

THE WORD OF TRUTH

OTIS Q. SELLERS, Editor JULY, 1936

Vol. I, No. 2

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WE THANK YOU

We deeply appreciate the very kind reception given to the first issue of our magazine. We are happy that God has made it possible for us to present this the second number. This periodical has already grown beyond our expectations. When we first made our plans for this publication we felt that 500 copies would be sufficient but by the time it was ready for the press we discovered that our needs would require 2,500 copies. The size of the present issue is increased to twelve pages and the number to 3,500.

Requests for the magazine come on every mail. We appreciate the many request from brethren who are ministering the Word. They may not see things as we do but at least they are willing to read and consider and test that which we claim to be the truth. We regret that many readers who received the first issue hesitated to send in a request for further issues because they felt an offering was expected. Please take us at our word in this matter and send in your request. This magazine is free to all who will read it and a postal card or letter, will put your name on our regular readers list.

We have decided to send this issue to all who received the first. After reading the second issue will you not send us a request to send it to you every month?

Many will wonder how we can send this out free without even asking for gifts. Some may think it is supported by someone with means but this is not true. The first issue went to press with only \$2.00 on hand and not a penny of support promised from anyone. Many small gifts were received from those to whom this truth is precious and as this is written our books are balanced with no assets and no obligations. Truly, He is faithful. So as a step of faith the second issue goes to press and out to our readers. May you find in it that which will turn you to God's Word, the source of all truth.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE MYSTERY

(Continued from Vol. I, No. 1)

Even though it was Paul's "stupendous struggle" that the believers in Colosse might come to the knowledge of the mystery, it is sad indeed to know that the Colossian assembly as a whole did not come to the full knowledge of this majestic truth. The hope of the New Covenant with its ordinances; the prospect of sharing in the earthly or heavenly blessings promised to Abraham and his seed; the powers of the coming ages as seen in miraculous signs and gifts, had such a strong hold upon them that they could not turn from these things to a higher hope to be realized only by faith. A hope with no earthly blessings but with all spiritual blessings far above all heavens in Christ.

All Asia had at one time heard the Word and had received Paul with open arms, yet after hearing the truth of the mystery, God's final revelation, he was forced to say from a heart that was breaking: **"This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes."** 2 Tim. 1:15.

The Word of God to the Hebrews could very well be paraphrased to bring an important lesson to us. "So we see that they did not come to a knowledge of the mystery because they turned away from the one to whom it was revealed. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left to us, that God wills to make known unto us this mystery, any of us should seem to come short of it. We must not turn from the Apostle to the Gentiles to whom it was revealed, and turn back to the truth, hopes and blessings of other callings. For unto us is this mystery declared as well as unto them, but the truth preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." (These words are based upon Hebrews 3:19 to, 4:2).

Paul's Final Commission

That the saints of God might know the mystery is the burden of God's final commission to the Apostle Paul.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is THE DISPENSATION OF THE MYSTERY which from all ages HATH BEEN HID IN GOD who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God." Eph. 3:8-10 R. V.

Thus we see it was Paul's final commission to enlighten all men to what is "the dispensation of the mystery." It is plain that the phrase "dispensation of the mystery" is a Scriptural term even though it is not found in the Authorized Version of the New Testament. Thus the question "What is the dispensation of the mystery" is pertinent and important. It behooves us to know, and to know from God's Word, just what is the dispensation of the mystery.

In order to properly pursue our subject, it is necessary for us to have an understanding of the meaning of the words "dispensation" and "mystery."

Dispensation Defined

A dispensation is an administration. It is the translation of the Greek word "oikonomia." This word occurs in two forms in **Luke 16:1-4**, where it is translated steward and stewardship and could well have been translated administrator and administration or administratorship.

"There was a certain rich man which 'had a steward (administrator); and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said unto, him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship (administratorship) , for thou mayest be no longer steward (administrator). Then the steward (administrator) said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship (administratorship): I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.; I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put *out* of the stewardship (administratorship), they may receive me into, their houses."

This passage reveals that the word "oikonomia" literally means the administration or management of a household. This administrator had been set over his lord's household but because of his wastefulness he was required to give an account of his administration as he was to be no longer administrator.

Thus a dispensation is seen to be an administration or method of dealing with a household. As it is used of the administrations of God it refers to God's methods of dealing or His administration of His household here upon the earth. God's household has not always been the same, once it was Adam and Eve, again it was Abraham's seed or Israel, now it is "the Church which is His body." Thus a definite change of household would require a change of administration. However administrations have changed even though the household has been the same.

