

No.

217.

"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS
WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE
RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

ACTS 2, AND A NEW DISPENSATION.

An Address (revised) at

Minories, Aldgate, E. C.

14th April, 1925.

by

PERCY W. HEWARD.

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ACTS 2, AND A NEW DISPENSATION.

An Adress by Mr. P. W. Heward,
At Minories, Aldgate, E. C.
14th April, 1925.

OUTLINE:

1. "The Day of Pentecost Fulfilled", and a "New Meal Offering" (Lev. 23:16). The Work of the Holy Spirit.
2. "I will Build My Church", (Matt. 16:18; Heb. 2:12-14).
3. Thoughts on Gal. 2, (Gospel of the Uncircumcision, etc.)
4. Is there (As Some Maintain) A Break of Dispensation Before the "Prison Epistles"? Notes on Acts 28:29-31, on the Gospel of the Grace of God, and the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Our subject, beloved friends, is Acts 2, with special reference to the beginning of the new dispensation. That God has a right to make any dispensational arrangements He pleases, our hearts acknowledge, and that dispensational limitations do not alter the unveiling of a final completeness of all the redeemed, we must confess. The Lord can arrange for an Abraham to live in one sphere, a David in another, a Paul in another, and yet can bring them all finally to the same climax. There is no hindrance from God's standpoint. What we want to know is what Scripture says. Do let us be clear upon this point. God never contradicts Himself. God's teaching is always perfect, but there are no limitations apart from those of sin, for HE cannot sin. There are no limitations from the standpoint of power and arrangement, and we behold the carrying out of different parts of His work in different ways. Sin is the only limitation. We go to Israel, and they say, "Christ COULD not be the Son of God". We go to the Mohammedans, and they speak in a similar manner. We answer, "You have no authority to introduce the word 'could' or 'could not' in this matter. God can do everything, sin alone excepted". Therefore everything is a matter of REVELATION. It is not ~~an~~ a matter of our previous opinion what SHOULD be, what is desirable. It is a matter of revelation as to every age, period and dispensation, Acts 2 begins with the

declaration that the day of Pentecost was fulfilled, - "fully come" is our human addition. "Fully come" is not the statement which the Holy Spirit makes. Literally the verse reads, "In the being fulfilled". Not only a fulfilment as to TIME.. Was Christ the Passover? We reply, Yes. Was the Passover therefore prophetic? Undoubtedly. Are not all the feasts of the Lord prophetic? Will there not be the application of the Day of Atonement to Israel? If so there must be a fulfilment of the Day of Pentecost. Types are prophecies. The Holy Spirit tells us that Passover was fulfilled when Christ died, that self-same day. The Holy Spirit now tells us that Pentecost was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit came down on the fiftieth day, the day after the Sabbath, seven weeks from the omer being waved before the Lord. If the Day of Pentecost was then fulfilled, the present dispensation is explained. The Day of Pentecost is unique among the three feasts of Israel's year. It is the feast which does not have a "week" attached to it, the feast which does not have a Sabbath, and which cannot be a Sabbath. Other feasts are dated by the month, and therefore can be on the Sabbath. As they have a week, they must have a Sabbath; but Pentecost has no month day, only a week day, it can neither HAVE nor BE, a Sabbath. It must be the first day of the week, the day AFTER THE Sabbath. Consequently, as we are not told what happened BEFORE the Day of Pentecost, the remarkable passing over of the Sabbath in a few words in Luke 23, and the passing over of the Sabbath in Acts 20, will find a parallel in the definite passing over of the Sabbath in Acts 2. Remarkably, however, we do not have the evening and the morning brought before us. Among Israel the first day of the week began the preceding evening, but though Acts 2 deals with the day after the Sabbath, it does not deal with it from the evening and the morning standpoint; it begins at the time associated with the third hour of the day. Thus not only is the Jewish Sabbath set aside, but the Jewish mode of reckoning the evening and the morning is set aside, and we reach the fulfilment of the ~~old~~ feast which is dated

