

IRONSIDE'S ARGUMENT

- “THERE is perhaps nothing about which the ultradispensationalists are more certain, according to their own expressions, than that the book of the Acts covers a transitional period, coming in between the age of the law and the present age in which the dispensation of the mystery has been revealed. They do not always agree as to the name of this intervening period. Some call it the Kingdom Church; others the Jewish Church; and there are those who prefer the term Pentecostal Dispensation.” (Pg. 23)
 - Is there any reason for certainty?
 - Is there a transition in Acts, or is it immediately a presentation of grace in an era in which Jewishness does not matter and works are not allowed?
 - Is "the church of God" that Paul persecuted the same "church of God" that Paul led?
 - What indicators are there in the text that Peter is immediately preaching the message of grace to the gentiles at Acts 2?
 - Why did the Jews "disobey" God and not immediately receive Gentiles as free from the Law?
 - Do ultradispensationalists teach a "dispensation" during this period, as Ironside intimates?
 - In truth, most non-Acts-2 dispensationalists teach an overlap between the Kingdom offer among the Jews and the offer of grace given to all.
- “Assemblies in Judea, Samaria, and the various Gentile countries, were simply groups of believers who were waiting for the manifestation of the kingdom, and had not yet come into the full liberty of grace.” (pg. 23)
 - This statement is given as the position of the ultradispensationalists.
 - First, "assemblies" of who?
 - If they were Jewish assemblies, were they "waiting for the manifestation of the kingdom" and was that the wrong thing to do?
 - Was it possible for these assemblies to be BOTH "waiting for the manifestation of the kingdom" AND have "come into the full liberty of grace?"
 - Were there some who believed in Jesus as Messiah but had NOT personally "come into the full liberty of grace"?
 - Remember Apollos? What of Ephesus?
 - Why does Ironside have a chapter entitled, "Advancing from John's Baptism to the Truth of New Creation" in his Acts commentary, and says that the Ephesians were "living in a transition stage. They were neither Jews as such, still on legal ground, nor were they on full New Testament ground. They were Jews who were looking forward to the coming of Messiah, and had been baptized with the baptism of John." H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Acts*. (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1943), 437–438.
- “...it is perfectly plain that the Church, the Body of Christ, was formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.” (pg. 24).
 - Is this perfect plainness from the Scripture or from the theologians?
 - The phrase "Body of Christ" is used only four times in Scripture, and only one of those (Eph. 4:12) could possibly refer to anything beyond the local assembly.
 - The baptism of the Holy Spirit was prophesied in Joel 2:28 and fulfilled in Acts 2. Therefore, under Ironside's theology, the church was by necessity an Old Testament prophesy.
 - Even if the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is what baptizes us into the Body of Christ, this is not testimony that the book of Acts is not transitional nor that the age of grace began with Acts 2.
- “Personally, I have no objection to the term “transitional period,” if it be understood that the transition was in the minds of men and not in the mind of God. According to God, the new dispensation, that in which we now live, the dispensation of the grace of God, otherwise called the dispensation of the mystery, began the moment the Spirit descended at Pentecost. That moment the one Body came into existence, though at the

beginning it was composed entirely of believers taken out from the Jewish people. But in the minds even of the disciples, there was a long period before they all fully entered into the special work that God had begun to do. Many of them, in fact, probably never did apprehend the true character of this dispensation, as we shall see further on." (Pg. 25).

