

THE SALVATION—THE BAPTISM
THE DEDICATION
of
LITTLE CHILDREN

THE CHRISTIANS RESPONSIBILITY
CONCERNING
The Sermon on the Mount
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OTHER MESSAGES:
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LITTLE CHILDREN

The Dedication—The Baptism—The Salvation

Without offering Scriptural proof most parents are sure that their little ones, who die before they reach the age of responsibility or accountability, go to heaven. Perhaps we should believe that they are saved because God, the Judge of all the earth, will do right. (Genesis 18:25). God could not do anything but save a little child who is neither responsible for its sinful nature nor capable of intelligently considering believing, receiving, or rejecting God's offer of redemption through Jesus Christ, God's Son.

Some parents seem to think that something religious done in behalf of the little child will somehow aid in its salvation; that if in some way the little one can be subjected to some religious ceremony, it will benefit the child and will add to the parents' assurance that the little child will go to heaven. And so, without searching the Scriptures, they publicly present the little one for dedication, perhaps with a little water on the head. They prefer this public presentation at a Sunday church service.

Occasionally some mother asks me if I will baptize or dedicate her baby during the Sunday morning services. I reply that I earnestly endeavor to follow the Word of God in such matters. Then invariably if any Scriptural support is offered, the story of Abraham and Isaac, Hannah and Samuel, Mary and her Child, Elizabeth and John the Baptist are quoted, together with the words of the Lord Jesus, "Suffer little children to come unto Me." After explaining these Scriptures, as we shall presently explain them, comes the response. "well, other churches sprinkle or dedicate children."

So many Christians today include practices in their spiritual programs because other Christians or other churches are practicing them.

We quote now the words of the Lord Jesus recorded in Matthew 19:14 to 15 and Luke 18:16 and 17: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And He laid His hands on them and departed thence." Matthew 19:14 and 15. "But Jesus called them unto Him and said; Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." Luke 18:16 and 17.

Doubtless all Christian parents have thought of the statement of Christ, that a person must be born again to get into the kingdom of God and, as this regeneration is the result of the individual's faith in Christ, which an irresponsible child cannot exercise, they have asked how can that child be born again?

We accept the words of the Saviour concerning little children, "of such is the kingdom of God." The members of the "covenant" denominations are sure that I Corinthians 7:14 teaches that the children of Christians are included in the covenant of salvation, whether the parents were Christians at the time the baby was born or became Christians later on. We quote this verse: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean: but now are they holy." I Corinthians 7:14. We shall consider this verse when we turn to the story of Abraham and Isaac.

But let us turn to Romans 5:19 to 21: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

In what sense is the little child made a sinner by Adam's disobedience? "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me." Psalms 51:5.

Every human being by natural birth inherits a sinful nature. Then these two definitions of sin: "sin is the transgression of the law"; "of sin," said Christ, "because they believe not on me." John 16:9. The irresponsible little child neither willfully trespasses God's holy law nor knows how to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore that child neither commits the sin of transgressing God's holy law nor believing not on God's holy Son.

Then some "ifs" come to our minds. If God in His foreknowledge knows that that little child, if permitted to grow to the age of responsibility, would reject Jesus Christ as Saviour, would it be just to take that child by death to heaven before it became responsible and permit other children to live to willfully reject Christ and go to eternal perdition?

When we behold what is going on in this world today, with the increase of awful crimes committed by the youth of this age, and the ungodliness and the immorality of the young women as well as the young men, and see that the great majority of the youth, as well as the older men and women, will not receive Christ and be saved, we might well say, "oh, that they had died in early childhood." In the light of God's Word in God's Book it would have been far better for more than seventy percent of the human race, if they had never been born. As Christ said, concerning Judas, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born." That is true of every man born of woman, if he will not be born again.

But now comes the parent to the preacher with this question, "what is the age of accountability?" "At what age does the child reach the point when he can intelligently consider God's offer of salvation and either receive Christ or reject Him?" "My child knows right and wrong and gives evidence that his conscience hurts him when he does something he knows he should not do."

No human being can definitely fix the exact time when a little child becomes responsible to God in the matter of its salvation. Most assuredly the training of the child's mind in the spiritual things of God and His Book somewhat determines this. We would say that a child in a Christian home would reach this state before a child in a pagan home. This age of responsibility would also depend upon the intelligence of the child. We will permit the omniscient God to determine the age of each child.

However, all parents should be much exercised about the spiritual welfare of their children, and be instructed by the Scriptures concerning their responsibility. "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right." Proverbs 20:11. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Proverbs 22:15. "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die." Proverbs 23:13. "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." Proverbs 29:15.

It is interesting to study the life of Philip the evangelist. We have not a very long record concerning this man of God in the Bible. We read of him in Acts 6 that he was full of faith, full of the Holy Spirit, a man of good report. In chapter eight we find him first in Samaria and then in the desert speaking to the eunuch. We learn in that chapter that Philip was a humble, obedient, zealous servant of the Lord. About twenty years later the Apostle Paul visited in Philip's home. What kind of a home was it? The story is told in Acts 21:9: "And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy." Philip must have lived a consistent, spiritual life. He did not weary in well doing. His influence was wonderful. His girls were in the Lord's service.

Some of God's faithful servants are men who have been hardened sinners, out of homes that were anything but Christian homes. On the other hand deep sorrow has come to the hearts of Christian parents because their children, who were brought up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord, have gone deep into sin. A Christian-worker told me some time ago of three business men in Chicago, all brilliant successful men of the world, not one of whom attends church services. One of them is an enemy and opponent of things spiritual. This worker said, "I have often visited their mother and father in the east, I believe these boys' mother and father were two of the most devoted, consecrated, spiritual saints I have ever known." What a disappointment! Yes, but this is the exception to the rule.

We can only do our best for our children—this we owe to God and our children—and then turn them over to the Lord.

We are here reminded of Samson and Samuel. Both of these men were the offspring of godly parents who gave their babies to the Lord even before they were born. Let us read a few verses concerning the circumstances of their births and the parents to whom they were born. In Judges 13:3 to 5 and 24 and 25 we read:

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: For to thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol."

In I Samuel 1 and 2: “But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion for HE loved Hannah but the Lord had shut up her womb And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him And she bare a son and called his name Samuel, saying because I have asked him of the Lord. And when she had weaned him she took him up with her with three bullocks and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh; and the child was young. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little coat, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord and also with men.”

What an awful mess Samson made of life. He compromised with sin, associated with sinners, dishonored his parents and his Nation. Humiliated, defeated and disgraced, Samson fell under the judgment of God and also fell into the hands of the heathen who hated Samson’s God. With his eyes out and as a slave of the heathen he came to the end of life worse than a failure. On the other hand, Samuel lived to be an old man, an obedient, faithful, prayerful, uncompromising servant of God and at the end of his life he asked a question of his people. Note the question and the answer; “Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before His anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man’s hand. And he said unto them, Thy Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.” I Samuel 12:3, 4, and 5.

It is sad indeed when parents have done their very best for their children and then to have their children disgrace them and go into the ways of the ungodly. But kind treatment, good clothes, a good table and a good education are not enough. There must be spiritual instruction and much prayer. Unless the behaviour of parents is godly in the home the testimony will be for naught. Children, who are thinking of things spiritually watch their spiritual instructors very closely, and it behooves such instructors to practice what they preach.

It is interesting to read the accounts of each of the barren women to whom God promised a son. Sarah and Isaac, Manoah’s wife and Samson, Hannah and Samuel, Elizabeth and John the Baptist. There was Divine intervention in each case. By the Word of God each of these mothers knew that her baby was to be a boy and each mother and father dedicated their baby boy to the Lord before it was born.

Surely all Christian parents should dedicate their children to the Lord before they are born. Some years ago I was teaching for several nights in an Ohio city. Every night near the front there sat a mother with two sons, one about seven years of age and the other about nine. She was a consecrated spiritual saint who loved the Lord and His Word. Her two sons were well behaved and very attentive. When I spoke to her concerning her fine boys, she said, “I want you to pray that their lives may be surrendered to the Lord for service when they are older.” About twenty years later one of those boys came into my office. He had finished college and seminary and was a pastor of a church. He told me his brother also had been a pastor for several years.

Godly, spiritual business-men are needed just as much as preachers and pastors. So are spiritual women in the home and in the church. Christian parents are fully compensated for all

their endeavors, sacrifices and prayers when they know that their sons and daughters love the Lord and faithfully serve Him.

PUBLIC DEDICATION

But how about the public dedication of children? Do you know of one record in the Bible of the dedication of a baby girl? There may have been such dedication; but the record is missing. However, we read God's law in Leviticus 12:2, 3 and 6:

“Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest.”

Now let us read Luke 2:21 to 24 concerning the presentation of Mary's Son, which we note was required by the law which God gave to Israel:

“And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. Luke 2:21 to 24.

