

# “Jesus, Dallas & NT — The Book of Acts” Course Study Guide



God incarnate in one humble, brilliant, loving teacher set in action a changed world. Two of His students, Dallas Willard & NT Wright, were called and gifted by Jesus to preach His Gospel. The result is decades of global impact through these two humble, brilliant scholars, compassionate pastors, and genuine followers of Jesus offering biblical truth with broad influence in the 20th & 21st Century, rare in the same generation. Two countries, two cultures, one King, same Gospel.

Join our four act drama with the Kingdom of God to engage what Dallas & NT believed, taught and lived in and for the Kingdom of God in the name of Jesus and why so many of us find their message uncommonly common. Here are the themes for each of the four sessions:

- Act 1 - Jesus as King
- Act 2 - Peter & the Hebrew People
- Act 3 - Paul & the Gentiles
- Act 4 - Kingdom Beachheads — Then & Now

The course offers wise application, winsome affirmation and weekly accountability to envision and experience intentional, Christlike thought and action naturally developing from a biblical, accurate and true understanding of the Gospel in Jesus Christ to live power in His Name and Kingdom today.

*Offered free...all grace, no drachma...by [Jesus College](#)*

**Jesus College — “Be a student of history’s greatest teacher”**

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## Your “V-I-M”\*\* Participation

Make your experience more than just a free webinar added to your routine. Place it as an intentional discipline for spiritual growth. Ideally, invite a partner, a spiritual growth “spotter”, to journey with you to better learn, apply, and grow in Christlikeness as a launch pad from the sessions. Here are a few suggestions on how to make the most of this course.

1) WATCH/LISTEN to the recommended teachings by Dallas Willard and NT Wright available for free on YouTube.



### Session 1 — Act I - Jesus as King

Dallas, [“Acts” #1](#) 00:20:00, 35:40-End; [The DC Lecture #6](#) 28:20-39:30

NT, [“Acts” Talk #1](#) (videos 1-6)

[Talk Notes in the Study Guide: Dallas — p. 12-14, 16-22; 58-59 NT — p. 33-40]

### Session 2 — Act II - Peter & God’s People

Dallas, [“Acts” #1](#) 20:00-35:40 [“Acts 2”](#) 18:30-30:30

NT, [“Acts” Talk #2](#) Video 6 (3:30-End) & Videos 7-13

[Talk Notes in the Study Guide: Dallas p. 13-15, 24-25 NT — p. 41-47]

### Session 3 — Act III - Paul & the Gentiles

Dallas, [“Acts” #2](#) 0:00-18:30; 30:30-50:00

NT, [“Acts” Talk #3](#) Videos 14-21

[Talk Notes in the Study Guide: Dallas — p. 23-24, 26-29 NT — p. 48-54 for NT]

### Session 4 — Act IV - Kingdom Beachheads Then & Now

Dallas, [“Acts” #2](#) 50:00-1:06:30 (end)

NT, [“Acts” Talk #4](#) Videos 22-26

[Talk Notes in the Study Guide: Dallas p. 30-31 NT — p. 55-59]

2) REVIEW the handout notes and scriptures adding your own notes to bring to each session.

3) SHARE - Offer questions and comments to each session that stood out in your preparation. Enter them in the Q&A tool on the bottom of the Zoom screen during the session. Linger longer for the post “Q&C” time.

4) PRACTICE - Answer the questions and put into action the spiritual action question in each week’s guide.

5) RETREAT - As part of your practice, invest one hour solo time weekly with Jesus discussing your key discovery from the week.

6) REFLECT - At the end of the course, type or write a 300 word summary or journal entry recognizing the impact of the study and the vision of how it can, by God’s grace, form your spiritual growth in Christlikeness.

[\*\* V-I-M = *Vision-Intention-Means* — Dallas calls this the reliable pattern for spiritual change, really any change. As you envision a life of hearing God and truly intend to want to hear God, you will seek and find the means to practice a life of hearing God. For more on V-I-M, see *Renovation of the Heart*, chapter 5 ([Webinar on the book](#).) Another rich resource on V-I-M is in the [Life With God Bible](#) Introduction, xxv-xxxvi]

## Act I — "Jesus as King"

### **The Book of Acts — "Jesus - Kingdom Unity"**

"A human organization for world revolution" Dallas, "Acts" talk #1

"Jesus as King, Messiah & Lord and the new Temple of Heaven on Earth"

NT "Acts" 2 (video 8)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8

### **The Spirit of Jesus and the Kingdom of God**

"An eternal work God is doing in history. Start in Genesis 1:26 - the rule of human being under the rule of God. The Kingdom of God is here. The book of Acts is where God revealed Himself to the world through His Son. His closest friends did not know what was happening. He's talking to them about the Kingdom of God." Dallas, "Acts" Talk #1

"The whole book is about what it looks like when the life of Heaven comes to birth on Earth. It's all about Jesus...through His Spirit, working in and through the church to establish His Kingdom - God's sovereign rule coming on Earth as in Heaven. The Kingdom of God and Lordship of Jesus frame the book of Acts."

NT, "Acts" Talk #1 Videos 1-2

### **The Book of Acts Overview**

Acts 1-12 - Herod vs. Jesus and Herod dies

Acts 13-28 - Caesar vs. Jesus - Paul in Rome: Jesus is Lord not Caesar

NT, "Acts", Talk #1 Video 6

### **Acts 1:1-8 The Power of the Kingdom of God**

"People still asking for a kingdom based on a human organization...the Messiah to come in the form of a governmental leader. You shall receive power from the Spirit. Have Isaiah 49:6 in mind when you read Acts 1. He is talking about world revolution — Love - Law - Power. Place the book of Acts in God's march through history. World revolution is what the Great Commission is about, what Acts 1 is about." Dallas, "Acts", Talk #1

"Will you restore the Kingdom? The answer is yes but not like you thought it was going to be. 'You will receive power to be my witnesses'. The entire task of the church is summed up in Acts 1:8. We observed the enthronement of the world's true Lord and are charged with going to tell the world who this Lord is and the consequences of the nature of His Kingdom." NT, "Acts" #1, Video 2

## Act I — “Jesus as King”

Session 1 (continued)

### Heaven and Earth Together in King Jesus

“Walk through the book of Acts and watch how the gospel of the Kingdom and the gospel of Jesus come together. You will see them separate at the beginning and together at the end. Acts put a face to the Kingdom and a Kingdom to the face. People did not know what Jesus was talking about when He talked about the Kingdom of God.” Dallas, [The Divine Conspiracy Lecture #6](#) 29:25

“Think about the Temple and then think about the whole Earth. This is hugely germane to the meaning of Acts. Acts is the theology of Jesus and the church as the true Temple. Jesus is the place where Heaven & Earth have come together, uniquely, decisively and forever.” NT, “Acts” Talk #1, Video 4

### The Ascension of the King to His Throne - Acts 1:9

“If Heaven and Earth are joined together in Jesus in biblical theology then Heaven is the control room for Earth. Heaven is not a detached place in order to not have something to do with earth. The ascension is the correlate of the world wide mission of the church. Once Jesus is raised to heaven, He is in charge and He sends people to implement His work and His will.” NT, “Acts” Talk #1, Video 5

### The Church — Disciples of a Kingdom World Revolution

“This is a radical shift - bringing knowledge of the Kingdom of God of Jesus Christ, what He is doing today. We are not called to help people do things. We are called to help people know things...to learn to live there as disciples who know eternal living. The book of Acts comes at a point where all the preparation has been completed. Jesus has come into the world to make real the power of the Kingdom of God.” Dallas, “Acts” talk #2

**Meditation** — Acts 1:1-8, Psalm 72, Isaiah 6

### Application for Kingdom Power Training → V-I-M

V — Where is Heaven and how and when will I enter it?

I — How revolutionary is my view of my apprenticeship with Jesus?

M — How and with whom will I pray this week to receive Holy Spirit power?

### Teaching from Dallas & NT to enrich Session 1



Dallas, [“Acts” #1](#) 00-20:00, 35:40-End; [DC Lecture 6](#) 28:20-39:30  
NT, [“Acts” Talk #1](#) (videos 1-6)

[Talk Notes - see Study Guide p. 12-13, 16-21 for Dallas and p. 33-40 for NT]

**Next Session 2 of 4** Act II ~ Peter & God’s People - Acts 1:12-12:35

## Act II — "Peter & God's People"

### Session 2

#### God's Covenant Promise — Father Abraham and the Hebrew People

"**Abraham's** descendants - not a nation. Exodus, they became a people. **Jeremiah** - "I'm just a kid." **Judges** - No human organization. God's interaction with those He called. **Samuel** - 'Give us a king'. "They have not rejected you, they have rejected me'." **Daniel** - "The stone cut without hands." **Exile** - Jews government is crushed. **Malachi** - Restore the family. "God desires and is establishing a world of His Kingdom that does not run from human power. That's what we are learning especially when we get to the book of Acts."

Dallas, "Acts" #1 24:00

"The Temple filled with the glory of God" - **Isaiah 6** - "Holy, holy, holy...the whole Earth is full of His glory. **Tabernacle** - God's glory fills it. **Numbers 14:21** - Joshua & Caleb - "The Lord is with us. We can do it." **Isaiah 40 & 60** - "All flesh seeing the glory of God." **Psalms 72** - Davidic kingdom fulfilled in the risen Messiah. "This is what Acts is all about. Acts is the theology of Jesus and the church as the true Temple." NT "Acts" #1 Video 4

#### Power from Heaven in the Name of Jesus — Acts 2:1 - Pentecost

"One of the interesting things you see in the book of Acts is learning to act in the name of Jesus...a way of bringing the immediate presence of God and His kingdom into human life. He had told them to do that. They had to learn how to do that because He was no longer here but they had His name to work with."

Dallas, "Acts" 2 18:30-20:40

"Christ in you the hope of glory. The ecclesiology of Colossians & Ephesians includes when the church goes out into the world bearing Christ in the power of the Spirit, this is a sign to the world of the filling with the glory of God which Isaiah and Habakkuk spoke of. The life, witness and mission of the church is the sign already of how that happens that wherever the people of God are there is already Christ in you the hope of glory. That's what Acts is about."

NT "Acts"1 Video 6 3:30

#### Kingdom Ambassadors in Jerusalem

Acts 1:12-12:25 (end)

Jesus vs. Herod: Herod dies, Jesus lives. Peter, John, Acts 2 Church, Stephen

"The early church are using Psalm 2 - the true Jews over against the nations of the world...an astonishing claim that those praising in the name of Jesus. In them, this little group of believers, is there, only there, the people of God to be found. The result is the new political positioning of the people of God. The fulfillment of Israel, hence, they must obey God rather than human beings. If Jesus is Lord, we must obey God rather than human beings." Acts 4:19, 5:29  
NT "Acts" 2, video 10

## Act II — "Peter and God's People"

Session 2 (continued)

### The Name of Jesus & Kingdom Power in the Public Square

Acts 8

Phillip in Samaria — "Power of God over the magic of the pagans. Isaiah 54 - Covenant renewal. Isaiah 55 - Invitation to a new Creation, 'Come everyone who thirsts.' Isaiah 56 - 'Foreigners and eunuchs will be full members of the family of God.'" Jesus died and was raised. The new covenant is happening. The new creation is happening.' NT, "Acts" 2 video 12

"Good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.' Acts 8:12 That is our message today if we've got one. Our problem today is we are not preaching the message that Philip and Paul did. They did not preach a kingdom without Jesus and they did not do Jesus without a Kingdom."  
Dallas, "Acts" 2 26:30

### The Road to Damascus

Acts 9

"Paul was the embodiment of what God had done to Israel (Galatians 2:15-21). He has taken His people Israel zealous for Torah and thru the Torah and the death and resurrection of the Messiah He has turned his people inside out to be at last what they were always intended to be the people of God for the world... the bearers of God's promise for the world. Saul has been absolutely right and absolutely wrong of the God of Israel. Saul saw Jesus with his own eyes. The deeply personal meaning of the cosmic meeting of Jesus." NT, Acts #2, Video 12 end & Video 13 [see NT Wright, *Paul*, - What happened on the road to Damascus?]

### Peter — Cornelius & Prison - Kingdom Unity

Acts 10:1-11:18; 12:1-23

"Christ came to break God's kingdom out of cultural captivity. The big issue in the book of Acts is whether one can be a Christian and not a Jew. *"The Kingdom shall be taken away from you and given to a people producing the fruit of it."* Matthew 21:43 "That's what happened in the book of Acts. The Kingdom of God was not in the Jews' peculiar possession to make it available to the world."  
Dallas, "The Divine Conspiracy" Lecture #3

**Meditation** — Acts 2:14-47; 11:1-18 Isaiah 49:6 & Acts 1:8

### Application for Kingdom Power Training → V-I-M

- V — How does God's organization differ from our churches & governments?
- I — How do my desire and intention stand in light of Stephen? (Acts 7:55)
- M — Where will I serve this week "outside" of my circle of familiarity?

### Teaching from Dallas & NT to enrich Session 2



Dallas, "["Acts" #1](#) 20:00-34:40 "["Acts 2"](#) 18:30-30:30

NT, "["Acts" Talk #2](#) Video 6 (3:30-End) & Videos 7-13

[Talk Notes - see Study Guide p. 13-15, 24-25 for Dallas and p. 41-47 for NT]

**Next Session 3 of 4** — "Act III - Paul & the Gentiles" Acts 11:19-29; 13:1-20:38

## Act III — "Paul & the Gentiles"

### Session 3

#### I. The Acts Message - "Radical Messianic Eschatology" NT, *Paul, A Biography* (54)

"The resurrection of Christ and the availability of that life to everyone who trusts Him. The guidance of the Kingdom of God over the activities of those who are in the fellowship of disciples." Dallas, Acts" Talk #2 @ 17:00

#### II. Paul & The Gentiles - Acts 13-20 "Testifying to the gospel of God's grace"

Acts 13-14 — "Setting the Scene: Paul's initial foray into the pagan world."

Acts 15 - Church Council: "Is it okay to take the Gospel to the pagans?"

Acts 16-20 - Paul's main mission. "What a great page turner Acts is."

Stunning one thing after another with a crescendo of him preaching to hostile Jews then Gentiles then explanations of what we are about. "Yes, we are different. Look at who we are, look at what we are doing. We are not being wicked. We are actually keeping the moral standards and actually making the peoples lives and communities better." Underlying question - Is Paul a loyal Jew? Is he actually a danger to Roman order? Is Paul really plotting to destroy Judaism or being loyal to the traditions? NT, "Acts" Talk #3 - Video 14 @ 4:00

#### III. Setting the Scene: "Lordship & Worship" - Acts 13-14 - Tour 1

"Christian mission is about radical transformation of life, something which was already happening all over the place in the early chapters of Acts."

NT, *Acts for Everyone*, p. 66

Open Doors & Opposition — *Healing & Stoning in Lystra* — "Paganism looks at elements in the world and divinizes them and worships them. In terms of people as Paul says in Romans looking at the world which is full of God's power and worshipping the world instead of the God who made the world, worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator.

NT, "Acts" Talk #3, Video 16 @ 4:15

#### IV. The Jerusalem Council - Acts 15 — *Okay to take the gospel to the pagans?*

"Deep in the heart of Old Testament prophecy, we have the prediction of when God does for Israel what God will do for Israel, the Gentiles will get in on the act. Of course they will because God is the Creator. Then the whole earth will be blessed." *Circumcision is out. Idolatry & Fornication still forbidden.*

NT, "Acts" Talk #3, Video 17 @ 7:00

The Church United; Paul & Barnabas Divided - "The awful thing is they are both right. I suspect it has its roots in Syrian Antioch conflict. They were not very much so unlike us. God blesses two missions."

NT, "Acts" Talk #3, Video 18 @ 5:35

~> Free ebook Resource — "[The Story of Acts 15](#)" by NT Wright



### Act III — "Paul & the Gentiles"

#### Session 3 (continued)

#### V. Paul's Main Mission - Acts 16-20 — Tours 2 & 3: *To the Jew then Gentile*

Tour 2 - 16:1-18:22 - Conversion, Jail, Philosophers, Priscilla, Aquila, Gallio

Tour 3 - 18:23-20:38 - Miracles, Riots, Town Clerk, Apollos, Eutychus, Elders

"The Jewish and Christian critique of paganism is not, "You're wrong, get out of here. It's you're picking up signals but you don't know how to interpret them. You need to step back from all the ways you've been doing it wrong and here is how to do it right." NT, "Acts" Talk #3, Video 20 @ 8:30

~ ~ ~

"We have to be very careful about this if we are going to engage in the "moral revolution of the world. What is the message? It isn't forgiveness of sins. It includes that, but more or less incidentally by putting human life on a different basis. "They were reasoning and persuading them about the Kingdom of God." (Acts 19:8) Dallas, "Acts" Talk #2 @ 32:40

#### VI. The Acts Message Then & Now - *Kingdom Discipleship*

"What you see is Jesus and the Kingdom are coming together. They are not two things, they are one thing. If you have a Kingdom without Jesus, you don't have much of a Kingdom. If Jesus without a Kingdom, you don't have much of a Jesus. They come together. With Paul and others in the book of Acts, they are gradually closing the gap." Dallas, "Acts" Talk #2 @ 49:20

~ ~ ~

"The Church has to learn how to declare that Jesus is Lord and God raised Him from the dead and to do so in such a way that the gospel of Jesus goes out into those cultures and not just rejecting them, not affirming them as they stand, but transforming them by planting the seeds of hope, particularly planting these communities of faith that will then in each place bear witness to the word of Jesus which is more powerful than anything else." NT, "Acts" 3, Video 21@8:00

**Meditation** — Acts 11:1-18; 15:1-21

#### Application for Kingdom Power Training —> V-I-M

V — What does it look like for me to remain in grace? (Acts 13:43, 11:23)

I — Why don't I accept both/and compromise instead of either/or? (Acts 15)

M — Who is my Priscilla or Aquila mentor and Apollos mentee? (Acts 18)

#### Teaching from Dallas & NT to enrich Session 3



Dallas, "[Acts](#)" #2 0:00-18:30; 30:30-50:00

NT, "[Acts](#)" Talk #3 Videos 14-21

[Talk Notes - see Study Guide p. 23-24, 26-29 for Dallas and p. 48-54 for NT]

**Next Session 4 of 4** "Act IV - Kingdom Beachheads Then & Now" Acts 21:1-28:31

**Act IV — "Kingdom Beachheads — Then & Now"**

Session 4

**Paul on to Jerusalem — Acts 21-26**

"I am ready to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (21:13)

~> Paul Beaten, Arrested and Trials before the Sanhedrin, Felix, and Festus

"Paul's defense - 'I am a loyal Jew. What I have been doing is an expression of my loyalty to the traditions of Israel.' The Messiah and His coming and His mission is in fact what the traditions of Israel are all about - particularly the Resurrection."

