

THE GREAT DIVIDE

Christ Came Unto His Own

Israel's Four Great Sin

How Long Was Israel's All Day Long?

When Did Israel Fall?

The Dispensation of Grace For Gentiles

THE GREAT DIVIDE

In this message we are to consider Israel's four great sins, and something of the meaning of the profound truth of Romans 11:25 and 26:

“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—And all Israel shall be saved.”

This revealed mystery should be studied with Christ's awful judgment upon Israel, recorded in Matthew 23:31 to 39, especially the last two verses:

“Behold your house is left unto you desolate—For I say unto you, ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.”

Israel committed many great sins, but the four we shall consider have special and significant mention in the Bible.

And we would ask our Gentile friends to consider the very important statement recorded in Romans 11:21:

“For if God spared not the natural branches (the Jews), take heed lest He also spare not thee (Gentiles).”

CHRIST CAME UNTO HIS OWN

Have you ever prayerfully, studiously considered the statement concerning the Lord Jesus Christ in John 1:11: “He came unto His own and His own received Him not?”

Let us take a little time out and sit down, as true Bereans, with our Bibles open and our minds yielded to the infallible Holy Spirit, and diligently and prayerfully study this statement in the light of other Scriptures.

Surely we all believe the statement in Acts 15:18, “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.” With this statement let us consider the foreknowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in John 6:64:

“But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who would betray Him.”

From these Scriptures and others we learn that neither God the Father nor God the Son was taken by surprise when Judas betrayed the Son of God, or when Israel’s rulers received Him not. In this connection note carefully Acts 2:23:

“Him (Christ) being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

Israel did the killing. But God foreknew. It was by His determinate counsel, “It is the Lord’s doing.” (Matthew 21:42).

Let us think of several statements concerning the guilt and sin of the Jews:

“The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond; it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars.” Jeremiah 17:1.

“Because they have done that which was evil in My sight, and have provoked Me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day.” II Kings 2:15.”

Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God.” II Kings 17:14.

“And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out of My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name will be there.” II Kings 23:27.

“Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpent, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” Matthew 23:31 to 33.

“Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of Whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.” Acts 7:51 and 52.

“. . . the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men; Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” I Thessalonians 2:15 and 16.

“But to Israel He saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” Romans 10:21.

Note this, “all day long.” God’s covenant dealings with Israel. The question comes to the mind of the intelligent student, “how long was all day long?” This is a most important question Search the Scriptures for the answer. The Scriptures have much to say concerning Israel’s unbelief, rebellion and wicked disobedience during the forty years they traveled from Egypt to Canaan, about 1500 B.C. (Exodus 32:9—Exodus 33:5—Deuteronomy 31:27). So “all day long”

was a very long day. Israel did not fall and had not filled up their sin until they added to all their other sins the great sin in the days of the apostle Paul: "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." I Thessalonians 2:16. God's wrath came upon Israel before their fall (Romans 11:11) but not to the uttermost.

In Luke 19:41 to 48 we learn that the Lord Jesus Christ wept for Jerusalem and Israel and why He wept. Then we read His words concerning the city and people in Luke 13: 34 and 35:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not . . . Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

All of these Scriptures have to do with the statement, "Christ came unto His own and His own received Him not." And in this study there is perhaps no more wonderful and significant truth in all the Bible than that great parable of the vineyard, spoken by the Son of God in the midst of Israel, and recorded in Matthew 21:33 to 46.

Before we quote these verses let us consider these truths concerning Jehovah and Israel:

"But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou are Mine."

"This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." Isaiah 43:1 and 21.

"I am the Lord your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King." Isaiah 43:15.

"Now will I sing. to My well Beloved a song of my Beloved touching His vineyard. My well Beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And He fenced it and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and brake down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged: but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the House of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant. And He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." Isaiah 5:1 to 7.

Surely we are familiar with the record concerning the birth of God's nation, for God's glory. Read the first twelve chapters of Exodus and then note carefully Romans 9:4 and 5:

"Who are Israelites? To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." Romans 9:4 and 5.

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD

Now for the great parable, one of the most tragic, most terrible stories ever told, and yet one of the most wonderful. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the King of Israel, spoke these words:

“Hear another parable: There was a certain House holder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country; And when the time of the fruit drew near, He sent His servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took His servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, He sent other servants more than the first; and they did unto them likewise. But last of all He sent unto them His Son, saying, they will reverence My Son. But when the husbandmen saw the Son, they said among themselves, This is the Heir; come, let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance. And they caught Him and cast Him out of the vineyard and slew Him. When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will He do unto these husbandmen? They say unto Him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out His vineyard to other husbandmen, which shall render Him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The Stone which the builders rejected, the Same is become the Head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this Stone shall be broken: and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitude, because they took Him for a prophet.” Matthew 21:33 to 46.

