

THREE BIBLE LESSONS

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THE BIBLE CHURCH - THE BAPTIST CHURCH THE BRETHREN CHURCH

There are more than three hundred different denominations, each sustaining a religious program in the name of Christ and the Bible. They are referred to as different churches. If each denomination claims to be a Bible church with a Bible program, either they are making false claims or there are many different church programs in the Bible.

Is it possible that by the unanimous positive declaration of all of these differing denominations the Holy Spirit is Divine and infallible, and that as the infallible Author of the infallible Bible He has given to us a Book that is so filled with misunderstandings, mistakes, contradictions and vague and uncertain statement's that this disorderly Book is responsible for the confusion and divisions and sectarianism among Christians? We must decide that the pitiful and deplorable sectarianism among God's people is either due to the Author of the Bible, in failing to give clear and specific instructions for the order and program of the true Bible Church, or to the Christians' inability or unwillingness to give the proper interpretation to those clear and specific instructions. Perhaps we are unanimous in our decision that the mistake is with the fallible interpreters and not with the infallible Author.

But we are also unanimous in our decision that much of God's program for His people from Moses to John the Baptist cannot be included, with God's sanction, in His program for His Church during those years from John the Baptist to the death of the Apostle Paul.

This leads us to this question; how much of the God-given program of John the Baptist is to be included in the Church program that God gave to the Apostle Paul? How much of the program given by Christ to the Twelve? That John the Baptist and all of the Apostles were true messengers of the same Lord, that all of them spoke with the same Divine authority, but that they proclaimed different messages and presented different programs for different people, no careful reader of the Bible will deny.

If it were possible for us to have an interview with the church leaders and preachers of all of the three hundred, or more, denominational churches in this country, we would learn that all of them would acknowledge that they have eliminated from their church programs many of the religious ceremonies observed, with Divine authority, from John the Baptist to the final revelation of the risen Christ to the Apostle Paul. They neither proclaim to their church-members many of the God-given messages of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts, nor include in their church creeds and programs all of the religious programs, the signs, gifts and order of these Books.

In the light of Ephesians 4:3 to 6, all Christians should readily admit that since the time that the Epistle to the Ephesians was written, there has been only one true Church of Christ; that Church which is His Body. Ephesians 1:19 to 21. "One Body." Ephesians 4:4 and 5. So with no uncertain dogmatism we can agree and assert, on the authority of the Word of God, that there is but one true Bible Church. But we must qualify that statement, and say, "there is but one true Bible Church program for this particular age in which we are living." We may disagree as to when this particular Church, which is His Body, began; but as we search the Scriptures we should not find it so difficult to learn when, in the Bible, the Church program, intended for Christians of today, began. If we agree that it began with John the Baptist or with the earthly ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, we should revise our programs.

THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS

In Acts 7:38 we read of "the Church in the Wilderness." That Church was made up of the people whom the Lord had called out of Egypt to go to Canaan. They had a religious program of "meats and drinks, and carnal ordinances and divers washings (baptisms)." Hebrews 9:10. That religious program was given to them by God. That was imposed upon them until the time of reformation. God has not given to the Church, which is Christ's Body, that program. Colossians 2:12 to 15. To the, members of that Old Covenant Church a seventh day sabbath was given, and several annual feasts, with burnt offerings, peace offerings, meat offerings and sin offerings. But in Hebrews 10:9 we are told that He taketh away the first that He may establish the second. In II Corinthians 3:7 to 17, we are plainly told that all of that religious, legalistic program was taken out of the way and abolished with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All intelligent, spiritual students of the Word of God are agreed that Israel's Old Covenant religious "Church" program is not God's program for the Church which is Christ's Body. Moreover where there has been real earnest endeavour to determine just what should be the program, mission, message and ministry of members of the Body of Christ, the problem for the individual student of the Word and the principal cause for the lack of unity among students and "churches" has been because of the failure, inability or unwillingness to agree as to when and how that Old Covenant program ceased to be God's program for His children; and how much, if any, of that Old Covenant program should be included with the new program for the Body of Christ given to the members of that Body by the risen Christ through His Apostle Paul.

These words are recorded in Luke 16:16; "the law and the prophets were until John (Baptist); since that time the Kingdom of God is preached." There are Christians, men who really love the Lord and His Word, who tell us that the Holy Spirit has taught in this Scripture that the Law economy closed with John's announcement; "repent, for the Kingdom of the Heavens is at hand." Matthew 3:2. The Bible declares that "the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1:17. Then if the Dispensation, or Age, or Economy, of Grace began when John the Baptist introduced Jesus to Israel, and if the Church, which is Christ's Body, began then and there, there is no company of Christians in the world carrying on a Bible Church program. Inasmuch as the Scriptures plainly declare that the Lord Jesus Christ was made under the law, that He was circumcised, that His custom was to go to the Jews' synagogue on the Jews' sabbath, that He observed the feasts that God gave to Israel, that He instructed worshippers to obey the law of Moses and observe the ceremonies of Judaism, we can hardly respect the judgment or opinions of those who would have the law out of the way before the death and resurrection of the Son of God.

But the confusion among Christians who are students is largely due to the fact that much of the Old Covenant religious program is found in the Book of Acts. Many Christians who have diligently searched the Scriptures, or followed human leaders, have decided that the Church which is Christ's Body began on the day of Pentecost. They have been required to acknowledge that much of Israel's religious program was included in the program of that Church which they have decided began on the day of Pentecost.

DENOMINATIONAL PROGRAMS

For some reason and at some time and place along the line the Christian churches have dropped much of the program, as to the message and practice, authority and power, gifts and credentials, not only of the Apostles, before and after the death of Christ, but of the other first century Church-members who were contemporaries with those Apostles.

Surely every faithful servant of the Lord wants to obey the Word of the Lord, and no faithful, obedient servant of the Lord will purposely eliminate from his Christian program any message, gift or ceremony that today Scripturally belongs to the Church which is Christ's Body. But the practices of church fathers before or since the Reformation cannot be accepted as Divine authority for the adoption of a Scriptural Church program. If there are any church leaders today who have the right to arrange the program for the ministry, message and practice of the Bible Church, they surely know that it must be strictly in accordance with the Bible. A Bible

Church program should be a Bible program. So then we come to this question; "where in the Bible is the program for the Bible Church of 1935 to be found?"

For some reason the Lord made choice that by the mouth and pen of the Apostle Paul His truth concerning the Church, which is His Body, should be made known. This Apostle to the Gentiles died about 67 A. D., shortly after he wrote his last epistle; II Timothy. The events of Pentecost, recorded in the second chapter of Acts, occurred about half way between the birth of the Lord Jesus and the death of the Apostle Paul. Intelligent, spiritual students of the Word, who have sought diligently to know the Scriptures, have been compelled to note some differences between the program of the Lord during the "Book of Acts" period and His program for His Church as stated in the Epistles which the Apostle Paul wrote after the "Book of Acts" period closed; namely, I Timothy, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, Titus, and II Timothy.

In trying to definitely determine just what God does require of the Church, which is Christ's Body, for this day in which we live, so that believers can give forth a sane, spiritual, Scriptural testimony for the risen Lord and maintain a Scriptural Church order and program that will please the One who is the Head of His own Body, no intelligent, spiritual student of the Word of God would think of placing special "inspirational" emphasis on any special portion of the Holy Scriptures, but obedience to II Timothy 2:15 and other such Divine instructions makes it imperative that such students should place special "dispensational" emphasis on special portions of the Scriptures. There are no "inspirational" differences among Christians; only "dispensational" differences. All Christians should be willing to admit without argument, that they are members of the Church which is His Body; and therefore, without argument, should admit that there are in the last seven Epistles written by Paul the specific instructions to and for the members of the Body as to the program for the Dispensation of Grace committed to the Apostle Paul for the Gentiles, to them which were afar off and to them that were nigh. Ephesians 3:1 and 2:17. This is not our problem; for we can see this pure message of grace and this clearly defined Church program in these last seven Epistles. But we also know that our Church program for today is to include some of the messages of the prophets of the Lord before the advent of Christ, some of the messages of Christ and His Apostles during His earthly ministry, and very much of the program of the Church during the "Book of Acts" period, which includes the messages and ministry of Paul and other saints given forth before Paul became the prisoner at Rome. But how to eliminate from the Four Gospels, the Book of Acts, The Epistle of James, the Epistle of Hebrews, the Epistles of Peter, and Paul's earlier Epistles, Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans, that which will not fit into the final program outlined for the Church which is His Body, is our most difficult task.

That the different churches have eliminated from these writings such of the messages, ministries and ceremonies as they have pleased in preparing their church creeds and that they have arbitrarily and promiscuously selected here and there from the Four Records of the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus and from the "Book of Acts" period such messages and ministries, such ceremonies, signs and gifts as they have decided should be included in their established man-made creeds and requirements for church membership and Christian fellowship, no careful observer should dispute. It is true that sectarianism among truly saved people, who are seeking to be Scripturally orthodox, is due to differences of interpretations or differences of emphasis given to certain Scriptures. But it is also true that this deplorable sectarianism is due to "how much" or "how little" of God's program in the Four Gospels and the Book of Acts and the "Book of Acts" period has been incorporated in the various denominational doctrinal platforms and church creeds, with little or no explanation or attempt to apply the "dispensational" principle set forth in II Timothy 2:15.

Some of us have dealt with members of a sect of Christians known as "Two By Two Disciples". Their slogan might be called "Back to Jesus." They go back to the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus for their church program; for their marching orders, for their message; polity and basis of fellowship. Their orders are from Him as declared in His Kingdom program to the Seventy: Luke 10:1 to 11. We quote verses one, four, nine and eleven:

"After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place, whither He Himself would come . . . Carry neither purse, nor script. nor shoes: and salute no man by the way . . . And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you . . . Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you."

