

## 6. Dispensation of Grace

The dispensation of grace commenced from the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary and will be closed by the coming of Christ in the clouds (Rapture). This has no connection or continuation with other dispensations, which are dealing mainly with Jews. As we have already seen this Church period is coming in between the 69th and 70 th week.

It is not "The Kingdom". John the baptist came preaching that the "Kingdom of Heaven" was "at hand" and Jesus sent out the Twelve and Seventy to preach the same, but the Jewish people rejected their King, and the setting up of the Kingdom was postponed. The Church is never confounded with the Kingdom, but compared with a **house** (1 Timo.3:15), to a **Temple** (1 Cori.3:16), to a **Body** (1Cori.12:27-31), a **Bride** (Ephe.5:23-32, Rev.21:2,9,10)etc.

### The Kingdom was no mystery

The Old Testament prophets describe it in glowing terms. But there was something that was a "Mystery" to them, and that was what was to come in between the suffering and glory of Christ (I Peter 1;9-12) that is between the Cross and the Crown. Jesus intimated that there was to be something that he called the "Church". But he didn't say when it should appear, or what it would be like (Matt. 16:13-20)

### The "Mystery of the Church"

It was first revealed to Paul. "Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the **mystery** made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was **not made known to men in other generations** as it has now been revealed by the spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that throw the gospel the gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and shares together in the promise in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 3;2-6)

From this we see that the Church was unknown to the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets. The word Church comes from the Greek word "Ecclesia" which means a congregation of "called out ones". The purpose of this dispensation then is not the conversion of the world but the gathering out of the church.

While Israel is a called out body it is a **National Body** composed exclusively of the descendants of Abraham, but the Church is not a national body for it is not composed of the people of any one nation, but of **individuals from every kindred, people, tribe and nation**. Israel was chosen in Abraham from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25;34) while the church was chosen in Jesus **before** the foundation of the world. (Eph. 1;4-6)

### The origin of the Church

While, as we have seen the Church had it's origin in the mind of God before the foundation of the world yet it didn't exist until after Christ's ascension. Once Jesus said to Peter "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." (Matt. 16;18.) Here one thing is clear that the church is not built till that time. But the second thing to note is on which foundation it is to be built. From this verse, we may think it is on Peter. It is from the Greek word "**Petros**" that the word Peter is derived, which means a **stone**, the small fragment of a rock, while the Greek word "**Petra**" means a **Rock** or large mass of stone.

".....you are Peter (Petros), and on this rock (Petra) I will build my Church." This means the Church will be founded on **Jesus Christ the Rock**, not **Peter the Stone**. From the following scriptures we can very well understand that Peter never claimed that the Church is founded on him, but rather he ascertained that Christ is the foundation and the corner stone of the Church.

### Exercise

1. Write a note on the dispensation of Grace.
2. Give an account of the mystery revealed to Paul.
3. Explain in short the origin of the Church.

**M.V.: Eph. 2:8-9**