Israel killed God’s prophets. They killed God’s Son. The Builders rejected the Stone. He became the Head of the Corner. “This is the Lord’s doing.”

After prayerful study of this parable, read the sequel, in Stephen’s “Jerusalem” message to Israel:

“Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: As your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of Whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.” Acts 7:51 and 52.

Then again another sequel, some years later:

“The Jews Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men. Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” (I Thessalonians 2:15 and 16.)

Note Israel’s three great sins in Stephen’s message:

1. They killed the old testament prophets.
2. They betrayed and murdered the Christ concerning
Whom those prophets spoke and wrote.
3. They resisted the Holy Spirit.

To understand this third great sin we should read Acts 5:29 to 32. Here we learn that the Holy Spirit witnessed that God raised Christ from the dead to be Israel’s Saviour.

During the months between the day Christ spoke the parable of the vineyard and the day Stephen was stoned to death by the Jews, for his message of Acts 7:51 to 56, many of His own (Jews) did receive Christ. On the day of Pentecost three thousand Jews were saved. (Acts 2:40 to 43). Some days later the number was increased to five thousand. (Acts 4:4). Then many believing Jews were added and even multiplied. (Acts 5:14—6:1 to 7).

“And the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Acts 6:7.

Very many of Christ’s own did receive Him, both before and after His death. But in John 1:11 we read, “His own received Him not.” Individual Jews received Him as Saviour, but for the nation the rulers rejected Him as their Messiah and King. Think of this with the statement concerning Paul’s ministry years after Christ died:

“And it came to pass in Iconium that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.” Acts 14:1.

Here we learn that many Jews did receive Christ. Four times, in the Gospel of John, we read that many Jews believed on Christ before He died.

So Christ’s own did receive Him. But the plain word is, “His own received Him not.” And then about twenty-five years after the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross the apostle Paul wrote concerning the Gentiles:

“For as ye (Gentiles) in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their (Israel’s) unbelief.” Romans 11:30.

Pause here. Prayerfully and spiritually consider this verse, for it is so important that Christians understand the meaning of this statement. Note why Gentiles obtained mercy and then learn when.

If Gentiles received mercy from God, because the Jews did not believe, what would the Gentiles have received, if the Jews had believed? After the close of this present age and economy of grace the Jews are going to believe (Romans 11:26) and then what will happen to believing Gentiles? Many old testament Scriptures answer this question. Here is another question. Why did God permit thousands of the Jews, including those who killed Christ, to believe and be saved after Christ pronounced His awful judgment upon them in Matthew 23:31 to 39 at the time He called them serpents and told them their house was left unto the desolate?

Can you answer these questions? If not, we shall endeavor to help you answer them and some more questions.

THE GREAT COMMISSION, PETER AND PAUL

Perhaps you have studied together Matthew 28:19 and 20 with Acts 13:45 and 46 and Galatians 2:9:

“Go ye therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

“But when the Jews saw the multitude they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and

Barnabas waxed bold and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES.”

“And when James, Peter and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.”

Now several more questions are suggested: “If Paul was supposed to disciple Gentiles under the commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20, why did he say that he turned to the Gentiles, because Israel, who had the opportunity to hear the Word of God FIRST, put it away from them?” “If Peter and his fellow-apostles were to disciple Gentiles under the commission of Matthew 28:19 and 29, why did they say, with Paul’s sanction, that they would go to the Jews?” “Why was it necessary for Paul to go to the Jews FIRST more than twelve years after the Lord Jesus told them that their house was left unto them desolate (Matthew 23:38)?”

All of these questions have to do with the statement, “Christ came unto His own and His own received Him not.” Always study with the statement in John 1:11 that all-important truth in Romans 11:30, that Gentiles obtained mercy because of Israel’s unbelief. And then ask and answer the question, When? When did the Gentiles obtain mercy, because of Israel’s unbelief? What was the date of Israel’s unbelief that brought salvation to the Gentiles? Was this before or after Christ died? Was this before or after Saul became Paul?

At the close of the “all-day-long” of Romans 10:21 God’s attitude toward Israel and His dealings with Israel radically changed. And this brought even a more radical change in God’s attitude toward Gentiles and His dealings with them; for it was then that the dispensation of the grace of God for Gentiles (Ephesians 3:1 to 4), “the dispensation of the mystery” (Ephesians 3:9) began.