Note the facts: the mother's first-born—a Son eight days old—according to the law of Moses—Jerusalem—a sacrifice offered unto the Lord—circumcised. Note the law in Exodus 13:1 and 2:

“And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast; it is mine.”

Read also Exodus 34:19 and Numbers 8:17. We quote Numbers 3:13:

“Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the LORD.

In Leviticus 12:8 we learn why Mary brought the turtle doves and pigeons:

“And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.”

Joseph and Mary were too poor to bring the lamb.

Thus we see from the Scriptures that the first son born to Israelitish parents especially belonged to the Lord. But Christian parents are not under the law. Christian parents during this period of grace, are in God's spiritual temple (Ephesians 2:17 to 22) but they are not obligated to any earthly priest. No human priest on earth is genuine so far as God and His Word are concerned. Our Priest is in heaven, Head of the Church, Christ's Body, made up of sinners saved by grace. We have no temple on earth. We have no altar. We need no altar. We would be out of the will of God to take animals of any kind to any religious man to be sacrificed unto the Lord. We are living in an entirely different dispensation, in the economy of grace. And in all of God's

messages, written to the members of the Body of Christ there is not one single word about any public dedication of the sons or daughters of Christian parents.

Quite frequently this argument is presented: if it does no particular harm and it gives satisfaction, comfort and assurance to Christian parents, why not humor them? The answer is easy! There is too much superstition, false teaching; and too many unscriptural practices in the church based upon tradition. Every pastor is supposed to be a teacher of the Word of God, a steward of the mysteries of God (I Corinthians 4:1 to 6) and if he is not able to rightly divide the Word of Truth, he is not a pastor by God's appointment. It is the duty of every man of God, who pastors a congregation of God's people, to lead that people by God's Word and God's Truth and away from human traditions. Every faithful teacher of the Scriptures will earnestly endeavor to keep God's people from frustrating the grace of God by doing things according to the law instead of according to the dispensation of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:1 to 3) .

THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHILDREN

In the dedication of Mary's Son, we learn that He was circumcised when He was eight days old. In Galatians 5:3 we learn that he who is circumcised is debtor to the whole law. God's Word is positively against religious circumcision for this day of grace, although circumcision was instituted about four hundred years before God gave the law to Israel at Sinai.

Abram was circumcised when he was ninety-nine years of age. Genesis 17:6 to 20. At the time Abram was circumcised his name was changed to Abraham. Some years before Abram was circumcised he was declared righteous in uncircumcision. Romans 4:3 to 11. Abram's circumcision was the seal of the righteousness which he received before his name was changed, some years before Isaac was born.

The seal of the righteousness of a believer in this day of grace is the Holy Spirit. "In Whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." Ephesians 1:13 and 14. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Ephesians 4:30. "That the blessing of Abraham may come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Galatians 3:14.

Every member of the Body of Christ is circumcised spiritually with the circumcision of Christ, even as he is saved by the baptism of Christ on the cross. Colossians 2:11 and 12. We quote Genesis 17:12:

"And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed."

and Genesis 21:4 and 5:

"And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him."

Surely Isaac was not only included in the covenant which God made with Abraham; but Isaac was the child of promise. (Galatians 4:28.)

Now the question: if Gentiles are today saved by grace, in accordance with Galatians 3:6 to 8 and 3:14, because God made a covenant with Abram and saved him as an uncircumcised Gentile and because in his Seed (Christ) all nations were to be blessed, are not the babies of

Christians included in the covenant? Is that the meaning of the children “holy” in I Corinthians 7:14?

Notwithstanding the fact that we do read that several households were baptized, we do not have any Scriptural statement in the economy of grace that the child of Christian parents is any more righteous than the child of unsaved parents. Surely there are many unsaved religious parents, members of some covenant denominations, never born again, who have presented their little babies for baptism.

WHY DO PREACHERS BAPTIZE OR SPRINKLE LITTLE CHILDREN?

Some of the creeds of covenant denominational churches declare that sprinkling with water is the seal of the New Covenant as circumcision was the seal of the Old Covenant. There is not a verse in the Scriptures to support this religious theory. But what about church history? That is the appeal of the Romanists, the Seventh Day Adventists and many others. Our appeal should be “What saith the Scriptures?” Where is there a single verse of Scripture that even intimates that water baptism either took the place of circumcision or that water baptism is the seal of the New Covenant? It is not to be found.

Dr. Albertus Pieters, a leader in the Reformed Church, writes: “The Bible is entirely silent about Infant Baptism, either pro or con. We admit it. We do not profess to get infant baptism from its pages.” “He would not find Infant Baptism in the Bible, because it is not there, and cannot be gotten out of the Bible.”

Now the fact of the matter is, that Jesus Christ on earth was a Minister of the circumcision. Romans 15:8. He was circumcised 30 years before He was baptized. The believer’s circumcision and baptism of Colossians 2:11 and 12 are spiritual, and not physical. Every person baptized while Christ was on earth had first been circumcised. Note the awful predicament of Peter seven years after the baptism of Christ on the cross for baptizing an uncircumcised, God-fearing, Jew-loving, praying man (Acts 10:2 and 22). Now reads Acts 10:47 to 11:3:

Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days. And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. Acts 10:47 to 11:3.

Now the facts are these: so far as we have any Scriptural Record the last persons to receive water baptism are mentioned in Acts 19:1 to 7. By turning to Acts 21 we learn that after that last baptism record both James, the Lord’s brother, and Paul endorsed the circumcision of Jewish Christians. Remember Paul’s act recorded in Acts 16:3:

“Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.”

So we see that the teaching that water baptism took the place of circumcision is wholly without Scriptural support. The Holy Spirit is God’s seal for righteous people in this present reign of grace.

No Girls Circumcised

Read again Genesis 17:10:

“This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.”

If only males were to be circumcised and if baptism did take the place of circumcision, then the baptism of girl children or women would not be Scriptural. Again we see the folly of following denominational church creeds and the traditions of men instead of following the Word of God rightly divided.

While perhaps most Lutheran preachers do not believe that sprinkling the little child of Lutheran parents will make the child a Christian, yet I heard a Lutheran preacher make the statement that the baby of such parents becomes a Christian at the time it is sprinkled by the Lutheran preacher. He explained, “perhaps we would call this becoming a Christian by accident.”

Many Reformed and some Presbyterian churches declare that little children become church-members when presented for baptism by parents who are members of their churches. They do not prove it by the Word of God, but, inasmuch as it is stated in the established denominational creeds handed down from their forefathers they continue the practice.

I was formerly a Presbyterian minister and was associated with some spiritual servants of God in that denomination. Being a traveling evangelist I was not called upon to baptize either adults or children. During my ministry in that denomination I sprinkled two infants. The first little one I sprinkled was a baby of a member of our family. The other was the dying infant of Lutheran parents who were away from their home city. They urged me to sprinkle their little baby before it passed away. I tried to persuade them from the Scriptures that it was unnecessary, but the mother tearfully implored me and I acquiesced. You say, “it did the child no harm.” That is right; for the little tot was altogether unconscious of what was going on, but it gave me a real opportunity to witness to the parents. When I was about to apply the water, I said to the parents, “this little baby is going to heaven, but now the question: are you going to meet this loved one in heaven?” I was somewhat shocked but not altogether surprised at the reply. Said one, “I am not sure.” Said the other one, “I hope so.” Then turning to them I put the question in a straightforward manner. “Have you ever been definitely saved?” “Are you sure you have been born again?” Each of them answered in such a manner as to prove that they knew nothing about a vital relation with God through Jesus Christ. They not only had no assurance, but little clear, definite knowledge of God’s saving grace message. I told them that the Lord Jesus Christ put away sin, abolished death, obtained eternal redemption and then He sat down at God’s right hand in heaven. I do not know whether or not they professed Christ and salvation so that I would go on with the sprinkling of the baby, but they both claimed to receive Christ and acknowledged Him as Saviour.

Whether or not a precious little child has been taken from you, baptized or unbaptized, do not worry about the present and future state of that child. Your concern should be about your own spiritual welfare and eternal destiny. Moreover, your serious thinking and spiritual endeavors should be given to children who are still on earth.

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN’S OBLIGATION TO THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND THE LORD’S PRAYER?

Some time ago a gentleman said to me, "If a Christian is one who obeys the instructions of the Lord Jesus in the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth chapters of Matthew, I have never seen a Christian and I do not think you have." I replied, "You are right." Many are asking, "Why do Christian preachers tell the church-members that they are obligated to obey and practice what the preachers do not obey and practice?" And we might add this to the question: why do Christian preachers pick out some of the Lord's commandments and instructions in the Sermon on the Mount and other kingdom teachings and ignore more than they impose upon their followers?

