

## Acts 28 – The Great N.T. dispensational divide

### The Acts period is Habakkuk

### Paul, the Malefactor, Romans, Corinthians, Hebrews and Revelation

The Acts period covered 35+ years and was not the history of the early church his body, it was the continuing history of the church Israel. As Israel's continuing history, it was not only a fulfilment or potential fulfilment of prophetic history, that is, Israel's history which foreshadowed what was to come, but also contained fulfilment or potential fulfilment of inspired prophesy.

Like the Exodus, Acts was full of signs, wonders, supernatural blessings, but also of warnings about serious consequences for those who fell from grace, who did not endure, who failed to suffer with Christ. We find such a warning in Habakkuk that foretold the end times which is precisely the timetable of Acts.

The setting of the prophet is the setting of the Acts period, so Habakkuk in Acts, Romans, Galatians and Hebrews is significant. Here are passages from the prophet and their New Testament usages.

*Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.* Hab 1:5.

*Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.* Act 13:41.

*For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.* Hab 2:3-4.

*For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.* Rom 1:17

*But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.* Gal 3:11

*For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.* Heb 10:37-38.

These four features of Habakkuk fit perfectly in the Gospel and Acts period.

#### 1. Hab.1:5-10.

The prophet warns of an army of judgment upon faithless Israel.

The Gospels and Acts warn of this pending anti-Messiah army invading Israel prior the return of Christ to Israel.

#### 2. Hab.2:3.

The prophet states that in the end it will surely come, not tarry.

The Acts period was the ends of the ages, the time was short.

#### 3. Hab.2:4.

The prophet declares that during apostacy, the just by their faith shall live.

The nation was disobedient and contradicting, rejecting the Lord as their Messiah, but some had faith and looked to live unto His coming.

#### 4. Hab.2:14, 20.

The prophet repeats the oath of the Lord when apostate, faithless Israel refused at Kadesh Barnea. They wandered 40 years, but the Lord was seen between the Cherubim. That oath being the earth

will be filled with the glory of the Lord as he resides in his holy temple.

Paul references Isa.11 in Roms.15 another prophet who looks back and forward to the same oath by the Lord at Kadesh Barnea.

Paul, in Acts along with Hebrews, looks to the earth eventually filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, the time being short and the just shall live by faith while the nation is apostate. Paul in the Acts period is Habakkuk, the other prophets, the Law, Moses and Hebrews.

During Acts serious consequences awaited, for those who rejected Christ, for believers who sinned willfully, and for believers who turned back, who fell from grace. This is Habakkuk. The prophet is not so much emphasizing righteousness reckoned by faith, but rather, the just by his faith shall live, while those of ungodly behavior will face the wrath of God and not live in his sight. This is not to exclude from Habakkuk the doctrine of righteousness by faith through grace, we are observing the dispensational framework of Habakkuk being the dispensational framework of the Acts period.

Habakkuk promised the righteous that by their faith they would live in terrible end times, but warned sinful Israel about the bitter, hasty, terrible and dreadful Chaldeans coming because of their ungodliness. Paul brings the same warnings right into the Acts period. There was a choice, forgiveness and righteousness through faith, or fulfilment of the warning.

*Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs.* Hab 1:5-6.

*Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you* [Hab.1:5]. Act.13:38-41.

Habakkuk in Romans is used in context of the gospel of salvation based on faith, which gospel included the consequences for those who showed unfaithfulness. The wrath of God on such people was imminent at the return of Christ. This is the same setting in the prophet. Here we have gospel, believe, shall live, faith and wrath.

*So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;* Rom.1:15-18. See Hebs.10:37-38, draw back, no pleasure.

Paul in Acts and Habakkuk both speak of the end, or as Paul writes, "the ends of the world" or the ends of the ages that had arrived. The just by his faith shall live, at the end, when the judgment army is coming, not at the beginning of the church his body.

*And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.* Hab 2:2-4.

*Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also*

*lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. ....Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 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.* 1Cor.10:6-8, 10-12, see 7:29, 31, 15:51, 1Thess.4:17, 19.

Paul warned the Corinthians they might not live to see the Kingdom. The unfaithful in ancient Israel did not see Trumpets, the entry into the Kingdom. As in history, so in Acts, unhappy consequences were possible on those who departed, who turned from faith, or as in Galatians, had fallen from grace by turning back to the Law, Gals.5:3-4.

Pentecost, fulfilled at Acts 2, was a feast of first fruits, a foretaste of the Lord's capital punishment reign of righteousness. The next Feast was Trumpets, and the Acts period parallels that same typical time frame between Pentecost at Mt. Sinai, and Trumpets at Jericho. Those who sinned during the Exodus wanderings were punished, those of faith lived to see Trumpets, this is Habakkuk and the Acts period. The church which is his body is not found in the Exodus, prophecy or the Acts period.