God’s unprophesied message and program of “all” grace for Gentiles is quite different from the prophesied kingdom program for Gentiles. The one was because of Israel’s unbelief and fall; while the other will be after their national redemption.

As we carefully search the Divine Record, studying every verse in the Book of Acts, we learn that when many of the Jewish disciples of Christ left Jerusalem, at the time Stephen was stoned to death, the twelve apostles remained in Jerusalem and the scattered disciples preached to none but Jews only. (Acts 8:1 and 11:19.)

Now by studying Acts 10:28 and Acts 11:1 to 5, we learn that some seven or eight years after Peter preached to devout Jews from every nation (Acts 2:5 and 36), it was not lawful for the Twelve to go to Gentiles; and that when the Lord, by the “sheet” vision, made it lawful for Peter’s one month to do this, (Acts 15:7—Acts 10:1 to 35), the other apostles and disciples contended with him for preaching to the household of Cornelius.

In Acts 15:1 to 19, we learn that Peter and the other apostles were in Jerusalem some fifteen years after the day of Pentecost of Acts Two. At about that time we learn that the attitude of the Jewish apostles and disciples of Jerusalem toward the Gentiles was such that Peter himself was afraid to sit at a table and eat with Christian Gentiles. (Galatians 2:10 to 13). This of course causes the thoughtful student of the Scriptures to ask these questions, “Where there any uncircumcised Christian Gentiles in the Jerusalem Church?” “Would Christian Jews have gone to unsaved Gentiles to preach to them, when they refused to eat with Christian Gentiles?”

As we study Acts 8:1 and Acts 15:1 to 19 and Galatians 2:9, it is obvious that the twelve apostles, during the “Acts” period, did not obey the commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20; for they could not disciple all nations by remaining in the land of the Jews and preaching to the circumcision. Did something go wrong? Yes, our wrong thinking and failure to obey II Timothy 2:15 has caused us to accept the faulty dispensationalism of those who teach that Israel’s fall came with their second sin, “killing the Prince of life” (Acts 3:15 to 18), instead of with their third and fourth sins, recorded in Acts 7:51, 13:45 and I Thessalonians 2:16.

The Lord Jesus, in the Jerusalem temple, told Paul to get out of Jerusalem and go far hence unto the Gentiles, and he did. (Acts 22:17 to 22—Colossians 1:5, 6 and 23—II Timothy 4:17). Then note how Paul received his “grace” message. (Galatians 1:11 and 12, Acts 20:24.)

One mouth of the Twelve was chosen by God to speak to the household of Cornelius (Acts 15:7); but Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles. (Romans 11:13—Romans 15:16—Galatians 1:11 to 18—I Timothy 2:4 to 8—II Timothy 1:11—Ephesians 3:1 to 4 and 8). Note in this last verse Paul’s special message to Gentiles, “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

To Peter, Christ gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 16:16 to 19.) To Paul, Christ gave the dispensation of the grace of God for Gentiles. (Ephesians 3:1 to 5). And the unsearchable riches of Christ for Gentiles. (Ephesians 3:8). Paul did not enter into this special ministry until after Peter had used the keys of the kingdom of heaven, from the day of Pentecost until he preached to the household of Cornelius; until after the commission of Acts 13:2. Both Peter and Paul said it was necessary that the truth concerning the risen Christ should FIRST be spoken to the Jews. (Acts 3:26 and 13:46.) Both Peter and Paul declared to Israel that Jesus Christ was raised up, IN INCARNATION, to be Israel’s Saviour. (Acts 5:29 and 30 and Acts 13:23.) Both Peter and Paul declared to Israel that Jesus Christ was raised up, IN RESURRECTION, to be Israel’s Saviour. (Acts 5:31 and 32 and Acts 13:30 to 37.)

ISRAEL’S FALL

For an intelligent understanding of God’s message and program of grace, the knowledge of no truth is more important than the knowledge of the fact that the Lord did not lead His apostles to Gentiles, with the gospel of grace, when and because the Jews rejected Christ, IN INCARNATION; but when and because the Jews rejected Christ, IN RESURRECTION.

Ponder well the truth of Romans 11:15, reconciliation for Gentiles when and because God rejected Israel; because Israel rejected the witness of the Holy Spirit concerning the resurrection of Christ to be Israel’s Saviour.

It is not surprising that ninety-nine per cent of Christians are not obeying Ephesians 3:9 when that per cent have not learned WHEN and WHY the Lord turned Paul to the Gentiles. We quote Ephesians 3:9 and Acts 13:46:

“And to make all men see what is the dispensation 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.

“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES.” Acts 13:46.

