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The Herald of His Grace

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The Acts Period and the Acts Period Epistles

The Beginning of Something New? or the Continuation of Something Old?

by — Tom L. Ballinger

The Book of Acts has always been a problem to those who insist that the “Dispensation of Grace” of Ephesians 3:2 began therein. The problem is caused by two things:

1. They do not understand what is going on in the Book of Acts;
2. They cannot reconcile the doctrine and practice of the Book of Acts with *present truth* which is found in the Prison Epistles of Paul.

Many today insist that *their* “church” and *their* “doctrine” began during the Acts period, but this belief presents problems to many when confronted with the doctrine of baptism, tongues, signs and wonders which are all to be found in the Book of Acts and those Epistles written during that time. Many attempt to *explain them away*.

Many hold a preposterous position that what Paul taught and practiced during the Acts period was *different* from what he wrote during the same period; namely the books of I & II Corinthians, Galatians, I & II Thessalonians, Hebrews and Romans, all of which were written during the Acts period.

In the Book of Acts there is **NO** change in hope, in-



heritance or sphere of blessing. All doctrine in the Book of Acts is based on the *Kingdom of God* found in the Old Testament Scriptures of Moses and the Prophets, centering on the finished work of Christ.

What needs to be answered honestly by the true student of the Word is, did the Book of Acts introduce a *heavenly sphere* or was it the continuation of the *earthly Kingdom* of which Christ would sit on the throne of His father David, ruling the nations with Israel as a Kingdom of priests and a channel of blessing to the other nations? We ask the reader to do only three things:

1. Forget what the religious leaders say about this subject, no matter how fundamental or dispensational they claim to be;
2. Compare every verse with your Bible and be willing to believe the verses mean what they say and say what they mean;
3. Don't try to explain away things that are obviously true just because they are contrary to what you believe.

THE SECOND COMING

Every man who wrote an epistle during the Acts period expected the *Second Coming of Christ* to take ►

place either in their lifetime or the lifetime of their readers.

James:

*Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for **the coming of the Lord draweth nigh**, grudge not one against another brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold **the Judge standeth before the door** (James 5:8-9).*

Peter:

*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at **the revelation of Jesus Christ** (I Peter 1:13).*

John:

*Now, little children, abide in Him that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him **at His coming** (I John 2:28).*

Paul:

*The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet **shortly** (Romans 16:20).*

*To the end He may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, **at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints** (I Thessalonians 3:13).*

*Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift **waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ** (I Corinthians 1:7-8).*

The Apostles who wrote the epistles in the Acts period were not looking for a 2000 year (so far) *Dispensation of Grace*. They expected the soon return of Christ as He promised He would. They encouraged their readers to look for His coming to take place shortly. They said the time was “short.” (I Corinthians 7:29).

The Acts period wasn't *the first days of a new dispensation*, but *the last days of an old dispensation*. They didn't call the Acts period *the beginning of a new thing*, but *the end of things*. They didn't refer to Acts as a *revelation of something new*, but the *consummation of something old*. They looked for the soon, prophetic return of the Lord.

THE BOOK OF ACTS IS A COMPLETE UNIT

The first and last half of the Book of Acts is identical. Please read and compare the following subjects and verses. In this comparison the letter “A” will refer to the first half of Acts (chapters 1-14). The letter “B” will refer to the last half of Acts (chapters 15-28).

The *Kingdom of God* was preached throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 1:3; 8:12; 14:22;
- B. Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31.



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The Book of Job

by – E.W. Bullinger

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Doctrines were based on Moses and the prophets throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 2:14-36; 3:19-24; 7:2-60; 13:15-42;
- B. Acts 26:22-23; 28:23; 17:1-2.

Feast days were observed throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 2:1; 12:3;
- B. Acts 20:16; 18:21.

Water Baptism was practiced throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 2:41; 8:12; 8:38; 9:18; 10:48;
- B. Acts 16:15; 16:33; 18:8; 19:5.

The sick were healed throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 3:7; 5:15; 8:7;
- B. Acts 19:11-12; 28:8.

The dead were raised throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 9:37-40;
- B. Acts 20:9-11.

Israel's Hope was preached throughout the Acts period:¹

- A. Acts 4:1-2; 13:32-37;
- B. Acts 28:20; 26:6-8.

The Jew was first throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 1:8; 3:26; 11:19; 13:46;
- B. Acts 17:1-2; 18:4, 19; 19:8; 28:17.

Speaking in Tongues was practiced throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 2:4, 11; 10:46;
- B. Acts 19:6; I Corinthians 12:10, 28, 30; 14:5-6, 18, 21-23, 39.²

Israel's salvation was the chief motive of everyone's preaching throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 3:25-26; 2:22-36;
- B. Romans 10:1; 11:12-15.³

Demons and unclean spirits were cast out throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 5:16; 8:7;
- B. Acts 16:16-18; 19:12.