NT, "Acts" talk #4, video 22 @ 6:10

~> Paul before King Agrippa - Acts 26 - Paul's 3rd Testimony of Damascus Road

"Here is the heart of what we need to grasp for the 21st Century. When the gospel Jesus Christ impinges on someone's own personal life, heart and soul, that is so that God will do in them and thereby through them what God wants to do for the whole world. Conversion and justification are God doing in and through the individual that which God is intending to do for the whole cosmos. The two marry up ultimately in the New Testament. You can't have the one without the other. Acts 26:17-18 say it sharply." NT, "Acts" talk #4, video 24 @ 2:05

**Paul on to Rome — Acts 27-28**

"I appeal to Caesar." (23:11, 25:11)

~> "Saved" from Shipwreck — Equivalent of the death of Jesus on the Cross.

Acts 14:22, "Thru many sufferings we must enter the Kingdom of God."

"Because [the Cross] is done once and for all, we are marked and shaped by it and we always bear in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life may be manifest in our body. We do not die for the sins of the world. But, we are shaped by the dying of Jesus. In ministry, you know when you come to the point where you are cast down but not destroyed, depressed but not utterly forsaken. In the dying, you live."

NT, "Acts" Talk #4, video 25 @ 5:50

~ ~ ~

"Salvation is being caught up in the life Jesus is now living on Earth. Where is He living that life? Not just in church. I hope He is living His life there. But, that is not the primary location. The primary location is the world in which we created to be responsible for. You can see how these things come together. Wherever I am a disciple is wherever I am, whatever I am doing. That's where I come to know the reality of God. That's discipleship...reframing my mind, what I think about in life."

Dallas, "Acts" talk #2 @ 51:45

~> The Trial in Rome - We don't know what happened

"As we await the final verdict, we who believe in Jesus Christ have already heard the verdict in the present. Luke has woven the fact that we already heard the verdict - you are innocent. You are not guilty. We wait for the final day when the verdict will be ratified. We have already heard it. Faith involves looking to Jesus and so hearing that verdict already. The resurrection of Jesus, as Paul kept on emphasizing, is the thing that anchors it all." NT, "Acts" Talk #4, video 26 @ 3:05

**Act IV — “Kingdom Beachheads — Then & Now”**

Session 4 (continued)

**The Kingdom of God Beachhead in Rome & Your Hometown**

“Paul preached about the Kingdom of God and taught of the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.” Acts 28:30-31

*What was Paul up to?*

“He was a loyal Jew saying things people didn’t want to hear but his conscience was clear. He was representing the tradition at it’s deepest point. He could show he was being true.”\*

*What was God up to?*

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. God was in Paul, was bringing the news of that reconciliation to the world.”\*

*What are we up to?*

“The call to deep loyalty and yet often exploration which will land us up accusations of disloyalty. To do things which people will say “You are politically out of line. You are talking about another king.” We are called to do things that people will see as subversive. The power of love which the gospel is all about always challenges the love of power which is what Caesar is all about.”\*

\* - NT, “Acts” talk #4, video 26 @ 4:40-5:55

~ ~ ~

“Paul was not supported by human organizations. He was there because God had picked him up and put him there. He wanted to be there. He was supported by the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of God brought all kinds of resources to put him there. That’s what I am trying to think about with you about the book of Acts. The book of Acts is a revelation of how the people of God move independently of human arrangements.” Dallas, “Acts” Talk #2 @ 58:50

The Book of Acts theme — “Jesus - Kingdom Unity”     *“The first big issue in the New Testament is equality of people before God.”* Dallas, “Acts” talk #2 @ 56:40

**Meditation** — Acts 28:11-31

**Application for Kingdom Power Training → V-I-M**

V — Where do I see God has rescued me from shipwrecks?

I — Am I ready to die for the name of Jesus Christ? (21:13)

M — What will I do with Kingdom resources at hand to live the book of Acts?

**Teaching from Dallas & NT to enrich Session 4**



Dallas, [“Acts” #2](#) 50:00-1:06:30 (end)

NT, [“Acts” Talk #4](#) Videos 22-26

[Talk Notes - see Study Guide p. 30-31 for Dallas and p. 55-59 for NT]



**Scribe's Comments** - The session was transcribed from the recording in good-faith effort but it is not verbatim. The **bold** and underline are the scribe's emphasis.

~ ~ ~ **Session 1**

[Total = 1:13:59]



**"The Book of Acts"** (audio only)

[See "[Jesus, Dallas & NT - The Book of Acts](#)" Jesus College webinar]

Being invited to deal with Acts in two hours is a little like being invited to eat a horse for lunch.

The book of Acts is normally not appreciated for what it really is.

Can we understand Acts in terms of contemporary church life or only by placing it in the context of God's march through human history?

The answer is the latter.

Book of Acts in a much larger context than we do today - often a feed into what we know about churches in our world today and recently, you can't appreciate what it does and it will block understanding of the the Kingdom of God is doing today.

*"I will build my church and death will not overcome it."* — **Matthew 16**

It is an eternal work God is doing in history and what He gets out of it is a redeemed community of love in which He dwells because His indwelling has always been His aim. We messed it up but He didn't give up.

We have to think about God's re-involvement in humanity.

If we want to get this right, we have to start in Genesis 1:26. [5:00]

Then God said, *"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule..."*

That is the image of God - to rule, to have dominion.

That is not the top of the human food chain.

The rule of the human being is always meant to be under the rule of God.

Jesus, *"Repent, the Kingdom of God is here."*

\* Turn, for the dining room is at hand. It's there and has been there.

Turn, for the rule of God is available to you. You can live there.

Seek first the Kingdom of God is a companion. If we don't seek it, we will wind up living on our own. The result is the disasters we see.

**The Kingdom of God** - *"God in action."*

[9:30]

His kingdom is present where He wants done is done.

Don't think about that obstructively. It's right here, right now.

*"In Him, we live and move and have our being."*

\* Move you hand. You did that in God.

Praying *"thy kingdom come"* is where he wants done is not done.

\* Ezekiel - "Wheels of Fire"

I can't do much with Wheels of Fire but if you are dealing with people far from God, you may need this.

The book of Acts where God had revealed Himself to the world through His son. His closest friends did not know what was happening.

#### **John 14**

Thomas - We don't know where you are going.

Jesus - I am the way. Know me, know the Father.

Phillip - Show us the Father.

The presence of Jesus and the death and resurrection open the door to the book of Acts. That's what Jesus very carefully prepared them for. The book of Acts opens with Him continuing to work with them. They were still fumbling trying to get their minds wrapped around what was happening. He's talking to them about the Kingdom of God.

The gospel that brings discipleship, transformation and then power is the gospel of the Kingdom of God. **What is the gospel of the Kingdom of God?** It is available to anyone who will simply rely on Jesus, put their confidence in Him. Putting your trust in what he said and what He did you begin to experience the kingdom of God.

New birth - John 3.

Nicodemus came claiming to see the action of God in Jesus.

"Only do what you do unless God is with you."

He was right but he didn't know what he was saying. The kingdom comes in an invisible, personal power. The Kingdom of God is un-bodily, personal power. You can't see it.

A major part that has had to develop through the centuries is an understanding of God as a spiritual reality, interacting with us, wanting to inhabit us and bringing us to the power and character He intended us to have living in His image. We would exercise dominion in union with God. The way we know God is with us is by his action with us. Most of the time, we know God was with us through the rear-view mirror. We would probably not do well if we had a sense God was with us.

The prophet, "*Oh that God would rend the heavens and come down.*"

He did it in a manger and He does it with humble people who act in reliance upon Him. Generally, we know that as we look back and we say, "Ebenezer, hitherto, the Lord has led us" past tense.

That's one of the great things we learn when we develop the character of Christ in His companionship. All of that had to be worked out. I'm thankful to be able to refer to the Renovare Study Bible - [now the [Life with God Bible](#)] the wonderful presentation of God's action in history calling out a people came to be more and more present and have a view of where He intends all of this to wind up. As time goes by it's almost seems as if God is working out a plan as to how he might come back into human life in a way that doesn't destroy it. Because God is so great He has to in a manner hide Himself in order that we can have a life.

"You are a God who hides yourself." **Isaiah 54**

That's a part of the story to allow human beings to step into a life that is greater than they can imagine without destroying themselves.

### **The Blessing of Abraham**

[20:00]

What is the blessing of Abraham?

God is with him in everything he does!

Turns up again in **Galatians 3:14** - The blessing of Abraham would come upon those who have learned to put their faith in Him. That's what comes to us. That we would be able to fulfill our calling to reign in life.

**Romans 5:17** - *"For if, by the transgression of one person, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ."*

That's now through the "abundance of grace".

### **Grace - (def.) "God acting in your life."**

Grace and the Kingdom come together. Grace is God acting in our lives to accomplish what we can not accomplish on our own. When you get that understanding of grace and then you read the teachings in the Old & New Testament about grace, you'll see it is the restoring of rule. It is God's way of helping us realize what we were called to in our creation. That is creative responsibility for our world.

\* For example - [Our] house is a manifestation of our life...our [work] is.

Grace goes far beyond anything that is typically thought of as religious.

That thought is one of the main thoughts that I have to hang everything I have to say because the book of Acts is the story of how God's kingdom and grace manifested itself far beyond religious organization because in that story religious organization drops away.

### **The History of the Old Testament**

[24:05]

\* **Exodus** - Abraham's descendants were not a nation. In the Exodus, they became a people. God manifested himself in the Exodus independent of and contrast to religious organization.

God in the bush before Moses. "You want me to what?"

"Who am I going to tell them sent me?"

"Tell the, 'I am that I am' sent me." "Oh..."

That's a common theme when God calls people.

\* **Jeremiah** - *"I'm just a kid."*

God desires and is establishing a world of His kingdom that does not run from human power. That's what we are learning especially when we get to the book of Acts.

\* **Book of Judges** - One of the places you see most vividly of what God had in mind is the book of Judges. There is no human organization in Judges. God's interaction was through individuals whom He called. God was working out a pattern of human government that was from God not from man.

\* **Samuel** - They get tired of judges. They want a government.  
God says, *"They have not rejected you, they have rejected me."*

One of the more profound passages in the Bible when we think so much about government.

*"I give you a King in my anger and I took him away in my wrath."*  
**Hosea 13:11**

He gives them a king who are used to thrash them. You have a few good ones but there was not a king in the history of Israel that did not fail bitterly at some point. That's the way it is if you go that route. If you have human government it is some kind of stop gap measure and the plan is to abolish it.

\* **Daniel 2** - The stone cut without hands is a divine government and it is designed to eliminate human government. That has grave implications for what we do in religion.

\* **Exile** [30:10]

The human government the Jews had come to trust is crushed in the Exile. The exile is a progression in God's plan that picks up in the book of Acts and the book of Acts is not done yet. We are still living there. It will come out to a good solution in the future and we get to be a part of it. Human government in its nature is designed to fail because it trusts the wrong thing.

\* **Malachi 4:4** - A manifestation of the old effort at the kingdom of God among the Jewish people. *"Remember the law from my servant Moses...the prophet will restore the hearts of the Father to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers."*

The manifestation of the failure is in the family. The old law could not redo the heart. The primary manifestation of it was the failure of fathers & sons to relate to one another as was intended. This is such a revelation of human reality.

Ten Commandments - *"Honor your Father & Mother."* How? Can't do it if your'e relying on human abilities. Same with **Marriage** - *Three to Get Married* by Fulton Sheen. You have to have God involved.

## Inter-Testamental

[34:00]

A rich form of Jewish life formed. It was a failure because it attempted to organized Jewish life through the synagogue with government organized around religion. That form prevails when John the Baptist comes. Everyone was thinking of the Kingdom of God coming in the form of human kingdom, mainly the religious authorities. What had come to be know as the "Law & the Prophets" was not the Law & the Prophets at all. It was the arrangement of human power that crushed the people where the people in power allowed it to exalt themselves. Jesus is constantly fighting that battle.

## The New Testament

[35:40]

**Matthew 21** - Jesus is teaching, *"the ones in power rejected the stone that alone could be the cornerstone."*

The stone that the builders rejected is now taken by God and made the keystone to the whole building for God's purposes. The cornerstone held the whole structure together.

Jesus is announcing a tremendous shift.

v. 43 - *"Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit."*

The book of Acts is an account of how that happened. It begins with post-resurrection teachings by Jesus and winds up with Paul in Rome teaching with no human power whatsoever. Indeed living off the Roman government to some extent in the household of Caesar preaching the gospel as a basically prisoner. It's important to get the point of that change. This is expressed most clearly in Acts 1.

## The Book of Acts - A Divine Organization for World Revolution [38:00]

**Acts 1** - People are still asking for a kingdom based on human organization. He rejects that. He is with them but often not visible.

v. 2 - *"By the Holy Spirit he had given orders by the apostles He had chosen."* What's the significance of that? He was teaching them without being visibly present. That's where He had to bring His people. The effects of the words that came through the Holy Spirit was something they could identify.

\* The Disciples on the road to Emmaus - *"Did not our hearts burn within us as He spoke to us on the way?"* That's Jesus heartburn. Now He's teaching them how to respond through the Holy Spirit to what He's teaching them and leading them as He goes on because He is going to form a powerful organization for "world redemption" that is not be based on anything that could be identified as human organization. This is a big point for us to get to understand what is happening in the book of Acts and what is to happen today. The constant tendency is to try to find a human organization and give powers to people in that organization with the hope it will work somehow for God's glory. Look at the wording in this passage:



v. 4 - "...wait for what the Father promised you had heard from me. You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit..."

Unfortunately, many people when they come to the book of Acts and other parts of the New Testament, they tend to think in terms of what was manifested in the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Let me shock you by saying the book of Acts is not about baptism of the Holy Spirit. Many say, "What we need is to get into the Upper Room to pray and God will baptize us and that will not solve our problems." It was a time for initiation as an order under God that people had to have a way for recognizing. If you study the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts you will find it will always occur in a manifest form where someone needs to recognize the presence of God where they had not previously recognized it. If you want to understand what the baptism of the Holy Spirit means you have to go beyond the manifestations and look at the reorganization of God's people under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They were still asking verse 6, "Is it at this time that you are going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?"

Their idea of restoration of the kingdom was taking governmental power. That had thought in those terms for centuries. In the gospels, Jesus is reconstructing that understanding.

"What is your opinion about the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They replied, "David's." **Matthew 22:42**

He shows them that He is not going to be the Son of David as they understand. No Jewish Father is going to call their son Lord. He is teaching and working at this constantly to try to get them past the idea that the Messiah is going to come in the form of a governmental leader.

v. 8 - "You shall receive power" ...Wait a minute? You're going to have power without position. They wanted position. Their understanding of power is that it flowed from position. They could not understand how they could return to the dominion of Genesis 1:26 without having human position and power. That comes up over and over in our ecclesiastical organizations where power is associated with position. And yet if you look back, the prophetic ministry has always been power without position.

"Who sent you?" "Where did you get this authority?"

They were asking for position. Jesus was careful to arrange that by His association with John the Baptist but He was actually never a student of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was recognized as a prophet and someone who endorsed Jesus. That shows up in the discussions. But notice, that was not human authority. John the Baptist did not have human authority. Jesus cornered his critics one time by asking them,

"Was John's authority from heaven or of man?" **Matthew 21:25**  
They would not say "of men". It was of heaven. That's the point.

## The Law and Power of the Kingdom

[46:20]

Is there a heavenly authority that organizes human life so that it can actually be conducted in the manner intended by God where the law of God flows from a life that is transformed by God?

That is what the Old Testament did not succeed in doing largely because it degenerated into human arrangements that served human purposes and always found the prophets in opposition. The prophet basically in Israel's history is a position of opposition. They normally get killed. That's what Jesus had in mind when he said,

*"A prophet does not perish outside of Jerusalem."* **Luke 13:33**

The human system of domination is where you go to get killed if you are a prophet. That will be because that system always tries to work in human power and because of that can never come into accord with God's Kingdom. Never. You can't do it. You can only come into accord with God's kingdom by God's power and for that you have to be subordinated from the inside out.

They knew this. When the wiz-kid comes to quiz Jesus about the great law, Jesus does not say a single thing about observing the outward rituals or forms moral or otherwise. He doesn't say, "You don't lie." He goes right to the inside, *"Love God with all your heart, mind, strength, soul and your neighbor as yourself."* That's a different location to come to. You come out of that you don't necessarily have to go to church to get worked up to do that. That's your life.

What is it to love God? To have your will set to accomplish what is good in God's eyes. Love is always oriented toward what is good.

\* If you love your flower pot. What do you do? You take care of it.

Love is care. To love God with your all heart, mind, soul and strength is to have all the primary dimensions of your life directed to what is good for God.

Obviously the law is good for God.

