

## Putting right the errors of mid-Acts dispensationalism

I would like to see mid-Acts dispensationalism lose the ultra-dispensationalism or hyper-dispensationalism tags and become the MAINSTREAM understanding of Christianity. Several false dogmas have become widespread among mid-Acts dispensationalists and an overhaul of mid-Acts understanding is required to halt the drift toward its errors becoming solidified into yet another denomination. Cutting edge bible doctrine must always be responsive to a more perfect understanding of the scriptures and can NEVER solidify into a denomination.

Firstly, I would like to clarify my understanding regarding the arrival of the indwelling holy Spirit of promise (and therefore the body of Christ) in Acts 2 and the later commencement of the dispensation of grace in Acts 9.

My understanding in short is this: the body of Christ began with the indwelling of the holy Spirit of promise in believers which began on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and continues with the Spirit baptism of believers to this day (ONE baptism - "One Lord, one faith, one baptism," (Ephesians 4:5 AV)).

The dispensation of grace however did NOT begin on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 (as many believe) but it began with the salvation by grace alone of the Lord's enemy, Saul of Tarsus, on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. Saul did NOT voluntarily repent and be water baptised as the saved Jewish believers who had received the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Saul was stopped in his tracks and saved by God's grace alone. Although Saul was also water baptised (Acts 9:18) he later preached that "Christ sent me not to (water) baptize but to preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 1:17). The ONE BAPTISM he later wrote about in Ephesians 4:5 can only be Spirit baptism because without the Spirit we are "none of his" "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Romans 8:9 AV)

Here is a list of corrections that will help to put the mid-Acts ship back on course:

### 1. Church defined by the presence of the Holy Spirit of promise

The church, the body of Christ is **solely defined** by the presence of **the Holy Spirit of promise** in believers (Romans 8:9, Ephesians 1:13), AKA **the promise of the Holy Ghost** (Acts 2:33), **the blessing of Abraham** and **the promise of the Spirit** (Galatians 3:14). He is the **same Spirit of promise** that was promised to Israel (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-5). Therefore Paul was not the first member of the church, the body of Christ (Romans 16:7). The Lord asked Paul "why persecutest thou ME?" (Acts 9:4, 22:7, 26:14) therefore Peter's little flock were the Lord's body. Paul's partner Barnabas was saved before Paul was (Acts 4:36) and was later called a Christian (Acts 11:26). Peter later saw himself and his people as Christians (1 Peter 4:16).

Paul NEVER claimed that he was the first member of the church, the body of Christ. Paul mentions that Andronicus and Junia were "in Christ" before him (Romans 16:7) (**see NOTE 1**). Paul also declared that Christ is "not divided" (1 Corinthians 1:13). PLEASE STOP DIVIDING CHRIST ALL OF YOU WHO CLAIM THAT THE JEWS SAVED PRIOR TO PAUL WERE IN A DIFFERENT CHURCH!

But Paul WAS

- the first person saved in God's new and unprophesied dispensation of his longsuffering and grace to ignorant and unbelieving sinners - the ME FIRST pattern of the great longsuffering and grace of God toward us ignorant sinners saved since, providing we repent of our ignorance and believe (Ephesians 3:2, 4:18; 1 Timothy 1:13-16; 2 Timothy 2:25; 2 Peter 3:15);
- the apostle to whom the great mysteries of Christ and the power of the preaching of the cross were revealed (Romans 1:16; 16:25; 1 Corinthians 1:17-18, 2:7, 15:51; Galatians 1:11-12; Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 1:26-27; 4:3; 1 Timothy 3:16);
- the apostle who spoke and wrote the commandments of the HEAVENLY Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 14:37);
- the apostle of the Gentiles (he MAGNIFIED his office), given the dispensation of grace to Gentile-ward - the extremely dangerous task of DISPENSING spiritual things intended for (but unwanted by) Israel, among people that the Jews considered UNCLEAN - the Gentiles (Acts 9:16, 10:28; Romans 11:13, 15:27; 2 Corinthians 11:24-27; Ephesians 3:1-9);
- the PLANTER of most of the early Christian churches (after Jerusalem and Syrian Antioch), the MASTERBUILDER (1 Corinthians 3:10) of the doctrine and functioning of the body of Christ on earth for the duration of its existence and the great ENCOURAGER of the loving and graceful behavior of Christians toward each other and the world (see Acts chapters 13 to 28 and all of Paul's epistles - Romans to Philemon).