Before we attempt to answer these questions and the important question, "What are Christians to do with the Sermon on the Mount and the "Our Father" prayer?" let us glean from the Four Gospels and the Book of Acts some of the Lord's instructions to His disciples as to certain acts, religious ceremonies and practices, supernatural visitations and endowments included in the spiritual program of John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, and His selected apostles and disciples!

"And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." (Matthew 5:40, 41 and 42).

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (Matthew 5:23 and 24).

"Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison." (Matthew 5:25).

"But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy feet." (Matthew 6:17).

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:34).

"And as ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of heaven is at hand, Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils, freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house salute it." (Matthew 10:7 to 12).

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee then take with thee one or two more that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matthew 18:15 to 17).

"Saying the Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not." (Matthew 23:2 and 3).

"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world, Amen." (Matthew 28:19 and 20).

"Then He called His twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And He sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the

sick. And they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere.” (Luke 9:1, 2, and 6).

“And heal the sick that are therein and say unto them, the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” (Luke 10:9 and 19).

“Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.” (Luke 6:30 and 35).

“Sell that ye have, and give alms.” (Luke 12:33).

“And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.” (Matthew 8:4).

“And his Lord was wroth and delivered him to the tormenters, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” (Matthew 18:34 and 35).

“Jesus saith unto him, If thou wilt be perfect go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow Me.” (Matthew 19:21).

“And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” (Matthew 21:22).

“Afterward He appeared unto the Eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.” (Mark 16:14 to 18).

“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.” (John 13:14).

“And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.” (Mark 6:13).

“Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.” (John 20:23).

“Then Peter said unto them. 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. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” (Acts 2:38, 44 and 45).

“Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold. And laid them down at the apostles’ feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” (Acts 4:34 and 35).

Any servant of the Lord who makes the unqualified statement that no member of the Body of Christ is to obey the Sermon on the Mount is unwise. Every child of God accepts all of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation as the inspired Word of God. Concerning the Lord Jesus, the Father in heaven said, “This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him.” The people of His day wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth; they acknowledged that He

spoke as one having Divine authority. They said he spake as never man spake. So God's children should read again and again, study, memorize and hide in their hearts every Word spoken by the holy Son of God while He was on the earth. Every spiritual child of God wants to be faithful and obedient to the Word of God and will not disobey or ignore or eliminate from His spiritual program one single command or admonition in any part of the Bible unless there is good and sufficient Scriptural reason for doing so. When the student of the Scripture reads in the Word "no longer under a schoolmaster (Galatians 3:25)," "henceforth we will no longer know Jesus after the flesh (II Corinthians 5:16) ," he knows that God came to a certain point with one spiritual program and changed to a new and different one.

According to Genesis 17, if circumcision was not practiced the uncircumcised was to be cut off from fellowship and communion with God and His people. In Galatians 4 and 5 the religious people who preached and practiced circumcision, were to be disfellowshipped and cut off. Why? Simple answer: a different dispensation.

Ask any Christian why Christians gather the first day of the week to worship God in the assembly and not on the sabbath, the seventh day. They can never prove that the sabbath was changed by God from the seventh day to the first day. But they can say, that "Christ is the end of the law (Romans 10:6)." Christ was dead and buried on Israel's sabbath and arose to be the Head of a new creation on the first day of the week. Then as a new creature in Christ Jesus the believer is subject to the instructions of Colossians 2:16: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath." Now just imagine what would have happened to a prophet or a priest if he had preached Colossians 2:16 to Israel under the law. Death for him would have been sure.

Is it not strange that the same instruction from God to His People, which brings blessing, would have brought death to them in another dispensation?

Then we ask, how can any Christian respect the teaching of any man who claims to be the servant of God and who ridicules dispensational teaching? We might well ridicule the dispensational teaching of some who have imagined a few extra dispensations.

But now we see the "why" of the instructions in Colossians 2:16. Note the several preceding verses. We quote Colossians 2:13 and 14: "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses: Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross. We quote with these two verses: Romans 6:14: "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Romans 7:4: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ: that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." And Ephesians 4:32: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

In the Greek text of Romans 3:24 we learn that a believing sinner is declared righteous without a cause, by God's grace and by Christ's redemptive work. In II Timothy 1:9 and 10 we learn that we are saved, not by our doing, but by the grace God gave us in Christ before the foundation of the world. In Titus 3:5 to 7 we learn that we are saved, not by works of righteousness. In these Scriptures and in many others we learn that the sinner's activities have nothing to do with his salvation. In fact, in Romans 4:3 to 5 we learn that his doings, as a sinner, hinders his salvation. He could not be justified by the law. Romans 3:20 and 28. But by Jesus Christ all believers are justified from all things. Acts 13:39.

God took the law out of the way by the death and resurrection of Christ. Christ by His obedience unto death on the cross put away sin. By His resurrection He abolished and destroyed Satan's death power. After that God set "the House of Israel" aside and brought in the reign of grace and a new purpose. "the House of God," and a new spiritual program, "the reign of grace."

Now the teaching of the Word of God is plain, that certain practices which were of God under the reign of law, must not be brought over to the reign of grace and frustrate the grace of God or pervert the gospel of the grace of God.

God's Word in Colossians 2:13 and Ephesians 4:32 tells members of Christ's Body that all their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. This forgiveness was not offered or given by God to the believer on condition of anything that that believing sinner did, but because he believed what the Tri-une God did. This is quite different from the conditional forgiveness of sins in the petition found in the "our Father" prayer.

Let us note Matthew 6:14 and 15: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." And Matthew 18:34 and 35: "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

Now compare with this forgiveness the forgiveness mentioned in Ephesians 4:32: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Which do you prefer? If you are religious instead of spiritual, you may take the conditional forgiveness of Matthew. But be careful. Read the conditions in Matthew 18:23 to 35 and be sure that you are not headed for the tormentors.

Read again Colossians 2:14: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, trailing it to His cross."

Now before we study the Sermon on the Mount, this question: Had the end of the reign of law come when Christ preached the Sermon on the Mount? Had the reign of grace begun when Christ taught the "Our Father" prayer? Some preachers say "Yes" and "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." Luke 16:16.

But what folly in the light of Matthew 23:1 to 3. It was years after that when the reconciling of Gentiles began. Read Romans 11:15: "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them (Israel) be, but life from the dead?"

Had Israel been put out of the way before Christ died? Certainly not; and if the law had not been blotted out when Christ spoke the Sermon on the Mount, was He anticipating the dispensation of the grace of God which He was to later reveal to Paul? "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward, that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words.)" Ephesians 3:1 to 3. Was Christ giving truth for the obedience of members of the Body of Christ? In other words,

DOES THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT FIT INTO THE ECONOMY OF GRACE?

The following footnotes appear in the Scofield Reference Bible:

“The Sermon on the Mount has a twofold application: (1) Literally to the kingdom. In this sense it gives the Divine constitution for the righteous government of the earth. Whenever the kingdom of heaven is established on earth it will be according to that constitution, which may be regarded as an explanation of the word “righteousness” as used by the prophets in describing the kingdom (e.g. Isaiah 11:4, 5; Isaiah 32:1; Daniel 9:24). In this sense the Sermon on the Mount is pure law, and transfers the offense from the overt act to the motive (Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28). Here lies the deeper reason why the Jews rejected the kingdom. For these reasons the Sermon on the Mount in its primary application gives neither the privilege nor the duty of the Church. These are found in the Epistles. Under the law of the kingdom, for example, no one may hope for forgiveness who has not first forgiven. (Matthew 6:12, 14, 15). Under grace the Christian is exhorted to forgive because he is already forgiven. (Ephesians 4:30 to 32). But there is a beautiful moral application to the Christian. It always remains true that the poor in spirit, rather than the proud, are blessed, and those who mourn because of their sins, and who are meek in the consciousness of them, will hunger and thirst after righteousness, and hungering will be filled. The merciful are “blessed”; the pure in heart do “see God”. These principles fundamentally reappear in the teaching of the Epistles.”

We thank Dr. Scofield for this general statement, but it by no means answers the question in the hearts and minds of many sincere Christians. How many saints of God, during this present reign of grace, have been comforted, encouraged, and kept faithful because of the beatitudes of Christ recorded in Matthew 5:11 and 12? We are not going to give this exclusively to saints of another dispensation. How about Matthew 5:8: “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God”? We accept this as it fits into Ephesians 2:7: “That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

How about Matthew 5:5: “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.” Will members of the Body of Christ inherit the earth?

How about Matthew 5:9: “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.” We read in Colossians 1:20 and Galatians 3:26: “And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself: by Him I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.” Colossians 1:20. And now Galatians 3:26: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

In these messages of grace we read that Christ was the Peacemaker on behalf of sinners, who by faith in the peace that Christ made on the cross, are made the children of God. Redeemed sinners should prove to the world that they are God’s children by doing good works, including some peace making. But they are saved. not by being peacemakers. but by grace through faith in Christ.