**Psalms 19** - *"The law of the Lord is perfect restoring the soul."*

**Joshua 1:8** - *"This book of the Law not depart from your mouth..."*

One of the great tragedies of our time is people go to the fact you can't be justified by the law and say, "we don't need it. The primary way you seek the Kingdom of God is through the law of God." [49:45]

When you seek it there you find grace. Grace does not come apart from law and law is not effective apart from grace. You find someone truthful through and through, that's grace. They can't do that on their own.

\* Girl in Sunday School - "What is a lie?"

*"It is an abomination to God and a very present help in times of trouble."*

If you are going to be truthful, you're going to need some help. All of the Law is like that. The law came in the Old Testament to the people who really did understand

that but it could not be made the basis of their life together. The life of the Jewish people together degenerated into all kinds of things other than truthfulness and love and the prophetic story over and over again until you see it being enriched in the later prophets is always directed in keeping the law like in the most tender ways like making sure you take care of widows & orphans. That's always the mark. Why? Because that's where love is. You don't do that just for points, you do that because you love widows & orphans because you love God and you love what God loves and He loves widows & orphans.

You had to turn to the inside. By the time you get to Jesus, this lawyer asking the question knows what the answer is. Jesus says, "*You're not far from the kingdom of God.*" **Mark 12:34** The lawyer at least knew the answer but they could not make it happen. They constantly fell back into legalism, pharisaism, self-righteousness, and all of that. So when Jesus comes and says, "*You shall receive power*" - it is a power that comes from God. It is not mediated through human beings. That shift is the primary shift in the book of Acts. [52:45]

What you see now is God taking a people that has been prepared and reaching out to the whole world in transformation.

**Acts 1:7-8**, "*...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you...my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the Earth.*"

That had actually been the intention of the Jewish people all along. They had not been given the presence of God in their lives just to enjoy for their own sake.

**Isaiah 49:6** - "*It is too small a thing that you should be my servant...I will make you a light of the nations so that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.*"

\* Nations refers to non-Jews.

You have to have that in mind when you reach Acts 1. Not identifiable in terms of cultural religion. What he is talking about is "world revolution".

**Acts: Disciples for a World Revolution** [55:40]

**Matthew 28:18-20** — "*All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me...*"

It is not just Jewish things or just Christian things, it is everything - designing a house, writing a play, running a bank. I have been given power over that. Jesus is the best in your field. Whatever you can do, He can do everything better than you.

We're talking "world revolution".

*"As you go, make Baptists, Quakers, Catholics, Protestants, Christians"*

He said make disciples of Him.

\* If we miss that turn, we have to consult our GPS - "recalculating"

*"As you go, make disciples..."*

When you have disciples, bring them together in Trinitarian fellowship. Baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The name is the reality. It is not something you use when you say it. That's not what is being spoken of here.

It is talking about immersion in Trinitarian fellowship. You see it clearly in John 17 - Jesus is likening it to the fellowship with the Father to the fellowship that the disciples are intended to have with one another. If you got there, you can take on the last clause:

*"Teach them to do all that I commanded."*

Not they ought to, but teach them in such a way they do what Jesus said.

*"I am with you until the end of the age"* - the point at which it's all done.

God has accomplished His purposes in human history and now He has the community He intended from the beginning in the creation of human beings.

When you look at that passage, think what it is all about. That section is about "world revolution"...wherever you live. It invites you to think, suppose that would happen there. The result would not be whiz-bang church services. This is not about the church. The Church, appropriately understood in New Testament terms, is about discipleship. They make disciples. Disciples are for the benefit of the world not for benefit of the the church. This is quite a shift.

When you think about the book of Acts you have to be thinking about it by placing it in God's march though human history.

What we call the church today has a place in this. Don't be too hard on the church. The best people are in the church. The church is the primary place for making disciples.

"World revolution" is what the Great Commission is about  
...what Acts 1 is about.

*"You will be my witnesses..."*

Witnesses are people who cause others to know something. They have knowledge and they bring it and make it available to others.

\* Court systems don't want to know what you think, what you've heard, what you're committed to. T

### **Disciples with Knowledge of the Kingdom of God**

[1:02:25]

This is a radical shift. This is bringing knowledge of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ, and what He is doing today, as well as then, to people as a basis for them deciding how to live their lives.

We are not called to get people to do things. We are called to help people know things. If we get people to do things, we'll have to spend the rest of our life restarting them to do things. The natural progression here would be they would achieve an understanding of life in the Kingdom of God that would make what they do a natural expression of their knowledge.

\* Driving - Teaching someone to drive. After they come to knowledge, you don't have to get them to do things. They do them because they know they are right and good and appropriate.

Same thing for people who become disciples in the Kingdom of God and learn how to live there as His disciples. You don't have to try to get them to be truthful. Their attitude is, *"Who would want to lie?"* They are saying that in a context with a background of knowledge. *"Since God is in charge of things and He is faithful, why would I need to lie? Steal?"*

**Ephesians 4, Colossians 3** - "Lay aside malice"

(def.) Ill will to see other people harmed.

There's a lot of that in the world. "Lay that aside" - that's the natural response - transformation of character. When that comes everything in human life changes generally.

In the book of Acts, what you are looking at is the transformation of lives as they step out on dependence of human organization. Sometimes that is manifestly against prevailing practices.

\* Jewish widows were better cared for by the church.

People from all around the world heard in their own language. This is the reversal of Babel. Why was there Babel? To thwart human ambition. God brought confusion of their language. Now then, as the Kingdom of God in Christ comes upon a group of people, it is safe for them to be able to communicate. So, He reverses Babel. The idea is we are going to see a transformation of life under Christ in the Kingdom of God that makes it safe for people to be able to cooperate. Isn't that an interesting perception? They are going to move onto a different basis of life that is going to be the direct presence of God in their lives. That's not in the world yet but that's what they are going to bring it. They will give a model for what it is like for people to live together who genuinely love one another. That is going to be the mark of His disciple. *"One another"* refers primarily to the hospital, the learning place of the assembly of the disciples. That's where you learn it.

That's why Jesus says in **Luke 14** - You have to set aside your family. You're going to come into the fellowship of disciples and become a kind of person who can go back into your families safely and redemptively. The family is such a tragic display of the failure of human abilities. That's going to be redeemed now because we're moving away from human structures and dependence upon human structures. There are going to be human structures but they will not be what runs life. The intent is to redeem them not necessarily just to create a new set. There will be a new set but the point of the new set is to allow people to come into the spiritual hospital and recover and become capable of living under God as He intended them. The field before them is all that is good and right. Whatever is good, God is for that. As you watch the letters of the New Testament develop, you can see over and over as Paul returns to the theme of "doing good".

\* Wesley - *"Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can, To all the people you can, As long as ever you can."*

That's the picture of life under the Kingdom of God - what the disciples are called together in Trinitarian fellowship to learn and then their whole life displays that.

They are hopeless do-gooders. That's because God is a hopeless do-gooder. He set up a world in which human beings can learn to live in the Kingdom of God in that way where there is no area of life that they touch that is not touched by the Kingdom of God... and that's eternal living.

### **Eternal Life**

[1:12:05]

Let me conclude with that — eternal life is not something that begins after you die. We can help ourselves by translating it "Eternal living" because eternal life has pretty well been ruined. Eternal living is living now in such a way that what you do is a part of God's life.

When Jesus says, "*This is eternal life - know you and Jesus whom you sent*" (John 17:3), He's referring to an interactive, participative relationship now for what we are doing becomes a part of what God is doing and becomes eternal in that way. It is the quality of God's life that is eternal life. We were meant for that and that's what we were created for.

The Book of Acts comes at a point where all the preparation has been completed. Jesus has come into the world to make real the power of the Kingdom of God. The best people on Earth have crucified and killed the best man whoever lived and what do you know, He just gets up on the other side. Now He is creating a community of people who live in His eternal kingdom now.

The book of Acts is about that. We will spend time going over more of the details showing how this works in the book of Acts. It is a beautiful story.

### **Closing Prayer**

~ ~ ~ End of Session 1 @ 1:13:59 ~ ~ ~

~ ~ ~ Session 2

[1:19:18]



[“The Book of Acts — Session 2” \(audio\)](#)



I would like us to keep thinking about whether or not what we are looking at here [in Acts] is the system of churches that we now have. I hesitate to do that. I don't want to be in position of even being thought of They are the best thing we have going and the best people are there. The people I know involved in churches are doing the best they can.

There is a problem and we need to try to make as clear as possible what the problem is. The big issue is the message and associated with the message is the idea of “salvation”.

### **The Message - “Trust Jesus”**

The message that enlivened a power to the people of Christ in the book of Acts to the power of Christ was primarily the resurrection of Christ which is the summary of the Kingdom of God. It vindicates everything Jesus says about the Kingdom of God.

*“Repent the kingdom of God is at hand”* is the fundamental proclamation.

He tells his people repeatedly, “I am going to Jerusalem and they are going to kill me.” That was not their idea of a Davidic King. They could not put that together. His disciples did not get that.

\* Peter's denial of Jesus' death - He did not understand the Kingdom of God. He thought it was an arrangement of human power. This idea that He would die could not possibly be. They could not comprehend it. It was because they had not understood God as a spiritual being. Even though the teaching of the Old Testament were sharply directed at that. They were still tied to physical realities. The resurrection is what drives them beyond that. Because now Christ is alive, but He is not physically present. He is acting but not in terms of physical powers. It affects the physical but it does not come out of the physical.

The real question - What is the message? — Trust Jesus!

He does not mean have the correct beliefs about Him but put your weight on Him. Trust is something people experience very differently from faith in our culture. They believe you can have faith in something you don't trust. We associate “trust” with financial institutions and “faith” with churches. I've never heard of “Trust Baptist Church”. To trust something is to lay your life on it. To trust Jesus would be to put your life on His claim of the reality that the Kingdom is right here. The church picks that up.

*“Let your gentleness be known to all...”* **Philippians 4:5-7**

It means don't take stuff into your own hand and make it happen. The reason given is because *“the Lord is at hand.”* Then he goes on in the passage, *“Be anxious for nothing...”* That's the gospel message - you can absolutely put everything in the reality of Jesus and His kingdom.

You want to understand when this is presented in the book of Acts and the Letters it is referring to a kind of resignation to God. You turned everything over to God. "Don't be anxious..." God's got your back. Just keep the conversation going. Prayer is asking and receiving in the fellowship of Christ with what we are doing together. When I undertake something, my expectation is that He will act with me to accomplish what He wants to come out of that operation. I trust that. I am able to go ahead, leave it to God and do what is right, do what is good, what I think is best, helpful. I have to work on my habits which is where discipleship comes in. God is in that too. I engage in disciplines. I engage with it the increase my interactive relationship with God in whatever it is I am doing.

That message has a different take on salvation underlying it. The block that we face lies in a mistaken understanding of the message of what salvation is. If you get the message wrong, it will leave ordinary life out. That is basically what has happened in the prevailing understanding of Christians of the United States and Western culture. This always has to do with removing guilt. This has not always been true.

\* *"Rock of Ages...the double cure - saved from wrath and made me pure."*

Salvation from sin is not just salvation from guilt. It is salvation from the power of wrongdoing over my life. It is the "double cure".

If you have message that does not encompass that, you're going to have a different version of salvation. If your message leaves out whole life, your salvation will leave out whole life.

Resurrection life in the Kingdom of God comes to enable us to easily and routinely escape the power of sin as a practice in our lives. [11:44]

This digs into the roots of the whole idea in the Old Testament - it will return over and over again to Obedience. There's simply no excuse for not obeying.

That was normally done by institutions they have developed to mediate God's favor on the people of Israel.

If you read the Psalms, you're not left by any false impressions by this.

\* Psalms - Spiritual mud wrestling. You get down in the stuff.

People who engage with God and obey live the 23rd Psalm kind of life.

That is a different understanding of salvation. Salvation as it comes down through the ages gradually moves further and further away from obedience. [13:25]

A human arrangement for forgiveness is something the church very early on offers to human beings and makes them dependent upon the human organization. The human organization has control over forgiveness.

\* Catholic Church - the sacraments: forgiveness dispensed through Priests  
Kings in medieval Europe quailed before even Bishops, much less the Pope.  
Church dispensed or could withhold salvation as delivery from guilt.  
Holiness usually wound up in the monasteries.



From Eusebius on ordinary people don't have that kind of holiness. They are able to draw upon the special quality of the special people to help them get through life and eventually be received by God. That is a very powerful thing - Salvation is forgiveness and we have the control over forgiveness.

\* Reformation - In not too long, forgiveness becomes tied to correct doctrine.  
By now we have over 40,000 Christian denominations. All of them are right.  
Faith became associated in believing the right things rather than trusting Christ and believing in the Kingdom of God.

**The Message in the Book of Acts** - the resurrection of Christ and the availability of that life to everyone who trusts Him. The guidance of the Kingdom of God over the activities of those who are in the fellowship of disciples.

Salvation - acceptability in that life by the power of God that now you get a different quality of existence - resurrection life.

Colossians 3 - *"Since you have been raised up with Christ, set your affections on the things above...because you are dead"*

Your old life you have now transferred out of that.

\* Running on electricity and you've switched over to propane.

The reality of the resurrection life in the Kingdom of God is now what is running your life and what you live in terms of with reference to organizations.

### **The Book of Acts**

[18:30]

Human organization occurs under the Kingdom of God

**Acts 2:1** - *"a sound from heaven"* - a power directly from Heaven.

It acts among the people who are living in the name of Jesus.

One of the interesting things you see in the book of Acts is learning to act in the name of Jesus. Kingdoms work by names.

\* Elect a President - sign papers, put their names on things,  
give orders that come from them individually.

Acting in the name of Jesus is a way of bringing the immediate presence of God and His kingdom into human life. He had told them to do that. They had to learn how to do that because He was no longer here but they had His name to work with.

**Acts 3:6** - Peter & John in the Temple to Pray

[20:40]

*"Silver and gold have I none, but what I do have, I give in the name of Jesus Christ."*

The name is access to the Kingdom of God in meeting issues in real life around them. They are beginning to get confident in the Kingdom of God. They are realizing a community is here that is not a human community. It has power, it can direct us without organization in human terms. We have to be careful with how we work that out. Human beings have to be organized but they don't have to trust their organization. That's the difference, whether you are trusting the organization.

When they asked, "Are you going to restore the Kingdom?" They wanted Jesus to introduce a human arrangement but He refused to do it. One of the most important things for us to understand today is how human organizations work. What is the role of leaders in that arrangement because it does not come by the sword. Look how we have slipped in history. People in religious authority took human means.

Illustration on how now to do that — **Acts 13:11** [23:40]

Paul & Barnabas on the Isle of Cyprus.

*"The Lord's hand is going to be upon you and you will be blind."*

That's different from taking a sword and punching his eyes out. Paul knew he had the power to effect people's lives but he tried to stay out of it. That is deeply indicative in how we are to handle power.

We have to have organizations. Elders & Bishops is a loving presence that does not hesitate to speak the truth but it does not rely on human power to enforce it.

Peter & John spoke on behalf of the kingdom and the result is present in the visible world. It was not produced by anything in the world but two persons acting in a power that was not in their own power.

Acting in someones' name - using the power and acting for a benefit other than themselves.

**Acts 8** - Philip in Samaria [26:30]

*"But once they began to believe Philip as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, men and women alike were baptized."* v. 12

—> The Message: People could live in the availability of the Kingdom of God through confidence in Jesus.

That is our message today if we've got one! Our problem today is we are not preaching the message that Philip and Paul did. They did not preach a kingdom without Jesus and they did not do Jesus without a kingdom.

At this point in the development, they are experimenting in how it works but the presence of the Kingdom and the name of Jesus is breaking out in "the public square." There is not a square that is not public. People live in the public square.

\* Secular Universities

Has anyone established that reality is secular?

There is no "secular square".

Private places are not private because God is there.

Jesus is beginning to increasingly come on the scene as a part of the Kingdom.

**Acts 17** Paul at Thessolonica [30:30]

People are jealous of Paul's success come along and stir people up.

**6** *When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here*

*also"; 7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."*

They were moving with the Kingdom of God. It was manifesting its reality. It always hit the business system. It disturbed people's way of making a living. King Jesus is threatening the civic order because people realize this will make a huge change in their lives. It is going to change the city. They are being transformed into citizens of the Kingdom of God. Because of that you have the upset of the city.

### **What is the Message? - Kingdom Discipleship**

[32:40]

What I am hammering on is the message. We have to be very careful about this if we are going to engage in the "moral revolution of the world".

What is the message? It isn't forgiveness of sins. It includes that, but more or less incidentally by putting human life on a different basis. "They were reasoning and persuading them about the Kingdom of God." (Acts 19:8)

If you and I are going to do that, how are we going to do that? Messing with the message messes with our invitation. What do you invite people to? We have to deal with the fact that how we have brought people to Christianity has not been by leading them to become disciples of Jesus.

How do people get in? In all kinds of ways.

We don't evangelize for discipleship. One of things I'm suggesting is that we invite people to become disciples.

We have a lot of approaching them trying to haze them into it. It isn't exactly inviting. Am I preaching a gospel that has a natural tendency to make people want to become disciples? That's the point of talking about this. Does the message I bring have a natural tendency by what it presents by salvation to make people want to become a disciple?

In the Gospels and the Letters, you see a lot of talk about discipleship. There's a lot of confusion in the Gospels. Jesus had to deal with a lot of people who thought discipleship was getting on the gravy train with Jesus.

If you really want to be a disciple, you have to want it more than anything else. When these people in the book of Acts go through these cities and present King Jesus and His Kingdom, they had multitudes that wanted to be disciples of Jesus.

When The New Testament is a book of disciples.

"Disciple" is mentioned some 300 times in the NT. "Christian" appears 3 times.

*Are Christians disciples?*

The next question is...

