true King David. The people were to have new hearts, and enjoy temporal prosperity, and physical health. According to the 35th chapter of Isaiah, that kingdom was to be inaugurated with mighty signs, by the hands of the Messiah. Therefore, the Twelve were to say, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." And they were to prove it by healing the sick,

raising the dead, casting out demons, cleansing the lepers. They were to be saved by enduring to the end.

After these Messengers had been proclaiming this kingdom message for two years, their Messiah told them of His death and resurrection, recorded in Luke 18:31 to 34, which would be the basis of the Gospel of the grace of God which was to be preached later on by the Apostle Paul. By reading these verses, in the eighteenth chapter of Luke, you will observe that the twelve apostles had not the slightest understanding of the things spoken by Christ concerning His death, burial and resurrection.

Let us compare the statement in Matthew 10:5, the words of the Lord Jesus to the Twelve, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles", with the statement of the Lord Jesus to the Apostle Paul, recorded in Acts 22:21, "I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles".

Now let us note carefully the fact in I Timothy 1:11, Paul's words in connection with the Gospel of glory. He said, "Committed to my trust". We should never fail to catch the significance of the "my". It does not say "our trust". In other Scriptures Paul uses the expression, "my gospel". In II Timothy 2:2 we learn that Paul was committing to Timothy the Gospel and the Mystery truth which the Lord had committed to him. But Timothy did not go as did the Twelve, preaching the Gospel everywhere and healing, for he, himself, was told to take a physical remedy for his own sickness. I Timothy 5:23. And Timothy could look at Paul himself suffering with his physical infirmities and know that there had been a change in the Gospel message and Gospel program since the days of the Twelve on earth with Christ. Timothy was not instructed to preach, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand", for it was not then at hand as it was in Matthew 10:7. He was not proclaiming a message of national deliverance to Israel. Neither was Timothy instructed to tell any one to endure unto the end in order to be saved. He was told that they were saved not by enduring unto the end; not by any of their works; but by the grace and purpose of God given them in Christ Jesus (before the foundation of the world. II Timothy 1:9.

In the Gospel according to Luke we cannot find a message which Christ spoke directly to a single Gentile until He stood before Pilate. The Roman centurion, in the seventh chapter, received a physical blessing for His servant, because he had built a synagogue for Israel. And the elders of Israel interceded in his behalf. Luke 7:1 to 8.

In the Book of Matthew the word "grace" is not found. It is difficult in that Book to find the Gospel of the grace of God for an individual Gentile sinner. In that Book the Lord Jesus Christ was under the law with His Nation, with a ministry of confirmation, in accordance with Romans 15:8. The message of salvation is covered with so much Judaism that it takes an expert exegete to uncover it. Whereas, the message of pure grace is so clearly set forth in Paul's Epistles to Timothy, that it seems a spiritual crime for any preacher to present the mixture of the two messages to a poor lost sinner, who must be saved by grace, and grace alone.

From this we see the importance of obeying Hebrews 6:1, which we quote:

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection".

"If by grace, it is no more of works." Romans 11:6.

CHRIST ON THE EARTH

AND

CHRIST IN THE HEAVENLIES

In Luke's Gospel we have one of God's records of the words and works of His Son "on earth". In the Epistle to the Ephesians we have something of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ "in the heavenlies".

Let us compare two verses: "The Son of man hath power `upon earth', to forgive sins." Luke 5:24. "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings `in the heavenlies' ". Ephesians 1:3. The blessed ones in Ephesians 1:3 have already been delivered from the power of darkness and have been translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Colossians 1:13. Their citizenship is in heaven; and they are waiting for Christ to call them on high in bodies like unto His glorious body. Philippians 3:20 to 22. The people of Luke's Gospel, to whom the Son of man was preaching on earth, were instructed to strive to enter in at the straight gate and to pray "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth." Luke 13:24 and Luke 11:2.

You will recall Paul's instructions in Philippians 1:10, "test the things that differ" (R. V.) To even the superficial student of the Word of God it must be apparent that there is a great difference between "on earth" and "in the heavenlies" "In the heavenlies" is found five times in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Ephesians 1:3; Ephesians 1:20; Ephesians 2:6; Ephesians 3:10; Ephesians 6:12.

The Greek word translated, "heavenly places" or "high places", "epouranios", means literally the "super heavenlies", that is, "the highest heavenlies."

The expression "on the earth" is used about ten times in Luke's Gospel. In Luke's Gospel Christ is on earth. There He is instructing people to be meek and thereby inherit the earth. Matthew 5:5. There He is promising His faithful disciples that they will be rewarded by sitting with Him on earth when He shall return in glory. They are going to sit with Him, eat with Him, drink with Him,, and reign with Him. Luke 22:28 to 30.

In the Ephesian ministry the sinners, saved altogether by grace, are members of the Body of Christ; and they are waiting for the manifestation of Christ, to be manifested with Him in glory. Colossians 3:3 and 4. "On the earth", is the key to Luke's Gospel; "the King and the kingdom". "In the super-heavenlies", is the key to Ephesians ; "the Head and the Body," "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Ephesians 1: 20 to 22.

In Luke's Gospel the Prince of Peace is born in the city of David, in the house of David, of the seed of David, to take the throne of David. Luke 1:28 to 33. This was in fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6 and 7. Therefore, the government is to be upon His shoulder, when He is upon the throne of David. Of the increase of His government and peace there is to be no end. Hear the announcement sent to earth from heaven "Peace on earth, good will toward men." Luke 2:14. Israel rejected the Prince of Peace, saying, "we will not have this man to reign over us;" "we have no king but Caesar." They crowned their King, with the emblem of the curse, the thorns that came as the result of the sin of the first man. The first man brought the thorns; the Second Man wore the thorns. The first man (Adam) brought the curse; the Second Man, Christ, bore the curse.

The Man at God's right hand is the only man now living, or who will yet live, that has the right to David's throne. But that Man's present ministry has nothing to do with David's

throne; or with bringing peace to this earth. The Father of glory is now engaged in making One New Man. Ephesians 2:15. This New Man is made up of the Head, who at present is not on David's throne, but far above principality, power and dominion in the highest heavenlies. Ephesians 1:19 to 22. The members of this Body were once dead in trespasses and sins, by nature the children of wrath, alienated from the life of God, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers of the covenants of promise, in the world having no hope. Ephesians 2:1 to 4 and Ephesians 2:11 and 12 and Ephesians 4:18. Then comes those two glorious "Buts". Hear them: "BUT GOD" and "BUT NOW". Ephesians 2:4 and Ephesians 2:13. Never forget them. "But God" . . ."But now". "But God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved us ... hath made us alive ... and raised us up to sit together with Christ in the highest heavenlies." "BUT now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." What a transformation! What a change! Sinners who were once walking according to the course of this world forgiven for Christ's sake. Ephesians 4:32. Saved by grace through faith; not of works. Ephesians 2:8 and 9. All for the glory of God. That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:7. Every spiritual blessing that believers enjoy, and shall forever continue to enjoy, is through Christ Jesus and in Christ Jesus. The free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23. Grace reigns through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:21. Who shall deliver us from the body of this death? Romans 7:25. I praise God through Jesus Christ our Lord. We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Romans 8:27.

If you are a believer, have you permitted God to do for you what He longs to do? God longs to give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: The eyes of you understanding being enlightened: that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward. "The hope of His calling"; "The riches of the glory of His inheritance"; "The exceeding greatness of His power." This is all because Christ is the believer's peace. Ephesians 2:14. On the cross the Lord Jesus Christ made peace by the blood of His cross. Colossians 1:20. He was foreordained before the foundation of the world to be the spotless Lamb of God, for the redemption of sinners. I Peter 1:18 to 20. It was then that our high, holy and heavenly calling was in the mind of God, with our salvation, not according to our works; but according to His grace and purpose which was given us in Christ before the foundation of the world. II Timothy 1:9.

What has the hope of God's calling or the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints of Ephesians, or the exceeding greatness of God's power that raised Christ to His own right hand far above, which placed members of the Body to the same high and exalted place, to do with "peace on earth"? The members of the Body of Christ are already completely justified, at peace with God, and every day conscious of the peace of God that passeth understanding. But we know full well that peace on earth is only in spots and that there will be wars and rumors of war until the horseman of Revelation 6:4 shall come and do his deadly work: "to him was given power to take peace from the earth."

The question which the Lord Jesus asked in Luke 18:8, "when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth", demands, by the Greek construction, the negative answer. The Son of man will not find faith on the earth when He comes to the earth. The Son of man is coming to the earth; but He will not come as long as the Church, which is His Body, is in the making. The Lord Jesus Christ is not the Son of man to the Church which is His Body. He is the Head of the Body. He is not coming to the earth to judge His Body. But the Son of Man is going

to sit as the King on the throne of His glory. All nations will be gathered before the Son of man when He is again on earth on the throne of His glory. Matthew 25:31. The Son of man will not only judge Gentiles, but He, together with the Twelve Apostles, will judge the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Matthew 19:28.

James, one of the Twelve, wrote to the Twelve Tribes: “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh;” “the judge standeth at the door.” James 5:9 and 10. The arrival of the Son of man will be when there is no faith on the earth. What will be on earth? And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and UPON THE EARTH distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring: Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming ON THE EARTH: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” Luke 25 and 26.

It will be at such a time that the Son of man shall arrive to bring peace on earth. “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory!” “So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.” Luke 21:27 and 31.

When we compare Luke 2:14 with Luke 12:51, we are again reminded of the importance and necessity of applying II Timothy for the intelligent understanding of the Word of truth and for the elimination of the seeming contradictions in God’s Book. The declaration of Luke 2:14 is, “peace on earth.” Therefore, when the question is asked by the Son of man in Luke 12:51, “suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth,” we would promptly reply “yes”; for that is what the heavenly messengers proclaimed to the shepherds keeping their flock by night. But note the Lord’s answer to His own question; “I tell you, Nay.” If Israel would receive Him as the Prince of Peace, as their promised King and Deliverer, He would take the throne for which he was born. But His sufferings must precede His glory; so He must be despised and rejected. His kingdom must be postponed. With the postponement of Christ’s kingdom on earth, world peace, peace on earth must be postponed. The King will be rejected. Pilate is to ask Israel, “shall I crucify your king? What then shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ? Their answer is to be, “away with Him; crucify Him.”

Peace on earth cannot be, and will not be, while the King is away from the earth. Christ’s presence on earth, actually reigning as the King on the throne of His glory, is necessary, in order that there shall be peace on earth. As long as David’s throne is unoccupied, world peace is impossible. The prince of the power of the air, the usurper, is still the god of this age and the prince of this world. He will not be reigning when God’s King is on David’s throne. When God’s King shall occupy David’s throne, Satan will be a prisoner in the bottomless pit. Israel will be a scattered people and Jerusalem will be a city trodden under the feet of the nations until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled. Luke 21:24.

Instead of peace on this earth while the King is away, the times of the Gentiles is to come to an end with much distress and great sorrow. This is the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. Jeremiah 30:7 to 11. Israel is to be saved, by the coming of their Deliverer out of Sion. Romans 11: 26. It will be at the time of their greatest distress that they are to lift up their heads and know that their redemption is nigh, by signs in the heavens and on the earth; and then the Kingdom of God will be at hand. During that time of sorrow surely Israel will pray, “thy Kingdom come” and “give us this day our daily bread.”