What principle is presented in this example: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth?” II Timothy 2:15. We must study all of the beatitudes, all of the Sermon on the Mount, the Lords Prayer, and all of “the kingdom of heaven” message in Matthew in the light of the dispensation of the grace of God which the risen Christ revealed to Paul after He had proclaimed His program on earth, died on the cross, and gone back to heaven. Surely there must be a Divine principle for the selection or rejection, for this present dispensation, of Divine truth which belonged to a former age.

Note the program the Lord Jesus gave to the Twelve in Matthew 10:7 to 10: “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven. is at hand, Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor

brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes. nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his hire.”

Agreed; this is not our program for today. But was it not given with Divine authority after the Lord had preached the Sermon on the Mount? What kind of exegesis is it to say that Matthew 10 is a “kingdom of heaven” program, not to be practiced by the Church under grace, but that Matthew 5 to 8 is for the practice of the Church today?

Note the “dispensational” and “context” setting of the Sermon on the Mount and the “Our Father” prayer. “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND.” Matthew 4:17. “But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND, Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give.” Matthew 10:6 to 8.

According to the other kingdom teaching and the Sermon on the Mount. Christ and His servants demanded that penitents and disciples should be baptized for the remission of sins, give away one of two coats, sell their property and give the money to the poor, travel without money in their purses, take gifts to the priests, obey the scribes and the Pharisees sitting in Moses’ seat, strive to enter into salvation, give to any who asked, lend to those who could not pay back, agree with their adversaries quickly, etc.

One question. Note what the disciples did according to Acts 2:44 and 45 and Acts 4:34 and 35. “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” Acts 2:44 and 45. And Acts 4:34 and 35: “Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” Why is this not practiced by Christians today? The answer must be, it belonged to a different dispensation, to the Lord’s kingdom program. Well, if Acts 2 and 4 covered a dispensation different from the dispensation of grace, surely the program of Matthew, Mark and Luke did.

Surely many of the instructions of the Lord and the Holy Spirit in Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts are for the obedience, of the members of the Body of Christ, while others are not. Every member of the Body of Christ, who is a loyal denominationalist in any denominational church, is governed by that church creed, or written doctrinal statement, in which a few of the instructions, practices and ceremonies of John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, the Twelve and the Seventy are included, but many of them the majority wholly ignore. This is what we call the “snatch-grab” method practiced by preachers without apology or explanation, while they bitterly oppose other preachers who offer the dispensational explanation.

AS TO THE “OUR FATHER” PRAYER

I have asked hundreds of Christians what they were praying for when they prayed, “Thy kingdom come.” Fully ninety-eight percent of them knew not what they were praying for. Being sincere and obedient to the instructions of the Lord, they feel that He will accept their sincerity and overlook their ignorance and answer the petition to suit Himself.

Concerning members of the Body of Christ, under grace, we read in Colossians 1:13: “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.”

We are in Christ's kingdom. And in Romans 14:17, we read:

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

If, by praying, "Thy kingdom come," we mean that the kingdom will come because all sinners on earth will become members of the Body of Christ, we are not praying intelligently but contrary to the plain teaching of God's Word. If we are praying for the return of Christ as King in the midst of the great tribulation to redeem Israel, do the members of the Body of Christ want to pray themselves into the great tribulation?

Do you think the Lord Jesus Christ was referring to the kingdom to which members of His Body belong in Luke 21:27 to 31 and Luke 22:16 and 18 and 29 and 30?

"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Luke 21:27 to 31.

"For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Luke 22:16 and 18 and 29 and 30.

Is this the kingdom of God for which Christ taught His disciples to pray? Is this kingdom of God identical with the Church which is Christ's Body, the kingdom of the Son of God's love in Colossians 1:13: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son?

Let us study several other Scriptures before we give our answer.

A little while before the Lord Jesus told His apostles that in the coming kingdom age they would occupy twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28. Luke 22:30. He told them He was going to Jerusalem to be rejected, crucified, and raised from the dead. This is recorded in Luke 18:31 to 34. Note the reaction: "Then He took unto Him the Twelve, and said unto them. Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished." Luke 18:31. "And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." Luke 18:34:

Then after His death and resurrection note that His two most privileged and intimate apostles, Peter and John, "knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." John 20:9. After the resurrection and before the ascension, note what the resurrected Messiah did according to Acts 1:3: "To whom also He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." If in giving His apostles instructions and information concerning "the kingdom of God", the risen Christ told them anything concerning His Father's purpose during this age, the making of the One New Man, bringing in the dispensation of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:1) or "the dispensation of the mystery" (Ephesians 3:9), or forming the Body of Ephesians 3:6, they did not understand Him, for within a few days thereafter they asked Him. ". . . Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Acts 1:6.

Then on the day of Pentecost Peter and the Eleven preached concerning the prophecies of Joel and David that had to do with Israel's kingdom, and nothing to do with the Body of Christ. Acts 2:14 to 18; Acts 2:27 to 32.

Then in Acts 3:24 we read: "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after as many as have spoken have likewise foretold of these days." "These days" were Israel's kingdom days. According to Colossians 1:24 to 28 and Ephesians 3:7 to 11, Joel, David, Moses, Samuel and the other prophets knew not the first thing concerning the Body and the dispensation of the mystery.

With these facts in mind and considering the fact that Christ was made under the law (Galatians 4:4), that He was a minister to Israel, confirming kingdom promises which God made to Israel (Romans 15:8), that Christ came to fulfill the law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17), we might better understand Matthew 23:1 to 3: "Then spoke Jesus to the multitude, and to His disciples, Saying, the scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not."

Here we note that Christ told His saved disciples to obey the commands of unsaved Pharisees and scribes. Why? Because of their seat of authority, Moses' seat, Christ had not yet done away with Moses' seat. But He did after His death and resurrection.

Every honest student of the Scriptures should admit that Israel, Christ and His disciples were under the law (Luke 4:16) when the Sermon on the Mount was proclaimed. It was proclaimed when Christ was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Matthew 15:24. It was proclaimed before the word of Christ in Luke 19:42 and 44: "Saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day; the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." ". . . they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou, knewest not the time of thy visitation." Before Matthew 21:43: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

Mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount are instructions and practices that belong strictly to the law and are incompatible with the grace message. They have no place in the grace program for the Body of Christ.

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

What is the kingdom of God? We may turn to many different Scriptures and read concerning the kingdom of God for this term is found about 70 times in the Bible. But after having carefully noted every Scripture where the term is used we find it most difficult to give an intelligent Scriptural definition of the kingdom of God. We observe in the study of the Bible that there are such different aspects and phases of "the kingdom of God" that no one definition is adequate to answer our question.

What is the kingdom of heaven? This expression "the kingdom of heaven" or "the kingdom of the heavens" is found more than 30 times in the Book of Matthew. but it is not found in these words in any other Book of the Bible. Sometimes "the kingdom of heaven" and "the kingdom of God" are used synonymously and interchangeably. There are however some phases of "the kingdom of God" not Scripturally defined by the term "the kingdom of heaven." In Matthew 3:11; Matthew 4:17; and Matthew 10:7 we read "the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

These Scriptures refer to the same kingdom and the Divine truth expressed in Mark 1:15: “The kingdom of God is at hand.” Today “the kingdom of God”, or “the kingdom of heaven”. declared to be at hand in Matthew and Mark, is not at hand in the same sense.

On this earth at this present time God has one and only one true Bible Church. That Church is called in Ephesians 4:4 “one Body.” Christ is far above in the heavenlies as the Head of that one Body. Ephesians 1:19 to 22. In many of the Old Testament prophecies God foretold many things about “the kingdom of God” and by His prophets God made known the truth concerning “the kingdom of heaven”, that there would some day be on this earth a Divine King on a throne, not in heaven, but on earth. Just two prophecies: “Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” Isaiah 9:7.

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.” Daniel 2:44.

We might quote one hundred or more such prophecies. But we would search in vain through all of the thirty-nine Books of the so-called Old Testament Scriptures for a single prophecy concerning the present ministry of Christ in connection with His relation to the members of His Body. Note the plain declaration of the Holy Spirit in Colossians 1:24 to 26: “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body’s sake, which is the Church: whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God Even the mystery, which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.”

What do we learn here? The Divine Truth concerning the Body of Christ was not made known to Israel’s prophets or even Israel’s apostles. It was made known to the Apostle Paul. Before Christ revealed this Divine truth to Paul it was a mystery hid in God. Ephesians 3:9. Note this verse; “And to make all men see what is THE DISPENSATION OF THE MYSTERY, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ.”

