

Bible Student's Notebook"

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 30 Issue 728

The Acts Dispensation

Part 2 of 3

by — Otis Q. Sellers (1901-1992)

THE ACTS DISPENSATION, A CHARISMATIC DISPENSATION

The Greek word *charisma* has to do with divine favor that is manifested as a special gift, and the Acts Period was the time in sacred history that was so completely characterized by these gifts that it can well be called *The Charismatic Dispensation*.

This period of time began with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and continued until Paul's great pronouncement recorded in Acts 28:28. It is the thirty-three years of which the Book of Acts is the history, and the foundation was laid for it in the words of the Lord Jesus to His eleven disciples (Mark 16:14). He said unto them,

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover (Mark 16:15-18).

A statement by statement examination of this passage will show that it was in full force and operative during the Acts period. It declares God's method of dealing with His people at that time. It produced *The Charismatic Dispensation*.

Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (:15).

This commission was performed and fulfilled to the letter in the thirty-three years that followed the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Some will quibble about this, but we who make a practice of taking God at His Word and thinking accordingly will take our stand upon its statements.

And they went forth and preached everywhere (Mark 16:20).

Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4).

These statements settle the matter for all who settle things by the Word of God for a fuller study of this commission.

Signs

And these signs shall follow them that believe (Mark 16:17).

These words were spoken to the eleven disciples ▶

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concerning all who believe. Not the apostles only but all who believed. The Greek word translated "follow" here is a forceful word that means to fully follow or to follow so as to be parallel with. These signs were the divine accreditation of the faith of all who believed during the charismatic dispensation. Again, there were no secret believers in that day. No believer's life was "hid with Christ in God" as ours is today. Faith was a manifest thing that was evident to all.

Casting Out Demons

The divine activity at that time, the purpose that was being fulfilled, and the short time in which it was to be fully accomplished (Romans 9:28) brought forth intense demonic activity in opposition to all that God was doing. The Lord said they would cast them out, and they did.

In My name shall they cast out devils (Mark 16:17).

When Philip, who was not one of the Twelve, proclaimed Christ in Samaria, his word was confirmed by such miracles, and,

unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed (Acts 8:7).

Speaking in Tongues

Then we read,

They shall speak with new tongues (Mark 16:17).

This gift was one of the great features of the charismatic dispensation. It was the God-given ability to speak another language as if it were one's native tongue. This happened first on the day of Pentecost when men out of fifteen or more countries bewilderedly confessed that they were hearing,

every man in our own tongue wherein we were born (Acts 2:8).

These words tell us that the 120 believers on the day of Pentecost were able to freely and fluently speak seventeen languages and dialects.

We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11).

Taking Up Serpents

They shall take up serpents (Mark 16:18).

Poisonous snakes abounded in Palestine, Syria and Sinai. As men walked about bare-legged and in sandals, their feet and legs were the common targets of these vipers. Even before this they had been promised power to tread on serpents and scorpions (Luke 10:19).

Here they were told that they could pick up serpents. This was a most valuable and relevant power to those whose lives would be given to continuous travel, always walking, typically sleeping in the open in snake-infested areas, wrapped only in their own garments or any other covering they carried along. The warmth of their bodies was a constant invitation to vipers to crawl in. If this happened they were in no danger. All they needed to do was pick it up and cast it aside.

A record concerning this is found in Acts 28:3-6. There we read that Paul and his traveling companions, shipwrecked on the Isle of Melita, were warming themselves at a fire that had been kindled. When he had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out of the heat and fastened on his hand. The inhabitants of the island knew the poisonous nature of this serpent and expected that the venom would cause swelling at once and that in a short time he would be dead, but Paul shook off the serpent into the fire and felt no harm. This was a normal experience in the charismatic dispensation, and this incident, happening when it did, is proof that the dispensation under which such things were normal extended to and was in full force until the close of the Acts period.

Drink Any Deadly Thing

And if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them (Mark 16:18).

