

A Mid-Acts Dispensational Trip through the Bible¹

The Bible is inspired Holy Scripture authored by God through the Holy Spirit and reveals the various programs He has used in dealing with His creation. A fundamental premise is that the Bible can be understood, since God is not the author of confusion.

We find that in the beginning God created two distinctive parts, the heaven and the earth.

The creation of the earth included all life on the earth. Man and woman were created in a sinless state but at the first temptation, provided by the serpent, they sinned. This caused a change in God's program for them. He promised a "**Seed**" that would bruise the serpent's head, which we now know was Christ when He made the full payment for the sins of mankind with His death on the cross.

In the meantime God shed blood to cover the initial sin of Adam and Eve until the fulfillment of the promise of the "**Seed.**"

As time went on the earth became populated, sinfulness increased, and finally God judged mankind and destroyed all life on the earth by means of a universal flood, except for Noah, his wife, his three sons, their three wives, and at least two of every form of animal life. After the flood God promised Noah that He would never again allow a flood to destroy all life on the earth. He placed a rainbow in the clouds as a sign of this promise and instructed Noah to replenish the earth.

However, as the earth was being repopulated, sinfulness once again increased, and mankind began to congregate in one area. Because of this disobedience God judged mankind and this time He scattered them over the earth by confusing their language.

At this point God essentially concluded His dealings with mankind and men and women were known as "**nations,**" "**heathen,**" "**Gentiles,**" or "**Uncircumcision.**"

Next, God chose a man named Abram to begin a people He could have dealings with and also a people that could be a channel for the promised "**Seed.**"

Abram's name was later changed to Abraham and he became the father of the nation Israel. It is through Israel that God then channeled His dealings and planned to ultimately resume His dealings with the Gentiles as well.

As the nation Israel grew, God gave them the Law through Moses, which consisted of more than 600 commandments, regulations, and ordinances.

As the nation Israel began to take possession of the land promised to Abraham, they were under the leadership of Moses, Joshua, and the judges.

During the time of Samuel, who was to be the last judge, the Israelites rejected God the Father by demanding a king to judge them instead of having God reign over them.

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As a result of this sin, the nation Israel never fully held possession of the Promised Land, even to this present day. Through the ministry of the prophets, God prophesied that He would send the Messiah to redeem Israel from her sin. This Messiah, born of the virgin Mary, was the Son of God in the person of Jesus Christ. God also promised Israel that He would establish an earthly kingdom where Jesus Christ Himself would reign as King, on the throne of David, and a tremendous time of peace and prosperity would result.

During the three-year earthly ministry of the Messiah, He preached repentance, that the kingdom of (from)² heaven was at hand, and this message was given to the twelve Apostles to preach as well.

The nation Israel, for the most part, rejected her Messiah along with His message of forgiveness for their sins and His preaching of the coming prophesied kingdom. This rejection took the form of unbelief and demanding His crucifixion.

Jesus Christ rose from the grave on the third day and instructed His disciples again to preach the gospel of the kingdom with water baptism for the remission of sins.

They were to begin with the nation Israel in Jerusalem and if Israel responded this time, they were to proceed with the same gospel in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. The Lord then ascended to heaven after promising to send the Holy Spirit to empower them in this commission, usually known as the *Great Commission*.

The water ceremony of baptism was part of the fulfillment of God's conditional promise, through Moses, that the Israelites would become a "**kingdom of priests**," in the coming earthly kingdom, if they would obey His voice and keep His covenant. This washing or baptism was done in conjunction with the blood sacrifice in preparation for the priesthood.

With the preaching of the "**kingdom of (from) heaven at hand**," the Israelites were now ready to become that "**kingdom of priests**" if they would believe and submit to water baptism.

As you begin reading the book of Acts, you find the apostles being filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and Peter preaching the gospel of the kingdom as the Lord had instructed. The people of the nation Israel now need not only to repent of their broken covenant relationship with God but also to repent of the sin of murder in crucifying their Messiah.

The Bible records that about three thousand souls were added to the Jewish Church as a result of Peter's Pentecostal address. In his next address/sermon the charge of murder was lessened, by acknowledging their ignorance, and the promised kingdom was finally offered. This agrees with our Lord's prayer on the cross, Luke 23:34: "**...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.**"

Despite the fact that many had responded earlier, the majority in the nation Israel along with her leaders rejected this offer.

²Kingdom of heaven is taken to mean coming *from* heaven (to earth).

If this wasn't enough Israel's leaders also began persecuting the apostles who were preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

According to the parable in Luke 13:6-9, Israel was expected to produce fruit during the three year ministry of Christ. When this didn't happen the extra year was granted, during which insufficient fruit was produced and the persecution of the few continued.

Despite much persecution God allowed His program to continue unchanged for the extra year, until Stephen was stoned to death by the Jewish leaders. It was at this time that the nation Israel resisted or blasphemed the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.

This was the third and final chance for Israel. First, they had rejected God the Father by demanding a king under Samuel. Second, they had rejected God the Son at the cross. Now, their rejection of God the Holy Spirit through Stephen resulted in their committing the unpardonable sin about which they had been warned.

After the stoning of Stephen the unrepentant Jews began to unrelentingly persecute the Jewish church. This “**great persecution**” began in Jerusalem and scattered that church abroad. There are two noteworthy aspects of this scattering of the Jewish church: first, the apostles stayed at Jerusalem in obedience to their commission from the Lord; and second, the scattered Jewish church preached the word to the Jews only (the Gentiles will be dealt with shortly) in obedience to the commission from the Lord.

It was at this point that God began to change the program of His dealings with the nation Israel. First, Jesus Christ Himself struck down Saul, also known as Paul, on his way to Damascus. Then He saved Paul, commissioned him an apostle, and through a series of revelations, communicated a new program whereby salvation would be offered directly to the Gentiles in spite of Israel's rejection of her Messiah and subsequent fall. At this time God temporarily set aside the kingdom program with the Jews and began a new program, called *the mystery*, to both Jews and Gentiles. The term *mystery* means that you can't find this program forecast in the prophetic Scriptures, it was “**hid in God.**”

The terms of the new program resulted in Paul preaching a new “**gospel of the grace of God,**” whereby individuals can be saved by truly believing in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and that He died for their sins. The difference in this gospel is that Christ's blood and His blood alone is sufficient payment for all past, present, and future sins of those who believe this gospel of God's grace.

Earlier, we identified the *Great Commission* as it related to the preaching of the *gospel of the kingdom*. Now, let's take a look at the *current commission* as it relates to the preaching of the *gospel of the grace of God*. There are two aspects to the *current commission*. First, God has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation as ambassadors for Christ. Second, according to the example of the Apostle Paul, we preach the unsearchable riches of Christ and help all see the fellowship of the *mystery*. The word fellowship (Gr, *koinonia*: participation, communion) suggests: the loving participation and communion among members of the body of Christ, in the *mystery*.

The complete changeover from the *prophetic* program to the *mystery* program took about thirty years as the Apostle Paul was receiving revelations from the ascended Lord Jesus Christ. Just as the Jews failed to see that their program with God had changed

then, today, many Christians are combining the previous program with the current one called the *mystery*. It is no wonder that there are over 400 denominations today that differ in relation to what parts of the old program are combined with the new *mystery* program. This new *mystery* program with the gospel of the grace of God and the church, which is His body, will continue “**until the fulness of the Gentiles** [full number of the Gentiles]³ **be come in.**”

Once “**the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.**” the Lord will take the church, His body, to heaven, and God’s prophetic program, on the earth, with Israel will resume. It will begin with the tribulation period, lasting seven years and will include Christ’s second coming to earth to establish the promised earthly kingdom. It is then that He will reign as King on David’s throne. He will resurrect the kingdom saints of all ages and the Twelve Apostles will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The first phase of this kingdom we now know will last 1,000 years, during which time Satan will be bound and cast into the bottomless pit. At the end of 1,000 years, Satan will be “**loosed out of his prison,**” and he will “**go out to deceive the nations.**”

This time God will quickly end the final outbreak of sin on the earth. He will then resurrect and judge the unsaved of all ages at the “**great white throne,**” and usher in the eternal state where the saved, of all programs, will occupy “**a new heaven and a new earth:**” and the unsaved, of all programs, will be “**cast into the lake of fire.**” From then on sin will be no more and the saved will spend eternity with God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit in a sinless state as it was in the beginning, when God created the heaven and the earth.

³Gr, *pleroma*: completion