There was a difference in God's dealings with the Gentiles. in His message to them with Peter's "kingdom" keys, (Acts 10:34 to 38), and with Paul's "grace" gospel and dispensation. (Romans 4:4 and 5—Ephesians 3:1 to 4). One was before Israel fell. The other was after Israel fell:

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them (Israel) to jealousy." Romans 11:11.

These words are very significant. When did Israel fall? In Matthew 21:42 we read the words of Christ concerning His rejection by Israel:

"Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The Stone which the builders rejected, the Same is become the Head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes."

Israel certainly stumbled at the Stumblingstone. (Romans 9:32 and I Peter 2:3 to 8). That was the Lord's doing. Note carefully Acts 4:26 to 28:

"The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against Thy holy Child, Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done."

Then note Matthew 21:44:

"And whosoever shall fall on this Stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, It will grind him to powder." Matthew 21:44.

Israel fell on that Stone and was broken. But the fall of Romans 11:11 was not until after Paul's message in Acts 13:46. The Stone is yet to fall upon a Christless civilization.

Let us give this a Scriptural check-up:

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted His raiment and cast lots." Luke 23:34.

"And killed the Prince of life, Whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses." "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all His holy prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled." Acts 3:15,17 and 18.

"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 Spirit, Whom God hath given to them who obey Him." Acts 5:29 to 32.

Did not Christ say, "the Son of man must be lifted up?" (John 3:14). Did not Christ say, "the Son of man goeth as it is written of Him?" (Matthew 26:24, Luke 24:23 to 25; 42 to 47). Was not the death of Jesus Christ inevitable and according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God? (I Peter 1:18 to 20—Acts 13:29—Acts 2:23—Acts 3:18). Did not Jesus Christ say that the sin against the Son of man would be forgiven? (Matthew 12:30 to 33).

Because of these great facts, Christ on the cross prayed that the Builders would be forgiven for rejecting the Stone. It was the Lord's doing. It is still marvelous in our eyes.

Christ came unto His own and His own received Him not. His own had the opportunity to receive Him, as their Prince and Saviour, after His resurrection. Again they received Him not. They blasphemed against the Holy Spirit Who was sent to Israel as a witness that God had raised Christ up, IN RESURRECTION, to be Israel's Saviour (Acts 5:32).

Remember Israel's three great sins in Acts 7:51 to 56:

1. Rejecting and killing the prophets before Christ's incarnation.
2. Rejecting the Son of man IN INCARNATION.
3. Rejecting the witness of the Holy Spirit concerning Christ, IN RESURRECTION, as Israel's Prince and Saviour.

Then remember the fourth great sin that filled up their sins and brought God's great wrath:

"The Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men. Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." I Thessalonians 2:14 to 16.

This fourth sin brought their fall. This did not happen until after the dispensational miracle of Acts 13:2 to 10, where we see Bar-Jesus, the symbolic Jew (the son of Jehovah-Saviour), trying to keep the Gentile from hearing the gospel from the lips of Paul. Bar-Jesus represents blind Israel, the Son of Jehovah. Note what the Jews did in Acts 14:2—Acts 14:19—Acts 17:5—Acts 18:12. So Israel's fourth great sin "forbidding us to speak to Gentiles", brought the fall of Romans 11:11 and the truth of Romans 11:30:

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid; but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles to provoke them (Israel) to jealousy.

"For as ye (Gentiles) in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their (Israel's) unbelief."

TWELVE APOSTLES—ONE APOSTLE

Have you not wondered why there had to be eleven other apostles identified with Peter from Acts 1:1 to Acts 12:1, and that thereafter the Twelve were broken up and no successor was chosen to take the place of martyred James? (Compare Acts 1:17 to 26 and Acts 12:1).

The selection and election of Matthias to take the place of Judas so that there would be twelve apostles from Acts 2:1 to 12:1 should convince any Berean Bible student that God was dealing with Israel and the kingdom during those years and not with the Joint-Body of Ephesians 3:6.

Have you not wondered why only Jews on earth saw Christ after His resurrection? Or why Paul (Saul) was the only unsaved, unbelieving Jew who saw Christ after His death?

Have you not wondered, after reading the commissions of Matthew 28:19 and 20, Mark 16:14 to 18 and Acts 1:8, why, after the commission to Paul, in Acts 13:2, there is no mention of

the missionary journeys of the Twelve, or any of their spiritual activities in the last sixteen chapters of Acts, except as they had dealings with Paul?

Those sixteen chapters give us the autobiography, testimonies, missionary activities of only one man (Paul) and the mention of others who had dealings with him.