[37:00]

If you are not a disciple, are you going to Heaven when you die? You see how that hangs together? For many people, they have hung the whole message on "forgiveness".

We need to raise other questions like...

Do you think you'd really be comfortable in Heaven if you are not a disciple who learned to love God?

Loving God is not a snap of the fingers. For one thing, you have to settle that you are not God. That's a shift. What happens to my kingdom? My kingdom is probably the greatest threat to God's Kingdom in my life. Satan has a kingdom and he knows how to work on mine. When you look at the system of the world and the bondage people are in, you have to understand all those kingdoms are at work.

My kingdom is the range of my effective will - where I want done, get's done. You might have ideas about that too for your kingdom. For my kingdom to win, you have to lose. Sounds so much like life doesn't it? The issue of will comes up and anger comes out of that because anger is a will phenomenon. You cross my will, I get mad.

So much hangs together with what is salvation.

So now we might ask the question that is so often asked with evangelism  
"If you die tonight, where will you go?" [39:20]

We also need to ask - "What are you going to do if you don't die tonight?" You're going to still have to deal with your life. That's a helpful thing to talk with people. Say to them, "how are you doing with your kingdom?" That's a pretty good starting point for a conversation. Very often they haven't thought that they have a kingdom but you cross it, they will let you know. They don't have thinking ideas to get around that. So they don't understand why life goes the way it goes. We have to say things that will help them.

That's why in the book of Acts you see this preaching about the Kingdom of God because that repositions everything. [40:10]

You see the presence of the Kingdom of God in the people who are speaking and you say, "I'd like to have life in the Kingdom of God. How do I do that?"  
"You become a disciple of Jesus. You learning from Him, He's your teacher, how to live your life in the Kingdom of God as He would lead your life in the Kingdom of God if He were you.

The real question is not "What would Jesus do?", but "What am I going to do?" Now then comes you can learn how to lead your life in the Kingdom of God. What would that involve? Start with simple things Jesus said like...

Trusting the Kingdom to be here. He said the Kingdom is at hand. Act as if it were and see what happens. Put it to the test.

Any of the teachings of Jesus. "*Don't return evil for evil.*" You don't return evil, you return good for evil. Try it, you might like it. Most of us will have opportunity to do that even in with people our own families. Families are unfortunately are place where people often do things to hurt one another. Imagine not responding the same way. That's a disciple for a disciple in one who is learning to live in the Kingdom of God not just learning to do what Jesus said. That can lead to soul killing legalism. That what has happened over and over again in the church. They look at the **Sermon on the Mount** and say, "OK, I'm going to do that!"

It’s understandable when looking at the Sermon on the Mount, “I can’t do that.” They can’t. They are thinking of terms in who they are now. If you stay that way, you can’t do that stuff. He’s talking about becoming a different person and the kind of actions that come naturally out of that. Discipleship is a position that you have accepted with some understanding of what it involves and you have a vision of what it would be like to do that.

“Spiritual Formation” or what I prefer to call “Growth in Grace” [43:40]

- The process of the transformation that goes on in the life of the disciple.

Discipleship is not an advanced spiritual condition. Disciples are often very green. If you don’t believe that, all you have to do is read the Gospels and see all the green, silly stuff they did. How? They were just disciples and they were very green. Thank God for grace. God accepts green people and not so green people as well because He’s operating on a different basis of righteousness in terms of the law. Grace make it possible for green people to commit themselves to the war that leads to all the wonderful things you see in I Corinthians 13 and Colossians 3. I Corinthians 13 means you stop concentrating on doing the right thing but becoming the kind of person who would naturally do the right thing. You see, sin is slop. When you come to understand, you don’t want to stick your head in it. Until you’ve grown to a certain point, it is very attractive.

#### **Ephesians 4** - “*Deceitful lusts or desires*”

Desire always says, “If you give me that, I’ll be happy!” It’s never true. That’s the nature of desire. You only can fulfill desire by learning how to deny it and subordinate it to what is good. There is no way to deal with desire on its own terms.

A disciple now accepts a position with Christ because of the message he or she has heard and in that process they experience a deliverance from the old life into the new life that is eternal.

Paul in Ephesus is persuading them about the Kingdom of God. [46:50]

What was he doing in particular? In part he was teaching them about the Kingdom and relating to Jesus. He was talking about how you come to live there and learn to grow to the point to where you can, in Colossians 3, mortify the deeds of the body - “things are dropping off”. That is a work of the Spirit in conjunction with your decision to learn what you need to learn to follow Christ.

#### **Acts 20** — Farewell to the Ephesians Elders

[47:50]

v. 21 - “Testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance towards God and faith to our Lord Jesus Christ.”

You turn to God from yourself and put your faith and confidence in Jesus Christ.

v. 25 - “I know that all of you among whom I went about preaching the Kingdom will see my face no more.” Is that a different gospel preaching the Kingdom? Not likely. They are the same gospel. Preaching the Kingdom of God is preaching

repentance, turning to God, putting your faith in the reality of the Kingdom. That is the same as repentance towards God in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

What you see is Jesus and the Kingdom are coming together. They are not two things, they are one thing. If you have a Kingdom without Jesus, you don't have much of a Kingdom. If you Jesus without a Kingdom, you don't have much of a Jesus. They come together.

With Paul and others in the book of Acts, they are gradually closing the gap.

### **Kingdom Living with Jesus Now on Earth**

[50:00]

**Acts 28** — Paul has found his way to Rome. He had a free ride from the government to Rome. Amazing how all of this works out.

v, 23 - Teaching about the Kingdom of God and about the name of Jesus Christ. Prophets & scriptures...

What is the Kingdom of God? You need Jesus to understand it. It was Jesus. Jesus was the King. If we don't preach Him as King, we will never have disciples. When you preach Him as King, you present Him as leading a life now on Earth of which you can be a part of. You witness to people by saying, "Aren't you worried about missing out on the most important thing that is happening in your life?"

What is that? What Jesus is now doing on Earth.

A Version of Salvation — Being caught up in the life Jesus is now living on Earth.

Where is He living that life? Not just in church. I hope He is living His life there. But, that is not the primary location. The primary location is the world in which we created to be responsible for. You can see how these things come together. Wherever I am a disciple is wherever I am, whatever I am doing. That's where I come to know the reality of God. That's what discipleship is. It involves reframing my mind, what I think about in life.

When you begin to understand these things in the book of Acts that goes all the way back to the creation of Genesis.

What am I? What is man and woman that you have anything to do with them? (Psalm 8) "How marvelous are you God? What must I be if God pays any attention to me?"

One of my attempts to formulate this:

"I am an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny  
in God's great universe."

That's who I am. If you don't understand that, the rest of it eventually won't make any sense. When you begin to get an understanding of the Kingdom of God and Jesus and what He is doing in the world, you can say, "It does make sense. Those will never experience death. "Death" - I begin to think differently.

CS Lewis, *Weight of Glory* - *Most common human being - you might be inclined to worship or run from as in a nightmare.*

The first big issue in the New Testament is equality of people before God. [56:40]

"No Greek, No Jews." Colossians 3 Discrimination - It doesn't love people. No Greek, Jew, slave, free, barbarian, Scythian.

It's possible to become very tired hearing about social issues because they are presented as "social issues" not personal issues. This is my neighbor under God that God loves. If I love God I am going to love what God loves. This whole revelation about what this is about is going to become more clear.

Last verses of the book of Acts, **30** *And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.*"

He was not supported by human organizations. He was there because God had picked him up and put him there. He wanted to be there. He was supported by the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of God brought all kinds of resources to put him there. That's what I am trying to think about with you about the book of Acts.

The book of Acts is a revelation of how the people of God move independently of human arrangements. There are going to be arrangements, institutions. It's not a bad thing. It's when you try to live in them independently of God, that it all goes sour. Once you are living in the Kingdom of God with Jesus, the Holy Spirit upholding you. The Father will send another comforter - "parakletos". Jesus and the Father will move in with you when you follow His words. They will be acting, instructing and guiding beyond what you ever thought about.

When we look at the book of Acts, we are looking at life as God meant it now and forever. It enables us to take our whole life where the power and character of God are constantly exhibited. How would the world look if the Jesus revolution would carry out even in the small measure? How would it look if all the affairs of human institutions would be caught up in God?

Art - What is the point of art? If human hands it can be very degraded. Where are the Christian artists and are they willing to step into that realm and be Christian artists? They will catch a lot of flack. That's the nature of the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil, which are often human kingdoms. You go with the knowledge that God will act with you. That's the Kingdom of God in action. Do you win every battle? Probably not. The battle is often very unfair. So often it is a matter of people who will not think about what is going on. People are stubborn. Everyone who opposes them is wrong. That's what we live through as people of Jesus Christ. Life in the Kingdom of God is not a new feature on earth. We can look in history and see the difference it makes to be a follower of Jesus Christ in the area of art, government, legislation, judges. Who needs to be a Christian disciple more than a lawyer?

Law - the idealism and base for law is so obvious. You have to make choices how you are going to be a lawyer. The system wears people down. They discover justice is "due process". The Law is a place of strong, good people who stand for what Law really does historically stand for.

~ ~ ~ **End of Session 2 @ 1:06:30** ~ ~ ~

Q & A

[1:06:30]

Q - [Richard Foster] - Areas Renovaré has been under divine governance and areas where we have been sucked into human governance?

A - What was assumed as standard in the churches may have been more influential than it should. [Renovaré](#) has been counter-cultural. Renovare has been a watering hole. The difficulty of challenging the message of what is salvation is really hard. I'm not for sure that we have really confronted that. Influencing theological schools. We've tried. The Renovaré Institute is a real move in that direction. Perhaps now is the time to look at that again and how we might get at this fundamental question.

Q — We have been selfish and keep it to ourselves.

A — It is to the message. It is a private matter and everyone is on the Heavenly Train.

Q - Because we hate all that stuff, we react far to the other way.

A - [1:14:14] I think we do. That is based on the idea of what we take our message to be and we accept the idea that our message has nothing to do with workplace community, what's happening to the arts and the professions in our culture. That's something we've got wrong. We have to go back and start here and understand that the message is not forgiveness of sins and I'd like to get you to do what you can do to get your sins forgiven.

Here's where pastors are going to have to lead. Who is going to lead the pastors? That's where Renovaré has to take on the educational establishment, *"We have to tell you things you can verify by empirical study and thoughtful examination and guide your life by. We are not in this little corner over here called faith."*

Q - "Condemnation" in John 3:17-18, Romans 8:1-2

A - [1:15:40] Romans 8 condemnation is the condition described in Romans 7.

Romans 7 - who will deliver me? Romans 8 is the answer.

John 3:17-18 - Includes the condemnation of Romans 7 & 8 but it is more like "they have judged themselves" by the position they have taken. They have shown who they are. You take at Jesus and say, "This isn't it."

"Wrath" is a consequence. The primary consequences is not "wrath" but it is the condition of these people, they have been given over to a reprobate mind. A reprobate mind is a mind that doesn't work. People are doing stupid stuff.

\* It's heart breaking to see people who say they are love can come to hate one another. Pain in marriage & divorce is awful.

Q - Where have you written on the misunderstanding of salvation?

A - First chapters in *The Spirit of the Disciplines* where I talk about Christianity as a life. Get out of the idea it is a judicial arrangement.

[See Session 3 - ["The Spirit of the Disciplines Course"](#)]

~ ~ ~ Q & A ends @ 1:19:18 ~ ~ ~

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**Scribe's Comments** - The session was transcribed from the recording in good-faith effort but it is not verbatim. The **bold** and underline are the scribe's emphasis.



### "The Book of Acts"

NT Wright ~ Los Ranchos Presbytery Annual Pastors' Retreat, Malibu, CA

Four Talks	Pages
#1 - Acts 1-2 - Videos 1-6 [RT 48:46]	33-40
#2 - Acts 2-12 - Videos 7-13	41-47
#3 - Acts 13-19 - Videos 14-21	48-54
#4 - Acts 20-28 - Videos 22-26	55-58

[Link to all videos](#)

#### #1 - Introduction of Acts - *The Kingdom of Heaven on Earth* (Videos 1-6)

**Video 1** - Acts 1:1-11 - "The Heaven on Earth" show [TOTAL = 8:10]

The whole book is really about what it looks like when the life of Heaven comes to birth on Earth. We fail to realize that the fact of the church is grounded in the belief that heaven and earth have actually come together in several highly significant senses. Yes, of course, we await the time of the final consummation when they will come together in a new way again. But, we sell ourselves short when we imagine the two have not already come together.

#### **Acts 1:1-5** [1:55]

To begin with, this is, of course, is all about Jesus. It's easy to forget when you're doing Acts that's it's all about Jesus. From one point of view, Jesus has done all he is going to do on Earth in the course of His earthly ministry.

The first book - the gospel of Luke - was written about all Jesus did and taught from the beginning. Luke's first book - How Jesus began to do those things. Part of the point of the book of Acts - this is Jesus Himself through His Spirit, working in and through the church to establish His Kingdom on Earth as in Heaven.

v. 2-3 - *"After His resurrection, He appeared to them over the course of 40 days and spoke about the Kingdom of God."*

I remember in Oxford when I was a graduate student, I asked, "Can somebody please tell me in one sentence what this phrase "Kingdom of God" actually means?" I became more and more puzzled. This phrase "Kingdom of God" has been so misunderstood in the Western tradition in particular. The phrase Kingdom of God declined away from what it means in the New Testament and actually got translated into something else entirely. For so many people, they will go back to default mode where Kingdom of God means heaven and where Heaven is a long way away ontologically from us. And a long, long way away temporarily because Heaven is a place where God's people go to when we die. The Kingdom of God becomes a place called heaven where we hope to go some day. The whole point of the Gospels and Acts is that it is not so. **The Kingdom of God is God's sovereign, saving rule coming on Earth as in Heaven.** I try to write in *Surprised by Hope* and other

places, I try to turn our western tradition inside out. The whole point of Jesus' ministry and mission was to inaugurate what He taught us to pray, *"Thy Kingdom come on Earth as it is in Heaven."*

I suspect ever since the Middle Ages, Western Christianity has tended to assume that the gospel is about how to go to heaven and the Gospels plural are books about the stuff that Jesus did in order to set us a good example, teach some important truths, then to do the climactic thing of dying and rising so that we could then one day go to heaven. Actually, for many people's theology, both Catholic and Protestant, it really would not have much have mattered as long as He was born of a virgin and died and rose three days later, it would not have much have mattered if he had not done all that stuff in between. You might wonder why did Matthew, Mark, Luke and John bother to tell us all that other stuff?

I find in my tradition, we have two different sorts of Christians:

One - Epistles Christians - all about getting saved.

Two - Gospel Christians - all about bringing God's kingdom on Earth as in heaven and then they are not quite sure why Jesus had to die and rise. He did stuff and we try to copy that stuff. I spend quite a bit of my professional life trying to enable those two sorts of Christians to learn from and listen to one other. That's part of the agenda we have to engage with in the Western church right now.

**We need to bring the picture back together again.  
That is what Acts is all about.**

[Video 2](#) - Acts 1:1-11 (continued)

[TOTAL = 9:30]

**The whole book is about the Kingdom of God.**

**Acts 1:3 & Acts 28:31** - Proclaiming the Kingdom of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ frame the book of Acts.

- v. 4-5 - When the disciples are themselves equipped with the Holy Spirit, they will be His witnesses.
- vi. 6-8 - They are puzzled about this. You can see the transition of the meaning of "kingdom". The Kingdom of God is essentially a Jewish thing, an Israel business. (1:6) *"Lord, is it at this time when you restore the Kingdom of God to the Israelites?"* Looks like Jesus said no. Jesus is saying you're going out to the ends of the world. We have forgotten the Israel dimension of the purposes of God. The new perspective on Paul is a recovery of the Israel dimension of the purposes of God, a recovery in the reformed tradition that they got right but is in danger of losing under the pressure of the rest of the Western tradition.

People often tell the story now: "God created humans; humans sinned, God sent Jesus, humans are rescued." Then as with the gospels, we wonder what was all that stuff in the middle about? Why is 2/3 of the Bible the story of what God did with his people Israel?

The answer is that's not how the biblical story works. If you miss the Israel dimension you'll get it wrong. The Israel dimension is that God called **Abraham** and His family to be the means of rescuing the world so that He could Himself rescue the world by coming as Israel's solo representative. The identity of Jesus is formed because He is the focal point where all those strands of Jewish tradition come rushing together. The meaning of the work of Jesus is found that He is doing that for which God called Abraham and His family in the first place. A great deal of the Old Testament is the struggle between Israel knowing it is the bearer of the promises but discovering as it stands it can not actually accomplish those promises. The tension between those two is in the unbearable tension that is only finally resolved in the vertical and horizontal of the Cross.

*"Is this the time you will restore the Kingdom of Israel?"*

The answer is "Yes, but not like you thought it was going to be. Yes, there is coming a day when every knee will bow at the One who is Israel's King." That is the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Israel's dream - Be a great nation as it had been in the days of David & Solomon. So it will be one day. This is the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. But it won't look like any of them every imagined.

*What will it look like?*

"You will receive power and you will be my witnesses."

The entire task of the church is summed up in Acts 1:8. [4:40]

*Witnesses in what sense?*

Not "witnesses" in the sense I have had this religious experience because I want to tell you about it and you might like to have this religious experience to. That may or may not be the case. Witnesses in much more the sense that we are the ones who have observed the enthronement of the world's true Lord and are charged with going out to tell the world who this Lord is and the consequences of the nature of His Kingdom. That is as subversive as the fact of the King Himself.

**Acts 1:9-10** - The Ascension

[5:50]

It's easier to preach about "our man in heaven" than to talk about this very strange event that happened on the Mount of Olives. Part of the difficulty we have is not in what we are saying about Jesus but in the mental furniture we have about heaven & earth. We assume our culture being steeped still in Greek thought rather than Jewish thought, we assume heaven and earth are a long way from one other, completely ontological different. They are different kinds of thing, place, space. That which is normal on earth, e.g. physicality, would be totally abnormal, indeed unthinkable, in heaven. Jesus is very much physical. Jesus is not a ghost.