Poisoning was the favorite method of assassination at the time these words were spoken. It is quite probable that, when the Pharisees held a council against Jesus as to "how they might destroy Him" (Matthew 12:14), assassination by means of poisoning was probably suggested.

In that time if poison could be secretly administered it resulted in a crime that could not be detected, there being no such thing as autopsies or chemical analysis of the contents of the stomach.

The believers of the Acts period were the objects of the most malignant, Satan-generated hatred that men have ever known. Many would have gladly murdered them, thinking they were serving God by so doing (John 16:2).

It should be noted here that all other items in this declaration are prefaced by the positive words "they shall," while this one begins with the hypothetical words "if they shall." There is no record that they did drink any deadly poisons, and if they did no one would have known it save those who had secretly administered it. The disciples in the charismatic dispensation were free from any danger of death by this common form of assassination.

Healing the Sick

They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover (Mark 16:18).

Note that it does not say "pray for the sick," as that is another matter. They laid hands on the sick, for they were performing a mediatorial service, and the sick recovered. Faith on the part of those who were

healed was not a prerequisite (see Acts 28:7-9). There were no gimmicks, false claims or deceitful practices. They did not pitch tents, organize choirs, or work up the people into frenzied emotional states. They never failed. They simply laid hands on the sick, and the sick recovered.

The commission recorded in Mark 16:15-18 is the divine constitution of the charismatic dispensation. It is not applicable to the present dispensation of the grace¹ of God. It was the principles embodied in this declaration that gave the Acts period its peculiar character, one that is unique in all sacred history.

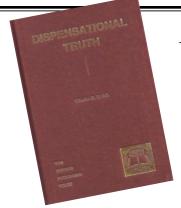
The charismatic dispensation fulfilled its purpose, ran its glorious course and came to an end by Paul's pronouncement in Acts 28:28. This pronouncement brought an end to Paul's peculiar apostolic ministry, even though under new and special commissions he wrote seven epistles after that time. Among all of the gifted men of the Acts period there was none who exceeded the Apostle Paul. He was,

not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles (II Corinthians 11:5).

Paul's ability to heal the sick was demonstrated over and over. God even wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul (Acts 19:11) so that,

(see Acts, page 6248)

- 1. [Editor:] For more information on grace, see:
 - The Nature of Grace, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., <u>Bible Student's Notebook #274</u>; or see <u>Daily Goodies</u>, January 18, same title (book, see order form);
 - Divine Justice and Grace, Steve McVey, <u>Bible Student's Note-book #290</u>;
 - God will Judge in Grace, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr, <u>Bible Student's</u> Notebook #505;
 - Reigning in Life: The Present Effect of Super-Abundant Grace, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., Bible Student's Notebook #75.



Dispensational Truth or The Place of Israel & the Church Which Is His Body in the Purpose of the Ages

by — Charles H. Welch (1880-1967)

First published in 1912, this was the author's first full length book. The author exhibits how the Bible reveals the purposes of God, which are seen to have earthly as well as heavenly implications, and need to be carefully compared with traditional doctrines.

263 pp, HB See order form.



Editor's Zesk

"Even Some of Your Own"

Acts 17:28 (Rotherham)

"Even Some of Your Own" is a new series that will run occasionally as a part of the Editor's Desk. It will chronicle truth coming from unexpected sources.

My Ride with a BYU Theology Professor

Arriving at the Sacramento CA airport in August 2010 while traveling home from a conference, I found that fog had canceled my connecting flight to San Francisco. The airport rented a taxi for me and two other passengers to travel the two-hour ride to make our connection.

Another gentleman and I sat in the back seat, and I soon learned that he was a retired professor of theology at Brigham Young University. Over the years, I had spoken with many of the young "elders" that had showed up at my door, but this was the first time that I actually had the opportunity to speak to someone from Mormonism that was "in the know."