They accept also the Kingdom program of John the Baptist, and the commissions which Jesus of Nazareth gave to His Twelve Apostles.

The Christians who are identified with this particular sect are conscientious, earnest, devoted people; and they are almost unanimous in their testimony that after years of experiment their program is satisfactory and practical and their ministry has been blessed of the Lord. Who is to contradict them Scripturally? Their program does away with the salaried pastor. Who can say that they have not a Bible program given by Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and forever? It was a Christ-given Bible program. Is it Christ's program for today? Do not the church programs of orthodox Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Brethren and Undenominational Fundamentalists differ altogether from the program of the "Two By Two" sect? These orthodox groups claim that they are carrying on Bible programs, and yet their programs vary.

When and why did the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ cease to include in the program of the Christian Church so many of the commandments and orders, messages and ministries committed by the Lord to His servants, such as "he that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise", "baptism unto repentance for the remission of sins", "blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth", "if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off", "leave there thy gift before the altar", "give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away", "be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect", but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses", "strive (work laboriously) to enter in at the straight gate", "shew thyself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded", "sell that ye have, and give alms"?

Certainly no child of God will permit any man, or any group of men, to take away from him one single spiritual blessing or lesson contained in God's Book. But most assuredly he should seek the definite guidance of the Holy Spirit to know whether it is written to him and about him. There are three distinct periods set forth in God's Word, even if we pay no attention to the subdivisions of these periods. "From Adam to Moses . . . until the law." Romans 5:13 and 14. "The Law was added till the Seed should come." Galatians 3:19. He blotted "out the handwriting of ordinances . . . took it out of the way; nailing it to His cross." Colossians 2:14 and 15. "In other ages not made known to the sons of men; that the Gentiles should be jointheirs in a joint-Body." Ephesians 3:5 and 6. So the three general divisions of the Bible, the periods that must be recognized, if we would know how to interpret and apply the Word of God, are: "From Adam to Moses" . . . "From Moses to Christ's Revelation to Paul" . . . "From Christ's Revelation to Paul until the Lord shall return for the members of His Body." Other periods are to follow, but without recognizing these three general divisions from Genesis to II Timothy, that is, to the death of Paul, we must remain in confusion on earth. Individual saints in every economy can be, and should be, governed by certain instructions all through the Book given for the purity and righteous conduct of the people of God. But to give to the members of the Body of Christ the truth which God intended only for His people during a different economy is to be unspiritual, unintelligent and undispensational.

JESUS AND ISRAEL

When the Lord Jesus commissioned His Twelve, He said emphatically, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles." Matthew 10:5. Then He added, "preach, saying, the Kingdom of the heavens is at hand." "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons, provide neither gold nor silver, neither two coats", etc. Matthew 10:7 to 9. What did they do? They went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere." Luke 9:6. Then He sent other seventy (Luke 10:1) "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy Name." 10:17.

We know that the Lord gave these orders to His Apostles and disciples and they were obeyed. Did He later on give to the Twelve Apostles a similar message and program for Gentiles? Should members of the Body of Christ preach the Kingdom Gospel and perform the Kingdom signs today? If not, why not? If we believe that the program for the Body of Christ is the Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28:19 and 20 and Mark 16:15 to 18, then the Kingdom gospel should be preached and the Kingdom signs should follow, and water baptism should be a factor in salvation. It is one thing to say that the Twelve Apostles were to, and did, start on the day of Pentecost with the gospel of grace for Jews and Gentiles and were instructed to carry on a program of divers

miracles, signs, imposition of hands, tongues and water baptism, then gradually drop everything except the gospel of grace and water baptism; but it is quite a different thing to prove it by something more than human traditions. The man who separates Kingdom signs and Israelitish ceremonies from water baptism is more of an unscriptural religious juggler than a Scriptural expert or intelligent Bible exegete: moreover, he disobeys II Timothy 2:15 in his futile endeavor to reconcile the program of Mark 16:15 to 17, that gospel, baptism, signs, etc., with I Timothy 1:11 and I Timothy 5:23, the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, without signs. Matthew 10:5 to 8 and Luke 9:6 agree with the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20 and Mark 16:15 to 17, but they are entirely different from the message and program of Ephesians, Colossians and Timothy.

We should be exceedingly careful about mixing Israel's Kingdom program, given by Jesus of Nazareth on earth, with the program which He later gave to Paul for Gentiles. To entirely ignore Christ's earthly program or eliminate it from our church creeds, without Scriptural explanation, is presumption. We admit that the mixture produces confusion, uncertainty, fanaticism and skepticism, because no believer, or group of believers, can perpetuate or duplicate the signs program of the Twelve, the Seventy, or even the members of the Corinthian Assembly. I Corinthians 12:8 to 11.

We would need to make no apologies to the critics and adversaries of Christianity if we would teach them how we apply the principle of rightly dividing the Word of truth for the application of all of the Inspired Word of God intended for other Divine economies but not for the members of the Body of Christ in this period of Gentile favor, while Israel is waiting for the fulness of the Gentiles." Romans 11:25.

A skeptic said to me, "if a Christian is one who obeys the Words of Jesus, recorded in the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Chapters of Matthew and does works with which the Apostles are accredited, I have never seen a Christian." Neither have I. Neither have you. We can do much to close the mouths of these enemies of Christ and perhaps help many poor deluded, fanatical saints to abandon their counterfeit imitation of the sign program of Christ and His Apostles, if we will intelligently apply II Timothy 2:15 and learn from Christ, through our Apostle Paul, what is the Lord's present day Church program.

As members of the Body of Christ we have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God, saved wholly and solely by pure and unadulterated grace. We have been brought nigh by His blood. We have been made accepted in the Beloved, and meet to be partakers of Him and all of the blessings of God in Him. We are complete in Christ. We need nothing added to Christ, who is our redemption, our holiness, our righteousness, our peace, our hope and our life.

Surely there must be some sane, God-given principle or system for the interpretation, partitioning and application of the Word of God. The Lord said to His disciples, "when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face." Matthew 6:17. They "anointed with oil many that were sick." Mark 6:13. "Let them pray over him anointing him with oil." James 5:14. "From his (Paul's) body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them and the evil spirits went out of them." Acts 19:12. "Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine oft sicknesses." I Timothy 5:23. Is there not some way of knowing if and when we should anoint with oil today; whether or not we should use handkerchiefs and aprons, or when we should take wine or other medicine for sickness, and be sure we are in the will of God?

The Lord said, "ye also ought to wash one another's feet." John 13:14. Some Christians practice this. Others utterly ignore the command without any explanation. Should we, or should we not, wash one another's feet? Some preachers follow the message of Peter and the Eleven, "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Some fail or refuse to preach this, because they say "it is not up to date."

SIGNS-HEALINGS-GIFTS

The Pentecostalists report real Scriptural experiences in their tarrying-meetings telling of the Christians who receive the Holy Spirit in power by their importunate prayers and imposition of hands, manifested by

"tongues." They have the experience. They support their experience with Scriptures. The other Christians make light of their fanaticism, but offer no Scriptural corrective. Many of God's people, with the slogan "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever", refuse to use material remedies for sickness, claiming Jesus Christ as their Healer, because the Record is, that He healed all manner of sickness and all that were sick; and so did Peter; and so did Philip. Matthew 8:16, Luke 6:19. Acts 5:15 and 16. Acts 8:5 to 12. Is there some Scriptural explanation of their fallacy, or is it that those Christians who disagree with them are in error?

Some church organizations will exclude from their membership Christians who deny that the gifts of I Corinthians 12:8 to 11 belong to the Lord's program for His Body during this period of grace, the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues and interpretation of tongues. They are mentioned in the same Epistle, in the very same chapter that instructs the Christian concerning the baptism of Jews and Gentiles into one body. 12:13. Some Christians who practice household baptism, prove their position by the Tenth Chapter of I Corinthians, and quote the Eleventh Chapter of I Corinthians for their observance of the Lord's Supper; but they would disfellowship a believer, and ask him to attend some other assembly, if he should claim the gift of discerning of spirits or the gift of working miracles, or speaking with tongues, on the authority of the Twelfth Chapter of I Corinthians. They ignore these gifts generally, but if pressed to answer why they have not included them in their church creeds they refer to experiences instead of to the Word of God, rightly divided. Such careless handling of the Word of God is almost "handling the Word of God deceitfully." II Corinthians 4:2. It is ignorantly, if not deceitfully, handled. To say that the gifts are found once a year, or once every ten years, in the foreign field, or that they would be found here, if members of the Body of Christ had sufficient faith, is not the manifestation of that sound mind called for in II Timothy 1:7.

What bunglers some preachers have been in their attempts to make primary applications of the Kingdom parables of the Lord Jesus Christ in presenting the gospel of the grace of God to Gentiles, dead in trespasses and sins. They have simply covered up the message of salvation and spoiled the Lord's wonderful grace gospel by either willfully or ignorantly disobeying the specific instructions of the Holy Spirit, "rightly dividing the Word of truth."