Thus we do see that “on earth” is the key to Luke’s Gospel. Christ was on earth. At first peace was announced; “peace on earth.” Then the King was to be rejected; and He would go away. “Peace on earth?” “I tell you, Nay.” When the Son of man comes back, will He find faith

on the earth? Nay. What will the Son of man find on the earth “Upon the earth, distress of nations, with perplexity ... men’s hearts failing them for fear, looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” Luke 21:25 and 26. Surely we have in these Scriptures anything but “peace on earth.” And then what?

“They shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Luke 21:27.

In comparing the truth of Luke’s Gospel, the Son of man “on earth,” with the truth of Ephesians, “the Lord Jesus Christ in the super-heavenlies,” surely we can see how essential it is to obey II Timothy 2:15. There is real spiritual progress from Jesus of Nazareth in the land of the Jews, proclaiming His kingdom message to the people of God, protected and preserved by God’s covenants, to the proclamation of the dispensation of the grace of God to the Gentiles, who had been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and to the revelation of the dispensation of the mystery to you Gentiles who were strangers of the covenants of promise.

In Luke’s Gospel the unfortunate diseased woman was healed, because she was the daughter of Abraham. Luke 13:16. In Luke’s Gospel sinful Zaccheus received salvation, because he was a son of Abraham. Luke 19:9 and 10. The only Gentile to receive a blessing of healing, according to Luke’s Gospel, was a centurion, who loved Israel and built them a synagogue. Luke 7:1 to 11.

In Ephesians the good news is proclaimed, that on the cross of Calvary the Son of man, who confined his earthly ministry to Israel, broke down the middle wall of partition between Israel and the Gentiles, then and there made peace. Any advantage or preference previously shown to Israel, by virtue of covenants, has been done away with. The uncircumcised Gentiles, in Ephesians, if there is any difference, have the advantage over Israel, because that Nation had received a judgment of blindness from the hand of God. Acts 28:25 to 28.

In Ephesians, the richest spiritual blessings of the Lord are available for any and every member of the Body of Christ; the mighty power of God and the inexhaustible riches of God’s grace are at the disposal of the believer. The grace message of Ephesians is a free-for-all message. It is no longer a kingdom blessing for the sons and daughters of Abraham, or for one special Gentile of great faith who had built a synagogue for Israel which Nation he loved. No; here is the contrast: “But God Who is rich in mercy; for the great love wherewith He hath loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins, aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise.”

We have observed that the twelve apostles are to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, when the Son of man comes to sit on the throne of His glory. Most assuredly, this is an earthly scene and a reward in the kingdom for faithful discipleship. But in Ephesians 2:6 we have learned that members of the Body of Christ are already seated with Him in the super-heavenlies. While the kingdom was in view, the apostles of Christ were to testify to Israel that He was the Messiah. This they could do by reasoning out of the scriptures, for as Christ said, “they are they which testify of me.” The members of the Body of Christ are to make all men see what is the dispensation of the Mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God. “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the Mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ;

“TO THE INTENT THAT NOW UNTO THE PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS IN HEAVENLY PLACES MIGHT BE MADE KNOWN BY’ THE CHURCH THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD.” Ephesians 3:9 and 10.

We learn by Ephesians 1:11 that this is according to the eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Surely there is a difference between that which God foretold in the Scriptures, concerning the Kingdom, and that which He did not foretell in the Scriptures, but which He did purpose before the foundation of the world, concerning the Church which is His Body. No prophet ever wrote concerning Christ's present position and concerning the Body of which He is Head.

When the Saviour was on earth He was tempted by Satan the prince of this world. But in Ephesians 6:11 to 20 we read that members of the Body of (Christ are wrestling against the rulers of darkness in the super-heavenlies. Surely the adversary who transforms himself into an angel of light is opposed to the message of Ephesians. He will use every effort to keep members of the Body of Christ from obeying the two commands mentioned in Ephesians 4:3 and Ephesians 3:9, which we quote:

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:3. “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the Mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ.” Ephesians 3:9.

The modernists's slogan is “back to Jesus”. Let us remember that Jesus was on earth proclaiming the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom was at hand for Israel. The kingdom was taken away from Israel. But the kingdom will be given to Israel when the Son of man returns with His angels in the clouds, in power and great glory. He will come to the earth to establish His kingdom. He is in the highest heavenlies, Head of the Church which is His Body.

Surely those who know the high and holy truth of Ephesians, the exalted place and privileges of sinners saved by grace, identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, seated with Him in the super-heavenlies and blessed there with all spiritual blessings, will not exchange their inheritance in Christ and His inheritance in them for the inheritance of the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world.

“Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.” Matthew 25:34.

God has given to members of the Body of Christ the highest place among all of the redeemed, the most glorious hope and calling, the choicest blessings and the richest inheritance which He has had or will have for any people. It is the will and desire of the Father of glory that we should appreciate and appropriate the riches of His grace and know the hope of His calling. Certainly the Father of glory would not have us go back to the Son of man on earth, to Israel's hope and calling. But rather we should search diligently for the meaning of Paul's words in Philippians 3:10 to 14, which we quote:

“That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death:

“IF BY ANY MEANS I MIGHT ATTAIN UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, If that I may apprehend that, for which also am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

“I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE OF THE CALLING ON HIGH OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.” Philippians 3:10 to 14.

Shall we go back to the earthly ministry of the Son of man, leaving our high and holy place, privileges and possessions in Christ in the super-heavenlies? Shall we go back and hear

the Son of man say, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel?" Shall we go back the other side of Calvary back to the ignorance of the Twelve? Read these two verses:

"And they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again;

"And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."

The Son of man on earth did not suggest that there was to be a joint-Body, the One New Man of Ephesians seated with Him and in Him in the super-heavenlies. This blessed truth came by means of Christ's revelation through Paul. Where is our blessing, "on earth" with the Son of man or in the heavenlies with Christ our Head?

THE ALL SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

By Ike T. Sidebottom

We all realize that the pure grace message is the need of the hour. Such a message presents the all sufficiency of Christ. Yet the popular message today is "Christ plus this" and "Christ plus that." These added things we are warned against by the Holy Spirit in Colossians 2:8. God help us to be satisfied with Christ alone.

The majority of believers have not been taught to understand, obey and practice II Timothy 2:15. For this reason many honest, God-fearing people are seeking to follow the teachings of Jesus, trying to duplicate or perpetuate the miracles, signs and wonders wrought by the Twelve, forgetting to distinguish between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of the grace of God. These gospels have some things in common, but in other respects they greatly differ.

We find John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets, baptizing with water and preaching "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:1 to 12). His water baptism was to manifest Christ to Israel. He was followed by Jesus, who began to preach and say, "repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand ." All through His earthly ministry the Lord Jesus Christ made a distinction between the Jew and the Gentile as He "went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Jesus of Nazareth, the man approved of God among the Jews by miracles and signs which God did by Him in the midst of His people, was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and taken by wicked hands and crucified and slain. Acts 2:22 and 23.

Just before His crucifixion He said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come He will guide you into all truth." As Christ closed His earthly ministry, He instructed His followers concerning the Holy Spirit who was to come "not many days hence." The Galileans watched Him as He was taken by the cloud out of their sight. Then they returned to Jerusalem to tarry for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came just ten days after the Lord ascended to the right hand of the Father. The prominent preacher at the beginning of the dispensation of the Spirit was Peter. As he and the Eleven went forth in their ministry, filled by the Holy Spirit they preached a kingdom message, and delivered it to Jews only. Acts 2:22; Acts 5:26 to 33. We find that as late as the persecution that arose about Stephen they were preaching to "none but unto the Jews only." Acts 3:26; Acts 11:19.

When God sent Peter to the house of Cornelius he said unto them, “Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation.” Acts 10:28. Yet God showed Peter that he should not call the Gentiles common or unclean, and Peter gave forth his ministry to this one Gentile household. Compare the message of Acts 10:34 to 43 with Ephesians 2:7 to 10. So far as the record goes, neither Peter nor the Eleven ever preached to another Gentile. And to Cornelius Peter preached concerning Jesus of Nazareth in the land of the Jews, sent by God to the children of Israel. Acts 10:36 to 42.

After Peter opened the door to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius God sent His chosen vessel, the Apostle Paul, who was to become the preacher, apostle, and teacher to the Gentiles (II Timothy 1:11; Romans 11:13). As Paul began to minister, in the thirteenth chapter of Acts, He went forth “to the Jew first”, extended to Acts 28:28, where he emphatically says, “The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it.” This should be studied with Acts 18:6 and Romans 11:8; 1 Romans 1:11; and Romans 11:25.

Paul’s letter to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, and to the Church at Thessalonica were written during that period of time between the thirteenth and twenty eighth chapters of Acts and consequently bear the mark of the “Jew first”. After Acts 28:28 Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and probably Hebrews. In these epistles we find the middle wall of partition between the Jew and the Gentile is not recognized. The believers from among the Jews and the believers from among the Gentiles have been placed into one Body, forming the “New Man” of Ephesians 2:15. In this portion of the Word we find believers, saved by grace alone, are seated in the highest of the high heavens with our risen and exalted Lord. We are identified with Him as members of His Body, the Church. There is no place in these epistles for the carnal ordinances which were nailed to the cross; no place for the signs, miracles, and wonders which were wrought along with the kingdom message given by Jesus and the Twelve, and also performed by Paul while he was going to the Jew first. The emphasis is placed upon the one Body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all. And surely the one baptism is the identification of the members of the one Body in death and resurrection with the one Lord by the one Spirit; by one Divine baptism.

As we thus follow through from John the Baptist to the Apostle Paul we must recognize a period during which there was the overlapping of the kingdom message with the gospel of the grace of God mentioned in Acts 20:24. Some teach that John the Baptist started the Church. Others try to prove that Christ started the Church during His ministry. While others are convinced that the Lord Jesus only promised to build the Church and that it began when He had gone to glory and the Holy Spirit had descended on the day of Pentecost.

There are still others who hold that the Church, which began on the day of Pentecost, is not one and the same as the Church which is spoken of as His Body. The big question among these believers is, when did the Pentecostal Church end and the Church, which is His Body, begin? This question is causing the brethren much study. Let us apply the Berean test instead of following the commentaries of great and worthy leaders. According to Galatians 1:13 the Church of God was in the early chapters of Acts. Let us not be highminded and condemn Christian brethren who may disagree with us.

As we honestly and prayerfully study this great question of the transition period let us keep in mind the statement of Galatians 2:7 to 9: The gospel of the UNCIRCUMCISION was committed to Paul; The gospel of the CIRCUMCISION was committed to Peter.

In the light of this statement let us study several marked contrasts between the testimony of Peter and that of the Apostle Paul.

Peter said, "It is an UNLAWFUL thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of ANOTHER NATION" (Acts 10:28). On the other hand, Paul said, "I am appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher of the GENTILES" (II Timothy 1:11). Did Peter become as one without the law to Gentiles? I Corinthians 9:20 to 23.

As far as the record goes, Peter was sent to ONLY ONE household of the Gentiles (Acts 10). But the Lord commanded Paul and his co-workers saying, "I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ENDS OF THE EARTH" (Acts 13:46 and 47). "That all the Gentiles might hear", (II Timothy 4:17), "I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles." Acts 22:21.

Peter did not eat with the Gentiles at Antioch when the Jewish brethren from Jerusalem were represent because, "he feared the circumcision". But Paul boldly withstood Peter to his face, saying, "he was to be blamed" (Galatians 2:11 and 12).

Peter preached to the Jews a crucified and risen Saviour (Acts 2:36) PLUS "repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38),. But Paul preached to both Jews and Gentiles in Ephesians, Colossians, Timothy and Titus the same crucified and risen Saviour MINUS the "repent and be baptized"; a message of pure grace unmixed with religion. He even says "Christ sent me NOT to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (I Corinthians 1:17). Compare Acts 15:17 with Acts 14:27. Then develop Gentile salvation to Ephesians 3:8 and 9 and you will know that Peter's Kingdom of Heaven keys will not fit Paul's Dispensation of Grace "for us Gentiles". Ephesians 3:1 and 2. Matthew 16:18.