In Matthew 13:31 we read that the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a mixture of wheat and tares. Now the Body of Christ is not like any mixture of wheat and tares; for there are no tares in the Body of Christ. No member of the Body of Christ is going to be burned. Every member of the Body of Christ is identified with the risen, glorified Christ in death, burial and resurrection, is seated with Christ in the heavenlies and blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. Ephesians 1:3 and 4; Ephesians 2:5 to 9. Members of Christ’s Body are sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption and are joined to Christ in an eternal and inseparable union, saved by grace through faith in the death and resurrection of the Son of God. However then the Body of Christ may be related to the kingdom of heaven—if it is any part of it—there is a great difference.

But no diligent student of the Scriptures will teach that the Body of Christ is not a part of the kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is mentioned 33 times in the Gospel of Luke. But after carefully studying that Gospel and every statement therein concerning “the kingdom of God,” we cannot say that we can define “the kingdom of God” as any one specific thing. By carefully studying the following verses found in Luke you will learn that the kingdom of God was at hand, that the

disciples preached the gospel of the kingdom and healed; that Christ taught that the kingdom of God would be given to Israel at some future time; that the kingdom of God would come at the time of Israel's great tribulation. Luke 8:1; Luke 9:1 and 2; Luke 9:5; Luke 10:9 and 11; Luke 11:20; Luke 16:16; Luke 17:20 and 21; Luke 19:11 and 12; Luke 21:31; Luke 22:16, 18 and 29; Luke 23:51.

Now we quote for your study Luke 10:9; Luke 9:2 and 6; Luke 17:20; Luke 19:11 and 12; Luke 22:16 and 18; Matthew 21:43 and Luke 21:27 and 31: "And saying The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel . . . And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you . . . And He sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick . . . And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where . . . And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation . . . And as they heard these things, He added and spoke a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive unto himself a kingdom and to return . . . For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God . . . For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come . . . Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof . . . And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory . . . So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

We can see from the Scriptures just quoted how very difficult it is to give an answer to the question, "What is the kingdom of God?" "The kingdom of God is at hand." "The kingdom of God is nigh." "The kingdom of God will not immediately appear because the Nobleman must go into the far country and return." "Then in the midst of awful signs in the heavens and on earth, the Son of man will come to earth and the kingdom of God will be at hand." "The kingdom of God is within you." "The kingdom of God shall be taken away and given to a Nation."

Which kingdom of God was the Lord referring to in John 3:3 "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now read Acts 14:22: "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." And Colossians 4:11: "And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision, These only are my fellow-workers unto "the kingdom of God," which have been a comfort unto me." And Acts 28:31: "Preaching the kingdom of God," and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

From what we have quoted we know that there is a certain phase of the kingdom that is not at hand except when Jesus Christ is on earth. Then during His absence believers can enter the kingdom of God. This is not the kingdom of God that Christ will give to His people when He eats bread with them in His Father's kingdom, when the Twelve shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. If the kingdom of God was in the saved disciples, that kingdom will not be taken away from them. The kingdom of God was not within the unsaved Israelites but it was in their midst while Christ, the King, was in their midst. The saved Israelites, as well as the unsaved Israelites thought Christ had come for national, political redemption (Luke 24:21 in accordance with Luke 1:67 to 77. Joseph, the rich man, was waiting for this

kingdom of God. Luke 23:50. The disciples asked the Lord after His death: “wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Acts 1:6.

God had a kingdom long before Christ came to earth, God has a kingdom today.

In one of Paul’s last Epistles he referred to certain saints who were his fellowworkers unto “the kingdom of God.” Colossians 4:11. If you are a Christian, surely you want to be a faithful workman in “the kingdom of God” and for that kingdom. It is imperative therefore that Christians know just how they fit into “the kingdom of God” and just how to labor intelligently and Scripturally for “the kingdom of God.”

Quite frequently we find in the Bible the expression “that ye may know,” “ye know.” “we know,” etc. Christians should know. They should know positively that they are saved; by grace, through faith in the crucified and glorified Christ. They should know the Scriptures. They should know how to study, appropriate and apply the Scriptures. They should know the Bible program concerning “the kingdom of God” during this present grace age and know how this program differs from the Bible programs concerning “the kingdom of God” in ages past and the program of “the kingdom of God” that is to be after this present age has closed.

WE ARE CALLED UNTO THE KINGDOM

“That ye walk worthy of God Who hath called us unto His kingdom and glory.’ I Thessalonians 2:12.

Every child of God should earnestly desire to walk worthy of God. We should marvel that it is possible, by the grace of God, to thus walk. God’s Word so plainly teaches that the very best human is not worthy of His blessings. No sinner is saved because he is worthy of God. He is saved because God is the God of all grace and because “worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” The believing sinner is made accepted in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:6. Our calling and salvation are not of works but according to God’s grace and purpose in Christ Jesus. II Timothy 1:9.

Something more than a desire and zeal are essential if the believer is to walk worthy of God. God’s Word declares that zeal must be according to knowledge. In other words, God’s child must obey II Timothy 2:15: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.” There may be zeal, sincerity and enthusiasm wasted by even an earnest spiritual saint who is ignorant concerning the kingdom and its program to which he has been called. Every child of God today is a member of the Body of Christ. For every such member God’s Book tells of a very definite hope and calling. That Body, with the sphere of blessing is clearly described in Ephesians and Colossians. For the member of the Body of Christ the Holy Spirit has written in Ephesians 4:1: “I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”

To walk worthy of God we must walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called. We are not called to be Israelites. We are not called with Israel’s calling. We do not enjoy Israel’s hope, any more than we are now under Israel’s peculiar Divine judgment. We are not called to bring in the kingdom or to preach the gospel of the kingdom. We have a very distinct, specific grace program. Let us diligently search the Scriptures and see just what our program is, unto what kingdom and glory we are called, so we may walk worthy of God.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

In the Book of Matthew we find recorded seven times, “the kingdom of heaven is like unto,” and three times. “the kingdom of heaven is likened unto.” But after we have studied all of these parables. we have found no satisfactory answer to the question. “what is the kingdom of heaven?” To Peter, the Lord Jesus said. ‘ I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 16:19. Without diligently searching the Scriptures to see whether or not it be true, many have accepted as Divine truth the interpretation of certain men who have taught that Peter, with the Eleven, used one key for Israel on the day of Pentecost, to begin the Body of Christ and used the other key about seven years later to open the Church door for the Gentiles, beginning with the household of Cornelius. However certain or uncertain we may feel as to the truth of this interpretation, students of the Word know that they must ignore many Scriptures to accept it. And even if we agree that this is the correct Scriptural interpretation, we have no specific answer to the question, “What is the kingdom of heaven?” In fact, after we have carefully studied in the Book of Matthew the more than thirty verses in which we find the expression. “the kingdom of heaven,” we have no satisfactory answer to this question; but rather are convinced that the kingdom of heaven is no one specific thing. However, there is a definite phase of the “kingdom of heaven” that we may understand by carefully comparing Matthew, Mark and Luke; namely, the kingdom of Jesus Christ, Israel’s King, on this earth. promised by Jehovah to David and confirmed by Jehovah’s prophets to Israel. While the “kingdom of God” and the “kingdom of heaven” are not always identical, yet they are so in the Scriptures we shall now consider:

1. Luke 23:51—“Himself (Joseph) waited for the kingdom of God.”
2. Luke 10:9—“The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.”
3. Luke 9:2—“Sent them to preach the kingdom of God.”
4. Luke 21:31—“the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.”
5. Matthew 3:2—“the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
6. Matthew 4:17—“the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
7. Matthew 10:7—“the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

We may be sure that all of these Scriptures speak of the same kingdom to which Jesus referred in Mark 1:14 and 15, which we quote: “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, “the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the Gospel.”

When Jesus began His ministry in the land of the Jews. Nathanael saluted Him as King of Israel. John 1:49. But several centuries before that salutation Jehovah declared that He was King of Israel. Isaiah 43:15 . . . Isaiah 44:6 . . . Isaiah 41:21. “The Lord your God was your king.” I Samuel 12:12. By the mouth of Daniel the Lord declared that He would set up a kingdom on this earth that would never be moved. Daniel 2:44. The Lord promised a kingdom forever to the Seed of David. II Samuel 7:16. “One king shall be king unto them all.” Ezekiel 27:22. “A king shall reign and prosper.” Jeremiah 23:5.

Jesus was born to occupy David’s throne and establish His kingdom forever. Luke 1:29 to 33. He was to accomplish the consolation of Israel. Luke 2:25. He was to deliver Israel from their enemies. Luke 1:67 to 77. He was to fulfill the promises God made to Abraham, and confirmed by all of the prophets since the world began. Luke 1:70. These promises guaranteed to Israel the peaceful possession of their land under the Prince of Peace on David’s throne. Genesis 17:8. Isaiah 9:6 and 7. Amos 9:11 to 15. Ezekiel 36:24 to 34.