Undoubtedly we have observed that the Lord, according to the Synoptic Records, was dealing with His own nation, in presenting the Kingdom gospel with the Kingdom signs, when he taught His lessons to Pharisees and publicans in His Kingdom parables. We most assuredly have learned that, in those three Gospels, the grace message was pretty well buried under religion. Certainly our evangelists and pastors have experienced much difficulty in attempting to reconcile some statements from the pen of Paul with the statements given forth by Jesus of Nazareth, the minister of the circumcision; such statements as Romans 3:24 to 26 and II Timothy 1:9, "being justified without a cause by His grace", "not according to our works, but according to His grace and purpose which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began", with "he that endureth unto the end the same shall be saved" and "strive to enter in at the straight gate". Matthew 24:13, Luke 13:24. How many times have they left their hearers with their minds full of questions and their hearts full of doubts, because they have not brought them to the pure unmixed message of grace, "the gospel of your salvation", mentioned in Ephesians 1:13 and 2:8 and 9. They try to clear up their mixed messages with stories instead of with the rightly-divided Word of truth. Our Scriptural incongruities may be forgiveable, but many of them are inexcusable and much of the damage done by them is irreparable. With sectarian teachers the remedy is feared more than the disease, because it means the surrender of some cherished religious ceremony or religious experience and it requires the grace and humility to say, "I have learned from a careful study of the Word of God that what I have been teaching is unscriptural, or at least undispensational". It may mean the loss of position and religious friends. This might require the further word, "Whether or not this makes me unpopular with men or sects, I shall take my stand without the fear or favor of men." Such servants of the Lord are few and far between.

Whether or not we believe that the Body of Christ began on the day of Pentecost, we know that the message and program for the Body of Christ in Ephesians, Colossians and Timothy differs in many respects from the program of the Church of God in the first chapters of the Book of Acts. Perhaps we can satisfy our minds by stating that we can see in the Book of Acts the overlapping of the Kingdom message proclaimed while Christ was on earth and therefore the bringing over of that Kingdom program to run concurrently with the Body program for a few years and then wane and pass out. Certainly the words of Acts 2:44 and 45, Acts 4:32, Acts 3:6 and Acts 10:22 and 35 seem to indicate that the same kingdom was being proclaimed during the "Acts" period as was being proclaimed in Luke 3:11, Matthew 10:9 to 12, Luke 12:32 and 33, Luke 18:22 and Luke 10:1 to 15.

When the disciples sold their possessions and brought the money to the Apostles, according to Acts 2:44 and 4:32, when Peter said, "silver and gold have I none", when Cornelius was acceptable because he gave alms, it all was certainly in agreement with the words of the Lord "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." Luke 12:32 and 33. Those who are so particular about breaking bread every Sunday, on the authority of Acts 2:46, have certainly ignored Acts 2:45, for some of the brethren have their property and much more money than other brethren. Why be so careful about one part of the Kingdom program and ignore the other? The answer is, "The tradition of the elders, rather than the Word of God."

Let us now turn to our Apostle. Read that he is Christ's own choice for us. Acts 22:21, Romans 11:13, Romans 15:16, I Timothy 2:7, II Timothy 1:11, Ephesians 3:8, Colossians 1:25 to 28, Galatians 1:11 to 18 and Galatians 2:7 to 9.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians "Be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ." I Corinthians 11:1, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me." I Corinthians 4:15 and 16.

Before we follow James, Peter and John, the pillars of Galatians 2:9, we must see what our Apostle Paul says about it. We must likewise study what Christ said on earth in the light of His later revelations to and through Paul. We must obey and follow Paul. But in following Paul before he wrote Ephesians, and his other prison Epistles, we must carefully study his teaching and acts in the light of I Corinthians 9:20 to 22, which we quote:

I CORINTHIANS 9:20 to 22

"And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law that I might gain them that are under the law.

To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

Certainly there is no way in which we can Scripturally become as one under the law, as Paul did in Acts 16:3, Acts 18:18, Acts 21:23 to 28 and Acts 23:5 and 6. We are not to follow him in circumcision, vows and other things Jewish. Neither can we believe in the light of II Corinthians 2:14, Acts 20:24, II Timothy 4:7 and I Corinthians 9:20 to 23, that Paul was for one moment out of the will of God when he was carrying on his two-fold ministry and program, while he was an able minister of the New Covenant. II Corinthians 3:6.

It is quite a simple matter to see that Peter and his associates were ministers of the circumcision, and that Paul was the chosen vessel of the risen Lord for the ministry to the Gentiles. He was to preach God's Son to the heathen, to go far hence to the Gentiles, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles. The glorious gospel, or the gospel of glory, was committed to Paul's trust. I Timothy 1:11. All of this is plain. It is also plainly stated that there was one order for "the Jews which believed" and another order for "the Gentiles which believed", during the "Book of Acts" period. Acts 21:24 to 28. Acts 15:19 to 29.

But where we, as members of the Body of Christ, must be exceedingly careful is not to carry the divisions so far that we will ignore or disobey any of the Lord's orders to us, whether it is in Corinthians, John's

Gospel, Galatians, Ephesians or Timothy. We cannot believe that Paul was presumptuous or deluded. He spoke with authority, when he used the first person pronoun about 1100 times. He was chosen by the risen Christ to fulfill the Word of God, to bring it to perfection. Colossians 1:25. Peter's activities dropped from the Record with the Fifteenth Chapter of Acts until he wrote his Epistles. Paul is mentioned more than one hundred times in the last half of the Book of Acts. He said little or nothing to Gentiles about the earthly ministry, or Kingdom parables, of the Lord Jesus Christ in his written ministry. II Corinthians 5:16. Paul specifically declared, "Christ sent me not to baptize." I Corinthians 1:17. He has told us to follow him as he followed Christ. What are we to do about it?

When Paul, in Acts 28:25 to 28, had finished declaring the judgment of God upon the Nation Israel, that Nation was set aside about 62 A.D., then said Paul; "the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles." The salvation of God had been sent to the Gentiles for over twenty years. It had been sent to the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy, because they put it from them. Acts 13:46 . . . Acts 18:6 . . . Romans 11:11. But after Acts 28:28 it was to be sent to them, independent of Israel, their covenants, ceremonies or religion; on the basis of grace, God's mercy and love; according to God's eternal purpose in Christ. Ephesians 3:11; Ephesians 1:4; II Timothy 1:9. "To you and to them." No longer "to the Jew first". No longer would Paul become a Jew to the Jew and carry on a two-fold program. "To you which were far off and to them that were nigh." Ephesians 2:17.

No longer would he circumcise a Timothy or say, "I am a Pharisee", or shave his head or take a Jewish vow. Those things now are all dung. Philippians 3:8. What a difference between Paul in Acts 21:24 to 28, Acts 23:5 and 6 and Paul in Philippians 3:5 to 9. A great change. The change came with Israel's setting-aside. If you lose sight of this, you will lose the key to the correct Scriptural, spiritual program for members of the Body of Christ. Therefore, we must trace through the "Book of Acts" period, including Paul's Epistles to Galatians, Corinthians, Thessalonians, and Romans, as well as through the Four Gospels, and accept for the Body of Christ every message that will fit into the program for the Body of Christ declared after Paul dropped his ministry of confirmation and continued with his ministry of revelation. By this Holy Spirit Scriptural system, the believer of today will not fail to apply for himself and to himself every word in the Gospels, Book of Acts, Paul's earlier Epistles, and in the writings of the Twelve, all of the Word of God that is compatible with the Body truth of Paul's prison Epistles. This system could never be faulty, although every other system is. Only by the application of this system can we ever hope for the realization on earth of obedience to Ephesians 4:3, even in a small way. We know that denominational leaders cannot afford to apply this system; for it would mean either their end with the denomination or the end of the denomination. Who will pay the price? In what other way can we ever expect to rid the Body of Christ of the counterfeits, religious entanglements, Satanic delusions, and unscriptural programs, or show all Christians why we have more than three hundred and fifty Bible churches in America? Try this system of interpretation and application for a few weeks, without counting the personal cost, and see how it works, believing with all your heart Ephesians 4:4 to 8.

By this God-given principle of interpretation and application of God's own Divine truth we can see how that all of the seeming contradictions in the Book disappear. We can also understand the gradual uncovering of the grace of God from Matthew to II Timothy, and be instructed how to rejoice in the "all-sufficiency" of the Lord Jesus Christ, without religion, without any of the covenants or ceremonies given to Israel. And recognizing the one Head of the one Body, the Lord Jesus who is far above in the highest heavenlies, we can see that we have the most exalted place and the most blessed benefits which God ever bestowed upon any company of believers; for we too are seated with our risen Lord, and are united to Him. We have an inheritance in Him and He has an inheritance in us: we are in Him and He is in us. Quite a contrast between "Jesus of Nazareth a man approved of God in the midst of you (Israel) by miracles", and "Christ in the Gentiles the hope of glory." Acts 2:22 and Colossians 1:27.

Truly the highest standard of Christian living, the Christ life, is set forth in the Epistles that tell of the believer's position in and with Christ in the highest heavenlies; raised to seek those things which are above where Christ is. Truly the affection of Body-members will be where the Head is. The believer's citizenship is there; his hope is laid up there; and he is waiting for Christ to appear in glory that he might also appear with Him.

As some one has truly said, the believer will not be ready for the truth of Paul's last Epistles until he has given heed to the instructions of Corinthians, Romans and Galatians. Therefore, we would not emphasize obedience to the Prison Epistles of Paul to the exclusion of the Holy Spirit's warnings, admonitions and instructions in Paul's earlier Epistles, although we must observe in his earlier writings some instructions that are not binding in his prison Epistles. Every word from Genesis to Revelation that will enable the member of the Body of Christ to walk worthy of the vocation set forth in the Epistle to the Ephesians is for the believer's appropriation and application, even to the present time.

GRACE AND RELIGION

It has been said that the Book of Matthew is more than ninety per cent religion and less than nine per cent grace; and that the Book of Romans is more than ninety per cent grace and less than nine per cent religion. Whether this is true or not, we know that the word "grace" is not found in Matthew, and that the only two Gentile who received Kingdom blessings from Israel's Messiah, according to Matthew, were two Gentiles of great faith. Matthew 8:5 to 12. Matthew 15:21 to 27. Surely to an unsaved man we would be intelligent enough to suggest that he read the Book of Romans for the message of salvation rather than the Book of Matthew. In the church creeds and church programs of all of our leading evangelical churches most of the religious messages, ceremonies and legal requirements of the Book of Matthew have no place. Why? In most cases they have been omitted without explanation.

