

Acts 28 – The Great N.T. dispensational divide

Paul & Grace in the Acts period – Jews and Gentiles

The Acts period was not the dispensation of the grace of God

Replacement theology is so deeply ingrained in traditional denominational circles, that it is nearly impossible to read any commentary on any part of Scripture without the word church coloring the comments.

Many Christians happily include themselves whenever the words we, us, you and ourselves are featured in scripture. Replacement theology is rampant, it is the misinformation narrative which has divided and blinkered orthodoxy for centuries. The Mid-Acts ideology is also replacement theology. It replaces Paul's clear writings about the earthly purpose of God up until Acts 28 with part, or all of the later dispensational truths of Ephesians and Colossians.

Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. Ex. 12:21.

And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. Ex.12:25.

Replacing scriptures with those which don't apply weakens faith rather than strengthening it. Take the prophesy of Revelation for example, despite its many Old Testament references, its mention of the tribes, Zion, Trumpets, the New Jerusalem, Paradise restored and the total Israeli framework from beginning to end, in traditional circles, it is about "the church".

The Exodus is an example where Christianity sees the "church" in type, concluding it must be so since the blood facilitated every step of Israel's national deliverance, and because the blood is important to us as well, then obviously, Israel pictures the church. The phrase "the one true church" encapsulates this error since true stands against typical, but our church which is his body was never typified in the O.T. When we read Exodus features in the New Testament, it is wise to leave them in their earthly setting.

The anticipations of Exodus can be seen up until Acts 28, and this includes Paul's writings of that time. Israel, Passover lamb, and the Promised Land are inseparable.

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*Israel, Passover Lamb, Promised Land
no separation
no replacement*

Passover belongs with Israel and is not an isolated holy day; it is the beginning of a series and linked with Israel and the Promised Land. To preach the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world in the Gospels or Acts disconnected from

the context of Israel their Passover and the promised land and the other dispensational features mixes our calling with Israel. We must not separate the church Israel from the Passover lamb, land, and promise, yet when some read these things in Paul during Acts this is exactly what they do.

Passover was Jehovah keeping his promise to Israel and their Land. Passover is the first step in Israel's national deliverance into the Land God had given to their father Abraham by an unconditional covenant, Gen.15. The Land was entered at Trumpets. We cannot separate Passover lamb from Israel, land, and Kingdom. Here is that same dispensational theme in the Gospels.

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. Joh.1:29.

And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. Joh.1:31.

Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Joh.1:49.

Here is Christ at Passover confirming this dispensational setting. We should not separate or transfer, Passover lamb, angels, Trumpet, blood, New Testament, God's promise to the fathers, and Kingdom of heaven on the earth in the Gospels or Acts from Israel to "the church".

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Mat 24:31, Isa.27:13.

For this is my blood of the new testament, 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. Mat 26:28-29.

If the Passover blood protected the Israel's firstborn in Egypt and initialized their deliverance from Gentile dominion into the Promised Land at Trumpets, with an Old Testament or Covenant, then replacing that identical picture as it unfolds up to Acts 28 with anything else is the first step in losing the dispensational truths for today. At Passover fulfilment, Christ shed his blood, died on the cross, as foretold, and his blood ratified the New Covenant which has nothing to do with us today. Passover, Old Covenant, Promised Land and Israel are inseparable. Passover, New Covenant, Promised Land and Israel are inseparable.

*The Acts period,
no transition,
no progression,
no replacement*

When Paul wrote in the Acts period that he had received from the Lord knowledge about the Passover meal, he was not sharing about the dispensation of the grace of God. Paul was writing about the same dispensational purpose typified in the Exodus. We can't mix the hope of the Ephesians and Colossians with the earthy hope of the Exodus. Paul in Acts is linked with Christ in the Gospels dispensationally, he writes of the Passover meal which is linked to the Father's kingdom and drinking wine therein.

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. 1Cor.11:23-26.

Paul and others during Acts, were ministers of the new Covenant, 2Cor.3:6, and this would include preaching and teaching those features promised under its terms, see Jer.30-31. Until Acts 28 we have the Feasts and their effects in view, but replacement theology skims right over them. If we fail to examine the Feasts as they relate to Israel's Exodus, we are set for misunderstanding as they are

fulfilled in the New Testament. If Paul writes about the following, then he is writing about the earthly Kingdom of Heaven.

Passover is the Lord keeping his promise to Israel and their Fathers, it is not the first step for Christians today to go to heaven. 1Cor.5:7.

Unleavened Bread is the Lord keeping his promise to Israel and their Fathers, it is not the second step in our calling today. 1Cor.5:8.

Pentecost is the Lord keeping his promise to Israel and their fathers, it is not the third step in our calling today. Acts 20:16, 1Cor.16:8.