These simple statements cannot be harmonized apart from the application of II Timothy 2:15. We must accept God's truth as to the difference between the Jew and the Gentile, between Israel and the Church, and between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of the Grace of God. This can only be done as we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us into an impartial unprejudiced study of the whole counsel of God, and the eternal purpose of God in Christ. Never once must we forget, or overlook the significance of Ephesians 3:3, 5 and 9, and Colossians 1:24 to 28.

A GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE BIBLE IN TEN LESSONS

LESSON NUMBER THREE

ADAM—NOAH—ABRAHAM Every member of the human race is related to Adam, the first man. Every member of the human race is likewise related to Noah. With Adam began the human race. With Noah there was the second beginning of the human race, for Noah and his sons alone were saved from the world's destruction by the flood which God sent about 1656 years after Adam's transgression. With Abraham there was the promise of Israel or the Jewish race, although Abraham himself was not a Jew.

So these three men mark most important beginnings.

"In Adam all die." I Corinthians 15:22. "Death reigned from Adam to Moses." Romans 5:14. "From Adam to Moses" is, therefore, an age recognized by God in His Word. But this period of time was subdivided into other ages or dispensations. God made a covenant with Adam, and God made a covenant with Israel, through Moses. But God also made a covenant with Noah about 840 years before He talked with Moses on Mt. Sinai. Read the eighth and ninth

chapters of Genesis. The same God made with Abram, or Abraham, years before Moses was on that Mount. Galatians 3:17. So there was a period of time, an age, a dispensation from Adam to Noah; that is, from the fall of man to the flood. That dispensation has been called by many, the "Dispensation of Conscience." As Noah lived 600 years before the flood, he lived for 600 years under the same covenant, and in the same dispensation, with fallen Adam. Adam died 216 years before Noah was born. Noah lived 350 years after the world was destroyed by the flood. At the time of that destruction God entered into a new covenant with the human race through Noah. That covenant introduced a new dispensation which has been well called by some "the Dispensation of Human Government" or "Authority."

The covenant that God made with Adam is not that which is designated in the Word of God, "the Old Covenant". Neither is the covenant that God made with Noah "the Old Covenant". "The Old Covenant" was made with the House of Israel. Jeremiah 31:32. We have seen that the Abrahamic Covenant was made by God 430 years (before the Old Covenant was established. Therefore, "the Abrahamic (Covenant" is not "the Old Covenant."

We have observed that Adam lived before and after the fall; therefore in two different dispensations. We might call the age before his fall, the "Dispensation of Innocence." We have observed that Noah lived before and after the flood, and in two different dispensations. The dispensation that God afterward entered into through Moses was a covenant of works, or mutual doing, a contract in which God was to do His part if Israel would do their part.

"Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord". And then, "according to all that God commanded, so did he." Genesis 6:8 and 22 . . . Genesis 7:5.

"God said unto Noah." Genesis 6:13, 7:1. "God remembered Noah." Genesis 8:1. "And God blessed Noah" Genesis 9:1.

To Noah God said:

"WHILE THE EARTH REMAINETH, SEED TIME AND HARVEST, AND COLD AND HEAT, AND SUMMER AND WINTER, AND DAY AND NIGHT SHALL NOT CEASE." Genesis 8:22.

"AND I WILL REMEMBER MY COVENANT, 'WHICH IS BETWEEN ME AND YOU AND EVERY LIVING CREATURE OF ALL FLESH AND THE WATERS SHALL NO MORE BECOME A FLOOD TO DESTROY ALL FLESH.'" Genesis 9:15.

The ark of Noah was judgment-proof. Within the ark was the only place of escape from God's judgment of the world. When Christ went to the cross, He said, "Now is the judgment of this world." John 12:31. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world by that Man." Acts 17:31. "There is therefore now no judgment to them that are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1. Christ is God's judgment-proof ark for sinners today.

About 700 years before the flood there lived a prophet by the name of Enoch. He foretold the coming of Christ in judgment; and then this man, who walked with God, was translated and did not taste death. Genesis 5:24. Hebrews 11:5. Jude 14.

The new age beginning with God's new covenant with Noah has been called the "Dispensation of Human Government," because of these words of God contained in the covenant:

"AND SURELY YOUR BLOOD OF YOUR LIVES WILL I REQUIRE: AT THE HAND OF EVERY BEAST WILL I REQUIRE IT; AND AT THE HAND OF MAN: AT THE HAND OF EVERY BROTHER WILL I REQUIRE THE LIFE OF MAN. WHOSO SHEDDETH MAN'S BLOOD, BY MAN SHALL HIS BLOOD BE SHED: FOR IN THE IMAGE OF GOD MADE HE MAN." Genesis 9:5 and 6.

“BY FAITH NOAH, BEING WARNED OF GOD OF THINGS NOT SEEN AS YET, MOVED WITH FEAR, PREPARED AN ARK TO THE SAVING OF HIS HOUSE, BY THE WHICH HE CONDEMNED THE WORLD, AND BECAME HEIR OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS BY FAITH.” Hebrews 11:7.

Noah begot three sons, Shem, Ham and Japhet, Genesis 6:10.

“AND THE LORD SAID UNTO NOAH, “COME THOU AND ALL THY HOUSE INTO THE ARK; FOR THEE HAVE I SEEN RIGHTEOUS BEFORE ME IN THIS GENERATION.” Genesis 7:1.

“AND GOD BLESSED NOAH AND HIS SONS, AND SAID UNTO THEM, BE FRUITFUL, AND MULTIPLY, AND REPLENISH THE EARTH.” Genesis 9:1.

“AND THE SONS OF NOAH THAT WENT FORTH OF THE ARK, WERE SHEM AND HAM AND JAPHET: AND HAM IS THE FATHER OF CANAAN. AND OF THEM WAS THE WHOLE EARTH OVERSPREAD.” Genesis 9:18 and 19.

In the closing verses of the ninth chapter of Genesis is recorded the sin of Noah and that of Ham and the curse that followed.

“CURSED BE CANAAN; A SERVANT OF SERVANTS SHALL HE BE UNTO HIS BRETHREN.” Genesis 9:25.

“BLESSED BE THE LORD GOD OF SHEM: AND CANAAN SHALL BE HIS SERVANT. GOD SHALL ENLARGE JAPHETH, AND HE SHALL DWELL IN THE TENTS OF SHEM, AND CANAAN SHALL BE HIS SERVANT.” Genesis 9:26 and 27.

Abraham, David and Jesus Christ came from the line of Shem. The generations of Shem, as recorded in the eleventh chapter of Genesis, are as follows: “Shem, Arphaxad (born two years after the flood). Salah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, Abram.” Abram was born about 2008 A. H. Shem died about 2158 A.H. Genesis 11:10 and 11. Shem was about 525 years of age when God made His covenant with Abram, at the age of 75. Abram had two brothers, Nahor and Haran. Haran begat Lot, the nephew of Abram. Haran died in Ur of the Chaldees. Nahor, the brother of Abram married Milcah. Abram married Sarai. Genesis 11:26 to 30. Lot went with Abraham until they separated.

In the days of Peleg (Division) the earth was divided. I Chronicles 1:19. It was undoubtedly at that time that “the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.” Genesis 11:8.

“THEREFORE IS THE NAME OF IT CALLED BABEL; BECAUSE THE LORD DID THERE CONFOUND THE LANGUAGE OF ALL THE EARTH: AND FROM THENCE DID THE LORD SCATTER THEM ABROAD UPON THE FACE OF ALL THE EARTH,” Genesis 11:9.

There is but a brief history of the human race between God’s judgment at Babel and the call of Abram. But the drift was to universal idolatry and sin, according to the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. “When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.” Romans 1:21 to 23. “Wherefore God gave them up.” Romans 1:24. “God gave them up.” Romans 1:26. “God gave them over.” Romans 1:28.

For His purpose and plan God needed a nation. So with the call of Abram there was another beginning.

“NOW THE LORD HAD SAID TO ABRAM, GET THEE OUT OF THY COUNTRY, AND FROM THY KINDRED, AND FROM THY FATHER’S HOUSE, UNTO A LAND THAT I WILL SHOW THEE, AND I WILL MAKE OF THEE A GREAT NATION.” Genesis 12:1 and 2.

Herein is the promise of a land and a great nation.

In eleven short chapters of Genesis the Lord covered about 2100 years from Adam to Abram. And from then on thirty-nine chapters of Genesis and thirty-eight other books were written to record the history of the Great Nation (Israel) which is to come out of Abram, and that Nation after 1900 years is to give to the world the Seed of the Woman promised in the Garden of Eden, and that Seed is to be the Seed of Abram, and the Seed of David. Even 65 per cent of the New Testament Scriptures deal with Israel.

We also find Abraham included with Abel, Enoch and Noah in the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11:8 and 9, 17, 18 and 19.

“BY FAITH ABRAHAM, WHEN HE WAS CALLED TO GO OUT INTO A PLACE WHICH HE SHOULD AFTER RECEIVE FOR AN INHERITANCE, OBEYED; AND HE WENT OUT, NOT KNOWING WHITHER HE WENT. BY FAITH HE SOJOURNED IN THE LAND OF PROMISE, AS IN A STRANGE COUNTRY, DWELLING IN TABERNACLES WITH ISAAC AND JACOB, THE HEIRS WITH HIM OF THE SAME PROMISE.”

“BY FAITH ABRAHAM, WHEN HE WAS TRIED, OFFERED UP ISAAC; AND HE THAT HAD RECEIVED THE PROMISES OFFERED UP HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON.”

“OF WHOM IT WAS SAID, THAT IN ISAAC SHALL THY SEED BE CALLED;”
“ACCOUNTING THAT GOD WAS ABLE TO RAISE HIM UP, EVEN FROM THE DEAD; FROM WHENCE ALSO HE RECEIVED HIM IN A FIGURE.”

A careful study of the fourth chapter of Romans, the third chapter of Galatians and the sixth chapter of Hebrews will give us a better understanding of God’s dealings with Abraham, and Abraham’s place in the purpose of God with the human race. In the fourth chapter of Romans we learn that Abraham was justified by faith without works. That he was declared righteous in uncircumcision. Romans 4:3 to 11. We quote the thirteenth verse:

“FOR THE PROMISE, THAT HE SHOULD BE THE HEIR OF THE WORLD, WAS NOT TO ABRAHAM, OR TO HIS SEED, THROUGH THE LAW, BUT THROUGH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH.”

We turn to Galatians 3:17 and learn that God’s covenant with Abraham was made 430 years before He entered into His covenant with Israel, through Moses. The Law Covenant made at Sinai did not annul or make ineffective the promises of God in the Abrahamic Covenant and Oath. In verse six of that chapter we are told again that Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And then we quote three most important verses:

“AND THE SCRIPTURE, FORESEEING THAT GOD WOULD JUSTIFY THE HEATHEN THROUGH FAITH, PREACHED BEFORE THE GOSPEL UNTO ABRAHAM, SAYING, IN THEE SHALL ALL NATIONS BE BLESSED” . . . Galatians 3:8.

“WHEREFORE THEN SERVETH THE LAW? IT WAS ADDED BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS, TILL THE SEED SHOULD COME TO WHOM THE PROMISE WAS MADE; AND IT WAS ORDAINED BY ANGELS IN THE HAND OF A MEDIATOR.” Galatians 3:19.

