

The TRANSITION
out of Judaism and into pure Christianity
as recorded in the Book of Acts
and the epistles of Paul

A Vital Doctrine
which is greatly misunderstood
and most often ignored
in Christendom

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Sept. 2015

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The book of Acts is the thrilling inspired history of the first 32 years of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Christ from the dead followed by the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit poured new life and vitality into the community of believers gathered in Jerusalem. Unfolding before the reader is the fresh and vibrant account of the day to day attestation of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And yet a sober reality, which has surprised many in reading the book, is to also notice the often casual indications of different aspects of the old Mosaic Law being observed. This is characteristically true throughout the whole book. Jewish believers during this period were clearly still very much Law observant. As outstanding evidence of Law observance note the following examples—

General Law Observance stated—Acts 21:20-24.

Temple Worship—Luke 24:52-53; Acts 2:46; 3:1-3; 5:20, 25, 42;
21:26-27; 22:17; 24:18 and 25:8.

Recognition of the High Priest and Sanhedrin—Acts 4:5-8 and 23:1-5.

Sabbath Observance—Acts 13:14; 16:13 and 17:2.

Dietary Laws—Acts 10:10-16 and 11:2-3.

Feast Day Observances—Acts 2:1; 18:21; 20:6 and 16.

Circumcision—Acts 15:1, 5-6 and 16:3.

Vows and Headshaving—Acts 18:18 and 21:23-24.

Ritual Purifications—Acts 21:24.

Ritual Sacrificial Offerings—Acts 21:26

In addition, there is no recorded revelation in Acts of any condemnation from God for the Jewish believers being Law observant. Instead, it is not until the very end of the Acts period that the book of Hebrews was written telling Jewish believers that the “first Covenant” system “*is becoming obsolete and growing old*” and “*is ready to vanish away*” (8:13). And again, Hebrews 9:10 goes on to say that the Law system was “**imposed** until the time of reformation [setting things straight].” Now these are accurate translations which make it clear that the Law was “*imposed*” until the very end of the Acts period. This time period of the imposition of the Old Covenant upon Jewish believers comes to an end with the conclusion of the book of Acts. So it is that during the book of Acts the Jewish believers were Law observant within the will of God. In a later section of this study we will find out why God allowed the Law to still be practiced.

This passage in Hebrews 9:10 gives us the scriptural term for this time period of the Transition out of Judaism into pure Christianity as “*the time of reformation.*” We normally think of the “Reformation” as that time of the emergence of Protestantism away from Roman Catholicism. But here in Hebrews we receive the Spirit’s inspired term which is commonly translated as “reformation” in many of our Bibles. The Greek word is *diorthosis*, literally meaning ‘to make straight.’ W.E. Vine says “the word has the meaning either (a) of a right arrangement, right ordering, or, more usually, (b) of restoration, amendment, bringing right again; what is here indicated is a time when the imperfect, the inadequate, would be superseded by a better order of things” (*The Expanded Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). So it is that during this time period God was still allowing the Law of Moses to be practiced by believing Jews.

Yet, on the other hand, all readers of Acts recognize that on the Day of Pentecost a new assembly was being formed through a new baptism—the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit. Soon this new assembly came to include Gentiles in large growing proportions. In the middle of the book of Acts, and in clear distinction from their Jewish brethren, these Gentile believers are plainly told that they are not to be placed under the observance of the Mosaic Law system (see Acts 15). In addition, when we read the corollary epistles of Paul, like Romans and Galatians, which were written just before the apostle Paul’s final trip to Jerusalem, we realize that believers today are not under the Law but are under the principles of Grace.

Thus, we have what some have described as an apparent contradiction—that there are two economies in operation at the same time in the book of Acts. The reconciliation for these two conflicting economies in the early history of the Church is the revelation of what has been labeled “the Transition.” This important issue is going to be carefully discussed in this study.

THE TRANSITION

A transition occurs when two systems are in operation simultaneously for a temporary period of time. One system is phasing in while the other is phasing out. So it is that certain theologians and careful Bible teachers have observed that the history of the early Church, as recorded in the book of Acts, represents a Transition time period wherein the old system of historic Judaism is gradually phasing out and the new system of pure Christianity is phasing in. In other words, on the Day of Pentecost when the Church of Jesus Christ suddenly came into existence by the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 2:1, 2; 1 Cor. 12:13), the old Mosaic Law system did not suddenly stop in the practice of the Spirit baptized believers. Indeed, the believers who now formed the early fellowship of that Church in Jerusalem were all Law abiding Jews who continued the practice of the Mosaic Law system. In fact, the Jewish Temple itself became the very center of their operations—Luke 24:52, 53; Acts 2:46; 3:1, 11; 5:12, 20, 25, 42.

If you remember, the final act of Christ in His earthly ministry, which brought the wrath of the Jewish leadership upon Him, was His cleansing of the Temple—“It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves’” (Matt. 21:13). No doubt, this left an indelible impression upon Christ’s disciples. Therefore, immediately after the Day of Pentecost we find Peter and John going up “to the Temple at the hour of prayer” (Acts 3:1). Not only was the Temple the center of the apostles’ preaching and teaching, but the growing congregation of believers actually had become very appreciative of the Mosaic Law precisely because they increasingly understood how many aspects of the ceremonial Law system beautifully prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ. As far as the Jewish believers were concerned, this proper appreciation of the Law continued right up until near the end of the book of Acts. James stated, “You see, brother, how many myriads (Greek, *urias*, many thousands, or tens of thousands) of Jews there are who have believed, *and they are all zealous for the Law*” (Acts 21:18-20).

Consequently, by the time of the close of this Transition period the Church learned that the Law as a governing system was actually “nailed” to the cross. That means that *in principle* the old system had ended at the cross. However, *in practice* the old system was allowed to continue until the time of the Transition was completed.

That there was a new “beginning” by the baptism of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was common knowledge—Acts 11:15. However, the nature of that “beginning” was by no stretch of the imagination comprehended by the apostles and believers. In fact, one of the last things Christ told the apostles was that, when the Holy Spirit was come, there would be *progressive revelation* as to what direction God was leading the Church. Christ said:

*I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, **He will guide you into all truth;** for He will not speak on His own authority, *but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.**
John 16:12, 13.

The Principle of PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

As an example of that progressive revelation, let us take the truth—that we all know and appreciate today—that the Law itself was actually “nailed to the cross.” Now it is important to ask the question, “Did the apostles and Jewish believers know that truth during the early Acts time period?” And the answer is, absolutely not! *For this truth was not revealed* by the Spirit of God until Paul was inspired to write the two epistles, Ephesians and Colossians, at the very close of the book of Acts. It was at the end of the two years (Acts 28:30) in which Paul was in Roman bonds that Ephesians 2:14-17 and Colossians 2:14 were written. That is some 32 years after the Church was founded in Acts

2. So this was not a truth that the Jewish believers could realize and understand in the first years of the Church.

As another example, we might ask the question of whether the early Jewish believers understood the meaning of the “rent veil” in the Temple. As you may remember this rending of the veil in the Temple took place because of the earthquake that occurred when Christ was crucified (Matt. 27:51). Again, the spiritual significance of this phenomenon, and its meaning for the Jewish believer, was not revealed until the book of Hebrews was written some 32 years later, at the very close of Acts. This is when the revelations in Hebrews were given—see Hebrews 10:19-22. When the Hebrew Christians learned this truth, they would be prepared for the destruction of their physical Temple just a few years away in A.D. 70. With the spiritual realities explained in Hebrews, they would be prepared for the total loss of the whole physical Law system.

So it is that the time period between the death of Jesus Christ and the total destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple constituted a time of gradual transition for the believers—out of Judaism into pure Christianity. That total time period was about 40 years long, from A.D. 30 to A.D. 70. The principle history of the early Church as recorded in the book of Acts was about 32 years long and takes one up until about seven or eight years before the final destruction of the Temple. During this time period the Holy Spirit was progressively revealing the distinctive blueprints for the Church of Jesus Christ, which was a “mystery” program not previously revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures—see Romans 16:25-26; Ephesians 3:1-13 and Colossians 1:24-28.

CONFUSION

Untold confusion has occurred in Christendom because of a failure to properly understand this period of Transition. Three major problems have arisen because of an erroneous understanding of this period of time—

The first error, and undoubtedly the major one, is that Christendom has brought over into pure Christianity many select physical rituals that originated in Judaism and were practiced in Acts under the Law system, which actually have no place whatsoever in the worship of God “in Spirit and in truth” (John 4:21-24) for this present Age of Grace. Most Christians in Protestantism simply take it for granted that Christendom has at least two physical ordinances, and they have no realization of the vital connection to Judaism and the Law that these two ordinances have.

The second error is in the other extreme, so much so that some Bible teachers think the Acts period is so characteristic of Judaism that the Church of Jesus Christ could not possibly have started in Acts 2. Consequently, they believe that the present body of Christ began either at the time of Paul’s conversion, or at the time of his first ministry, or some even believe it did not exist until after Acts was over. This so-called “wisdom” totally ignores all the relevant issues of a transition. That the Law of Moses was still being

practiced is a fact. That this means that the “Church which is Christ’s body” did not begin at Pentecost is false.

A third error is that certain Bible teachers have come to the conclusion that there is no other explanation for the Jewish Law being practiced in the book of Acts other than an admission that the early believers were just plain ignorant and disobedient. This blunder focuses upon the apostle Paul practicing the Jewish ceremonial Law as late as Acts 21. They conclude that Paul was just plainly compromising on the truths revealed to him in order to win more Jews. They also believe this action got Paul into trouble and even into prison. This attack on Paul actually destroys his credibility as the apostle of Jesus Christ.

So, one can see that this is a very vital and basic area of biblical doctrine to understand. One needs to know exactly what was happening in the Acts period and why.

WHY IS IT VITAL TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THE TRANSITION?

The vital importance of understanding the Transition in the book of Acts is basically two-fold. First, it provides for us an explanation as to why God allowed the Jewish believers to continue the practice of the Law. Secondly, it provides the basis for properly understanding the very controversial carnal ordinances such as the Lord’s Supper and water baptism. This study can be listed under other important subject headings, each of which is a study in itself. Here, then, are a few of the important reasons—

1. **The change from Law to Grace.** A proper understanding of just *how* the Dispensation of the Law was terminated and the “Dispensation of the Grace of God” (Eph. 3:2) came into practice will provide basic understanding of why the early believers still observed the Law.
2. **God’s purpose for Israel vs. God’s purpose for the Church.** Two entities, Israel and the Church, are still in existence during the book of Acts time frame in the outworking of God’s plan. One must distinguish God’s purpose or allowance for each entity.
3. **Physical worship vs. worship in the Spirit.** Worship under the Law system consisted of many physical agencies—priests, animal sacrifices, the Temple, holy days, etc. All those agencies are absent and unnecessary in a program that depends only on the spiritual realities.
4. **Again, ritualism vs. realities.** Modern Christendom is plagued with numerous rituals borrowed from both Judaism and paganism, none of which have any relevance in the present Age. In fact, they actually distract believers from the appreciation of the spiritual realities.
5. **The Gospel of the Circumcision vs. the Gospel of the Uncircumcision.** As you may know, these two Gospels have reference to the walk of Jewish believers in Christ versus the walk of Gentile believers in Christ. The “walks” were radically different during the Transition.

6. **The miraculous gifts of the Spirit in contrast to the “fruit of the Spirit.”** Israel in the wilderness for 40 years had many miraculous provisions for her guidance and subsistence. So the Church in its 40 year Transition had miraculous provisions by the Spirit for its sustainment.
7. **The growth of the Church through its “childhood” and into “maturity.”** This is also related to the sustaining power of the miraculous gifts until such time as the full revelations of God’s Word for this Age were completed.
8. **Paul preached the Law’s demise to the Gentiles, yet practiced its rites when with Jews.** Was he spiritual or, as some teachers claim, carnal and out of God’s will? It is vitally important to understand how Paul could be and was perfectly consistent in all that he did.
9. **Salvation by works or by faith in God’s grace.** Even the subject of how one is saved came into sharp focus during aspects of the Transition in Acts. The practice of the Law never was for personal soul salvation. Both Jews and Gentiles are saved the same way.
10. **The “breaking off and grafting in of olive branches.”** The unbelieving Jewish nation is likened to olive branches gradually being broken off from a place of nearness to God. In turn, believing Gentiles were grafted into that Abrahamic stock for blessings promised by God.

CHAPTER TWO

CHRIST AND THE LAW OF MOSES

In beginning the study of the Transition period, it is very important to understand Christ's own attitude and allegiance to the Law of Moses. We will note this under ten sections.

1. Jesus Christ was "born under the Law" (Gal. 4:4). He was circumcised the eighth day according to the Law (Luke 2:21). At twelve years of age, which was the customary time for the "Bar Mitzvah" of the son (the time when the son demonstrates his commitment to the Torah, voluntarily accepts God's Covenant and receives full rights as an adult), He went up to the Temple at the Feast of Passover and amazed the teachers by His knowledge and answers (Luke 2:41-50).

2. In the book of Romans the apostle Paul was inspired to characterize Christ's ministry. This is important to remember. Paul said, Christ was "a minister *to the circumcision* for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. 15:8). Thus Christ was a Law abiding Jew Who ministered to Israel those things promised in the Hebrew Scriptures.

3. It became obvious that Christ was preaching the literal, Davidic Kingdom of God for Israel. This is expressed for us in the prophecy of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:67-79). That message automatically brought certain modifications to the Law under the promised New Covenant. These modifications were given by the Messiah's own authority (see Matt. 5:21, 22, etc.). This new authority offended the Jewish leadership. Christendom itself mistakenly thinks that these modifications are directly applicable to Christendom today. In reality, they are specifically for the future Kingdom Age.

4. In the Gospels, especially the synoptic Gospels, Christ actually reinforced the Law of Moses, even though some falsely charged Him with changing the Law. He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom which was basically the new management of the Law under the promises of the New Covenant for the nation of Israel. Thus, Christ spoke with authority—"but I say unto you!"

5. In the "Sermon on the Mount" Christ clearly demonstrated His allegiance to the Law:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away,

one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 5:17-19).

6. In this same sermon Christ instructed them, “. . . first be reconciled to your brother and then come and present your offering at the altar” (Matt. 5:23, 24).
7. When Christ healed the leper He told him “. . . go, show yourself to the priest, and present the offering that Moses commanded” (Matt. 8:4).
8. Christ’s ministry was primarily to the nation of Israel. When He sent out the twelve to preach He told them, “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:5, 6).
9. Concerning the leadership of the nation of Israel, Christ said, “The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not” (Matt. 23:2, 3).
10. The final act of Jesus was His cleansing of the Temple. This is recorded in all three of the synoptic Gospels—Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-19 and Luke 19:45-46. Christ observed the money changers right up on the Temple proper and immediately took violent action. He overthrew the tables and with a cord whip He scattered the profiteers. This was, no doubt, a shocking scene and no one dared to stand in His way. On this occasion Christ said, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’” Thus Christ left the holiness and sanctity of the Temple firmly in the minds of His disciples. It is no wonder the disciples utilized the Temple as the center of their activities after Pentecost.

Consequently, in light of the public ministry of Christ as manifested in the synoptic Gospels, the Jewish believers who would form the early years of the Church would tend to be zealous for the Law of Moses. This is because nowhere in the synoptic Gospels, where Christ’s ministry is to the nation of Israel in fulfilment of her hopes, did Christ ever say that the Law would be terminated! This is primarily what lodged in the hearts and minds of the apostles—God’s purpose for Israel. (However, in light of John’s revelations in his Gospel, wherein the world at large comes into view, we shall see that the leadership in the early Church would certainly be open to the Holy Spirit’s indications of change, especially changes like those revealed through the distinctive revelations given to the apostle Paul.)