The rich man could have said to, his steward: "Your administration has been extravagant and wasteful, it must now be frugal and economical." This would have changed the administration, even though the household remained the same.

It should be plain to the reader that when we know the character of the present administration, the administration of the mystery, we know God's present method of dealing with and His requirements of His household. Thus we can walk accordingly and peace and harmony can reign in the household.

Different Administrations

The diligent Bible student soon becomes aware of the fact that in different periods of human history God has dealt with men under different methods of dealing. These different methods of dealing are called dispensations or administrations. The last name is the most satisfactory and we shall use it hereafter as the most satisfactory translation of the Greek word "oikonomia." These different administrations are based upon and brought about by same new revelation of the will or purpose of God.

It is the opinion of many uninstructed believers that after man was created that God established certain methods of dealing with this man and his descendants through all ages, and that God so bound Himself that He has neither power nor right to change His methods of dealing with the human race which sprang from this first man. They admit

that God added to His laws and regulations but do not think that He ever abrogated or changed any that were given before. However, this opinion is far from true.

The administration of God with that first pair was on the basis of innocence and the fact that they had been given only one command to keep. Here God established a certain administration for His household on earth even though there were only two persons in His household.

As soon as Adam and Eve violated the established order of God's household they were dealt with in judgment and God changed His administration from innocence to conscience in order to meet the changed conditions. None of Adam's descendants have ever been dealt with on the basis of innocence.

The right of God, whose power over His creatures is absolute, to change His administration or methods of dealing at any time. His wisdom deems this necessary, cannot be questioned. This applies to his dealings with and requirements of the human race as a whole or His dealings with and requirements of those whom He has redeemed.

An illustration of this is seen in the workings of our national government. During the world depression it became necessary to change the administration in an attempt to cope with that situation. If, before this change, a group of business men had come together and entered into an agreement to charge a certain price for their products or services they would have been prosecuted and penalized. However, that administration of business changed and businessmen were required by law to come together and do the very thing which before they would have been prosecuted for doing. The explanation of this is that at first the government was dealing with businessmen on the basis of the Sherman Anti-Trust Law. However this was changed and they were dealt with on the basis of the National Recovery Act. Both of these statutes were on the statute books at the same time as the first was not repealed. However, the latter superseded the former.

Even so, at the present time, God is not dealing with His household or the world on the basis of innocence, conscience or law as He has in times past. Neither is He now dealing with men on the basis of Tribulation, judgments, or Kingdom righteousness as He will in the future. God is now dealing with the world on the basis of absolute grace. He is saving by grace all who will come unto Him. He is dealing with His saved ones, His household, on the basis of those unique truths revealed in the last seven epistles given by God through Paul. These epistles set forth the character of the present dispensation or administration of the mystery.

Mystery Defined

The word mystery suggests something mysterious or something incomprehensible. However, there is nothing incomprehensible or mysterious about "the mystery" or "the dispensation of the mystery." The English word mystery is the transliteration of the Greek word "mysterion." The Greeks used the word "mysterion" as meaning a **secret**, pure and simple; a secret which can be easily understood when once made known. The word mystery is used by men today as referring to that which cannot be understood at all. This is not the meaning of the word in its Biblical sense. Too much emphasis cannot be placed upon the fact that the word "mysterion" means a secret and when used in connection with the things of God means a sacred or divine secret. The reader must

always think of SECRET when he comes upon the word mystery in the Bible. It should also be remembered that a secret is something hidden or concealed that can be revealed.

God had revealed His will "by divers portions also in divers manners" during the time from Adam to Christ, but He also, kept secret certain things and revealed them at certain times according to His will and purposes. These revelations of things previously kept as secrets and then later revealed make up the mysteries or secrets of the New Testament.

A clear illustration of this definition of "mystery" is seen in the fact that the Old Testament was full of truth concerning the Kingdom which was to be established upon the earth. This revelation seems to be so complete that almost every detail was given from the first proclamation of the approach of the Kingdom right through to its complete consummation. However, we now know that some things about this Kingdom were purposely kept hidden and could not be known until they were revealed. Thus in Matthew 13:10-11 we read of the mysteries or secrets of the Kingdom of heaven. These things which our Lord then revealed to His disciples had been hidden and therefore could not be known until revealed by Him. Of course it is evident, that after they were revealed they are no longer secrets or mysteries. They are still designated as such because in time past they had been kept hidden.

(Continued, Vol. I, No. 3)

A CONCORDANCE TO "MUSTERION"

In connection with our article in this issue on "The Dispensation of the Mystery" we feel we can help the true student of the Word by supplying a concordance of the Greek word "musterion." We also note as to whether it is preceded by the article in the original.

