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W. O. Vaught

Ouachita Baptist University

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THE GENTILE PENTECOST

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
NUMBER 37
ACTS 10:1-5

Dr. W. O. Vaught, Jr.
Immanuel Baptist Church
Little Rock, Arkansas

This chapter brings us to the beginning of the Gentile Pentecost. In order to understand the Gentile Pentecost, we need to look again at the doctrine of the church. Why do we have a Jewish Pentecost, then a Samaritan Pentecost and finally a Gentile Pentecost? We must understand certain phrases in the Bible in order to get the answer to this question. We must understand the phrase "in Christ". This means to be in union with Christ and is one name given to the church, or the Church Age. "Body" as found in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 points out that while we are all in union with Christ, each has different gifts, therefore different functions. We function under different gifts, but we are all in union with Christ. "ECCLESIA" is the Greek word translated "church" in the New Testament. It came from the original idea of the assembly of the people of Greece in a free democracy. A majority vote of the citizens determined everything, and they called themselves an "Ecclesia". Acts 7:38 gives us the first use made of "Ecclesia" in the New Testament and the idea here is the assembly of Israel. In Matthew 18:17 ecclesia is used to describe a meeting of the Jews in their synagogue. In Acts 19:25 the word "Ecclesia" is used to describe an assembly of a Greek type people. Then this word is used in a sort of universal sense which includes every believer in union with Christ. We find this universal sense of the use of "Ecclesia" in Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 5:25-27, Colossians 1:17-18, and Colossians 2:9-10. In his letters this is usually the way Paul made use of the word "Ecclesia". Sometimes the word "Ecclesia" was used of a local church, an assembly of people meeting in a certain locality, such as in 1 Corinthians 1:2, or 1 Thessalonians 1:1.

Now this word "Ecclesia" which is translated church, is also used dispensationally. On the day of Pentecost in 30 A.D. a new emphasis began. Let us look for a moment at the four dispensations given us in the Bible.

1. The age of the Gentiles. This was from Adam to Abraham. There was one race and one language in the earth.
2. The age of the Jews. There are three periods in this dispensation.
 - a. The age of the patriarchs.
 - b. The period of the law--from Moses to Christ.
 - c. The regathering of the Jews and the Tribulation.
(When God divided the nations racially and linguistically after the Tower of Babel, the idea of "The nation" came to be God's plan, and the Jewish nation came to have the responsibility of evangelism, and were the custodians of the divine revealed message we call the Bible.)
3. The church age. After Christ ascended we move into this third dispensation. This dispensation will last from Pentecost to the time when Christ terminates the church age and takes the church out of the world.
4. The age of Christ. This is the final dispensation and covers the thousand year reign of Christ on the earth.

Now this passage we are studying is going to deal with the problems of the church age, or the Gentile Pentecost. To understand this we should also have in our minds the facts concerning the termination of the church age.

1. The church age actually began on the day of Pentecost. There was no church in the Old Testament. The Jews were custodians of the Word of God and responsible for its dissemination to all the world. We learn this from the doctrine of "The Mystery" in the New Testament, in Ephesians 3:1-6, Colossians 1:25-26, and Romans 16:25-26. Mystery means information which was totally hidden from the past. This was during the Old Testament when there was no church and absolutely no information given about the church. Never once in the Old Testament will you find mentioned "In Christ", or "Every believer in union with Christ", or "The baptism of the Holy Spirit", or "The termination of the church".

- In Matthew 16:16-18 when Christ said, "I will build my church" the church was still future. It had not yet begun. "On this rock I will build my church" and the tense is future. This is very important theologically for there are many false doctrines which find the church in the Old Testament. These false systems confuse Israel and the church. They say the church began in the Garden of Eden or in Abraham's tent in the wilderness. This is what is called "Covenant Theology" and generally taught in many seminaries.
2. The second approach is the idea that the church was still future when Christ spoke of the founding of the church in Matthew 16.
 3. The third approach is the idea of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The church is founded by the Baptism of the Spirit. Jesus said, "I will baptize with the Holy Spirit not many days hence". It was still future. We read the mechanics of the Baptist of the Holy Spirit in 1 Cor. 12:13 "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." We get this concept of when the church began from Ephesians 4:3-12.
 4. The termination of the church is to be the resurrection of the church. When the number of people saved fulfills the will of God then the church will be taken from the earth.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." This termination of the church will occur according to God's will. Then when the church is in heaven the Tribulation takes place.

These three things happen to the church--

- a. Members receive their resurrection bodies.
- b. Members of this body lose their old sin nature (Ultimate sanctification).
- c. All human good is judged.

The church on earth is called the body of Christ but in heaven it is called the Bride of Christ. The church is the bride being prepared. Then at Christ's return the Jewish age ends and during the 1,000 year reign of Christ, the church and Israel will be together joined by the headstone or cornerstone which is Christ. Christ as David's Son is the ruler of Israel and as cornerstone he is the head of the church.

There are seven designations given the church in the New Testament. These are the synonyms given the church in the New Testament.