“THAT THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM MIGHT COME ON THE GENTILES THROUGH JESUS CHRIST; THAT WE MIGHT RECEIVE THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT THROUGH FAITH.” Galatians 3:14.

Thus we see that when the Lord preached the Gospel to Abram, or Abraham, righteousness by faith, 430 years before the Law was given, He foresaw the ministry and message of Paul for Gentiles, who would be justified just as Abram was. This is also declared in the five closing verses of the fourth chapter of Romans.

In Galatians 3:19 we learn that the Law was added to the Promise and Gospel till Christ, the Seed of Abraham, came and died on the cross. When Christ died the handwriting of ordinances was taken out of the way, nailed to His cross. Colossians 2:11 to 14. He became the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth, when on the cross He was made sin that believers might be made the righteousness of God in Him ... Romans 10:4 and 5. II Corinthians 5:21. The Book of Acts covered God's transitional period from law to pure grace, from kingdom truth to Body truth.

And we learn in Galatians 3:14 that because of the redemptive work of Christ on the cross believing Gentiles receive the blessing of Abraham, that is, God's righteousness, and by faith the assurance of that righteousness which is the Holy Spirit.

In the closing verses of the sixth chapter of Hebrews we learn of the believer's strong consolation by the two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie; namely, His Covenant and Oath to Abraham.

In comparing the statement of Paul, in the fourth chapter of Romans, and that of James in the second chapter of his Epistle, in which there seems to be a contradiction, let us bear in mind that James declares that Abraham was justified by works when he had offered up Isaac. By careful study of the twelfth, thirteenth, seventeenth and twenty-second chapters of Genesis we shall learn that Abraham offered up Isaac forty years after he was declared righteous by God. We shall also learn that Abraham was circumcised twenty-four years after he was declared righteous by God. The circumcision was the seal of the righteousness which he had, yet being uncircumcised. . . Romans 4:9 to 12. Also James had the gospel of the circumcision and Paul the gospel of the uncircumcision. Galatians 2:7 to 9.

THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY

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The word EKKLESIA, here translated CHURCH, is found one hundred and eighteen times in the New Testament and in the Septuagint it is often found to describe the assembly of Israel. In Acts 7:38 Stephen uses it for the hosts of Israel, which had been led out of Egypt. The name EKKLESIA comes from the verb EKKALEO "I call out of". The noun means, therefore, a group of called out ones. The turbulent mob of Acts 19:32 to 39 is also called an EKKLESIA, because it was a gathering out of the citizens of Ephesus. This word then, does not define the very essence of the Church for this age. It is too broad, since it includes Israel and the Gentiles. The definition put above this article, and found in Ephesians 1:23, presupposes that there is an EKKLESIA which is not His Body. In the word SOMA, body, we have the essence of the Church for this age.

The crucified, raised, and glorified Lord was given to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body. Before this the (Body) Church could not be in existence. In the term HEAD, we have not a figure or a simile, but a living, bright reality. He is not the King of this Body, but the HEAD. Kingship is always connected with Israel. He was presented, proclaimed, and professed as King of Israel and in His PAROUSIA He shall restore the Kingdom to Israel.

The head is organically joined to the body and there is the most intimate union and communion, representation and even identification. The head is above all the members and this is true of our glorious Head in heaven. As the head is the seat of the senses, so Christ is the seat of all our spiritual senses, and as the head of the body is the common property of all the individual members, so all the members of the Church own Him as their Head. The Orient folks carry everything on their heads. The baker had three baskets on his head, Genesis 40:16. Our Head bore our guilt and filth away on the cross, as our sin-bearer, and since then He is our burden bearer. Suffering saints, put your burdens on your Head and leave them there! The Head of the High Priest received the anointing with the oil and in the Baptism of the Spirit and our Head has transmitted that to us. Again, the Head rules in love the body, and this is true of our Lord and Saviour. He loved and loosed us from our sins, and since then He sways us, not with an iron or golden scepter, not with law, but with love. Not merely judicially or potentially, but really the Head and the Body are one, because we have been crucified, buried, baptized, quickened, raised and made to sit together with Him in super-celestial places. As soon as a soul is united to Christ by faith, all His past and present work is imputed to that soul. He shares at once the present blessings of his representative in glory as ACCEPTANCE with God, ACCESS to God, ADVOCACY, and for the future the ADVENT with Him in glory, Colossians 3:4.

According to Colossians 2:19, our Head renders to His Body the threefold service of nourishment, unity and growth.

We have now briefly seen what the Head does for the Body, relative to the past, present and future. We now ask what the Body should do for the Head, in other words, what is the calling and business of the Church? The Epistle to the Ephesians gives us the answer to this question. The calling of the Body, as a whole, and of every member individually, is first of all that we should be living TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY. Three times this phrase is repeated, Ephesians 1:6, 12 and 14. The body should reflect, manifest and serve the Head. The feet carry whither the head directs, the hands toil, the eyes see, the nose smells and the tongue speaks, all as the head directs, and thus it is with Christ and His Body. The Body should do His will and run His errands in the world. In the second place we find, in Ephesians 2:7 that God wants to make of the Church a great display, a great fair and exhibition, in the ages to come. In that celestial show He will show forth the EXCEEDING RICHES OF HIS GRACE IN HIS KINDNESS TOWARD US IN CHRIST JESUS . . . The word EXCEEDING is HYPERBOLE. This word is used seven times by Paul only. It means literally, something tossed beyond the mark, and in this case it means that His grace transcended all normal limits and boundaries and is unmeasurable, unrestricted, incalculable, inimitable, and incomparable. Chicago prepared years for her show, but God has already been preparing for nearly two millenniums to make this show a wonderment for earth and heaven and hell. This text shows then that our real mission still lives in the future. The third calling of the Body is expressed in Ephesians 3:10 "To the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God.

The Body is not served by the angels but serves the angels, whether good or evil, with the manifold wisdom of God. Ephesians 4:16 gives us another business of the body. It has to edify itself in love. This task of the body is most forgotten and neglected. All talk of Pauline truth shall be worse than worthless, if it is not accompanied with Pauline love.

Finally, the members of the Body have to be bold warriors, armed with the whole armor of God. We are not called to fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12. Let us not forget, it is a mark of good Generalship to know the character of the enemy.

The perfect identification of our glorious Head and His Body form the mystery which has been hid in God from all ages and generations. Not one of the ancient worthies could know it as God had not revealed it. Even during the generation of the Gospel period, no one knew it, and also during the generation of the Acts, no one could know it, except Paul, for to him it has been revealed. The mystery was not a new development of some known thing, but something altogether new and distinct.

Here is a new PERSON to present this truth, Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, "less than the least of all saints."

Here is a new PEOPLE, a heavenly body, one with the Head.

Here is a new prearrangement: chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. Concerning Israel it is FROM; concerning the mystery body the choice is BEFORE the foundation of the world. Ephesians 1:4.

Here is a new panegyric and praise, for no one had ever praised God for having been blessed with all spiritual blessings.

Here is a new possession, since Israel had had many blessings, but never all the Spirit-blessings in Christ as here.

Here is a new place; for no Jew or Gentile had been set in the epourama, or super-celestial places.

Here is a new period; the dispensation of the grace of God, Ephesians 2:9.

Here is a new power; the exceeding greatness of His power. Ephesians 1:19.

Here is a new position; In Him is the precious monogram of Paul, used in one form, or another, thirty times in Ephesians.

Here is a new purpose; to re-head all things in Christ. Ephesians 1:10

Here is a new prayer life; read only the prison prayers of Paul.

Here is a new parity; perfect equality of the Head and the Body.

Here is a new partnership; a sharing of all His coming glories.

Here is a new Pleroma or filling up of the mystical Christ.

Here is a new pattern; not the one shown to Moses, but the one shown to Paul, the exalted Lord of Glory.

Here is a new peculiar people. Titus 2:14.

Here is a new peace; for He Himself is our peace. Ephesians 2:14.

Here is a new poem; for we are His poem. Titus 2:10.

Here is a new principality; mentioned as our foe. Titus 6:10 to 18.

Here is a new perfection, for we are complete in Him. Colossians 2:10.

Here is a new piety; away from all legalism and formalism.

Here is a new plenitude; Filled with all the fulness of God. Colossians 3:19.

Here is a new prisoner; such as the world has never seen before.

Here is a new perseverance; for in Him we are safe and secure.

Here is a new prediction; that we shall appear with Him in glory. Colossians 3:4.

Here is a new plea for spirituality: be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18.

Here is a new prize held out: the out resurrection from the dead. Philippians 3:14.

Here is a new prevailing in prayer, Ephesians 3:20.

Here is a new perfecting of the saints. Ephesians 4:11-12.

Here is a new perfect man. Ephesians 4:13.

Here is a new practicable seven-fold unity with a petition to keep. Ephesians 4:3 to 6.
Here is a new predestination, Ephesians 1:5.
Here is a new panoply against the invisible plotters, Ephesians 6:11.
Here is a new persecution for all Fundamentalists in Asia. Galatia and Rome left Paul when he presented this mystery.

GLEANINGS FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS

LESSON THREE

In this study of the Book of Acts we shall consider some of the points in the ministry of Peter and the Eleven in Chapters Three to Seven, with the desire, purpose and hope that even the babe in Christ may learn that the Nation Israel was not set aside by God at Calvary, or before; that in these chapters the kingdom message was still being proclaimed to that Nation; that there was no message of grace and mercy being preached to Gentiles, and that in these chapters there is not one verse or sentence to intimate in any way that the Body of Christ, “The dispensation of the grace of God” or “the dispensation of the mystery” began with Pentecost. And speaking of Pentecost, surely it should help every Bible student to read Acts 20:16, and learn that both believing and unbelieving Israelites were still observing the feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem and in the Jerusalem temple more than 25 years after the Pentecost of Acts 2:1. Paul himself hastened, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost. In Acts 21:18 to 28 we have the record of Paul’s experience in the temple at Jerusalem, in the year 60 A.D., and we would call your special attention to the fact that at that late time Israel’s rulers were so opposed to the presence of a Gentile in their Jerusalem temple that their wrath was kindled against Paul because they accused him of encouraging Trophimus, a Gentile, to pollute their holy place. Acts 21:28 and 29. It is also interesting to observe, in Chapter 23:1 to 7, that Paul is humbly apologizing to Israel’s High Priest, in obedience to Israel’s Scriptures, some 27 years after the veil in the temple was rent at Calvary, and that in that same chapter the Apostle Paul, in his defense, says, “I am a Pharisee.” (Chapter 23:6). Rome was still permitting Israel in Jerusalem to try, condemn and punish violators of the laws given them at Sinai. Acts 24:5 and 6.

These few remarks about Israel and their temple some years after Peter’s name had disappeared from the “Acts” record should help us to better understand our consideration of the ministry of Peter and the Eleven to Israel, in chapters three to seven, and to appreciate the place of Israel before God during these, and subsequent, chapters in the Book of Acts, until the judgment of Acts 28:25 to 28. Scriptural reasoning for the place of the Nation Israel during the Book of Acts is by no means for the sake of controversy, but for the intelligent understanding of the Book of Acts and the Epistles written during the period covered by Acts and thereafter. This will help us to better understand Paul’s two-fold attitude toward the law, those under the law, and those without until he became the Lord’s prisoner in Rome. I Corinthians 9:20 to 22.