Matt. 13:11. the MYSTERIES of the kingdom of heaven.-(definite article)
Mark. 4:11. the MYSTERY of the kingdom of God.-(definite article).
Luke 8:10. the MYSTERIES of the kingdom of God.-(definite article).
Rom. 11:25. ignorant of this MYSTERY.-(definite article).
Rom. 16:25. of the MYSTERY, which was kept secret.-(no article).
1 Car. 2:7. the wisdom of God in a MYSTERY.-(no article),
1 Car. 4:1. stewards of the MYSTERIES of God.-(no article),
1 Car. 13:2. and understand all MYSTERIES.-(definite article).
1 Car. 14:2. in the spirit he speaketh MYSTERIES.-(no article).
1 Car. 15:51. I shew (tell) you a MYS'TERY.-(no article).
Eph. 1:9. Unto us the MYSTERY of His will.-(definite article).
Eph. 3:3. made known unto me the MYSTERY.-(definite article).
Eph. 3:4. the MYSTERY of Christ.-(definite article).
Eph. 3:9. the fellowship (dispensation) of the MYSTERY.-(definite article).
Eph. 5:32. this is a great MYSTERY.-(definite article).

Eph. 6:19. the MYSTERY of the gospel.-(definite article).
Col. 1:26. the MYSTERY which hath been hid.-(definite article).
Col. 1:27. this MYSTERY among the Gentiles.-(definite article).
Col. 2:2. MYSTERY of God.-(definite article).
Col. 4:3. speak the MYSTERY of Christ. (definite article).
2 Thess. 2:7. the MYSTERY of iniquity doth already.-(definite article).
1 Tim. 3:9. holding the MYSTERY of the faith.-(definite article),
1 Tim. 3:16. the MYSTERY, of Godliness.-(definite article).
Rev. 1:20. the MYSTERY of the seven stars.-(definite article).
Rev. 10:7. the MYSTERY of God should be finished.-(definite article). Rev. 17:5.
MYSTERY, Babylon the Great.-(no article).
Rev. 17:7. the MYSTERY of the woman.-(definite article),

WHY WE STAND WHERE WE STAND

Regarding Water Baptism

Five years ago the writer was the pastor of a denominational Church. At the close of a successful evangelistic campaign it was our duty to baptize by immersion about thirty believers. For years we had been preaching and teaching the gospel of the grace of God, even as we had preached it in these three weeks of special meetings. Our message of salvation by grace was a true one. Although many changes have taken place in our views since that time, there has been no change in our message of salvation. Having been saved after bearing for years the most shallow type of legalistic preaching we would then, and still do, repudiate any suggestion that salvation could come by works of any character.

Now if, at the time we baptized these thirty believers, we had been asked by what authority, and upon what Scriptural grounds or for what Scriptural reason we did it, there were many answers that we could have given.

By What Authority

As to our authority for performing this ceremony, we could have quoted the so-called great commission of Matthew 28:19-20. But having followed good teachers, such as Gray, Gaebelien, Darby and Pettingill, we had been led to see that this was the Kingdom commission and that it was not the marching orders of the Church. This we believed then and still believe and hold. Even though we have read and carefully considered every argument to the contrary we see no reason for any change in this belief. Thus we could not have given this commission as our authority for baptizing these believers. And where is there any Scripture which gives one member of the Church which is His body the right to baptize another member? There is none.

For What Scriptural Reason

Then as to our Scriptural reasons for the ceremony we might have answered as follows. We could have said that we baptized these believers in water unto repentance. If we had thus answered we would have had a Scriptural reason and could have supported this by **Matthew 3:11**. "**I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance.**" But we would never have given such a reason as this for these were already believers and such a reason would have been contrary to our belief in salvation by grace alone. This was certainly John's reason for baptizing, but it was not our reason.

Or, we could have answered that we baptized these believers unto repentance for the remission of sins. This also could have been supported with Scripture as follows: "**John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins**" (**Mark 1:4**). However, we could not have given this reason for we knew that the sins of these believers were already remitted "**according to the riches of His grace.**" (**Eph. 1:7**). John did preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. This cannot be denied. But we preached the gospel of the grace of God and remission of sins according to the riches of His grace.

Again, we might have answered by saying that we baptized these believers in order that we might complete that which was required of them as essential for their salvation. This we could have supported with Scripture if chapter and verse were demanded. "**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.**" **Mark 16:16**. This would have been impossible for these were already saved, they were complete in Him and to them we had preached salvation by grace alone apart from water baptism. We would not repudiate this and reverse our position.