It's a failure of imagination. Our imagination has been stuck in this Western world view that heaven into earth won't go and earth into heaven shouldn't, can't and never will go.

The entire biblical world view from Genesis to Revelation is predicated on the assumption that heaven on earth are the overlapping and interlocking spheres of God’s good creation.

**Video 3** “Heaven and Earth Joined Together”

[TOTAL = 5:46]

This became one of the main themes in *Simply Christian*. It’s right here in Acts - Heaven and Earth always were made to be joined to one another. They were made for one another. The transition of Jesus from Earth to Heaven as far as I am concerned, may have, for the benefit of the disciples involved some vertical movement. But, the important thing is not as in so much Western imagination, that this means that Jesus is “going away”, that He is going somewhere else. Heaven is not somewhere else. Heaven overlaps and interlocks with Earth. Heaven is present to us when we pray, read scripture, share in the sacraments, minister to the poor in Jesus name. We are right on the edge of heaven looking into it, acting into it, receiving from it.

- \* Eastern Orthodox - East (heaven) to West (earth) in the sanctuary
- \* Western - Vertical from earth to heaven

Now Heaven and Earth are joined together. Heaven is God’s space. Earth is our space. The two are joined together in Jesus. The nature of the cosmos has now been actually itself renewed in Jesus. At last, because sin and death have been met and defeated and overcome on the Cross, the new creation which begins with the physical body of Jesus.

**Easter is not Jesus is risen so we’re all going to heaven. The point is Jesus is risen therefore new creation has begun so we have a job to do. The nature of the cosmos has been renewed.**

Here is a great biblical theme. In Judaism where many Jews basically got this heaven and earth thing, but there was one place where they believed heaven and earth really did come together. It was of course the **Temple**. That really was for them where the two spheres intersected. When you were in the Temple, you were still on earth but this was the place on earth where heaven actually intersected with it and you were there. You really were in the presence of God. One of the Rabbis saying, “Where two or three get together and study the Torah, there the shekinah, the tabernacling presence of God, dwells with them.”

**Video 4**

[TOTAL = 8:44]

Think about the Temple and then think about the whole Earth. This is hugely germane to the meaning of Acts. This has grown upon me slowly since I wrote *Acts for Everyone*. For the Jews, when they were doing their best rooted in their own scriptures, the Temple was not a place of escape to be on earth and also in heaven. No doubt it often felt like that. Rather, the Temple was supposed to a sign and foretaste of what God would do one day for the whole creation.

*Where do you go in the Old Testament to find the Temple filled with the glory of God?*

- \* Isaiah 6 - "Holy, holy, holy...the whole Earth is full of His glory."
- \* Tabernacle - The glory of YHWH descends and fills it. (end of Exodus)
- \* Numbers 14:21 - Joshua & Caleb - "The Lord is with us. We can do it.

Nevertheless, the whole Earth shall be filled with my glory." Why does he say that there? The entry into the promised land will be the coming of the glory into the land against when one day it will fill all creation.

- \* Isaiah 40 & 60 - "All flesh seeing the glory of God."
- \* Psalm 72 - Davidic kingdom fulfilled in the risen Messiah - "Let the whole Earth be filled with His glory."

5:00 - This is what Acts is all about. **Acts is the theology of Jesus and the church as the true Temple.** Jesus is the place where Heaven and Earth have come together, uniquely, decisively and forever.

In His ascension, we have a piece of the new Earth now in Heaven.

Pentecost - we have the power of the renewed Heaven now on Earth. Ascension and Pentecost establish Jesus and the church as the true Temple. The anticipation of and the means by which God's glory is going to fill the whole creation.

*What will that look like?*

Isaiah 40 - "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed." What will it look like when it happens? You might think a blazing fire, God forcing His way in. According to Acts is 11+1 = very puzzled men and soon lots of women too, going out discovering when they talked about Jesus and announced He was Lord, and prayed for the power of the Spirit, all sorts of strange things happened. Communities and lives were transformed. Some people were deeply threatened. Some very unpleasant things happened. Luke is saying this is what it looks like when the glory of the Lord starts to be revealed so that all flesh can see it together. You can see it in the structure:

Acts 1-12 - Jesus being announced as the Messiah of Israel  
Center 7 - Stephen's speech, "He made you a Temple".

Acts 13-28 - Gospel going out to the great pagan world in late antiquity.  
Key centerpiece - 17 - Paul's speech on the Areopagus.

**Video 5** - "The Ascension & Second Coming"

[TOTAL = 8:39]

The idea of the church rooted in the life of Jesus Himself as the truth of both the Jewish temple and the pagan temples were, in the last analysis, pointers or parodies. If heaven and earth are joined together in Jesus' resurrection, in biblical theology then Heaven is the control room for Earth. Heaven is not a detached place in order to not have anything to do with earth. If you read the book of Daniel, there point there is a God in heaven, you better watch out, because He is in charge and you're going to find out soon.

Today we are faced in our post-modern world with the false antithesis of deism or theocracy. The deism of the enlightenment, the epicureanism which says God is upstairs a long way away. Religion is how we get in touch with this distant God but

it's got nothing to do with the real world. Your country [the U.S.] is built on that dogma - late 18th Century deism epicureanism.

Or, today we see types of theocracy as in Islamic fundamentalism - "We are going to defeat you and blast you into smithereens." If that's God running the world, we don't want that, we'll go back to deism. In my country [Great Britain], God must be at all costs, kept away from the public square because that way lies the danger of the tyrannist's theocracy.

**The Ascension** — The point of the Ascension and all that flows from it in the book of Acts is the word "theocracy" changes according to which "theos" you believe in. If you believe in a big, bad God who is going to squash you, of course theocracy will be unpleasant. Suppose you believe in the God revealed in Jesus of Nazareth? Theocracy might look very different. The Kingdom of God is theocracy. The whole point of Jesus mission and ministry, all those parables, feastings, healings, working with the poor - are saying, "This is what it looks like if God is running the show." It not that hateful theocracy that will diminish you. It is a theocracy of a generous God comes to fill His creation with light, love & hope. This is what the book of Acts is all about.

*What would it look like if God was running this show?*

That's what Jesus was saying, "I'll show you." Here's a leper who gets healed. This is what it looks like when God is running the show. Acts is saying, "You'll will be witnesses to show people as well as tell them what it is like when the true God is running the show."

The ascension, in other words, is the correlate of the world wide mission of the church. Once Jesus is raised to heaven, He is in charge and sends people to implement His work and His will.

Acts 1:11 - **The Second Coming**

[5:18]

The moment when Heaven and Earth finally come together. (See NT Wright's *Surprised by Hope*.) So much of the Western tradition has got the second coming wrong. He's coming back to take us home. No he isn't. He's coming to establish His rule and reign by transforming this world and our bodies to be like His glorious body.

- Philippians 3:20-21, Acts 3:20-21 - *"Times of refreshing...Jesus must remain in Heaven until the time of universal restoration God announce long ago by His holy prophets."*

The point of the second coming is not to take people away from earth but to establish God's kingdom on the earth.

- Revelation 21 - The last scene in the Bible is not about people going up to heaven, but the new Jerusalem coming down from Heaven to Earth. It is the ultimate denial of all agnosticism. Since post enlightenment western civilization has been deeply agnostic in so many ways, the church has gone along for the ride and robbed itself of not only of one its key theological emphases but as we shall see, one of its key social and political emphases as well.

What would somebody in the ancient world have thought reading Acts 1:1-11? An ancient Jew of the first century would have known Daniel 7. "A world ruler will emerge from the people of God." The key texts - Daniel 2, 7 & 9 are key to Daniel's Prophecy. "The son of man is coming upward to the ancient of days." A Jew would say aware of Daniel would say, "This is the moment when God's sovereignty is being exercised by His anointed King when the nations will find out who runs the world after all."

**Video 6** "Acts: Purpose & Pentecost"

[TOTAL = 7:57]

*What would an ancient Roman think about a king going up to Heaven?*

- \* Top of the Forum Arch of Emperor Titus turned into a god at his death.
- \* Emperor Claudius' death - Seneca, tutor of Nero who followed Claudius, wrote a satirical book about Claudius being turned into a pumpkin.

They knew about divinization - you went up and became divine and you deserved worship and are now part of the pantheon of the gods that is running the world. Luke is not writing that. An ancient Roman may have thought, "Maybe Jesus is the reality of which The Caesar Cult is simply the ghastly, distorted parody."

### **Purpose of Acts**

First Half - Acts 1-12: Jesus the Messiah of Israel ends with the present King of the Jews, the Herod of the day taking up arms against the church then dying.

Second Half - Acts 13-28: Gospel going out into Caesar's world. It is tantalizing, We want to know what happens when Paul gets to Rome. Paul ends in Rome talking about the Gospel of the Kingdom of God openly and unhindered right under Caesar's nose because Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not.

The point of Acts — Temple; Culture, Politics — main themes: worship and Lordship of Jesus.

### **Acts 2** - Story of Pentecost

[3:30]

Come to Acts 2 with the theology of what's going on in Acts 1 - this is how Heaven and Earth are brought together and these are the people who through who will go out the glory of God to the earth.

We ought to read the story of Pentecost - rushing mighty wind filling the house and the fire and the wind filling the disciples as itself is a counter Temple statement like Isaiah 6, "Glory of the Lord filled the house" only now it's happening to these people and it is equipping them to be the means of God's glory going out into the world.

Paul in **Colossians 1:27** - *"To me has been given this glorious gift to make known to the Gentiles the secret of God which has been hidden for the ages which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."*

We in Western world have shrunk in "me" singular but the Greek is plural, but whose glory is it? I think in the light of Colossians 1, it's bigger than that because Col. 1:15-20 is all about the cosmic vision - *"In Him, through Him and for Him all things created and reconciled. All things reconciled by making peace in Him through the blood of the Cross."*

Is God going to step back from that? No. Christ in you the hope of glory. The ecclesiology of Colossians and Ephesians includes this idea that when the church goes out into the world bearing Christ in the power of the Spirit, this is the sign to the world already of that filling, that flooding with the glory of God of which Isaiah and Habakuk had spoken. The life and witness and mission of the church is the sign already of how that happens that wherever the people of God are, there in that place, there is already Christ in you the hope of that glory. That's what Acts is about.

That's why as we go through, the church is the counter Temple movement and the Church is the movement which hails Jesus as Lord and so which runs into other people who think they are running the show.

In between worship and sovereignty, we have the whole question of human culture of what we'll see how the early church navigated those particular challenges which I hope will generate some reflections of how we do as well.

**~ ~ ~ End of Talk #1 ~ ~ ~**



**Talk #2 - The Book of Acts** - Chapters 1-12 (videos 7-13)

[Video 7](#) - Acts 1-12

[TOTAL = 9:21]

\* "Joy to the World" hymn - A robust sense of God's kingdom coming on Earth as in Heaven. A transition takes place in the late 18th, early 19th century where people stop writing about that and start writing about God is somewhere else where God is going to be King. The idea of Heaven on Earth gets lost in that place in much of the Western tradition.

Acts 1-12

[RT: 1:44]

Students think of the Bible as tiny little bits. They never get the big picture. See the whole book overview.

\* Myer's Briggs - Many people study the Bible as ISTJ - looking at the little bits and not putting them back together. I'm a strong "NF" and I just love the big picture. When you got the big picture, the bits come up in three dimensions.

Acts 2:14-36 - Peter's Sermon at Pentecost

[RT: 2:40]

The explanation is is the fulfillment of the new promises of God. Peter is quoting from the prophet Joel. He's telling the story of the people of God as having now arrived at its new moment. This is the new day that the prophets were talking about. Already you get this sense bubbling up in the earliest days in Christianity that they know where they are in the story. We're not talking about individual, isolated human beings doing some sort of business with God. There is a narrative going forward, the place where at last the Spirit gets poured out.

Why has it happened? Because of Jesus as Messiah on the basis of the resurrection. God's new world has begun and we've got a job to do. Jesus really is the Messiah. Jesus "King of the Jesus". How ironic, "King of the Jesus" above a cross. The resurrection says despite appearances, that's who He really was. Jesus descended from the seat of David. The resurrection demonstrates that the David messianic claim of Jesus really was true all along. He was publicly designated what He was already.

v. 25-28 - Quoting from the Psalms

Resurrection means new bodies - a non-corruptible, new physicality which takes imagination. "This Jesus God raised up of this we are all witnesses." (v. 32) That is why the Spirit is poured out. Jesus is Lord of the world and he's equipping people to be His agents. Not a bullying theocracy. We are talking about a theocracy in which Jesus announces the Kingdom of God healing, feasting and helping the weak and the meek.

v. 34 - Psalm 110, "The Lord said to my lord sit at my right hand...", quoted again and again by Jesus (Mark 12) and Hebrews - Jesus enthronement. He's is raised from the dead as the one who shares the very throne and name of God. Kyrios - carries the divine name applied directly to Jesus.

**Video 8** Acts 2-12

[TOTAL = 9:50]

**1st Theme - Jesus is announced as King, Messiah and Lord.**

At the end of the sequence, Herod comes out and says, "There's already a king of the Jews and there can't be two people, therefore, I'm going to stamp you out." Herod kills James the brother of John he wants to kill Peter. Hold the first half of the book within that framework - Jesus is announced as King of the Jews. The news inevitably generates a clash with the present authorities with Herod at the end of the process.

**2nd Theme - The Temple**

Messiah & Temple belong closely together. David wants to build the Temple. God says, "You can't build it but your son will build it." "He will be my son, I will be his Father. He will build my house." This is huge to understand the incarnation. God's answer to David's request - Sort of, but actually, I am going to give you a child and I will be His father and he will be my son. The place where God wants to dwell is not a house made of bricks and mortar but a human being from the family of David. He will be the Temple builder. The immediate fulfillment is Solomon who builds the Temple and the ends of the earth comes to hear his wisdom - another Christological theme. Theme of wisdom sought in the son - Archetype The King himself is the bearer of the promise and the Temple builder. The great Kings of Hezekiah & Josiah cleanse & rebuild the Temple Zerrubabel rebuilds the Temple but is this really the new Temple - Have we really refounded the Temple? At no point in the second Temple period is it said YHWH come back to live in the Temple. The glory departed (Ezekiel's Chariot departing glory.) Malachi - "He will come back"; Isaiah 66 says, "Why would you want to build a temple - the heavens and the earth can not contain Him?" There's a tension there.

If Jesus and now even the Church are the place where Heaven & Earth overlap, we're going to run into problems to the relation of the existing temple in Jerusalem. In these two themes - Jesus as King and Lord over and against other authorities and the Worship at the Temple we have acted out in Acts the themes in the Gospels

- ~ Welcome of the Kingdom
- ~ Challenge of the Kingdom - Are you up for this?
- ~ Warning - what happens if you don't take it seriously.

**Chapter 1 & 2 and Chapter 12 are book ends of this section of Acts**

Left - 2:37 - 6:7 - "The church as the alternative Temple"

Center - 6:8-8:3 - Stephen's speech - "The judgment on the old Temple"

Right - 8:4-11:30 - The word goes out to the Samaritans & Gentiles

Psalms 72 - "David is on the throne His dominion from one sea to the other"

When God does for Israel what God is going to do, the whole of the rest of the world is going to get in the act. The idea of the rest of the world coming to worship the God of Israel and submissive to the King of Israel is a deeply ingrained Old Testament theme. The church as the new Temple worshipping the true God. Then Stephen's speech - the great clash then the result - the Word goes out Philip, Paul and then Peter.

**Video 9** - Acts 2-12

[TOTAL = 8:59]

**Part One of 2-12 - 2:37 - 6:7 - The Church as the alternative Temple**

2:37-47 - The Early Church Life - "Repent and be baptized."

v. 42 - Marks of the Church: Devoted to the apostles teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and the prayers. These are the signs of where the living presence of the living God is to be found. This is what you devote yourselves to. The very beginning of the church's corporate life as the new community, the new Temple.

Holding all things in common. They are realizing they are a "family" much like businesses in the ancient world were strictly in the family. They are not thinking of themselves as different families, they are thinking of themselves as sharing a family identity that must be expressed in terms of possessions and economics.

4:32-47 — The Description of the Early Church

v. 34 - "There was not a needy person among them."

Ref: Deuteronomy 15 - Law concerning the Sabbatical Year "Remission of Debts". They are living as the people whose debts have been forgiven. 15:4 - "No one in need among you because the Lord is sure to bless you." They are behaving as a people who say, "At last this is how the Lord always promised it. We are forgiveness people. We signal the "Jubilee", the great sabbatical. (Luke 4)

I do think wishing western individualism, there is an enormous amount we have screened out much of this because it so clashes with our world view. We gaze and wonder and quickly pass on to something else. There are hints we need to take deeply seriously. "Miracles doesn't happen today." "Yes, and they shared and that doesn't happen much either. Maybe those two have something to do with each other."

Healing (3:1-10) - An event that precipitates an address about Jesus. [5:15]

There is a tension. They are visiting the Temple, not avoiding the Temple.

They are going to the Temple but behaving like they are the true Temple.

Peter says, "*Don't look at us. It's not our power or piety that has made him walk. It's what God has done for Jesus.*"

The resurrection and exaltation of Jesus now results in fresh, new creation power at work in the world. Now, Peter turns the knife, "This is the Jesus whom you gave up and God has raised Him up. By faith in His name God has made this man strong and whole, his faith has given him health in the presence of all of you."

He is explaining where they are in the story.