Perhaps you have asked this question, “If Israel was set aside by the Lord with that awful judgment pronounced by Christ, in Matthew 23:33 to 39, when He called them “serpents” and “vipers”, why did Paul declare more than 25 years later that God’s message was “to the Jew first” and why were they tenderly and affectionately addressed as “children of the covenant” who had ignorantly killed their Messiah, Acts 3:12 to 26? Why did the disciples of Christ for years after that judgment was pronounced on Israel by Christ preach the Word to none but unto Jews only? (Acts 11:19). If the Lord, in the so-called Great Commission, had carefully explained to

the Twelve that they were to preach the Gospel of the Grace of God unto Gentiles, why did they confine their testimony to the House of Israel in the first chapters of Acts and why was it necessary for Peter to have a housetop vision of unclean creatures to authorize him to preach the gospel of the circumcision to one God-fearing Gentile and his family? With these questions to provoke thought we proceed with our study.

In the study of Chapters Three to Seven, let us consider several verses in the middle chapter. In Acts 5:17 and 18 we have the record that the high priests and rulers put the apostles in jail. . . .

“BUT THE ANGEL OF THE LORD BY NIGHT OPENED THE PRISON DOORS, AND BROUGHT THEM FORTH AND SAID, GO STAND AND SPEAK IN THE TEMPLE TO THE PEOPLE ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LIFE. AND WHEN THEY HEARD, THEY ENTERED INTO THE TEMPLE EARLY IN THE MORNING AND TAUGHT” Acts 5:21

“AND DAILY IN THE TEMPLE, AND IN EVERY HOUSE, THEY CEASED NOT TO TEACH AND PREACH JESUS CHRIST.” Acts 5:42.

“THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS RAISED UP JESUS, WHOM YE SLEW AND HANGED ON A TREE. HIM HATH GOD EXALTED WITH HIS RIGHT HAND TO BE A PRINCE AND A SAVIOUR, FOR TO GIVE REPENTANCE TO ISRAEL, AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS. AND WE ARE WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS; AND SO IS ALSO THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHOM GOD HATH GIVEN TO THEM THAT OBEY HIM. WHEN THEY HEARD, THEY WERE CUT TO THE HEART, AND TOOK COUNCIL TO SLAY THEM.” Acts 5:30 to 33.

In connection with these Scriptures we should read the last verse in Luke’s Gospel; “And were continually in the temple praising God and blessing God.”

From these verses which we have quoted from the fifth chapter, most assuredly we should be taught first, that Israel was still considered the people of God; second, that Israel was being permitted by God to continue their religious services in the temple; third, that God was very eager that this Nation should receive the message of life; fourth, that the resurrected Christ was Israel’s Prince and Saviour, with a message of repentance and forgiveness to that Nation; fifth, that the Holy Spirit was the witness of these facts; sixth, that again the Nation Israel was rejecting the message of the Lord and the messengers of the Lord; seventh, that there was no suggestion that the exalted Christ was offering any blessing to Gentiles, or that He was the Head of the Church, which is His Body, in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile.

This witness of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Acts 5:31 and 32, concerning the exalted Prince and Saviour, with a message for Israel should be carefully studied in connection with the words which Jesus spoke to Israel, in Matthew 12:31 and 32, concerning the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit which is called the “unpardonable sin”. If Israel sinned against the Son of man it would be forgiven them, but not if and when they sinned against the Holy Spirit. It should also be studied in connection with the words of Stephen, recorded in Acts 7:55 and 56 and 7:51 and 52. By carefully studying these words of Stephen we shall learn that the rulers of Israel were doing what they were warned not to do, in the words of the Lord in Matthew 12:31 and 32. Stephen told them they were again resisting the Holy Spirit. He was full of the Holy Spirit. They were again cut to the heart. Stephen accuses them of the death of Christ. And now being full of the Holy Spirit he declared that he saw the Son of man in heaven.

We repeat that according to Matthew 12:31 and 32, Israel was going to sin against the Son of man and be forgiven; but if they sinned against the Holy Spirit they would not be forgiven. The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was to be Israel’s “unpardonable sin”. Israel did

sin against the Son of man, for in Matthew 26:24 the Saviour said, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him". When the Son of man died on the cross He prayed that Israel would be forgiven for sinning against the Son of man. Luke 23:34.

In response to the dying Saviour's prayer and in fulfillment of Matthew 12:31 we have the message of Peter and the Eleven to Israel, recorded in Acts 3:26. "Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities". Israel was accused of the great sin of killing their Messiah. No longer was this nation called "serpents" and "vipers", as in Matthew 23:33 to 39, but children, Acts 3:25.

In Acts 3:17 and 18 there were two reasons why the Nation would be forgiven for their great sin if they would repent. The first reason was, God was willing to consider their act as one of ignorance; and the second reason was that the rejection and death of Christ at their hands fulfilled Scriptures and provided salvation for sinful humanity. Through Israel's unbelief mercy came to Gentiles. Romans 11:30. Then follows, "O the depth" of Romans 11:33 and 34.

In Acts 3:19 to 25 we learn that Israel's God is still willing to stand by the covenant which He made with their fathers, by sending Christ back from heaven to bring to Israel the blessed days on earth prophets beginning with Samuel. None of these prophets spoke concerning the Body of Christ, blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, but concerning the King and the Kingdom of heaven on earth.

The word "therefore", in Acts 3:19, is very significant. And this offer of the kingdom, in fulfillment of the covenant which God made with the fathers, was because of that prayer of Christ on the cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do".

Surely the student of the Word of God will not find in any of the words spoken by Jesus of Nazareth, in the midst of His people on earth, a more definite offer of the kingdom, in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, than His offer in Acts 3:19 to 25. The kingdom of heaven was still at hand. But were the Twelve members of the Body and seated in Christ in the highest heavenlies? Ephesians 2:6.

The language used in Acts 3:21, concerning Israel's kingdom on earth, is the restitution of all things which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. In Acts 3:24 the statement is repeated that all the prophets foretold of "these days". By way of comparison and contrast it will prove profitable to compare these statements in Acts 3 with the Lord's message, through Paul, in Colossians 1:24 to 29, and in Ephesians 3:1 to 11, concerning the Mystery among the Gentiles, the Church which is Christ's Body, about which not one of Israel's prophets spoke. The prophets were not only altogether silent concerning Paul's message but altogether ignorant; and therefore, it must be apparent to any student of the Scriptures that the "these days" of Colossians 1:24 to 28 are altogether different from the "these days" of Acts 3:19 to 26. The verses in Colossians refer to the Head and the Body. The verses in Acts refer to the King and the Kingdom.

Let us now compare Acts 2:36 and 2:38 with the words of Paul in Acts 18:5 and 6. By studying both of these scriptures we shall find that in the second chapter the twelve apostles were watchman unto the house of Israel, in accordance with Ezekiel 3:17 to 21. And we shall find in the eighteenth chapter that Paul was likewise a watchman unto the house of Israel, in fulfillment of the same Scriptures. He had been a faithful watchman in Asia according to Acts 13:46. And now he was a faithful watchman in Europe. We should never overlook the significance of Paul's "henceforth" in Acts 18:6; "henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles". Why? Because he had delivered his own soul as a watchman of the house of Israel. That Nation was committing the unpardonable sin" in fulfillment of Matthew 12:32, because they were blaspheming the Holy

Spirit who was witnessing to the same message which Peter proclaimed in Acts 2:36, which we quote

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

It was in connection with that message that Peter told the convicted Israelites, in Acts 2:38, that they might receive the Holy Spirit, if they would repent. When they refused to repent some years later, at the preaching of Paul, Paul turned from Israel to the Gentiles. After that turning Paul said, “I must finish my course with joy and testify of the Gospel of the Grace of God. Acts 20:24. Then he wrote those words concerning Israel and Gentile salvation in the 11th chapter of Romans.

(See December edition for continuation)

AN OPEN DOOR—AN OPEN MOUTH AND AN OPEN MIND

In connection with the high and holy truth which the Holy Spirit designates “the MYSTERY” and “the UNSEARCHABLE RICHES of Jesus Christ,” we call your attention to several verses of Scripture.

Concerning the Open Door:

“WITHAL PRAYING ALSO FOR US, THAT GOD WOULD OPEN UNTO US A DOOR OF UTTERANCE, TO SPEAK THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST, FOR WHICH I AM ALSO IN BONDS; THAT I MAY MAKE IT MANIFEST, AS I OUGHT TO SPEAK.” Colossians 4:3 and 4.

Concerning the Open Mouth:

“AND FOR ME, THAT UTTERANCE MAY BE GIVEN UNTO ME, THAT I MAY OPEN MY MOUTH BOLDLY, TO MAKE KNOWN THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL, FOR WHICH I AM AN AMBASSADOR IN BONDS; THAT THEREIN I MAY SPEAK BOLDLY, AS I OUGHT TO SPEAK.” Ephesians 6:19, 20.

Concerning the Open Mind:

“THAT THE GOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE FATHER OF GLORY, MAY GIVE UNTO YOU THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND REVELATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM; THE EYES OF YOUR UNDERSTANDING BEING ENLIGHTENED; THAT YE MAY KNOW WHAT IS THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING, AND WHAT THE RICHES OF THE GLORY OF HIS INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS.” Ephesians 1:17 and 18.

So far as this blessed and glorious truth of Ephesians and Colossians is concerned, it is still a mystery with a great majority of Christians, including the so-called leading Fundamentalist Bible teachers. Most of these seem to be as ignorant of this Divine mystery concerning the Body of Christ, and the two-fold inheritance of the Head and members of that Body, as though it had never been declared in the Word of God. There is no limit to Satan’s opposition to the truth designated “the Mystery”. Undoubtedly he is responsible for the blindness that seems to be upon the minds of so many of the Lord’s redeemed people in this day and age. This evil one must be responsible for having kept the mystery of grace and glory covered up by the man-made

religious creeds and sectarian religious mixtures down through the past eighteen centuries. It is rather pitiable and deplorable that even the present-day servants of the Lord, who are supposed to be messengers of the grace of God, are so blind and prejudiced as to confuse the hope of Israel with the blessed hope set forth in the Prison Epistles of the Apostle Paul. And the sad fact is that these messengers are the ones who are most bitterly opposing the very message that they think they are preaching; that is, the message of pure grace and the one Body, in which there is an eternal, inseparable union of the Lord Jesus Christ and sinners saved by grace, both Head and members seated in the upper heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

Apart from Satan it is most difficult to account for the bitter antagonism to the highest, the most blessed and most glorious truth in all of the Word of God. Quite significant it is that these servants of the Lord, who seem to hate this blessed truth with a vicious hatred, must resort to foul methods and carnal weapons in their vain and futile endeavors to discredit the Lord's messengers rather than intelligently use the Sword of the Spirit to disprove the teaching of the "Body truth" as revealed in Paul's final epistles, and expounded by the servants of the Lord who would faithfully obey Ephesians 4:3 and Ephesians 3:9. But let us bear in mind that this bitter and unholy opposition, these unjust and unscriptural methods, began in the days of Paul. But God, knowing the end from the beginning, has given us full warning and encouragement and He has left us instructions as to how to carry on with this glorious message. He has told us what to expect in the way of opposition from religious Bible teachers who are either unwilling or unable to rightly divide the Word of truth. Of course we all realize that men are naturally religious and so prejudiced by the creeds and traditions of Christendom that it is next to impossible for most of them to be a true Berean.