Now note these “henceforths” in Paul’s testimonies:

“And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean, FROM HENCEFORTH I will go unto the Gentiles.” Acts 18:5 and 6.

“Wherefore HENCEFORTH know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now HENCEFORTH know we Him no more.” II Corinthians 5:16.

Hence we learn that the statement “Christ came unto His own and His own received Him not” covered God’s dealings with Israel from Matthew 4:17 and Matthew 10:4 to 8 until after they rejected Stephen’s message in their land and Paul’s message out of their land. It was Israel’s fourth sin of I Thessalonians 2:14 to 16 that brought their fall and the ushering in of the dispensation of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:1 to 4). God’s all-day-long with Israel began with their journey out of Egypt, and closed with their fall in Romans 11:11.

THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE KINGDOM

Christians, who are Premillenarians, believe in the postponement of the kingdom. By this kingdom we mean the kingdom, which the Lord Jesus Christ declared was at hand, in Mark 1:14 and 15 and Matthew 4:17, at the time He was thirty years of age, the same kingdom that He declared would be at hand when He returns from heaven to redeem Israel. (Luke 21:27 to 32.)

This, of course, means between the time Israel rejected the kingdom of Mark 1:14 and 15, and Matthew 4:17, and the day that the King returns to Israel (Matthew 23:39), that God is not establishing on earth that same kingdom. Hence we refer to this present “grace” age as a parenthetical age, during which time the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are building up the Body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:9 to 14). This is not bringing in the kingdom prayed for in the “Our Father” prayer.

The kingdom of heaven of Matthew 4:17, Mark 1:14 and 15, Luke 21:31 to 33 was prophesied by all the holy prophets since the world began. But no prophet wrote about, spoke about, or knew about the Joint-Body of Ephesians 3:6. Therefore up to the time this truth was given to the apostle Paul, by special revelation, it was God’s secret or mystery. (Ephesians 3:9—3:4—Colossians 1:25 and 26.)

The kingdom of heaven was at hand and was presented to Israel. (Matthew 4:17—Matthew 10:5 to 8—Matthew 10:23—Luke 1:29 to 33—Luke 1:67 to 77—Acts 3:19 to 21—Luke 19:41 to 44—Matthew 21:43).

By comparing Luke 1:67 to 77 with Acts 3:19 to 21 we learn that the same kingdom that was presented to Israel during the years of Christ’s incarnation was presented to them after His resurrection.

All Premillenarians are dispensationalists. They believe that God's kingdom covenants have been suspended or interrupted; that is, the guarantees in those covenants that pertain to Israel's national redemption and peaceful possession of the land of Canaan under the reign of their true King David. In this connection note that Christ was born for David's throne (Luke 1:27 to 33); that Christ was raised from the dead for David's throne (Acts 2:27 to 33 Acts 13:30 to 37); and that Christ is coming back for David's throne (Acts 15:13 to 18—Isaiah 9:6 and 7 and Matthew 25:31 to 43).

All intelligent students of the Scriptures believe that in the Book of Acts there was a transitional period after the resurrection of Christ until the inauguration and full revelation of the dispensation and reign of grace, which came when God set aside His religious kingdom nation.

During the first part of this transitional period Peter and his fellow-apostles were using the keys of the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 16:16 to 19). But note Paul's testimony in Ephesians 3:1 to 4:

“For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for You Gentiles, If Ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward; 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.”

Premillenarians know that God sent reconciliation and the “grace” message to Gentiles when and because of Israel's unbelief and fall. (Romans 11:11—11:15—11:30 and Acts 13:45 and 46—18:5 and 6—Acts 28:25 to 28.) They know that this was after Israel had committed the unpardonable sin. (Matthew 12:30 to 32—Acts 7:51—Acts 18:5 and 6—I Thessalonians 2:15 and 16).

Premillenarians know that the Church, the Joint-Body of Ephesians 3:6, was chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. (Ephesians 1:4 and 5—Ephesians 1:11—Ephesians 3:11—II Timothy 1:9 and 10—Romans 8:28 to 30—I Corinthians 2:6 to 8). But they believe that the Body had its historic beginning after Christ was raised from the dead.

At the present time there is no little unpleasant controversy because of ‘Premillenarians’ “dispensational” differences. Some say that Israel fell when they rejected and killed Christ; that Israel had already committed the unpardonable sin of Matthew 12:30 to 32 before they killed the Prince of life. Some who contend for Pentecost as the birthday of the Church and the beginning of the dispensation of the mystery (Ephesians 3:9) also acknowledge that the kingdom of heaven was presented to Israel in Peter's message in Acts 3:12 to 26. They believe that the Body of Ephesians and Colossians existed at the time Peter offered the kingdom to Israel, in Acts 3:19 to 21.