Trumpets is the Lord keeping his promise to Israel, and at which point Israel enters that Promised Land, it is not the fourth step in our calling today. 1Cor.15:52, 1Thess.4:16.

This affirmation of the faithfulness of God to his word, can be repeated for the remaining Feasts, Atonement, Tabernacles/Booths and its great Day.

These Feasts, their fulfilment and the purpose of God designed through them for Israel and the world, is the foundation of all preaching, teaching and writing up until Acts 28.

*Gospels and Acts,
Israel's Feasts being fulfilled*

Acts was pictured in the Exodus, the period between Pentecost and Trumpets.

The Gospels close with Passover, and the first fruit resurrection of Unleavened Bread and Acts opens with the fulfilment of the Feast of Pentecost. The writings of Acts looked forward to the next Feast, Trumpets. Passover meal was to be observed till he came, and the King came at Trumpets. When Paul writes of Trumpets, we need to remember Jericho, not heavenly places. This hope of the King's coming at Trumpets was the hope in Acts up until Acts 28.

The period between Pentecost and Trumpets in the Exodus is critical for understanding the Acts period. This period is inseparable from the Feasts program, it is the Lord keeping his promise to Israel. It is the time for crops to harvest, the time to consider the poor and the stranger, Lev.23:22. This does not typify our calling today or the present dispensation set between Pentecost and Trumpets. It is a time of labor prior to Trumpets, which is exactly what the Lord's servants were doing in the Acts period.

God called Moses to lead Israel from Pentecost at Mt Sinai, into the Land at Trumpets, this was always the objective, see Deut.1:6-8. This could have been almost immediate, Deut.1:2, [compare Acts 1:6], but was eventually prolonged because Israel lacked faith at Kadeshbarnea. Moses intercedes for faithless Israel and God made a declaration.

Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word: But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: Numb.14:20-23, compare Deut.9:1-7. Earth filled see Psa.72:19, Isa.6:3, 11:9, Hab.2:14.

Between Pentecost and Trumpets in the Exodus & Acts, blessings and curses.

Israel wandered for forty years, but Trumpets eventually happened, not because of Israel's faithfulness, but because of God's faithfulness to himself and his word, Deut.9:6-7 and Roms.3:1-4, 11:26-29. The features of the Exodus wanderings can be found in the Acts period which spanned a similar number of years. Here is the situation in those Exodus years between Pentecost and Trumpets.

The great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles: Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day. And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot. Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink: that ye might know that I am the LORD your God. Deut.29:3-6.

Those who saw, tempted, they saw but did not listen and provoked, they would not see the Land, but God had delivered them from bondage, Deut.7:6-8. This is the setting of that wilderness wandering, testing and provocation of the Lord brought serious consequences. On the other hand, the Lord blessed Israel. They were led through the wilderness, water and food provided, their shoes and clothes did not wear out and at the same time, God was proving them to know their hearts and teaching them that they should not live by bread alone, Deut.8:2-3.

Do we recognize the words of the Exodus which are repeated by Paul and others during the Acts period? Mighty signs, wonders, heart, eyes, ears, provocation, temptation, Hab.2 [all the earth filled with the Lord's glory], mercy, grace [Ex.33:16, 34:9], and God's faithfulness? This is because the Acts period is foreshadowed in that Exodus period between Pentecost and Trumpets.

With many of ancient Israel, God was not pleased and apart from the blessings, divine judgment fell, immediate and final. The period between Pentecost and Trumpets in the Exodus and the same period covered by Acts were not the dispensation of the grace of God, it was blessing and judgment.

Paul brings the warnings of those Exodus wilderness wanderings to the Corinthians, he writes that despite the fact all were baptized into Moses, 1Cor.10:2, not all entered the Land. The word fall is important.

But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 1Co 10:5. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 1Co 10:11-12.

When Paul rebukes the Corinthians for their attitude at the Passover meal, we notice the degrees of consequence, weak and sickly or death, death being the ultimate punishment. Fall signalled serious possibilities.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation [condemnation :34] to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 1Co 11:28-30.

These are Acts period believers under Paul's ministry who are suffering the consequences of sinning. They could fall, become weak and sickly or die. This is not the dispensation of the grace of God.

*Paul or James
believers sick and dying
during Acts*

James provides a remedy for those who had fallen sick, either naturally or because of sinning.

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Jas 5:14-16.

Sinning as a believer, saved by grace through faith in the Acts period, brought serious consequences, Paul and James made that clear. Here are some other features prior to acts 28 which harmonize with this Exodus setting.

The Lord's prayer of Matt.6 was for the disciples and appropriate for the Acts period, it ask for trespasses to be forgiven. Perhaps Jude was referring to believers of that time, when he penned verse 23. Hebs.12:28-29 warns that the faithful should serve God with fear because God is a consuming fire, which is a direct quote from Deut.4:24. John writes about a sin unto death, 1Jn.5:16-17 and had earlier reminded them to confess their sins for forgiveness, 1Jn.1:5-10. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would also fit in the Acts period dispensation of the Exodus.