Offerings were taken up *for Israel* throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 11:29;
- B. I Corinthians 16:1-5²; Romans 15:26.³

The Holy Spirit was received by the laying on of hands throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 8:17; 9:17;
- B. Acts 19:6.

Men were commanded to repent throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22;
- B. Acts 17:30; 20:21; 26:20.

God gave men visions throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 9:12; 10:17;
- B. Acts 16:9-10; 18:9-10.

Men were commanded to perform works of righteousness throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 10:35;
- B. Acts 26:20.

Instant judgment was dispensed throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 5:1-11;
- B. I Corinthians 5:1-5; 11:30.²

1. Israel's Hope was the Hope of Resurrection that Christ gave to Israel in Matthew 24:29-31; John 5:25-29; 11:25-26.

2. I Corinthians was written in the period of Acts 19; cf. I Corinthians 16:8, Acts 19:1-10.

3. Romans was Paul's last Acts epistle written late in the Acts period.

The Second Coming of Christ was looked for throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 1:10-11; 3:20;
- B. I Thessalonians 1:10;⁴ I Corinthians 1:6-8;² Romans 16:20.³

Jesus was preached as Israel's Messiah throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 2:36-37; 8:5; 9:19-22;
- B. Acts 17:3; 28:23.

The Law was observed throughout the Acts period:

- A. Matthew 5:18-19; 23:1-3;⁵
- B. Acts 21:20, 24.

Angels ministered to believers throughout the Acts period:

- A. Acts 5:19; 8:26; 12:7-9;
- B. Acts 27:23.

Here are examples of major doctrines and practices that *remained the same throughout the Acts period*. They were believed and practiced at the end of the Acts period with the same zeal as they were in the beginning of the Acts period.

In the last half of the Book of Acts you will find Paul still practicing Jewish doctrines:

- 4. I Thessalonians was written in the period of Acts 17.
- 5. These verses are addressed to the 12 Apostles and were obeyed throughout Acts.

1. Paul circumcised a man (Acts 16:1-3);
2. Paul shaved his head and took a Jewish vow (Acts 21:22-24);
3. Paul offered a sacrifice for purification (Acts 21:26);
4. Paul was unharmed by the bite of a deadly serpent (Acts 28:3-6; Mark 16:18).

Also, please consider the Jewish doctrines and practices found *in the very last chapter of Acts*:

1. Paul still goes to the Jew first (Acts 28:17);
2. Paul still heals the sick (Acts 28:8-9);
3. Paul is unharmed by the bite of a venomous beast (Acts 28:3-6; Mark 16:18);
4. Paul is still preaching Israel's Hope (Acts 28:20);
5. Paul is still preaching the Kingdom of God (Acts 28:23);
6. Paul still bases his preaching on Moses and the prophets (Acts 28:23);
7. Paul still declares that Jesus is Israel's Messiah (Acts 28:23).

PAUL'S ACTS EPISTLES ARE NOT SEPARATE FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Acts Epistles of Paul and the Book of Acts are not separate entities bearing no relationship to one another, but rather they are interwoven together and harmonize with each other. As a matter of fact, they are so interwoven that what you find in one you will find in the other. Doctrines that were believed and practiced in the Book of Acts are found in Paul's Acts Epistles. Doctrines in the Acts Epistles are based on Moses, the prophets and the Gospels:

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- *The Kingdom of God* (I Corinthians 6:9; 15:50; I Thessalonians 2:12; II Thessalonians 1:5; Hebrews 12:28);
- *The Gospel* (Romans 16:25-26; I Corinthians 15:3-4);
- *The Resurrection* (I Corinthians 15:54);
- *Righteousness* (Romans 3:21-22);
- *The Blessings* (Galatians 3:14; Romans 11:17; 15:27);
- *The New Covenant* (II Corinthians 3:6);
- *The People* (Romans 4:11-12; Galatians 3:7; 4:28);
- *The Passover* (I Corinthians 11:23);
- *Justification* (Romans 4:1-8);
- *Tongues* (I Corinthians 14:21);
- Etc.

The doctrine in the Acts Epistles can be found in the Old Testament Scriptures:

- The Acts Epistles *did not* condemn those who observed the Sabbath or feast days during the Acts period (Romans 14:5-6);
- All of the gifts of the Spirit practiced in the Book of Acts – such as healing, tongues, miracles – are found in the Acts Epistles of Paul (I Corinthians 12:1-11);
- The Acts Epistles *did not* forbid the practice of

water baptism during the Acts period.⁶

THE MIDDLE WALL OF PARTITION

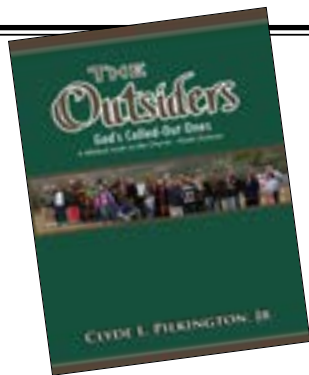
The *Dispensation of Grace* began immediately after the middle wall of partition was broken down (Ephesians 2:14). It was abolished and broken down when the Temple was destroyed by Titus in 68-69 A.D., for the law, the priesthood and the sacrifices were centered on the Temple in Jerusalem.