Jesus was born King of the Jews. Matthew 2:2. God sent forth His Son, made under the law. Galatians 4:4. The Son said, “the time is fulfilled.” He came to confirm the promises made

by the prophets to Israel. Romans 15:8. He came to fulfill the promises also. When the King presented Himself to His Nation, He said, “the kingdom of God is at hand.” Mark 1:15. He said, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matthew 4:17. He said, “If I with the finger of God cast out demons, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.” Luke 11:20.

David’s Seed had arrived. Jesus was born the Seed of David, in the house of David, in the city of David, to take the throne of David. David’s throne was on earth. The kingdom guaranteed to David’s Seed was a kingdom on earth with a throne on earth.

This kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God, was at hand when the Son of man was there. That kingdom will be at hand when the Son of man comes back to earth. That kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God therefore, is not now at hand. It is possible for a man today to be born into the kingdom of God, if that is the same as being baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, but that does not mean that members of the Body of Christ during this day of grace shall be among those to whom the Lord shall say, “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

It is no easy matter to disprove the fact that between the time the Lord shall call His Body to glory and that day when He shall return as the Son of man, to Israel, there shall be a period of universal sorrow, distress of nations, and signs in the heavens.

It should be a very simple task to convince any student of the Word of God that God’s program for this age is the making of a new man, (Ephesians 2:15) the outgathering of the members of the Church of Christ which is His Body, rather than establishing on earth the kingdom of heaven proclaimed by John the Baptist, Jesus and His Twelve; that the evangel for today is not the Gospel of the kingdom proclaimed in connection with the proclamation of the kingdom of heaven, but the Gospel of Grace.

It should be just as easy to convince any student that God is going to deal with the Nation Israel, and have His messengers proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, after He has accomplished His purpose concerning the Body during this age. To admit this is to admit that the kingdom of the heavens is in abeyance, that the Nation Israel has been temporarily set aside, that God’s covenants concerning Canaan and the earth have been for the time suspended. But the difficult task is to decide when the postponement of the kingdom actually began.

We are all agreed that during this dispensation of grace, any individual Israelite can be saved by grace and become a member of the Body of Christ. If we call that being born into the kingdom of God, then the kingdom of God has not been taken away from individual Israelites, and never during the past nineteen centuries has there been a time when the offer of salvation has been denied any Jew. Therefore, the kingdom of God that was taken away from Israel was not the offer of salvation to individual Israelites. but the offer of the restoration to the Nation. That restoration was promised by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began. Luke 1:70 and Acts 3:21.

By carefully comparing Acts 3:21 with Luke 1:70, we must believe that God, by the mouth of Peter, was offering to Israel, in Acts 3:14 to 26, national restoration as well as individual salvation. If Jesus was offering His Nation, after His resurrection, the very same kingdom of heaven that He offered to that Nation before His death, how could He have offered at the same time a place in His Body to individual believers? The answer to this question requires more than superficial thinking.

If there was a continuation of the offer of the kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God, to the Nation in the third chapter of Acts, or a renewal of the offer, then the Lord delayed action in taking away the kingdom from Israel, and giving it to another nation. It is difficult, if not

impossible, to trace the ministry of the twelve apostles through the Book of Acts and learn where the Lord took the kingdom away from Israel and gave it to another nation.

Most assuredly the Lord was not giving the kingdom of God to another nation on the day of Pentecost, when Peter said to Israel, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” Acts 2:38.

Certainly that kingdom was not being given to another nation when Peter, in Acts 3:26, said to Israel, “Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”

The fact of the matter is, that the kingdom which Jesus offered to Israel before His death and immediately following His death—the time of the restitution of all things—has never been given to any nation.

The salvation of God which has been sent to the nations is a different message and with that different message God began a different program. That God offered to individual believers membership in the Body of Christ some years after the day of Pentecost, no one should deny. But that God offered to individual Israelites membership in that Body, either before, or on, the day of Pentecost, thoughtful students of the Word must question.

Concerning Peter’s message to Israel in Acts 3:14 to 26, Mr. John Darby taught that God sent that message to the Nation. He wrote in his “Synopsis,” “Acts to Philippians” (page 11) “In a word, they are invited to return by repentance, and enjoy all the promises made to Israel. The Messiah, Himself should return from heaven to establish their blessing. The whole Nation is here addressed as natural heirs of the promise made to Abraham.”

In his “Christian Workers’ Commentary” (page 347), Dr. James M. Gray wrote, concerning Acts 3:19 to 21, “Let them now repent that the Lord may send the Messiah who hath been appointed for you. The inference from all this to the end of the chapter is that, had they as a Nation repented the Messiah would have returned at that time to set up His kingdom in Israel.”

Therefore, both Mr. Darby and Dr. Gray, with hundreds of other able exegetes, believed that there was a definite offer to Israel, after the resurrection of Jesus, of the same kingdom of God which Jesus said, in Matthew 21:43, would be taken from that Nation and given to another nation. That particular kingdom will be given to Israel.

When the Son of man returns to earth the kingdom of God will be at hand. Luke 21:31. Israel will be saved. Romans 11:26. Their house then will not be desolate.

THE CHURCH—THE BODY

Sometimes the word “church” is used in a general sense and sometimes it refers specifically to the Body of Christ. “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. Psalms 22:22. And Hebrews 2:12: Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” Here we learn that “the congregation” of Psalm 22:22 is “the church” of Hebrews 2:12. The Body of Christ of Ephesians 3:6 was never mentioned in prophecy (Colossians 1:24 to 28). Therefore the church of Hebrews 2:12 could not refer to the Body of Christ.

The Hebrew word in the Old Testament Scriptures for “congregation” is found 83 times. The word is “qahal”. It is interesting to note that this Old Testament Hebrew word is translated “E-K-K-L-E-S-I-A” in the Greek Septuagint translation many times. This is the same Greek

word translated 80 times “church,” and 24 times “churches” in the so-called New Testament Scriptures. It is translated three times in Acts 19 “assembly.” Acts 19:32, 39 and 41.

This refers to an assembly of heathen in a theater. “Ekklesia” means literally “called-out.” Although we read nothing in the Bible concerning the Church, which is Christ’s Body, until we come to the ministry of the Apostle Paul, God certainly had “called-out” groups of redeemed people before that time. In Acts 7:38 we read of the “ekklesia” (church) in the wilderness. And we have mentioned the fact that Israel, the congregation of the Lord, under the reign of law, is called in the Greek translation “the ekklesia.” Even a gathering of unsaved heathen could have been correctly called an “ekklesia.”

We read of the “ekklesia of God” in Nehemiah 13:1.

And in that Book we learn how the Samaritans persecuted the “ekklesia of God.” So Saul of Tarsus was not the first one to persecute the Church of God. The word “church” is literally “Kurion”, “of the Lord.” Christ is called “Kurios” many times in the so-called New Testament Scriptures.

Some Christians endeavor to prove that the Lord Jesus was referring to the Body of Christ in Acts 9:4 because he asked “Why persecutest thou Me?” They argue that in persecuting the disciples of Christ they were persecuting Christ, and hence the disciples were His Body. According to that same argument Matthew 25:40 proves that the kingdom of Matthew 25:31 to 47 was the Body of Christ. Hence they have no valid proof. The kingdom of Matthew 25 was from the foundation of the world. Whereas God’s eternal purpose concerning Christ’s Body was from before the foundation of the world. Ephesians 3:9 to 11. Ephesians 1:3 and 4. II Timothy 1:9. Titus 1:2.

If we call the Body of Christ the kingdom of Christ, because of Colossians 1:13 and II Timothy 4:1 and II Timothy 4:18, we certainly know that it is not the kingdom of Matthew 25 and Acts 1:6. So we see that Christ is related to more than one kingdom in the Bible. Again this question, which kingdom did Christ have in mind in the petition “Thy kingdom come” in the “Our Father” prayer?

Christ’s Body in Ephesians 3:6 is in the Greek the “Sussoma”, meaning literally “Joint-Body.” Paul mentioned the Body using the Greek word “Soma” about 15 times. No other writer, in referring to the Church, uses the word “Soma.” So we say it is a Pauline word. When we say that the mystery concerning the Body of Christ is a Pauline doctrine, we mean that this mystery by Christ was revealed to him first. Paul passed it on to others. “How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words.) Ephesians 3:3. “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” II Timothy 2:2. “Unto me who am less than the least, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ.” Ephesians 3:8 and 9.

The unsearchable riches of Christ was a revelation to Paul to preach among Gentiles. “Unsearchable” is literally “untraceable,” meaning truth not found in Prophecy—Note in the language of Colossians 1:26: “Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints.”

Every truth proclaimed by Peter and the Eleven in the ministry recorded in the Book of Acts, was in fulfillment of Scripture. Quite a difference. The Prophets foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow and even foretold a ministry of grace (I Peter 1:10 to 13), but they said nothing about Paul’s message of Ephesians 3:1 to 11.