CONCERNING THE OPEN DOOR

We have observed from the reading of Colossians 4:3 and 4 that God alone can open doors for the truth concerning the believer's position and possessions in Christ, independent of any of Israel's covenants, the believer's identification with the risen and glorified Christ in death, burial, resurrection and glorification, all by one Divine baptism which has nothing to do with Israel's hope or Israel's kingdom baptism. Certainly to mix the hope of the Body of Christ and God's inheritance in the members of that Body, the mystery among the Gentiles, with the hope and inheritance of Israel is a great blunder, and seemingly inexcusable disobedience to II Timothy 2:15. Let us then, who are rejoicing in this glorious truth, pray earnestly that God will open doors that this message may be presented. Even ninety-five per cent of the assemblies, made up of Christians called Fundamentalists, are closed doors to this truth. But perhaps we have some reason to be encouraged because new doors are being opened, as new messengers are being equipped by the Holy Spirit to proclaim that secret which was hid in the mind of God from the foundation of the world until it was revealed from glory to the Apostle Paul, who was a special messenger of the glorified Christ, the ambassador with the ministry of reconciliation and custodian of the mystery. To his trust was committed the ministry, commission and deposit which not only supplemented but Superseded the revelations of God to His servants before the call of Paul.

CONCERNING OPEN MOUTHS

Because of the unpopularity of this blessed truth, many servants seem to lack boldness and liberty to proclaim it. Many of them are even persuaded and influenced by their very best friends to compromise for the sake of human unity and Christian fellowship. Some of these true friends are well meaning and they are willing to have peace and harmony among those who are agreed concerning the great fundamentals of the Christian faith even at the sacrifice of Divine truth and the surrender of Holy Spirit conviction. What option has the Spirit-led and Bible-taught grace preacher under such circumstances? His duty is plain; and for his stewardship he must give an account to the Lord. It is not our God-given duty to endeavor by means of compromise or religious diplomacy to establish unity or a church program. We must advance with God's truth and do our utmost to complete the task of wholly ridding God's message of grace of the religious entanglements and ecclesiastical traditions that have so long kept it hidden from the people of God.

We must pray that God will open the mouths of His servants, to whom this message has been revealed, that they may speak it forth with Holy Spirit boldness, speaking the truth in love, wholly disregarding either the praise or fear of man. Let us unite in this important prayer.

CONCERNING OPEN MINDS

We would impress upon our readers that they diligently study Ephesians 1:17 and 18 and meditate prayerfully this holy desire of the Lord concerning every member of the Body of Christ. Let us not forget that the human heart is desperately wicked and deceitful, and that the god of this age is accused of the crime of deceiving the whole world. We repeat that he is especially antagonistic to the Body truth and will use every effort to keep believers from understanding this truth. In the spirit of meekness we should confess our ignorance and the darkness of the natural mind. If even the simple doctrines of the Bible are spiritually discerned how can we expect to comprehend these profound truths of Ephesians and Colossians apart from God's own way set forth in these two verses and several other verses in the Epistle to the Ephesians? The Father of glory is the one who is able to give to the believer the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself, and thereby enlighten the eyes of the understanding.

In connection with this prayer let us read also the prayer of Ephesians 3:16 to 19, which we quote

“THAT HE WOULD GRANT YOU, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY, TO BE STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT BY HIS SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN; THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS BY FAITH; THAT YE BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE, MAY BE ABLE TO COMPREHEND WITH ALL SAINTS WHAT IS THE BREADTH, AND LENGTH, AND DEPTH, AND HEIGHT; AND TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST, WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE, THAT YE MIGHT BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD.”

I am sure after prayerfully considering these Scriptures we shall not expect the member of the Body of Christ to appreciate or appropriate his riches of grace and glory, which are likewise Christ's richest, except as his mind and heart are opened by the power from above.

Let us unite then in our prayer that God will give open doors, open mouths and open minds that many of the saints of Christ shall come into the knowledge of the glorious truth of the Mystery given to us by Christ through His chosen vessel, Paul. Let us be wholly satisfied with Christ, without religion, knowing that the Father of glory was so well pleased with His perfect life and perfect sacrifice that naught but the precious blood of the spotless Lamb of God is

required for acceptance by Him, and that none of Israel's religious program will aid us in a holy walk and spiritual life.

THE BODY OF CHRIST—CONFIRMATION OR REVELATION?

BY PASTOR VINCENT BENNETT

In Hebrews 2:3 we find these words, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;" and immediately we ask the question, "With what kind of ministry did the Lord Jesus begin?" In Romans 15:8 Paul supplies the answer, "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." So we see from the Word of God that Jesus Christ's beginning ministry was a ministry of confirmation.

Turning to Matthew 4:17 we find these words, "From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," This gives to us the message of Jesus' ministry, and in verse 23, its dispensational characteristics.

"AND JESUS WENT ABOUT ALL GALILEE, TEACHING IN THEIR SYNAGOGUES, AND PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM, AND HEALING ALL MANNER OF SICKNESS AND ALL MANNER OF DISEASE AMONG THE PEOPLE"

Then again in Matthew 10:5 to 8, the commission that Jesus gave to the twelve apostles agreed with His own message and ministry, "These twelve Jesus sent forth and commanded them, saying:

"GO NOT INTO THE WAY OF THE GENTILES, AND INTO ANY CITY OF THE SAMARITANS ENTER YE NOT: BUT GO RATHER TO THE LOST SHEEP OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL. AND AS YE GO, PREACH, SAYING, THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND. HEAL THE SICK, CLEANSE THE LEPERS, RAISE THE DEAD, CAST OUT DEVILS: FREELY YE HAVE RECEIVED, FREELY GIVE."

The mission of the Lord Jesus while on this earth was exclusively Jewish. He came to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and the key to His earthly ministry can only be understood in the light of His own expression found in Matthew 15:24.

"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Therefore, we come to this conclusion, The Lord Jesus began his ministry among the lost sheep of the house of Israel, preaching the gospel of the kingdom with signs following, and the apostles began with the same ministry, Hebrews 2:4, "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

The gospel of the kingdom was not an unexpected message to the Jews, for were they not looking forward to the coming of the King who would bring the realization of their Kingdom hopes? The message of the kingdom had been the last word of revelation in the Old Testament, and then after 400 years of silence God spoke again to the same people to whom the prophets had spoken for centuries, and concerning the same land, city, temple and law, etc.

The only difference is this, in the prophets the message is that Christ shall come, and in Matthew the Christ has come. Hebrews 1:1 and 2: "God who at sundry times and in divers

manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds”.

Jesus came to His own people, but they received Him not. They rejected and crucified the Lord of Glory. It certainly was true that they knew not the day of their visitation. Luke 19:44.

When Jesus explained His beginning ministry in Luke 4:16 to 19; He quoted from Isaiah, chapter 61:1 and 2, and closed the quotation with the significant expression found in verse 19. He came “to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” In verse 21 He said “this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.” and truly He might have said to His listeners, “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” The kingdom, long promised, was indeed “at hand”. But Israel would not have this man to reign over them. A little later we hear their cry, “crucify Him.” John 19:14 and 15. But Jesus loved “his own”. He wept over His people and the city of the Great King. In His dying hour, “He made intercession for the transgressors,” (Isaiah 53:12), praying, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do”. Luke 23:34.

When we open the Book of Acts and read the first verse we find that instead of the beginning of something new we have a continuation of something already made known. Acts 1:1 “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus BEGAN to do and to teach.” Jesus began as a minister of the circumcision. Here in the Book of Acts we find the risen Christ continuing His ministry, and His message is still related to the Abrahamic and Davidic promises, hopes, and people. After forty days of instruction the disciples ask Jesus a direct question, Acts 1:6, “Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” When Jesus replied He did not tell them that they had misunderstood Him and that He was then going to call out “the Church which is His Body”. No, that Church had nothing to do with a confirmation ministry. The Body was not a subject of which the prophets wrote. They were silent and ignorant of that mystery which had been hid for ages and generations, Colossians 1:26. He told them that it was not for them “to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power.” Acts 1:7. They were to be witnesses for Him. Witnesses to what? we might ask. Read Acts 2:36—Acts 5:31 and 32 for the answer.

Before we go any further it might be well to inquire why did the disciples ask such a question in reference to the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel? Had Jesus given any reason at all to suspect that such a thing might take place? I think so, for the disciples did not ask the question until Jesus had mentioned the Spirit Baptism in Acts 1:5 “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence,” and this would naturally bring the thought of kingdom restoration to the disciples. Notice with me, Isaiah 32:1 “Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in judgment. . . (Isaiah 32:13) upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers . . . (Isaiah 32:15) until the spirit be poured upon us from on high . . . (Isaiah 32:16) then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

Isaiah 44:3, “I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring.”

When the Spirit came upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, Peter quoted Joel as an explanation of what had taken place. Acts 2:16 and 17. “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh” Therefore, the disciples asked a proper question in reference to Israel’s restoration at the time Jesus mentioned the baptism with the Holy Ghost. Jesus said unto them, ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses. Again we ask the question, witnesses to what? Was Jesus telling them the baptism of the Holy Spirit would make them members of His Body?

Peter on the day of Pentecost made the astounding declaration that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead to sit on the throne of David. Acts 2:30. In chapter 3:19 to 21 he made a national appeal to the Jewish people, declaring that national repentance would bring national deliverance and the restoration promised to Israel through the prophets. In verse 24 the Word of God is very definite, "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." Therein was the answer to their question, "wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" What did that have to do with Jew and Gentile in the Body?

In summing up, I am sure you will agree with me that the risen ministry of Jesus, witnessed to by the disciples was a ministry of confirmation. Acts 5:29 to 32: "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him." The language in this 32nd verse is very specific, we are His witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost. So if the Holy Ghost is giving this message through the apostles, criticism is a very serious thing. Let us turn to Acts 3:24 again, where "these days" were the subject of prophecy and compare with the "these days" in Ephesians 3:9, "which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God." This ministry of the Apostle Paul was called the mystery, "hid from ages and generations." Colossians 1:26.

If Peter's message on the day of Pentecost is not the same as Paul's message as given in Ephesians and Colossians, why do Christians insist on disregarding the injunction of Philippians 1:10 where we are told to distinguish between the things that differ? Why do Fundamentalist Bible teachers, in the face of these Scriptural distinctions, tell us that the Church, which is His Body, began on the day of Pentecost? Peter's message was a message of confirmation. Paul's mystery message was one of revelation.

In Paul's first Epistles he confirmed to Israel many things which the prophets had foretold and that which Christ and the Twelve had confirmed. But after Israel's judgment pronounced by Paul in Acts 28:25 to 28, that apostle to the Gentiles declared many new and glorious truths unknown to the Old Testament prophets or the New Testament apostles. He wants you to obey and pass on to others Ephesians 3:9. What are you doing about it?

SEVERAL STATEMENTS FROM A MESSAGE

BY C. E. ELLEBY

If we maintain that God, on the day of Pentecost, began to build the "New Man", the Church which is His Body, that "Body" had its beginning in a purely kingdom message. Can we then prove when and where the message to "the Church which is His Body" changed from its kingdom aspects, with its covenant relationships, to a message entirely heavenly in scope, declared to a people alien to any covenant relationship whatsoever? Ephesians 2:11 to 15. Surely it will not bring anything but confusion to take the revelation of the Pauline Epistles, written after the close of the "Acts" period, and read it into the Book of Acts. Where is there one verse in the Book of Acts to suggest that Paul was preaching the truth of Ephesians 1:14 to 23?

If the principle of progressive revelation is carefully observed, we shall be delivered from the folly of declaring that the twelve apostles and Paul were out of the will of God when they continued to teach and observe the law of Moses, circumcising their children, taking Jewish vows, refusing to company with Gentiles. Acts 10:28—Acts 27:18 to 28. That the law was done away at the cross we know “now”; that the middle wall of partition was broken down, we know “now”; that the law and ordinances are not part of the message of God for the present day, we know “now”; but our clear knowledge of these things is absolutely dependent upon revelation which came through the Apostle Paul, after the close of the “Acts” period. In the “Acts” period, Paul circumcised Timothy, shaved his head with a Jewish vow, and in many ways became as one under the law. All knew that “he who despised Moses’ law died without mercy; but until instructed by God to do otherwise, believing Israelites under the authority of James, the Lord’s brother, continued to be zealous of the law. Acts 21:20.