The Book of Acts and the Acts Epistles were written during the time when the Law was still standing (Acts 21:20), sacrifices were still offered (Acts 21:26) and Israel was still God's people (Romans 11:1-5; Romans 3:1) and had not yet become "Lo-Ammi."

- The Hope of the Acts Epistles is the Hope of Israel, which is the resurrection that Christ

6. Contrary to the opinion of many dispensationalists I Corinthians 1:17 did not forbid Paul from practicing water baptism, for the same man who penned those words under the inspiration of God also practiced water baptism throughout the Acts period.

When Paul said, "For Christ sent me not to baptize," that does not mean that Christ commanded Paul not to baptize anyone, because he did throughout his Acts ministry. He even baptized some of the Corinthians, to whom he wrote these words. What Paul is saying in I Corinthians 1:17 is that the first and foremost thing Christ sent him to do in the Acts period was to preach the Gospel. Water Baptism was secondary but not forbidden, for Paul baptized those that believed the gospel (Acts 16:15; 16:33; 18:8; 19:5).



128 pp., PB.

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The Outsiders: God's Called-Out Ones – A Biblical Look at the Church – God's Ecclesia

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

In 1995, after sixteen years of being in the "pastorate" the author walked away. He left the "religious system" by resigning from the very "church" and "ministry" he had formed. In many ways this work is a testament to these actions. This testimony was thirty years in the making – the results of a spiritual journey that the author found to be common to other saints scattered throughout the world and across history. This is an opportunity to explain why some who love the Lord no longer "go to church." It does not seek to persuade others to do something different, but rather to be simply who and what they already are "in Him." This is an uncovering of the truth of the church, and an encouragement for the members of His Body to enjoy the position and standing "in Christ" that they already possess, realizing that they are truly "complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10), that He alone is their Life (Colossians 3:4), and that His Life is full of freedom (Galatians 5:1).

The Outsiders was very encouraging. Thanks for your thoughts and study on the true Body of Christ and the lonely road we travel at times. – **MO**

I thank God for *The Outsiders*. I couldn't put it down. Read it all in one sitting. – **PA**

The Outsiders has something different about it. Upon finishing it an awareness has taken hold of my mind and spirit – a "knowing" that I have been afforded a special measure of His grace in just being allowed to be exposed to the truth contained within. – **KS**

promised Israel at His Second Coming (Matthew 24:29-31; I Corinthians 15:52-54, I Thessalonians 1:10; 4:14-18; Romans 11:15);

- In the Acts Epistles, as in the Book of Acts, the Jews had the priority – “to the Jew first” (Romans 1:16). Israel’s salvation was Paul’s heart’s desire during this time (10:1; 11:12-15);
- Offerings were commanded to be taken up for Israel in the Acts Epistles of Paul (I Corinthians 16:1-5; Romans 15:26-27);
- The Gifts of the Spirit were administered by the laying on of hands in the Acts Epistles of Paul (I Corinthians 12:1-30);
- Special visions and revelations from God are found in the Acts Epistles (I Corinthians 12:8; 14:26; II Corinthians 12:1);
- Instant judgment and even death was executed upon believers in the Acts Epistles (I Corinthians 5:1-5; 11:30);
- Angels ministered unto believers in the Acts Epistles (Hebrews 1:14; I Corinthians 11:10);
- The Second Coming of Christ was looked for by believers in the Acts Epistles as well as the Book of Acts (I Thessalonians 1:10; I Corinthians 1:6-8; I Corinthians 11:26; Romans 16:20).

with the Book of Acts. They do not contradict, but rather *complement* what Paul said and did in the Book of Acts.

All of the signs, wonders and miracles found in the Book of Acts are found in the Acts Epistles. All of the doctrines relating to Israel, the New Covenant, New Jerusalem and the second coming of Christ found in the Book of Acts are found in the Acts Epistles.

The Acts Epistles do not contain the revelation of a new program and dispensation. Instead they describe more fully the former program and dispensation that God had instituted with Israel years earlier (emphasizing the Gentiles’ place in that program and dispensation).

Today, tongues, prophecy, signs and wonders have no place, no ministry, no edification, no part as they did in the former dispensation. However, this is only a *temporary* cessation of the signs and wonders, for when the *Dispensation of the Mystery* ends and the One New Man is manifested with Christ “*far above all heavens*” (Colossians 3:1-4), God’s program for Israel will take up where it left off in the Acts period.

Far from being separate and distinct from the Book of Acts, the Acts Epistles are in complete harmony

(*edited*)

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- the “*preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past*” (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 1:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:

- total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
- union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
- adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

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