**THE EARLY CHURCH WAS ACTUALLY CONSIDERED,
BY BOTH SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS HISTORIANS,
AS A SECT OF JUDAISM DURING THIS TRANSITION
TIME PERIOD**

1. The Greek word *ekklesia* (translated “church” in our English Bibles) literally meant an assembly or congregation. This word was already commonly known and used many times in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures as referring to the people of Israel. When Christ said He “would build His Church” (Matt. 16:18), they thought of nothing other than a following of Jewish people from out of the Jewish nation to whom He was ministering. This would be a Jewish assembly of followers of Jesus the Christ (Messiah).
2. In the opening chapters of the book of Acts, all the way up until chapter 11 and verse 19, the gospel was preached only to the Jewish people. It is also clear that the early disciples must have been consistent Law keepers for the simple reason that they were said to be “in favor with all the people” who were worshipers in Jerusalem, Acts 2:47.
3. The Temple was actually the center of preaching and of the fellowship of the Jerusalem Church—see Acts 2:46; 3:1-8, 10, 4:1; 5:20-25, 42; 21:26; 22:17; 24:18; 25:8, etc. So the sanctity of the Temple was obviously upheld by the early Jewish Church.
4. In Acts chapter 5 (33-42) the famous Pharisee named Gamaliel spoke before the Sanhedrin council and considered the apostles John and Peter as simply “these men.” He did not call them sectarian or heretics because of their obvious loyalty to the Law. Thus he described their ministry simply as “*a work*” that could very well be within the will of God. Thus they were considered as Jews who had a special mission for Israel.
5. Later in Acts—Acts 18:15—in the city of Corinth, when the case was brought by the Jews against the apostle Paul, Gallio said “But if it is a question of words and names and your own Law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such things.” In other words, Gallio was considering this to be an inner squabble of the Jewish people.
6. Even some 30 years after Pentecost, at Paul’s trial before a representation of the Jewish authority, the lawyer Tertullus only referred to Paul as “the ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5). This meant Paul was considered to be starting a new sect within Judaism.
7. Festus also placed Paul and his accusers into the same mold as simply belonging to this “superstition” (Acts 25:19).
8. Even in Rome, when Paul called all the Jews together to make one last appeal to them, the Jews merely spoke of “that sect,” again meaning a sect of Judaism itself (Acts 28:22).
9. Just as the word *ekklesia* was applied to the Jewish congregations, it has also been pointed out by early historians of the period that another expression, “*the way*,” was also in common use among the Jewish people. This description is used among the Jewish sect of the Dead Sea Scrolls—1QS 8:10, 14; 4:22; 8:21; 9:5 and 21 (The Community Rule of Qumran.) Apollos also was considered as being “in *the Way* of the Lord” Acts 18:24-25, and this was before his acceptance into the Christian community. And this expression is also used of the early Jewish-Christian communities—Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14 and 22. In many new translations it is capitalized.

10. Thus we conclude that the early Church during this time of transition was often actually indistinguishable from Judaism, was considered a “sect of Judaism,” and Judaism was thus considered by all historians of this age as the mother and origin of Christianity.

Roman historians like Tacitus (Annal. Lib. XV. Cap. 44, written about A.D. 110) tell us of the first persecution of Christians segregated from Judaism. This happened in A.D. 64 under Nero.

Nero, in order to stifle the rumor [as if he, himself, had set Rome on fire], ascribed it to those people who were hated for their wicked practices, and called by the vulgar ‘Christians’; these he punished exquisitely. The author of this name was Christ, Who, in the reign of Tiberius, was brought to punishment by Pontius Pilate the procurator.

Tacitus further stated in his Histories (Chronicles ii, 30. 6.), which was written in the same time frame, concerning the destruction of the Temple,—

Others, including Titus himself, expressed the opinion that the temple should most certainly be demolished, in order that the Jewish and Christian religions might be more completely wiped out; for although these religions were mutually hostile, they nevertheless shared the same origin; the Christians were an offshoot of the Jews, and if the root were destroyed, the stock would quickly perish.

GOD’S PURPOSE FOR ISRAEL DURING THE TRANSITION IN ACTS

In the Gospel accounts Christ gave two very clear indications of an extended opportunity for the nation of Israel and the Jewish people to accept their Messiah on the resurrection side of the cross. This will correspond with the statements by the apostles during Acts that the gospel was “to the Jew first”—Acts 3:26; 13:46; 26:20; Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10 and Eph. 2:17.

The first of these passages is **Matthew 22:1-14**, which is called the “Wedding Feast Parable.” Herein Christ revealed three distinct offers made to the Jewish people to receive the blessed promise of the Kingdom of God. The first two offers took place at the general time of the first coming of Christ—that is, the very first one during Christ’s own ministry and the second during the ministry of the apostles of the Acts period. The third offer will be just before Christ’s second coming in great judgment. Therefore, I am going to note these offers in this passage by labeling them **A**, **B** and **C** and make a brief comment after each one.

(1) And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parable and said:

- A** (2) The Kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son. (3) And sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.

This was the first offer, and corresponds to the four Gospels period of time when Christ first sent out the apostles to preach the gospel of the Kingdom—Matt. 10:1-15. As we know, the nation rejected the offer of the Kingdom of God. Instead, Christ died for the sins of Israel and of the world. In addition, full sacrificial preparation was made for the redemption of the nation of Israel by the resurrection of Christ. Now let us continue the passage—

- B** (4) **Again**, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.”’ (5) But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. (6) And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. (7) But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

This was the second offer, and corresponds to the Acts time period wherein the gospel was preached again to the Jewish people. The apostles were explaining the finished work of Christ in His sacrifice for them. But the nation was again rejecting the message and even began to kill the messengers. This period ends with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Roman armies.

This second offer (**B**) completes all things surrounding the first coming of Christ to Israel. As we now know, there is a great gap in time (nearly 2000 years, presently) between this second offer of the Kingdom to Israel and that which takes place just before the second coming of Christ (**C**). At the second coming of Christ will be the judgment indicated in this text. Therefore, the parable continues—

- C** (8) Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. (9) Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’ (10) So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. (11) But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. (12) So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. (13) Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ (14) For many are called but few are chosen.

The first two offers centered around the first coming of Israel’s Messiah. This last offering actually takes us right into the final time of the Great Tribulation of Matthew 24 where Christ said “This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached into all the world for a witness to all nations”—Matthew 24:14 and 21.

So it is, in this parable we have a clear indication of the Lord’s purpose for the ministry to the Jews during the book of Acts time frame (offer # **2**). He did not choose to immediately cut Israel off, but rather to give a second opportunity. This second opportunity

was to receive their promised Kingdom in light of the finished work of Christ. We can understand therefore, that for this reason the Law was still allowed to be practiced by the Jewish believers during this time.

The second passage illustrating this truth is found in **Luke 13:6-9**. This is the parable that Christ gave of the barren fig tree. The fig tree was a well-known figure of the nation of Israel. Note in this parable the extended time allotted for the tree to bear fruit.

(6) He also spoke this parable: “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. (7) Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ (8) But he [the keeper] answered and said to him, “Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. (9) And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.””

Most interpreters understand that this parable is related to the warnings Christ gave in the earlier context. Christ had just been informed of an execution of certain Galileans by Pilate. Christ had asked the question “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things?” Then He answered —“I tell you the truth, no: but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (verses 1-5). Then Christ followed this statement by giving this parable which actually illustrates how the failure of the whole nation of Israel to repent will bring about its own destruction. The parable can be explained in the following manner:

- (1) **The fig tree** planted in a vineyard is typical of the nation of Israel.
- (2) **The owner** seeking fruit on it for the last three years is Jesus Christ, Himself.
- (3) No doubt, **the three years** are not just an illustration of time in general, but of the specific time of His ministry up until this point.
- (4) The fact that there was **no fruit** on the tree illustrates the failure of the nation to repent and respond to the gospel.
- (5) The charge to “cut it down” was met by **the keeper**, who might very well represent the Holy Spirit.
- (6) The plea by the “keeper” to **extend His** [the owner’s] **patience** until after that year had passed represents a second allowance for ministry and for the nation to repent.
- (7) To allow the keeper the opportunity to “**dig about**” the tree and to “**fertilize**” it—the digging represents the apostle’s frank exposure of the hardness of the hearts of the national leadership from early on in the book of Acts—see Acts 2:22, 36, 37; 3:14-21; 5:29-32; 7:51-53. This was designed to bring repentance. The ministry further brought to light the benefits of the death, burial and resurrection in the gospel as the life giving “fertilizer.” All this was an extra effort to bring forth fruit on this tree—Israel.

(8) Then if “it does not bear fruit” it was to be “**cut down.**” This is precisely what happened by the close of the book of Acts. Therein Paul made a last appeal to representative Jews in Rome, and they, in the main, rejected it. It was only about eight to ten years later that Jerusalem was destroyed and the nation dispersed.

So it is, in these two parables, that of Matthew 22 and Luke 13, we see the purpose of God, revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ, for the Jewish nation during the book of Acts time frame. In the book of Acts the Jewish believers were fervently preaching the gospel to their nation in anticipation of the possibility of the coming Kingdom, if Israel was to repent and believe the gospel. While that extended opportunity was being made, the Mosaic Law system was still “*imposed*” upon all Jews (Hebrews 9:10).

In consistency with these parables was the fact concerning the gospel that it was “to the Jew first,” as stated several times. Peter stated the principle in Acts 3:26. Paul made the statement several times—Acts 13:46; 26:20 and Romans 1:16.

In consistency with the truth of these parables was another principle to be observed

THE OFFER AND ANTICIPATION OF THE KINGDOM DURING THE BOOK OF ACTS

Thomas Ice, one of the most respected teachers in dispensational, pre-tribulational rapture theology today, makes a noteworthy statement at the very beginning of his study on the *Transition In The Book of Acts*. On page 1 he stated:

Virtually all students of the Bible would acknowledge that the Book of Acts is a transition from Israel to the Church, as God’s instrument through whom He uses to spread His message. There are three major passages that should be understood in order to properly grasp what this transition is about. Those three passages are Acts 1:3-10; 3:11-26; 15:6-21.

He goes on to explain in his study that the expectation by the early Jewish believers of the literal Davidic Kingdom for Israel was foremost on their minds and hearts at this time.

Acts 1:3, 6 and 7

Verse 3 of this passage says that after Christ’s resurrection He spent “forty days” with His disciples during which He spoke to them “of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.” No doubt, Christ wanted to assure them that His rejection by the Jewish nation and His suffering and death did not mean that the promised Kingdom for Israel was canceled out and no longer a possibility. Consequently, the disciples asked Him just before

His ascension, “Lord, will You at this time **restore** the Kingdom to Israel?” (verse 6). Christ obviously did not rebuke them for asking the question. Nor did He consider their perception of the Kingdom to be wrong as many in Christendom falsely teach. Rather Christ simply stated “It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority” (verse 7).

Consequently, in Christ’s ministry the promised Davidic Kingdom which He came to set up and offered to the Jewish nation was still a possibility on the horizon. The disciples simply were not to know precisely when that Kingdom would come. They were to direct their attention to preaching the gospel to the Jewish nation in faithfulness and consistency with the aid and direction of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.

Note the word “**restore.**” Christ had spoken during His ministry of the Kingdom of God being “taken from them and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it” (Matthew 21:43). Actually, for a long time Israel had been without a King. And the offer of that Kingdom was the most prominent aspect of Christ’s ministry. Israel’s rejection obviously postponed the setting up of that Kingdom. Now the question was naturally raised in their minds if God would still “restore” that Kingdom at that time. So there is going to be a restoration of that Kingdom for Israel. They simply did not know when, but were to concentrate on preaching the gospel.

Acts 3:18-21

In this second passage the apostle Peter obviously offered to the Jewish people the possibility of their long hoped for Kingdom. Note the words of Peter—

(18) But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. (19) Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, (20) and that He may send Jesus Christ, Who was preached to you before, (21) Whom heaven must receive until the times of **restoration** of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His prophets since the world began.

It becomes obvious from this passage that Peter believed all the promises of the Messianic Kingdom could be fulfilled if that generation would have believed the gospel. Again, note the word “**restoration.**” The early Jewish disciples were looking for and in expectation of the possibility of that Kingdom if Israel would repent on a national scale.

Again, this would make it obvious as to why God was still allowing the Jewish believers to continue in their practice of the Law system, at least until such time as it became obvious that Israel was not going to accept the message of the gospel. And, indeed, the attitude of the Jewish leadership indicated a hardening of hearts against Christ and the gospel. In the next period of time, persecution arose on a serious scale—even from threatening and beatings—to death itself.

Acts 15:13-18

In the meantime a new and amazing thing happened—Gentiles received the gospel, and a whole new relationship with those Israel had long considered as “unclean” changed for the Jewish believers. Thus a question finally arose because of the vast number of Gentiles who were saved under the ministry of the apostle Paul. The question is, should the Gentiles also be compelled to keep the Law as did the Jewish disciples? *At this time there never was any question about the Jewish believers dropping their practice of the Law.* However, in Acts 15 the revelation was that the Gentiles were to be considered free from obligations of service to the Mosaic Law. In this context James gave the inspired verdict of the Holy Spirit and the apostles—

(13) And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men and brethren, listen to me; (14) Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. (15) And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: (16) ‘**After this I will return** and will **rebuild** the tabernacle [same as the Temple] of David, which has fallen down; I will **rebuild** its ruins, and I will set it up; (17) so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD Who does all these things.’”

From this declaration it became evident that whenever this time of the “calling out of the Gentiles” terminates, the Jewish brethren could expect the restoration or “rebuilding” of their Temple. Of course, their Temple had not yet been destroyed, but they knew it would be according to Christ’s own specific prophecy of “not one stone left upon another” (Matt. 24:2).

So it seems again that the time of the “restoration of all things,” i.e., the Kingdom, is placed at a further unknown distance in the future. This leaves one last passage where a final appeal was made to a representative of the Jewish people—

Acts 28:25-27

(25) So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, (26) saying, ‘Go to this people and say: “Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand: and seeing you will see, and not perceive; (27) for the hearts of this people have grown dull; their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.’”

The communal living of the early Jewish assembly

One of the most noticeable things about the early Christian community was its communal living. This is spelled out for us in Acts 4:32-37; 5:1-11 and 6:1-7. Briefly stated—

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things common.

The other passages above demonstrate the extent to which land was sold and the proceeds were placed into a common fund for distribution to those in need. There were also daily distributions of food and necessities. This was actually done in compliance to certain teachings of Christ pertaining to the Kingdom of Heaven—see Matthew 5:40-42; 6:19-20, 25-34; 10:9-10; Luke 12:32-34 and 18:22. This demonstrates that the early Jewish believers still anticipated the possibility of the coming Kingdom of God being fulfilled. Obviously, as time went on throughout the Acts time period, and as the national Jewish leadership became more hardened to the gospel, the prospects of this Kingdom become dimmer and dimmer.

CHAPTER THREE

TRANSITION INTRODUCED IN JOHN

Though the Transition did not take place during the time of Christ's earthly ministry as recorded in the Gospel of John, yet it is in the Gospel of John where the basis for the record of the Transition out of Judaism actually is laid. In the record of the Gospel of John, the Holy Spirit actually brought back to John's "remembrance" (John 14:26) the things which Christ said and did which contrast the principles of Grace with the Law of Moses. Some of these incidences involved private conversations; even what was said in public was most often not understood in its potential. Thus it is in the Gospel of John that we have the record where Christ gave the clearest indications of the Age of Grace that was coming.