When we study the Book of Acts as a “continuation” of the things “begun” in the Gospels, we find that the signs and wonders are but the logical accompaniment of the message with which they were originally and intentionally identified. Depart from that message and the signs disappear. Was not the message and program of the Twelve in Acts much the same as in the Four Gospels? That the signs belonged to the kingdom message, and that the kingdom message was for a people promised a King and a kingdom is clearly revealed. The gospel of the Kingdom is to be preached again after the Body of Christ has been called on high. When God ceased dealing with His covenant people, Israel, as stated in the eleventh chapter of Romans, the kingdom program ceased and consequently the signs ceased. After the “Acts” period Paul no longer became a Jew to the Jews as one under the law; but gave the full revelation of the blotting out of the handwriting of ordinances. Colossians 2:11 to 14.

When we turn to consider the “Prison” Epistles of Paul, we are no longer in any doubt as to God’s message and order. The “Acts” kingdom message is no longer proclaimed. The Jew no longer has any priority right. The Lord is not now offering a “kingdom” to a covenant people, but is building, or calling out, the “Church which is His Body”, from among men, without respect to any covenant made with any individual or nation, since the world began. The calling, position, and destiny of this Church was not the subject of prophecy; nor is it set forth in the Gospels. Neither is it declared in the Book of Acts. But up to the Epistle to the Ephesians the Body was a mystery “which hath been hid from ages and from generations; but now (after Paul reached the Roman prison) made manifest to His saints”. Colossians 1:26. “From the beginning of the world” this mystery was “hid IN GOD”. Ephesians 3:9. “Given us in Christ Jesus before the ages began”. II Timothy 1:9.

Certainly the message and signs given of God to make Christ manifest to Israel are not being used of God today “to make Himself of twain one New Man”. Ephesians 2:15. Nothing is creating more divisions in the Body of Christ today than the pitiable attempt to duplicate the kingdom signs and the practice of the kingdom ordinance, water baptism.

Surely the truth for this “dispensation of the grace of God”, which was given to Paul for US Gentiles (Ephesians 3:2), is the criterion by which all previous revelation must be tested before being applied to the present-day believer. Anything that is in disagreement with this final revelation must not be applied to the believer of this present day of God’ grace.

No intelligent, spiritual saint of God will refuse to appropriate and apply any verse of Scripture from the Old Testament, from the Four Gospels, or from Acts, James, Revelation, or any other Book of the Bible that is compatible with the message of grace in Ephesians, Colossians and II Timothy. No other principle of interpretation is intelligent or God-given.

MYSTERY IN PAUL'S EPISTLES AND THE REVELATION

Romans 11:25:

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this MYSTERY lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”

Romans 16:25 and 26:

“Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the MYSTERY, which was kept secret since the world began.

“But now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”

I Corinthians 2:7 and 8:

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a MYSTERY, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.

“Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

I Corinthians 4:1:

“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the MYSTERIES of God.”

I Corinthians 13:2:

“And though I have the gifts of prophecy and understand all MYSTERIES and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could move mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”

I Corinthians 14:2:

“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men but unto God; for no man understandeth him, howbeit in the Spirit he speaketh MYSTERIES.”

I Corinthians 15: 51 and 52: “Behold, I shew you a MYSTERY: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

Ephesians 1:9 and 10: “Having made known unto us the MYSTERY of His will according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself;

“That in the dispensation of the fulness of time He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in Him.”

Ephesians 3:3 to 5:

“How that by revelation He made known unto me the MYSTERY; (as I wrote afore in few words,

“Whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the MYSTERY of Christ)

“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.”

Ephesians 3:8 and 9:

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

“And to make all men know what is the fellowship of the MYSTERY, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”

Ephesians 5:32:

“This is a great MYSTERY, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.”

Ephesians 6:19:

“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the MYSTERY of the gospel,

“For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak.”

Colossians 1:25 to 27: “Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God

“Even the MYSTERY which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints.

“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this MYSTERY among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory.”

Colossians 2: 2 and 3:

“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the MYSTERY of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.”

Colossians 4:3 and 4: “Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the MYSTERY of Christ, for which I am also in bonds,

“That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”

II Thessalonians 2:7:

“For the MYSTERY of iniquity doth already work, only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.”

I Timothy 3:9:

“Holding the MYSTERY of the faith in a pure conscience.”

I Timothy 3:16:

“And without controversy great is the MYSTERY of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

Revelation 1:20:

“The MYSTERY of the seven stars which thou seeest in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou Seest are the seven churches.”

Revelation 10:7:

“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the MYSTERY of God should be finished, as He hath declared by His servants the prophets.”

Revelation 17:5:

“And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.”

Revelation 17:7:

“And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the MYSTERY of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.”

WHAT SHALL WE SEEK?

It is interesting to compare and contrast Matthew 6:33 and 34 with Colossians 3:1 to 4. We quote these Scriptures for your consideration and study.

“SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS; AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU.”

“TAKE NO THOUGHT FOR THE MORROW.” Matthew 6:33 and 34.

“IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.

“SET YOUR AFFECTION ON THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON THINGS ON THE EARTH. “FOR YE ARE DEAD, AND YOUR LIFE IS HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD.

“WHEN CHRIST, WHO IS OUR LIFE, SHALL APPEAR, THEN SHALL YE ALSO APPEAR WITH HIM IN GLORY.” Colossians 3:1 to 4.

In the Book of Matthew, Jesus is on earth, Israel’s Messiah, the King from heaven long promised to that nation. He is presenting the kingdom for which they have long waited. Included in the kingdom promises were blessings of physical healing, temporal prosperity, peace on earth, and Israel’s deliverance from Gentile political authority. Surely, with the Shepherd-King present, the kingdom subjects could declare, with David, the twenty-third Psalm, in perfect trust and confidence. The Shepherd-King said to His people, “Fear not, little flock”, “sell that ye have and give alms” Luke 12:32 and 33 “Take no thought for the morrow”.

In the Book of Colossians the same Lord. Jesus is not on earth presenting a kingdom to Israel, but is far above in the super-heavenlies, the Head of the Church which is His Body. The members of that Body are identified with the risen Head in death, burial and resurrection. They are seated with Him in the upper-heavenlies, and are waiting to appear with Him in glory. These facts are stated in Ephesians 1:3, Ephesians 1:19 to 22 and Ephesians 2:6. The same thought is expressed in Philippians 3:20 and 21.

The believer in the Body of Christ is to seek those things which are above. He, too, is to know that God shall supply all of his needs according to the riches in glory by Christ Jesus. But surely while the King is away the member of Christ’s Body is not to be subject to the laws and principles that shall govern the kingdom which is to be established on this earth when the King returns to take His throne. The kingdom of the heavens, under the reign of Israel’s King, and the Church united to the risen Lord, have some blessings in common. But the member of the Body of Christ, who endeavors to obey Matthew, chapters five to seven, in all details, will find himself in a state of confusion which may lead to despair and skepticism when he learns that the blessings therein promised are unrealized. Surely the believers are not to be condemned for laying in their coal for the winter months or for storing up their fruits and vegetables in advance.

In this study we have a simple illustration of what the Lord means by “testing the things that differ”. And by searching the Scriptures we shall realize that we have the best things God ever gave any people.

SOME SIMPLE THOUGHTS CONCERNING BODY TRUTH

We have had requests from a number of our friends to present some elementary lessons concerning the Church which is called the “Body of Christ”, and the relation of other dispensations to the “Dispensation of the Mystery”. Ephesians 3:9.

We appreciate that this is not an easy task, for the reason that the great majority of Christians do not seem to have the interest or desire to diligently study the Word of God with open hearts and unprejudiced minds. It is almost impossible for loyal denominationalist to be Bereans, and accept as truth that which is contrary to their denominational creeds and the traditions of church fathers. But we shall endeavor in this message to present some plain facts clearly taught in the Bible.

FIRST—IN THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURES WE ARE TAUGHT THAT THE APOSTLE PAUL WAS CHOSEN BY CHRIST TO BE THE APOSTLE, THE PREACHER, THE TEACHER, THE WITNESS, AND THE PRISONER OF THE LORD JESUS TO THE GENTILES. Galatians 1:16 - Galatians 2:7 - Acts 9:15 - Romans 15:16 - Romans 11:13 I Timothy 2:7 - II Timothy 1:11 - Ephesians 3:1 - Ephesians 3:8 - Colossians 1:24 to 28.

SECOND—The Apostle Paul was not one of the twelve apostles who companied with Jesus during the years of His ministry on earth, and therefore was not present with Christ on earth when Christ committed to Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew 16:16 to 18.

Neither was he present with the twelve apostles, after the resurrection of Christ, when the Eleven received from the resurrected Christ, the Great Commission. Paul received his “Grace of Christ” message, the ministry of reconciliation, the uncircumcision gospel, the truth concerning the Mystery and the Body of Christ, in fact all of his commissions, by visions and revelations, after Christ had gone back to heaven. Acts 9:15—Galatians 1:12 and 1:17—Acts 22:17 to 21—Ephesians 3:3 and II Corinthians 12:17.

THIRD—IN EPHESIANS 1:22 AND 23 WE READ OF THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY. IN COLOSSIANS 1:24 WE READ “FOR HIS BODY’S SAKE, WHICH IS THE CHURCH”. THE EPISTLES TO THE EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS WERE WRITTEN AFTER THE CLOSE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS, WHEN PAUL WAS A PRISONER OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. Ephesians 3:1. NO OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET EVER FORETOLD ANYTHING CONCERNING THE BODY OF CHRIST. IT WAS PURPOSED IN CHRIST BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.

FOURTH—When the twelve apostles were sent by Christ on earth they were specifically instructed to, “go not unto the Gentiles”, but only unto Israel. Matthew 10:5. Some years after the death of Christ it was decided in the conference of apostles that the Twelve would preach the Israelitish gospel to Israel. Galatians 2:9. Peter preached to the household of Cornelius, a God-fearing, Israel-loving, devout, respectable, religious Gentile, who lived in Israel’s land. But there is no record in Acts that he preached to any other Gentiles. There is no record in Acts that any of the Twelve preached outside of the land of the Jews, or to any Gentiles, except the one message to Cornelius. Paul was given the responsibility of preaching Grace to the Gentiles. Galatians 2:9.

FIFTH—THERE IS ONLY ONE BIBLE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THIS AGE OF GRACE. THAT CHURCH IS SCRIPTURALLY DESIGNATED “THE BODY OF CHRIST”. Ephesians 1:22 and 23. Colossians 1:24. CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THIS ONE CHURCH. THE HEAD IS SEATED FAR ABOVE PRINCIPALITY AND POWER IN THE HEAVENLIES. Ephesians 1:19 to 22. THE MEMBERS OF THAT ONE BODY ARE LIKEWISE SEATED IN THE HEAVENLIES. Ephesians 2:6. EVERY SINNER SAVED BY GRACE IS A MEMBER OF THAT ONE BODY, WHETHER OR NOT HE BELONGS TO

ANY DENOMINATIONAL OR UNDENOMINATIONAL CHURCH ORGANIZATION. "JOINING THE CHURCH" IS NOT A SCRIPTURAL EXPRESSION.

