



The Church

During various periods of time, God has chosen to deal with men in different ways in respect to sin and man's responsibility. We refer to these periods as DISPENSATIONS. In each, God is just and merciful. In each, man has failed. Therefore, God has judged men at the end of each dispensation and then ushered in a new dispensation. Previous dispensations have been innocence, conscience, human government, promise and law. Presently we are in the dispensation called GRACE. Another name for it is the CHURCH AGE; so called because God is preparing a church from every kindred, tongue, people and nation to be the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:9). Truly, we live in the most exciting, eventful, beautiful and rewarding dispensation of all.

The opportunity to be part of the redeemed bride of Christ is to be envied by the angels (I Peter 1:12). The opportunity which is available to all, is made possible by the grace of God, hence the dispensation of GRACE. For the previous two dispensations, promise and law, God's dealings were primarily with His chosen people, Israel. However, during this dispensation of GRACE, God has temporarily set His chosen House of Israel aside, due to their unbelief and disobedience, to deal with mankind in general. During the next dispensation of the kingdom and restoration of Israel, God will again return to His chosen people. Now is our opportunity, during the times of the Gentiles. Salvation is now available to Jew and Gentile alike.

The Jews, the household of Israel, rejected their promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. As a result, He turned to those who would do the will of His Father. Therefore, the salvation that is available in the name of Jesus is available to all who are willing to obey God's Word to receive it. Those who do. . . become a part of the body of Christ or the church. Jesus Christ died on the rugged cross of Calvary to make this salvation possible. He took upon Him the sins of the world and the punishment for them. After three days, He rose from the grave and showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3). Then, after being seen of His disciples, teaching, and exhorting them for a space of forty days, He ascended into heaven; they watched Him go (Acts 1:9). However, this was not the happy ending of a beautiful story. Before He left, Jesus bestowed upon His followers many promises and commands.

One of His promises which particularly captivated their thinking was one that if He went away, He would return again (John 14:3). Two angels appeared immediately after Jesus' ascension and reaffirmed this to His disciples, "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel: which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This

same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:10-11). They knew that Jesus had gone to prepare a place for them in His Father's house, where there are many mansions, and that when He returned, He would receive them unto Himself, that where He was, they might be also (John 14:2,3). So, rather than let their hearts be troubled at His leaving, they returned unto Jerusalem in obedience to His command to wait for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4)

When the day of Pentecost was fully come, and they were all in one mind and one accord, they received the promise of the Father, the baptism of the Holy Ghost. And, all one hundred and twenty of them began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave utterance (Acts 2:1-4). Thus, the church of the living God was born. The baptism of the Holy Ghost ushered in the dispensation of GRACE; salvation for the soul of a hungry man made available by the grace of a merciful God. The Church flourished and multiplied quickly. On the very same day as the initial outpouring, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, explained how to get into the church and threw the door open to all who would believe.

In response to the inquiries of people who were convicted in their hearts of their sins and desirous of the same experience that the disciples had just received, Peter said, ". . . Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise (The promise of what? The promise of the Father of the baptism of the Holy Ghost mentioned in Acts 1:4,5) is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38,39). The people were hungry for a reality in God and gladly received Peter's testimony and exhortations. "Then, they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them (Who are THEM? They are the ones who had been baptized with the Holy Ghost that day.) About three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). This was the birthday of the church. Some want to confine the baptism of the Holy Ghost to the original one hundred and twenty in the upper room, and a few other special circumstances.

People cannot deny that God is filling people with His Spirit today! It is not only for a few, but for all.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost is promised unto you, and to your children, and to those that are afar off (Acts 2:39). To be a part of God's church, you need to be baptized in His name and filled with His Spirit. Such was the Apostolic Church. Such is the church today. Such was the Samaritan Church. Philip preached unto them the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, they believed, and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:16). When Peter and John came down from Jerusalem and laid hands on them, they received the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:17). And, in fact, there seemed to be concern in Jerusalem because they had not previously received.

That is why they sent Peter and John. Saul, the persecutor of the church, who became Paul the apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, received this same experience; water baptism in the name of the Lord and the infilling of the Holy Ghost (Acts 9:17,18). Paul preached this message. In Acts 19, he baptized some followers of John the Baptist in the name of the Lord Jesus and laid hands on them in order for them to receive the Holy Ghost (Acts 19:5,6). Peter was chosen of God to first take this same message of Jesus Christ to the gentiles.

They also received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and were commanded by Peter to be baptized in water in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:44-48). Peter knew that they had received the Holy Ghost like the disciples had in the beginning because they spoke in other tongues. This, in fact, was the characteristic that was prophesied of by Isaiah, confirmed by Jesus (Mark 16:17, John 3:8) and exhibited on the day of Pentecost, in Cornelius's household, and at Ephesus AS THE INITIAL SIGN of being baptized with His Spirit. The precedent was set in the early church, the Pentecostal church, in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Repent of your sins, be baptized in Jesus' name for the remission of sins, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and become a member of the body of Christ, the church.

One day, Jesus will return for His bride, a glorious church, that has kept herself pure and holy, without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:27). At the end of the apostolic age, about 100 A.D., with the death of the last of the original apostles, men began to teach heresy. Some people became spoiled with the traditions of men. However, these people were not the true church. The true church of Jesus Christ were those who were called by His name and baptized with His Spirit. They were persecuted at first by the governments of the world and later by the "accepted" church. Christianity was for many years opposed by world leaders, but with the ascension of Constantine to power in 324 A.D. Christianity became the state religion. However, Constantine claiming to be a Christian himself, decided to run the church the way he saw fit. Anyone who disagreed with his, and the Catholic Church's theology, would receive censorship and quite possibly death.

Still the true church, of which we have little record of today due to persecution and destruction of their writings, lived on. Groups like the Sabellians taught the oneness of God (not Trinitarianism as adopted by the Catholic Church in 325 A.D.). Augustine wrote in the fourth century that converts should speak in tongues. The Waldenses in the twelfth and thirteenth century spoke in tongues. Finally, in the midst of all the darkness that prevailed in the accepted church, reformers began to change the thinking of men. John Wycliffe (England in 1320) began to speak out against the traditional church. He despised the corruption that had entered the church and advocated a return to scripture, which seemingly had been rejected. He translated the scripture into English to make the Bible available to the common man to read.

The Catholic Church reserved scripture for only the clergy to read. Men like John Huss, Savonarola, and others, picked up the banner to return to truth and carried it forward. They were martyred by the "church" but truth marched on. Martin Luther soon joined the ranks of the reformers. He propagated truth with a fervor and spirit that gained the following of many, and the hatred of the Catholic Church. However, try as they did, they could not stop the progress of truth. And, to this day, His truth is marching!

The march of truth carried it to a place called Stone's Folly in Topeka, Kansas. There a group of students led by Charles F. Parham received the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in other tongues, beginning on January 1, 1901. This was the beginning of thousands and even millions who would receive this same experience during the twentieth century. It spread like fire, Holy Ghost fire, throughout Kansas, into Texas and to a place called Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles, California, and from there to the world. Truth had been suppressed for many years. While it had not been stamped out, it had certainly been censored. Truth therefore had some more marching to do. In a world-wide camp meeting of Holy Ghost baptized believers, held in

Los Angeles, California, in 1913, it marched right to the pulpit. It was carried in the anointed preaching of R. E. McAlister. It seemed good to him and the Holy Ghost to express to the people that the proper formula for water baptism was one used by the Apostolic Church. . .in Jesus' name.

This truth was received by some and rejected by others.

Men like Frank Ewart, Glenn Cook, G. T. Haywood, E.N. Bell, H. A. Goss, and many other lovers of truth were rebaptized and began to propagate this truth wherever they went. Years passed and the Jesus' name church grew and prospered, and finally in 1944, two of its largest organizations began a merger. In 1945 the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ, led by W. T. Witherspoon, and the Pentecostal Church Incorporated, led by Howard A. Goss, officially merged to form the United Pentecostal Church. They united in a joint effort of doing everything within their power to preach the "Whole Gospel to the Whole World."

They adopted the following fundamental doctrine: "The basic and fundamental doctrine of this organization shall be the Bible standard of full salvation, which is repentance, baptism in water by immersion in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the initial sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance.

We shall endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit until we all come into the unity of the faith, at the same time admonishing all brethren that they shall not contend for their different views to the disunity of the body." The same message was taught and preached by Peter, Paul and the rest of the apostles in the book of Acts. No man knows all God has in store for His church in the future.

One thing is for certain, the church still has the hope and promise of the soon returning of its Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Until He does come to catch them away, as a thief in the night, it remains their duty to try and reach the "Whole World with the Whole Gospel."

The church of Jesus Christ is programmed to victory, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). Truth shall always march forward! The church shall march forward in the truth of God's Word, the power of His Spirit, manifesting holiness that characterizes the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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