Most Bible teachers and scholars believe that the Gospel of John was last of the four Gospels written. It is generally understood that John was composed sometime during the last ten to twenty years of the first century. That would mean that John was written after the time of the Transition was completed, which is some time after A.D. 70. No doubt, when this Gospel became a part of the public record of the life of Christ it would effectively place the stamp of approval, by the Head of the Church Himself, upon the revelation of Paul of "the Dispensation of the Grace of God" (Eph. 3:2). In other words, in John we see that Christ, Himself, gave many clear indications of the Age of Grace to come. In addition, the Gospel of John would effectively complement the book of Hebrews which closes the Transition period and prepares the Jewish believer for "better things" under the administration of the Grace of God.

John held an important position in the early Christian community. The apostle Paul recognized John as one of the "pillars" in the Church (Gal. 2:9). As Paul and John interacted together in the midst of progressive revelation about the Church of Jesus Christ they, no doubt, complemented one another in a beautiful and unusual way—Paul, by his vision of Christ in heaven and John, by his remembrance of Christ's words on earth. Their respect for each other, and the vital "grace" connection of the revelations given to each one made judgment, such as took place in Acts 15, truly a memorable event. Christ was not leaving any mere speculations about the reality and truth of this new Divine institution.

I will illustrate the distinctive truths from the Gospel of John in the form of charts with bold letters which I have used before a larger audience. One can muse upon each point made precisely as Christ intended to be done—

*In contrast to the synoptic Gospels (Mt., Mk., & Lk.),
which prepare Israelites for the Messianic Kingdom,*

JOHN'S GOSPEL

prepares believers for the Age of Grace!

- Jn. 1:17 LAW by Moses, GRACE and Truth by Christ***
“Not under Law but under Grace”—Rom. 6:14
- Jn. 3 The NEW BIRTH by the Spirit of God (v.6)***
“Now we regard no one after the flesh, [but] a New Creation”—2 Cor. 5:16, 17
- Jn. 4 Worship God IN SPIRIT and in TRUTH (v. 23)***
See Philippians 3:3; Gal. 3:1, 2; Eph. 2:19-22
- Jn 6 Eating Christ’s flesh, drinking His blood***
“Come to Him, believe in Him” Spiritually—1 Cor. 10:15-18
- Jn. 7 Spiritual Fountain of Living Water (vs. 37, 38)***
1 Corinthians 12:13 “drink into one Spirit”
- Jn. 10 The Shepherd and the Sheep (v. 16)***
“Other sheep I have . . . One flock, one Shepherd”
- Jn. 11 The Resurrection and the Life (vs. 25, 26)***
“Raised to walk in newness of life”—Rom. 6:4-14
- Jn. 13 Washing one another’s feet (vs. 7-17)***
“You who are spiritual restore such a one. . . .” Gal. 6:1
- Jn. 14 In My Father’s house are many mansions***
The blessed hope of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Note the parallel
- Jn. 14:15-18, 25, 26; 15:26; 16:12-15 The Spirit Comforter***
“The Promise of the Father” for all believers—Lk. 24:49; Acts 2:39; Eph. 1:13
- Jn. 17 Christ’s prayer for the believer today!***
“That they all may be one, that the world may believe”—Jn. 17:11, 21-23.
- Jn. 18 The Kingdom in John is spiritual (18:33-37)***
“Everyone who is of the TRUTH hears My voice.”

Cardinal Passages to Remember

John 4:21-24

*“... believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father But the hour is coming, and now is, when true worshipers will worship the Father **IN SPIRIT and TRUTH**; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship **IN SPIRIT and TRUTH.**”*

*In giving these words Christ has
Epitomized the present Age of Grace*

“For we are the circumcision, who worship God **IN the SPIRIT, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have **No confidence in the flesh.**” Philippians 3:3**

“O foolish Galatians . . . this only would I learn from you: Did you receive the **SPIRIT by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun **IN the SPIRIT**, Are you now made perfect by the flesh?
Galatians 3:1-3**

1.) God allowed the Law system to still be practiced by believing Jews during the book of Acts time period. 2.) The revelation of the termination of the Law was gradually and progressively revealed. 3.) Thus, there occurred a transition out of Judaism and into pure Christianity. This has generally been called “The Transition Period” by theologians and Bible teachers. Note the following illustrations from the book of Acts—

<i><u>Physical Law System</u></i>			<i><u>Spiritual Realities</u></i>	
1.	Temple 3:1; 21:26; 22:17	/	Temple 1 Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:19-22	
2.	Sacrifices 21:26	/	Sacrifices Heb. 9:23-26; 10:5-10	
3.	Priesthood 23:1-5	/	Priesthood Heb. 4:14; 5:1-11	
4.	Sabbath 16:13; 17:2	/	Sabbath Heb. 4:10, 11	
5.	Feasts 12:3, 4; 18:21; 20:16	/	Feasts 1 Cor. 5:8; Col. 2:16, 17	
6.	Meats, Drinks 10:11-14	/	Not Meats and Drinks Rom. 14:17	
7.	Law Keeping 21:20, 24	/	Law of Spirit and Life Rom. 8:1, 2	
8.	Circumcision 16:3	/	Circumcision Philip. 3:3	
9.	Head-shaving, Vows 18:18; 21:24	/	True Commitments Rom. 12:1, 2	
10.	Purifications-Baptism 21:24, 26; 8:36; 10:47; 11:16; 18:25	/	Purifications-Baptism Titus 2:14; 1 Cor. 12:13	
11.	Passover Bread, Wine Luke 22:1-20; 1 Cor. 11:17-34	/	Body, Blood of Christ John 6:35, 53-63; 1 Cor. 10:15-17	
12.	Earthly blessings 3:19-21	/	Heavenly blessings Eph. 1:3	

CHAPTER FOUR

A NEW PROGRAM IN ACTS

Is Clearly Demonstrated—

- 1.) ***A NEW “BEGINNING”—*** *Acts 11:15*
“... the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us AT THE BEGINNING.”
- 2.) ***A NEW BAPTISM—*** *Acts 1:5*
“... but you shall be baptized with the HOLY SPIRIT not many days hence.”
- 3.) ***A NEW DIRECTOR—*** *Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 3:8*
“... the Holy Spirit has come upon you; ... The MINISTRATION of the Spirit.”
- 4.) ***A NEW FELLOWSHIP—*** *Acts 2:42-47*
“... they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and FELLOWSHIP, ...”
- 5.) ***A NEW MIRACULOUS GIFT—*** *Acts 2:4; 1 Cor. 12-14*
“... all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other TONGUES.”
- 6.) ***A NEW DISCIPLINE—*** *Acts 5:1-11*
“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, ...”
- 7.) ***A NEW SERVICE—*** *Acts 6:1-7*
“... seven men of good reputation ... appoint over this business.”
- 8.) ***A NEW APOSTLE—*** *Acts 9:1-16*
“... one called Saul of Tarsus. ... he is a chosen vessel of Mine. ...”
- 9.) ***A NEW CONVERT—*** *Acts 10*
“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius ... all his household. ...”
- 10.) ***A NEW WALK WITHOUT LAW—*** *Acts 15*
“... to whom we gave no such commandment ... “
- 11.) ***A NEW REVELATION—*** *2 Cor. 12:2-7*
“... such a one was caught up to the third heaven”
- 12.) ***A NEW HOPE—*** *1 Thess. 4:13-18*
“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them. ...”

Note the GUIDANCE of the HOLY SPIRIT in ACTS

Christ had promised the apostles that after His departure the Holy Spirit would come and direct the affairs of the Church. There are several statements that Christ made to this effect. These should be carefully read and appreciated in order to understand the new order that was occurring in God's dispensational plans. Note the following texts from John 14, 15 and 16; then see how it begins to unfold as recorded in Acts—

John 14: (15) And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—(16) the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. (17) I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. (26) But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

John 15: (26) But when the Helper comes Whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth Who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

John 16: (12) I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. (13) However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

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|--|---------------------------|
| 1.) <i>His Coming—</i> | <i>Acts 1:5, 8; 2:1-4</i> |
| 2.) <i>His Filling—</i> | <i>Acts 4:31</i> |
| 3.) <i>Being Lied to—</i> | <i>Acts 5:3, 9</i> |
| 4.) <i>Being Filled at Death—</i> | <i>Acts 7:55</i> |
| 5.) <i>Received by Samaritans—</i> | <i>Acts 8:17</i> |
| 6.) <i>Guidance of Philip—</i> | <i>Acts 8:29, 39</i> |
| 7.) <i>Comforting the Church—</i> | <i>Acts 9:31</i> |
| 8.) <i>Guiding Peter—</i> | <i>Acts 10:19</i> |
| 9.) <i>Received by Gentiles—</i> | <i>Acts 10:44</i> |
| 10.) <i>Call of Paul & Barnabus—</i> | <i>Acts 13:2</i> |
| 11.) <i>Guidance of Conference—</i> | <i>Acts 15:28</i> |
| 12.) <i>Directing Paul—</i> | <i>Acts 16:6, 7</i> |
| 13.) <i>Received by 12 Disciples—</i> | <i>Acts 19:6</i> |
| 14.) <i>Making Overseers—</i> | <i>Acts 20:28</i> |
| 15.) <i>Revealing Trials, etc.—</i> | <i>Acts 21:11</i> |
| 16.) <i>Final Words—</i> | <i>Acts 28:25</i> |

The Entrance of GENTILES A Major Modification of the Law

Gentiles enter into the household of the Church of Jesus Christ in four clear steps:

(1) The **First** is at the conversion of Saul of Tarsus when he was told by the Lord —“ . . . I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the *Gentiles*, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:17-18). On that occasion it was also revealed to Ananias who lived in Damascus that Saul was “ . . . a chosen vessel of Mine [Christ] to bear My name before *Gentiles*, kings and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Thus a new apostle was chosen by the Lord and was being sent into a new direction among the human family—in particular to the Gentile peoples. No doubt, the news of this conversion and the direction of his mission rapidly spread throughout all the various Jewish assemblies of believers in Jesus Christ.

(2) The **Second** is the revelation given to the apostle Peter that he should no longer consider the *Gentile* peoples as unclean (Acts 10:15-17 and 28), and that he was to go and preach to Cornelius and his household (Acts 10). This event was so important and dramatic that Peter was compelled to make careful explanation of it before the Jewish brethren at Jerusalem (Acts. 11:1-18). No doubt this was a pivotal point in the history of the early Church. It certainly indicated a modification in the Mosaic Law system for the Jewish believers, for now there was a new evaluation of the Gentile peoples by the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, this revelation to Peter had the effect of giving further confirmation to the truthfulness of the ministry Christ had for the apostle Paul to the Gentiles.

(3) The **Third** is in the city of Antioch in Phoenicia. We are told in Acts 11:19 that up until this time the Jewish disciples had been preaching the gospel “ . . . to no one but the Jews only.” However, in the city of Antioch they preached to the “Hellenists.” These were Grecian *Gentiles* and a great number of them were saved (Acts 11:21). When news of this came to the saints at Jerusalem they sent Barnabas to Antioch to minister there. In turn, Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Saul (Paul) and bring him over to Antioch to help in the ministry. Thus a large congregation, which was composed of a majority of *Gentiles* began to function in that area. This assembly became a sort of second Jerusalem; it became the center of operations for the apostle Paul.

(4) The **Fourth** is when Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the Holy Spirit and the congregation at Antioch and they traveled into present day southern Turkey. They preached the gospel in several of the cities in the south central area and a great number of Gentiles were saved. In Acts 13:42 and 44 we are told that the *Gentiles* desired to hear the gospel. In Acts 13:46-47 Paul told the Jews who had rejected the gospel that he was turning to the *Gentiles*, and a great many were said to be saved (verse 48). In Acts 14:1-2 many more

Gentiles were saved. Finally, when Paul and Barnabas came back to Antioch they reported that God “. . . *had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles*” (Acts 14:27).

In all these cases there is no indication that the saved *Gentiles* were told to start practicing the Law of Moses. No doubt, the apostle Paul had already received a heavenly vision and some of the revelations mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:1-6.

*In Acts 15—It Becomes Official;
GENTILES are not to have the LAW
Imposed upon them!*

Perhaps the most important chapter in the book of Acts on the subject of the Transition is chapter 15. Paul and Barnabas had returned to Antioch with the glowing report of large scale *Gentile* conversions. After this news spread, “certain men” from Judea came to Antioch and began teaching that the *Gentiles* would have to be “circumcised” and convert to Judaism in order to be saved. This was met with strong opposition and refutation by Paul and Barnabas. Though it was true in historic Judaism—that to be received in fellowship, the *Gentiles* would have to fully convert to Judaism—yet new revelation had now come to the brethren, especially through Paul, that the *Gentiles* were not to have the Law imposed upon them, and most certainly Law keeping was never the basis for spiritual soul salvation. The conflict was so strong and the importance of settling this issue so important that it was determined that Paul and Barnabas should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders in order to settle the issue.

We get further information on this problem from Paul’s account in the book of Galatians. Therein, Paul explained that the gospel he preached came straight from special revelation through Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12). He further explained that he went up to Jerusalem by special “revelation” and communicated the gospel he preached to the apostles “privately” before their larger meeting (Gal. 2:1-2). Paul also clearly distinguished between “the gospel to the circumcised” and “the gospel to the uncircumcised.” The difference was not in how to be saved, rather it was in the directions as to the walk of the ones being addressed. Whereas, Peter and the other apostles were primarily going to the Jewish people—“the circumcised”—with the gospel, Paul was primarily going to the *Gentile* peoples—“the uncircumcised”—with the gospel (Gal. 2:7-8). This also meant that there was further difference as to the *walk* of the *Gentiles* in contrast to the *walk* of the Jews. The Jews, of course, were still walking under the guidelines of the Law of Moses, whereas the *Gentiles*, in their walk, were not under the obligations of the ritual system of the Law, but more surely were simply under the rule of the spiritual realities of their new life in Christ.

In Acts 15, it became evident that certain new converts from among the Pharisees were the source of the problem (15:5). However, after the clear testimony of Peter, Paul and Barnabas, James (the Lord’s half-brother) was led to express the Spirit guided decision, “Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the *Gentiles* who

are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:19-20). In addition, “Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was surnamed Barsabas and Silas, leading men among the brethren. They wrote and sent the following letter by them:” (15:22-23a).

It is important that this letter be fully understood by all, especially as we study the subject of the Transition, because it expresses the understanding and leading of the Holy Spirit in the early Church as to the walk of Gentile believers outside the Law of Moses.

(23) The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,

To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:

Greetings.

(24) Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law”—to whom we gave no such commandment— (25) it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, (26) men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (27) We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. (28) For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: (29) that you should abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

(Acts 15:23-29.)

This letter was a great encouragement to the Gentile believers as it was read to the various assemblies (Acts 15:31). When Paul traveled again through the various assemblies, he read this letter and explained it to them as stated in Acts 16:4. “And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.”

The important thing for us to note is that there was no declaration whatsoever that the Jewish believers were to cease their practice of the Mosaic Law system. Consequently, from here on, it is clear that there will be two distinct walks among the believers composing the various assemblies; the Jewish believers will continue to practice the Law, whereas the Gentile believers will abstain from practicing the Law. In addition, the Jewish believers will realize a change has come in their allowance to eat with and associate with the Gentile believers. In other words, that aspect of the Law which forbade the Jews from such association with Gentiles was therein abolished as far as the Christians associating together were concerned. That was further established, as we read of the account by Paul in Galatians, that Jews and Gentiles may eat and fellowship together. See Galatians 2:11-21.

