

THE LORD'S SUPPER

We pass from one controversial subject, namely the Lord's Prayer, to another of even greater consequence. The dispensational boundary of Acts 28 has been set forth under that heading, but we indicate its bearing upon the subject before us, by setting out the epistles of Paul as they are grouped on either side.

Galatians*

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians Pentecostal, earthly Kingdom period.

Hebrews The hope of Israel.

1 Corinthians The New Covenant.

2 Corinthians

Romans

Acts 28:25 -27 -- The dispensational boundary.

Ephesians

Philippians Prison The dispensation of the Mystery.

Colossians Standard truth for the

Philemon church which is His body.

1 Timothy Israel dismissed.

Titus New Covenant suspended.

2 Timothy Prison

The Lord's Supper

We note that we find mention of the Lord's Supper in those Scriptures written before the beginning of this dispensation, but not even a hint of it afterwards. We will not, however, limit ourselves to this argument, although, rightly understood, it is final and conclusive. Let us turn to the Scriptures where we first read of this institution of the Lord's Supper. When was this ordinance instituted? Matthew 26:26 -30 supplies the information:

'And as they were eating (i.e. the passover, see verses 17 and 19), Jesus took bread (i.e. a passover loaf of unleavened bread), and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives'.

The Passover

Thus we see that the Lord's Supper is connected with the Jewish feast of the Passover, and by reading 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 we see that henceforth this feast was not merely to remind them of the deliverance from Egypt, but to 'show the Lord's death till He come', which is further interpreted in 1 Corinthians 5:7 by the words, 'For even Christ our Passover hath been sacrificed for us'. Both Matthew 26 and 1 Corinthians 11, tell us that the wine typified the 'blood of the new covenant'. What is this new covenant? Is it connected with the Mystery hidden since the age -times? Is the new covenant a secret only revealed now, or is it a matter of Old Testament revelation? Let us turn to Jeremiah 31:

'At the same time (i.e. "the latter times", Jeremiah 30:24), saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people ... Again I will build thee, ... O virgin of Israel ... O Lord, save Thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth ... for I am a Father to Israel ... He that scattered Israel will gather him ... for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob ... Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt (hence the connection between the new covenant, the passover, and the Lord's Supper) ... but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel (this is God's interpretation of the new covenant) ... If those ordinances (of the sun, moon and stars) depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever. Thus saith the Lord; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord'.

The New Covenant

No one who believes that God means what He says can help seeing that the New Covenant is related to a greater, though parallel, exodus than that from Egypt, that it is specifically connected with the future gathering of Israel back to their land, and that the church of the Mystery of Ephesians 3 finds no place therein whatsoever. The opening words of Exodus 20 teach much the same lesson. 'I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage'. Then follows the covenant, 'which they brake' (Jer. 31:32), and, 'They have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt' (Deut. 29:25, see also Jer. 11:7,8; Heb. 8).

In Matthew 26 the Lord Jesus looks forward to 'that day', to 'His Father's kingdom'; the kingdom in which the Father's will shall be done on earth; 'I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel' (Luke 22:29,30). Where in all this is room and place for, or hint of, the church of the Mystery? When we pass the dispensational boundary of Acts 28 we read in Ephesians not of the kingdom of the heavens, nor of the kingdom of the Father, but of 'the kingdom of Christ and of God' (Eph. 5:5).

In Colossians 1:13 we read, 'The kingdom of the Son of His love' (R.V.), which is in operation now, and is entirely distinct from the kingdom that hinges upon the restoration of Israel.

The usage of 'covenant'

The word rendered 'covenant' is never used in those epistles that were written after Acts 28, without reference to Israel. 2 Corinthians was written before Acts 28. Hebrews, as its title shows has a message for those of Israel.

The one reference to a covenant in Ephesians 2:12 refers back to 'the time past' when these Ephesian believers were aliens and strangers, or at most guests, with regard to the 'covenants of the promise'. No covenant is ever mentioned in relation to the 'church which is His body'. There is a promise and a purpose given before the age -time (Titus 1:1 -3), but not a covenant old or new. The new covenant is God's gracious provision for the very people who failed under the old covenant.

After the supper we read, 'They sung an hymn' (the Psalms known as the Hallel), and then 'went out into the Mount of Olives'. The Mount of Olives! The last portion of earth which the Saviour's feet trod before He ascended, and destined to be the first place touched by His feet when He returns to take to Himself the kingdom (Acts 1:12; Zech. 14:4).