Other Premillenarians are perplexed and confused concerning the offer and the postponement of the kingdom, either before or after the death of Christ, because Israel's great tribulation must precede the coming of the King to redeem Israel and establish His kingdom. They seem to think that if Christ, in incarnation, presented the prophesied Messianic kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6) or if Peter and the Eleven presented that same kingdom to Israel, in Acts 3:19 to 21, the kingdom was not offered in good faith, because of God's foreknowledge of this present parenthetical “grace” program and dispensation which He purposed in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 3:11—II Timothy 1:9 and 10).

Those Premillenarians, who believe that this present age and economy of grace began when Israel committed their second great sin, rejecting the Stone, oppose and not always graciously other Premillenarian, who agree with them one hundred per cent on all the Christian fundamentals, but who believe that this present “grace” age did not begin until Israel had committed their third and fourth great sins, resisting the witness of the Holy Spirit, and forbidding God’s messengers to preach to the Gentiles. (Acts 7:51—Acts 5:29 to 32—I Thessalonians 2:15 and 16). What do you think in the light of Acts 13:46, Acts 14:27, Acts 18:6 and Romans 11:15?

This second group of dispensationalists are called many different names by the first group, such names as “ultra-dispensationalists” “hyper-dispensationalist, Bullingerites.”

Of course, such “name-calling” does not help either Christian fellowship or the recovery of the most glorious truth in all the Bible, truth concerning God’s “all” grace program and the Joint-Body of Ephesians 3:6.

It is noteworthy that the Premillenarians, who teach that the fall of Israel of Romans 11:11 took place when Israel rejected Christ, in incarnation, never obey Ephesians 3:9. But they are the organized opponents of the Premillenarians, who are earnestly endeavoring to make all saints see the dispensation of the mystery which began when Israel rejected Christ in resurrection.

THE REIGN OF GRACE—RECONCILIATION—RELIGION

Let us carefully and prayerfully compare several Scriptures:

“Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 5:20 and 21.

“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.

“Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.” Hebrews 9:10.

“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the reconciliation.” Romans 5:11.

“And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham (Abram), saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed.” Galatians 3:8.

“And all things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” II Corinthians 5:18 and 20.

“The law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” John 1:17. Four hundred and thirty years before the law was given at Sinai, Abram, an uncircumcised heathen, was declared righteous by faith, without the deeds of the law. (Romans 4:9 to 11—Galatians 3:6—Genesis 15:6—Galatians 3:16 to 18). About four hundred and thirty years before Abram

was justified by faith Noah found grace in the sight of the Lord and was a preacher of righteousness. (Genesis 6:8; II Peter 2:5).

Four hundred and thirty years after Abram was declared righteous by faith the law was added, when Moses was eighty years old. (About 1496 B.C.). The offense entered by Adam about twenty-five hundred years before the law entered by Moses. (Romans 5:12). By Adam was the entrance of sin. By Moses was the entrance of law, or the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:19 and 20). By the Lord Jesus Christ, and God's reign of grace for the human race, is the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 13:39—Ephesians 1:6 and 7 and Ephesians 4:32—Colossians 1:13 to 15 and Colossians 2:13).

When the law entered that the offense might abound, God's religious system, religious program for Israel entered. It was imposed until the time of reformation. (Hebrews 9:10). It would require many hours of diligent Bible study to learn all the religious ceremonies that God demanded of Israel, under the reign of law. Because of the statement in Ephesians 2:15 to 18 many Christians believe that the time of reformation arrived when Christ yielded up the ghost on the cross and the veil of the temple was rent; that then and there the reign and dispensation of grace began. Some Christians attempt to prove by the Gospel of John, which differs much from the Synoptic Gospels, that the reign of grace began when Christ entered His public ministry at the age of thirty. They quote John 1:17 and John 3:16 and 17 and John 6:47 and other verses in John.

If Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord before the flood and if Abraham, the uncircumcised heathen, was justified by faith before the law was added and before God imposed His religious program upon Israel, and if God, during the reign of law, provided the burnt offering, the meat offering, the peace offering, the trespass offering and the sin offering, including the blood-sprinkled mercyseat, we know that God's grace has always been extended to sinners. But intelligent, spiritual students of the Scriptures know the difference between "grace" in the former dispensations and the present "dispensation of grace," which began with Paul after the great commission of Acts 13:2 and II Corinthians 5:16 to 20, and not with Peter and the Matthew commission on the day of Pentecost. In this age of grace our great commission is II Corinthians 5:16 to 21. The old testament saints received the spirit of bondage unto fear and were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith afterwards revealed. (Romans 8:15—Galatians 3:23). They were servants under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father. (Galatians 4:2).