Even a greater contrast is found in God's message and program when we compare Matthew and Ephesians. They are so different. Matthew tells us of two Gentiles who received Kingdom healing for their loved ones, because of great faith; Ephesians tells us of all Gentiles who receive spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, because of God's great love. Ephesians 2:4. This is all pure grace, by faith; the gift of God; not of works. Gentiles could have little in Matthew; but everything in Ephesians. Matthew 10:5, Matthew 15:24. Just this simple question; if we should find contradiction between the truth of Matthew and Ephesians and had to make choice as to which truth should be applied to the Church which is Christ's Body, would not the Lord expect us to take our truth from Ephesians, and apply the truth of Matthew in the light of the truth of Ephesians? He certainly would; and He would expect us to study and apply the truth of the Book of Acts and the "Book of Acts" period in the light of the truth of Ephesians and other messages written after Acts was closed. The seven messages which the Holy Spirit wrote by the pen of Paul, after the close of Acts, are messages of pure grace; no religion; no signs and no ceremonies; nothing Israelitish. Israel was set aside with the close of Acts.

Surely we have asked ourselves the question, why did the Lord for more than thirty years postpone the judgment announced in Matthew 22:7; "When the King heard thereof, he was wroth: and He sent forth armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city?" God had a purpose in protecting His Nation Israel for more than thirty years after the death of Christ and giving them favor with Rome not only in their own land, but throughout the countries of Asia and Europe where Paul witnessed to them until 60 A.D. Why did God permit their temple to stand all during the "Book of Acts" period? Why did God permit Paul to become a Jew to the Jews all during that period? Christ said in Matthew 23:38, "your house is left unto you desolate." There He called them "serpents". Matthew 23:32 to 39. But during the "Acts" period He again dealt with them in great mercy, as "children". Acts 3:14 to 25. We must know that God had a purpose with Israel, during the "Acts" period other than giving them, as individual Jews, the opportunity to become members of that Body of Christ which is mentioned in Ephesians 1:19 to 22. Even a superficial student of the Word of God must know that Romans 11:6 to 31 marks a very definite turning-point in God's dealings with Israel, and that such a radical change took place after Acts 28:28, that Church truth must be studied as to whether it was written before or after Romans 11:6 to 31 and Acts 28:25 to 28. To miss this is to miss one of the most important keys to the truth of God concerning the Body. In Paul's last seven Epistles, concerning the truth of the Body, the word "mystery" (secret) is used twelve times.

Among the truths and commands mentioned for the first time, in these Prison Epistles, we learn of "The One New Man"; and that we are to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit; and make all men see what is the

dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God." Ephesians 2:15. . . 4:3 to 6 . . . 3:8 and 9.

Inasmuch as all saved people are members of the One New Man, members of that one Church which is the Body of Christ, and are in Christ complete, one flesh, most assuredly anything but unity among these Body-members is displeasing to the Lord which is the one Head of that one Body. With prevailing sectarianism it seems as though it would be wasted energy and futile endeavour to make any attempt to keep the unity of the Spirit. Our duty is to make the endeavour and leave the results with our Father. Pause for a moment, and ask yourself this question, "do I know of any preacher who is trying to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery made known to the Body of Christ about that Body through the Apostle Paul?" Is not the Holy Spirit as much concerned about making known this dispensation of the mystery as He is in having religious people struggle with the Kingdom Sermon on the Mount? The Bible truth and Bible program to be emphasized, if we would obey these "Ephesians" commands, is the "Ephesians" truth. And the all important fundamental truth is, that there is one, and only one Church for today. It is the duty of every servant of the Lord to declare that truth unqualifiedly and uncompromisingly.

Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit has been pleased to declare the pure message of grace, the gospel of glory freed from religion, in the Prison Epistles of Paul, and in those Epistles has referred to the Church, as "the Church which is His Body", would it not help to clear away some of the confusion and show that sectarianism is a spiritual crime by using the expression, "the Body of Christ", in speaking of the Church? The word "church" is too indefinite. We can see that the truth and ministry, the message and program, for the Lord's people, in this dispensation of the grace of God, have been obscured by the use of the word "church". Intelligent Bible teachers are all agreed that there has been but one Body of Christ since Israel was set aside; therefore, but one Bible Church. We are also agreed that there are different churches in the Bible, some of which were not identified with the Body of Ephesians.

To divide the One Body of Christ into many sects is strictly in disobedience to, and defiance of, the plain instructions of the Holy Spirit, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit." "One Body", "One Faith", "One Baptism". Ephesians 4:3 to 7. Perhaps, in most cases, it is because of ignorance of the Word.

Undoubtedly one reason why God has not brought to an end this day of grace, this period of Gentile favor, by the return of the Head for the Body, is to give to the members of that Body the opportunity to help Him in that which He very much desires, namely, the recovery of the glorious Body truths lost for centuries to the churches, covered beneath the religious mixture of Bible truth, used without regard to their dispensational setting, and human traditions.

In assuming responsibility in this task of recovering the truth concerning the Body of Christ, we might be perplexed as to whether there is a difference between the Body of the Twelfth Chapter of I Corinthians and the Body of Ephesians 1:19 to 22. If the Body of Corinthians and the Body of Ephesians are one and the same, then the question arises, "which Body program should be recovered, the program of Corinthians or the program of Ephesians?" We should be able to answer this by reading the two-fold position of the Apostle to the Gentiles, recorded in I Corinthians 9:20 to 23. That two-fold position was a thing of the past after Paul had said the last word recorded in Acts. Any attempt to perpetuate the judgments of I Corinthians or recover the gifts of I Corinthians, even by the most spiritual members of the Body of Christ, will prove either futile or extremely exceptional instead of general, and in the light of the gifts of Ephesians 4:8 to 15, it is apparent that the Lord gave the "Ephesians" program to supersede the "Corinthians" program. In the Body mentioned in Corinthians there were two baptisms, whereas in the Body mentioned in Ephesians there was one baptism. The task of separating in the Corinthians Epistles that which applied to the local assembly and that which applied to the Body of Christ down to the present time is rather difficult; whereas in the Ephesians Epistle we have no such difficult task. Our principal task is to recover the truth of Ephesians, Colossians, Titus, Philippians and Timothy that has to do with that glorious truth designated "the mystery". This glorious truth should neither be mysterious nor hidden from every member of the Body of Christ; and would not be if the Christian teachers had obeyed Ephesians 3:8 and 9 and Ephesians 4:3.

Whenever there has been the attempt to recover the blessed truths of the Bible those who have made the attempts have had to stand the opposition and suffer the persecutions of church leaders, and have been branded trouble-makers, generally as heretics. This applies to Luther, Knox, Calvin, Wesley, Darby and many others.

Today we behold in the denominations a falling away from orthodoxy to modernism, on the one hand, and to fanaticism, on the other hand. Most professing Christians drifting toward modernism are unsaved; most of them going to fanaticism might be called fundamentalists. There are some truly saved people unequally yoked together under modernist leaders in church federation movements. They permit Jesus to have a little place in their human brotherhood and their social betterment programs; but these leaders care nothing about Body truth or the gospel of grace. Such a gospel is an insult to their scholarship and an offense to their religious pride.

The present-day ultra-orthodox Christians are called "Fundamentalists." Strange as it may seem, while most of the religious leaders identified with sectarian orthodoxy, remain indifferent and inactive concerning the recovery of Body truth, altogether occupied with their denominational programs, the non-sectarian Fundamentalists are the chief opponents and the principal hindrance in the recovery of Body truth. As a group of true Bereans agreed in a recent Bible Conference the Bible teachers and Christian leaders who are nearest to Body truth of Ephesians, are its bitterest and most aggressive enemies, and the chief stumblingblock in the way of the recovery of this glorious truth so dear to the heart of our risen Lord.

THE BAPTIST-BRETHREN CHURCH

This stubborn resistance, this determined organized opposition, to the will of God, expressed in the Epistle to the Ephesians, is being carried on under the leadership of Christian men who have taken a compromise stand between the program of the Baptists and the dispensational and doctrinal position of the Plymouth Brethren. No two sects have done more to emphasize the grace message of the Lord than have the independent orthodox Baptists and the Plymouth Brethren; and for this all saints should be grateful. Although the Plymouth Brethren are now divided into more than one dozen sects, yet it must be acknowledged that every group of them proclaims the gospel of grace and declares emphatically that there is one, and only one, Bible Church in the world today; that that Church is not primarily an organization, but the Body of Christ; and that every sinner saved by grace is a member of that one Body.

All orthodox Baptists are exclusive Baptists. All Plymouth Brethren are exclusive Brethren. Both the Baptists and the Plymouth Brethren have made much of water baptism by immersion and breaking of bread. The Baptists have denied denominational fellowship to all other Christians who have not agreed with their denominational teaching concerning these two so-called church ordinances. The Plymouth Brethren have denied what they term undenominational fellowship in their assemblies to all other Christians who have not agreed with their doctrinal stand as to water baptism, the Lord's supper and the truth of the One Church. As to water baptism, they are still divided into two general groups; one group who teach and practice "believer's" baptism and another group who teach "household" baptism, the immersion of infants and children with their parents. There are many of these Brethren who teach household baptism, but for some reason they are timid about declaring their position publicly. It seems to be rather a message for private proclamation. Some of the leading Fundamentalists of today believe it secretly but for some reason withhold their views from the public.

It is apparent that if either the Baptists or the Plymouth Brethren can Scripturally justify their exclusive positions, they will have to make the endeavor by using the message to the Corinthians instead of the truth of Ephesians. The Epistle to the Ephesians is wholly against their attitude toward other members of the Body Christ, with whom they are in agreement concerning the eternal Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the pure and unadulterated message of grace and the high and holy walk of Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians. To place a "water baptism" barrier between members of the Body of Christ is either willful or ignorant disobedience to Ephesians 4:3 to 7, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit" on the basis of one baptism.