People today think of Christianity as an abstract mechanism where individuals can plug God's grace for their individual lives. They want God's grace to help them feel better. Where as Peter is saying here is how the story works (v. 17 & 18), "God has fulfilled what he has foretold through the prophets. You now have to respond to these events by repenting and turning to God so times of refreshing may come from the Lord and He may send the Messiah appointed for you." He is going to remain in heaven until the time for universal restoration. That's the great picture we have. People are looking to just go off to Heaven. Peter tells the story and shows where they are in the middle of the story.

**Video 10** - Acts 4

[TOTAL = 7:18]

NT on translations — "I tend to use the NRSV because it is huge improvement on some of the other alternatives but there are times when it lets you down."

**Acts 4:2** — The Sadducees found them in the temple much annoyed. There are announcing in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.

v.2 - "Sadducees are cross because they are teaching the people they are announcing in Jesus the resurrection of the dead." It doesn't mean in Jesus there is resurrection from the dead. They are announcing in Jesus "resurrection has already happened." Please get your heads around this. Resurrection for the 1st Century Jew was the great moment when God would transform everything and bring about His kingdom on Earth. The resurrection is split into two:

Mark 1 - Jesus

Mark 2 - still upcoming for the whole world including those who belong to Jesus.

The Sadducees are very cross because God has inaugurated His great saving act not through the high and mighty running the Temple, but in this man Jesus. The early church are living in the new age while the old age is rumbling on and resenting that claim. That's why they are arrested and put in to custody.

v. 10 - This man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus who you crucified that God raised from the dead.

(Learn to read the Old Testament quotes in the NT. When you have one line or verse quote from the Old Testament, for these listeners a reference to this text would carry with it the whole context.)

Ps. 118.11 - The stone rejected by you has become the cornerstone is a psalm about celebrating in Jerusalem because we are coming to the Temple of the Lord. They are claiming that God is building his true eschatological Temple with Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. Jesus used the same line in the parable of the wicked tenants. There is salvation in no one else. This is where the story comes together.

v. 12 - Psalm 2 becomes the focus of their prayer. When the nations are raging, I have sent my King on my Holy hill. "You are my Son, ask of me and I will give you the nations as your possession"; Great passage for understanding NT theology

Romans 8 - "The inheritance" An exodus theme. What is the inheritance/ Inheritance is not Heaven but the whole Earth, the whole world is now God's Holy Land which is already in view in Acts 4. The early church are using Psalm 2 - the true Jews over against the nations of the world. They are making an astonishing claim that those praising in the name of Jesus. In them, this little group of believers is there, only there, the people of God to be found. The result is the new political positioning of the people of God. They are claiming to be the fulfillment of Israel, hence they must obey God rather than human beings. We obey Jesus in preference to what human authorities tell us to do.

4:19, 5:29 - If Jesus is Lord, we obey God rather than human beings.

**Video 11** - Acts 5-7

[TOTAL = 9:59]

How does this work? Obeying God rather than men? This doesn't mean a cheerful, holy anarchy. We have to relearn the grammar of a New Testament political theology. It's all here. We have screened it out. Ever since the day of enlightenment we have been taught there is no such thing as a New Testament political theology. Absolute rubbish. We have been conned by this. After the enlightenment ruled out a biblical, political theology, it gave us a political theory of left & right - of anarchy over here and tyranny over there. We in the West don't like tyranny. We don't know anarchy in the US or UK. We assumed that democracy is the thing we hold onto in the middle which prevents anarchy on the one hand and tyranny on the other.

**In the New Testament, the Lordship of Jesus Christ prevents both anarchy and tyranny.** It really does appear the way the last 200 years the Western world has construed liberal democracy is doing the same job within political thought as the Kingdom of God does in the gospels. One of the tasks of our day is to rethink what it means to be servants of Jesus while being western democrats. How those two play out and how it relates here. That's what actually going on here to have to navigate to be loyal to Jesus and Caesar who tells them to do something else.

Acts 5 - Financial integrity

- \* Ananias & Saphira - Matters of financial Integrity
- \* Gamaliel - Acts 5:34 - God might be in this new movement.

This is a pattern which emerges all through the book of Acts. When the church trusts God and speaks up it will find friends in surprising places. The beginning of a much larger theme which works its way out into the 2nd century - the to and fro between the apologetics that the church offers to the wider society - we are not community wreckers but community builders. We are not a danger to society. We are following the Lord who is transforming and healing the whole world. On the other hand, martyrdom. If you tell us to do something that goes against Jesus we are going to stick with Jesus. Some of the greatest apologists also become some of the greatest martyrs. Justin Martyr, Polycarp. See the the roots of it here - the kingdom of the world and the Kingdom of God.

**Acts 6**

[5:10]

This is a problem that only occurs because the early church is living as a family. Widows are cared for by the church family. Ethnic divisions are starting to surface. The Church looks to the Spirit to provide ministries that serve the unity of the church. The focus is not the conflict but the desire to better serve the unity of the Church. v. 7 - The numbers increased greatly. A great number of the priests became believers. They are seeing the writing on the wall. This really is the new Temple. We've been serving the old. God has done the new thing. It's time to move.

**7:1:-53** - Stephen's Sermon

[6:20]

The centerpiece of this whole section - Acts 6-8 - Stephen. A fresh re-telling of the whole story. The whole point of Stephen telling the story - we the followers of Jesus are the true heirs of the story of Jesus. He sees Heaven opened and the Son

of Man standing at the right hand of God. Stephen witnesses of the reality of the coming together of Heaven on Earth.

- 1) God frequently sends messengers or redeemers to His people and the people reject them.
- 2) People always tend toward idolatry and the building of the Temple are in danger of being exactly that.

God's act of rejected rulers.

Stephen quoting **Amos** (v. 42-43) and **Isaiah** 66 (v. 49-50) - Even Solomon's Temple was only an advanced signpost like a signpost on a long journey, you'll be tempted to stop at the signpost. Don't stop at the signpost but go on. The Temple in Jerusalem was the signpost of the God for whom Heaven and Earth are His throne and His footstool is going to come and join Heaven and Earth in a new way. That has now happened. The narrative is claiming in Jesus and the church we find the true heirs and fulfillments of the promises of Israel not in the present Temple.

*When Stephen is being stoned, as if to say "I told you so" Stephen witnesses the reality of that coming together Heaven & Earth. The persecuted church knows the reality of the Heaven & Earth joining in Jesus and the "Danielic" overtones of that.*

[Video 12](#) - Acts 1-12 "Third Section"

[TOTAL = 7:46]

Acts 8:4-end of chapter 11

If this is the eschatological Temple, it's time for the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion which is the ancient Jewish theme in Isaiah 40-55. When God does what God is going to do, then the nations will come in because the God of Israel is the creator of the whole world. Israel has been the plan for the whole world. It's been particular in order that it can be universal. In the biblical narrative, God acting in the specific case for the benefit for the whole world.

Luke wants to stress that this is not a Pauline oddity. Many Jewish Christians would have seen the inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God was something that dangerous Paul was trying to present. The charge against Paul is that he is a traitor to the traditions of Israel and corrupting the traditions of Israel by enabling Gentiles to come in. Acts 8-11, Luke is making it abundantly clear: This started with Philip going off to the Samaritans and its climax is with Peter going to the house of Cornelius. The conversion of Paul happens between those two. This was not some wacky thing he dreamed up because he had a weird experience on the road to Damascus. This was the necessary, logical outflowing of the great claim that was there all along.

**Philip** - Acts 8:26-40

[2:40]

Power of God over the magic of the pagans. His message to Samaria. (Acts 1:8) Philip is able to explain the meaning of Isaiah 53 to an Ethiopian Eunuch. [Suffering servant] Immediately after the glory of **Isaiah 53**, you have **Isaiah 54** about the renewal of the Covenant, then the general invitation to a new Creation in **Isaiah 55**, "Come everyone who thirsts." **Isaiah 56** - "Foreigners and eunuchs who join

themselves to the people of God will be full members of the family of God." Luke wants you to have this whole thing in mind here. It's happening fulfilled. Jesus died and was raised. The new covenant is happening. The new creation is happening. Now "foreigners and eunuchs" are being welcomed in.

**Paul - Acts 9**

[5:20]

He saw himself as the embodiment of what God had done to Israel. "I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:19-21), relates to the argument (Galatians 2:15-18). This is what God has done. He has taken His people zealous for Torah and through the Torah itself, through the death and resurrection of the Messiah, He has turned His people inside out to be at last what they were always intended to be - the people of God for the world. The deeply personal meeting of the people of Israel to be the bearers of God's promise for the world.

**Video 13** - Acts 9-12

[TOTAL = 6:26]

Saul's Conversion - As a devout Pharisee would have been a man of prayer, somebody who meditated on the scriptures. One of the great meditations of the time was the meditation on the throne chariot of Ezekiel. If you think about this, it shows something of what it meant to Paul. Imagine he is meditating on the chariot. In his mind's eye, he starts to see the one sitting on the throne of the chariot. The face is the face of Jesus of Nazareth. At that point everything is fulfilled and everything is destroyed. He has been absolutely right and absolutely wrong of the God of Israel. There is something about Heaven and Earth coming together. Saul saw Jesus with his own eyes as did Stephen just before when he was being stoned to death. The deeply personal meeting indicates the cosmic meaning of Heaven and Earth have come together and the point where they come together is Jesus.

Chapter end of 9 to 11 [3:15] — Luke makes Peter tell the story again. He really wants you to get hold of the fact that when the gospel went out it was Peter who did it because God gave him the symbolic vision of clean and unclean foods that is a boundary marker that separates Israel from the Gentiles. It comes to symbolize Israel is the clean ones and Gentiles are the unclean ones. God says, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." (If you want to know the origin of the new perspective on Paul, it is in the vision of Peter when he goes to the house of Cornelius.)

End of Chapter 11:19-30 - the larger extension of the characteristic of the Church in Acts 2 & 4 that lives by Jubilee. One part helps another part of the Church.

Chapter 12 - Herod is struck down and dies. v. 24 - But the Word of God continues to advance and gain adherence. What they were doing in their culture - fulfilled and turned inside out? What would it look like if we were to meditate on where we are as Westerners? There is a huge amount we might conceivably learn.

**~ ~ ~ End of Talk #2 ~ ~ ~**

**Talk #3 - The Book of Acts** - Chapters 13-28 (videos 14-21)

**Video 14** - 2nd Half of Acts - Ch's 13-28

[TOTAL = 7:50]

Acts 13-28 - Lordship & Worship (Major Two Themes)

*"Everywhere Paul went, there were riots. Everywhere I go, they serve tea."*

Why aren't there riots when we go about our work?

Where is this generation's Bob Dylan the last 6-7 years?

2nd Half of Acts: Part I — Chapters 13-20 Part II — Chapters 21-28

The Church as a Jewish community fulfilled taking on the pagan world. The underlying themes of travel, journey, going to the ends of the earth, going to Rome.

*"I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for salvation, to the Jew first and also the Greek."* (Romans 1:16) You can see this lived out in Paul.

**Acts 13-20** — Divided in three parts

[4:00]

1.) 13-14 — Setting the Scene - Paul's initial foray into the pagan world

2.) 15 - Church, "Is it okay to take the Gospel to the pagans?"

3.) 16-20 - Paul's main mission. From Asia-Minor to Europe: Philippi,

Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus. "What a great page turner Acts is."

Stunning one thing after another with a crescendo of him preaching to hostile Jews then Gentiles then explanations of what we are about. "Yes, we are different. Look at who we are, look at what we are doing. We are not being wicked. We are actually keeping the moral standards and actually making the peoples lives and communities better." Underlying question - Is Paul a loyal Jew?

Is he actually a danger to Roman order? If not why not, and if so, why?

Is Paul really plotting to destroy Judaism or being loyal to the traditions?

Or is he actually a threat to Roman order or ought he be on trial at all?

**Video 15** - Acts 13-14

[TOTAL = 8:31]

The power of the gospel to confront evil and impress a foreign governor.

A meeting with the false prophet Bar-Jesus and he is blinded. Roman proconsul believed for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord. You Romans out there reading this. Here was one of your own. He saw Paul at the beginning his mission. He by his own surprise, came to faith. Like the Centurion at the foot of the Cross, "Truly this man is the Son of God." That serves as an opening cameo prepares you, gets the mind ready for the main action.

13:13-52 - Speech in the Synagogue - A brief history of Israel.

Out in the wider world where they had not heard much about Jesus. Paul has to tell more about Jesus. It is a Davidic story - God has brought a savior in Jesus as He promised. The challenge - Jesus died, given up, handed over to the pagans, God raised Him from the dead, and now we bring you the good news. What God promised to His ancestors He has fulfilled to their children. This is the fundamental message. You can not tell the Christian story without saying this is the fulfillment of



those ancient promises. If you take that away, you collapse into an Marcianism - into a dualism - which says Judaism is a bad religion and we got rid of that. We've got something different. No, all that went before is good but it was a set of signposts pointing forwards to this point.

13:33 - Psalm 2 then Isaiah 55 [4:20]

Democratization of the Davidic promise, "Anyone who thirsts..."

The way it happens is through Jesus the Messiah for anybody and everybody.

13:41 - Psalm 16 then Habakuk 1:5 - I am doing a work you'll never believe.

Habakuk is warning the people of God that God is raising up the Gentiles who might come and attack unless they get their act together and listen the word God is speaking. Gentiles raised up not to attack but to share in the promises made to give to Israel.

13:45 - The word for jealousy -is "Zeal" = "Jealousy"- a major category when your heart is burning on fire with a love for Israel's God, His Temple, the Land, His Word, the Law, His Truth. If anyone is breaking, you're prepared to do whatever it takes to bring people into line. Zeal is to eliminate them with a sword or dagger.

Saul of Tarsus who knew about zeal. He would not have received authority to take Christians captive. If you're waiting for God's Kingdom, longing for God's new age to break in, now is the time for the prophecies to be fulfilled, if there are Jews letting the side down, fraternizing with the Gentiles, given up on food laws. then you have to act. Because if Israel is in a mess like that, you will delay, perhaps fatally, the coming of the Kingdom, there is an eschatological agenda at stake. The "zeal" tradition Elijah killing the prophets of Baal. Phineas killing the Midianite woman. These figures become legendary in Jewish folklore. In Galatians 1, "Exceedingly zealous" for the traditions of my fathers - role modeling Elijah.

**Video 16** - Acts 13

[TOTAL = 9:03]

13:45 - The Jews see the Gentiles coming into our synagogue to hear the words for us. They're coming in to corrupt the purity, the holiness of Judaism. Paul and Barnabas speak out boldly. You are rejecting the Word of God. We now are turning to the Gentiles.

13:47 Paul quotes **Isaiah 49:6**, "*I have made you a light to the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the ends of the Earth.*"

This is not something which means abandon the Jewish way, the Jewish promises. Read your scriptures you will see your more recent anti-Gentile reasons are out of line. The Spirit would go out and take the Gentiles captive with the love of God and to bring them into God's family. Not carbon-copy versions of yourselves.

13:50 - There is persecution with the Jews inciting. Same in 14:1-7 - Lystra - Paul & Barnabas (14:11) Appearances as Zeus & Hermes. Here we get the beginning of a critique of paganism which is not a dualistic critique which says, "The world of paganism is bad because the created order is bad. The sooner we flee and get to

purified, platonic Heaven, the better." That's not what Paul and Barnabas do. (v. 15-18) They are trying to get people to stop.

*"We are mortals just like you. Turn from these worthless things to the living God who made earth and the sea."*

### **The Doctrine of God the Creator of the World**

[4:15]

Paganism looks at elements in the world and divinizes them and worships them. Paganism is not just a random mistake. Paganism can be analyzed quite carefully. In terms of people as Paul says in Romans looking at the world which is full of God's power and worshipping the world instead of the God who made the world, worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator.

The irony is so sharp. Because by saying "the gods have come down in human form", it doesn't take much to translate that into genuine Christianity where God has made Himself known in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth. Only there perceiving something and drawing a conclusion which is both the right conclusion and yet the radically wrong conclusion. We need to understand how paganism works. Your world may not feel terribly pagan just yet because Christianity is still so much more widespread and powerful in America. It ain't like that in the whole of the U.K. You need to understand how paganism works. It looks at good things in the world and divinizes them. The answer is in verse 16. In past generations, God allowed all of the nations to follow their own ways. People often say, "if Christianity were true, surely it is something that should have been known throughout history. How come it has only appeared so recently just in the last couple of thousands of years when there has been all that long stretch of history before?"

The early Christians were quite clear. You see in Ephesians, in many passages, here, and in chapter 17. This is actually the secret plan of God, that eventually, once the preparatory period was over through the long history of Israel, now at last at the end of time, God would pull back the curtain to unveil the plan that has been waiting all along. "Yet even in this present time, He has not left Himself without a witness." (17:17) Turn from these worthless things to serve and worship the Creator. The crowds flip very quickly...and they turn around and stone him.

I remember preaching this text to medical faculty at Oxford about Paul healing the Lystra lame man. With the medical profession - We are tempted to divinize them. When they let us down, we turn around and curse them. We swing this way and that. [Crowd interaction.] They may not stone them, they sue them, which may be the same end result, just more drawn out.

\* Bob Dylan, "Everyone must get stoned."

**[Video 17](#)** - Acts 15 [Free eBook by NT Wright - [Story of Acts 15](#)] [TOTAL = 7:30]

14:22 - God's new age is coming. The time is coming in when God is becoming King. The transition is a troubled transition.

There is a sense that I come back to, why is it so easy to be a Christian in the UK and the US? Is it we are not cutting the ice the way we should? Maybe some of us are missing out on something somewhere.

Acts 15 - Vital Interlude - A reflex question: How do Jews & Gentiles fit together?