*[The main error that mid-Acts dispensationalists make is to try and start the body of Christ with the salvation of Paul. This leads to great confusion and puts Peter and Barnabas in a different body, or church, to Paul. A dispensational change can occur within an existing body of God's people. The new dispensation of law was introduced through Moses to an existing body of God's people - Israel. Many of Israel did not go along with it and were cut off.*

*The new grace dispensation was introduced through Paul to an existing body of God's people - the church of God which began on the day of Pentecost and which was initially a Jewish sect. Many existing members were blinded to God's new dispensation of grace revealed through Paul. They could not let go of the former law dispensation and were broken off (Romans 11:5-7, Romans 11:17-20, Galatians 2:16-21).]*

## 2. The millennial kingdom has never been 'at hand' yet

Israel's millennial kingdom was **never** preached as being imminent or at hand during the Lord's earthly ministry. Even the Son did not know that day and hour (Mark 13:32). It will not be at hand until the Lord returns in a cloud with power and great glory (Luke 21:27). Even after his death, burial and resurrection, and just prior to his ascension, the Lord would still not be drawn into revealing whether or not the millennial kingdom was at hand (Acts 1:6-7). He instead drew their attention to the imminent arrival of the promise of the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:8).

Although the coming millennial kingdom was talked about by Jesus, the kingdom that John the Baptist and Jesus preached as being **at hand** was the kingdom that is **within us** (Luke 17:21) - the Holy Spirit kingdom (Romans 14:17). John would have

been preaching a false alarm if he was preaching that the millennial kingdom was at hand – BECAUSE IT WASN'T (**see NOTE 2**). John preached **only the truth** – that Jesus was the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29) and that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Ghost (John 1:33). The spiritual kingdom of God within us is an **earnest** (foretaste and pledge) of our eternal inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14) in the heavenly, eternal kingdom of God (2 Corinthians 5:1, 2 Timothy 4:18, 1 Peter 1:3-4). The millennial kingdom will be “seen” therefore it will be earthly and temporal (2 Corinthians 4:18), not heavenly and eternal.

God was not surprised by Israel’s rejection of his Holy Spirit of promise because the present dispensation was **kept secret** since the world began (Romans 16:25). Therefore the great tribulation, followed by Israel’s millennial kingdom, were also **never at hand** in the months and years immediately after the day of Pentecost – although it is understandable that the believers thought they were (Acts 1:6-7, Acts 2:19-20, Acts 3:19). This present dispensation had been kept secret – hidden from prophecy.

*[The second main error that mid-Acts dispensationalists make is to try and convince us that John the Baptist and Jesus Christ (in his earthly role as a minister of the circumcision – Romans 15:8) were preaching that Israel’s millennial kingdom was at hand. That is why the word “kingdom” has become pretty much unusable when speaking with mid-Acts people. They teach that God had planned to install Israel’s millennial kingdom sometime after the day of Pentecost, but changed his mind in reaction to Israel’s persecution of his Spirit-filled flock. Therefore they are teaching that God does not have foreknowledge (1 Peter 1:2) and had not planned the introduction of his mystery program, through Paul, since the world began (Romans 16:25).*

*Most mid-Acts and Acts 28 teachers completely miss the point by bundling the preaching of John the Baptist and the earthly Jesus under the heading “the offering of the (millennial) kingdom”. It is a necessary false foundation stone of the falsehood that they are preparing their students for – the falsehood that the kingdom preached by John the Baptist and the earthly Jesus is a different kingdom to that preached by Paul. The kingdom they are failing to see is the kingdom (“that world”) of THE CHILDREN OF THE RESURRECTION (Luke 20:34-36) which was the kingdom consistently preached from the time of John the Baptist right through to Paul (1 Corinthians 15:12-58) and the kingdom of which the subjective Holy Spirit kingdom gives us a foretaste or earnest (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14). For the HOPE OF ISRAEL, the lively hope (1 Peter 1:3), the hope of the resurrection of the dead, was Paul “bound with this chain” (Acts 23:6; 26:6-8; 28:20).]*

### 3. The Church are partakers of Israel’s spiritual things

Gentile believers today are partakers of **their** spiritual things; i.e. Israel’s spiritual things (Romans 15:27). We are partakers of New Covenant spiritual blessings initially promised to Israel and our head is the mediator of the New Covenant (1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 12:24). The dispensation of grace is the dispensation of Israel’s spiritual things to anyone who believes Paul’s gospel (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Timothy 2:8-10). The promises were made to Abraham and his **seed** – which is Christ (Galatians 3:16). Cleansed Gentiles are Christ’s flesh and bone (Ephesians 5:30) and therefore inheritors of the promises made to Abraham and his seed.

Both Jews **and** Gentiles were unwittingly involved (Acts 4:27-28) in the Lord's offering "one sacrifice for sins forever (Hebrews 10:12)". So the Gentiles were also cleansed by the Lord's sacrifice - although this wasn't revealed until the Lord directed Peter to go to the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10:15). Gentiles who are washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11) are **partakers of God's covenants of promise with Israel** (Galatians 3:14, Ephesians 2:12-13). We both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Ephesians 2:18) - the **Spirit of promise** that was promised to Israel (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 11:19; 18:31, 36:26; Joel 2:28-29; Luke 24:49; John 16:7; Acts 1:4-5, 2:33; Galatians 3:14; Ephesians 2:13).