To fellowship fellow-members of the Body of Christ outside of a denominational assembly and disfellowship them in the assembly is pure hypocrisy. The Holy Spirit fellowship and unity of Ephesians is not

limited to locality or time. It is in Christ with members of His Body, seated in the heavenlies and at all times, if the walk is in accordance with the instructions in Ephesians.

The "exclusive" position of the Disciples of Christ (the Christian Church) is far more consistent than that of either the Baptists or the Plymouth Brethren. The Disciples say that water baptism is essential to salvation and must be by immersion unto repentance for the remission of sins; and obedience to their doctrine is equivalent to being born of water. They justify their position with the Scriptures: John 3:5; Mark 16:15 and 16; Acts 2:38. They agree with the Plymouth Brethren and the Premillennialist Baptists that the Church, or Body, began on the day of Pentecost: and if that was the ideal Church (Revelation 2:1), Peter and the Eleven must have proclaimed the ideal message in Acts 2:38. If water baptism is a factor in the individual's salvation and essential to become a member of the Body of Christ, and must be by immersion with a special meaning, and be administered with a special formula, then it is most assuredly the Scriptural duty of all who are made Christians in this way to exclude from their Christian fellowship in the assembly, and or at any other time or place, all who have not been born of the water.

The Disciples are still waiting for the Baptists and Plymouth Brethren to give them Scriptural reasons for not preaching Acts 2:38 and Mark 16:15 and 16. And the Pentecostalists are waiting for their answer from the Disciples as to why they do not include the signs, Mark 16:17 and 18 in their Church program.

The Fundamentalist leaders who are today opposing and doing all in their power to thwart the recovery of the Body truth of Ephesians, to make all men see the dispensation of the mystery, and endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit, teach that the Body began on the day of Pentecost. But they are agreed that the message proclaimed on the day of Pentecost is not God's message for today. They are by no means agreed among themselves as to "how much" or "how little" of the program of the Book of Acts, the Four Gospels, the Epistle of James and the Epistle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to the Hebrews should be included in the program for the Body of Christ. Neither have they any Bible system for the selection or rejection of such of the Book of Acts program as seemeth good to them. Some of them omit the Lord's prayer; some include it. Most of the younger preachers get their programs from the Fundamentalist leaders. It is still the question, "have any of the rulers believed on Him?" John 7:48. What a responsibility for the rulers! Think of what several of the outstanding Fundamentalist leaders right here in Chicago will have to answer for. And some of them know better. Others of them are not so far along in the truth of God as they were several years ago, having turned their backs on truth far in advance of what they are now teaching. The temptation for an inoffensive and popular ministry is difficult to resist.

When anything religious can be added to the cross of Calvary, then is the offense of the cross ceased. Galatians 5:11. This refers just as much to water baptism today as it did to circumcision in Paul's day. How it does take away the offense of the cross, and how cleverly it is done. Any Christian, Fundamentalist or otherwise, who claims to have Holy Spirit fellowship with other Christians in a union meeting or in an organized association and at the same time excludes them from full fellowship in the assembly to which he belongs because of different views concerning water baptism, is inconsistent, if not insincere. Any Christian who makes water baptism the basis of fellowship in the Lord is out of the will of God, and is acting contrary to the plain teaching of the Word of God.

The majority of the outstanding Bible teachers among the Fundamentalists are of the Baptist-Brethren combination. They are Scripturally endeavoring to lead orthodox Christians to clearly see the difference between law and grace. This is indeed a most important and praiseworthy ministry. But they seem to be ignorant of the fact that they can frustrate the grace of God by adding to it water baptism, just as much as they can by adding some commandment which the Lord gave to Israel: Surely great headway has been made during the past forty years in the matter of getting saints from under the law; but the work will have to be done over, if the present-day Fundamentalist Bible teachers continue to lead them from under the law to under the water.

Comparatively few of the outstanding Fundamentalist Bible teachers read "water" into the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5. Some of them have been forced to make that one baptism "water", in order to support their unscriptural position. Then by their public utterances they repudiate what they try to persuade themselves that they believe; for they say that water baptism plays absolutely no part in a man's salvation. According to their confessions, water baptism in no way aids a believer to become a member of the One Body of Ephesians;

neither will the believer's refusal to be immersed in water in any way affect his remaining a member of that one Body, either here or hereafter. All of these teachers, whose ability is respected by Bible students, believe in the Christian's eternal security; that he is saved by grace without works, and that works and religion never help in any way to keep him saved after he has become a member of the Body of Christ by faith in the redemptive work of the Son of God.

What pastor, or board of elders, governing a company of saints united for Christian fellowship and service in an assembly, whether they call it a "church" or "brethren", has the Scriptural right to demand for membership in their church or fellowship in their assembly a religious ceremony which they unanimously admit is wholly unnecessary for membership in the Bible Church, the Body of Christ. To require an ordinance for entrance into an organization, or for participation in some fellowship, and call that organization or fellowship the Body of Christ, and at the same time admit that the Bible makes no such requirement for entrance into the Bible Church, known as the Body of Christ, is to prove that the human organization differs from the Bible Church and is to that extent unscriptural.

It would seem that intelligent students of the Word of God, familiar with the divisions and sects, in the Christian Church dawn through the centuries, would be so disgusted with the thirty, or more, different theories concerning water baptism that they would try to deliver the Body of Christ from this Israelitish ceremony which Satan has used more than any one thing to destroy the unity among God's people. Just a little thinking should convince any child of God that the Holy Spirit could never have been referring to water when He said, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit": "one baptism." Ephesians 4:3 to 7. We would not expect unity on the basis of two Bodies or two Lords. Then why on the basis of two baptisms? To read "water" into Ephesians 4:5 would be to do away with any possibility of unity; as would also to make it both water and Spirit baptism. And if our Fundamentalist brethren acknowledge that water baptism is not essential to become complete in Christ, and part of Him, dead, buried, raised and seated with Him, why make it essential to fellowship with other members in that Body? Is more required for human fellowship than for Divine fellowship? Can you not see the absurdity of their position? Water baptism is either of "far more" or "far less" importance than they attach to it. They say, "no", "it is not essential to salvation or Body membership; but it is necessary to get into my church or our Fundamentalist Association." "It is not necessary to salvation, but . . . but . . . but . . . but." Not one of their "buts" will stand the test of Scriptures: nor is one of them sure of what he thinks he believes, whether it is a seal of salvation, a witness to the world, an outward symbol of an inward work, a seal to take the place of circumcision, or a burial with Christ, or a door of entrance to the local assembly.

After the Scriptures have been searched and not one of the positions has been the unity of the Spirit and to make all men proved, then the appeal is made to Historic Christianity, and the ceremony is retained on the grounds of the traditions of the fathers instead of on the authority of the Word of God. It is interesting, but sad, to see the shifting from Mark 16:15 to 18, Acts 2:38 to other Scriptures to prove that water baptism had one meaning up to the Tenth Chapter of Acts, and another meaning from then on. It is a known fact that many gifted Fundamentalists during the past fifty years have taught, unreservedly, that the Great Commission is not the marching orders of the Church for today. And those who have taught that it is must believe that it has been revised considerably, if we are carrying on the Lord's program under the commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20. How could it be possible to take "Ephesians" truth for our program and obey Ephesians 3:9 and also obey Matthew 28:20? How could a child of God learn from Ephesians 4:8 to 15 which member of the Body of Christ is to baptize the other member? Where is any member of the Body of Christ instructed in the Bible to baptize another member or be baptized by another member? If the Lord places us in the Body by the one baptism, why try to add a physical baptism to that member, accepted in Christ and complete in Christ? Colossians 2:13 to 16.

Let us earnestly contend for the program, the fellowship and the unity of the Bible Church rather than for that of the Baptist Church, the Brethren Church—or the Baptist-Brethren Church.

Truly no one thing has hindered members of the Body of Christ from observing Ephesians 4:3 and Ephesians 3:9 more than his clinging on to water baptism. Is it not true that a believer can neither endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit nor make all men to see what is the dispensation of the mystery, if he insists on water baptism for members of the Body of Christ? Is it not conversely true that those who endeavour

Scripturally to keep the unity of the Spirit and to make all men see the fellowship of the mystery will not hold on to water baptism?

Surely we have observed a great difference between the message, the requirements, the order and the sphere of blessing as declared by Peter and the Eleven on the day of Pentecost and those in the Epistle to the Ephesians. On the day of Pentecost the message was concerning Joel's prophecy, David's prophecy, and the truth that God had made the Jesus whom Israel had crucified both Lord and Christ. Those guilty Israelites were to repent of their awful crime be baptized unto the remission of sins, and receive the Holy Spirit. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day were added about three thousand souls." Acts 2:41. "And the Lord added daily such as should be saved." 2:47. Though there is some question about the words "to the church" in the Greek, yet the church was there. But were they raised and seated in the heavenlies and then and there blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies?

In order that the penitent Israelites might be added to the church, the requirement was, two baptisms, water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism. According to most of our Fundamentalist Bible teachers, those 3000 Israelites on the day of Pentecost experienced I Corinthians 12:13: they were then and there baptized by the Holy Spirit into the same Body of Christ that is described in the Epistle to the Ephesians. If this is true, surely we all have some questions to ask: "if any of the 3000 Israelites had refused to be immersed in water (or be sprinkled), would they have received the Holy Spirit?": "were not two baptisms required on the day of Pentecost for membership in that Pentecostal Church and far fellowship and unity with other members in that Church (Body)?" Our answer to the first question is "no"; and to the second question, "yes." Then this third question: "are we not told specifically in the Epistle to the Ephesians that membership in that Body of Christ and the unity and fellowship of the members of that Body, both with the Head and with fellow-members, is on the basis of one baptism?" "Yes." And now one more question: "was not the receiving of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 dependent upon repentance and water baptism, and the receiving of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 1:13 dependent upon believing the gospel of salvation, which was not of works, Ephesians 2:8 and 9?" If one believer baptizes another believer to aid him either in salvation or to become a member of the Body of Christ, is not that salvation, and Body-membership, by grace plus works?" How do we reconcile Mark 16:15 and 16 with Ephesians 1:13, 2:8 and 4:5?