Why were the believing Corinthians weak, sick and dying? Because if they failed to judge themselves, they would join the Lord's judgment on the world. Corinthians is not about us today, this is not the dispensation of the grace of God, this is the jurisdiction of Pentecost, of Exodus.

*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 to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.* 1Cor.11:28-32.

Habakkuk appears four times in the N.T., Acts13:41, Roms.1:17, Gals.3:11 and Hebs.10:38. Those features of the prophet listed above are found in Paul's writings of that time but are evident in Hebrews as well. Habakkuk, Paul in Acts and Hebrews are dispensationally identical. The word **chastened** in 1Cor.11 for example, is also found in Hebrews in a passage which contains other words and phrases found in Paul during Acts.

*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* Heb 12:6.

*And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.* Heb 12:13-17.

The Hebrews were to look diligently lest any should **fail of the grace of God**. This thought we have seen in Galatians where fallen from grace is understood by the statement that Ishamel will not be heir with Isaac.

*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.* Gal 5:4.

Ishmael in Galatians and [Esau](#) in Hebrews but the lessons are the same. The men either lost something wonderful by disinterest or were not heirs with the vessels of honor. Ishmael received promises, Gen.21:13,18.

Esau only features in Hebrews and Paul in Roms.9:13, where the context is vessels of honor and dishonor, vessels of wrath and mercy. Esau is compared to Jacob, one loved, the other loved less, one a picture of honor, the other a picture of dishonor. However, both sons are in Isaac and will eventually be saved as Roms.11:25-27 declares. Esau lost something of great value, he disregarded his inheritance, and it was lost to him, not unlike Judas who also lost something wonderful.

Hebrews turns back to the wilderness wanderings, just as Paul had done in Corinthians. The Hebrews were warned not to neglect the grace upon them. They were sons, heirs, and the loving father chastised them, however, failing to respond, failing to maintain obedient faith, brought loss of the position of heir as Esau. He found no place for repentance regarding the inheritance he had neglected. Hebrews asked and answered a very important question. Like Corinthians who had been blessed with supernatural gifts as a confirmation, but could lose somethings, so the Hebrews were given the same warnings.

*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? Heb.2:3-4.*

*See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Heb.12:25.*

Hebrews 12 features chastisement to partake of his holiness, the warning of Esau and Mt. Sinai, where an inheritance blessing was lost and those who did not obey lost much more. There was no escape for some at the mountain and no escape for those of Acts who turned away.

The salvation of Hebrews, including Habakkuk, is the salvation of the Gospels, first spoken by the Lord. The salvation of Paul up until Acts 28, including Habakkuk, is also the salvation of Hebrews and the Gospels. No change, no progression, no transfer, no transition from the Gospels. This Kingdom salvation was postponed at Acts 28 when Israel was let go for a time.

There is an interesting point in Hebs.2:3 which says, "confirmed unto us by them that heard him". The "us" would not include Peter who was one of those who heard him, and witnessed to some of the Corinthians, 1Cor.15:11. The "us" would including the author of Hebrews and his companion Timothy, Hebs.13:23.

We have seen the word [chasten](#) common to Paul and Hebrews as is the reference to [Esau](#) and the similar phrase, [fail of the grace of God](#), but here is something very informative. These are found in Hebs.12, and that chapter contains other features common to Paul and all others to Acts 28.

*For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly*

*and church of the firstborn [Hebs.1:5, Roms.8:29], which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. Heb.12:18-24.*

The Biblical evidence that Paul before Acts 28 and Hebrews were on the same dispensational page is undeniable. Hebrews 12 alone is full of Paul, chastisement, Esau, fail of the grace, trumpets, two mountains, voice, angels, new covenant, and Zion.

The salvation during Acts that was first spoken by the Lord and Paul along with Hebrews is none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come. Romans through Philemon is a dire disregard of these dispensational differences.

Paul writes the heavenly Jerusalem as the Jerusalem above in Gals.4, and this city is linked with the heavenly country. The New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem are inseparable.

*But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. Heb 11:16, [10, 13-15].*

Revelation describes these foundations, 21:10-27 and confirms this connection between the heavenly country and heavenly city but adds paradise as part of the heavenly country.

*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. Rev 21:1-3.*

*And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: Rev 22:1-3.*

The link between Bride and this city with the believers up until Acts 28 can be found in 2Cor.11:1-3 where Eve is mentioned.

Water flowing from the throne reminds us of water flowing out of Eden, Gen.2:10, from Christ the Rock, Ex.17:6 and 1Cor.10:4. Psa.46:4, and Ez.47:1-12, are of interest. The prophetic nature of the original garden of Eden will be fulfilled when Rev.22 is a reality.