from the waving of the omer of Passover week. That waving of the omer was in accord with the words of John 12:24, a picture of resurrection. The Corn of Wheat had fallen into the ground and died. The Corn of Wheat was raised up. Christ the Firstfruits. The new meal offering, therefore, is associated with resurrection; only there are differences between the firstfruits of Pentecost and Passover. Passover has a sheaf, Pentecost has two loaves. Passover has the waving of the sheaf before the Lord.. Pentecost has two loaves. Passover has the waving of the sheaf before the Lord. Pentecost emphasizes a bringing out of habitations. Scripture lays a special stress on habitations. Passover has the pure corn. Pentecost has a **NEW** meal offering prepared with leaven. It is not leaven, but leavened. Leavened bread is NOT a type of evil, but a type of good after there has been a stern dealing with evil, since fire has been applied to remove the active and ruling operation of the leaven, though the **EFFECTS** of the leaven are manifest.. Secondly, the two loaves are presented **WITH** a sin offering, which is not so with the Passover sheaf. Two is in Scripture a number of fellowship, and of witness; and Pentecost is associated with the fellowship of Jew and Gentile, and the fellowship in ministry of the Lord's servants. The Holy Spirit came on Christ in the form of a dove, for there was resting without burning, but He came on the disciples in the form of fire, for there was a necessity of fire to burn that which was evil, and fire deals with the leaven. Hence there is the definite contrast with the Passover firstfruits, and we see the witnesses coming out from the habitations, or Christian ministry on the basis of Christian assembly, but with a consciousness that as the live coal was needed by an Isaiah who said, Woe is me, so were cloven tongues as of fire needed by those who confessed their imperfection. Thus we have brought before us the redeemed of the Lord in the present dispensation on resurrection ground accepted **WITH** a sin offering, conscious of the fiery work of the Holy Spirit, as those who hate the active operations of sin, and who live as witnesses in a new position, for it is called a **NEW** meal offering. We thus

have that which is appropriate with regard to the new covenant, and thus the Holy Spirit indicates a new beginning here.

This new beginning is in accord with various Scriptures that precede it. The Lord Jesus made the striking statement "NOW is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out". Again "~~My~~ Father's house" of John 2 becomes "Your house" left to you desolate. It is, therefore, evident that a great & crisis came, and in connection with that crisis the Lord Jesus said, The world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me. And that crisis is viewed in various ways. How is it viewed with regard to God's people and their gatherings? In Matt. 16, Christ spoke prophetically: † "On This Rock I WILL build" (not I have built, nor I am building), On This Rock I will build My church. There was a new beginning on the resurrection basis. Christ the Rock. "And the gates of Hades shall not have strength against it". He went to Hades, but the gates of Hades had not strength to hold down the Rock. He came up from the Gates of Hades, and the everlasting doors must be opened to Him. Thus we have a new building as well as the new offering which was linked with "habitations". This setting aside of Israel is very definite, and the "tongues" were for a sign to the dwellers at Jerusalem, setting aside the Hebrew dispensationally. After this date no preserved inspired book is in Hebrew, though every previous inspired book had been in Hebrew or an associated language. This remarkable contrast with Babel evidently shows a fresh beginning. We have now seen something of God's instruction (a) by the new meal offering in prophecy, (b) by the change of day, i.e. the setting aside of the seventh, the last rested seventh day according to the commandment preceded resurrection, (c) the change even as to reckoning of hours which other Scriptures corroborate, (d) the setting aside of Israel's house, and (e) a new beginning of a church. In connection with this, moreover, we have a hint in John's Gospel. "The hour cometh AND NOW IS when the true worshippers shall worship", but NOT "The hour cometh AND NOW IS when

ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father". The hour was coming, but Christ did not add "now is", for at that time there was still the worship at Jerusalem. The hour coming without worship in Jerusalem evidently points to the hour when worship can only be in HEAVENLY PLACES * "boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus", which Heb. 10 associates with the present dispensation. It is remarkable that the epistle to Hebrews, 1 Pet. 2, and Eph. 2 contain parallel expressions, for so many have differentiated and made Ephesians apply to a different dispensation from that of Peter and Hebrews. The parallel terms are the Lord's own witness. In all three we have the holiest of all entered by the redeemed, and THERE is our worship, for we have no place of worship on earth. There will be a place of worship when Israel again have a temple. That Hebrews cannot be brought into connection with a Jewish remnant is evident. A Jewish remnant will have worship on earth, and ~~not~~ erect earthly buildings; nor could one write to them about the setting aside of sacrifices. The Jewish remnant will have the sacrifices, because if there is the worship of an EARTHLY remnant in the body, there must be animal sacrifices. The blood of bulls and goats sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, for in the epistle to the Hebrews this is set forth. It is only in heavenly places, as the same epistle shows, that animal sacrifices are set on one side. If we worshipped on earth we should have animal sacrifices, for they are not MERE forms, they sanctify to the purifying of the FLESH, which is the Holy Spirit's own statement. This accounts for their reintroduction as soon as God reintroduces a city, a building, a priesthood, a warfare, and Sabbath and musical instruments. These all stand together. It is remarkable that many dear children of God in dread of Romanism and Ritualism see some of these parts of truth, yet fail to see the completeness, The entire change of dispensation is so clearly marked out.

But not only have we this new company built by the Lord, we have in the parables the indication of a change.

The kingdom of heaven suffered violence in the temporary enthusiasm of many in the life of the Lord Jesus, but the ENTERING of it has a different aspect. The first parable of the Personal Sower is not a parable in which we read "The kingdom of heaven is like", but when the field has been bought by blood, the second parable is "The Kingdom of heaven is like". "This is evident." "The kingdom of heaven is like". "The word of the kingdom" was preached by the Sower, but his field is associated with the first expression "The kingdom of heaven is like". The kingdom of heaven is thus commenced, and the new dispensation is introduced by a preparatory three and a half years as the future dispensation will be, though the three and a half years belong to the dispensation just closing. The new dispensation introduced at Pentecost by three and a half years is associated with the kingdom of the heavens, and redeemed ones are not part of the kingdom of the earth, nor is the Lord's kingdom now from hence. His kingdom is not of this world, therefore His servants do not fight. Their sword is sheathed, and here is the patience and faith of the saints. Consequently the book of Revelation laying a stress upon ~~an~~ this heavenly aspect, - though many have thought it tells of a Jewish remnant, - ~~the~~ the book of Revelation gives us a view of the redeemed, as the contrast with those that dwell ON THE EARTH. They are said to tabernacle in heaven, and the manchild is BORN in heavenly places, and the woman is seen there FIRST before she goes into the wilderness, even as we have "Within the veil" before "outside the camp". Thus Hebrews and Revelation lay a tremendous stress upon the heavenly kingdom, and deny an allusion to an earthly remnant. The earthly remnant is marked in both Matthew's Gospel and Revelation as distinct from the people to whom those books are addressed. Then shall THE TRIBES OF THE LAND see the Lord Jesus, in Matt. 24. They are distinguished from the heavenly people, and "All the kindreds of the land shall wail because of Him", says Revelation, again distinguishing them from a heavenly people of whom Revelation speaks as definitely as Daniel 7, - the saints of the Most High. It is worthy of notice that this distinction is