My seat mate and I ended up discussing issues related to my curiosity about the Church of the Latter Day Saints, and we meandered into some for which I'd never seemed to have been able to get a straight answer from the young elders. He was a theology

professor, so I asked if he had any understanding of the consummation¹ of all things. I inquired about his view regarding what the bottom line would be for all of God's creatures - what did his church believe about the final end of all creation?

Now, at this point, I had not even alluded to what I believed Scriptures taught regarding the subject. The words that came out of his mouth quite amazed me. He told me that the answer to my question was answered by Paul in I Corinthians 15, pointing out that, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (:22), but that it would be "every man in his own order" (:23).

How had he come to know this? Was this a position held among his peers? Or, was this the result of some personal searching that had uncovered this significant glimpse into the ultimate plan of God?

Regardless, I told him that the truth of the Scripture that he had referenced had been at the very heart of my own study and teaching for many years now. We spoke for the remainder of the car ride regarding these things.

I believe that a vital part of Paul's divine commission was the completion of the Scriptures, and thus I reject the claim that the Book of Mormon is a part of Scripture. However, I nonetheless found it quite interesting that this professor took me to Paul's writ-

- 1. [Editor:] For more information on the consummation, see:
 - The Consummation, Bob Evely, Bible Student's Notebook #603;
 - The Consummation of the Eons, A.E. Knoch, Bible Student's Notebook #656;
 - God in Consummation, A.E. Saxby, Bible Student's Notebook



The Prayers of Ephesians: We in Christ - Christ in Us

by — E.W. Bullinger

The Epistle to the Ephesians contains two long prayers plus a shorter concluding one. The two longer prayers have a common subject: Jesus Christ and Believers. The first prayer concentrates on Christ's purpose for us, whereas the second focuses on what God has made us in Christ. In other words, the first asserts "We in Christ," while the second proclaims "Christ in Us." The first prayer deals with God's power which He wrought in Christ, while the second one deals with God's power which is at work in us.

57 pp., PB

See order form.

www.EWBullinger.com

ings to answer my question.

Last year, in the course of managing our used book business, Janet came across a book dealing with the early history of Mormonism. Glancing through the index a reference to "Universalism" was noted. This inspired a closer look to see what might be within its pages.

Interestingly enough, it was chronicled that Joseph Smith's grandfather, Asael Smith, actually taught and wrote concerning the salvation of all mankind. I will cite a few related lines from the book, including a few quotations from the pen of Asael Smith.

Asael Smith's teachings to his children show more of the influence of the Universalist John Murray. Murray taught that Christ assumed the sins of all men and redeemed them all by His atonement. They did not merit grace by their good works; Christ's grace alone redeemed them, but it was powerful enough to redeem everyone without exception. Murray carried the Calvinist idea of irresistible grace to its logical conclusion and included every soul within the circle of divine love.

Asael, like Murray, put his trust in salvation by grace alone. In *A Few Words of Advice* he tried to bring his children step by step to the same conclusion. Consider, he said, "whether you can by outward forms, rites and ordinances save yourselves, or whether there is a necessity of rites and ordinances to save yourselves?" The question was whether Christ came "to save mankind because they were sinners and could not save themselves or whether He [came] to save mankind because

they had repented of their sins, so as to be forgiven on the score of their repentance." In Asael's opinion "he came to save sinners merely because they were such," not because of repentance. Having gone that far, Asael saw no reason why God should favor Vermont Christians over "the worst heathen in the darkest corner of the deserts of Arabia. And if you can believe that Christ [came] to save sinners ... sinners must be saved by the righteousness of Christ alone, without mixing any of their own righteousness with His, then you will see that He can as well save all as any."²

I rejoice to see the testimony of God's truth acknowledged, even in the most unlikely of places. Even though Paul was referring to the testimony of nature when he stated that God "left not Himself without witness," nevertheless, it is indeed true that His testimony is manifest in all other areas of life as well.