This is a passage germane to the new perspective on Paul to highlight what is there in Romans and Galatians. When Paul is talking about justification, he is talking about Jews & Gentiles coming together in the single family. They are not two different things because God's plan always was to bring together the whole human race. A sign that God is God and Jesus is Lord. Caesar would have loved to be able to unite the world like that. He tried but could not do it. It was artificial. Only God brings people together on race, class, color, gender. They are all one in Christ. That is what justification is all about

[2:25] - The key question in Acts 15 is not do these people have to do circumcision as a good work in order to get justified? But as in Galatians, do you have to become ethnically Jewish in order to belong to the family of Abraham, the people of promise?

The question is - How do you tell the story of the people of God? The Christian Pharisees (15:5) say - It works like this - God made promises to Abraham, God then gave Moses the law so the people of Abraham would be kept in line by the law. Therefore, if you want to inherit the promises to Abraham, you have to be in line with the law of Moses because that's how it works. It is necessary if anyone wants to be part of this basically Jewish movement, it is necessary to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses.

It was open to the early Church, had they wanted to go the Marcionite route, to say, "No, this isn't about Abraham. It isn't about Moses. We've got this salvation thing and Jesus won it for us by his death. Let's just go with Jesus and forget all that Abrahamic stuff." Of course, they totally and utterly refused that.

Again in Acts 15 and Acts 9, 10, 11 - Luke highlights Peter and James to provide the foundational and scriptural answer to say this inclusion of Gentiles is not something silly Paul dreamt up that you can dump it on his if you don't like it. It is woven in to the heart of the early Church through Peter (6-11) and James (13-21)

Peter (v. 10) - "Why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke neither our ancestors or we were able to bear?"

Paul - Torah will say itself, "you are a law breaker" (Romans 7). We already have the sense that Torah is incapable of giving the life it promised. The paradox of ancient Judaism - I see this wonderful, holy law but what the it says to me, "You're a law breaker." But, "saved by the grace of the Lord." (v. 11)

The key point with James - Amos 9 quoted in v. 16 & 17, "God is calling for judgment on Israel." He is saying, "Israel, you are just like the Ethiopians, 'Yeah, I brought you out of Egypt. I do migration.'" Now, when I am rebuilding the dwelling of David which has fallen, I am doing that so that all the others will seek the Lord even all the Gentiles over who my name is called. Deep in the heart of Old Testament prophecy, we have the prediction of when God does for Israel what God will do for Israel, the Gentiles will get in on the act. Of course they will because God is the creator. Then the whole earth will be blessed.

**Video 18** - Acts 15 (continued)

[TOTAL = 7:36]

Acts 15 - The heart of the early church - *You need to tell the difference between the differences that make a difference and the differences that don't make a difference.*

The Jerusalem Council decided circumcision does not make a difference. The keeping of the Mosaic law in all its bits and pieces is now irrelevant. But that does not mean anything goes...such as idolatry and fornication, perhaps and some elements of the food laws.

Idolatry & Fornication - “Sexual Morality” at the heart of the Christian ethic because it is at the heart of the human personality and the heart of the nature of humanity as God’s image bearers.

\* Galen - pagan doctor in Asia Minor in the end of the 2nd Century. He knew 2 things about this odd sect of Christians: One, they believed the Resurrection and two, they are not did not sleep around. Both were unheard of in the ancient world. The two go together because the Christian valuation of the body means not only that is sustained by Resurrection but your body is also a temple of the Holy Spirit. What you do with us matters. The early Christians knew what we struggle to learn, there is no such thing as casual sex.

So the apostles send out the letter to the churches.

Paul & Barnabas Split over Mark joining the mission. [5:35]

The awful thing is they are both right. They could have arranged that. I suspect the reason they didn’t arrange it properly, has its roots in Syrian Antioch in Galatians 2, “Even Barnabas was led astray by those who came from James.”. The trust between Paul and Barnabas had been severely shaken. All that came to the surface. This is a horribly human story. They were not very much so unlike us. God blesses two missions rather than one. Paul chooses Silas and off he goes.

**Video 19** - Acts 16-20 Paul’s Mission

[TOTAL = 7:11]

Key things: Confrontation with pagan religion, pagan authority, by reflex with Jewish people around the pagan world, and then again, again and again, Paul announcing Jesus, explaining Jesus, suffering for Jesus, relying on the guidance of Jesus. You can see him doing the end of Colossians 1

16:20ff - Before authorities, “Jews advocating customs not for us as Romans”

17:6 - They’re saying, “Another King. Jesus is Lord, Caesar isn’t.”

17:18ff - Epicureans & Stoics

Paul is proclaiming foreign divinities

Socrates charges: Corrupting the youth and preaching foreign divinities.

18:13ff - Philippi - Riot begins about business; Paul exorcises slave girl

Beginning the work in the pagan world - navigating how to cope with the political magistrates. They were ordered to be beaten and thrown in jail.

\* Cicero’s speech against Governor Varies who fleeced Sicily dry. A Roman citizen was crucified by Varies circa 55 B.C. Varies quickly left Sicily to save himself

Paul using his Roman citizenship. Think about Romans 13 - God wants there to be human authorities to serve God’s purpose for justice. It is part of the task of the church to remind the authorities of what God’s purpose in justice looks like.

**Video 20** - Acts 17

[TOTAL = 8:53]

From Thessalonica, Berea then on to Athens in a city full of idols.

- Epicureans - Gods may exist but they are a long way away. Our job is to make life as tolerable as we can. (An early form of Deism.)
- Stoicism: God and the world are the same thing. It is a form of Pantheism. It can not explain evil. If you don't like it, tough. You can always free to leave (suicide). Eventually the world will collapse in a ball of fire and restart again.
- Areopagus - Court of justice for Athens looks at the Acropolis & Parthenon

17:24-25 - God who made the world does not live in shrines made with human hands. Nor is God served with human hands. He gives life Himself. He made all the human race. He has taken on the Epicureans - "God is here" and the Stoics - "God is the Creator of the world".

v. 30 - But now, God commands all people to repent. Suddenly, here is a Jewish world with a specifically Christian twist landing on the door step of ancient paganism. Paganism doesn't have a big story into which you fit.

Judaism says because God is the creator, God is going to sort out the world once and for all. Creation and, in this sense, judgment, are the foundations of Jewish style monotheism. The Christian difference is we now know the name of the judge. God has fixed on a day in which He will put the world to right by a man He has appointed. Romans 1:4 + 2:16 - The resurrection constitutes Jesus as Messiah and constitutes him as the one through whom God will put everything right at last. That is the shock message which is a slap in the face of the philosophers of Athens. This is very clever. Paul upstage their charges. I am not telling you about foreign divinities. I am telling you about a god who you say you do worship...signposts to the true God scattered across your culture. If you were true to your best instincts, you'll work around about the other side. Actually, here is a narrative which will pick up your narrative and make sense of it in a way you never imagined.

The Jewish and Christian critique of paganism is not, "You're wrong, get out of here. Rather, you're picking up signals but you don't know how to interpret them. You need to step back from all the ways you've been doing it wrong and here is how to do it right." They laughed. Of course, people always do laugh.

**Video 21** - Acts 18-19

[TOTAL = 8:27]

I was invited to do a lecture at the London School of Economics - one of the high temples of British secularism. They have discovered the question of doing God in public has become very controversial. Taking the signals from the contemporary culture and critiquing the negativism of culture and talk about the resurrection.

Paul in Corinth (18:12) - Big breakthrough. Gallio decides Christianity is another way of doing Judaism. What's the point of that? Judaism is an approved religion in the empire. Gallio has decided that Christians are not acting extra-legally. He decides that Christianity is just another way of doing Judaism. This is not extra-

legally but an internal Jewish matter. This is very good news for the Christians. Luke wants to say here is a Roman official that made the decision that Christianity must be permitted within the Roman empire. If this were to catch on, this would be very good news for the Christians and, sadly, probably very bad news for the Jews.

Ephesus (19:23) The Riot caused by business interests related directly to idolatry translated into religious as well as political charges. "Idols are rubbish", says Paul. Demetrius stirs up the crowd. Once again help comes from a strange quarter. The town porter tells them off. He does what Gallio and others have done - God is going to be true and will raise up help for His people in whatever ways God sees as appropriate.

Summary - Paul's Gospel to the Jew first and also the Greek. We see in I Corinthians - it is a scandal to the Jews and folly to the Greeks but it is God's power to all those who believe. We see throughout this passage the leading and guiding of Jesus and the Spirit. The critical thing, as the early church found out, is you have to expect trouble. When you put your finger on the key symbols of people's faith and world view - Torah, Temple, Food Rituals, Circumcision - is like burning the flag. People react with enormous hostility.

The critique is not that Judaism is bad and you must give it up. It is that Judaism is the God given way to prepare the world for the coming of God Himself in the person of His Son. The critique of paganism is not that the material world is not a bad place and you have to escape it, but rather God made it and it is full of joy and delight. Paganism worships the world not God the Creator. Worship the Creator not the creation. You have to understand history as the sphere of God's strange, patient providence ultimately calling it to account.

The Church - Be the community that witnesses to all of this, to God's grace, God's infinite love for His Creation. Be the community which knows how to stand without shame and without fear before the authorities, real or self-appointed. The media is self-appointed today who set themselves up as an authority and need to be confronted in appropriate ways. The Church has to learn how to declare that Jesus is Lord and God raised Him from the dead and to do so in such a way that the gospel of Jesus goes out into those cultures and not just rejecting them, not affirming them as they stand, but transforming them by planting the seeds of hope, particularly planting these communities of faith that will then in each place bear witness to the word of Jesus which is more powerful than anything else.

~ ~ ~ **End of Talk #3** ~ ~ ~

**Talk #4 - Acts - Paul in Jerusalem & Rome (Videos 22-26)**

**Video 22** - Acts 21-22 - Paul in Jerusalem

[TOTAL = 7:59]

On the Eucharist - All those who belong to Jesus by faith belong at the same table (Galatians 2 - the first articulation of justification of faith.) It always saddens me when Christians draw a dividing line there. We should celebrate as a great sign that we are one in Christ and pledge ourselves to work together in that way.

What Paul was up to in the last 8 chapters of Acts...

Paul tells his conversion story twice. [22:6-14, They really want you to take it on board and get use to it. The last 1/3 of the book are structured around what Paul is saying in his defense for his upcoming trial before Caesar in Rome.

Acts 21 - Charge - Is Paul being subversive against our people, our law, and the place - the Temple?

People are suspicious because of what they've heard about Paul. Paul is disloyal and now he's come here to Jerusalem to flaunt his disloyalty by bringing pagans into the Temple to show that he doesn't care for our traditions.

The Paul who is hearing these charges thrown against him is the same Paul had recently written the letter to the Romans including 9-11. "There's not way I can explain all of this to you."

Paul's defense - "I am a loyal Jew. What I have been doing is an expression of my loyalty to the traditions of Israel." The Messiah and His coming and His mission is in fact what the traditions of Israel are all about - particularly the Resurrection.

22:12-16 - He highlights loyalty to the tradition.

Question within a postmodern world to the church - Are you loyal to the traditions? Some of us who find we are called to challenge some of the traditions in which we've grown up find ourselves in someways in a parallel to this.

**Video 23** - Acts 22-24

[TOTAL = 7:04]

I. First Cycle of Paul's Trial before the Sanhedrin 22:30-23:10

22:22 - Centurion wants to flog Paul but Paul states his citizenship.

23:3-5 - Paul confronts the high priest then apologizes. A fascinating little exchange. Paul is holding the rulers to account of what they are to be doing. He apologizes. He did not intend to break the law. That little negotiation has a huge amount to teach us about holding up a mirror to those in power.

23:6 - The key thing is the resurrection. "I am on trial concerning the hope for the resurrection of the dead." He released that cat among the pigeons and the hearing isn't going anywhere.

II. Second Cycle of Paul's Trial before Felix 23:23-24:27 (end) [2:35]

Don't you love the plot to kill Paul. A bunch of people who band together and swear will not eat or drink until they kill Paul. Did they? I write about that in [Acts for Everyone](#).

Charges against Paul before Felix. Paul emphasizes, "All about the resurrection." (24:14) "I worship the God of our ancestors. I am not worshipping another God. I am being deeply loyal."

Ancient Jewish hope is the resurrection. My conscience must be clear before the God who is the God of our ancestors. Let them prove it. Let them bring their charges.

**24:24-25** - Paul Before Felix [5:50]

Paul addresses justice, self-control & the coming judgment. Felix got worried. Of course he would. The coming judgment was something they were very happy to ignore.

The resurrection is the coping stone of the theology in whose two pillars are creation and judgment. Judgment in the positive sense of the Creator God is putting the world right. The resurrection is the moment when the living God sets the world right in principle. All that now has to happen is what happened on Easter day has to be worked out through the whole cosmos. This is going to blow Felix's world view apart, so he gets frightened and sends Paul away hoping Paul will bribe him and get around that way but Paul is not about to do that.

**Acts 25** - Paul before Festus [6:30]

Felix is replaced by Festus who is a pain in the neck but that's a whole other story. We won't go there today.

This time again we get Festus who wants to do the Jews a favor.  
v. 8 - Paul, "I have not committed an offense against the law of the Jews, or the Temple or against the Emperor."  
v. 11-12 - Paul appeals to Caesar. "To Caesar you will go."

**Video 24** - Acts 26 - Paul Before King Agrippa [TOTAL = 8:23]

**Acts 26:17-23**

v. 18 — Paul's Mission - The big picture of what is going on through Paul's work and this is still the ministry and mission with which we are charged. Jesus to Paul, "I am sending you to them [Gentiles] to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."

The two power spheres: the sphere of darkness and the sphere of light - the power of God in the resurrection of Jesus is all about that sigh of relief which we call judgment. God is sorting all things out and we can part of that sorting out movement. It includes sorting ourselves out - forgiveness of sins and sanctification - but it is not about little me finding that I'm okay after all.

Here is the heart of what we need to grasp for the 21st Century - Spiritual & Social Christianity. When the gospel Jesus Christ impinges on someone's own personal life, heart and soul, that is so that God will do in them and thereby through them what God wants to do for the whole world. Conversion and justification are God doing in and through the individual that which God is intending



to do for the whole cosmos. The two marry up ultimately in the New Testament. You can't have the one without the other. Acts 26:17-18 say it sharply.

v. 19-23 - This is the last great theological statement Paul makes, "I wasn't disobedient to the heavenly vision. What I am saying is nothing but what Moses and prophets said would take place - the suffering Messiah, the risen Messiah, and the Messiah proclaiming light both to our people and to the Gentiles - the great circle of the gospel. The resurrection is the key thing that sends Paul on his mission.

Festus shouts, "Paul, you're out of your mind." The point is if this were true, Festus' entire world view will be blown apart. Here is the Kingdom of God facing the kingdom of Caesar. If you can live with and work through what that means, you will understand what it might mean to be Christian missionaries in tomorrow's world.

**26:30-32** - Is Paul guilty in Rome's eyes? He is not guilty. (Acts 13, 18) [5:00]

The emphatic conclusion of the treatment of trials — 31 *"This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment."* 32 *Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to the emperor."*

What was Paul up to? Glance back to Acts 20. He wasn't stirring up crowds or building financial empire. Night and day with tears, from house to house and in public, he was appealing to each person, and the growing Christian community as a body, to live in a manner that was worthy of the gospel of God.

Pastors - take Acts 20 and pray thru it slowly and ask yourself about yourself and congregation, "Is this who I am? Is this how it is for me?" [7:15]

Jews - "Paul you are disloyal!"

Romans - "You're preaching another king!"

Paul - a pastor spending and being spent night and day - celebrating a ministry of joy, of tears, of Jesus. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (20:35)

**Video 25** - Acts 27

[TOTAL = 9:45]

When Paul arrives in Rome he goes to see the Jewish elders. We want to know what happened next? How does this work? Luke doesn't tell us.

Paul is bearing the hope of Israel forwards in the great story of God's purposes. He is announcing and inaugurating the Kingdom of Jesus in the world of Caesar. We can not escape the political dimensions of the gospel. We in the Western world have done our best to escape that the last couple of hundred years. The gospel of Jesus is public truth about the different way of being human. It is not simply a private truth about my spirituality or my salvation.

The resurrection is inescapably political. It is about real bodies in a real world. Not about ghosts in timeless eternity. That's why the 18th-20th Century theology has downplayed the bodily resurrection because it did not want gospel to have a political impact. We were satisfied. Resurrection might disturb it. Let's just quietly bury it. Ha ha.

It is a politics of a totally different sort. It isn't simply Right against Left.

The Christian right were right to see that you had to get the gospel back in the political sphere but wrong in how they've gone about it.

### **What was God up to?**

[2:30]

Look at the way Luke has told the story. Ever since Acts 13, Paul has been on the road and he's going to the great city knowing something is going to happen. When have we heard that story? Like Jesus (Luke 9) sets his face to Jerusalem. He is going to complete His exodus. Luke's theology of the death of Jesus is contained of the journey reaching the point where what's got to be done has got to be done.

Theology of the Cross in Luke — Jesus as the righteous one who goes to the place where God is placing judgment on all those who have rebelled against his purposes. Jesus is the hen who longs to gather the chicks under her wings. After the fire rages, you will find live chicks under the body of a dead hen.

The theology of the Cross in the book of Acts?

Acts 20-22 - Paul is warned, "Don't go to Jerusalem. They are going to kill you." What would that say theologically? That would say the death of Jesus was the first in a sequence. His death is once and once for all. What God did in Jesus on the cross, He never does again. It is the finished work of Christ. Amen for that.

Because that is done once and for all, we are marked and shaped by it and we always bear in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life may be manifest in our body. We do not die for the sins of the world. But, we are shaped by the dying of Jesus. In ministry, you know when you come to the point where you are cast down but not destroyed, depressed but not utterly forsaken. In the dying, you live.

How has Luke said this in the book of Acts? The equivalent of the death of Jesus in Luke is the shipwreck in Acts. Why the shipwreck? For the Jew, the sea is the primal chaos. The sea is the Red Sea which stands between the Israelites and the journey to their inheritance. Jonah - sea is the dark force. Daniel - sea is the place out of which the monsters emerge, the place of ultimate evil.