preserved throughout. "the saints of the Most High" AND "The people of the saints of the Most High". "His elect", and the wider term "All the elect", - "His elect" being then ALREADY claimed as His, and caught up to meet Him. "The elect", the wider ~~term~~ term, includes the earthly people AS WELL, though at present unclaimed. So exact is the language of Scripture. But this remarkable change of the introduction of the kingdom of the heavens, and the building of the church upon the finished work of the Rock, had an effect upon those who had fallen asleep. Grace is not an afterthought. But union with Christ could not precede Calvary, and though they could receive life in advance, and though there were to be a Divine reckoning as there was in the putting aside of the transgressions, there could not be the giving of that resurrection life in union with Christ which would nullify His own statement that union with Him was on resurrection ground. Consequently the old-time saints possessing spirits did not possess spirits brought to the goal, they possessed life as Gal.4 shows, but we are not told that they were in living union with the Lord Jesus. But now we read, You are come unto the spirits of just men made perfect. They have reached the goal as the word signifies. He was brought to the goal through sufferings, and they have reached their goal, - there is now something further for their spirits, and hence they must have been brought into living union with Him. Consequently the old-time saints have received this living union with the Lord though their bodies are not yet changed, for their bodies remain in death, and it is appointed that they without us should not be brought to this goal. It is only the spirits that have been brought to the goal. In accord with this Hebrews 2 definitely says that the Lord Jesus via death and resurrection transferred those who through all their lifetime were subject to servitude. Thus subjection to servitude belongs to the dispensation of servants. For the heir so long as he is a child, an infant, is subject to guardians appointed, and differeth nothing from a servant. WE have not received the Spirit of servitude AGAIN to fear, but the Spirit of sonship in Whom we cry Abba, Father.

But THEY received the Spirit, as Scripture shows, as the Spirit of servitude. They were children, but sonship was not realized. They were, if we may go back to our subject of yesterday, in the city of refuge but not permitted to return to a free position till the High Priest died. Their safety was secure, but their freedom and position were not manifest. The priests of Israel were before the veil ere the veil was rent. They were in the High priest's family, but were not able to draw near into the Holiest of All. They had life but not living union. There was safety, but the way into the holiest was not made manifest while as yet the first tabernacle was standing. It was when the fulfilment came and God carried through Christ's work that there was this making manifest and this bringing of just men to that completeness. Then the words were illustrated "On This Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not have strength against it"; for we must remember that there were those in Hades when Christ died, but we do not read of any old-time saints, or new time saints, as being in Hades now. It is not merely that Hades is associated with a temporary position, but they have been moved from Hades, and Matt. 16 says, "The gates of Hades shall not have strength against IT" - neither against the Rock nor the church, as the word may signify. Those who were moved were evidently brought then into a prophecy of His church, "I will build My church", in accord with the fact that the sleep of the Last Adam meant the bringing out from His side of the one who shall be built up, the one bride who is not two, and the old-time saints must be incorporated in that one bride who is taken out of Him, (cf. Isha taken out of Ish, in Gen. 2.) For Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might HEAD up in one. He died for One company, and dispensational temporary applications will not hinder the final oneness of the redeemed. Salvation is because of being in Him by Divine election, and it reaches that possession of life which is in Him in the final glory. It begins with one and ends with one, even

though there may be in between various partial realizations and partial applications and partial enjoyments of the final "heading up" in a perfect unity in accord with a fulness. For SUBSTITUTION implies absolute unity in the possession of life. If He was less than a Substitute there is no atonement, but if He was a Substitute, those for whom He was a Substitute must surely receive His life. They cannot have less, else substitution is hurled from its glory. This is not a mere matter of words. It is a pivot, a question that affects the whole of substitution. Was Christ a Substitution or not? Substitution is involved, because if there was substitution there must be the possession of His life. Thus we have brought before us the glorious BUILDING up of the great Isha. This is the very verb in the margin of Gen. 2. He built up a woman. The building up of the glorious Isha, the one whose me is named from Himself, even of those who are of one piece with the glorious Mercy Seat. You have observed that in the tabernacle where there is wood, and where there is copper, we do not have union, but only relationship. Where there is gold we have union. The laver rests upon the foundation, - relationship, not union. The loaves rest on the table, - relationship, not union. The boards are dependent upon the silver sockets, - relationship, not union. But in the lampstand, we behold, we behold union, not merely relationship, for it ~~is~~ is gold alone; and in the mercy seat we see union, not bare relationship. I mean not INCOMPLETE relationship, but the perfection of relationship in full union. The ark is ALONE. There are no cherubim attached to it, for it has wood, and whenever we have Christ pictured in the days of humiliation before He was raised from the dead, there is not union but relationship; but where He is pictured in resurrection we have brought before us that fulness of union which He wondrously guaranteed in sovereign grace. But there are those who will bring up the thought, though they may not be among us now, - those who will bring it up seriously and earnestly that there was a Jewish remnant with whom the Lord was dealing