Another answer might have been given such as this. "These believers, we are baptizing in water, that the Messiah might be manifest to Israel" This would have been a Scriptural answer and could have been supported as follows: "**And I knew Him not: but He (the Messiah) should be manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.**" **John 1:31**. But such a reason would have been ridiculous for there were no Israelites present at this service. John said plainly that this was his reason for baptizing but it was not and could not be our reason.

Then we might have given and supported with Scripture the following answer. "These are being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins that they might receive the Holy Ghost." Does it not say in Acts 2:38 "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Such a reason, however, would have been so contrary to the gospel of the grace of God, that we would have had to renounce grace to hold such a position.

There are still other Scriptural reasons which we could have given, such as this. "We baptize these believers in order to wash away their sins." In support of this we would have quoted **Acts 22:16**. "**And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.**" Such an answer would have been so foreign to the message of grace which we preached that it could never have escaped from our lips.

Then finally, we might have said that we performed this ceremony because it had saving power, and quoted to support our statement, **1 Peter 3:21. "The like figure whereunto baptism doth now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."** There was little danger of us making any. such statement.

Now if. we had given any of the seven reasons, already listed, for baptizing these believers, we could have supported anyone of them with Scripture. This has been demonstrated and cannot be denied. However, if we gave any other reason for baptizing these believers we could not have supported it with Scripture. These seven verses, already quoted, give the entire New Testament teaching as to the meaning, significance and purpose of water baptism.

. Any statement as to meaning and purpose of water baptism which includes the truth of these seven verses is certainly Scriptural. Any theory which ignores the truth revealed in these seven verses is not Scriptural. Let the reader examine every reference in the New Testament wherein the word baptism is mentioned and he will discover that these seven verses contain the entire teaching of the New Testament as to the meaning and purpose of water baptism as set forth in the Word of God.

However, in examining the passages wherein baptism is mentioned, you must not rob verses of their teaching which deal with the baptism in the Spirit for example 1 Corinthians 12:13. Neither should you ravage those verses which speak of Christ's death baptism and our death baptism with Christ- - for example Luke 12:50; Matt. 20:22-23; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:10-12.

Water baptism is certainly taught in the Scriptures. It was the Divine order for the periods covered by the Gospels and the book of Acts. Water baptism is as much out of harmony in the present dispensation of the grace of God as would be sacrifices and a priesthood.

Can any scriptural support be given for the following statements so often heard concerning water baptism? Water baptism is said to be a seal of believers; that it is a sign for unbelievers; that it takes the place of circumcision; that it is a confession of Christ; that it is a symbol of our death burial and resurrection with Christ; that it is the door of entrance to the local church; that it is the initiatory ordinance of Christianity; that it is putting on the uniform of a Christian; that by it we are identified with a rejected Christ; that it is a means of grace; that it is a testimony that you have received the teachings of grace for this day; that it brings you under God's covenanted mercy; etc.

These statements could be multiplied. They are from the writings of men. They are different, one from another, but they all have one thing in common. There is no Scripture to support them. They are not what God's Word teaches about baptism. These statements sound devout and pious but they are not true to God's Word. They express the different sayings of men concerning baptism, but what God says is entirely different.

In England some years ago an anonymous writer stated as follows. "From Moses and onward, men have made of ordinances that God never intended nor commanded. In proof of this, one needs only to call attention to how the prophets of Israel actually testified against the outward ordinances that God had established (See Isaiah 1). In this matter, the history of Christendom repeats the history of Israel. What pitiable uses, what ridiculous notions, what priestly

pretensions have been associated with what are called the two Christian 'ordinances' of **Baptism** and the **Lord's Supper**! How the simple statements of these subjects have been put into ecclesiastical 'stocks' and tortured and twisted until they screamed out some confession never written into them, is truly one of the greatest wonders of perversion!"

The truth of the foregoing statements cannot be challenged. It is true that most men have little difficulty in taking the act of dipping a believer into water and attach to that act some pious significance, some strange virtue, and force upon it some meaning which is not even suggested in the Scripture, Is this dealing honestly with the truth of God?

Finding the Truth

Some years ago there appeared in the magazine "Our Hope" an article by Lewis Sperry Chafer. In this article was one statement which from the day we read it had a profound influence upon all our Bible study. This is here quoted.