1. THE LAST ADAM AND THE NEW CREATION.
1 Cor. 15:22 "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."
2. THE HEAD OF THE BODY.
1 Cor. 12:12 "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ."
Romans 12:4-5 "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

3. THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP.

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

John 10:27-28 "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Hebrews 13:20 "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant"

1 Peter 5:4 "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

4. THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES.

John 15:5 "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

5. THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE AND STONES OF THE BUILDING.

Ephesians 2:20 "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;"

Psalms 118:20 "This gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter."

6. THE HIGH PRIEST AND THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD.

1 Peter 2:5 "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

Revelation 1:6 "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

7. THE BRIDEGROOM AND THE BRIDE.

Ephesians 5:31-32 "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Revelation 19:7 "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

Of all the four dispensations, the church age is the most exciting. The reason for this is that every believer is considered in full-time Christian service and we all have these characteristics--

1. All are baptized by the Holy Spirit.
2. Every believer is indwelt by the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. The Holy Spirit actually indwells every believer.
4. Every believer is his own priest.
5. Christians have the completed Canon Scripture. Everything God wants to know about spiritual things can be found in Scripture.
6. We have a supernatural way of life.
7. We have supernatural means for executing this life.
8. Every believer is an ambassador for Christ.

Look for a moment at this problem. You remember the church began in one spot, and that spot was Jerusalem in 30 A. D. Believers were scattered all over the earth and the church didn't reach them immediately. So in Jerusalem you have the church age and New Testament saints but all over the rest of the world you have Old Testament saints for Pentecost as yet had not touched them and they have not yet heard of Pentecost. Later they would be baptized by the Holy Spirit and changed into New Testament Church age saints. So some problems naturally arose since the church began in one locality, namely Jerusalem, and with one race only, namely Jews. So right at first the Jews had a monopoly on the church. This is the reason why we have the book of the Acts and the Samaritan Pentecost in Acts 8, and the Gentile Pentecost in Acts 10 and the integration of Old Testament saints and New Testament saints in Acts 19. This is the way the problem of the Jewish monopoly was solved. God dealt with this problem by the very rapid spread of the church over the earth.

ere in Acts 10 we are to study how the vision of a Gentile man ushered in a new era in the spread of the church.

Verses 1-8 tell the story of this Gentile vision.

Verses 9-23 tell the story of Simon Peter's vision.

Verses 24-48 tell the story of the Gentile Pentecost.

The Vision of a Gentile Unbeliever.

The city of Caesarea is a thorn in the side of the Jew, and Cornelius lived in Caesarea. Herod the Great built this magnificent city. Herod had a worldwide construction program and built more cities and great buildings than any other person on earth. Herod established a system whereby he could flash news all over Palestine by signal towers. He formed close friendships with all the Roman leaders over a period of forty years. So this man, Herod the Great, decided to build this great seaport town and he named it for Julius Caesar and called it Caesarea. When the Romans took over Palestine they made Caesarea their headquarters. Now there was a certain man in Caesarea named Cornelius. He was a Roman aristocrat from one of the leading families of Rome. He had chosen the army as his career. The Italian band was regarded as the finest in all the Roman army. He showed positive volition toward God, but he had no information about how to be converted. In this connection with Cornelius, let us get ~~five~~ points right here concerning heathenism.

1. God in his essence is perfectly righteous--not willing for men to be lost.
2. God is a God of unlimited atonement--wanting all to be saved and providing salvation for all men who will accept it.
3. God is not willing that any should perish.
4. When any man in the earth sends up to God positive volition concerning salvation, God assumes the responsibility of giving the Gospel to him.

John 7:17 "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

Jeremiah 29:13 "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

Romans 1:20 "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"

Now Cornelius was willing and anxious to know God and believe in God. Cornelius was conscious of God and the need of God in his life, and God responded to this positive volition. Cornelius was possibly born in Rome and he was a man of great nobility. This is the meaning of ACTS 10:1 "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band"

ACTS 10:2 "A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." "Devout" comes from the Greek word "Eusebes" and though often used in the New Testament to mean Godliness is used here to mean unbeliever. "Feared God" means that he was in awe of God. He had been generous with helping the Jews financially and he prayed to God means that he was conscious of God.

ACTS 10:3-4 "He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." This shows us God's response to his positive volition. The ninth hour is three o'clock in the afternoon, the time the Jews prayed in the temple. Before the Canon of Scripture was completed God dealt with men in direct communications, as he did with Moses, or in dreams or visions, as we see here. We see that Cornelius was afraid, but he looked God in the eye and said, "What is it Lord?" In military terms we would say, "Yes sir, Lord, speak!" And God reassured him that his prayers had been heard.

ACTS 10:5-6 "And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." This is God's direct instruction. Joppa is thirty miles South and down in Joppa God is preparing Simon Peter to be the answer to the prayers of Cornelius. Cornelius is an educated aristocrat, and Simon Peter is an uneducated fisherman. Cornelius is high class, and Simon Peter is low class. You can't think of men farther apart in temperament and training. Here we have a Roman commander and a fisherman. But next time we will see how God is going to bring them together for a great purpose.