in the book of Acts until that remnant finally rejected the testimony, and that the new dispensation was introduced much later. This seems to deny the teaching of Matt. 16, and the reference to "the kingdom of the heavens and still more definitely the fulfilling which the Holy Spirit declares took place on that Day of Pentecost when the Day of Pentecost was fulfilled. If it was not a fulfilling, what was it? What else comes in afterwards? Many dear children of God have been led astray because the apostles were slow to perceive the new dispensation, and still retained various forms of Judaism, and thousands of believers zealous for the law, and even Paul went back to a vow and its associated sacrifices. But slowness to perceive is not dispensational appointment. Israel were always slow to perceive, and so are we; but, thanks be unto God, our salvation does not depend on our perception, and our position in Christ is not made a matter of knowledge, but depends upon His grace and His arrangement and His guarantee of His definitely arranged purpose, and the Holy Spirit always emphasizes this. Moreover, if we look more closely into the book of Acts we shall not find a further transition period of the character which many assume. They will tell us that there was an inter-period and that now we are beyond that inter-period in a further position, and that there are various gospels, and that we are not associated with the Gospel of the Kingdom, but with the Gospel of the Grace of God. Some will even go so far as to emphasize statements which are made in the New Testament about obedience and say they could not fit the present dispensation; that the reference to Cornelius as a man that was accepted by God, could not belong to a dispensation of pure grace, and that those who are viewed as washing their robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb could not be saints of the present time because they thus act; and even that the epistle of James deals with another dispensation because of its balance stress on works. But, beloved friends, if in ANY dispensation salvation is by works, the whole foundation of the Gospel is gone. This is not only an

error of interpretation, it involves an error of teaching which is of the most dangerous character. Grace must shine out in all its glory, and I suppose there are many of us who can see no difficulty in the epistle of James which refers to the fruits and evidences of LIVING faith. The life is by grace, and the fruits are a matter of responsibility in the Spirit. Nor can we find a problem in washing robes in the blood of the Lamb in the application and enjoyment of that work whereby the GIVEN robe, which is never said to need mending, but only the washing away of that which is a foreign substance, which is placed on it but not becoming part of it. That given robe is the basis, and the washing is the application not to IT, but to that which is upon it. Nor is this the work of a man in securing righteousness, but of an already saved man in the manifestation of that righteousness already given.

Are we not told that the Gospel of the circumcision to Peter? Have we not therefore two Gospels? It is amazing how any can thus read Gal. 2. If there is anything evident in the subsequent context in Gal. 2, it is that to make two Gospels would bring one under the judgment - "Because he was to be blamed". Peter is distinctly said there to be blamed because he introduced a separate position for the Jewish believers, and if there is anything evident in Paul's testimony to him afterwards, it is that the Gospel of the Grace of God involves the same salvation to those who are Jews by nature as to those who are sinners of the Gentiles. Moreover, the sternly loving words about Barnabas being carried away by this dissimulation should be sounded forth when such a strange error is introduced. The Gospel of the circum-^{is}cision - what it? Does the context speak of a Gospel of circumcision made up? By no means. It is God's Gospel. What then is the difference? The manner of the Gospel. If you try and read those earlier verses that there was one Gospel given to Peter which was distinct from that given to Paul, you will find that the verses become hopelessly confused. But if you take it that Paul had a sphere of preaching among Gentiles as the apostle of the