"There are certain well defined laws of interpretation of the Scriptures, which, if honestly followed, will lead to one conclusion concerning a given truth. The first, and most imperative, of these laws is the discovery of all that the Bible teaches on a given theme, bringing the material together in orderly arrangement, and then being willing to abide by the testimony the Bible gives. When this law is applied, there are some themes in which there would seem to be contradictions unless the dispensational aspects of the truth is recognized. Of course, if one is committed to an error and therefore too prejudiced to heed the 'correction' and reproof of Scripture, this law of interpretation is violated, and there is no hope for a right understanding of the truth."

When we first read this statement it so gripped our mind that it became and has been ever since our first and most imperative law of interpretation. This was the beginning of the end of our use of the Bible as a buttress, quoting a passage here and there to support some belief of our own. It was now to become a fountain from which we were to draw for ourselves as well as for others.

We tried this method and principle on several subjects with good results. It brought us much joy, we rejoiced as one that found great treasure. By this method some old truths were positively confirmed and became our own convictions, new truths were uncovered. Of course it is always pleasant to follow God's word as long as the old is being confirmed and the new is being revealed. But it is not so pleasant when the reproof and correction begins to take place.

At this time our mind had been turned to the subject of baptism. We felt that we had not made enough of this ordinance. We determined to apply this method and principle of interpretation to the subject of baptism. We fully expected our beliefs on the subject to be confirmed and strengthened and some new truths to be revealed. Little did we then realize what we were facing or the spiritual revolution this was to work in our life.

With the aid of a Concordance we made a list of every passage in the New Testament wherein baptism is mentioned and began to analyze them one by one to discover what the Word revealed upon this subject. Before we had gone very far we discovered that our findings were entirely different from our beliefs, different from our teaching, different from our denominational practices, different from that which we had

been taught since childhood. This was reproof and correction and we were not open for either. Our study ended. Our beliefs and practices on baptism could tolerate no such investigation. We were committed to an error and was too prejudiced to heed the correction and reproof of Scripture. We violated our own law of interpretation and refused to abide by the testimony given by the Word of God.

This matter caused us some spiritual exercise, for the conviction was strong that we had not dealt faithfully with God's Word. But even though we continued for some time as a denominational pastor, **never again did we baptize or teach on the subject of water baptism.**

At last we made a break for soul liberty, not because of baptism, for our convictions on the subject were not yet formed. We made the break in order to be free to study this as well as other truths in God's Word, then walk in the knowledge of them and teach them to others. Once free, there was no need for hurry in the matter and our present convictions, as set forth in our pamphlet "The Glory of the One Baptism," are the result of calm and prolonged searching of the Word of Truth.

Many have wondered why there are about twenty different beliefs on the subject of water baptism held by Bible teachers of today. They wonder how God's Word can teach such contradictory views upon one subject. The answer to this can be illustrated by a passage from the book of Judges. "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in His own eyes." Judges 17:4.

The king represented authority, but there was no king and so no authority. In these days God has given His Word as our authority but believers have refused it as far as water baptism is concerned. The result is that having ignored God's authority in this matter every man believes and practices that which is right in his own eyes. As Bible teachers go from place to place they avoid anything which approximates to being definite on the subject of baptism. They maintain a general vagueness about this matter and thus they avoid giving offense and are able to set forth a semblance of unity even though none exists.

On the subject of baptism God's Word is the authority for our present beliefs and practices. We would rejoice if some Bible teacher who believes that water baptism is for the One Body, would adopt our method on this subject. Let every verse be considered, let them be analyzed one by one, let the truth thus revealed be brought together to form a single revelation. Let the admonition of 2 Timothy 2:15 to "rightly divide" be obeyed. Let any student of God's Word try this and see if they can honestly come to any other conclusion than what the writer came to as set forth in our pamphlet on "The Glory of the One Baptism."

We have attempted to show why we stand where we stand. We trust that our readers will now see the honesty of our purpose and the depth of our convictions upon this subject. However, we are still open for any further light from God's Word. We are standing fast in the liberty whereby Christ has made us free. This liberty permits us to follow where the Word leads, to receive what it has to teach us.

A TESTIMONY FROM "THE MOODY MONTHLY"

It will not be the practice of THE WORD OF TRUTH to reprint articles from other magazines. However, an article in the July number of THE MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE MONTHLY is so indicative of a more tolerant attitude toward those peculiar truths that are so vitally related to the transcendent truth of "the mystery," that we reprint the greater part of the article. The emphasis is ours. The article was written by Pastor George Douglas of Cardiff, Wales, and he writes as follows:

"Only as we recognize and understand the place which Israel holds in the divine scheme of revelation, can we read and understand aright the book of Acts.

"All enlightened students of Holy Scripture recognize that though Israel has been set aside, it is not forever, and the present dispensation in its earthly aspect is to continue only until the time comes when the covenant people shall again be restored to divine favor (Rom. 9:10,11).