In the sight of this plain declaration of Divine Truth what folly to teach—as some outstanding Bible teachers are teaching—that “the dispensation of the mystery” began on the day of Pentecost.

Note carefully Ephesians 3:9: “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ.”

On the day of Pentecost, and for some years thereafter, the administration of the mystery was as much hid in God as it was in the days of Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel and John the Baptist.

The Twelve did not even hear of the gospel of the uncircumcision until 14 years after Paul was converted. Galatians 2:1 to 7.

The mystery, and its administration, was Gentilish. Colossians 1:24 to 28. Ephesians 3:1 to 11. II Timothy 1:11. During the first nine chapters of Acts it was not lawful for the Twelve to fellowship with Gentiles or preach to them. Acts 10:28. Acts 11:19. Acts 5:29 to 32. Gentiles could not even receive the gospel of the circumcision or the gospel of the kingdom until after Peter’s house-top vision in Acts 10. And then what a commotion among the Christian Jews, because Peter had preached to the household of a God-fearing, Jew-loving, alms-giving, moral, praying Gentile. Read Acts 11:1 to 8.

Note the reaction about seven years after Pentecost: “Where they heard these things they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” Acts 11:18.

Now think of the folly of beginning the Gentilish mystery and the Joint-Body of Christ before Acts 11:18!

As members of Christ’s Body we are to walk worthy of our vocation and calling, worthy of God’s kingdom whereunto we are called.

The kingdom of Christ of Matthew 4:17 and Matthew 10:7 is not the Body of Christ and to transfer the whole program of Matthew 5, 6 and 7 into “the dispensation of the grace of God” and “the dispensation of the mystery” is to greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures.

Let us stand with Paul on Galatians 2:21 and Galatians 5:1: “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” Galatians 2:21. And Galatians 5:1: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

Remember the words of Galatians 1:7: “But there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”

We will include in God’s grace program of today any and all spiritual truth from Genesis to Revelation that is compatible with God’s grace message and program for the members of the Body of Christ.

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

Surely all earlier spiritual programs which God gave to His people should be studied in the light of revelation from Christ for His Church given some years later on.

Therefore is it not obvious that we must study Exodus. Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Numbers. Psalms and other Old Testament Writings in the light of Romans, Galatians. Ephesians and Colossians to know what Divine truth we may bring into this dispensation of grace to include in God’s spiritual program for the Body of Christ?

Must we not likewise study Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and the ministry of the Twelve in the Book of Acts in the light of Romans, Galatians, Ephesians and Colossians to know what has been done away and what the Holy Spirit has retained for our obedience and practice? Also that the early ministry of Christ must be studied in the light of Paul's last Writings?

The Lord Jesus while on earth did not teach concerning His Body. He never once intimated that He would be far above all principality and power and be Head of the Church which is His Body, the members of which would be raised up and seated with Him in the heavenlies. The members of His Body are not under the law, are not to receive physical circumcision; are not to be subject to the religious restraints or practice the religious ceremonies of the Jews. Also must not the early ministry of Paul be studied in the light of Paul's last writings? In giving forth Body truth Paul never was led by the Holy Spirit to speak of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of man, or as Jesus of Nazareth, or as King of the Church. Paul in writing to Gentiles, had practically nothing to say about what Christ did on earth. Note carefully II Corinthians 5:16: "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more."

If the disciples of Christ were not members of the Body of Christ during the days of His earthly ministry, and if, during those days, they lived with the Messiah as the Son of man, under a dispensation different from this present one, was He preaching to them Divine Truth that was not only for the kingdom dispensation in which He lived and taught on earth, but that was to apply to the Church of this dispensation and be obeyed by Gentile members of the Body described in Ephesians and Colossians? Every intelligent student of the Word of God will immediately answer "certainly not all of it."

When the Lord Jesus taught the kingdom truths in the Sermon on the Mount did He have in mind His rejection by Israel, the making of the one New Man of Ephesians 2:15? Therefore in the 5th, 6th and 7th chapters of Matthew was He presenting a spiritual program for the practice of members of His Body in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile?

Even the suggestion that the Lord's teaching in those chapters of Matthew were not intended for this present grace dispensation stirs some Christians to righteous or otherwise indignation, expressed with a vigorous protest, if not with sarcastic denunciation. But the fact is, that those Christians who protest and denounce ignore more than fifty percent of the commands and orders included in the Sermon on the Mount and make no effort to obey them. As has been truly said by many, if a Christian is one who perfectly obeys Matthew 5, 6 and 7, there are no Christians. And the messenger of the grace of God knows full well that no one becomes a Christian by struggling with the Golden Rule or by striving to do all that is commanded in the Sermon on the Mount. On the other hand, no such messenger would make any attempt to drop from God's spiritual program for the Body of Christ the Divine truth which God gave for our obedience.

We want to be obedient to every command of the Lord that is intended for His people during this age of grace. But now this question: "When did this present age of grace begin?" The answer to this question is so important. If it began while Jesus was on earth in the land of the Jews, how much of the program then presented to the twelve apostles is to be included in God's spiritual program for members of the Body today? If this present age began on the day of Pentecost, as some Bible teachers claim, and if God has in no way abridged the Church program, as found in the Book of Acts, where can we find a single group of Christians, a single church organization which is preaching and practicing the "Acts" Church program, including all of the supernatural demonstrations, signs and religious ceremonies?

In other words, does the Lord want us, as Christians, to follow the kingdom program and obey the orders which Christ, on earth, presented to His Nation and His disciples, or does He want us to follow in the footsteps of the twelve apostles and Paul as they ministered during the “Acts” period? If He wants us to select a part of these programs and reject the rest, which shall we reject? What Divine principle would the Holy Spirit have us to employ?

To become a member of the Body of Christ is to enter the kingdom of God. Sometimes, therefore, the Body of Christ and “the kingdom of God” are identical. Sometimes “the kingdom of God” has no reference to the Body of Christ. Sometimes the word “church” in the Bible does not refer to the Body of Christ.

CONCERNING ADAM—CHRIST—US

When Christ was on earth He said to the Jews “before Abraham was I am.” John 8:49. Christ could have said, “before Adam was I am.” Note Genesis 1:20: “And God said, Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the flesh of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” The word “God” here is the word “Elohim”. “Elohim” is the plural of “Eloah.”

What did Elohim mean when He said, “let Us”? The answer is in John 1:1 to 3: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him: and without Him was not anything made that was made.” Here we note that Christ is called “God,” and in the beginning He made all things. Therefore Christ made Adam.

Now note I Corinthians 15:45 and 47: “And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam was made a living soul;’ the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” “The first man is of the earth, earthy; but the Second Man is the Lord from heaven.” So Adam is called “the first man” and Christ is called “the last Adam,” “the Second Man from heaven.” The Second Man came from heaven four thousand years after He created the first man.

Read these two interesting statements: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.” John 1:14: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same: that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”

Christ became a Man that He might through death destroy Satan’s “death power.” “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming.” I Corinthians 15:21 to 23. By Adam, death; by Christ, the resurrection of the dead. In Adam all die. In Christ all that are Christ’s at His coming shall be made alive.

“In Adam.” “In Christ.” The Bible is the story of two men. Do you remember the words of Christ in John 3:6: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.” All who are born of the flesh are in Adam. All who are born of the Spirit are in Christ. “Therefore if any man, be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are, become new.” I Corinthians 5:17. “There is a new creation.” If any man be in Adam, he is part of the old creation. As such God declared in Romans 8:8: “So then they that

are in the flesh cannot please God.” Note Paul’s confession in Romans 7:18: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.”

There is but one escape from eternal death and that is to get out of Adam and in Christ. How? Ephesians 2:10 is the answer: “For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

How sad, that so many people have made the awful mistake of thinking that they can escape eternal death by trying to be good, by joining some church organization, or by taking on a religious program. No one can get out of Adam and in Christ by doing; only by believing. You must be God’s workmanship before God will accept your work.

In the Epistle to the Romans we have the message of Ruin and Retribution, of Redemption, Righteousness, Regeneration, Reconciliation, Resurrection and Reward.

ADAM AND RUIN—CHRIST AND REDEMPTION

The fifth and sixth chapters of Romans tell us of ruin by Adam and redemption by Christ.

The very first words of Romans 5:1, tell how the sinner receives redemption in Christ. “therefore being justified by faith.”

Now we quote: Romans 5:10 to 13 and Romans 5:14, 20 and 21.

ROMANS 5:10 TO 13

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the atonement (reconciliation).

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

(For until the law sin was in the world but sin is not imputed when there is no law.”

ROMANS 5:14, 20 TO 21

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.”

“Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

FROM ADAM TO MOSES

God speaks of an age “from Adam to Moses.” The age was divided into other ages. The first: from Adam’s sin until the flood, about 1656 years, when Noah and his family were saved in the ark, the antediluvian period. The people on earth before the flood were not given the ten commandments of the law of Sinai. The second: from the flood to the call of Abram, about 427 years. Abram was not under the law of Sinai. Abram was neither an Israelite, a Jew, nor an Old

Testament character. Abram was circumcised when he was ninety-nine years of age (Genesis 17:8 to 20) at which time his name was changed to Abraham.

God's Book speaks of a Covenant of Promise. God gave this promise to Abram about 430 years before He entered into that Sinai agreement with the descendants of Abraham, which we now call the Old Covenant. Galatians 3:6, 8 and 17. To that promise God added the Law (or Old) Covenant at Sinai 430 years after. Galatians 3:19. Galatians 3:17.

The law did not and could not release any sinner from the universal law of sin and death. Romans 8:3. But the law did not annul the Covenant of Promise which God gave to Abram. Christ came as the promised Seed of Abraham. Galatians 3:16. And we read concerning Christ this good news for sinners in Hebrews 2:16 and 17: "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the Seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

So where sin abounded in Adam and by Moses and the law, more abundant grace came by Jesus Christ.

We quote also II Corinthians 5:10 to 21.

II CORINTHIANS 5:10 TO 21

"For we must all appear before the judgment seal of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead.

And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

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

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Sin and death entered by Adam 2500 years before the law entered at Sinai. About 4000 years after Adam, the first man, sinned, Christ, the Second Man, came from heaven to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Hebrews 9:26.

The law, which God inscribed on two tables of stone, did not in any way remove the sinner's guilt or deliver him from the sentence of death. Contrariwise, that law in II Corinthians

3:7 to 9 is called the ministry of condemnation and death. The law entered that the offense, or reign of sin and death, might abound.

BY CHRIST THE RECONCILIATION

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

“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” II Corinthians 5:19 and 21.

As we learn in Romans 5 what came by Adam and what came by Christ, so we learn in Romans 6 the believer’s relation to the old creation and the new creation. He is crucified, dead, buried, and risen in Christ and with Christ.

With the blessed doctrine of reconciliation the Holy Spirit joins the doctrine of the believer’s new creation and the doctrine of his identification with the crucified and resurrected Christ. “And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.” II Corinthians 5:15.

Then note the “wherefore” of II Corinthians 5:16: “Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.” Perhaps we should emphasize the “henceforth”. The “henceforth” program here suggests also a “hitherto” program.

We have presented in II Corinthians 5 the reconciliation that is mentioned in Romans 5:11 and Romans 11:15.

Adam and Christ are in view when reconciliation is mentioned, so also is the new creation. When Christ was on earth He was confirming promises God made to Israel by the prophets. No promises were made unto them until the call of Abram. Although we do read in Genesis 11:8 “blessed be the Lord God of Shem.” Therefore Christ on earth did not speak to Israel concerning Adam. Neither did the twelve apostles to Israel mention Adam or reconciliation or the new creation or the identification of Romans 6 in the first eleven chapters of Acts. Paul was the apostle of reconciliation. The casting away of Israel brought Paul’s reconciliation ministry. Romans 11:12 and 15. Israel was not cast away until after Saul’s name was changed to Paul. Neither did the reign of grace or dispensation of the grace of God for Gentiles (Ephesians 3:1 to 31) begin until after Saul is called Paul in Acts.

WHY WE SHOULD BE FAITHFUL AMBASSADORS

Note in II Corinthians 5:10, 11 and 14: We persuade men, because we shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ, because the love of Christ constrains us, because we know the terror or the fear of the Lord, and because Christ died for us and we should live unto Him and for Him. Note II Corinthians 5:18: “And all things are of God, Who hath reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”

God hath reconciled us and committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We have no option in the matter. Our task is laid out for us. What a responsibility! What a glorious opportunity! What a blessed privilege! What a message for poor, lost, ruined children of Adam! “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their

trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." II Corinthians 5:19 to 21.

SALVATION—WHO DOES THE PRAYING?

There is a great difference between the message of salvation in Luke 18 when the publican prayed "God be merciful to me a sinner," and the ministry of reconciliation which God has committed to us. God is reconciled to the world. Christ has been made sin. Eternal redemption has been obtained (Hebrews 9:12). There is no praying through or begging on the part of the penitent sinner in II Corinthians 5:20. Read it again: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Believers are ambassadors beseeching and praying to unbelievers to receive Christ and God's reconciliation. And in this they are agents of God acting on orders. What a spiritual crime to spoil this glorious Divine ministry by mixing with it the kingdom gospel, which the Lord and His apostles had preached to Israel!

But now catch the force of the "henceforth" concerning the knowledge of Christ in His relation to Israel, as Jesus of Nazareth. Note carefully that Peter was the apostle to the circumcision (Galatians 2:8) and he preached Jesus of Nazareth. Acts 2:22 and Acts 10:37 and 38.

To Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, was committed the ministry of reconciliation and "the dispensation of the grace of God for you Gentiles." Ephesians 3:1 and 2.

Note his words in I Corinthians 3:10 and I Corinthians 15:10 and in Colossians 1:24 to 26 and in Ephesians 3:7 and 8.

I CORINTHIANS 3:10.

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."

I CORINTHIANS 15:10.

"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

COLOSSIANS 1:24 TO 26.

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, in my flesh for His Body's sake, which is the Church.

Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God.

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

EPHESIANS 3:7 AND 8.

"Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power.

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

This man Saul, or Paul, had preached Christ to the Jews in the synagogues of Asia and Europe, but his distinctive ministry was to the Gentiles. Christ appeared in a vision in the temple of Jerusalem: "I will send you far hence unto the Gentiles." Acts 22:17 and 21. Note Paul's words in Romans 11:13: "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office" Paul magnified his office; that is, he glorified it.

In Romans 15:16 to 24 he tells something of his unique ministry, not only did he preach his message where no man had ever preached the gospel, but he preached a message which no prophet or apostle of God had ever preached or heard.

Paul preached the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles. The message concerning the unsearchable (untraceable) riches of Christ was Divine Truth that Christ in heaven gave by special revelation to Paul. No prophet of Israel ever spoke of it. If he had it would have been searchable, or traceable in the Scriptures. The unsearchable riches of Christ were not revealed to Peter, James and John. If this ministry had been committed unto them they would not have agreed to go to Israel with the gospel of the circumcision more than fifteen years after the death of Christ. Galatians 2:7 to 9.

When Christ revealed to Paul that he was to no longer know Christ after the flesh, Paul mentioned quite frequently "the mystery" and he wrote of God's eternal purpose in Christ. Ephesians 3:9 to 11.

God's eternal purpose in Christ, concerning the Church which is His Body, is quite different from Israel's kingdom, spoken of by all the prophets since the world began. Luke 1:67 to 77. Acts 3:19 to 24.

Paul mentioned himself in the first person pronoun more than 1100 times. He was neither egotistical nor deluded. He received many revelations from Christ in heaven. II Corinthians 12:1 to 12. He had a different, a specific ministry. This he called "my deposit". (See the original of II Timothy 1:12). He mentioned several times "my gospel." He was a prisoner in jail for this unique message, designated "the mystery." Ephesians 3:1 and 2; Ephesians 4:1; Ephesians 6:19 to 21 and Colossians 4:3 and 4.

Paul wrote about one half of the Books of what we call the New Testament Scriptures. Paul did not believe in red-letting the words spoken by Christ on earth. He never referred, in any detail, to the earthly ministry and teachings of Christ. In writing to Gentiles he would mention the birth, death and resurrection of Christ with one sweep of the pen. No mention of the Sermon on the Mount, the kingdom parables, the "Our Father" prayer. He was not presenting Israel's Messiah and King as the King of the Body.

Concerning the Body, he wrote:

"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Ephesians 5:30 to 32.

Paul did not preach to Gentiles concerning Jesus as the Son of man, or as Jesus of Nazareth. He began with the Saviour's death and resurrection. While Paul himself became a Jew as one under the law to Israel, he stood out against all others for a religionless program of grace for Gentiles. After he reached the prison in Rome he no longer became as one under the law, but wrote:

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Philippians 3:8.

and then he added these words in verse Philippians 3:17:

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”

In other words, get rid of any and all religion. Christ is all you need. Then he added these words in I Timothy 1:16:

“Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”

And then he wrote Ephesians 2:4 to 9:

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace we are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

And he left this exhortation with members of Christ’s Body:

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Ephesians 4:1 to 7.

So we see there is but one true Bible Church in this dispensation; the Body of Christ. There is but one way to be saved, by grace through faith in the crucified and glorified Christ. Members of Christ’s Body are delivered from religion as well as from the law of Sinai and the law of sin and death.