This understanding and directions to all the local assemblies continued through the last two tours of ministry by the apostle Paul, right up until his last visit to Jerusalem, just before his imprisonment. Now it was also obvious in Paul's epistles of 2 Corinthians, Romans and Galatians, that he had received more revelations and had written more liberating truths to the Gentile members of the Church concerning their freedom from the Law and of the "revelation of the mystery" (Rom. 16:26). These revelations concerning the administration of grace of which Paul wrote openly were wrongfully interpreted by some to be teaching the Jewish believers themselves to stop the practice of the Law.

1 Corinthians 7:17-20 makes it very clear that the apostle Paul was encouraging saved Jews to remain in their Judaism and saved Gentiles to remain as Gentiles free from the Law. This is a highly important passage. It clearly was established by Paul in his ministry that the Jewish believers were to continue in their practice of the Law whereas the Gentiles were not to do so—

(17) But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all the churches. (18) Was any called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised [i.e., let him remain as a Jew]. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised [i.e., let him not take on Judaism]. (19) Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. (20) let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.

Another note of importance is the mention again of this settlement by James in Acts 21. Therein it is stated that though the Jewish believers were continuing to observe the Law, yet they had directed that the Gentiles were under no such obligation to do so—see Acts 21:20-25. I will just quote verse 25 here—"But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing [as Law observance], except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality." This will be crucial to the understanding of Paul's actions in Acts 21, which we will discuss further along.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHANGES IN THE LAW As Indicated by the Apostle Paul

As there were false reports that Jesus was changing the Law, so there were false reports that the early Jewish disciples were also changing the Law. One can primarily see this in the case of the false accusations against Stephen as recorded in Acts 6:11-14:

(11) Then they [those of the Synagogue of the Freedmen] secretly induced men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” (12) And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. (13) They also set up false witnesses who said “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the Law; (14) for we have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.”

It was on the basis of these false accusations that severe persecution broke out against the Jewish believers. In reality the Jewish brethren were very zealous observers of the Law.

As we have seen, the first indication of a change in the Law system really took place when the revelation came to the apostle Peter that he was to no longer consider the Gentiles as unclean, and that he was to go and preach to them. At that time Peter stated “But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28). This was clearly new revelation which had the potential to eventually seriously affect the observance of the Law. Peter was immediately the center of contention by his Jewish brethren for doing such a thing. But, when he explained it carefully to them, and when testimony was given of the Holy Spirit falling upon the Gentiles, they could only accept this new situation as being God’s direction (Acts 11:1-18).

Eventually this was further ratified at the conference in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15. So it is that everyone knew there were changes in the making concerning the Mosaic Law. In addition to this, it was becoming more evident that the leadership of the Jewish nation was leading them further astray from accepting Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. Thus their Kingdom hopes were seemingly becoming more remote.

Now as Paul neared the conclusion of his last missionary journey, he was inspired to write three letters, two of which have very strong and specific references to the new program under “Grace.” We need to look at each of these and note the clear statements of an administration of Grace in opposition to an administration under Law.

2 Corinthians 3:11 and 13. Twice in this passage the apostle Paul characterized the Law as being in the process of “*passing away*” (vs. 11 and 13). It is important to recognize that Paul was not stating this in the past tense as if the Law had passed away, nor in the future tense, but in the present tense. In other words the Law system was in the process of passing away. This is the proper translation and the proper reality. Paul also used these words in **2 Corinthians 5:16 and 17**, that “. . . we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away; behold all things have become new.” This is speaking of the principle that as Christians, in our present spiritual standing before God, we no longer recognize the fleshly distinctions of Jew and Gentile, but rather as a new species on earth in the reckoning of God—the “new creation.” It is generally agreed upon that the letter was written about A.D. 57. This was about eight years after the council in Jerusalem in A.D. 49-50.

ROMANS

Romans was written just after 2 Corinthians in late 57 or early A.D. 58. The statements in the book of Romans which clearly indicate that believers are not under the Law are as follows: **Romans 6:14-15**, “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under Law but under Grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under Law but under Grace? Certainly not.” **Romans 7:4 and 6**, “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the Law through the body of Christ, that you should be married to another—to Him Who is raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God” (v. 4). “But now we have been delivered from the Law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter” (v. 6). **Romans 10:4**, “For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” **Romans 14:14**, “I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.” Actually the explanation of the 14th chapter falls under the specific conditions of the Transition in the book of Acts. In Acts Jewish believers, of course, have clean and unclean meats, whereas the Gentiles do not make such differences. The Jewish believers celebrate certain holy days whereas the Gentile believers do not. This can bring many conflicts unless they are patient and considerate regarding each other’s obligations to God, Whom they are serving, as they understand His requirements for each of them. As stated before, there are two walks for the believers during this Transition period. By no stretch of the imagination was Paul saying in this passage that they can feel free to observe pagan holidays or follow unbiblical superstitions.

Now it is also important to recognize to whom this epistle is primarily addressed. Paul characterized his ministry in this letter as “that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the *Gentiles*, ministering the gospel of God that the offering of the *Gentiles* might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:16 and 18). Thus Paul stated in his opening remarks—“. . . that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other *Gentiles*” (Rom. 1:13). Again in Romans 11:13 Paul said, “For I speak to you

Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the *Gentiles*, I magnify my ministry.” See also Romans 16:4. Having demonstrated that Paul is primarily writing to Gentiles, there are four facts which need to be remembered—

(1) Thus we must conclude that the **primary emphasis** in the book is for the *Gentile believers* who are already free from the observance of the Law.

(2) In addition, and this is important to take note of, when Paul wrote to the Gentiles he also **identified with the Gentiles** as if he were one of them. This is exactly what he said he would do in 1 Corinthians 9:21—he would be “to those who are without Law, *as without Law . . .*” Therefore he says here in Romans 6:15 “. . . *we* are not under Law”

(3) Of course, it must be realized that these truths will have an eventual application to the Jewish believers as well. In other words, after the period of the Transition is completed, all believers will realize that they are free from practicing the Law. Nevertheless, having written this, no doubt some readers will charge Paul with telling the Jews to stop their practice of the Law.

(4) But, one thing for sure, though the truths about the Law in Romans are liberating, yet nowhere in Romans is Paul specifically telling the Jewish believer to stop his or her practice of the Law of Moses. Paul is careful to not cross that line. In fact, Romans 14 indicates otherwise.

GALATIANS

The book of Galatians was written at the same time as Romans (A.D. 57-58). This is primarily, but not exclusively, indicated by the similarity of content on features concerning Paul’s exposition of the Law. The book of Romans was sent west to Rome, whereas Galatians was sent east to Galatia. Whereas Romans was a well ordered and lengthy document explaining the whole panorama of truth for the present age, in contrast, Galatians was a short letter of emergency, burdened by the apostle in order to sharply and decisively deliver Gentile believers from being pressured to take upon themselves the Law system.

It is well understood by most interpreters and Bible teachers that the letter to the Galatians was written by Paul to Gentile believers in assemblies which had been infected by Judaizers attempting to get the Gentile saints to practice the Mosaic Law system. The evidence that it is written to Gentiles is abundant: (1) Paul emphasized that he is the Apostle to the *Gentiles*—Gal. 2:2, 7, and 9. (2) The *Gentiles* are saved by faith just like Abraham was—Gal. 3:8, 9, and 14. (3) The *Gentile* believers to whom Paul wrote, in times past served idols—Gal. 4:8. (4) The whole argument of the epistle is to repudiate the efforts to place *Gentiles* under the Law—Gal. 4:21-31. (5) The *Gentiles* had been “called unto liberty”—Gal. 2:4; and 5:1-13. (6) The false teachers wanted the *Gentiles* of Galatia to be circumcised—Gal. 6:11 and 13.

An outline study of Galatians will demonstrate the purpose of God for the Gentile believers to be separate from the Law system in their lives and worship. In other words, there was a new system in God's plan for the Gentiles, separate and apart from the Mosaic Law.

1. The very first thing that Paul emphasized in Galatians had to do with the uniqueness of his own ministry. The purpose for this was to stress the fact that the present problem he would be discussing was not merely an argument between apostolic leaders over what the Hebrew Scriptures taught. Rather, this was a clash over Divine revelation given by the Head of the Church to Paul as a special minister to the body of Christ—a special revelation that stands unique and operational, especially designed for the Gentile believers. Therefore, Paul's arguments and ministry cannot be looked upon as merely a different version—inherited from others—of the Law being modified, but rather as an entirely new and different system. Paul did not get this system from anybody on earth, but from the Lord in heaven! This was attested to by witnesses and many miraculous manifestations. This is the first chapter of Galatians.

2. In the second chapter of Galatians Paul first emphasized the “gospel of the circumcised” versus the “gospel of the uncircumcised.” The difference was not in how to get saved. The difference was first of all the people to whom each was addressed and secondly, the manner of walk in the life of each recipient. Paul preached the *gospel of the uncircumcised*, which was simply the *gospel to the uncircumcised*. They were mandated that they were under no obligation to “live as do the Jews,” meaning living under the Law of Moses. The circumcised were the Jewish people who lived under the Law system. The guiding principle for the uncircumcised was their new life in Christ—Gal. 2:20 and Rom. 8:1. (Of course, in time this would be fully realized and appreciated by their Jewish brethren as well.)

Some of the Judaizers had blended the walk of the believer with the manner of being saved, and contended that one could not be saved unless he kept the Law. The apostle Paul would deal with both aspects of this issue in the next chapter.

3. The third chapter of Galatians can be sub-divided under several sections: **(a)** First, Paul dealt with salvation by faith and not by works of the flesh—3:1-9. They received the Spirit by faith (verse 2) and they received the miraculous gifts by faith (verse 5). **(b)** Those who live under the Law are actually living under a curse, simply because no one can keep the Law perfectly. Christ became a curse for us in order to deliver us from the curse of the Law. The “just shall live by faith,” and again, they received the Spirit by faith. (See verses 10-14.) **(c)** The Covenant given to Abraham was by Promise and it was confirmed in Christ—3:15-18. **(d)** The purpose of the Law was to serve as a “schoolmaster to bring us to Christ”—3:19-25. (This principle will eventually be fully realized by the Jewish believers living under the Law. “We are no longer under a tutor” could best be appreciated by the Jew.) **(e)** Both Jews and Gentiles who believe the gospel become “one in Christ”—3:26-29.

4. In the fourth chapter Paul primarily appealed to the Gentile believers, **(a)** who had previously been in the service of foreign gods and religious superstition. He did

not want them to return to more observances of another ritual system, even that of the Law. **(b)** They had now been legally “adopted” by God as sons and heirs of God (4:1-7). **(c)** Consequently, they needed to not go back under a binding legal system of Law observance (4:8-20). **(d)** For those Gentiles who would be persuaded to be placed under the Law, Paul demonstrated the difference between the Covenant of Promise, under which they were saved, and the Covenant of the Law which meant a bondage to those under it (4:21-31).

5. Chapter five is the call for **(a)** “standing fast in liberty.” To do otherwise would be, in effect, **(b)** “falling from the principle of Grace” (5:1-6). God’s implanted “love” will, in effect, **(c)** fulfill all that the Law demanded (5:7-15). And, **(d)** by walking in the Spirit one would not be fulfilling the lusts of the flesh (5:16-26).

6. Chapter six begins with an encouragement to exercise **(a)** “the Law of Christ” by restoring the erring brother (6:1-5). **(b)** Then follow general exhortations (6:6-10). **(c)** Final exhortations emphasize “walking in the New Creation” (6:11-18).

In conclusion, in studying the book of Galatians, it is true enough that, though this epistle is directed towards the Gentile believers, it nevertheless has the effect of liberating the Jewish brethren as well. The book states the principle clearly. However, as in Romans, so it is also true here, Paul did not go so far as to directly instruct any Jewish believer to actually stop the practice of the Law. There is no question that this letter is directly telling the Gentiles to not be persuaded to take on the practice of the Law. Galatians, therefore, stands as the doctrinal revelation of the reason for the change in the Law system. If this truth comes to affect the Jewish believers, it does so now only potentially. Jewish believers are specifically set free from the observance of the Law in the book of Hebrews which was written directly to them.

One can easily see from the truths in Romans and Galatians that certain Jews, looking for an occasion against Paul, would propagate the rumor that Paul was now teaching Jewish believers to stop the practice of the Law. However, as we have examined, Paul was giving liberating truths specifically to Gentiles, but by no means was he going so far as to specifically teach Jewish believers to stop the Law practice. In fact, after writing these two epistles Paul, himself, as a Jew openly observed the ritual system of the Law—traveling “after the days of unleavened bread” (Acts 20:6, i.e., Passover), and “He was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost” (Acts 20:16). Indeed, once in Jerusalem this whole question came into sharp focus and a point of much erroneous contention and confusion by some.

CHAPTER SIX

ACCUSATIONS AGAINST PAUL

How could the apostle Paul go back to Jerusalem and observe the Mosaic Law, Temple worship and the sacrificial system after writing that believers are “not under Law but under Grace” (Rom. 6:14)? We will effectively answer this in the remainder of this study.

Certain theologians and Bible teachers have expressed their confusion or else actual contempt for the actions of Paul as recorded in Acts chapter 21, when he clearly condescends to the request of Jewish brethren to observe the Mosaic Law in order to prove before all that he, as a Jewish believer, also observes the Law. All kinds of condemnation have been heaped upon Paul for doing this. This condemnation is based upon faulty assumptions, presumptions and just plain ignorance concerning the nature of the Transition. Perhaps it is best to allow these accusers to speak for themselves and then to follow through with the biblical facts of the case which effectively and thoroughly answer these criticisms.

The well-known and highly respected theologian, Merrill F. Unger, in his book *Unger's Bible Handbook*, concerning Acts 21, on page 596, states the following—

But a crisis came. Paul conformed to Judaism, [vs] 23-26, to allay suspicions of Jewish believers zealous for the law. The result was a strange sight: the apostle who had taught deliverance from the law in union with Christ (cf. Gal 1-2; Rom. 6-7) was back in the temple going through dead ritual which was ended by the death of Christ. The result was disastrous. He was arrested and taken prisoner. Agabus' prophecy was fulfilled.”

Now what Unger said above was very polite and dignified compared to some others. Read, for instance, the tirade by another famous Bible teacher. A number of years ago a famous Bible teacher named M. R. De Haan, on his national and international “Radio Bible Class,” spoke and wrote of “*The Blunders of Paul.*” M. R. De Haan was totally ignorant of the Transition Period and thus he totally misunderstood the actions of the apostle Paul in practicing the Law as recorded in Acts 21. Here are some of M. R. De Haan's famous “blunders” in describing Paul—

How terrible is the sin of disobedience! How it blinds a person and twists his reason and judgment. Persistent disobedience leads to a dulling of a man's reasoning, until he reaches a point where the sincere efforts of friends to avert

tragedy, only stir up a stubborn determination to go ahead, whatever the cost and penalty. Paul even turned a deaf ear to the entreaties of his bosom friend, Dr. Luke; . . . [Page 16.]

The apostle Paul in Romans 3 answers his critics who accused him of teaching “Let us do evil, that good may come,” by declaring their “damnation is just” (Rom. 3:8). No, my friends, good intentions, pure motives, sincere love for souls, no matter how noble and commendable in themselves, are never an excuse for carrying out these intentions, motives, love, and desires by methods in direct violation of the Word of God. [Page 17.]