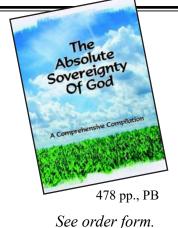
Thankful to be a part of *His* ongoing testimony,

Clyde

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. *Pilkington Abbey* Windber, PA

TOPICS:

Major: "Even Some of Your Own": Mormonism; Mormonism; Editor's Desk



The Absolute Sovereignty of God

(A Comprehensive Compilation)

This quintessential book victoriously celebrates and convincingly proclaims the absolute sovereignty of God. Sadly, religion has veiled the truth of the God of the Bible, making Him either an aloof deity, indifferent to the condition of the creation, or one who is at the worst cruel or at the least unloving and uncaring. Yet the loving Deity of Sacred Scripture always has had and will have sole and complete control over His entire creation. This ultimate collection of 100 works by 34 authors spans nearly 175 years. It is an extensive reference work that is essential for every library.

Richard L. Bushman, Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism. University of Illinois Press, 1984, pages 27-28.





Thank you so much for sharing your love and wisdom with me. You have been a wonderful brother to me and also an inspiration and a mentor, and I am so very thankful for you. ... What a wonderful God Who has so enslaved us with His love and His grace! How beautiful the feet of those He sends to us with His Word! Grace and peace to you, my brother, and to your household, and my undying love and gratitude, as well. – *TN*

I re-heard all three of your <u>Another Look at Bible Study</u>¹ teachings. These should be re-heard every 6 months so that we don't get the "big head" about what we know. Also, they should be listened to in order to remind us that not all are called to be heralds of the Word. Christendom has drilled the so-called "Great Commission" into us so much that we feel like just being still and knowing God is not enough. We know the "Great Commission" is not for now. ... You made us all realize that we are not all "called" to do what you and the few others do. Thanks so much, and I love you so much! – GA

God showed me that Christ was (literally) the

Savior of all mankind a few years ago when I was studying something else. That's typically what happens with me. I'm still overwhelmed with joy! – *VA*

Thanks again for your encouraging ministry EV-ERYDAY! Love you brother! – *TX*

It was not only a blessing but also a treat to be your guest at your home and spend time to get to know you and your family better. You guys are marvelous, simply marvelous. Now that I know better of your operation and what exactly you are doing I will see what the Lord gives me in way of helping. I see the importance of the work and look forward to being of service in whatever way He may provide. I pray for His blessings and strength for you and your family. – **OH**

BSN



The Pilkington Grand Kids. Recently all of the grandkids were at the Pilkington Abbey at the same time. They all live here except for Samuel who lives in FL. It was nice to have all of the cousins together.

Daily Quick Quotes

Since we first began placing single-sentence quotes on the tops of the pages of the *Bible Student's Notebook* they have been a most welcomed feature.

Daily Quick Quotes are single-sentence quotes selected from past pages of the Bible Student's Notebook that are added to a daily BLOG and assigned topical themes, making them easy to utilize.

You can view or sign up to receive these Daily Quick Quotes at:

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Also see our book by the same title, on the order form under "Clyde Pilkington."

The Universal Fullness of Christ

by — T. Austin-Sparks (1888-1971)

he predestined end of God is a full presentation of the fullness of Christ -"... The church, which is His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Every corner of the universe will speak audibly of Jesus Christ; so that we shall not be able to go into a place, or touch a life, without finding an expression of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory" - that is heaven! You walk in the presence of the Lord Jesus. Think of the whole universe like that: a universal expression of His Son in fullness. That is the end of all things; that, looking into everything, it shall be found to be full of Christ. All is made for Him, and in the new creation all will speak of His presence and show forth the same characteristic of Him. Oh! the joy, even now, when you touch a life and find immediately that life is full of the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus is the fullness of that life!

God has singled out a Person and set Him forth to be seen of all - "the Man Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5).

The Measure of Christ

Persecuted By Religion

by — Witness Lee (1905-1997)

eligious people cannot tolerate the breaking of their regulations. Any violation of their religious regulations will stir up persecution. When Jesus broke the Sabbath, the Jewish religionists persecuted Him and even sought to kill Him. Eventually, religion succeeded in sentencing Jesus to death. In the book of Acts we see that the situation was

the same regarding the persecution of the apostles.