Unless we had accepted the interpretation of some recognized Bible teacher, that the Church of Acts 2:38 to 47 is the Body of Christ of Ephesians, could we make the identification by diligent study and comparison of the Second Chapter of Ephesians? Do we not find different messages to different people, the one in fulfillment of the words of Israel's prophets, and the other the written revelation of Christ in heaven never revealed to any of Israel's prophets? Ephesians 3:3 and 3:8. Do we not see different gospels or at least different gospel programs, different promises, different orders and different spheres of blessings? Do you believe that the saved Israelites would have had fellowship with Cornelius, if he had not had two baptisms? Did not the Corinthians have two baptisms; Acts 18:8 and I Corinthians 12:13? Should we not uncompromisingly demand two baptisms, water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism, for membership in the Body of Christ and for fellowship among the Body-members, or else see the difference in the Church during the Acts period and the Body after the Acts period, and Scripturally eliminate all but one of the baptisms of the "Acts" period? Which shall we eliminate?

We trust that this message may at least cause the children of God to get their eyes off of human leaders and cease to believe that a statement is Scripturally true, because some outstanding Bible teacher so declares. And we trust also that the Holy Spirit may help all to see that all Bible truth must be appropriated and applied by the members of the Body of Christ in the light of the Body truth of Ephesians, Colossians and II Timothy.

“THE GREAT COMMISSION”

"THEN THE ELEVEN DISCIPLES WENT AWAY INTO GALILEE" "GO YE THEREFORE, AND TEACH (DISCIPLE) ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN (INTO OR UNTO) THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST: 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 (AGE)." Matthew 28:16 to 20.

Some of the outstanding teachers of the Bible, men of God who have been greatly blessed in the service of the Lord, have taught definitely that the ministries of the Twelve Apostles and Paul, in the Book of Acts, were not the fulfillment of the Great Commission; that the Church of God, the Body of Christ, has no authority

to fulfill this Commission; that the Nation Israel, or an elect remnant of that Nation, will fulfill this Commission in the Kingdom age which shall follow this present Church dispensation. We name several of these teachers, Mr. John Darby, Mr. A. C. Gaebelein, Dr. William L. Pettingill and Dr. James M. Gray.

We must respect the teaching ability of these men of God. Although we do not consider them final authority as to whether or not the Great Commission contains the "marching orders" of the Church, still when we compare the Commission with other Scriptures, we do not wonder that these spiritual men, and many others, have found it difficult to explain away some contradictions, and to find the twelve and Paul obeying the Great Commission as it has been interpreted by many of the Church fathers and Christian organizations.

Let us emphasize three facts:

1. The Commission was given to the Eleven.
2. They were instructed to disciple all nations.
3. They were to teach the observance of all things commanded by Christ.

In what sense did the Eleven disciple all nations? Our appeal is to the Holy Scriptures and not to Historic Christianity or to the traditions of the elders.

A careful study of the Prophecy of Daniel will convince any student of the Word that God has promised to establish on this earth the Kingdom of the Heavens. Daniel 2:44. The presence of the Heavenly King is necessary for the establishing of that Kingdom. Christ must come from heaven to bring about the restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began. Acts 3:19 to 21. When that restitution shall take place the Twelve Apostles shall sit on twelve thrones and judge the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Matthew 19:28. It is very essential that we carefully read Daniel 9:7 in connection with the Great Commission and the Kingdom of Heavens, remembering that the Kingdom of the Heavens is mentioned about thirty times in the Book of Matthew. We quote Daniel 9:7:

"O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, THAT ARE NEAR, and THAT ARE FAR OFF, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee." This should be studied with Daniel 9:24 as to the seven-fold purpose of God to be accomplished by Israel's Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's promise to all Israel, in and out of the holy land, THAT ARE NEAR and THAT ARE FAR OFF, mentioned in Daniel 9:7, should be carefully compared with the message of Peter and the Eleven, on the day of Pentecost, recorded in the second Chapter of the Book of Acts. We quote Acts 2:39: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that ARE AFAR OFF, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Then we quote Acts 2:5: "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." They were addressed as "Ye men of Judea and all ye that dwell in Jerusalem." Acts 2:14. They were later addressed: "Ye men of Israel." Again "Men and brethren." Acts 2:22 and 2:29. Again, "Ye men of Israel." Acts 3:12. Again, "Ye are the children of the prophets." Acts 3:25.

These Jews were out of every nation under heaven. The Eleven were to disciple all nations. One of them disciplined one company of Gentiles, the household of Cornelius. That was more than seven years after Pentecost or after the Great Commission was given. Seven years after the Great Commission was given it was unlawful for a Christian Jew to come to one of another nation. Acts 10:28. In the Great Commission the eleven were to disciple all nations. Then why was it unlawful for them to come to a Gentile seven years after the Great Commission was given? Why did the other apostles and saved Israelites contend with Peter because he preached to the Gentile seven years after the Great Commission, if they understood, in the Great Commission, that they were to disciple Gentiles? Why was it that the disciples, under the authority of the Eleven, preached the gospel to none but unto the Jews only several years after the Great Commission was given? Acts 11:19.

Why was Cornelius chosen for the ministry of the Eleven, under the Great Commission, and then they ceased to preach to any other Gentiles? They were to disciple all nations, but unless we find some Scripture containing contrary information, we must believe that the Lord Jesus meant all nations of the Jews. Now read about Cornelius, "a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among ALL THE NATION OF THE JEWS." Acts 10:22. Cornelius loved and honoured Israel's God and gave much alms to God's people. He lived in Israel's land. The Eleven to whom the Great Commission was given did not preach out of Israel's land, so far

as we have any record in the Book of Acts. They remained in Jerusalem. Acts 8:1. They were still there twenty-five years later. Acts 21:18 to 28. Not one of them preached the gospel to the Gentiles, except the message of Peter to the Household of Cornelius. What message did Peter preach to Cornelius? You may answer this question. We quote:

Galatians 2:7 to 9

BUT CONTRARIWISE, WHEN THEY SAW THAT THE GOSPEL OF THE UNCIRCUMCISION WAS COMMITTED UNTO ME, AS THE GOSPEL OF THE CIRCUMCISION WAS UNTO PETER: (FOR HE THAT WROUGHT EFFECTUALLY IN PETER TO THE APOSTLESHIP OF THE CIRCUMCISION, THE SAME WAS MIGHTY IN ME TOWARD 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."

Where is there any truth more clearly set forth in all of the Bible? The Lord worked effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision. Peter and his associates agreed to confine their ministry to the circumcision. Then how can any student of the Word of God believe that the Great Commission authorized the Eleven to disciple Gentiles? What gospel did the Eleven preach? The gospel of the circumcision? Who received the great Commission? The Eleven. Then did not the Great Commission authorize the Eleven to preach to Israel, near and far off, the gospel of the circumcision?

Who was authorized to preach the Grace of Christ to the Gentiles? Who is the man that calls himself the Apostle to the Gentiles; the teacher and preacher of the Gentiles; the prisoner of the Lord for the Gentiles? Who was to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles? Paul, of course. Read it. Acts 22:21, Romans 11:13, Acts 13:46, Acts 18:6, Romans 15:16, Galatians 1:16, Galatians 2:2, Ephesians 3:1, 3:8, Colossians 1:24 to 27, I Timothy 2:7, II Timothy 1:11, 4:17.

If Paul received his authority from Christ to preach the Grace of Christ to the Gentiles, under the Great Commission, then why did he declare that he received it by revelation and went up to Jerusalem by revelation to communicate it to other disciples and apostles? Galatians 1:13 and 2:2 to 6. What need for a revelation, if the authority was in the Great Commission? If Paul was preaching to Gentiles under the Great Commission, he must have received a "baptism" exemption from the Lord. The Eleven were told to baptize. Paul said, "Christ sent me not to baptize." I Corinthians 1:17.

If Paul was authorized under the Great Commission to preach the Grace of Christ, and the Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God, and the Unsearchable Riches of Christ to the Gentiles, why did he say to Israel; "seeing ye put it from you, we turn to the Gentiles", or "the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy", or "the Gentiles have obtained mercy through Israel's unbelief?" Acts 13:46, Romans 11:11 and 11:30. Is it not rather strange that we have taken so much for granted, without diligently studying the Bible? What is the meaning of Acts 28:28; because of Israel's blindness, the judgment of God pronounced in 63 A.D., "the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles?" Had not the salvation of God been sent to the Gentiles for more than twenty years? If the Great Commission was sufficient authority for the evangelization of the Gentiles with the Gospel of the Grace of God, why Acts 28:28? Was not the message to be sent to the Gentiles independent of any Israelitish religion or covenants after Acts 28:28? If the Great Commission authorized Paul to preach his final truth, why was a blindness to Israel necessary before he could do so, and why was it necessary for the Lord to give him further revelation from heaven? Ephesians 3:3.

All intelligent Premillennialist students of the Word of God believe that this Body dispensation is a parenthesis; that the Kingdom of Heaven is in abeyance, until the Lord has made the one New Man mentioned in Ephesians 2:15. Therefore, they must of necessity believe that there has been a suspension of the Abrahamic, Davidic and New Covenants that have to do with the salvation of "all Israel", and the restoration to that Nation of their land and the establishment of their Kingdom under their true King. They therefore, must believe that the Great Commission will have a more complete fulfillment in the coming Kingdom age, just as they must believe that Joel 2:1 to 24 must have a more complete fulfillment in the coming Kingdom age; as must all of the

prophecies concerning the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel. Joel's prophecy was not fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. The "these days" offered Israel in Acts 3:24 will come with the return of their King.

TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS

One of our outstanding Fundamentalists who insists that he is right about the Great Commission for the Body of Christ and that all who disagree with him are heretics, has forbidden the use of the "Our Father" prayer in the congregation of which he is pastor. Is he not rather inconsistent to insist on the Great Commission and then disobey it, by omitting from his "Church" program the so-called Lord's prayer? And this is by no means all that he omits. Undoubtedly he is not out of the will of God in omitting what he does, because he would be kept as busy trying to make them fit into Pauline Body truth as he is trying to make the Great Commission agree with Galatians 2:7 to 9, which he cannot do and which no other student of the Word of God can do. What about omitting the Lord's prayer in the light of "teaching them to observe all things which I have commanded you"? The Lord's Prayer was a specific command.

If the Great Commission is the Captain's marching orders for His Christian soldiers in the Body of Christ, Paul was a disobedient and disloyal soldier and did greatly err when he said, "I have fought a good fight." But Paul does not stand alone, for the fundamentalist brother, to whom I have referred, and all of the brethren during the Christian centuries until today are disobedient and disloyal. What spiritual Spirited servant of the Lord is observing or teaching others to observe all that the Lord commanded His disciples, by parable, precept, example and other teaching? Our Fundamentalist brother, in the light of the Pauline Grace Message and Body Truth, eliminated from his own program and practice the religious observances, the Kingdom messages and signs, and Jewish ceremonies which were the Divine order while Jesus of Nazareth was in the land of Israel, the Man approved of God by miracles, under the law, the minister of the circumcision. In fact, there is but one ceremony in all of the teachings and practices of the Lord Jesus and His apostles on earth that he accepts for himself that I do not accept for myself, and that is water baptism. Both of us believe that all of the Bible is the inspired Word of God and that all Divine truth from Genesis to Revelation, that will stand the test of Body truth or that will not frustrate the Grace of God, is for the acceptance, obedience and practice of every member of the Body of Christ.

Perhaps you have asked yourself this question: "Which is the more important, in endeavoring to obey the Great Commission, the discipling and baptizing or commanding the converts to obey all that the Lord Jesus had commanded His disciples? Many preachers and teachers, who place great stress on the baptizing, ignore many of the things which the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to observe. Was not the Lord Jesus restating the baptismal ceremony as a part of the Kingdom program covered by the "all things" He had commanded?

It is stated by many servants of the Lord that John the Baptist was an Old Testament prophet. It seems strange that an Old Testament prophet would have an ordinance for the Body of Christ, or a Jewish message with the baptism of Ephesians 4:5. Strange that Israel's prophet, himself not in the Body, should introduce a "Body" ordinance.

John's water baptism was to manifest Christ to Israel. John 1:31. John's water baptism was unto repentance for the remission of sins. Mark 1:4 . . . Luke 3:3 and Matthew 3:11. Now this question: was water baptism to have the same meaning and significance, under the terms of the Great Commission? It was, if the disciples were to teach all nations to observe all things that the Lord had commanded. It certainly did have the same significance and meaning when Peter and the Eleven preached to all nations of Jews on the day of Pentecost; "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Acts 2:38. It is not difficult to learn in Paul's message concerning the Body of Christ that the Holy Spirit gave a new interpretation to baptism. Ephesians 4:5 and Colossians 2:12. But he did not give a new interpretation of water baptism; for as long as there was any mention of water baptism there was the testimony to Israel that Jesus was their Messiah and it was unto repentance for the remission of sins. The teaching by our outstanding Fundamentalists that there were two entirely different significations to water baptism is not supported in the Scriptures. Water baptism was given in connection with Israel and their Kingdom and continued with Israel and

their Kingdom, and disappeared with the final revelation of the Body of Christ; after which there was one baptism, not water. Ephesians 4:5.

In Matthew 10:8, the disciples were commanded by the Lord Jesus to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. They continued to do this after the Great Commission was given. Shall we, under the terms of the Great Commission, teach all nations to observe this commandment? We had better get busy. Truly the healing commandment was included in the "all things"?

Shall we send the cleansed lepers to the priest with a gift demanded by the law? Matthew 8:4. Can we make the parables spoken for the benefit of publicans and Pharisees, who were on earth with Jesus of Nazareth under the law, fit into truth concerning the position and possessions of the members of the Body of Christ after He had blotted out the handwriting of ordinances on the cross and God had said to believers, "ye are not under the law." Romans 6:14. Colossians 2:14. Was water baptism introduced under the law dispensation or under the dispensation of grace? Compare Ephesians 3:1 to 3 with I Corinthians 1:17 and Ephesians 4:5.

If it is possible for us, with open and unprejudiced minds, to compare and contrast the gospel of the kingdom and the kingdom program of signs, committed to the Twelve while Christ was on earth,, with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, with the "signless" program, which Paul finally committed to Timothy, then we shall want to ask several questions:

1. Was not the "signless" program which Paul committed to Timothy likewise a "waterless" program?
2. Which program was committed to the Eleven, in the Great Commission, the "sign" and "water" program or the "signless" and "waterless" program?
3. Which commission is binding on the Body of Christ today, the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20 or the Timothy Commission of II Timothy 2:2?

For our study we compare and contrast Matthew 4:17, Matthew 10:5 to 8, Luke 9:6, Luke 13:24, Matthew 19:28, Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 25:34 to 36 with I Timothy 1:11 and 5:23, II Timothy 1:8 to 11, Ephesians 2:4 to 9, 2:13 to 18 and Titus 3:5 to 7. How would II Timothy 1:9 fit into the Book of Matthew or in the chapter with Luke 13:24?

Compare the baptisms of Matthew 3:11 with the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5. By comparing the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19 and 20 with the Great Commission, in Mark 16:15 to 18 we have the answer to questions 2; the program committed to the Eleven was a "water" and "sign" program. Moreover the water was to be a factor in salvation: "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The Eleven preached that message to Israel, for the "Jews require a sign." Signs and water continued to the end of Acts, for the Jews had priority rights and privileges during that period.

In what sense was, the kingdom of the heavens at hand in Matthew that it was not at hand in Acts? Did not the Eleven in Acts, continue with "baptism unto repentance for the remission of sins"? Was not their message of Acts 3:14 to 26 the gospel of the kingdom, the very same gospel—for Israel—declared by the Holy Spirit in Luke 1:67 to 77? The same Holy Spirit who filled Zacharias, according to the first chapter of Luke, to proclaim the Kingdom at hand, in fulfillment of God's promises by Israel's prophets, likewise filled Peter to do the same thing. The "these days" of Acts 3:24 are the "these days" of Luke 1:67 to 77.

The Great Commission was not given to Paul; it was given to the Eleven. We may not agree with the men of God who teach that the Eleven did not begin their ministry on the day of Pentecost under the orders of Matthew 28:19 and 20. But here is the question that should be in our minds; if the Eleven, filled with the Holy Spirit, proclaimed on the day of Pentecost, and thereafter, the gospel message and program in obedience to the Great Commission, why do we not follow Peter and the Eleven instead of Paul? Surely after carefully reading Galatians 2:7 to 9, no intelligent student of the Word of God will say that the Twelve and Paul preached the same message. Surely there is a difference between the "regeneration" message of Acts 2:38 and the "regeneration" message of Titus 3:5 to 7. No Grace preacher today, led by the Holy Spirit, is preaching to any sinner Acts 2:38 or Acts 3:19 to 21, or Acts 10:35 to 38. To say that we are going right on with the Great Commission, under which the Eleven began their ministry, and then to utterly ignore the program of signs, gifts, visions, imposition of hands, casting out demons, religious ceremonies and tongues of the Acts period, is most inconsistent.

If we carefully study the Word and see that the risen Lord gave to His chosen vessel, His Apostle to the Gentiles, a message, ministry and program, which not only supplemented, but in the final revelations superseded, His Commission to the Twelve, we shall see that the only intelligent and Scriptural way by which we can justify our present "signless" program of pure Grace is to acknowledge that we are working under the orders which Christ gave to Paul and which Paul handed down to Timothy and which we receive today as our marching orders. If we are supposed to be marching under Matthew 28:19 and 20, we are most disobedient. Within an hour of Paul's farewell he left us II Timothy 2:15. Let us obey it.

Was not water baptism restated after the death of Christ and carried over from Matthew into Acts? Certainly. So also were "signs" restated with water baptism and signs were carried over into Acts. Why let go of the signs and hold on to the water? Our Apostle Paul was sent with signs but not to baptize. II Corinthians 12:12; I Corinthians 1:17.

In the light of Paul's Commission to Timothy we lose nothing that the risen Lord intended for the members of His Body either in the Four Gospels or in the Book of Acts, only that which was Israelitish and not a part of the ". Body" program.

WHAT HAPPENED AT PENTECOST?

Pentecost was one of Jehovah's feasts for Israel. Pentecost was fifty days after the firstfruits; fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Between the resurrection of Jesus Christ and Pentecost He shewed Himself alive by many infallible proofs . . . "speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." Acts 1:3. Immediately before the ascension of Jesus Christ, the apostles, to whom He had been explaining the Kingdom of God, asked Him: "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?" Acts 1:6. Some months before His crucifixion Jesus had spoken a parable against Israel, in which He put these words in the mouth of that Nation "We will not have this man to reign over us." Luke 19:14. Then to Israel Jesus said: "Therefore I say unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matthew 21:43. We have no detailed record of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God which Jesus taught His apostles after His resurrection, but we may be positive that He told them nothing concerning the Church, which is His Body, as this was not revealed to the twelve apostles until it was made

known to the Apostle Paul some years after Pentecost. And so their question: "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom of Israel?"