In all writings of the Acts period, we see degrees of punishment for believers who sinned, the final consequence being death. Those sinning in the Exodus did not see the Kingdom come, they did not enter at Trumpets. Those who sinned severely in the Acts period likewise lost their lives and would not see the Kingdom at Trumpets. This might not mean they were totally lost, since there would be other resurrections during the Kingdom, all Israel will be saved, including Esau. The Lord spoke about those who were worthy of obtaining that world and the resurrection from the dead in Lk.20:35.

When Paul wrote in 1Cor.10 that they should take heed lest they fall, this included the ultimate punishment of death. But we see other consequences coupled with falling, something that could be lost to the believer in the Acts period. Paul wrote these words to the Romans, those justified by grace through faith during Acts.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. Rom 8:12-17. Gals.4:5-7.

The flesh life could end up in death, but remaining faithful in the walk of the Spirit brought sonship, joint inheritance with Christ. The contrast in that passage about the believers prior to Acts 28, is clear and emphatic, yes indeed, take heed lest they fall. Fall from seeing the Kingdom come and fall from being joint heirs with Christ. Galatians speaks the same warnings, not only about living according to the flesh or Spirit, Gals.5:16-25, but also falling from grace.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect

unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Gal 5:1-5.

Without contradiction we say, the Galatians could not possibly fall from the present dispensation of the grace of God, so from what could they and the Corinthians fall?

*Chapter breaks
can mean disconnection*

Chapter breaks are a bane for profitable Bible study, and it is evidenced by the need to say, Gals.5 follows Gals.4. Chapter 5 begins with “stand fast therefore”. Therefore, according to what I had already written in the previous chapter. Here are the key points from Gals.4 which help us understand the opening of chapter 5. As in Romans, Paul reminds them of their relationship with God the Father through Christ.

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Gal 4:6-7,9.

Paul is very concerned that they were heirs but were turning back to weak and beggarly elements, turning back to being under the Law, Gals..4:21. This was a very serious backward step.

Turning back to the flesh could end up in sickness or death, turning back to the bondage of the Law brought another, different loss.

Before Paul penned “fallen from grace” in Gals.5 he had written about the two sons, two women, two covenants, two mountains and two cities, in Gals.4. After he draws the differences between these opposing sets, a significant statement is pulled from the O.T. here.

Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. Gal 4:30, Gen.21:10.

Those who remained “under the Law”, who sought righteousness from the Law, or those who turned back again to those weak and beggarly elements, would not be heirs of promise, like Isaac. Those who turned back would lose much.

Isaac in Gals.4, is inseparable from the New Covenant, Mt Zion, New Jerusalem and the Kingdom. The earthly aspect as described in Isa.54 quoted in Gals.4:27. The New Covenant is linked with Christ the King’s return at Trumpets to Mt.Zion, Roms.11:26-27. Those who had believed into Christ up until Acts 28, were looking for the meeting in the clouds as the Lord descended, 1Thess.4:13-18. But this was for those who suffered with Christ, it was for those who were led by the Spirit and did not walk according to the flesh.

Paul vigorously opposed those seeking righteousness by the Law, for those Israelites would not partake of the blessings of those who endured to the end and who would be thus “saved” with better things. This is what he said in Roms.8, if they did not walk according to the flesh, if they walked according to the Spirit, if they suffered with Christ, then they would be joint heirs with Christ in the blessings of Abraham as he wrote in Gals.3. To fall from grace in Gals.5 is understood by the warning of Gen.21:10 in Gals.4:30. Those of the flesh, and those who sought righteousness by the Law, would not share in the inheritance of those who were led by, and walk by the Spirit.

*In the Acts period
do not desire like Exodus
take heed or fall
don't turn again
Jerusalem now or Jerusalem above*

Believers saved by grace through faith in the Acts period, including Jew or Gentile, were warned not to lust, to desire after things like the Israelites did in the Exodus wanderings, not to fall because the same judgment would fall.

Believers saved by grace through faith in the Acts period, including Jew or Gentile, were warned to live after the Spirit, to be led by the

Spirit, the positive being joint-heirs with Christ, the negative consequence being a fall from grace, a fall back to join the those under bondage who would experience wrath, tribulation, and all the anguish of the Jerusalem which now is.

During Acts, believers who sinned could get weak and sick or could die. During Acts, believers who turned back, who fell from grace back to the weak and beggarly elements jeopardized their inheritance.

Next lesson we shall see the identical things in Hebrews couple with a letter written to the Ephesians in the Acts period.

Oh how wonderfully does the Word explain the Word.

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