In like manner, a great many martyrs have suffered persecution at the hand of religion. Now it is our turn to undergo this persecution, this suffering for the building up of the Body of Christ.

- Life-Study of Colossians



185 pp., PB

See order form.

Wife Loving: The Husband's Paramount Privilege

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

This book is about Christ-mentored husbandry; a look at husbands' important and honored role of loving their wives. So lofty and divine is its pursuit, Paul presents none other than Christ Himself as the mentor: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church."

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"I have seldom read so much wisdom on marriage in relation to biblical principles." -Denmark

"Powerful, powerful stuff! As a woman I am honored by it. I am deeply grateful for your boldness to honor women and to portray the marriage relationship as simply yet profoundly as God intended." - CA



ACTS (continued from page 6243)

from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them (Acts 19:12).

These miracles were the credentials of his apostleship and it is evident that they did not continue after Acts 28:28. There is no reference to such things in the epistles written after this time. These are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Timothy, II Timothy and Philemon. It is in the epistles that we find positive evidence of the great change.

In Philippians 2:25-30 Paul speaks of Epaphroditus and describes him in such glowing and affectionate terms as "my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow soldier." The believers in Philippi had sent him with money for Paul, also to remain with him and look after his needs. However, after his arrival in Rome he became ill with a sickness that Paul describes as being "nigh unto death," and if anyone should ever have been healed by Paul it was this man Epaphroditus. There was no miraculous healing. His illness followed about the same course as ours do today. It took prayer, time, rest and good care before he was able to return to Philippi.

Another clear evidence of a dispensational change is found in Paul's advice to Timothy set forth in I Timothy 5:23.

Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.

Epaphroditus was with Paul when he took sick, but there was no attempt made to heal him by laying on hands. Timothy was at a distance, but Paul did not send him a handkerchief. In the charismatic dispensation, poison could not hurt Timothy, but here the bad water is a definite threat. Paul's advice that he use a little wine for his "often infirmities" (Greek, asthenia) needs to be compared with his healing of "diseases" (Greek, asthenia) on the Isle of Melita.

Paul's advice is a lesson in dispensational truth. In just about the last word he ever wrote by divine inspiration, Paul confesses that he had left Trophimus at Miletum sick (II Timothy 4:20). This would have been unthinkable during the charismatic dispensation. Not so under the dispensation of the grace of God.

(to be continued)

TOPICS:

Major: Acts, Book of; Israel; Right Division *Minor*: Miracles; Sickness; Signs; Spirit World

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide - Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360 Volume 30, No. 728 – July 16, 2018 Scripture education in a semi-weekly format!

This *free* electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- 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).

We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see index after the order form.

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ABBREVIATION KEY

Scripture Version

AV: Authorized VersionBSV: Bible Student's VersionCV: Concordant Literal Version

DAR: Darby Translation
DT: Dabhar Translation
ED: Emphatic Diaglott
FF: Ferrar Fenton Bible
KJV: King James Version
NET: New English Translation
RE: Rotherham's Emphasized Bible

WT: Weymouth Translation *YLT*: Young's Literal Translation

Reference Sources

AA: Analytical Analysis (Welch)
BDB: Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon
CB: Companion Bible Notes & Appendixes
(Bullinger)

CC: Concordant Commentary (Knoch)

CKC: Concordant Keyword Concordance (Knoch)

CL: A Critical Lexicon and Concordance (Bullinger)

CWS: Complete Word Study Dictionary (Zodhiates)

FoS: Figures of Speech (Bullinger) SEC: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance TGL: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon

UR: Unsearchable Riches

VED: Vine's Expository Dictionary *YAC*: Young's Analytical Concordance

Reference Notations

cf. – compare

e.g. – for example

et al. – and others

etc. – et cetera (and so on)

ff. – and the following

i.e., – that is