Gentiles, and that Peter had a sphere of ministering the Gospel to men of the circumcision, the context is fitting, - though we must never forget that Peter's sphere was LIMITED because he hesitated to go to the Gentiles. Originally he was appointed to go to all nations, as Matt. 28 shows, and Acts 1:8, but the disciples hesitated. They hesitated in Acts 2, they hesitated in Acts 8, and a Divine work was needed in Acts 10 to compel the going forward. Even then there was a measure of drawing back, and the result was the Lord limited the sphere, not the nature of the Gospel; even as if we choose a narrower sphere we may lose an open door. Thus Paul was brought to the ministering of the same Gospel to the Gentiles. But it may be said, Did he not have a fresh revelation? Undoubtedly he received fresh instruction. He was not present at the primary breaking of the bread, but he tells us in 1 Cor. 11, that the Lord explained that fully to him. Likewise as to other things he was not with the eleven when the Lord spoke in forty days of the things concerning the Kingdom of God, but the Lord explained them to him afterwards, that he might be appropriately the twelfth apostle of the Lamb. But, it may be said, Did he not have a QUITE distinct revelation? Nay, that which he set forth was revealed to the Lord's apostles and trustees. The distinctness is rather in this matter. Many were slower to follow the Lord on this very point. We would not ignore God's sovereignty, but there is also the thought of reproof. You have the illustration of this in the matter of Stephen. Stephen appears to have grasped the dispensational teaching more quickly. This was before Paul was an apostle, and Stephen - the context clearly indicates - understood more of the new dispensation than the apostles. But perception is one thing, revelation is another. The Lord had revealed the change of dispensation, but even the apostles were slow to see and act upon it. Acts 10 illustrated. But some will tell us that there is a break of dispensation at the end of the Book of Acts. I must say I have a dread of the present tendency to split up, UNLESS there is a clear

Divine evidence for it. I do not think for one moment that those who are in error on dispensational teaching intentionally attack inspiration. As a rule they do not. But you recollect how the higher critics began with two or three Pentateuch documents, then they wanted more, to save their consistency. And so is it with all of us. When inconsistency is found with an argument for "division" a further dividing is often brought in. But why not give up the theory? It ~~is~~ is the same with the Book of Revelation. Some maintain there were two stages in the first resurrection, though without Scripture warrant. They are pressed as to various points for a clear answer, and another writer goes on and finds several more, possibly seven stages. This is the natural development when difficulties come. Arguments are earnestly introduced "in good faith" as men say, and the points are taken further and further, whereas the basis is to be given up as untenable. The tendency with us all is to enlarge the number of diversities. In like manner some emphasized the beginning of the new dispensation in the middle of the Book of Acts where Paul's ministry is found, but others discover there are many things AFTER this which are still referring to the kingdom in the same way, so they assume that another dispensation must come in, in Acts 28; and thus rather than give up the error there is a tendency with us all to enlarge. But let us remember that diversity of expression does not necessarily mean a fundamental and intrinsic diversity. For example, the Lord Jesus Christ is called by these names, but the Lord Jesus Christ is the Same Person. There is no inherent difficulty in the Gospel of the Grace of God and the Gospel of the Kingdom being the same. Different WORDS may be used with different ASPECTS. This is deeply important. Some have taught that where we have baptizing into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, that this is distinct from what we have in the Book of Acts baptizing into the Name of the Lord Jesus. But why should it be? It is not the NameS, it is the Name, and if the NAME of the Father and the Son and the Spirit is ONE,

it is the Name of the Son; and as the Lord Jesus is the Son, the Name of the Lord Jesus is the Name of the Son; and, therefore, the Same as the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, But many who were baptized in the Books of Acts had acknowledged God, and His Name. The important point was that they should be brought to confess that the Lord Jesus Christ was entitled to the Same Name. Hence that point is emphasized. So when we reach the 28th chapter of Acts, we read that Paul called together the Jews at Rome, and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. Where we read of the Gentiles in verse 31, it is - preaching the kingdom of God, (still the kingdom of God, you will observe), and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, - no mention of the law of Moses, nor is it simply the Name Jesus, but the Lord Jesus Christ. Most fitting. In the one case there was the special need of evidence to Israel from the Law of Moses as to the Person Who had walked that earth among Israel, Whom they rejected. Hence language is used to give, and lay stress on, ~~various~~ various aspects. But observe that as the Book of Acts BEGINS with the Kingdom, so it ENDS with the Kingdom. It is sometimes claimed that the prison epistles come in afterwards. THEY DO NOT. I do praise God for those words of the 30th verse, "Paul dwelt TWO WHOLE YEARS in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him", for the prison epistles were written during those two whole years. Such a point must be brought forward, and if the answer given is to the effect that this is only just mentioned at the end, we see how the whole case is surrendered. The mention is AT THE END, not after. WITHIN, not subsequent to, the period of Acts we have the prison epistles. "Preaching the Kingdom of God" belongs to exactly the same period. If you ask which is the first epistle AFTER the Book of Acts, it is not Ephesians, it is first Timothy, an epistle which definitely keeps out the language of the united church and the body. I will not at present go more fully into the reason, but it seems to me to be the Lord's anticipation