He would go to Jerusalem, soft-pedal the message of grace he had proclaimed among the Gentiles, put himself back under law, shave his head, take a Jewish vow, honor the forsaken temple, bring a bloody sacrifice, and thus having pacified their anger and silenced their accusations, he could then preach the Gospel and win them to Christ. A superb plan, a noble purpose, but a tragic mistake, displeasing to the Lord. And it failed utterly in accomplishing Paul’s purpose or achieving the end for which he was willing to die. [Page 17-18.]

He had taught that Christ had fulfilled all the Old Testament ordinances, types and sacrifices. Yet now we see Paul going to the temple, paying for a sacrifice, and going to an earthly priest, who presented a bloody offering in an effort to gain a good end. Read carefully the account in Acts 21:18-26. [Page 18.]

M. R. De Haan went on to even say that the counsel given to Paul by James and the elders of Jerusalem was a “clever [and] diabolical suggestion!” (Pages 20 & 21.) Then De Haan continued on to say in conclusion—

Paul reaches Jerusalem; and at the advice of the elders, Paul agrees to soft-pedal the message of grace, and to put himself back under the law, in order to prevent a riot. He takes a Jewish vow, shaves his head, goes to the temple with its rent veil, brings an offering to an earthly priest in the hope of winning these Hebrews to Christ, by compromising the grace of God. But it failed completely. . . . What a strange sight to see Paul back in the temple going through these dead ceremonies which had all been abolished and ended by the death of Christ on the cross. [Page 27.]

One can see by the magnitude of the accusations in these published statements, and also even made over the radio, that M. R. De Haan is going to have a great deal of apologizing to do! Nor is M. R. De Haan alone in his assumptions. I have other statements from teachers which are not necessary to quote in light of all that De Haan has stated.

Now let us examine the Scriptures and see just who has “blundered.”

SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM—I.

A. Planning Paul's Trip

The apostle Paul's final trip to Jerusalem was not a haphazard, slipshod adventure to somehow win the Jews at any cost. Nor had this splendid apostle become a shallow negotiator, making a final attempt by sickening compromises with the truth of Christ, as implied by such presumptions as those expressed by M. R. De Haan. And most certainly, Paul was not resisting and even defying the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Anyone who studies this subject will only be soberly impressed by the spiritual carefulness in the plans for this trip, the actual purpose for the mission, and the godly execution of those plans.

Actually the plans for this final trip were several years in the making. In writing from Ephesus, notice the careful directions of Paul as expressed in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4:

(1) Now concerning the collection for the saints [specifically the saints in Judea], as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: (2) on the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. (3) And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift **to Jerusalem**. (4) But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.

In writing from Macedonia Paul gives further expression of his mission. Notice especially the carefulness of his plans as directed by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is almost as if Paul was anticipating the type of criticism leveled by misguided teachers—2 Corinthians 1:15-19:

(15) And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit— (16) to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way **to Judea**. (17) **Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly?** Or the things I plan, **do I plan according to the flesh**, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No? [In other words, Paul was not carnally fickle in his plans.] (18) But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No. (19) For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No. But in Him was Yes.

The beautiful and spiritual exposition of the principles of Christian giving, as expressed in 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9, are unmatched in quality and were all given in light of this final trip of Paul to Jerusalem. This special “gift” was a service of ministering “to the saints” in Judea (2 Cor. 8:19 and 9:1). This was a beautiful opportunity for the

Gentile assemblies to show their love and appreciation as benefactors of the grace of God that they had received through the faithfulness of the remnant of Jewish brethren who had suffered persecution from their own countrymen in Israel. So it is, the purpose and guidance for this endeavor were directed by the Head of the Church and motivated by the Holy Spirit.

The plans for this trip are further expressed by the apostle Paul in the book of Romans. Paul wrote Romans from Corinth just before he embarked on this final trip to Jerusalem. Notice again the spiritual purpose for the trip, and Paul's request for prayer as expressed in this text. As also indicated herein, Paul was fully aware of the trouble that could befall him in Jerusalem. By now, unsaved Jews from all over Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece, who might also be attending services in Jerusalem, could easily recognize Paul and have nothing but hateful slander against him. So now let us read Romans 15:25-31:

(25) But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. (26) For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. (27) It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. (28) Therefore, when I have performed this and sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. (29) But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. (30) Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, (31) that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints.

I might rightfully ask at this juncture, who could possibly fault the apostle Paul in these plans for this trip to Jerusalem? The plans were laid in the fundamental essence of spiritual carefulness. The plans were obviously directed by the Head of the Church and to be executed under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The plans were in accordance with God's will of solidifying the relationship between the Jewish and Gentile believers in a most noble and heartfelt manner. The Gentile believers would thus demonstrate their heartfelt thanks for what they had inherited from their Jewish brethren. If anything, this action would bind them closer together spiritually. If these plans, as expressed in these passages of inspired letters, are true, then one can only have utter disgust for those today who hastily attempt to bring slander upon Paul.

B. Execution of Paul's Trip

We will now make a careful study of the execution of Paul's trip back to Jerusalem. Primarily we will be doing this by way of the book of Acts. We will pause along the way with the apostle as he stops from place to place in ministering to the saints. We will note

the various expressions made during this journey and the dangers identified with it. We will certainly seek the Spirit's guidance just as I believe the apostle Paul did.

Acts 19:21— When these things were accomplished, Paul **purposed in the Spirit**, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”

Now this passage overlaps with **A. Planning His Trip**. It was Luke's account of Paul's thoughts just before he left Ephesus and was headed for his last tour of Macedonia and Achaia, and from there his final return to Jerusalem. He had already written 1 Corinthians, specifically the things we noted above in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4. The statement that Paul “purposed in the Spirit” most certainly tells us that this final trip was just as much led by the Holy Spirit as were his earlier trips from the very beginning—

Acts 13:2, 4, “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, **the Holy Spirit** said, ‘Now separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ . . . So, being sent out by **the Holy Spirit**, they went”

Acts 16:6, 7, “. . . they were forbidden by **the Holy Spirit** to preach the word in Asia. . . they tried to go into Bithynia, but **the Holy Spirit** did not permit them.”

Acts 18:5, “When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by **the Spirit**, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.”

And now Acts 19:21, “. . . Paul **purposed in the Spirit**, . . .”

Acts 20:22, 23— And see, now I go **bound in the Spirit** to Jerusalem, not knowing

the things that will happen to me there, except that **the Holy Spirit** testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

Anyone familiar with the King James Version or the NKJV will immediately see a difference in my quote of this verse. In the King James the word “spirit” is written with a small “s” indicating that the translators believed this was speaking of Paul's own spirit. Many teachers agree with this rendering and understanding. However, the English translation which was earlier than the King James—notably the Geneva Bible, translated over a decade before the King James and published in 1599—capitalized the word, which indicates they believed this was speaking of the Holy Spirit, not merely Paul's spirit. And indeed most new translations (NASB, NIV, NRSV, NEB, ESV, NAB, etc.) capitalize the word “Spirit.” As you can see, this would be more consistent with the earlier statements about the Holy Spirit leading, guiding and “purposing” the apostle's actions and ministry. In this case of Acts 20:22-23 the apostle is indicating that he is, as it were, incarcerated or taken captive by the Spirit (not by his own human spirit) to the destination of Jerusalem. In addition, and as a complement to this fact, the Holy Spirit further gives the message in every community of saints where Paul passes that “chains and tribulation await” him.

No matter how one translates the word *pneuma* (spirit) in this case, there is most certainly no indication whatsoever that Paul is in a state of rebellion against the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, being knowledgeable from the very time

of his conversion of the things he was destined to suffer (see Christ's words in **Acts 9:15 and 16**), Paul was a willing prisoner to his fate at Jerusalem. Paul's next words complement this fact—

Acts 20:24— But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, *so that I may finish my race with joy*, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Thus it is, that at the very beginning of Paul's final trip to Jerusalem, there are all the ingredients that also will be repeated at the time of his arrival on the coasts of Israel. The Holy Spirit has made known ahead of time the things that will happen to Paul. Yet Paul considers this as a climactic point in his service to Christ. He desires to finish this journey with spiritual "joy" in his commission of service to Christ.

One cannot help but see the parallel of this statement by Paul with that final exclamation made in 2 Timothy 4:7—"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Only a misguided expositor would ever assign a carnal, compromising motivation for either statement.

It appears that Paul's traveling companions (Acts 20:4) are in full unity with Paul in this particular trip. Immediately traveling with Paul are **Sopater** of Berea, **Aristarchus** and **Secundus** of Thessalonica, **Gaius** of Derbe, **Timothy**, **Tychicus** and **Trophimus** of Asia and, of course, **Luke** (see "we" of verse 6).

Acts 20:6 and 16— But we sailed away from Philippi after the *Days of Unleavened Bread*. . . . for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem if possible, *on the Day of Pentecost*.

Some might wonder why I list these two verses. Actually they serve in informing us of an important aspect of Paul's attitude towards the observance of the Mosaic Law. At the beginning of his trip Paul evidently waited till the conclusion of the week of Passover before setting sail, and then we are told that he purposed to be in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. These facts demonstrate that, as a believing Jew, the apostle Paul still observed the Law when occasion deemed it fitting. This is actually fully consistent with Paul's past habits and his own personal statement in this regard. As examples: Paul had Timothy, whose mother was Jewish, circumcised in Acts 16:3; Paul had shaved his head and taken a Jewish vow in Acts 18:18; Paul was Sabbath observant with the Jewish people in Acts 16:13 and 17:2 and Paul had stated emphatically that when he was with the Jewish people he "became as a Jew," and "to those who are under the Law, as under the Law" (1 Cor. 9:12-23). We must remember that in Acts 15:22-29 the decision by the Church, being led of the Holy Spirit, was that the Gentile believers, *not the Jewish believers*, were to be free from Law observance. In addition, it is clear from the book of Hebrews (9:10) that the Law in practice was still "*imposed*" upon the Jewish people until "the time of reformation" was completed.

So it is, that at the beginning of Paul's final trip to Jerusalem till his arrival in Jerusalem, and throughout the events in Jerusalem, he was Law observant when in the

company of Jewish believers. His Law observance was perfectly consistent throughout his ministry. At no time was Paul's ministry of the grace of God being sacrificed or thwarted. As you remember, this is a Transition period, where two different programs are being practiced simultaneously. The Jewish believers were practicing the Law, whereas the Gentile believers were not.

Acts 21:4— And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.

Paul and his company landed on the northern most coast of Palestine at the city of Tyre. There they were given hospitality by local Christians. As had happened before (Acts 20:23), the Holy Spirit let it be known of the dangers to which Paul was going to be exposed. Certain teachers today will cite this verse as if it is the Holy Spirit telling Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. Of course, this is only a conjecture at best. The passage itself says no such thing. What it actually indicates is that the disciples, "they," having learned by "the Holy Spirit" of the dangers ahead, warned Paul "not to go up to Jerusalem." This same sequence will be repeated in the next passage given.

Acts 21:10-14— (10) And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. (11) When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" (12) Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. (13) Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (14) So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

Once again, arguments are put forth from this passage by certain Bible teachers, as illustrated earlier, to the effect that the Holy Spirit is warning Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. A careful reading of the passage proves otherwise. (1) The Holy Spirit only spoke of the binding of Paul. (2) It was the people who "pleaded" with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. (3) Because of Paul's deep commitment he was ready to even die for the sake of "the name of the Lord Jesus." (4) They all concluded that "the will of the Lord be done." And, indeed, this is the only conclusion that satisfies all the facts in this historic event in the life of the apostle. The will of the Lord was, indeed, done!

Let us remember that when the 12 apostles heard Christ speak of His going up to Jerusalem to suffer "many things" and "be killed" (Matt. 16:21-23), the immediate human reaction of Peter was to attempt to persuade the Lord that this might not happen. Christ's words to Peter were surprisingly strong—"Get thee behind Me, Satan! You are an offence to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." Though the apostle Paul most certainly made no claim to be Christ, yet the circumstances are

amazingly parallel. Thus, when we look at this experience of Paul, and take it at face value without plunging into sordid accusations against Paul, we can realize an amazing identification between the apostle and his Savior. In other words, by the end of all this, we shall know that Paul was directly in the center of God's will.

The next thing on the agenda for Paul is the agreement circumscribed by James and the elders of the assembly in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM—II.

C. Conclusion of Paul's Trip

Acts 21:17-30— (17) And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. (18) On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. (19) When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. (20) And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, “You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; (21) but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. (22) What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. (23) Therefore do what we tell you: we have four men who have taken a vow. (24) Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. (25) But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.” (26) Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the Temple to announce the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each of them. (27) Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews of Asia, seeing him in the Temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, (28) crying out, “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the Law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the Temple and has defiled this holy place.” (29) (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the Temple.) (30) And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the Temple; and immediately the doors were shut.

The subject of this study is the Transition in the book of Acts wherein the old system of historic Judaism is phasing out and pure Christianity is phasing in. In the process of a transition of nearly any kind, wherein two differing systems are functioning simultaneously for a period of time, there are bound to be problems. These problems bring conflicts, but these conflicts are manageable when both systems and/or party leaders are united under the singular leadership of a head—in this case the headship of Jesus Christ as revealed by the Holy Spirit. So it is in the history of the early Church. This Transition is most certainly demonstrated in this passage.

Was the apostle Paul right in observing the Mosaic Law as described in this passage? In answer to that question, please keep in mind the following facts—

No.1, God had a plan for the Jewish people.

(a) I have previously demonstrated that God had a plan for the nation of Israel after the death of Jesus Christ. That plan consisted of a second opportunity to accept their Messiah on the resurrection side of the cross (Matt. 22:1-14 and Luke 13:6-9).

(b) While this plan was in operation the Jewish believers were still anticipating the possibility of the Kingdom being set up (Acts 1:3, 6-7; 3:18-21; 15:13-18 and 28:25-27). This would simply be an extension of the Kingdom that Christ had offered during His earthly ministry. Actually the communal living of the early Jewish saints (Acts 4:32-37) was an evidence that they still anticipated the Kingdom which Christ preached—Luke 10:9, 10; 12:32, 34; 18:22; Matt. 5:40-42; 6:19-20 and 25-34.

(c) Hebrews 9:1 and 10 specifically say that during this “time of reformation” the “first Covenant [i.e., **the Law**] . . . [with all its ritual] physical ordinances [was] **IMPOSED** [the same in all basic translations, KJV, ASV, NKJV, NASB, NRSV, ESV, NEB (enforce), NIV (applying)].” This means that as far as the Jewish believers were concerned they were still required to be practicing the Mosaic Law system until they were specifically told otherwise. It was not until the book of Hebrews was written that the Jewish believers were specifically told they had “better things” and should no longer practice the law. It is in Hebrews that they were told—“Now what is becoming obsolete (the Old Covenant Law) and growing old IS READY TO VANISH AWAY.” Of course, Hebrews was written at the very close of the book of Acts. It is at this very same time that the Holy Spirit also revealed that—in the counsels of God—the Law, as the condemnation against us, was nailed to the cross (see Ephesians and Colossians). All of this was only about 7 or 8 years before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

No. 2, God had a plan for the Gentile people.

(a) Saul of Tarsus was saved and it was revealed that he would be sent to minister to the *Gentile* peoples (Acts 9:1-19). It was revealed to the apostle Peter that he should no longer consider the *Gentile* peoples as “unclean” by the standards of the Law. Thus the first *Gentiles* were saved by the preaching of the gospel to them through Peter (Acts 10-11:18). Many more *Gentiles* were saved in the city of Antioch of Phoenicia (Acts 11:19-26). A

great many more Gentiles were brought into the faith through the ministry of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13 and 14).

(b) It was very clearly determined in the counsel of the saints in Jerusalem (Acts 15) that *Gentile* believers were not to have the Mosaic Law imposed upon them. This was also clearly an indication of a change in the Law system itself. Up until this time the Jewish people could only associate on a familiar basis with Gentiles if those Gentiles had become proselytes to Judaism. Now, however, it had been revealed to all the Jewish brethren that they could associate with the *Gentile* believers on an equal basis in Christ. This was certainly good news to the *Gentile* brethren and it tested the fidelity of the Jewish brethren to the new revelation from the Head of the Church on that issue.

(c) In Paul's epistles to the *Gentile* believers (Romans and Galatians) it was carefully explained that they were not under the Law system but were now under a dispensation of the Grace of God. It was further explained that their new life in Christ was governed by "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8). As you may remember, some professed Jewish brethren had responded to the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles by demanding that these Gentiles needed to be practicing the Law (Acts 15:1-5). So it also happened now, that these liberating truths from Paul were no doubt the basis for some carnal brethren to hastily propagate a falsehood that Paul was actually telling the Jewish brethren to stop their practice of the Law. In both cases this opposition to Paul and his ministry was false.

No. 3, **And God had a plan for the apostle Paul.**

(a) Initially that plan was spelled out at the time of Paul's conversion. In Acts 9:15 and 16 Christ, Himself, summarized God's plan for Paul—" . . . he [Paul] is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before *Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel*. For I will show him how many things *he must suffer* for My name's sake." Interesting enough, all three of these entities—*Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel*—were involved in this episode of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem. First of all, Paul gave the report of all that God was doing among the *Gentiles* through his ministry. This caused rejoicing among the Jewish believers. Second, because of this imprisonment Paul was able to fulfill Christ's prediction that he would speak *to kings*. For two years Paul was able to address kings concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 23:23- chapter 26). Paul would never have had that opportunity or invitation without his imprisonment. And lastly, Paul was able to once again preach to the Jewish people. Actually, preaching to the Jews first was his practice. Wherever he went preaching the gospel "to the Jew first" was his normal procedure (Acts 13:14-42).

(b) In perfect consistency, Paul made it a practice in his life, especially in regards to both *Jews and Gentiles*, to execute God's plan for him as a minister in the Church. As stated before in this study, 1 Corinthians, chapter 7, and verses 17-20 should be read very carefully—

(17) But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one,

so let him **walk**. And so **I ordain** in all the churches.

(18) Was anyone called while **circumcised** [meaning while being a Law observant Jew]? LET HIM NOT BECOME UNCIRCUMCISED. [This obviously means that he is not to renounce his Judaism. In addition, this answers the false accusation that Paul taught Jewish believers to forsake the Law (Acts 21:21)] Was anyone called while uncircumcised [meaning while being a Gentile outside the Law system]? LET HIM NOT BE CIRCUMCISED. [This is in consistency with the determination of the counsel of Acts 15.] (19) Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God [for each group]. (20) Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.

In this text the apostle Paul was plainly and specifically telling Jewish believers to remain in their Judaism. This is what he has “ordained” in every assembly.

(c) As to Paul’s own personal practice, that is clearly explained in this same epistle in chapter 9 and verses 19-21. Read this carefully—

(19) For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more;

(20) and to the Jews **I became as a Jew**, that I might win the Jews; to those who are under the Law, **as under the Law**, (not being myself under the Law [this part is added in most ancient texts]), that I might win those who are under the law,

(21) to those who are without law, **as without Law** (not being without law to God, but under law toward Christ), that I might gain those who are without Law.

So it is that Paul, in all consistency, was only doing at Jerusalem, among the Jewish brethren on this final trip, exactly what he had practiced throughout his ministry, and what he openly stated in this passage of 1 Corinthians 9.

(d) Consequently, the apostle Paul was not the least bit inconsistent in his actions of Law observance at Jerusalem as many teachers have mistakenly concluded. These teachers’ failure to observe the Transition in the book of Acts, the various aspects of that Transition, and the consistent practice of Paul in his ministry, have seriously blundered into hurtful slander against Christ’s servant. These teachers have actually discredited the unique apostleship of Paul. They have furthermore slandered the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem.

D. After Paul’s Trip

Those who view Paul’s conduct in Jerusalem as a sickening compromise towards those who wish to impose the Mosaic Law upon Christians have also considered Paul’s imprisonment as a catastrophe in his ministry. However, just as these teachers totally misunderstood the Transition period, so they totally misjudged Paul’s conduct and bring a reproach upon his ministry. Neither Paul nor the Head of the Church are silent upon the

after effects of his conduct in Jerusalem. Even before Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he had stated before the Ephesian elders, “*Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men*” (Acts 20:26). In other words, up to this point, and with a spiritual purpose in going to Jerusalem, Paul’s testimony is that he has never been one who would compromise the truth of God, which would endanger all future generations of believers. As to Paul’s testimony after his trip to Jerusalem, note the following clear declarations as to Paul’s character and service to Christ—

1. **Acts 23:1** Paul spoke before the Jewish Sanhedrin. “Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, ‘*Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.*’” I don’t know of anyone bold enough to step forward and consider Paul a liar—other than the high priest Ananias who told the guard to strike Paul. Now if the contention of certain teachers today is accurate—then the action of the high priest was justified.

2. **Acts 23:11** “But the following night the Lord stood by him [Paul] and said, ‘*Be of good cheer, Paul: for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.*’” Did our Lord think Paul’s service in Jerusalem was a catastrophe? Obviously not!

3. **Acts 24:16** In defense before King Felix, Paul stated, “This being so, *I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.*” This is Paul’s personal testimony as to his heartfelt attitude towards both God and man. No compromiser could ever make a statement like this unless he was heaping more guilt and judgment against himself.

4. **Acts 26:19** “*Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.*” And this is the only biblical conclusion one can come to who studies the facts instead of voicing vindictive accusations against a servant of God.

5. **Philippians 1:12-14** From the Roman imprisonment Paul wrote, “*But I want you to know brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*”

6. If the accusations against Paul are true, then he could never, never say or expect brethren to follow his example, as he stated many times—thank God! To the Thessalonians he said, “*And you became followers of us and of the Lord, . . .*” (1 Thess. 1:6). “*For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you*” (2 Thess. 3:7). “*Therefore I urge you, imitate me*” (1 Cor. 4:16). “*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ*” (1 Cor. 11:1). “*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who walk, as you have us for a pattern*” (Philip. 3:17).

7. **2 Timothy 4:7** At the conclusion of Paul’s ministry, he stated, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*” Remember that this is similar to the expression Paul made at the beginning of his final trip to Jerusalem—Acts 20:24. It remains as a beautiful testimony to Paul’s faithfulness.

E. Paul's Appeal to Caesar

Some do not believe that the apostle Paul should ever have appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:9-12), who in turn sent him to Rome in chains. Of course the statement from Christ, Himself—as well as the passage from Philippians above—effectively answers this suggestion of failure. But concerning appealing to Caesar, Paul did it several times when perfectly legitimate and necessary.

(1) In Philippi Paul let it be known that they had beaten a Roman citizen who was condemned— Acts 16:35-39. The magistrates who heard this knew they were in violation of Roman law, so they came and personally escorted Paul and Silas out of prison.

(2) In Acts 22:24-29 Paul revealed to the commander who was about to have Paul beaten that he was a Roman citizen. That fact changed everything and the ones about to administer the beating withdrew from him.

(3) In Acts 23:12-35 Paul found out about an effort of the Jews to kill him. He warned the Roman commander who in turn protected Paul with about 470 soldiers and secreted him to Caesarea. That amounts to a small army the size of a modern day battalion.

(4) In turn, Paul's appeal to Caesar actually saved his life because the Jews were planning another attempt to have him killed—see Acts 25:1-6 and 9-12. In turn it must be remembered that Christ stated that Paul would go to Rome as His witness—Acts 23:11. So it is that Paul's appeal to Caesar was in consistency with the Head of the Church.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DOCTRINES AFFECTED BY THE TRANSITION

A Brief Explanation of Each—

1. **Law Practices**, Various and Sundry
2. **Sabbath Observance**, either Saturday or Sunday
3. **The Lord's Passover Supper**, a Divisive Issue
4. **Water Baptism**, a Jewish Purification Rite
5. **The New Covenant**, Not for the Church
6. **The Miraculous Gifts of the Spirit**, Transitional
7. **The Completion of the Word of God**,
For this Age and the Future

1. Law Practices, Various and Sundry

Because various and sundry laws were being practiced during the book of Acts time frame, certain teachers have arisen claiming that the Law of Moses is still in effect today. They modify this and admit that the sacrificial system is not to be practiced in this age. The Seventh Day Adventists and Herbert W. Armstrong groups are typical examples of this. Failing to recognize the Transition period, these sects fall into numerous errors and frustrations. The simplest answer is the following “ten commandments” which speak of the demise of the Law system for this age.

1. **2 Corinthians 3:11**, speaking of the Law “written and engraved on stones” (verse 7), “For if what *is passing away* was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.”
2. **Romans 6:14 and 15**, “For sin shall not have dominion over you, *for you are not under Law but under Grace*. What then? Shall we sin because we are *not under Law but under Grace*? Certainly not!”
3. **Romans 7:4**, “Therefore, my brethren, *you also have become dead to the Law through the body of Christ*, that you may be married to another—to Him Who is raised from the dead. . . .”
4. **Romans 10:4-6**, “*For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes*. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the Law. . . . *But the righteousness of faith* speaks this way. . . .”
5. **Galatians 3:24-25**, “Therefore the Law was our custodian [to bring us] to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith is come, *we are no longer under a custodian* [i.e., the Law].”
6. **Galatians 4:4-5, 7**, “. . . God sent forth His Son . . . born under the Law, *to redeem those who were under the Law* [as in slavery], that we might receive the adoption of sons . . . *Therefore you are no longer a slave* [as under the Law] *but a son*. . . .”
7. **Galatians 4:21-22, 28**, “Tell me, you who desire to be under the Law, do you not hear the Law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman [representing the Law], *the other by a freewoman* [representing freedom from the Law]. . . Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, *are children of promise* [the free].”
8. **Gal. 5:18**, “But if you are led by the Spirit, *you are not under the Law*.”
9. **Ephesians 2:14-15**, “For He Himself is *our peace*, Who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation [lit.], *having abolished* in His flesh the enmity, *that is, the Law* of commandments in ordinances. . . .”
10. **Colossians 2:14**, “. . . *having wiped out the handwriting of requirements* that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, *having nailed it to the cross*.”

2. Sabbath Observance, Saturday

Sabbath observers today often point to the observance of the Jewish Sabbath by believers in the book of Acts as proof that Christians should continue to observe this holy day throughout this dispensation. Of course, the sacrificial system was also practiced in Acts as long as the Temple was standing, and yet they admit this is certainly not in effect in the Church today. So they are very selective in what they want to remain in effect today. As was true of the whole Mosaic Law system phasing out, so they also refuse to recognize the effect of the Transition in the book of Acts upon the Sabbath subject. They also refuse to recognize those indications in the Greek Scriptures which demonstrate a change in Sabbath observance from the ritual to the reality. As the lamb sacrifice was fulfilled by “the Lamb of God,” so it is that the physical Sabbath rest is fulfilled by spiritual “soul rest” in Christ as specified by Christ Himself—

Matthew 11:28-30, (28) Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest* [as a spiritual Sabbath]. (29) Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find *rest for your souls*. (30) For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

12:1-8, (1) AT THAT TIME [at the time He gave the beautiful plea above] Jesus went through the grain fields *on the Sabbath*. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. (2) And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, ‘Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do *on the Sabbath!*’ (3) But He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: (4) how he entered the house of God and ate the show bread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? (5) Or have you not read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? (6) Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the Temple. (7) But if you had known what this means, ‘*I desire mercy and not sacrifice,*’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. (8) For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

Like the Pharisees of old, the modern Sabbath observers fail to recognize the observance of the spiritual Sabbath—which determines one’s eternal destiny—and cling to a ritual fleshly Sabbath instead. Spiritual hypocrites think nothing of defaming the spiritual Sabbath as long as they can observe a ritual Sabbath. Yes, Jesus Christ in His ministry “worked” on the Sabbath (verse 5, and also in John 5:1-18) just as He would on any day of the week. So the self-righteous Jews of Christ’s day totally misjudged Him.

Thus it is also a fact that Gentile believers in Christ today are not to be “judged” regarding the “Sabbath” (see **Colossians 2:11-17**; **Galatians 4:9-11** and **Romans 14:5-6**). And Hebrew believers as well are to enter that realm of “soul rest” for the people of God—**Hebrews 3:7-19** and **4:1-13**.

Sunday

Not to be outdone, Satan has maneuvered in the hearts of the ritualists to think that God has actually changed the Sabbath from a Saturday to a Sunday. There is probably nothing that men will give any more elaborate and eloquent argumentation for than the observance of Sunday as the so-called “Christian Sabbath.” And yet there is no subject in the Bible in which there is more *silence* than on this Sunday observance. Most every Bible scholar and teacher will admit right up front that there is actually not one single word in all the “New Testament” that commands or instructs Christians to observe Sunday as some sort of replacement for the Jewish Sabbath. Neither is there any evidence of the early Church making an observance of that day. In the absence of any clear commands in the Bible, claims to the effect of observing Sunday rest are pure suppositions. Since religiosity plays upon the natural heart of most people, the teachers will say—

1.) *“Wasn’t Christ resurrected from the dead on Sunday morning? And therefore, should we not observe that day as well?”* Yes, Christ was raised on the first day of the week, but the fact remains that He never one single time even suggested that believers ritually observe that day. Rather, He has instructed through His apostles that believers are to manifest the fact of the resurrection by their own new lives every day of the week. Believers are said to be “resurrected with Christ” (Romans 6:4, 8, 11, 13). Therefore they are to demonstrate that new life perpetually.

2.) *“Wasn’t the Church born on the morning of Pentecost Sunday? And should we not therefore observe that day as the birthday of the Church?”* Yes, the Church was born on Pentecost Sunday. However, Christ never instructed His Church to, therefore, observe the Feast of Pentecost. In fact the Church is not to be observing Feast days—Gal. 4:9-11 and Col. 2:16—nor the “Sabbath.”

3.) *“Did not the Church habitually gather on the first day of the week as demonstrated by the assembly at Troas in Acts 20:7?”* The text says the brethren of Troas came together “to break bread on the first day of the week.” It does not say this was something they always did. Paul was leaving the next day so they had a special meeting for him. It also means this was not a Sunday morning meeting, but rather an evening meeting. In fact, some Bible translations indicate that this was probably on a Saturday evening, which according to Jewish reckoning begins the first day of the week. Any way it is taken, it was most certainly not a traditional Sunday A.M. service.

4.) *“Did not the apostle Paul instruct the Corinthian assembly to take collections on the first day of every week in 1 Corinthians 16:2?”* A careful reading of the text indicates that the word “day” is not in the original. This simply means that Paul was encouraging the households to “store up” their contributions in their own homes at the beginning of each week so that they would be easier to collect when contributions are called for.

5.) “*Is not Sunday called ‘The Lord’s Day’ in Revelation 1:10?*” Scholars have pointed out for years that this expression in the context of the book of revelation is actually talking about the subject of the book—“the great and terrible Day of the Lord.”

Also remember the clear prohibitions against the religious observance of holy days by the Church—Galatians 4:9, 10; Colossians 2:16 and Philippians 3:3.

3. The Lord’s Passover Supper, A Divisive Issue

One of the ritual observations of the Law which was carried over during the Transition period was the Lord’s Passover Supper. This Supper has virtually been remanufactured by clerical Christendom so that it no longer even resembles the meal Christ ate the night of His betrayal. However, during the Transition period Jewish believers were still observing the Lord’s Passover Supper. In fact, it became a divisive issue in the Corinthian assembly (1 Cor. 11:17-19) which had many Jewish members (Acts 18:2, 4, 5, and 8). In that case the apostle Paul precisely reminded them of the importance that the Lord placed upon the Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-26). Because of its abuse in the Corinthian assembly, “many” had experienced physical disciplinary sickness and even death (1 Cor. 11:30). Of course, if this precise Supper was still in effect today, most of Christendom would be seriously sick, to say the least.

Many Bible teachers take pride in how they interpret the Bible. Most say they take it literally and say as well that they believe what it says! However, when it comes to this Supper they don’t dare take it literally, because if they did they would no longer be observing the modern perversion of the Lord’s Supper. For instance, the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 gave—almost word for word—the very same account that is found in the Gospel of Luke. SIX times in Luke this supper is specifically identified as the Lord’s “**Passover**” Supper—Luke 22:1, 7, 8, 11, 13 and 15. “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this PASSOVER with you before I suffer” (Luke 22:15). In addition it is identified as the Passover supper SIX other times in the other two Gospel accounts—Matt. 26:17, 18, 19 and Mark 14:12, 14, 16. In addition, when the Passover meal was first instituted by Moses it was plainly designated as “the Lord’s Passover”—Exodus 12:11, 27 and Lev. 23:5. In 1 Corinthians Paul simply says “the Lord’s Supper.” Now the nature of this Supper has never been a secret. All Bible scholars and teachers readily admit that “the last supper” Christ ate with His disciples was “the Lord’s *Passover* Supper.” Nor did the Lord, in the midst of eating the Passover, somehow institute a different “Supper.” Some have tried to believe that the Lord somehow changed this meal around to make it fit their modern versions. This is obviously a futile task—to those who take the Bible literally. Note the differences in Christendom’s modern ritual with what the Bible actually says about the Lord’s Passover Supper—

1.) As demonstrated above this supper is clearly and unmistakably identified as the “*Passover*” supper. Christendom ignores that entirely in their ritual perversion.

2.) It was a full scale “*Feast meal*”—not a superficial “snack” of crackers and grape juice.

3.) It was always done in the “*evening*” because it symbolized the death of the lamb and deliverance that night at midnight (Exo. 12:8-10). You can rest assured it most certainly was never done on the morning, which would symbolize Christ’s resurrection.

4.) No “uncircumcised” person or “stranger” was ever allow to partake of it (Exo. 12:43-48). In other words, no Gentiles were to partake of this Supper—only the Jews.

5.) It was absolutely never to be observed as a “community meal,” but only as a family (sometimes two or more) meal to be eaten privately in their homes (Exo. 12:4 and 46).

6.) “As oft as you do this” in context meant it was to be eaten precisely *once* a year—14th day of Nisan, in the evening (Exo. 12:18). Christendom acts like a tipsy drunkard and takes their “supper” just any time they get good and ready—once a day, once a week, once a month, etc.

What was happening in the Corinthian assembly was hard for Paul to “believe” (1 Cor. 11:18). On one or more occasions the “Lord’s Supper” had been injected into the midst of a general “love feast” for apparent “divisive” reasons (1 Cor. 11:18). In addition there was “drunkenness” and “gluttony” exhibited. Also, others had “their own” suppers (1 Cor. 11:21) separately. What sad confusion all this spelled out.

Most scholars conclude that the one thing Paul did was to demand the separation of the Lord’s Supper from this type of situation. Therefore, the very first thing Paul said was—“Therefore when you come together in one place, it is NOT to eat the Lord’s Supper” (v.20). Both the King James and the New King James (and others, NASB, etc.) give a literal translation. Even more literal is the translation by A. E. Knock, *Concordant Literal New Testament*, which shows the tense of the verb—“Then at your coming together in the same place, **it is not to be eating the Lord’s dinner.**” Now many have contended that in the book of 1 Corinthians Paul virtually instituted the Lord’s Supper for observance in the Church. That is last thing Paul did. Taken literally, Paul forbid the eating of the Lord’s Supper in the midst of a general assembly!

When one realizes that this is the Lord’s Passover Supper, then Paul’s corrective measures are understandable. Of course, it is not to be eaten in a general gathering of the assembly. First of all, it was a private home meal. Secondly, it was not to be participated in by any Gentiles. And, of course, the sacredness of the symbolism, pointing to the Lord’s body and blood, brought strong judgment from the Lord when taken in such perverse conditions.

The Lord’s Supper was still being observed by believing Jews during the Transition period because they were still expecting the promised Messianic Kingdom, and that is precisely when the Lord stated that it would be “fulfilled”—Luke 22:15, 16—“I will no longer eat of it until it is FULFILLED in the Kingdom of God.” And again, “I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on UNTIL that day I drink it new with you in My

Father's Kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). And again, "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine UNTIL the Kingdom of God comes" (Luke 22:18). In other words, the Lord's Passover Supper is not specifically for the Church, but rather for Israel. The Supper that Christ ate, and placed new significance upon, has as its aim and fulfillment the future Kingdom of God. The Hebrew prophets had spoken of a future "passing over" wherein God would deliver Israel from all nations on the face of the earth at the beginning of the Kingdom in connection with Israel's New Covenant promises—Isaiah 11:11-16; 31:4, 5; Jeremiah 23:7, 8 and 31:31-34. Now Christ came "to confirm the promises made to the fathers" (Rom. 15:8). That is precisely what He did at this last Supper. In other words, this Supper looked forward to the Kingdom when Israel is delivered and Christ will again eat of these elements with His 12 disciples.

As for the Church which is Christ's body, which was a mystery hidden in past ages, they collectively are a new species on earth, and they partake of the body and blood of Christ *spiritually*—John 6:27-64 and 1 Cor. 10:15-18. Christ specifically said He was no longer going to be eating that Passover Supper until that future time—so it is that the "body of Christ" should not be doing something the "Head" is not doing!

Roman Catholicism and the Supper

Roman Catholicism, inspired and motivated by the crafty serpent, created the blasphemous "mass" by combining the ritual Passover bread and wine—used as a symbol of remembrance of Christ's body and blood—with the partaking of Christ's body and blood spiritually by faith and trust for salvation, as described by Christ in John 6. When they combined the two, they consequently created a "RITUAL for SALVATION." Don't look for this "Satanic Altar," hidden somewhere out in the woods where the cultish Satanists would gather for one of their secret rites. Look rather in the grandiose cathedrals dominating the skyline in nearly every city and state throughout the world. That is where you will find this creation being performed on the altars under the domes of fabulous gold plated grandeur amidst ritual "hocus-pocus." And amazing as it is, much of Protestantism has confusedly followed suit, at least in modified forms, though many of them actually know the difference between the ritual and the reality. Even recently I saw an article by a reputable evangelical teacher who stated that these two events—the Passover bread-wine and Christ's exposition of "manna" from heaven—are most certainly somehow related.

Christians must keep these two events separate in their hearts and minds. The three synoptic (similar) Gospels only present the *private* Passover Supper *matzah*-bread and wine memorial. In contrast, the Gospel of John presents the *public* plea of Christ to partake of His person as the salvation "*manna*" from heaven. The Gospel of John, which is called by many teachers the "spiritual Gospel," totally ignores the ritual Passover elements, but gives instead the reality of spiritual salvation. According to Matthew, Mark and Luke, at the last Passover Supper Christ used the two elements of the bread and wine as symbolic of His own death. He instructed the apostles that from then on when they would take these elements at Passover they would do so in "remembrance" of His death, as the basis for the deliverance of Israel in the Kingdom. In other words, from now on, in the believing Jews'

Passover celebrations, they would no longer be remembering Israel's deliverance out of Egypt by a lamb, rather, they would be remembering Christ's death, both for them and as the basis of the great deliverance in the future Kingdom. Christ specifically said that it "would be *fulfilled in the Kingdom*." Therefore, among the Jewish brethren the Passover took upon itself a forward anticipation, instead of the backward view.

Now, the amazing truths Christ gave, as recorded in John 6:22-71, should never be mixed or confused with the truths regarding the Passover. Even though both mention the body and blood of Christ they do so for different purposes and by way of different actions. The Jews themselves would never confuse the Passover *matzah* bread with the amazing miraculous *manna* bread from heaven. The dry, flat, unleavened, cracker-like *matzah* only spoke of their deliverance out of Egypt, whereas the honey flavored, oil-like *manna* speaks of their daily sustenance for forty years in the wilderness. At the Passover they would never bake *manna*, and in the wilderness they would never search to find *matzah* scattered on the ground. So it also should be in our theology; we should never mix the two distinct teaching each displays. No Gentile can partake of the Jewish Passover ritual, whereas in the *manna* reality, the whole world can be fed. The one is a physical ritual of remembrance, whereas the other is a spiritual reality for salvation and growth. The one is taken once a year on a particular date; the other is taken both initially and continuously. The one is done in physical ritual symbolism, whereas the other is done in spiritual reality of faith.

The apostle Paul warned that in the last days there would be "doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1). Satan's genius was to inspire Rome to combine the two separate events and make the amazing salvation REALITY nothing but a RITUAL. This has become a *blasphemous lie* deceiving millions of souls. It is the cardinal doctrine of "Mystery Babylon, the Mother of Harlots" which has made the nations "drunk with the *wine* of her fornication" (Revelation 17:2).

Christ, Himself, anticipated such a devilish scenario and thus stated long in advance, "It is the Spirit Who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak unto you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

4. **Water Baptism, a Jewish Purification Rite**

The two carnal ordinances which have erroneously been carried over into Christendom are the Lord's Passover Supper and water baptism. Both ordinances are Jewish rituals, originating in the Law of Moses, and have no place in true, spiritual Christianity—"we worship God in the Spirit . . . and have no confidence on the flesh [i.e., the carnal]"—Philippians 3:3. I have already proven that the modern "Holy Communion" or "Lord's Supper" is actually nothing more than a modified, distorted perversion of the "Lord's Passover Supper." The truth about water baptism is similar in nature. No matter whether the claim for water baptism is that it is necessary for salvation or that it is only for testimony, the biblical fact is that water baptism has nothing to do with the real baptism of Christianity. Water baptism is a carryover of the Jewish purification rites under the Law of

Moses. It is also significant that both these carnal ordinances were originally connected with the anticipation of the Messianic Kingdom. As stated by Christ, the Supper will “be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God” (Luke 22:16). John’s water baptism, whether performed by John and his disciples, or by Christ’s disciples, was a preparatory “**purification**” in anticipation of the *Kingdom of God*—see John 3:22-26 and Matthew 3:1-6—

(22) After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and *baptized* (4:2) (though Jesus Himself did not *baptize*, but His disciples). (23) Now John was also *baptizing* in Aenon near Salem, because there was much water there. And they came and were *baptized*. (24) For John was not yet cast into prison. (25) Then there arose a question between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about **purification**. (26) And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, He Who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you testified—behold, He is *baptizing*, and all are coming to Him!” (Matt. 3:1-2) John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!”

The book of Hebrews makes it very clear that the Jewish water baptisms were simply for ceremonial purification of the flesh for various reasons. Hebrews 9:1, 10 and 13 says, “Then indeed, even the first Covenant had ordinances of divine service. . . .concerned only with foods and drinks, various **baptisms** [Greek, *baptismois*, lit. trans., baptisms], and **fleshly ordinances** imposed until the time of reformation sanctifies to the **purifying** of the flesh, . . .”

The Passover “purification” (John 11:55) was also called by the Jews “the Baptism of the Passover,” Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. II, pg. 747.

James W. Dale, who has done the classic works on “baptism,” in his third volume, *Johanic Baptism*, stated simply, “Baptism was purification and purification was baptism,” pages 136-140. This would also be true of the Temple “purifications” mentioned in Acts 21:24-26 and 24:18.

“The use of the word ‘baptize’ in Jewish usage first appears in the Mosaic laws of purification (Exo. 30:17-21; Lev. 11:25; 15:8; 17:15; Num. 19:17, 18; 31:22, 23) where it undeniably means a mere ‘washing’ or ‘cleansing.’” *Zondervan’s Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, under “Baptism,” page 96.

“The Christian dispensation began with the baptism of John, and the early Church incorporated the practice borrowed from Judaism A comparison between the rites there described in bald summary . . . abundantly justifies the conclusion that all salient elements and many details of the Christian usage may be found in or explained by Jewish practice. Directions as to the examination, preparation, reception, and baptism of the candidate by immersion are of the same quality and character. In short, for the interpretation of early Christian belief and practice in regard to Baptism we need look no farther than contemporary Rabbinic Judaism.” F. Gavin, Ph.D., Th.D., Professor of Ecclesiastical

History, The general Theological Seminary, New York, *The Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments*, KTAV Publishing House, New York, 1969.

“Until the recent discoveries of modern Archaeology, we knew about ancient Jewish ritual immersion baths only from literary texts. Now, however, Archaeology has provided us with numerous examples of Jewish ritual immersion baths, called miqva’ot (singular, miqveh), dating to the Second Temple Period, prior to and during the time when John the Baptist lived. These miqva’ot undoubtedly provided background for Christian baptism We may therefore reasonably conclude that John’s baptism was not something new. It was something that grew out of Jewish ritual immersion in miqva’ot John’s baptism took place in the Jordan River (Matt. 3:6; Lk. 3:3). This conformed to rabbinic law, which required flowing or ‘living’ water to provide a valid purification (Mikva’ot 5:5).” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Jan./Feb. 1987/ Vol. 13, No. 1, by William Sanford LA., SOR., page 52.

All this explains why we still see occasions of water baptism being mentioned and practiced in the book of Acts time frame—because it was a transition period out of Judaism into pure Christianity. See—Acts 1:5, “For John truly baptized with *water*”

Acts 1:22, “. . . from the baptism of John”

Acts 8:36, 38, “See, here is *water* . . . into the *water* . . . he baptized him.”

Acts 10:37, “. . . after the baptism which John preached”

Acts 10:47, 48, “Can any man forbid *water* . . . and he commanded them, in the name of the Lord, to be baptized.”

Acts 11:16, “John indeed baptized with *water*.”

Acts 13:24, “John preached a baptism of repentance.”

Acts 18:25, “. . . knowing only the baptism of John.”

Acts 19:3, “Into what were you baptized? Into John’s baptism.”

Acts 19:4, “John baptized with a baptism of repentance”

Likewise, the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians, would deemphasize his part in practicing water baptism among the Jewish members of the assembly. In chapter one verses 13-17, Paul challenges the divisive members in these words, “Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? [Obviously not.] I thank God I baptized none of you except Crispus [ruler of the synagogue, Acts 18:8] and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize [in water], but to preach the gospel,” Thankfully, in preaching the gospel, Paul indirectly gave birth to all the Corinthians—“I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15). As a result of believing the gospel all the Corinthian saints were said to be “washed . . . in the name of the Lord Jesus and *by the Spirit of our God*” (1 Cor. 6:11).

Each of the four Gospels tells us emphatically that John’s water baptism would be replaced by a greater Spirit baptism initiated by Christ Himself; see—

Matthew 3:11, “water” / “Spirit” to come.

Mark 1:8, “water” / “Spirit” to come.

Luke 3:16, “water” / “Spirit” to come.

John 1:33, “water” / “Spirit” to come.
 This is repeated by Christ at the very beginning of Acts, see—
 Acts 1:5, “water” / “Spirit” to come shortly.
 This is remembered by Peter at the time of the first Gentile conversion, see—
 Acts 11:15, 16, “water” / “Spirit” has come.

Obviously, the real baptism of Christianity is the spiritual, not the carnal.

Baptism is one of the most important and beautiful subjects in the Church epistles and for this Age of grace. Whenever the apostle Paul, in any of his epistles, expounded upon true Christian baptism for the Church of Jesus Christ you will never find any evidence of a carnal water baptism involved. Prove this to be true by reading—(1) Romans 6:1-14; (2) 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; (3) Galatians 3:26-29; (4) Ephesians 4:1-6; (5) Ephesians 5:25-27 (lit. trans., “cleanse her with the laver [Greek, *lutron*] of water *in the Word*,” i.e., the Word of God is a bath—John 15:3 and 17:17); (6) Colossians 2:11-12 and (7) Hebrews 9:9-14. As Paul says in Ephesians 4:1-6, today there is just “ONE BAPTISM,” and this is in keeping with the “unity of the SPIRIT.”

Thus, Holy Spirit baptism gave birth to the Church of Jesus Christ on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1), and thereafter in the book of Acts it becomes more prominent—

Acts 2:1-4, All believers were baptized into one body.
 Acts 2:38, 39, and 41, New believers were saved and added to the body.
 Acts 3:19, Jews called upon to “repent” and be “converted.”
 Acts 8:12, 13 and 15-17, all three baptisms are spontaneous,
 plus the miraculous gifts of the Spirit by the “laying on of hands.”
 Acts 9:17, 18 and 22:16, Paul’s initial salvation and receiving the Spirit.
 Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-17; 15:7-9, Holy Spirit baptism of first Gentiles.
 Acts 16:14, 15, the baptism (spiritual) of Lydia and her household.
 Acts 16:30-33, the baptism (spiritual) of jailer and his household.
 Acts 18:8, the baptism (spiritual) of many of the Corinthians.
 Acts 18:24-25 and 19:1-6, last contrast between John’s and the Spirit’s.

As long as the promised Messianic Kingdom was extended as a possibility to the Jewish people, water baptism and the Law will be allowed to be practiced. God was giving the Jewish people another opportunity to receive their Messiah on the resurrection side of the cross. It was not until the clear rejection of the gospel by the Jewish nation that the Law with its “meats and drinks and variety of baptisms” (Heb. 8:13 and 9:9, 10) ceased.

True Christianity is NOT—

Ritualism	but	Reality
Shadows	but	Substance
Types	but	Antitypes
Outward	but	Inward
Physical	but	Spiritual

5. The New Covenant

Not made with the Church

This is another misunderstood subject in Christendom today. It is a fact that our Bibles have been divided into what is called “The Old Testament [or Covenant]” and “The New Testament [or Covenant].” Of course, this strongly infers that we are under the New Covenant today. However, this is not an inspired division, but rather one of convenience. The two sections of the Scriptures would better be designated simply as “The Hebrew Scriptures” and “The Greek Scriptures.” It is true that when Christ came, as recorded in the four Gospels, He offered to the nation of Israel their New Covenant Messianic Kingdom. However, the Jewish national leadership rejected that Kingdom, and consequently the Kingdom and the New Covenant were postponed until the time of the second appearance of the Messiah in great power and glory. So it is that most of the Greek Scriptures were written, not in the New Covenant Age, but in anticipation of the coming New Covenant Age.

In contradiction to this, the “Imperial Church,” better known as the early Roman Catholic Church, concluded that both the Kingdom and the New Covenant belong to the “Church” and not to Israel. In fact, they were so deceived as to conclude that there was no future for national Israel. “The ‘Church’ is the true Israel,” they proclaimed, and “every prophetic promise in the Hebrew Scriptures is actually for the ‘Church’ instead.” Thus began the assumption that the New Covenant and the Kingdom were for the present Church of our Lord Jesus Christ established at Pentecost.

As stated above, in scriptural reality, when Israel rejected her King, there was a postponement of the Kingdom and the New Covenant. The apostle Paul was taken up into the “third heaven” for special revelations (2 Cor. 12:1-6). A new “mystery” “dispensation of the grace of God” was revealed to Paul for this Age (Eph. 3:1-7). The Church is jointly composed of both saved Jews and saved Gentiles who are “baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13) to form “one New Man” (Eph. 2:14-18). This “new man” and this “dispensation of the grace of God” exist parenthetically between Christ’s first coming and His second coming. After the Rapture of the Church to its heavenly residence (1 Thess. 4:13-18; Col. 1:5; Philip. 3:14) there will follow Christ’s relationship with Israel as her ruling King, managing Israel under the “New Covenant.”

The specifics of the New Covenant are spelled out very clearly in many passages from the Hebrew prophets. The chief passage is Jeremiah 31:31-34 which is quoted in the book of Hebrews (Heb. 8:8-12). The specifications of this New Covenant have never been altered or changed—

- (8) Behold the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a New Covenant with **the house of Israel** and with **the house of Judah**,
- (9) *not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers* in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My Covenant, and I disregarded them,

says the LORD. (10) For this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: **After those days**, says the LORD. **I will put My Laws in their mind and will write them on their hearts**; and I will be their God, **and they shall be My people**. (11) *None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.* (12) **For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness**, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.

- (1) The People with whom the New Covenant is made is very specific—**it is Israel**—not the Church of Jesus Christ, wherein is neither Jew nor Gentile, but one “new man.”!
- (2) The New Covenant is thus made with the same people who had the Old Covenant. It could never be a “New Covenant” to the Church because they never had an Old Covenant.
- (3) The Time of the New Covenant is “**after those days**” which, in the context of all the passages that speak about it, is at the restoration of Israel, after the great tribulation, at the second coming of the Messiah!
- (4) The specifics of the Covenant is **for God to place the Law into the minds and hearts** of the people of Israel. Thus, once again, **Israel will be God’s people in standing**.
- (5) An immediate consequence of the Covenant is **the forgiveness of Israel’s sins** and lawless deeds. This is truly a restoration of Israel into God’s favor.
- (6) The specified effect of the New Covenant is that there will no longer be any need of evangelization, for all will “know the Lord.”

Nothing that is stated by Christ in the Gospel accounts, or by Paul in his epistles, changes the nature and fulfillment of the New Covenant. At the last supper Christ specifically said that His blood would be the basis for the Covenant’s going into effect, and He added very clearly that this “*would be fulfilled in the Kingdom*” (Luke 22:16-18). The apostle Paul and others were “able ministers of the New Covenant,” but this is qualified by “not of the letter [i.e., the Law], but of the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:6). In Hebrews 9:15-20 it is stated that a covenant goes into force “after men are dead.” This does not change the timing of the Covenant. The Scriptures are also very clear as to how long after Christ’s death the New Covenant will go into effect. Christ has now entered into His High Priestly position on our behalf (Heb. 5-8). But none of these blessings for believers today changed in the least the *nature of*, the *people of*, the *work of*, the *promised result of*, nor the *timing of* the New Covenant.

6. Miraculous Gifts of the Spirit, Transitional in nature

“**Snake handler hails Lord as bite kills him**,” so read the caption of the Associated Press news article. This was typical of many dozens of news articles. What a very sad testimony. This article went on to say, “. . . *he made remarks one day that his faith*

was to die in what he believed.” Of course, what he believed is *that he would not die!* The article went on to explain—“Snake handlers base their faith on Mark 16:17-18: ‘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.’” Sad to say, false teachers who prey upon spiritually ignorant people, will take verses like this, apply them directly to us today, and fail to recognize that the rest of the Scriptures qualify this passage. For instance, “these signs” were specifically for the “confirmation” of the gospel in that first generation. The passage in Mark goes on to say “And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and *confirming the word* through the accompanying signs” (Mark 16:20). Some thirty-two years later in the book of Hebrews this confirmation is spoken of in the *past tense*—“. . . so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and *was confirmed* to us by those who heard Him, God also *bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit. . . .*” (Hebrews 2:3-4).

Interestingly enough, this particular news article went on to report—“. . . his congregation’s faith is rarely affected by a death resulting from a snake bite.” This simply means that reality, whether scriptural or practical, makes no difference, “*they are going to believe what they want to believe!*” And so it is in Pentecostalism today. Even though the vast majority of so-called miracle meetings have been proven beyond any shadow of a doubt to be nothing but fraudulent circus devices to entertain the religious spectators (I have witnessed plenty of them), the deceived crowds only clamor for more “can you top this” acts. I can assure you that Barnum and Bailey becomes a far distant second place for entertainment compared to the classical Pentecostal tent theatrics. I personally witnessed Kathryn Kuhlman “knock-em down by the ‘Spirit’” (that is supposed to be in the Bible, did you know?). I preached at one public auditorium and heard firsthand of “the greatest miracle of all time” that took place there just a few days before I came—“a new brain transplant.” (The recipient of the “new brain” frankly said when questioned, “I think it was slightly exaggerated”). I heard another preacher, who was not going to be outdone, shout for agonizing joy because the laundromat owner reported that “his washing machines and even his driers were healed.” Even the crowd went uncontrollably wild. So it is with the modern miraculous gifts movement in Christendom today. Most all those movements die an ugly death. Even the charming and more sophisticated “Catholic Charismatic” movement has been led out to pasture to die a slow and agonizing death. The clerical authorities of the “Church” thought it wisest to take over and guide this movement from slipping too far into Protestant fundamentalism. With closer supervision they managed to keep it nearer to Mother Rome in its loyalty, and so it naturally lost its vitality and is now only a faint echo of the former “glory days.”

As to the matter of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, here is where an understanding of the Transition is crucial to recognizing that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were themselves transitional in nature.

Israel itself serves as the biblical example. After Israel was born as a nation in Egypt, it is well-known that they experienced a 40 year transitional period in the wilderness before they actually crossed over into their “Promised Land.” During Israel’s transition they received miraculous aids to protect and preserve them for that time period. In fact, one could list nine different ways in which God assisted them:

- (1.) God gave them *divine wisdom* through the leadership of Moses.
- (2.) God gave them the *additional knowledge* through the Spirit filled 70 elders.
- (3.) God gave them *the faith* as in the crossing the Red Sea.
- (4.) God gave them *miraculous healing* so that the diseases would not afflict them.
- (5.) God gave them the miraculous provision of *water* in the desert.
- (6.) God gave them the miraculous *bread* from heaven to feed them.
- (7.) God gave them *clothes and shoes* that never wore out.
- (8.) God gave them a *cloud* to protect them from the sun and to lead them.
- (9.) God gave them the *pillar of fire* by night to protect them from any enemy.

Now it is common knowledge that these miraculous provisions all ceased once the nation of Israel was secure in the Promised Land. This is illustrated for us after Israel had crossed over the Jordan River and a new generation began. Joshua 5:11-12 says, “On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some *of the produce of the land*—unleavened cakes and parched grain. *The manna ceased* on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year” (NASB). And so it was that the miraculous provisions designed for that 40 year trek were no longer needed once the nation had reached its destination and all of the Law was written for their functioning.

Now the same thing is precisely true of the Church of Jesus Christ. As has been pointed out in this study there was a 40 year transition period for the Church of Jesus Christ, during which it needed miraculous divine support, as it emerged from Judaism and progressed into what has been called “pure Christianity.”

In 1 Corinthians 12-14 we learn extensively of the 9-fold miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit for the functioning of the assemblies during this transition period. 1 Cor. 12:8-10:

- (1.) To one is given *the word of wisdom* through the Spirit,
- (2.) And to another *the word of knowledge* according to the same Spirit;
- (3.) To another *faith* by the same Spirit,
- (4.) And to another *gifts of healing* by the one Spirit,
- (5.) And to another the effecting of *miracles*,
- (6.) And to another *prophecy*,

- (7.) And to another the *distinguishing of spirits*,
- (8.) To another various kinds of *tongues*,
- (9.) And to another *the interpretation of tongues*.

After giving the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, Paul revealed “a more excellent way” (1 Cor. 13). The “more excellent way” is essentially the beautiful truth about the “*fruit of the Spirit*.” In other words, there was the time period when the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were being exercised, but there is now another “way” which is “more excellent” and enduring in quality. Then Paul revealed that “the way” and the time period of the miraculous gifts “*will cease*” when the “*maturity*” of the Church is reached—1 Corinthians 13:8-13 (NASB):

(8) Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge [miraculous gift of], it will be done away, (9) For we know [miraculous] in part and we prophesy in part; (10) but when *the perfect* [Greek, *teleios*, of persons, fully grown, mature, of full age] comes, the partial will be done away. (11) When I was a child, I used to speak as a child [tongues], think like a child [knowledge], reason as a child [wisdom], but when I became a man [fully grown], I did away with childish things. (12) For now [under the miraculous] we see in a mirror dimly, but then [when fully grown] face to face; now [during the transition] I know in part, but then [when maturity is reached] I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. (13) But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Notice and compare the following verses (NASB):

1 Corinthians 14:20, “Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be *mature* [Greek, *teleios*].”

Ephesians 4:13, “. . . until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a *mature* [Greek, *teleios*] man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

Hebrews 5:13, 14, and 6:1, “For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the *mature* [*teleios*], who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to *maturity* [*teleioo*].”

It becomes obvious from these passages that the miraculous gifts were for the support of the Church in its *infancy*. Once the full revelation of God was completed, the Church could move into *maturity*. And, indeed, every generation of Christians thereafter is encouraged and enabled to reach *maturity*—Ephesians 4: 13-16 and Hebrews 5:12-6:1.

Interestingly enough the “fruit of the Spirit,” which is “*the more excellent way*,” is 9-fold as well: “(1) love, (2) joy, (3) peace, (4) longsuffering, (5) kindness, (6) goodness, (7) faithfulness, (8) gentleness, (9) self-control” (Galatians 5:23-23).

7. The Completion of the Word of God For this Age and the Future

Contrary to Roman Catholic tradition, the world did not have to wait several centuries until the “Church’s” hierarchy made its formal declaration as to what was Scripture and what was not. In other words, the various books of what is called “the New Testament” were *inspired of God* the very moment they were penned. And, in addition, these books were instantly recognized as such by the saints who were themselves *inspired by God* in reading them. This is precisely why the apostle Peter already recognized the epistles of Paul as “Scripture” (see 2 Peter 3:14-16). This is also why the apostle Paul gave “charge” that his very first letter should be read by “all the holy brethren” (see 1 Thessalonians 5:27). It is also why Paul would write, not merely to the Corinthians, but beyond them, “to all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (see 1 Corinthians 1:2). It is factual that the only ones properly equipped and qualified to determine what is Scripture and what is not are those who have been “born again” by the truths in “the Word of God” (see 1 Peter 1:22-25 and 2:1-3). It is therefore realistic to understand that the “scholars” of Rome only declared what was Scripture on the basis of what the “saints” of the world already had long recognized as Scripture.

With the completion of the Word of God to sustain the saints, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were no longer needed. 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 states, “All Scripture [both the Hebrew and Greek] is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for DOCTRINE, for REPROOF, for CORRECTION, for INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, that the man of God may be COMPLETE [or *PERFECT*, KJV], THOROUGHLY EQUIPPED for EVERY GOOD WORK.” Now it is evident that there is nothing, even in the realm of the miraculous gifts, which can outperform the Word of God.

Most certainly the book of Revelation closes the door on the Age of Grace and opens the door for the Age of judgment and final restoration of all things.