What folly to teach that God's reign of grace for all the human race was the same before Christ died, or during the first twelve chapters of Acts, as it has been since. In Acts 13:23 Matthew 15:24—Matthew 10:5 to 8—Galatians 4:4—Romans 15:8—Luke 1:29 to 33 and Luke 1:67 to 77, we learn that Jesus of Nazareth on earth was not sent to Gentiles, but to Israel. The children had to be filled first before the Gentiles could receive their blessings. (Mark 7:24 to 31). In Acts 2:22—Acts 3:26—Acts 5:29 to 32—Acts 10:28 and Acts 11:19, we learn that the reign of grace for Gentiles did not begin during those first years following Pentecost. There was much grace, but not "the dispensation of grace" of Ephesians 3:1 to 4.

Compare Matthew 10:5 to 8 with Titus 2:11. In Matthew "Go not in the way of the Gentiles"—"Preach the kingdom of heaven at hand" "Before ye have gone over the cities of Israel the Son of man will come." (Matthew 10:23) . Then the twelve apostles will sit on twelve

thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matthew 19:27 and 28). But something different in Titus 2:11, written more than thirty years later, “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” A great difference between “the kingdom of heaven” for Israel and “the grace of God” for Gentiles and all men, after Israel was set aside. (Romans 11:11 and 15 and 30). Peter said, “repent and God will send Christ from heaven to earth.” (Acts 3:19 to 21). Paul said, “believe and God will raise you up into the heavenlies where Christ is.” (Ephesians 2:6 to 10). Quite a difference! (Philippians 1:10).

We learn in I Thessalonians 2:15 and 16, studied with Romans 11:5 to 30 and II Corinthians 5:16 to 20, that the nation Israel committed their fourth great sin and lost their place as a nation before Paul reached Rome; even before he wrote his first Epistle; for I Thessalonians was his earliest message. Those Christians, who teach that the dispensation of grace did not begin until after the pronouncement of Acts 28:25 to 28, offer a dispensationalism which is just as faulty as that of Christians who teach that the reign and dispensation of grace for Gentiles began with Peter and Pentecost, a Jewish feast day.

All Christians should obey II Timothy 2:15, “rightly dividing the Word of truth,” and they should be like the noble Bereans of Acts 17:11, searching the Scriptures daily to see whether these things be true.

No profound Bible study is necessary to prove that “the dispensation of the grace of God,” for Gentiles, mentioned in Ephesians 3:1 to 4, did not begin with Peter and the Eleven before Paul received the commission of Acts 13:2, before Paul said, in Acts 13:46, “LO WE TURN TO THE GENTILES.” Several verses of Scripture should be sufficient proof: Acts 10:28—Acts 11:1 to 4. Galatians 2:7 and Acts 14:27. During those first years, beginning with Pentecost, Peter and the Eleven did not preach to Gentiles, to provoke Israel to jealousy, (Romans 11:11); or because Israel had been cast away. (Romans 11:15).

To Peter was committed the gospel of the circumcision (Galatians 2:7), and the keys of the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 16:16 to 19). He did not preach the new creation and reconciliation to Gentiles as did Paul when and because Israel was set aside.

Several great events had to take place before the universal “grace” announcement of Titus 2:11 was made. But Romans 4:4 and 5 and Romans 3:24 to 26 prove that it was made before Paul reached Rome. The great events were: the putting away of sin by Christ on the cross (Hebrews 9:26); the blotting-out of the handwriting of ordinances, nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:13 to 16); the casting out of Satan by the death and resurrection of Christ (John 12:30 to 33—Hebrews 2:14 and Colossians 2:15); the abolition of death by Christ’s resurrection (II Timothy 1:10); the descent of the Holy Spirit to indwell believers (John 16:7 to 12); and the setting-aside of Israel with prior rights and special privileges (Romans 11:5 to 30). Then came God’s reign of grace for the human race as told in Romans 5:20 and 21. Remember that the middlewall of partition stood between Jews and Gentiles while Christ was on earth and also that God permitted believing Jews to remain under the law for several years after Christ’s death.

In the first eleven chapters of Acts we have a pattern of God’s kingdom program which is yet to be. (Amos 9:11 to 15; Joel 2:22 to 38). During those years the Twelve had in mind Matthew 10:23 and 19:27 and 28. What the risen Christ revealed to Paul, according to Galatians 1:11 and 12, was quite different from the “all things” which Christ commanded the Twelve to

teach all nations, according to Matthew 28:20. In the Epistle to the Galatians the Gentiles were forbidden to practice many things in Christ's program in Matthew.