The great journey motif is a way of saying when the gospel of Jesus is going to get where it need to get, namely under the nose of Caesar, expect it will have to through fire, and water, and shipwreck and death to get there. The story of the shipwreck parallels the story of the death of Jesus Himself. Luke's way of saying that Paul is bearing about in his body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be manifest in his mortal life. As he says in Acts 14:22, "Thru many sufferings we must enter the Kingdom of God."

### **Video 26** Acts 27-28

[TOTAL = 7:35]

Look up "save" or "salvation" - Acts 27:20, 31, 34, 43, 44, 28:1, 4

You go through the shipwreck and you are saved again and again. Even on bits and pieces of the ship, we all make it safely.

When you are actually engaged in the work of ministry what might have destroyed you and then you're saved. Somehow, even on bits & pieces of the ship, we all make it to safety.

The mission of the church [2:15] — The mission to go the place where we are sent which again and again will be to the place where there are other powers are at work and announce and embody the power of Jesus in that place. People need to turn from the power of the enemy to the power of God, from darkness to light, to find the rescue which is there. Luke has woven this into his narrative as though to say from that day to this and until Jesus comes again to complete the work He began, this is how the ministry of the gospel will be. Don't be surprised when it happens.

[3:05] What happens when to Paul when Paul stood in Caesar? We keep hearing Paul in innocent, he is not guilty. He could have been set free. We're waiting for the final verdict which will ratify it. Where have you heard that sequence before? This is the doctrine of justification by faith. As we await the final verdict, we who believe in Jesus Christ have already heard the verdict in the present. Luke has woven the fact that we already heard the verdict - you are innocent. You are not guilty. We wait for the final day when the verdict will be ratified. We have already heard it. Faith involves looking to Jesus and so hearing that verdict already. The resurrection of Jesus as Paul kept on emphasizing is the thing that anchors it all.

[4:40] What was Paul up to? He was a loyal Jew saying things people didn't want to hear but his conscience was clear. He was representing the tradition at it's deepest point. He could show he was being true.

What was God up to? God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. God was in Paul, was bringing the news of that reconciliation to the world.

What are we up to? The call to deep loyalty and yet often exploration which will land us up accusations of disloyalty. To do things which people will say "You are politically out of line. You are talking about another king." We are called to do things which people will see as subversive. The power of love which the gospel is all about always challenges the love of power which is what Caesar is all about.

The call to follow Jesus in ministry is always the call to discover the deep meaning of what it is to be genuinely human. When that happens, unexpected friends who will say, "We've think you've got a point. This person could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar." If you are being loyal, faithful and following this ministry, though you do bear about in your body the dying Jesus, the life of Jesus will also be manifest in your mortal body. Your task is not to be successful. Your task is to be people like Paul who go on speaking salvation in the middle of the storm and above all arriving at Rome and speaking of Jesus.

**Acts 28:30-31** - "Proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance."

~ ~ ~ **End of Talk 4 of 4: NT Wright's Teaching "Acts"** ~ ~ ~



**"The Gospel Preached in Acts" by Dallas Willard**

["The Divine Conspiracy Lectures" #6](#) [time code 28:20-39:30]

**Why is the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus is omitted?** [28:20]

Carefully study scripture, read carefully New Testament, the Old Testament to see what is the gospel? One issue in particular comes up over and over - the idea that Jesus preached one gospel and Paul preached another.

{Willard} "I want to tell you there is no such difference." The gospel that Jesus preached and the gospel Paul preached are the same. Walk through the book of Acts and watch how the gospel of the Kingdom and the gospel of Jesus come together. You will see them separate at the beginning and together at the end.

**Acts put a face to the Kingdom and a Kingdom to the face.**

People did not know what Jesus was talking about when He talked about the Kingdom of God.

**Acts 1:3** - Jesus spoke of things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

**Acts 8:12** - Phillip in Samaria preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus. When you invoke the name of Jesus, you can invoke the action of the Kingdom. That's what they had to learn - When you ask and act in the name of Jesus, the Kingdom comes into action.

**Colossians 3:17** - "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." [32:00]  
The name of Jesus ties in the Kingdom.

At the end of Acts, the face of Jesus has been put on the Kingdom and a Kingdom is presented in terms of the King who is Jesus. A King always brings a kingdom, so they come together.

If you don't start there, things won't clear up. If you don't, you will variably wind up in legalism.

—> **Spirituality without Ontology produces Legalism** [33:15]

Ontology (def.) *"The theory of being; the understanding of reality."*

It applies not just to God but also to us as human beings. What matters in us is the hidden aspect - the sources of our behavior. We are spiritual beings. That's ontology. When we get the ontology right and the order right in the person, then we are able to escape legalism - Pharisaism. That's why religious people are often so angry and can be very mean. They are focusing on behavior - on faith and practice and they are judging themselves and everyone else in terms of that. It produces mean and contentious Christians. Where does this come from? This comes from the insistence on behavior and right and wrong. Inquisitions, wars, all those things. How could that happen? They try to understand spirituality in terms of explicit behavior or faith in practice or explicit belief.

If we come to Jesus, we have to have beliefs about Him. You can't come to Him any other way. The significance of the belief is not so that we will be identified with having the right answers. Salvation is presented as...

\* Like a Driver's test. Miss it and you don't drive (Go to the bad place.)  
The significance of faith is not having the right answers,  
it is being enmeshed in reality in the way that accords with truth.  
When you do that, your life is different.

\* Virgin Birth of Christ significance?  
- It is not getting right answer but if He was born of a virgin, you've got a different world, now you're going to be relating to Him in a different way.

\* Was Christ divine? - If I say that, then I pass the test. God will let me in because I got the right answer. The right answer is not what matters. If I believe that Jesus was uniquely divine, I relate to Him differently than if I relate to Him as a nice man who had historical significance and we ought to be like him.

My belief is designed to integrate my action with reality. That's why it really matters. We seek the Kingdom in Jesus, we come to Him, we began to listen to Him. If the Holy Spirit and Word works the faith in our heart, we say,  
*"This is the Son of God. This is equal with God."*

Now we have a different kind of person that we are relating to. We come to seek the Kingdom in Jesus. We live out the righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit and we live in uncompromising obedience. We are learning to do that.

Do we have to be perfect? No. Why? We are not accepted on the basis of perfection or performing. We are accepted because our relationship to Jesus. When I go to Heaven, the place of God, they are not going to check the computer to see if all my sins have been paid for. They will see another friend of Jesus coming. A disciple may be very green and very imperfect. What characterizes a disciple is not the level of their perfection. What characterizes a disciple is they are learning and progressing and before very long, they are very different because their inner being has been transformed.

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The full Lecture # 6 and all 12 of this series by Dallas Willard including 119 pages of notes, go to [JesusCollege.com](http://JesusCollege.com) - [Dallas Willard](http://DallasWillard.com) - [The Divine Conspiracy](http://TheDivineConspiracy.com)



**Life With God Bible (LWGB)**

Essay 13: *The People of God in Mission* — The Book of Acts

**Purpose** - The formation of the People of God into an all-inclusive loving community is now present in the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom. (ref. LWGB, 191)

**“The People of God in Mission” Overview (LWGB, XLVI-XLVII)**

SCRIPTURE	Acts
GOD’S ACTION	Sends the Holy Spirit and creates the Church
HUMAN REACTION	Believe & proclaim; Disbelieve & persecute
MEDIATION	Thru the Holy Spirit, persecution and martyrdom
LOCATION	Temple, Synagogue, Schools, Riversides, Public Square
SOCIAL CONTEXT	Jew, Gentile, House Churches, Abandonment of social strata
KEY INDIVIDUALS	Peter & Paul
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES	Speaking & hearing the Word, sacrifice, guidance, generosity, service, fasting, prayer
PROFILES (Index p.581)	Ananias & Saphira (209), Barnabas (225), Stephen (213), Phillip (217)

**Areas of Discovery for Our Formation (LWGB, 191-195)**

~ God’s Action (191-192) - God forms an all-inclusive community with God at the center. Each person receives from the Spirit knowledge & power of Jesus. God Himself is living in them. At Pentecost & in Acts, God breaks down the ethnic walls.

~ Human Reaction (192-193) - Preaching declares the person and work of Jesus to non believers; conversation expands the message to believers. The disciples form new communities of faith thru prayer, worship, baptism & the Lord’s Supper.

~ Blessings & Benefits for Our Formation (193-194) - By the Holy Spirit, the all-inclusive community transcends every race, creed & culture. The Jerusalem Council releases the faith from its bonds of Judaism and the church begins. (Acts 15) The good news of the Kingdom is preached in new self-replicating societies of God.

~ Limits & Liabilities for Our Formation (194-195) - The problems of legalism as a mandatory system or “antinomianism” as an abuse of freedom. Also, the Spirit does not automatically produce unity as disputes are seen in the book of Acts.

~ Insights & Instructions for Our Formation (195) - 1) The universal nature of God’s love. 2) The Spirit of courage & boldness. (4:29, 8:31) 3) Rejoice in suffering because God is with us and He gives us strength & endurance in suffering. (5:40)

**Focus:** The Kingdom of God on Earth in prayer, unity, love & witness

compiled by Doug Webster

**Church Planting Models from the Book of Acts**  
by Doug Webster

*I have observed various models of church planting in the book of Acts. Although this is not an extensive or an exhaustive review of the move of God in the early church, it is my humble attempt as a seasoned church planter to discern the ways the Lord moved to originate new churches. Each of the models has two names: First, a contemporary description followed by a second, Biblical designation. The models are presented in the chronological order in which they occurred.*

**I. The Simultaneous Model – The Caesarean Model                      Acts 10**

The Simultaneous Model was launched in Caesarea when two different leaders came upon the same vision at the same time. First, the local leader by the name of Cornelius in the city of Caesarea was called by God to seek a “church planter” (10:3). Simultaneously, Peter in a different location is prompted by the Spirit of God to a more generic, non-location, non-people vision as an orientation or an openness to a move of God in his ministry (10:11). The model was enacted when the local leader commissioned representatives to seek and find the man of God to minister to the community. (10:17) A similar event occurs in the history of the church when a pastor senses a longing for a new ministry, a need to depart before he realizes where or when he needs to leave. At the same time an individual godly leader as in the case of Cornelius or a core group (the following model) confirms the call stirring in the heart of the church planter.

**II. The Core Group Model – The Antiochian Model                      Acts 11:19**

The Core Group model occurs in a group of believers already formed and created a vibrant ministry. As in the case of Acts 11, the reputation of the Antioch new church reached the ears of the Elders in the Jerusalem church much like gossip travels on the wind. The Elders commissioned Barnabas to do a reconnaissance of the new Antiochian ministry. His confirmation of God’s grace (and undoubtedly the orthodoxy of the new ministry) was followed by his recruiting of Saul (11: 25) to act as the church’s co-pastor along with Barnabas.

**III. The Sending Church Model – The Missionary Tour Model                      Acts 13**

The Sending model is the act of a church body commissioning a church planter from their midst to go plant churches in new locations away from the mother church. The Antiochians release of Paul and Barnabas sent by the Holy Spirit (13:4) served as the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Tour. We also find the dispensation of more Missionary Tours from the same sending church of Antioch (18:22).

**IV. The Church Planter Model – The Apostolic Model                      Acts 13 – 14**

The Apostolic model resulted from the Sending Model when Paul & Barnabas teamed up to visit various locations to begin a new work. In each of these locations such as Iconium, Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe Paul and Barnabas did not remain in these locations but appointed elders (14:23) to lead the churches. Paul and Barnabas returned later to these churches to provide strength and encouragement. It appears Syria & Cilicia churches may be in this same Apostolic/Church Planter model because Paul and Barnabas seem to strengthen pre-existing churches.

(15:41) We can see the same approach or model in Thessalonica (17:1), Berea (17:11), Athens (17:6), Corinth (18:1), Ephesus (18:19), Galatia & Phrygia (18:23), Greece (20:2) and finally Rome (27:2, 28:14).

#### **V. The Apprentice Model – The Timothean Model** **Acts 16:2**

Vital to the future growth of the new church plants is the recruiting and development of next generation leaders as seen in Timothy who is later commissioned as a pastor as in Berea (17:14) and associate pastor in Corinth (18:5).

#### **VI. The Vision Model – The Macedonian Call Model** **Acts 16**

Interestingly enough, Paul received a vision (16:9) similar to Peter in Acts 10 but this time the vision from the Lord designated a location unlike Peter's vision of purpose but not place. What is modified from the above Simultaneous Model is the absence of a believer in Macedonia or a specific person embodying the call to Paul. This model is not a two-way call with a clear confirmation from the local community but a one sided call from a church planter to a specific location.

#### **\* Varied Applications of #IV - The Church Planter/Apostolic Model**

##### **- Key Local Influencer - Lydia Factor Application** **Acts 16, 17**

In Philippi we see critical importance of the presence of a godly believer in Lydia (16:15) who becomes a vital influence in the original core group. We can discover the power of a local champion for the new work of the Lord by a second look at Cornelius (10:27) where Peter was met by a "large gathering". Vital to the effectiveness of every church plant is the presence and influence of local, credible "gatherers" in whom can be found a viable network of trust and word of mouth contacts to reach the non-churched. In Thessalonica we see Luke mention the involvement of "not a few prominent women" who joined the movement of the new church (17:4). The same can be said of both men and women of prominence in Berea (17:12)

##### **- Strategic Location – Synagogue Application**

Paul's strategy, what the NIV calls "custom" (Acts 17:2) or "as usual" (14:1), was to use the local Synagogues as church launch points in Damascus (9:20), Salamis (13:5), Pisidian Antioch (13:4), Iconium (14:1) Thessalonica (17:2), Berea (17:10), Athens (17:17), Corinth (18:4), Ephesus (18:19; 19:8).

##### **- Modified Non-Churched Strategic Location – Marketplace Application** **Acts 17:17**

Paul's expands his customary synagogue strategy when he arrived in Athens to discover the secular thinking. He moves to a second strategic location in the "marketplace" to be able to reach the non-church, non-religious but spiritually interested people of this location.

##### **- Modified Home Church Strategic Location – House Church Application**

As witnessed in the Key Influencer Model with both Lydia (16:15) and Cornelius (10:26-27), each of these leaders provide their home as the launch pad for the work of God's Spirit in the new churches in their towns. In both plants at



Lydia’s and Cornelius’ homes, we find the “Home Church” model spring forth. We also notice the same use of a home in Corinth (18:7-8) as a second location after the synagogue resulting from what we can contemporize as either facility or people conflict in the original venue. The House Church model was used by design in Caesarea and Philippi and by default in Corinth.

**- Apostolic Team Plant – Disciples Model      Acts 18**

We see Paul expand his apostolic church planting approach to include additional leaders beyond his original two man partnership with Barnabas. In Corinth we meet Priscilla and Aquila (18:2) who are later joined by Apollos (19:1). Apollos’ addition to Paul’s apostolic team is first mentioned in Ephesus (18:24). Apollos’ ministry involvement actually begins as a separate work of God (call it an additional church plant in the same community). Apollos eventually teams up with the apostolic ministry of Paul, Priscilla and Aquila. It is interesting to see in Greece that Paul rallied quite a developed team of seven church plant partners (20:4-6) including his apprentice disciple Timothy (who was first introduced in Acts 16:2).

**VII. The Confirmation Model – The Berean Model      Acts 17**

It is helpful to compare and contrast the impact of the Apostolic model on two separate ministries – Thessalonica and Berea. Both locations were targeted with the same approach – The Church Planter model – but the ministry was received two different ways by the locals. Although a responsive work of God was delivered by Paul in Thessalonica (17:4), he was harassed by opposition that followed him to Berea (17:5, 13). The Bereans on the other hand were described as more noble, teachable and responsive to the teaching of God’s Word. We can see the growth of the early church in various other places in Acts, often times rapid, significant response to the new plants but it is valuable and prudent to realize some locations, some cultures, or some people groups are more responsive to evangelical outreach and church planting.

**VIII. The Exclusion Model – The Bythinian Model      Acts 16:6-8**

Few if any church planters or sending churches want to admit inability to reach the lost or plant new churches in particular locations. We do find divine choreography in the early church that limits or excludes Paul from doing a work in some locations such as Asia, Mysia and in particular Bythinia. Many church planters would be compelled to continue pounding on a door that God may keep closed for an undisclosed reason or indeterminate time. Fortunately for the future, ensuing church of Philippi, Paul was mature and discerning enough to let go of his plans and move to a new location in response to God’s prompting that resulted in a mighty work through which we now have the book of Philippians.

**Summary** – We find the miraculous and inspiring work of the Holy Spirit in the beginning of the early church in varied and contrasting ways. We see an apostle led by the Spirit to the confirmation by a divinely inspired, awaiting group of people. On at least one occasion, the core group was growing their ministry without intent to secure a new church planter/pastor. At other times we find church leaders penetrating new locations without invitation or influence but quickly finding local influencers to convert to the faith and help build the new church. These new spots for God’s work have been the result of an intentional, visionary draw to a place and

people or the natural, organic result or a progressive, geographic church movement.

We find strategic effort targeted primarily in synagogues. The place of ministry is shifted to homes in other locations or after conflict in the original launch site. Non-religious venues were also employed tactically to reach those who would not otherwise attend a religious gathering.

We see the approach vary from a sending group of church leaders commissioning one man to an existing work of God, two men called to blazing a gospel gauntlet for the Lord, all the way up to a seasoned team of 7 plus a veteran apostle church planter plowing new territory. We discover great success in explosive works such as Antioch, the Cape Canaveral for the new church’s missionary movement, while finding limited response in Athens and Thessalonica that led to minimal impact or worse yet, conflict accompanying the ministry to future locations. