

## Acts... The Book Between – The Law & Grace Transition

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### **"THIS IS THAT"**

The Book of Acts covers a period of about thirty years; from the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, about 33 A.D., until after Paul's arrival in Rome as the prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ on earth, was a minister of the circumcision; sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Romans 15:8, Matthew 15:24. Paul was the prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ for Gentiles. Ephesians 3:1. He was the Apostle to the Gentiles, sent to them by Christ, with the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God? Galatians 1:11 to 13, I Timothy 1:11, I Timothy 2:7, II Timothy 1:11, Romans 11:13.

The Book of Acts is the "Book Between" the earthly ministry of the Son of God, which closed about 33 A. D., and those Epistles of the Apostle Paul, written after he had reached Rome; Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Timothy, Philemon, Titus and II Timothy. Inasmuch as "The Mystery " is mentioned twelve times in those Epistles, we could refer to them as "The Mystery Epistles", Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians were written about 64 A.D. or about thirty-one years after the Lord Jesus had gone back to heaven.

Let us then study the Book of Acts as the "Book Between" Matthew, Mark and Luke, on the one side, and Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, on the other side. It is interesting to note that the Book of Matthew has twenty-eight chapters; and that the Book of Acts has twenty-eight chapters. That the Book of Matthew is decidedly Jewish, no student of the Word of God will deny; but many students of the Word of God will be surprised to know that the following words are found only 86 times in the Book of Matthew and just 250 times in the Book of Acts: Jews, Jerusalem, Sabbath, Moses, Law, Temple, Synagogue, Israel. How Jewish, then, is the Book of Acts?

In Matthew, Mark and Luke, the Son of God was on earth. He was born King of the Jews; He entered Jerusalem on the ass, as the King of Israel; He was crucified as King of the Jews. In Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, the Son of God is seated in the upper-heavens, as Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body. Ephesians 1:19 to 22. Now the question, if the Lord Jesus is the King of Israel in the first three Books and is the Head of the Body in the last three Books, just which of the two is He in the "Book Between"? Is He both?

That the Lord Jesus Christ, when on earth, offered to Israel a Kingdom which was different from the Body of Christ described in Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, no intelligent student of the Word of God will deny. The character of that Kingdom offered to Israel is described in the first chapter of Luke. Christ was born to take David's throne. Luke 1:28 to 33. Christ was coming to deliver the Nation Israel. Luke 1:67 to 77. In His offer to establish His Kingdom in the midst of Israel, Christ was fulfilling the Word which God had spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. Luke 1:70. Luke was also the human author of the "Book Between". Is it not significant that in the Book of Acts, Christ was raised from the dead to take David's throne? Acts 2:25 to 31. Was there not also in the Book of Acts God's offer to Israel, upon the condition of repentance, to establish the same

Kingdom, promised by all of the holy prophets since the world began? Acts 3:21. Note the language of Luke 1:70 and Acts 3:21, and you must conclude that the same Israelitish Kingdom is referred to in both Scriptures.

Let us note three verses in the first three Books referred to; that is, one verse from Mark, one from Matthew and one from Luke; all concerning the Kingdom of God, or Kingdom of Heaven.

MARK 1:15

Jesus said; "THE TIME IS FULFILLED"; "THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND".

MATTHEW 21:43

Jesus said; "THE KINGDOM OF GOD SHALL BE TAKEN FROM YOU".

LUKE 21:31

Jesus said; "THE KINGDOM OF GOD WILL BE AT HAND". (When the Son of man shall return in the clouds) Luke 21:27.

The Kingdom was at hand; in fulfillment of the Scriptures. The Kingdom was taken away; in fulfillment of the Scriptures. Matthew 21:42. The Kingdom of God will be at hand; in fulfillment of the Scriptures. The Lord Jesus Christ went to the cross, died and was raised the third day; in fulfillment of the Scriptures. Luke 24:25 and Luke 24:46.

When Peter and the Eleven preached concerning the two great events, on the day of Pentecost, the resurrection of Christ and the advent of the Holy Spirit, they said that both events were in fulfillment of the Scriptures; in fulfillment of prophecies that God had made concerning Israel's Kingdom, by Joel and David. Neither of these prophets had any word about the "The Mystery" of Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. But both of them had much to say about the Kingdom of Acts which was the Kingdom of Matthew, Mark and Luke. So did Amos: Acts 15:13 to 18—Amos 9:11 to 15.

Concerning the advent of the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, Peter and the Eleven said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Acts 2:16. We can know the character of Joel's message, if we will read just one verse: Joel 2:18. Joel referred to the same Kingdom of God that Christ announced at hand; the same kingdom that Christ said would be taken away from Israel and that would be given back to Israel when the Son of man shall return. Joel's prophecy awaits complete fulfillment. Joel had not one word to say about the Body of Christ. Neither did any one of the holy prophets, who had spoken since the world began, refer to the Body of Christ. Concerning the "Body" message of Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, it could not be said, "this is that" which was spoken by Joel, Isaiah, Daniel, David, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Malachi, Jeremiah, Amos, Micah, or any other Old Testament prophet. We are so instructed in Ephesians 3:5 to 9 and Colossians 1:24 to 27. But all of them spoke of the Kingdom of Matthew, Mark and Luke and of the same Kingdom referred to in Acts

3:19 to 21. Read carefully Acts 3:24 concerning "these days". "These days" of Acts 3:19 to 25 differ from "these days" of Ephesians 2:11 to 17.

When the Lord Jesus proclaimed His Kingdom in Mark 1:15, "the Kingdom of God is at hand," He said, "the time is fulfilled." He could have well said; "This is That" which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Joel 2:15 to 18. He could have said, "this is that" which was spoken by Isaiah; in Isaiah 62:1 to 4, or in Isaiah 35:3 to 6. He could have said; "this is that" which was spoken by Zechariah, Daniel, David, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Micah, Amos, and so on. When the Son of man shall return in power and great glory to restore again the Kingdom to Israel, He can and will say: "this is that" which was spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began; for the same Kingdom that Christ proclaimed at hand shall then be at hand. This includes the prophets to whom Peter referred in the Book of Acts; Joel, David, Amos, (Acts 15:14 to 18), Moses, Samuel and all the prophets (Acts 3:22 and 3:24 and Acts 10:43).

It is of interest to note that there are about thirty-five quotations from Israel's Scriptures in the Book of Matthew, and about twenty-five quotations from Israel's Scriptures in the Book of Acts. The Old Testament prophecies are quoted in both Matthew and Acts. Surely they were Kingdom messages and not messages referring to the Body of Christ, which was "The Mystery" not made known to the sons of men in other ages. Ephesians 3:5. Colossians 1:25 and 26. Ephesians 3:9.

According to Matthew 4:17, the Lord said; "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." In Mark 1:15, we read; "the Kingdom of God is at hand." The Kingdom of Heaven of Matthew at hand and the Kingdom of God of Mark and Luke at hand were identical. The Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of God, foretold by Israel's prophets, was at hand, because the King was at hand. Every where the Kingdom message was for the Nation Israel, and the message was accompanied by Kingdom signs. When John the Baptist sent word to know if Jesus was the One to come, the Lord sent word to John, that the healing miracles of Isaiah 35:4 and 5 were being performed by Him; therefore, He was Israel's God, Messiah and King, promised in Isaiah 35:1 to 4. When the Lord Jesus sent forth His twelve apostles to preach saying, "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand", He said; "Heal the sick, Cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, etc." Matthew 10:7 and 8. They went preaching the Gospel and healing everywhere. Luke 9:6. What Gospel were they preaching? The Gospel of the Kingdom. Matthew 4:23—Matthew 9:35—Matthew 24:14 and Mark 1:14.

Included in the Lord's Kingdom program was not only the Kingdom signs, but the Kingdom parables, the Kingdom prayer, given to the Kingdom Nation. The instructions of the Lord to His apostles were: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles; go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matthew 10:5 and 6, Matthew 15:24. When the Lord shall come as the Son of man and establish His Kingdom on earth, the Twelve are to sit on twelve thrones and judge the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Matthew 19:28. For some reason, God instructed the Twelve to limit their ministry to the circumcision, after the conversion of Cornelius. Galatians 2:7 to 9.

All Premillennialists are agreed that the Kingdom of God was offered to Israel; that the Kingdom of God was taken away from Israel; and that the Kingdom of God shall yet be given to Israel. They are

agreed that while the Kingdom is in abeyance the Body of Christ is being completed. They are agreed that, "All Israel shall be saved". Romans 11:25 and 26. They are agreed that the redeemed Nation shall yet have peaceful possession of their land under the reign of the true King David, in fulfillment of the Abrahamic, Davidic and the New Covenants; because the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Romans 11:25 to 31. But the Premillennialists are by no means agreed as to just when the Kingdom of God was taken away from the Nation Israel. But they are agreed that the Body of Christ began historically after the death of Christ. Some say that the Kingdom of God was taken away from Israel, when the Lord Jesus pronounced that awful judgment upon that Nation, as recorded in Matthew 23:31 to 39: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers", "Your house is left unto you desolate". Others say that the Kingdom offer was not withdrawn until after Stephen saw the Son of man standing at the right hand of God and Peter was sent to Cornelius: Acts 7:54 to 56, Acts 10:34 to 46. Others say that the Kingdom of God was not taken from Israel until that Nation was set aside by the Lord after the words of rejection and judgment pronounced by the Apostle Paul, in Acts 28:25 to 28.

It is because of this division of opinion that we ask the question; is the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Book of Acts, in the "Book Between", the King of Israel or is He, in that Book, the Head of the Church, which is His Body? Of course, this is equivalent to asking, "Is the Church of God to which the three thousand were added on the day of Pentecost the same Church mentioned in Ephesians, the Body of Christ?" Or again this question; "Did the Church, which is His Body, begin historically on the day of Pentecost?" We know that we have no Scripture stating specifically that the Body of Christ did begin on the day of Pentecost; neither is there any Scripture stating that that Body did not begin on the day of Pentecost. We must study the scriptures diligently, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to answer this question, rather than follow some man's interpretation or accept the creeds of Historic Christianity. We seem to be agreed that Israel's seventh-day Sabbath is no longer binding on members of the Body of Christ. We learn that truth by the study of several Scriptures, in not one of which is the definite statement made that the member of the Body of Christ should regard the first day of the week, as a sanctified day, instead of the seventh day, which was given to Israel. Surely Sabbath-keeping, anointing with oil, signs and ceremonies continued to be practiced by Israelitish believers during the Acts period; and then for some reason they ceased to be God's order for the members of the Body of Christ. We should be able to give an intelligent Scriptural explanation for their cessation, in accordance with II Timothy 2:15. We should be able to give an intelligent Scriptural explanation as to why the Body of Christ did or did not begin on the day of Pentecost. We should not believe it, simply because some leading Bible teacher has so declared. If it is not stated in any chapter of the Book of Acts that the risen Lord is the King of Israel and if it is not stated in that Book, that He is the Head of that Church which is His Body, how can we answer the question?

In Mark 16:14 to 18 we find recorded the instructions given to Peter and the other apostles by the risen Lord. They were to go preach the Gospel. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Certain signs were to follow them that believe. The Eleven went out preaching the Gospel that was given to them; and "signs following." Mark 16:20. Kingdom signs continued. Were they preaching the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God. to which Paul referred in I Timothy 1:11? In I Timothy 5:23, the Apostle Paul told that faithful saint to take a physical remedy for his physical disease. Therefore,

Kingdom signs were not following the Gospel message which Timothy was preaching. The signs of Mark 16:17 and 18 followed Paul up to Acts 28:28. The signs of Mark 16:17 and 18 are not following the preaching of the Gospel by anyone today. Neither do Grace preachers preach, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." A radical change has taken place since the days of Mark 16:14 to 18. Is the change only in the signs, or in the Message?

Should the servant of the Lord today preach what Peter and the Eleven preached to Israel on the day of Pentecost, or what Peter preached eight years later to Cornelius? What messenger of the Grace of God is today preaching, with the approval of God, "repent and be baptized for the remission of sins?" What such messenger is preaching to individual Gentiles today what Peter preached to the Nation Israel, in Acts 3:19 to 26? Peter preached to Israel and to Cornelius concerning Jesus of Nazareth in the land of Israel. Acts 2:22. Acts 10:36 to 40 To be sure, in all of these messages there was the element of grace; but Israel's Kingdom was in view and saved Israelites continued with an Israelitish religious program throughout the "Acts" period. The "Book Between" is a book of signs, miracles and supernatural visitations. Should we, or should we not, earnestly endeavor to recover for the church today the signs, ceremonies and visions of the "Book Between"?

Does the "Sign" program of the Book of Acts correspond with the "Sign" program of Matthew, Mark and Luke, or with the "Signless" message of Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians?

After God has accomplished His purpose in this age. "to make of the twain One New Man," (Ephesians 2:15), the Son of man will return in the clouds in power and great glory, and then, for Israel, the Kingdom of God will be at hand. Luke 21:27 to 31. Then the Son of man will sit as a King on the throne of His glory. Matthew 25:31 to 35. He will be Wonderful, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, on David's throne. Isaiah 9:6 and 7. In the meantime the Lord Jesus is seated in the upper-heavenlies far above principality and power; and the members of the Church which is His Body are seated with Him in the upper-heavenlies; not blessed with millennium Kingdom blessings, but with all spiritual blessings in the upper-heavenlies. Ephesians 2:5 and 6. Ephesians 1:3.

In Acts 7:54 to 58, the Lord Jesus is seen as the "standing" Son of man. He is not the Son of man to the Church which is His Body, but in His Kingdom dealings with Israel, that Nation Stephen was addressing in the seventh chapter of Acts. Then the question; "In Acts 7:54 to 58, was the Lord Jesus seated in the upper-heavenlies as Head of the Church which is His Body, as He was in Ephesians 1:19 to 22, and as He is now?

In Matthew, Mark and Luke there was one baptism, baptism for Israel unto repentance for the remission of sins; water baptism that Christ might be made manifest unto Israel. John 1:31. In Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians there was one baptism; that baptism by which the believer is identified with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection and heavenly seat. That is not water. In the "Book Between" there were two baptisms, water and Holy Spirit.

Why is it that true messengers of the Grace of God prefer to turn to the messages of Paul for the Gospel rather than go to Matthew, Mark and Luke? Because in those three Books we do not find the

clear, unmixed Gospel of Grace for Gentiles, but rather Grace mixed with the Gospel of the Kingdom. We prefer to leave the "strive to enter in", or "he that endureth to the end shall be saved", or "bring forth fruit meet for repentance", or "they take the kingdom by violence", or "if thy right hand offend you cut it off" (all of which were the Lord's messages to Israel) and go on to the unmixed messages of Grace in Romans 3:24 to 28, or in Ephesians 2:8 and 9, or in Titus 3:5 and 6: "Being justified (declared righteous) without a cause by God's Grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"; "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast"; "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us".

As the Gospel of the Kingdom was a message different from Paul's unmixed Gospel of Grace, so did the messages of Peter and his associates, in the Book of Acts, differ from these pure Grace messages. The message of Peter on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:38, differed very much from Paul's Grace of Christ Message to the Gentiles. What Gospel preacher today would preach to Gentiles the Message of Repentance and Restitution that Peter preached to Israel, according to Acts 3:19 to 21? There was much grace in that message. but it was not the Message of Reconciliation which the risen Lord later committed to Paul. Peter preached to Cornelius, "In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him". Acts 10:35 and 36. Compare this with Titus 3:5 and 6; Ephesians 2:8 and 9. What Gospel preacher of today would follow the order of Philip's ministry in the City of Samaria, recorded in Acts 8:5 to 15? Not one. It is agreed by all dispensational students of the Word of God, who preach the Gospel of Grace, that the order of Acts 19:3 to 12, in the year 54 A.D., is not God's order for today among the members of the Body of Christ.

Paul declared that he persecuted the Church of God. Galatians 1:13. There is no Scriptural proof that that Church of God began on the day of Pentecost. It was the Pentecost Church of God that he persecuted, and it either began on that day or before that day. There were no Gentiles in the Church of God which Paul persecuted, except the proselytes referred to in Acts 2:10. The first company of Gentiles to be brought in was the household of Cornelius. Acts 11:18. Up to that year, about 41 A.D., it was unlawful for the Jewish apostles to go to a Gentile. Acts 10:28.

Concerning this company of Gentiles, who were granted repentance unto life, Peter afterward said, "God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe." Acts 15:17. The Lord's permission for Peter to preach to the Gentiles came with the vision of the sheet let down three times. Acts 10:8 to 18. In the light of the so-called Great Commission given to the Eleven, in which they were to disciple all nations, it is difficult to understand several facts; first, why was the housetop vision necessary to authorize Peter to preach to one family of religious, Godfearing Gentiles; second, why was it that it was by Peter's mouth, rather than by the mouths of all of the Eleven commissioned in Matthew 28:19 and 20, that the Gentiles were to hear the word of the gospel; third, why was it that after Peter's declaration in Acts 15:7 he was instructed to confine his ministry to the circumcision. then his name dropped from the Book of Acts and the responsibility of evangelizing the Gentiles was given exclusively to Paul and his associates? Galatians 2:7 to 9. This also leads us to ask why Paul declared that the Gentiles received mercy because of Israel's unbelief

(Romans 11:30 and Romans 11:11 and Acts 13:46) instead of because of the terms of the so-called Great Commission?

When Peter declared that God had made choice that by his mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe, James added these words: "Simeon hath declared how for the first time God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His Name." Acts 15:13. And the next verse: "To this agree the words of the prophets." Or, "this is that which was spoken by Amos." Acts 15:14 to 17. Amos 9:11 to 15. And even in his Epistle to the Romans Paul declared Gentile salvation, during the Acts period, was in fulfillment of Isaiah's Kingdom prophecy. Read carefully Romans 15:10 to 14.

Now it is of interest to study the declaration of Simeon and James, concerning the Gentile salvation, the outgathering from the nations, in fulfillment of Amos' prophecy, and the Gentile salvation, in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, in the light of Ephesians 3:5 and 6 and Ephesians 3:9. In Ephesians 3:9, the Apostle Paul declared that the risen Lord instructed him to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles. The word "unsearchable" means "untraceable", or "not to be tracked". That message to which Paul was referring in Ephesians 3:9 was somewhat different from the message to which he referred in Romans 15:10 to 14, because that "Romans" message was traceable; it could be tracked through Isaiah. In Ephesians 3:6 the Apostle Paul mentioned Gentile salvation in a joint-Body; the Gentile jointheirs. He declared, in Ephesians 3:5, that this particular Gentile salvation and Position in the Body of Christ was not made known to the sons of men in other ages; in other words, "this is not that" to which Peter referred in Acts 2:16, in Acts 3:19 to 26. in Acts 10:43 and in Acts 15:13 to 17. The mystery among the Gentiles, "Christ in you the hope of glory," was not made known to other generations. Colossians 1:25 to 27. The "Ephesians" and "Colossians" Body truth was unknown to all of Israel's Prophets and was not the message of the Twelve to Israel before the death of Christ, or during the "Acts" period. For this reason it is called "The Mystery" or "The Secret." Paul received it by revelation. Ephesians 3:3. If the Church of God, which Paul persecuted, was the subject of prophecy and the Ephesians "Church which is His Body" was not the subject of prophecy, were they not different Churches? Ephesians 1:19 to 22 and Ephesians 2:5 and 6.

If Pentecost was the birthday of the Church which is His Body, surely that was the ideal Church for this age. Then the message and program of that Church must be considered the ideal message and program for the present-day Church; and we should join with the modern Pentecostal Church in their determination to recover for twentieth-century saints and sinners the message, program and order of Acts 2:38— Acts 3:19 to 26—Acts 8:5 to 15 and Acts 19:3 to 12. But the fact is that most Fundamentalist Grace preachers know that that first message and program of the Twelve is not God's order for today. Ask one of them why he does not preach Mark 16:16 or Acts 2:38? The Pentecost Church must not be the Body of Christ.

Let us summarize, in closing: "The Kingdom of God is at hand." Mark 1:15, "This is that". "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you." Matthew 21:43. "This is that". "The Kingdom of God shall be at hand." Luke 21:31. "This is that." This Kingdom was promised by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began. Luke 1:70. Matthew 25:31 to 35: "When the day of Pentecost was fully come," "This is that" which was spoken by "Joel." Acts 2:1 and Acts 2:16. "Repent (Israel) and

God will send Jesus Christ." "This is that spoken by Moses, Samuel and all the prophets since the world began." Acts 3:19 to 25. Send Jesus Christ to bring about the restitution of all things. " . . . God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name:" Acts 15:14. "This is that" which was spoken by Amos and others.

Then Ephesians 3:1 to 11: "This is not that". In Colossians 1:24 to 27, "this is not that".

Is Christ the Head of the Church which is His Body in the "Book Between"? If so, with what chapter did this Headship begin? Why did God permit Israel's Jerusalem temple to stand and let them continue their religious activities and ceremonies in that temple during the years covered by the "Book Between"? Why did He instruct Paul to become a Jew to the Jews during those years? Why in the "Book Between" was God's order "to the Jew first"? Acts 3:26—Acts 13:46—Acts 18:6. Was Israel's house left desolate with Matthew 23:31 to 39 or thirty years later with Acts 28:25 to 28? The Nation was not set aside until Romans 11:25 and Acts 28:28.

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