When the time arrived that there was to be no difference between the children of Abraham and the Gentiles (Romans 10:12) Christ, after the flesh, was no longer to be known. (II Corinthians 5:16). Adam was mentioned (Romans 5:12); and, for the first time, "reconciliation" was mentioned. (Romans 5:11). And for the first time the new creation was mentioned (II Corinthians 5:17—Galatians 6:15).

Note when and why reconciliation was for Gentiles, in Romans 11:15. When the time of reformation (Hebrews 9:10) arrived God set aside His religious nation. According to Romans 11:25 and 26 they will remain the outcast nation until the times of the restitution of all things (Matthew 23:29 and Acts 3:21). With the fall of Israel (Romans 11:11) individual Jews had then to come as children of Adam. Then God was through with religion. The natural seed of Abraham had no more prior claims. Shortly thereafter the sign-gifts of I Corinthians 12:28 passed away and the new program of "all" grace-and no religion was established according to Ephesians 4:7 to 14. Yes, "all" grace and no religion in the dispensation of the mystery.

THE FOUR-FOLD DIVISION OF THE SCRIPTURES:

1. From Adam to Moses, when there was no law (Romans 5:13 and 14). During those 2500 years God offered grace and righteousness (before the law and the religious program of Hebrews 9:10 were added). When Abram was 99 years old a religious rite was added, circumcision. (Genesis 17:5 to 20). Read John 7:22 and 23. Aside from the sacrifice of animals God gave no religion to His people until He instituted circumcision, about 406 years before (430-24) the ten commandments were written on tables of stone by the finger of God. (Galatians 3:16 to 19).
2. From Moses to Christ, under the reign of law; more than 1500 years. During those years God DEMANDED religion in addition to grace and righteousness. This period included the years Christ lived in the midst of Israel, about 33 years. (Matthew 23:1 to 3—Galatians 4:4—Luke 4:16—Matthew 8:2 to 6). If we will keep in mind two important facts, it will help us to understand, interpret, appropriate, and apply the truth of the Four Gospels, especially the first three. The fact that Israel's priests offered their animals and other sacrifices all the time Christ on earth was ministering to Israel. (Hebrews 9:22—Leviticus 17:11). Christ did not instruct Israel to cease their religious program. And the fact that, so far as there is any record in the Gospel of John, Christ on earth did not minister to any Gentile, and according to Luke 7:1 to 10 and Matthew 8:1 to 12, the only Gentile man to whom He did minister, built a synagogue for Israel and approached Christ through a Jewish mediator. Remember the Samaritans were not considered Gentiles. (Matthew 10:5 and 6).
3. Then during the overlapping or transitional period, in the Book of Acts, God PERMITTED religion in addition to grace and righteousness. (Acts 16:3—Acts 21:18 to 27—I Corinthians 9:20 to 25).

4. In the last Epistles of Paul, God FORBADE religion in addition to grace and righteousness (Philippians 3:3—I Corinthians 13:8 to 13—Ephesians 4:11 to 14—Colossians 1:25 to 28). In Paul’s prison Epistles we find the clear revelation of “the dispensation of the mystery” and learn that we are living in a timeless, a signless and a religion-less age. And God’s message today is called “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” a message not foretold or mentioned by Israel’s prophets or in Acts by the twelve apostles.

The clearest messages of salvation by grace in the Bible are found in Ephesians 2:8 to 10—Titus 3:5 to 7—II Timothy 1:9 and 10—Romans 3:24 to 4:5.

In Paul’s prison Epistles we have the Lord Jesus Christ in “the dispensation of the grace of God” rather than in a religious setting. Remember these words in this age, “Christ”—”grace”—”righteousness”—”eternal life.” (Romans 5:20 and 21). And remember our great commission in II Corinthians 5:18 to 21 and in Ephesians 4:7 and 3:9.

We are not to deduce from this dispensationalism, that Christ in the Four Gospels did not look over the middle-wall of partition and present many glorious truths for the obedience and practice of members of the Body of Christ; but in the light of II Corinthians 3:7 to 17, Colossians 2:11 to 16, Ephesians 2:15 to 3:11, and all of the Epistle to the Galatians, the spiritual intelligent, obedient Christian will interpret, apply and appropriate the truth of the Four Gospels and all other Scriptures in the light of Paul’s grace message and will not frustrate the grace of God or pervert the gospel of grace. All of the Scriptures are God-breathed and are FOR the Church of Ephesians and Colossians, but they are not all ABOUT that Church.