"It is a common error to assume that the rejection and crucifixion of Christ was the historical crisis at which Israel was set aside. Under the influence of this erroneous conception, people are apt to read the rest of the New Testament as though it had no more to say concerning the earthly people. But when we come into the Acts we at once discover that a place of repentance was granted to Israel, and a 'blotting out of sins' was preached to them through the Messiah, whom they had rejected and crucified (Acts 2:14, 22, 36). Doubtless repentance would have brought them 'times of refreshing' and 'the times of restitution of all things' spoken of by all the 'prophets since the world began' (Acts 3:19-21). That was the Pentecostal proclamation of the divine amnesty for the guilty people of Jerusalem, and their answer to it was the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7).

"But that crowning sin of Jerusalem was not laid upon the Jews of the dispersion, and so the disciples who were scattered abroad by the persecution which followed, carried the Pentecostal gospel to them, for in the first period of the Pentecostal dispensation the preaching was 'to the Jews only.' And though the Jews did not have a monopoly on the gospel in the second part of the Pentecostal period or dispensation, they still enjoy a distinctive priority, for now it was 'to the Jew first.' But in this Christian dispensation, 'there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentiles.' Both stand on the same level as regards sin and condemnation, on the one hand, and the proclamation of divine forgiveness on the other. But in the Pentecostal dispensation even Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, preached 'to the Jew first' in every place, and this through the whole course of his great ministry as recorded in the Acts.

Why the Book of Acts Ends Abruptly

"We learn from Acts 15 that the position of the Gentiles in the Church was only authoritatively settled some twenty years after Pentecost, and it is interesting to observe that even that settlement was on the lines and in harmony with Old Testament prophecy (Acts 15:13-17). We notice too, that years after the date of that Church council at Jerusalem, the followers of Jesus Christ were still regarded as an heretical Jewish sect

(Acts 24:5, 14). And when the apostle Paul arrived in Rome, although as we learn from the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, the church there occupied such a prominent place in his affections, his first care was to summon together 'the chief of the Jews,' and it was as a Jew he addressed them, and his words are 'our fathers,' 'my nation,' 'the hope of Israel' (Acts 28:17-20). But when they rejected his testimony, he said 'your fathers' (v. 25, R.V.). He now severed himself from Israel, and pronounced the solemn words which sealed their doom (vv 25-31).

"It has often been asked why the evangelist Luke, who was with the apostle Paul in both his Roman imprisonments, closes the book of the Acts with such apparent abruptness without giving any information regarding the ministry of those periods, and the time of liberty between them, which would have been of great interest and value to us. The simple answer is that in this book we have the divine record of the Pentecostal dispensation, and that transition period was now ended. And here we notice a very significant fact, which surely cannot be said to be accidental, that in the New Testament books written after the date of Acts 28, there is not a word to be found about Spirit manifestations except as a warning, such as I Timothy 4:1, 2. Therefore, we heartily agree with the late Sir Robert Anderson when he says:

"As there were no miracles in Jerusalem after the stoning of Stephen, there were none in Rome after that solemn 'Ichabod' had been pronounced by the apostle. For the age of miracles was past with the dispensation to which they belonged; and the apostle himself entered upon the life of faith beneath a silent heaven. Such is the character of this Christian dispensation; for ours is the blessedness of those who have not seen but yet have believed."

Miracles and Tongues of Short Duration

"It is necessary to emphasize the importance of grasping clearly and firmly the dispensational teaching of the Bible, and especially the dispensational character of the Acts, and to bear in mind the truth that manifestations of Spirit were for a definite purpose, and for a limited period.

"The evidential value of miracles depended largely upon a preceding revelation. They were a sign for those who possessed the countersign, namely the Jews, for 'unto them were committed the oracles of God,' and when they were definitely set aside by the apostolic pronouncement of Acts 28:25-27, the signs definitely ceased.

Why Paul Did Not Heal His Sick Friends

"That explains why the apostle Paul performed no miracle in Rome, did not even speak in tongues. During his first imprisonment in Rome his 'brother, and companion in labor,' Epaphroditus, lay ill, but he exercised no special gift of healing upon him, but simply depended upon the mercy of God to restore him to health again (Phil. 2:25-30). When on the journey to his second imprisonment, another of his beloved friends became very ill, and his brief statement concerning him is, '**Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick' (II Tim. 4:20)**. When Timothy, his 'own son in the faith,' was feeling far from well, all the great apostle could do was to send him a simple medical prescription, very likely

suggested by Luke who was with him at the time (I Tim. 5:23). There was a time when a handkerchief carried from his person brought healing and health to the sick (Acts 19:12). But that dispensation was now ended.

"It is only as we understand the dispensational character of the inspired book which marks the transition period between the Gospels and the setting aside of Israel, that we can understand the mystery of the silence of God in this dispensation of grace. . . ."

We welcome this witness to the truth from the pages of "Moody Monthly." Several years ago we were led by the Spirit of God to see that Israel did not fall at the Cross; that Israel is before God throughout the Book of Acts; that in the Book of Acts we have the divine record of the unique Pentecostal dispensation; that Paul was an Israelite until Acts 28:28, but not after that; that Acts 28:28 marks the setting aside of Israel and the beginning of a new dispensation or administration; that those epistles written by Paul after Acts 28:28 present the truth of this new administration. Having been led to see these truths, we accepted them and have followed them out to all their conclusions and consequences.

During the past few years we have heard these truths denied again and again by different speakers over the Moody Institute Station. They have been denied almost every Saturday by our beloved Brother Wm. Mc Carrel in his weekly broadcast, sponsored by the Institute. And now the "Moody Monthly" confirms our position and proclaims without apology the truth which they have so consistently denied. Yes, we welcome this testimony for it will help break down prejudice and may turn many to God's Word to search and see if these things are so.

A TESTIMONY FROM "THE VOICE"

Another testimony to the verity of a distinctive truth which we have been proclaiming, and which has been vigorously denied, is found in the July issue of THE VOICE, the official organ of the "Independent Fundamental Churches of America." It is in answer to a reader's question of, "Why did Paul lose his power to heal (1 Tim. 5:23, 2 Tim. 4:20)?" "The answer is as follows, **the emphasis ours**.

"The healing miracles of the apostles were credentials of their testimony (Heb. 2:3-4), and particularly of the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 4:23; 8:5-13; 10:7-8. The Gospel of the Kingdom is the message, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. It was God's message to Israel during the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the period covered by the book of Acts. But as Israel's unbelief and hardness of heart became more and more apparent, and as the Spirit of God began to set her aside, to deal particularly with the Gentiles, the emphasis changed. The preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom gradually ceased, and the emphasis began to be placed upon other truths, particularly with reference to the Church. **In other words there was a change of dispensation during the lifetime of the apostle Paul, which involved a change of message.**"

The last sentence of this quotation is the very heart of the message which we are proclaiming in the pages of THE WORD OF TRUTH. We welcome this confirmation of our testimony.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Wisdom of God in A Mystery

A. B. T. -New York. In 1 Corinthians 2:6-8 the subject is WISDOM and not the mystery. The word "mystery" appears only when Paul describes how he spoke this wisdom. He spoke wisdom to the full-grown, kept it from the babes and thus spoke it in a secret. Paul says "we speak wisdom." He does not say "we speak the mystery," as so many are trying to force him to say. This wisdom, which Paul spoke to the perfect, was hidden in the times of the ages but was then manifested through Paul. My lexicon shows that in this passage "mystery" is neuter, "wisdom" is feminine, and the relative pronoun "which" is feminine, Thus it refers to wisdom. Summing up: it was wisdom which was spoken, it was wisdom which was hidden, it was wisdom which was ordained before the ages, it was wisdom which none of this world knew. Paul and his associates (we) did not broadcast this wisdom but spoke it in a mystery (secretly) to those who were perfect or full grown,

The Roman Postscript

(Question 2). Romans 16:26 has been the subject of intensive study on my part for two years. I have waited before the Lord on this and my only desire has been to get the truth. One year ago I took the position that this was a postscript and was added after Paul arrived in Rome and after he received and wrote the mystery (See "Do We Wrongly Divide," Page 20). I still hold that this is a postscript for anything written after the formal close of a letter is a postscript. However, the result of my studies has led me to see that this was not added several years later but at the time the Roman epistle was written. I am now convinced that this passage does not refer to "the mystery" of Ephesians and Colossians. There is no proof that it does and there is proof that it does not. I submit the following propositions.

The word "mysterion" translated "mystery" and meaning "secret" appears first in Matthew 13:11, Mark 4:11, and Luke 8:10. In the original, the first and last references are plural (mysteries) and the second is singular. Each has the definite article preceding it for these are very definitely the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.

The word "mysterion" appears next in the writings of Paul. Taken in their chronological order they appear as follows. In 2 Thess. 2:7 it has the definite article for he is speaking of a definite secret, "the secret of iniquity." Next comes 1 Cor. 2:7 where it is singular and has no definite article in the Greek which makes it indefinite. It refers to no "mystery" in this passage. Next in order comes 1 Cor. 4:1 where it is plural and has no article. This verse reveals that Paul was steward of many mysteries or secrets, When the word "mystery" appears we must always ask: "What mystery?" and let Scripture answer. We must "distinguish things that differ" and not take it for granted that they are the same.

Next comes 1 Cor. 14:2 where it is plural and has no article. Those who spoke in tongues spoke secrets, but not "the secret" of the One body. Then comes 1 Cor. 15:52 where it is singular, no article, and is translated "a mystery." Then in chronological order

comes Romans 11:25 where it is singular, has the definite article and refers to the mystery of Israel's blindness. Now Paul has used the word "mystery" seven times and not one of them refers to the mystery of the One Body, so clearly set forth in Ephesians. Now, the next reference is Romans 16:26. What about this, does "the mystery" suddenly appear in this eighth reference. When we examine the original of Romans 16:26 there is no article, therefore it is indefinite and should be translated "a mystery." After this Paul uses the word "mystery" twelve times and it always has the definite article before it.

The New Testament contains the revelation of many mysteries or secrets. Paul had an abundance of revelations. One of these he called "my gospel." This refers to "reconciliation" such as was proclaimed in 2 Corinthians and revealed in detail in Romans. This gospel became known to Paul by the revelation of a secret which was hushed in time of the ages. This is what Paul refers to in Romans 16:26. This secret was hid in the Old Testament (See Rom. 3:21-22). The secret of the Ephesians and Colossians was "hid in God." If Romans 16:26 refers to this secret, God would have guided Paul to use the definite article just as He did in Ephesians and Colossians.

This theme is worthy of yet more study and my own studies of the Roman postscript will continue. My latest writings will always set forth my latest light upon any subject. I will not hesitate to make any of my former writings void. I will not be bound by them. Truth is precious, my writings are worthless. So having opened the book let us keep it open.

Passover and Levitical Priesthood

J. W. H., Illinois --No, it is not true that the Levitical priesthood was inseparably linked up with the Jewish feast of Passover. The Scripture references given to prove this prove the exact opposite when the context is read. Read 2 Chron. 30:1-10, but don't stop there. Read on to verse 17 and note carefully verses 13, 15 and 17. There was a feast of Passover before there was a Levitical priesthood. In Luke 22:8 the Lord Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare the Passover. Neither of these men were Levitical priests. When they assembled the Lord said "with desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you." There were no Levitical priests in the upper room that night.

Sacrifices in the Kingdom

E.N., Illinois - You ask if further sacrifices for the remission of sins will be ordered by the Lord during the coming Kingdom age, and if God had a place for a "slain lamb in His spiritual program after the veil of the temple was rent in twain? Well, all I know is what I read in the Scriptures. It is my understanding that the last eight chapters of Ezekiel are millennial truth. Read Ezek. 43:19, 22, 25. Ezek. 44:29. Ezek. 45:15, 18, 19, 21. I am not required to answer "why" as to these sin offerings. I am required to believe the record, and this I do.

THE EDITOR'S MINISTRY

****We can provide a capable Bible Teacher for any group within sixty miles of Chicago. Twenty people meeting in a home is a very satisfactory class. Do not write to us about a teacher unless you desire to give him liberty to preach and teach the truth of God's Word as he sees it.

****Mr. C. H. Welch of England, Editor of "The Berean Expositor" and author of many Bible study books and pamphlets has the following to say concerning our latest pamphlet, "The Scriptural Position of the Lord's Supper."

"We welcome another booklet 'from the pen of Pastor Otis Q. Sellers entitled: 'The Scriptural Position of the Lord's Supper.'" In our own publication on this subject we have been content to rest the whole argument upon the 'New Covenant.' Pastor Sellers takes a wider scope, and deals very thoroughly with the Passover and its connection with the Lord's Supper. He recognizes also that the command concerning the Lord's Supper given in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 appears in that section of the Epistle which was addressed to the Circumcision, for only 'the fathers' of such were baptized into Moses and the sea (1 Cor. 10:1). The same patient dealing with the Word of God which characterized the booklet entitled 'The Glory of the One Baptism' will commend this new booklet to our readers."

We appreciate this good word of commendation, coming as it does from the one who for over twenty-five years has labored in England to break down prejudice and secure a hearing for the truth of the mystery. Mr. Welch's magazine "The Berean Expositor" will be of real value to those students of the Word who are somewhat advanced in their appreciation of "the mystery." We will be glad to receive, and forward to England, subscriptions for this monthly at seventy-five cents per year.

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