Linked with the kingdom

It seems as though everything has been written and arranged to link the Lord's Supper with the kingdom, and to sever it from the Mystery. Who then has blinded the eyes of believers, and made them more zealous concerning a kingdom ordinance, than eager to 'know what is the hope of His calling'? Turning from Matthew 26 let us consider 1 Corinthians 11:23 -26.

Till He come

This passage at first sight seems to nullify all that has been said before. First of all let us consider the statement, 'I have received of the Lord'. If we turn to 1 Corinthians 15:3, we shall read, 'For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received'; or Galatians 1:11,12, 'For I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ'. Paul continually declared his entire independence of man, both as to his apostleship and his doctrine.

No new revelation

Many at Corinth were being led away by Judaizing teachers to doubt or deny his office. 'Am I not an apostle?' he cries, 'are not ye my work in the Lord?' (1 Cor. 9:1). 'In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles' (2Cor. 12:11). The apostle immediately follows his words of censure, 'I praise you not' (1 Cor. 11:22), with the reminder of his authority, 'For I have received of the Lord'. There is no warrant to

make this statement mean more than the immediately preceding context indicates. The institution of the Lord's Supper was no secret. The apostle Paul received no further teaching regarding it than could be gathered from the records in the gospels; he emphasizes his words in this way to help the Corinthian believers to be more ready to listen to his rebukes in relation to their abuse of the ordinance.

Supernatural gifts

Let us also consider this, that every one of these Corinthian believers who assembled to partake of the Lord's Supper had some spiritual gift. It was not that a few had gifts, but 'everyone of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation' (1 Cor.14:26). These supernatural gifts were in perfect harmony with the dispensation in which they were given; they were, moreover, equally in harmony with all that we have seen relative to the Lord's Supper.

Their cessation

Will those who believe that the Lord's Supper is for them, satisfactorily (i.e. Scripturally, not traditionally) explain their lack of these qualifications, which were possessed by those to whom the instructions concerning the Lord's Supper were sent? The 'gifts' and the Lord's Supper ceased at the close of Acts 28; we search in vain for the faintest allusion to the ordinances in the epistles written after Acts 28. Why should we pick out one item from 1 Corinthians 11 and seek to perpetuate that, when we are compelled to confess that the very next verses in chapter 12 are written concerning that to which we can lay no claim?

Their omission

If we read 1 Timothy, we find the apostle giving Timothy detailed instructions that he may know how to behave in the house of God. The apostle repeats some of his instructions regarding the ministry of women (e.g. 1 Tim. 2 and 1 Cor. 11:1 -17), and yet, although the Lord's Supper is the very next item in 1 Corinthians 11, he finds no place for it in his instruction to Timothy.

The simple reason is that when the kingdom became in abeyance, everything connected therewith necessarily went with it. Spiritual gifts, the Lord's Supper, the covenants, all went with the kingdom teaching. The apostle was then commissioned to set out the new economy. To him was the grace given 'to make all men see what is the dispensation of the Mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God' (Eph. 3:9 R.V.).

Repetition and modification

This was a revelation of something entirely new, unforeseen, unprecedented, something not found in the Scriptures, but hidden by God away from all ages. No one could tell us what was to be observed or omitted except the apostle divinely appointed and commissioned. He has told us. The epistles of Paul written after

Acts 28 contain a complete system of doctrine and instruction for the church of the present dispensation. Where anything that obtained under the previous dispensation was to be repeated, we are told so. The repetition of the ministry of women (1 Cor. 11 and 1 Tim.2:11) is a case in point. Where a modification or alteration was to be made, we are told so. The specific statement as to one baptism in Ephesians 4, definitely sets aside the two baptisms (water and spirit) which obtained during the Pentecostal period covered by the Acts, and gives us today one baptism -- that of the Spirit.

We do not find a catalogue of things which we are not to do, for the list would be too great, and the record unnecessary. In the epistles after Acts 28 we have all that is necessary for our guidance, comfort and teaching. We add to the Word of God sent to us by the apostle to the Gentiles at our peril. Those who desire to enter into the blessed realization of the dispensation of the Secret will abide by the revelation of God pertaining thereto. Those who cannot rest satisfied unless they see or do something, will perpetuate the observance of ordinances, but not without the inevitable consequences that follow 'zeal for God, but not according to knowledge'.

Accompaniments of the Lord's Supper

If we are right to introduce, upon our own initiative, the Lord's Supper into this present dispensation, why not spiritual gifts, tongues, miracles? Why not be thorough? Apart from the silence of the later epistles, the whole weight of their positive testimony is against the introduction or perpetuation of that which was definitely linked with Israel, the new covenant, and the kingdom.