- Is it true that the dispensation began at Pentecost? Paul claims it was given to him (Col. 1:25, Eph. 3:2).
- What is the "mystery" that Paul claims was hidden in God before it was revealed to him (Eph. 3:9)?
- Were those who were not "fully entered into the special work that God had begun to do" walking in sin? or ignorance? Is ignorance, "even of the disciples" of God's new work acceptable?
- "It is one and the same Church throughout." (Pg. 27)
 - Ironside is partially correct in this statement. He argues that the "church of God" which Paul persecuted (Gal. 1:13, 1 Cor. 15:9) is the same "church of the living God" of which he wrote in 1 Timothy 3:15.
 - However, it is *not* problematic that the *church* began in Acts 2 as an assembly devoted to the Jewish law and the Jewish Messiah (Jesus Christ) and that this church received a revelation from God through Paul that totally changed the theology of the church, to the extent that a new dispensation began *after* the church began.
 - It is one church that *transitioned* from Judaism in full to a non-Jewish assembly, this transition took place through the book of Acts and was built upon the revelation given to Paul.
- "Everywhere that Paul goes, he preaches the kingdom as the Lord Himself has commanded, and finally he reached Rome a prisoner. There, following his usual custom, though not having the same liberty as in other places, he gets in touch first with the leaders of the Jewish people, gives them his message, and then tells them that even though they reject it, yet the purpose of God must be carried out, and the salvation of God sent to the Gentiles. This is supposed by many to be a dispensational break, but we have exactly the same thing in the thirteenth chapter of Acts." (Pgs. 27-28).
 - Here Ironside speaks truth but makes a false conclusion. Paul did preach the kingdom everywhere he went, even to the end. However, when you look closely you note that he preached the Kingdom in Jewish audiences, for the Kingdom belonged to them as an inheritance.
 - Bullinger makes the mistake of concluding that the dispensation of grace had not begun in Acts 28 because Paul is *still* teaching the Kingdom. However, as noted in Acts 28:29, the Kingdom teaching was given to an audience of Jews.
 - Neither Ironside nor Bullinger allow for a dual message at the same time.
 - Ironside immediately begins the dispensation of grace at Pentecost, as if the dispensation began with the fulfillment of prophecy (though he previously said, "Only when a new revelation from God is given, does a dispensation change." (Pg. 6)
 - Bullinger stretches the age of the Law to any point in which the Kingdom is still being proclaimed (the Kingdom is rightly a matter of the Law).
 - It is possible to have a theology in which the Kingdom of God is proclaimed to the destruction of Jerusalem (after which the requirements of the Kingdom cannot be fulfilled, until the restoration of the Temple), AND at the same time God is offering individual salvation by grace through Jesus Christ.
 - If this is offensive one must ask:
 - Is salvation and the Kingdom the same thing?
 - If so, then why did God mislead the Jewish people using Kingdom imagery, beginning with David?
 - Will the Messiah sit on the throne of David or just on the throne of my heart?
 - Will the 12 Apostles sit on thrones judging Israel, or was that just talk to placate the Apostles curiosity? (Mt. 19:28).

- Can God offer the Jewish nation its promised Kingdom while also offering individuals (regardless of ethnicity) personal salvation? And if so, can He offer these under different terms?
- “It is truly absurd to attempt to make two Churches out of the redeemed company between Pentecost and the Lord’s return.” (pg. 29).
 - Would it be "truly absurd" to have *one church* yet *two dispensations*? This is the position of "The New Testament Church" by James Willingham.
- “Not once in any of the sermons recorded of Peter and of Paul do we have a hint that the nation of Israel is still on trial, and that God is waiting for that nation to repent in this age.” (Pg. 30).
 - Is this true? Consider Peter's sermon of Acts 3. Especially look at Acts 3:14-15, 17, 19-21

THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

- The book of Acts is the historical account of the setting aside of Israel and the subsequent offer of Salvation to every believer.
- The setting aside of Israel would involve a complete separation from the Law (which was wholly Israel’s privilege and commands) and the covenants (which were equally Israel’s and only Israel’s). There is no indication that the Law nor the Covenants was set aside on the day of Pentecost.
- Paul declared that the **fall of them** (Israel) is **the riches of the world** (Rom. 11:12). When did Israel fall? At the Day of Pentecost? At the Crucifixion? At Matthew 12? At AD 70? I would say that the fall of Israel was a period of **diminishing** (Rom. 11:12), and with the revelation of the mystery to the Apostle Paul the age of grace began. By dividing Israel and the Kingdom from individual salvation and righteousness, one avoids the errors of kingdom theology within the church. Ironside fails to avoid these errors by seeing the fall of Israel too soon, and Bullinger avoids these errors by pushing the beginning of the age of Grace too far.