

PREPARATION FOR THE STUDY OF EPHESIANS

S.L.H.

DISPENSATIONALISM

- 1) Understanding the nature of **progressive revelation** and the concept of **dispensations** is essential for the proper interpretation of Ephesians (Eph1:10; 3:2). See the CHART OF THE DISPENSATIONS. New revelation given by God that initiates a new dispensation is not merely more detail concerning what was previously revealed, but often consists of completely new instructions that differ from (or even contradict) those which came before. To properly interpret any particular passage of Scripture, care must be taken to understand who is being addressed and under what circumstances (i.e., under which dispensation).
- 2) Jesus lived His entire earthly life as a Jewish man subject to the requirements of the Law of Moses (Matt 5:17; Gal4:4). Even the death of Christ was a fulfillment of the Law (Gal3:13).
- 3) The Gospels (i.e., Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) record Jesus' life and teaching under the Old (Mosaic) Covenant, not the New Covenant; the New Testament did not begin until after the death of Christ (cf. Heb9:16).
- 4) The "gospel" John the Baptist, Jesus, and Jesus' disciples preached was the "gospel of the kingdom" (Matt3:2; 4:17,23). In the Gospels, the disciples of Jesus did not preach the gospel of grace (Act20:24; 1Cor15:1-4), or even understand it (cf. Matt16:21-23; Luk18:31-34; Jn20:9), during the life of Christ.

"The *basis* of salvation in every age is **the death of Christ**; the *requirement* for salvation in every age is **faith**; the *object* of faith in every age is **God**; the *content* of faith **changes** in the various dispensations." (Charles C. Ryrie, **Dispensationalism Today**, 1965)

- 5) Jesus and His disciples went to Israel alone, and the "gospel of the kingdom" they preached was a message for Israel (Matt10:5-7), not the Gentiles/Church (cf. Matt15:21-28).
- 6) Even after the resurrection, the ministries of Peter, James, and John continued to be directed toward the Jews, whereas Paul was the apostle sent to the Gentiles (cf. Rom11:13; Gal2:7-9; 2Tim1:11). To the Apostle Paul alone were revealed the mysteries concerning the Church as the Body of Christ and the present Dispensation of Grace (cf. Eph3:1-10). Peter continued to preach the "gospel of the kingdom" to Israel even after the resurrection/ascension of Christ¹ (cf. Act3:12-21), only turning to Paul's "gospel of grace" later (cf. Act15:11).

¹ The reason the apostles continued to preach "the gospel of the kingdom" to the nation of Israel in the early chapters of the Book of Acts seems to be due to the fact that there remained (for a period of time) an opportunity for the nation to repent of their rejection of Jesus as Messiah/King (akin to Joshua's generation repenting of the sin of Moses' generation at Kadesh-Barnea, allowing them to enter the Promised Land), which could have rapidly initiated the prophesied sequence of events (i.e., Daniel's 70th Week; Dan9:27) culminating in the return of Christ and

GRAMMAR

- 7) Understanding grammar is critical to the proper interpretation of Ephesians. The pronouns "we", "us", "our", and "ours" are all first person plural pronouns, meaning the speaker is included in the group of persons under discussion; the pronouns "ye", "you", "your", and "yours" are all second person plural pronouns, meaning the speaker is addressing a group of persons that does not include himself. Furthermore, a King James Bible is necessary for serious Bible study, as it brings into English the distinction between singular ("thee", "thou", "thy", "thine") and plural ("ye", "you", "your", "yours") pronouns in the second person, a distinction that is always present in the underlying Greek (or Hebrew) text.

the inauguration of His Kingdom on earth (Act3:12-21). This re-offer of the kingdom and the opportunity for Israel to repent ended at some point; it certainly did not extend beyond the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. This offer/re-offer of the kingdom followed by the destruction of Jerusalem was prophesied by Jesus in His parable of the wedding feast (Matt22:1-7).