Some reader may interrupt here and say, What do you understand by the words 'till He come'? The Lord has not come, and it seems that until He does we must perforce continue the observance of this ordinance. This we must consider, but first, a note on John's Gospel.

Omitted in John's Gospel

Of all the gospels, the one written by John is the one which seems to approach nearer to the truth for the present time than the rest. Nine-tenths of gospel preaching of today is based upon passages from John's Gospel. The hope and comfort of many a believer are enshrined in the sacred words of John 14:17. There are many who might be willing to go so far as to agree that Matthew was indeed kingdom truth, but, say they, you must leave us John. Is it not striking then that the Lord's Supper, so fully described and enjoined in Matthew, the kingdom gospel, is omitted by John who above all should have taught it if he had a message for believers today? It is not as though the feast does not come into the subject of his writing. It does. John 13 tells of the betrayal and many incidents which took place at that supper. This omission must not be lightly set aside; it adds its weight to the evidence we seek to bring from the Word on this important subject.

Let not our faith stand in the wisdom of men; let none give up the Lord's Supper merely because someone has said that it is undispensational. 'Search and see', then act according to the teaching of the Word, and though misunderstanding and

censure be your portion here, you shall have the joy of being unashamed in that day, through the endeavour rightly to divide the Word of truth.

Till He come

1 Corinthians 11:26 says, 'For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come'. The natural conclusion upon reading these words is, the Lord has not come, therefore we must continue to observe the Lord's Supper. Logic operates within certain fixed boundaries.

There is a circumstance, not reckoned in this argument, which alters the case completely, viz., the complete cessation of the dispensation in which 1 Corinthians 11 found its place. We must remember that we are not at liberty to take a truth revealed at some later period back into an earlier period in matters of interpretation. To understand the meaning of the words 'till He come' we must acquaint ourselves with the teaching concerning that coming, which falls within the boundary line of that particular dispensation. If we read into 1 Corinthians 11 teaching that was not revealed, and which was kept an absolute secret until some years afterwards, we must expect to reap a harvest of confusion for our pains. There is a word which runs throughout the Scriptures pertaining to kingdom and Pentecostal times, which will help us in our studies; that word is, in the original tongue, the word *parousia*, and is translated sometimes 'coming', and sometimes 'presence'. It occurs twenty-four times in the New Testament. Seventeen of these occurrences refer to Christ, and the remaining seven refer to others -- Paul, Titus, Timothy, Stephanas, and antichrist (1Cor. 16:17; 2 Cor. 7:6,7; 10:10; Phil. 1:26; 2:12; 2 Thess. 2:9). The first canonical and historical use of the word occurs in Matthew 24, and if we allow the canon of interpretation to be true that the first occurrence of any word supplies the key to its meaning, then most certainly *parousia* belongs to the kingdom, and not to the Mystery. Let us consider the context of this first occurrence:

'And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives (inseparably connected with the kingdom, see Zech. 14:4; Matt. 26:30; Acts 1:6,12 etc.), the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy *parousia* (coming), and of the *sunteleia* (the "ending together" of events that culminate in the end) of the age?' (Matt. 24.3).

When ... Then

The Apocalypse is the inspired record of the *sunteleia* of the age, and with it the *parousia* is connected. In answer to the question 'When', the Lord gives a series of prophetic utterances commencing with the word 'Then' (see Matt. 24:9,10,16,23,30,40 and 25:1). It must be remembered that the word translated 'then' is a definite mark of time, 'then at that time'. In Matthew 24:21 we read, 'then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be'. These words single out this tribulation from any other, consequently Revelation 7:14 refers to the same period, These are they which came out of the tribulation, the great. The time of 'Jacob's trouble' will be brought to an end by the second coming of the Lord. 'For as the lightning cometh

out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so also shall the parousia of the Son of man be' (Matt.24:27).

This, coming directly in connection with the false messiahs and false prophets, with their 'great signs and wonders', links the passage with 2Thessalonians 2, and consequently with the antichrist. In 2 Thessalonians2:8,9 we read:

The wicked one

'And then shall that Wicked One be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His parousia (cf. "as the lightning", Matt. 24:27), even him, whose parousia (the travesty of the Lord's) is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders'. Remember, Satan travesties truth. The false messiah's parousia is connected with 'powers, signs, and lying wonders'. Now these powers, signs, and lying wonders are an exact counterfeit of Pentecost, as a reference to the Greek of Hebrews 2:4 will show, and go to prove that the parousia of the Lord Jesus is that spoken of by Peter in Acts 3:19,20, connecting it with Israel, the prophet Joel, and the day of the Lord. Matthew 24:29 continues:

The Tribulation

'Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the land mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory'. 'Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth (tribes of the land) shall wail because of Him' (Rev. 1:7). Isaiah, speaking of 'the day of the Lord' (Rev. 1:10) in Isaiah 13:6 -11, says in verse 10:

'For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine'. See also the following passages, Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 2:30,31; Amos 5:20;

Zephaniah 1:14,15; Acts 2:19,20; Revelation 6:12 -17, and again consider the question what has all this to do with the church of the Mystery? Interpreted of Israel, and the kingdom, all is clear; strained to fit the church of Ephesians, all is confusion. Continuing our study of the use of the word parousia in 1Thessalonians 4:15,16 we read:

'For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the parousia of the Lord shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first'.

The archangel (Dan. 12:1,2)

One archangel is mentioned in Scripture, 'Michael the archangel' (Jude 9).

According to Daniel 12:1 Michael is 'the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people' (see also Daniel 10:13,21). When Michael stands up there shall be:

'a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake'.

Here we have the connection between 1 Thessalonians 4 and Daniel 12, where the archangel is directly related to the resurrection (even as Jude 9), and the people of the kingdom -- Israel. James and Peter refer to this parousia of the Lord. Those to whom James wrote attended the synagogue (2:2), they were the 'twelve tribes scattered abroad' (1:1). Patience during the time of trouble is the exhortation, 'Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the parousia of the Lord' (5:7,8). Peter speaks of the parousia several times in his second epistle:

'For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye - witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory' (2Pet.1:16,17).

'Not yet' -- the present parenthesis

This passage has reference to the 'Transfiguration' (Matt. 17:1). The words 'honour and glory' are terms which belong to the kingdom (see Heb. 2:6,7 and Psalm 8). They further refer to the consecration of the priest in his robes of 'glory and beauty'. 'We see not yet ... but we see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour' (Heb. 2:8,9).

The 'not yet' of Hebrews 2:8 was a difficulty which Peter confessed. In 2 Peter 3:1 - 13 the scoffers are reported as saying, 'Where is the (fulfilment of the) promise of His parousia?' The apostle assures his hearers that the non - fulfilment of the promise is not the result of 'slackness' on the Lord's part, it was rather His 'long-suffering'. He continues by speaking of the day of the Lord coming 'as a thief in the night', exactly as Paul does in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5.

Peter, Paul and the postponement

Peter, however, had to refer his readers to Paul's epistles, saying:

'Our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood' (2 Pet. 3:15,16).

The scoffers knew about the parousia; Peter knew of that hoped -for coming, but he did not understand a great deal of the truth committed to Paul, viz., the dispensation of the Mystery which comes in the 'gap' occasioned by the setting aside of Israel, and the postponement of 'the promise of His parousia'. In 1Corinthians 15:23 we read, 'Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His parousia'. In 1 Thessalonians 4 the apostle had revealed the fact that some would be 'alive, and remain unto the parousia of the Lord', which we saw had a

connection with Daniel 12 and Israel. Here in 1 Corinthians 15 he gives further teaching:

The last trump

‘Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound (see 1 Thess. 4:15,16), and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed’ (1 Cor. 15:51,52).

Now ‘when’ this shall take place ‘then’ Isaiah 24 and 25:8,9 will be fulfilled.

Then the kingdoms of the world will have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. These words are spoken at the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Rev.11:15). No trumpet is recorded after this, and so we are justified in speaking of this as the ‘last trump’. If we have to argue that there may be another, it suggests something is wrong with our theology. The effect of the sounding of the seventh trumpet extends to Revelation 20, where we have the first resurrection, the resurrection of those who have gone through the great tribulation, and who share the glory of the millennial reign on earth.

We have seen that the Lord’s Supper is the memorial feast of the New Covenant. The people with whom that New Covenant was made, are the people of Israel, the Gentile participating only as a wild graft ‘contrary to nature’, during the period covered by the Acts. While the contracting parties of any covenant are in disagreement it is impossible for any other party to continue to enjoy blessings that can only be theirs as they share with the original parties to the covenant. The dispensation of the Mystery was actually instituted because of the breakdown (speaking humanly) of Israel, and to persist in the observance of a memorial feast, even though it concentrates attention upon the great sacrifice of Christ, is to betray a trust, to invalidate the distinctive calling that the Mystery brings, and to confuse that one initial promise in Christ before age times, with promises made to the fathers and focused primarily upon Israel.

For other aspects of this important theme in the Alphabetical Analysis, see The Olive Tree; The Second Coming; Covenant; and Memorial.