*[In their vigour to keep the church from being stained by anything Jewish, many mid-Acts dispensationalists overlook the fact that we have inherited spiritual things which all stem from the Lord's "blood of sprinkling" of the New Covenant - a covenant of promise that was made with the house of Israel (Hebrews 8:6-10).*

*Prior to Calvary, God could only have an earthly, fleshly church (Israel), of a single chosen bloodline and rigorously disciplined by an array of laws and ordinances. After Calvary and the outpouring of the promise of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:33), it became possible for God to have a spiritual, heavenly church for the first time. We who believe are ascended into the heavenly realm with Lord Jesus. God's spiritual, heavenly church is the only game in town today.]*

#### 4. The saints shall judge angels and the world

The saints shall judge angels **and** the world (1 Corinthians 6:2-3). Therefore the saints of this present age will judge the world at the Second Coming of the Lord. It is the only possible time we could. The Jewish saints shall be saved, even as the Gentiles (Acts 15:11), and they will judge the twelve tribes during the millennial kingdom (Matthew 19:28). The Gentile saints may judge the other tribes of the world. God has promised to restore his judges as at the first (Isaiah 1:26).

All of his saints have the honour of executing vengeance and punishments and binding kings and nobles with chains (Psalms 149). Surely this will be the role of the saints at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints (Colossians 3:4, 1 Thessalonians 3:13). Although the Lord and all his saints will be clothed with houses from heaven (2 Corinthians 5:2), they will have that ability that the Lord and his angels have always had - to appear as flesh and bone humans (Genesis 18:2; Judges 6:22, 13:16; Zechariah 1:10-11; John 20:26-27; Hebrews 13:2).

There is a close interrelationship between events on earth and events in heaven (Matthew 18:18) so judging angels and the world are likely to be closely interrelated also. Satan's angels are the current princes of **this world** (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11; Romans 8:38; Ephesians 3:10, 6:12; Colossians 1:16, 2:15; Titus 3:1) so judging them is to judge the world also.

*[I was taught that we are in a parenthesis of mystery, with prophecy being interrupted at the opening bracket and resuming at the closing bracket. After being raptured to some heavenly destination (planets in outer space according to some teachers) we will play no further role on earth in the prophesied great tribulation and the millennial kingdom which follows. That is why the current batch of mid-Acts teachers make heroic efforts to prove that Paul was NOT speaking to us grace age saints in 1 Corinthians 6:2 but **WAS** speaking to us in 1 Corinthians 6:3. After all, angels are in heaven and that's where we are headed.*

*Yes, Satan's angels **are** presently in heaven yet they still manage to rule the kingdoms of the earth (Luke 4:5-7). Judging angels and the world are closely interrelated and are also closely connected with God's prophetic program. So we must revise the dogma that we are totally disassociated from future prophesied events.*

*We are **RIGHT** in believing that our current dispensation was a **MYSTERY – HIDDEN** from prophecy. We are **WRONG** to believe that once revealed, the mystery does not become woven into God's overall program for heaven and earth and future prophesied events such as the millennial kingdom.*

*God has his angels and he has his saints. Among his saints there are differences in glory (1 Corinthians 15:38, 41; 2 Timothy 2:20-21) but I am certain that the saints are not divided along dispensational or racial lines. Saved Gentiles of this present dispensation of his grace are **FELLOWCITIZENS** with **ALL** of God's saints since the world began (Ephesians 2:19).**]***

## **NOTE 1**

Pastor Ricky at the Berean Bible Society suggested to me that Andronicus and Junia were "in Christ" but NOT "in the body of Christ" – in a similar manner to the saints of the Old Testament who were saved on the basis of the Lord's **FUTURE** atonement. There are three problems with Pastor Ricky's explanation. **The first** is that Andronicus and Junia were saved **AFTER** the Lord's atonement. **The second** is that, unlike the Old Testament saints, Andronicus and Junia were still walking around on this earth when they received the **PROMISE** of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:33). The promises were always **FUTURE** for the OT saints. **The third** is that whatever Andronicus and Junia were in was also what **PAUL** considered himself to be in. If you exclude Andronicus and Junia from the body of Christ then you also must **EXCLUDE PAUL** from the body of Christ. Therefore Andronicus and Junia were members of the body of the living God on earth – the church the body of Christ.

## **NOTE 2**

With the benefit of 20/20 hindsight we **KNOW** that Israel's millennial kingdom was not established on earth back in the first century. Therefore if John the Baptist was telling the truth when he said "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2) then he **MUST** have been proclaiming the imminence of a kingdom that actually **WAS AT HAND** - God's subjective **SPIRITUAL** kingdom which actually did arrive and is a foretaste or earnest of the kingdom of the children of the resurrection (Luke 20:34-36) preached by John, Jesus and Paul (1 Corinthians 15:12-58). This process, which will ultimately lead to the "manifestation of the sons of God (Romans 8:19)", began when the Father's promise of the Holy Ghost was delivered to the believers on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

John Bisset, Hamilton, New Zealand

Website: <https://johnbisset.nz/>

Email: [john.bisset@gmail.com](mailto:john.bisset@gmail.com)