The New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem, Paradise and a river from Christ's throne are inseparable. This is the Kingdom gospel, the is Paul in Acts.

Paradise takes us back to the Gospels where the malefactor sought entry into Christ's Kingdom.

*He said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "I tell you the truth today, you will be with me in paradise." Luk 23:42-43.*

The Lord promised him a residence in paradise which is part of the New Earth, and if this was known then O.T. scriptures foretold it, and if Christ was to sit on the throne of his father David, paradise is linked to that reign.

Paul is the only other writer to mention paradise which he connects with the new heaven.

*I know a man who belongs to the Messiah. Fourteen years ago—whether in his body or outside of his body, I do not know, but God knows—that man was snatched away to the third heaven. I know that this man—whether in his body or outside of his body, I do not know, but God knows—was snatched away to Paradise and heard things that cannot be expressed in words, things that no human being has a right even to mention. 2Co 12:2-4. ISV.*

Whoever was snatched away to the third heaven, horizontally, not vertically, was caught away to the new earth, that is the heavenly country including paradise. We note this person had this revelation 14 years before Paul wrote 2Cor.12, and thus revelations concerning the new earth and paradise were recorded years before Acts 28. Paradise in Paul prior to Acts 28 is consistent with his dispensational teaching of that time. Paradise is inseparable from Heavenly Jerusalem and Zion. These things were the center of Paul's hope in Acts, and these he would have shared with the Ephesians prior to Acts 28.

When Paul departed from Ephesus, his conscience was clear regarding the truths he had shared. Paul's Kingdom gospel of Acts included the new Jerusalem, heaven, earth, paradise, the river and he had taught them all the counsel of God regarding these things.

*And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Act 20:25-27.*

Had Paul mentioned to the Ephesians the revelations of the one who was caught away to the third heaven and paradise in 2Cor.12? One thing is certain, Paul preached to them the dispensational truths of Galatians, Romans, Corinthians and Thessalonians which are all about these things. We are also certain the Ephesians knew of the new heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem and paradise because they had received a book with that information included. A letter, not written by Paul, had been sent to them. Look at the context of this Ephesians letter and notice Paul's Acts period letters containing the same features. Asia was a significant location of Paul's preaching during Acts.

*John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, [Isa.55:4] and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him, [Zech.12:10, Matt.24:29-31]. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, [Isa.41:4], the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. Rev 1:4-8.*

*I came to be in the Spirit on the Day of the Lord, when I heard a loud voice behind me like a trumpet, saying, "Write on a scroll what you see, and send it to the seven churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea." Rev 1:10-11. ISV.*

This letter to the Ephesians, sent by the Lord himself as King of Kings, has an incredibly clear and precis dispensational context, it contains words and phrases found in Paul prior to Acts 28. Trumpet, voice, day of the Lord, clouds, and King. Here is the letter.

*Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not,*

*and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Rev 2:1-7.*

This letter to the Ephesians includes the same Acts period, dispensational conditions of blessing or the loss of something wonderful. They were warned to repent of their fall, and those who overcame, who endured, were promised they would eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God. There was much to be lost if they did not repent and overcome, including the removal of their candlestick, Rev.1:12, 20.

The overcomers of Ephesus, prior to Acts 28, would eat of the tree of life amid the Paradise of God and the malefactor would be there, this is not heavenly places as in Paul's letter to them after Acts 28. This letter fits in the dispensation from the foundation of the world. It fits all N.T. contexts where Habakkuk is found.

What a stark contrast between the two letters. One was written prior to Acts 28, when the time was short, behold the Lord was coming quickly, in clouds, with angels, a voice and the sound of the last trumpet, seven trumpets being mentioned from Rev.8:6 onwards. All the council of God delivered by Paul to the Ephesians in Acts 20, would include the features of Revelation according to the vision given 14 years before 2Cor.12, and John's letter sent by command of Christ, the Prince of the Kings of the earth.

If John was to write these things in a book and send it to the Ephesians, it would seem conflicting that John's letter arrived after Acts 28 alongside Paul's, the dispensational differences in both letters being monumental.

Habakkuk prophesied at the end it shall speak. Revelation concerns things that will shortly come to pass, and Paul in Acts writes that the time was short, and they shall not all die. Habakkuk, the Acts period, Paul in Acts, the Ephesians in Acts, Hebrews in Acts and the Revelation of John, all confirm that the just by their faith shall live at and to the end. Obedient faith enabled an endurance to the end which was upon them. The salvation thus obtained by enduring was not the initial salvation, but the glory of, as Hebrews put it, things that accompany salvation. Such things could be lost.

*But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. Heb 6:9-10.*

*Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour,.... Rev.2:1-2.*

Oh how wonderfully does the Word explain the Word.

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