of this erroneous wandering from the truth, and so He answers it in advance. The two whole years during which Paul was writing the epistles to Ephesians and Colossians concerning the unity, are the period during which he was preaching the kingdom of God, and receiving all that came in to him. That was the subject he brought before them. So we have the evidence that the kingdom of God is not to be viewed as Jewish, it belongs to the same period as Ephesians and Colossians. That there is a sudden end to the Book of Acts is evident, but the first epistle after it is an epistle not addressed to a CHURCH, but an individual; and Paul addresses NO MORE epistles to churches. He does not speak of A church in one, but not of THE church. He does not speak of supernatural gifts in the same way AFTER the Book of Acts. Some have taught this is an advance. The epistles, if prayerfully and carefully read, indicate that there was a loss of manifest united working, not an advance beyond the period of supernatural gifts, but a declension with effect as to the Lord's gifts. Timothy and Titus make this very evident. If it is said that the Lord's Supper is not mentioned again in Timothy, we observe that instructions were already given till He come. The arrangements ~~for~~ for ministry, however, were given afresh, because in 1 Cor. 14, all the speakers were inspired, and in 1 Timothy all arrangements for speaking leave out the thought of inspired speakers from among those ministering the truth, apart from Paul and Timothy. It is the same in 2 Timothy. I do not think we sufficiently realize that whereas in Corinthians we have apostles and prophets, and in Ephesians the foundation of apostles and prophets, in Timothy we have an apostle and the gift by prophecy, but the continuation of the work is not said to belong to the foundation of apostles and prophets; but - "I am ready to be offered" - an apostle. "Do the work of an evangelist". And what about teaching? Remember in Ephesians - apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The apostles and prophets were the foundation, and are no longer found in Timothy; but in Revelation, still later, the greetings

come FROM the Holy Spirit for the first time, and you have those who SAY they are apostles, and the woman who SAYS she is a prophetess, but not a true apostle, nor a true prophet. There is "the angel", from the same root as the word "evangelist", and the angel is blamed for allowing one who calls herself a prophetess to teach wrongly. He seems so blamed to show he ought to appoint teaching; and thus we have the angel (a shortened form from the same root as evangelist"), and the approval of right teaching, still found by contrast. Here there is the evidence not of a fresh dispensation of progress, but of a measure of loss parallel with Israel's loss at their temple and its unity and glory. The revival promised in the last days of the dispensation appears like the second temple without the Shekinah glory. In the restoration God says, "The word which I covenanted with you, My Spirit remaineth among you", but the Shekinah glory was not there. There is no promise that the foundation of apostles and prophets shall be restored, nor do any promises of the last days INDICATE signs and wonders except to deceive, nor when we have prophecies of signs in this age have we the statement "until the end of the age"; but when there are commandments they are unto the end of the age. "Ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come". "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age". where it is a matter of promise with respect to supernatural gifts, those words are expressly left out. There must be a reason for all of this, and we see in the later epistles addressed to INDIVIDUALS. the humble ground taken, that the Lord's dear people had not the manifest unity which existed at first. (Not to individuals to remain such, but to individuals privileged to seek Scriptural gatherings. INDIVIDUAL responsibility of care for assemblies seems much more prominent in days of weakness, though this is quite distinct from HUMAN "one man ministry".) It is this which gives the break at the end of the book of Acts, not the introduction of a higher dispensation. The Gospel of the

