

“You are HERE!”

Ephesians 3:1-7; 2:8-9, 14-16

East Berlin Community Church

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Introduction

- “You are HERE” reference on maps and malls
- Evangelism experience at the Texas State Fair
- Where are we in relation to God’s plan for the ages?

“You are Here”-- The DISPENSATION OF GRACE

A. Distinction between the “Dispensation of Grace” and the “Church Age”

1. **The church was a “mystery”**—something concealed in the Old Testament but revealed in the New.
 - Ephesians 3:1-7-- *“For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you have read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”*
2. **The church is a brand-new entity, something fresh.** God creates “one new man out of two” so that the church is not revamped Judaism nor reformed heathenism, but something brand new that did not exist before Pentecost.
 - Ephesians 2:14-16 -- *“our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in the ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, therefore putting to death the enmity.”*
3. While the church is the primary focus, the age in which we are living extends beyond the time the church is on the earth to include the tribulation period. **The “Church age” fits inside the “Dispensation of Grace”.**

B. Description of the “Dispensation of Grace”

1. **Jesus Christ inaugurates this “age of grace”**
 - a. He is Grace personified—
 - John 1:17-- *“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ!”*
 - Titus 2:11-- *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.”*
 - b. By His sinless life and substitutionary death, Jesus Christ fully fulfilled the Law.
 - Matthew 15:17-19 -- *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”*
 - Hebrews 10:5-10 -- *“when He (that is, Jesus Christ) came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body you have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure/ Then I said, “Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—To do Your will, O God.”’ Previously saying, ‘Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them’ (which are offered according to the law), then He said, ‘Behold, I*

have come to do Your will, O God.' He takes away the first, that he may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

- c. Thus Jesus Christ inaugurates this "age of grace."
 - 1) Meaning of the term "grace" as "God's unmerited favor"
 - 2) While Jesus Christ inaugurated this "age of grace", there is grace found in the previous ages but more so in the present age.

2. **What's it like to live in this "age of grace?"**
 - a. The one requirement is that we trust in Jesus Christ as our savior and accept His offer of grace.
 - Ephesians 2:8-9-- *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."*

 - b. Living under grace means living under the law of Christ.
 - 1) Grace is not a license to sin
 - Romans 6:14 -- *"sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."*
 - Romans 6:13 -- *"to God as being alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness to God."*
 - Romans 6:15 -- *"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? Certainly not!"*
 - Romans 6:16-18 -- *"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."*
 - Galatians 5:13-- *"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."*

 - 2) Difference between the merit system of the Law and unmerited system of Grace.
 - Ephesians 1:3-- *"blessed with every spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."*

 - 3) Grace living is liberty within the boundaries of Christ's law.
 - a) Jesus' summarization of His law
 - Matthew 22:37-30 -- *"Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it; 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*

 - b) Specifics commands found in the New Testament epistles.
 - (1) Positive commands and "let us"
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18-- *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you."*
 - Hebrews 10:22-24-- *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled with from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works."*
 - Galatians 5:2 -- *"Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ."*
 - 1 John 4:7 -- *"Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."*

- (2) Negative commands or "Do not"
 - Romans 6:12-- *"Do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts."*
 - Romans 12:2-- *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and acceptable and perfect will of God."*

- (3) Principles to guide us when Scripture is silent.
 - (a) Will it hinder my spiritual growth?
 - (b) Will it enslave me?
 - (c) Will it cause a weaker Christian to stumble into sin?
 - (d) Will it be a stumbling block to an unbeliever?
 - (e) Will the activity display God to the world? Will it be "Christ-like"?

3. *How does mankind do in the age of grace?* Some accept but many reject.

4. *When will this "Age of Grace" end?* Not at the rapture of the church, but at the return of Christ.

- a. The tribulation is God's judgment for rejection of His grace.
 - Matthew 24:21-- *"such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."*
 - Matthew 24:22-- that *"unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved."*

- b. The tribulation will be a time of unprecedented fruitfulness.
 - Revelation 7:9-10-- *"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'"*
 - Revelation 7:14 -- *"And I said to him. 'Sir, you know.' So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"*

We are HERE! But WHERE ARE YOU??