When Jesus began His public ministry He said: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." Mark 1:15. More than ten years after this announcement Peter, in speaking to Cornelius, declared that the word concerning the Kingdom was sent unto the children of Israel. Acts 10:36. In sending forth His twelve apostles to announce "the Kingdom at hand," Jesus instructed them to go only to Israel. Matthew 10:5 to 7. When the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus the Kingdom of God was at hand for Israel, as never before. Israel's King was at hand, and with the King, the Kingdom announced. Simeon was waiting for the "consolation of Israel." Luke 2:25. Joseph, in the city of the Jews, waited for "the Kingdom of God." Luke 23:51. They were waiting for one and the same thing; namely, for the coming of the King of Israel to be that Nation's Divine Deliverer.

Israel's expectation was expressed by the Holy Spirit in the words of the father of John the Baptist. Zacharias: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for He hath visited and redeemed His people . . . That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear." Luke 1:67 to 77. This was not a dream or an imagination of Zacharias; it was God's truth spoken by the infallible Holy Spirit, to confirm that which that same infallible Holy Spirit had spoken concerning Israel's Kingdom by the mouth of all of the Lord's holy prophets since the world began. Luke 1:70. Neither was Peter speaking in the flesh when the infallible Holy Spirit spoke to Israel by his mouth some months after Jesus Christ had gone back to heaven, offering to that Nation the very same Kingdom of God on the condition of repentance. "Repent ye therefore and be converted And He shall send Jesus Christ, Which before was preached unto you; Whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." Acts 3:19 to 21.

Let us carefully note the same language in Luke 1:70 and Acts 3:21, both messages by the pen of the same human author: "By the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." Most assuredly Peter and the eleven, in the third chapter of Acts, were offering to the Nation Israel, the very same Kingdom of God that was at hand with the Holy Spirit baptism of Jesus Christ and that was described by the Holy Spirit by the mouth of Zacharias.

Between His resurrection and Pentecost Jesus said to His apostles: "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" Luke 24:46. And now that we know that Christ appeared once to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time; now that we know that He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, we wonder and question, asking why did Gabriel announce that the Lord God would give unto Jesus the throne of David, to reign over the House of Jacob forever, and how could Jesus have offered to Israel, in good faith and sincerity, a Kingdom, when He was to be delivered according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God? In the shadow of the cross did He not say, "for this cause came I unto this hour?" John 12:27. There is not the slightest suggestion that Jesus was born to be the Head of the Church, which is His Body. He was born King of the Jews, and properly saluted by Nathaniel, "Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." John 1:49. But if Jesus had to fulfill all that was written of Him and be nailed to a tree, how could He have given the Kingdom of God to Israel, had they voted unanimously to crown Him King? Acts 13:29. Hebrews 2:9. Hebrews 9:26. Acts 2:22 and 23. Acts 4:27 and 28. And yet Jesus Christ did most assuredly proclaim to Israel the Kingdom of God with Himself as King. The Kingdom of God was at hand, because the time was fulfilled, and the King had been born. But Israel would not have the King to reign over them, and to that Nation the King said, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matthew 21:43. Most assuredly Jesus was not saying to individual Israelites, "the Kingdom of God shall be taken from within you." And most certainly Jesus was not saying to individual Israelites, "you will be given no further opportunity to enter the Kingdom of God." During the past nineteen centuries the door of salvation has been wide open for individual Israelites and Gentiles. Then what did Jesus mean?

I find less difficulty in understanding how the risen Christ could have fulfilled God's promises to Israel by coming back from heaven, according to Peter's proclamation in Acts 3:19 to 21, and giving the Kingdom of

God to Israel after His death and resurrection, than in understanding how He could have fulfilled Isaiah 9:6 and 7, by taking the throne of David, before He fulfilled the Scriptures concerning His suffering and resurrection. Of course in making this statement, I am not unmindful of the fact that God purposed something altogether different, in Christ Jesus, before the world began, concerning Gentiles in the Body of Christ. II Timothy 1:9 and 10. Ephesians 1:3 and 4. But this had nothing to do with the fulfillment of the promises made to Israel, concerning their Kingdom and the restitution of all things, spoken by the mouth of all their prophets since the world began. The Body of Christ was not the subject of prophecy. It was a hidden mystery, hid in God, unknown to Israel's prophets. Ephesians 3:1 to 9. Colossians 1:24 to 27. But the question is, "what began on the day of Pentecost?" Did the Lord, by the mouth of Peter and the eleven, offer again the Kingdom of God to Israel?

Our Premillennial brethren, who claim to be Dispensationalists, teach that while Jesus was on earth He actually offered to Israel a literal, physical, earthly Kingdom, with Himself as King ready and willing to occupy David's throne in Jerusalem. And furthermore they teach that it was that Kingdom of God that Jesus said would be taken from Israel. And furthermore they teach, that when Jesus, the Son of man, shall come back to earth He will give to Israel the Kingdom of God which he offered to that Nation, and which that Nation refused to accept, when He was here in the midst of Israel. And why should not any student of the Word of God agree with these brethren? Surely the Bible teaches that Jesus was born to take David's throne and establish the Kingdom of God on earth, with Israel restored. Luke 1:29 to 33. Mark 1:14 and 15. And if the words of Jesus have any meaning, when Israel "shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory," "know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Luke 21:27 and 31. The Son of man is coming again to redeem Israel. That Nation is going to be saved. That Nation is going to possess all the land of Canaan; and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land. Genesis 17:6 to 9. Amos 9:11 to 15. But now the question, can we agree with the Premillennial Dispensationalists who teach that, beginning with the day of Pentecost, the devout Jews from every nation under heaven, "ye men of Israel," were offered a place in an entirely different Kingdom of God? These brethren teach that before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of man, the Nation Israel was offered a literal, earthly Kingdom of God; but that thereafter they were offered membership in the Body of Christ, a hope laid up in heaven; that is, entrance, by repentance and baptism, into the heavenly Kingdom of God, something entirely different from the Kingdom which is yet to be restored to Israel. Your attention has been called to the similarity of language in Luke 1:70 and Acts 3:21, "spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." Whatever we may interpret the offer of the Lord, by the mouth of Peter, to Israel, in Acts 3:19 to 21, we must believe that it is the very same Kingdom of God described in Luke 1:67 to 77, the Lord's visitation to His People, Israel, for national deliverance. Was not Jesus born to occupy David's throne, according to Luke 1:30 to 32? Was not Jesus raised from the dead to occupy that very same throne, according to Acts 2:25 to 30?

Something must have happened which caused the Lord to change His mind about immediately taking the Kingdom of God away from Israel, as Jesus, in Matthew 21:43, said would be done. Was it not because when the Son of man was sinned against, and was giving Himself a ransom for many, He cried, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?" Luke 23:34. Surely the Father heard that prayer, for in the offer of the Kingdom of God to Israel anew, Peter declared, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." Acts 3:17. Remember, these words were addressed to "ye men of Israel." Acts 3:12. Then the offer, "repent . . . and He shall send Jesus Christ." Acts 3:19 and 20. What prophets did Peter and the eleven quote to Israel on the day of Pentecost? Joel and David. What was the very heart of Joel's Prophecy? "Then will the Lord be jealous for His land, and pity His people." Joel 2:18. Not one word did Joel or David have to say concerning the Jews and Gentiles, made one in the New Man, seated in the upper-heavens in Christ. Ephesians 2:7 to 18. Joel and David prophesied concerning Israel in their own land under their King.

Yes, Israel sinned against the Son of man; and it was forgiven them. Matthew 12:32. God exalted that Son of man with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins; yea, their greatest of all sins, "killed the Prince of life." Acts 5:30 and 31. Acts 3:15. This meant more than salvation for the individual Israelite. Three thousand of them were added on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:41. Then the number increased; "the number of the men was about five thousands." Acts 4:4. All of these were

Israelites. Then the Kingdom of God was not taken away from Israel. Some months later Stephen, addressing his message to that Nation, said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Acts 7:56. There Israel was resisting the Holy Spirit. Acts 7:51. That sin was not to be forgiven them. But Stephen once more prayed for their forgiveness. Acts 7:60. God continued His mercy toward His Nation; permitted their Temple to stand; and continued through Saul (Paul) to offer to Israel the Kingdom spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began.

It is true that the saved Israelites, whom Saul had been persecuting, were called "the Ekklesia of God," that is, "the Called-out of God," "the Church of God," or "the Assembly of God." Galatians 1:13. I Corinthians 15:9. They were called "the Church which was at Jerusalem," Acts 8:1; "the Churches of Judaea." Galatians 1:22. But the fact that individual Israelites were being added to "the Ekklesia of God" did not mean that the Nation was not being offered the Kingdom, by the return of the Son of man. Neither did it mean that individual believers were being raised up and made to sit in the upper-heavenlies in Christ, as members of the Church, which is His Body, according to Ephesians 1:22 and 2:5 to 7. How could members of Christ's Body have been sitting with their Head in the upperheavenlies, when He was standing, as the Son of man?

Even when Cornelius, and His house, were added, their salvation was in fulfillment of Amos 9:12. "Simeon hath declared how God did at first visit the Gentiles." Acts 15:13. "To this agree the words of the prophets (Amos and others); as it is written." Acts 15:14. How different is the language of Paul, "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men . . . That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs of the same Body." Ephesians 3:5 and 6. We cannot read the Body into Acts 15:13 and 14 without having a contradiction between Peter and Paul.

Therefore, we have no Scriptural proof that the Body of Christ began on the day of Pentecost. It is one thing to say, "I think it did"; but it is quite a different thing to Scripturally prove it; which seems rather a difficult task.