Grace of God is not contradictory to the Gospel of the Kingdom. We read that the Gospel of the kingdom was to be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations with respect to the calling out of a people for a heavenly lifting up, and as that command was given to those who became the nucleus of the church, to imply it did not mean the Gospel they were to preach would seem a strain on the understanding, the more so as the Acts begins with the Kingdom and ends with the Kingdom; and at Ephesus, be it noticed, to which the epistle was written, Paul lays a stress on the grace of God, and the kingdom of God, with regard to the expression "the whole counsel of God". Moreover, those who are viewed in the churches of Revelation, are said to be in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, where ~~Man~~ John said he still was, though he was the last of the apostles, probably the only one then living. It would seem strange that he should write such beautiful letters had he been transferred to a higher position, nor is there any hint that the Lord was dealing with companies in TWO positions at the same time, and that there were those who were in the kingdom and then brought into a different sphere. Thus, beloved friends, we find no contradiction between the Gospel of the Grace of God and the Gospel of the Kingdom, - only different aspects. Likewise Paul's statement "My Gospel" by no means indicates a ~~xxx~~ separate Gospel, as when he says "My God shall supply all your need". Why the apostle should be hindered from the term "My Gospel" any more than "My God", I do not know. Why the psalmist should have a stress upon the "my" again and again, and why the apostle cannot have it, without us saying that it does not mean the same Gospel, many of us fail to see. Thanks be unto God for the "my" of affectionate appropriating, that is its force; and if we realize in the power of the Holy Spirit this force more and more, we shall, I hope, be able to understand more definitely the beginning of the new dispensation and its course, and to take the lowly position acknowledging that which is lost, but resting upon the fact there is much that is not lost, and

that in its eternal and heavenly aspect that which is part of the counsel and work of God must remain unshaken, as we still look, in the power of the Holy Spirit, for That Blessed Hope which the early saints had.

The prayerful student is urged to hesitate as to any "beautiful" theories, whenever invited to embrace them. Attractive suggestions which lack "Thus saith the Lord", and which depend rather on assumption, should be rejected. "Types" confirm, allusions are helpful, but UNLESS the Holy Spirit say "This" or "That" IS a type, or ELSEWHERE states in OTHER language that which the type illustrates, we must beware lest the "type" be our imagination. Beautiful expressions about union with Christ naturally win us, and we must be on our guard lest they draw us to accept unconsciously error mingled with them. Again, let it be emphasized, "Keep seeming types in their true position, to illustrate GOD'S testimony, not to PROVE the thoughts even of earnest and thoughtful believers.

The evidence of different LANGUAGE IN DIFFERENT epistles must be carefully weighed. For example, if Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans are grouped together, and Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Timothy, Titus, it may be suggested that certain phraseology is varied, and word lists can be given to show relative frequency of words. BUT some of the EARLIER epistles will be found to omit the very words which are said to characterize them, and Timothy and Titus will be found different from Ephesians and Colossians. The GROUPING is often human and artificial, and misleads dear children of God, unintentionally.

Much has been said as to "upon the heavenlies" in Eph. 1:3; 2:6. But should it not be remembered that this word not only is omitted from Colossians, but occurs more often in Hebrews than in Ephesians, (3:1; 6:4; 8:5; 9:23; 11:16; 12:22; only five in Ephesians), and moreover, is found four times in one chapter of an EARLIER epistle (1 Cor. 15:40,48,49).

These thoughts may be used of God to keep some of His beloved children from accepting, and teaching, too readily that which seems to lack His own authority. Again we ask, (a) WHEN did the saints of God pass from one sphere to the other, if Ephesians is beyond the Church in Acts 2, and (b) Does God recognize two spheres at the SAME time, in the present dispensation among His people? With loving earnestness we would press for the simplicity of acceptance of His OWN WORDS, and not unconscious additions.