SIXTH—It is a Scriptural fact, acknowledged by all "Grace" preachers, that nothing is required for membership in the One true Bible Church, which is the Body of Christ, but saving faith in the crucified, resurrected and glorified Christ. They are all agreed that God, by a Divine baptism not made with hands, adds members to the Body of Christ; and, that if water baptism were required by God for membership in the Body of Christ, salvation would not be by grace and faith alone, but by God's work, plus man's work. No religious ceremony of any kind is required, either to save a believing sinner, or to give him membership in the Body of Christ. Therefore, it should be apparent to any student of the Scriptures that if a group of men require for membership in their church a religious ordinance not required for membership in the Bible Church, the churches are not one and the same.

SEVENTH—MEMBERS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST ARE NOT SAVED ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS, BUT ACCORDING TO GOD'S PURPOSE AND GRACE WHICH WAS GIVEN THEM IN CHRIST JESUS BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD. II Timothy 1:9. THIS IS CALLED GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE IN CHRIST. THIS PURPOSE WAS IN GOD'S MIND AND GOD'S PLAN AGES BEFORE HE MADE HIS COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM. BUT ONE GREAT QUESTION, WHICH PERHAPS REMAINS UNANSWERED IN THE MINDS OF MOST CHURCH-MEMBERS, IS: "WHEN DID THE BODY OF CHRIST BEGIN HISTORICALLY? THE POSTMILLENARIAN TEACHES THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST, THE CHURCH OF GOD AND ISRAEL ARE ALL THE SAME CHURCH IN DIFFERENT STAGES. SOME PREMILLENARIANS ARE SURE THE BODY BEGAN WHEN CHRIST BREATHED UPON HIS APOSTLES. John 20:22. OTHER PREMILLENARIANS TEACH THAT THE CHURCH BEGAN ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST. OTHER PREMILLENARIANS SAY, AFTER THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER OF ACTS. AND STILL OTHERS SAY, AFTER THE WORDS OF PAUL RECORDED IN THE CLOSE OF ACTS, IN ACTS 28:25 to 28. WHAT DO YOU SAY? AND WHAT IS YOUR SCRIPTURAL PROOF?

EIGHTH—The word "CHURCH" is a very indefinite term; and before applied to any specific company of people, the student of the Scriptures should find in the Scriptures the particular company of people to whom the term applies. The Greek word, used more than 100 times, is "EKKLESIA". In the last few verses of the nineteenth chapter of Acts, it is "assembly"; there referring to an unlawful assembly, or mob, of anti-Christian heathen. A company of unsaved and idolatrous Gentiles, assembled centuries before Christ came to earth, would have been called a "church". Therefore, we see that the word "Ekklesia" is so indefinite in its meaning, that we must find the Scriptural qualifications before we can prove any doctrinal points by the use of the word "church". In Acts 7:38 we learn that the Israelites marching to Canaan nearly 1500 years before Christ was born, was called the "Church in the Wilderness". We might say with Scriptural authority, that in the coming kingdom age, Israel, redeemed and restored under the promise of the New Covenant, will be a New Covenant Church. The Church of this dispensation is the Church, which is His Body.

NINTH—IN EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS WE LEARN THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAKS OF THE MYSTERY IN CONNECTION WITH THE BODY OF CHRIST. THE WORD "MYSTERY" MEANS "SECRET". IT IS APPARENT THEN, THAT UP TO THE TIME THAT PAUL WROTE EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS, GOD HAD KEPT THE TRUTH CONCERNING THE BODY OF CHRIST A SECRET. IT WAS GOD'S SECRET

“HID IN GOD FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD”. Ephesians 3:9. IT WAS THE SECRET WHICH “HATH BEEN HID FROM AGES AND FROM GENERATIONS. Colossians 1:26. THE TWELVE APOSTLES DID NOT USE THE WORD “BODY”, AND MADE NO ATTEMPT TO REVEAL TO SAINTS THE SECRET WHICH PAUL MADE KNOWN IN HIS PRISON EPISTLES.

TENTH—When Paul was speaking in Berea about 53 A.D., the Bereans searched the Scriptures to see if Paul’s statements were Scriptural. Acts 17:11. When Paul wrote, about ten years later, to the Ephesians they could not search the Scriptures which the Bereans searched, because Paul was writing concerning the “unsearchable” (not-to-be-tracked) riches of Christ. Ephesians 3:8. This should give to every Bible student a very simple principle of Bible study and convince any person that Paul first taught what Israel’s prophets had foretold and he later taught truths about which they were wholly ignorant as well as silent. Ephesians 3:1 to 11 . . . Colossians 1:24 to 28. Christ Himself began with Moses, who wrote the first five Books of the Bible, and went all through the Prophets to Malachi, and expounded unto His disciples all the Scriptures concerning Himself. Luke 24:21 to 36. But He did not speak to them concerning the Unsearchable Riches which Paul preached to the Gentiles, because Moses and Malachi, and all of the in-between prophets had nothing to say about these Riches. They were hid in God, until they were made known by the risen Christ to Paul. When we preach Christ we should obey Philippians 1:10 (R.V.)

ELEVENTH—JESUS OF NAZARETH ON EARTH WAS FULFILLING (FILLING OUT) THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS. Matthew 15:8. HIS MINISTRY WAS CONFIRMING WHAT THE PROPHETS HAD FORETOLD. Romans 15:8. WHILE ON EARTH THE LORD JESUS WAS PROCLAIMING THE PROPHESED KINGDOM OF HEAVEN; BUT HAD NOT ONE WORD TO SAY ABOUT THE BODY OF EPHESIANS 1:18 to 22, OF WHICH HE WAS TO BE THE HEAD. THE TWELVE APOSTLES CONTINUED WITH THIS “CONFIRMATION” MINISTRY ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST AND THROUGH THE BOOK OF ACTS. Hebrews 2:3 and 4. WHAT THEY PREACHED ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST WAS IN FULFILLMENT OF THE PROPHECIES MADE TO ISRAEL CENTURIES BEFORE. Acts 2:16 and 2:30 to 33. THE KINGDOM OFFERED TO ISRAEL, IN ACTS 2:19 TO 26 WAS A KINGDOM ABOUT WHICH ALL THE PROPHETS, FROM MOSES AND SAMUEL HAD WRITTEN. Acts 3:24 and 25. THEREFORE THE TWELVE APOSTLES WERE NOT OFFERING, IN ACTS 3, THE SAME KINGDOM CONCERNING WHICH PAUL WROTE IN EPHESIANS, COLOSSIANS AND II TIMOTHY. THE DISPENSATION OF THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS” COULD NOT BE THE “DISPENSATION OF THE MYSTERY”, MENTIONED IN EPHESIANS 3:9. THE LORD ON EARTH GAVE THE “KINGDOM” KEYS TO THE TWELVE; BUT THE RISEN CHRIST IN HEAVEN GAVE PAUL THE “DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD”. Ephesians 3:1 and 2. THE TWELVE WERE MINISTERS TO ISRAEL, AND ARE TO YET SIT ON TWELVE THRONES AND JUDGE THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL. Matthew 19:28. Galatians 2:9. PAUL WAS THE LORD’S MESSENGER TO THE GENTILES, WITH THE “UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST” AND THE “MYSTERY”. GOD, NOW, WANTS ALL MEN TO SEE WHAT IS THE “DISPENSATION OF THE MYSTERY”, HID IN GOD UNTIL PAUL REACHED ROME AND WROTE EPHESIANS, ABOUT 64 A.D.

TWELFTH—Thus we see that prophecy spoke of the death and resurrection of Christ; that the prophets and covenants foretold the Kingdom blessings of Israel, the hope and calling of Israel, and the Gentiles who were to be blessed with them. Romans 15:10. And we see that Jesus

of Nazareth and the Twelve Apostles carried on this ministry promised by prophets and covenants. And that in Paul's "Prison Epistles" God is speaking of a different kingdom, hope and calling purposed in Christ before there were any prophets.

DIVIDED UNITY

"WITH ALL LOWLINESS, AND MEEKNESS, WITH LONGSUFFERING, FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE... "ENDEAVORING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE . . . ONE BODY. . . ONE SPIRIT ... ONE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING . . . ONE LORD . . . ONE FAITH . . . ONE BAPTISM . . . ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL: Ephesians 4:2 to 7.

"BEHOLD, HOW GOOD AND HOW PLEASANT IT IS FOR BRETHREN TO DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY." Psalm 133:1

"To us there is one God the Father . . . and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." I Corinthians 8:6. Here we have stated the first great important doctrine of Christian unity. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I and my Father are one." There is one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once-for-all." Hebrews 10:10. That once-for-all offering, the Lord Jesus Christ called His "baptism". Luke 12:50. On the cross of Calvary the Lord Jesus Christ was baptized into death. "So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death." Romans 6:3. Christ was buried. Christ was raised. Christ is seated in the highest heavenlies, Head over all things unto the Church, which is His Body. Ephesians 1:9 to 22.

Members of Christ's Body are buried with Him by baptism into death. Romans 6:4. They are raised to seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Colossians 3:1 to 4. Members of Christ's Body are alive with Christ and seated with Christ in the highest heavenlies. They were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Ephesians 1:4. They were called, not according to works, but according to that grace and purpose of God which was given us in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. II Timothy 1:9. They are waiting for Christ to be manifested, to be manifested with Him in glory. Colossians 3:3 and 4. Christ is in these members, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27. God desires that these members should know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Ephesians 1:18. This is the one calling that is God's basis of Christian unity. This calling was God's purpose in the eternal ages before He called Abraham and chose His servant Israel. Israel's calling is different from the calling of members of the Body of Christ. A mixture of these callings will hinder, in fact, make impossible, obedience to Ephesians 4:3; "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit."

There is one Body. There are several churches in the Bible, but God has one and only one Church for today. That Church is the Body of Christ. This Body is clearly described in Ephesians and Colossians; but not in any other Books of the Bible. Christ had a little flock while He was on earth. Luke 12:32 and 33. That was a kingdom flock different from the Body of Christ as to hope and calling. They were not preaching the Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God, which was committed to Paul's trust. I Timothy 1:11. They knew nothing whatever of the Body of Ephesians and Colossians. They were instructed by their Messiah as to Israel's kingdom hopes and given the gospel of the kingdom.

All sinners saved by grace, without religion, without works, without a cause, are members of Christ's Body. They are identified with Him in His "Death Baptism", which is the one baptism declared by God to be the basis for keeping the unity of the Spirit. It is utterly impossible to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace by mixing Israel's water baptism with the believer's death baptism, as it is to mix Israel's hope and calling with the hope and calling of the Body of Christ. Water baptism is practiced by most of the 350 sects of the Christian Church with many different meanings and in many different ways. This is in total disregard, if not wilfull disobedience, to God's plain instructions in Ephesians 4:3 to 5. If God desires that we keep the unity of the Spirit on the basis of one baptism, which is a Divine baptism, not made with hands, it is worse than folly to make any attempt to obey God's instructions with thirty varieties of water baptism.

Can you point to a single Christian practicing water baptism who obeys Ephesians 3:9? "Make all men see what is the fellowship (administration) of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God?" If we are to make men see the mystery (the truth of the Body and the Head) with the hope and calling of this dispensation, we must not expect to show it to them in the Scriptures concerning Israel, where there is no reference to this glorious truth, about which all of the prophets of Israel, and the Lord's twelve apostles were ignorant as well as silent; but in the writings of the man who was entrusted with this special revelation.

We shall not succeed in getting very many members of the Body of Christ to keep the unity of the Spirit, but let us endeavour in God's own way and receive God's commendation.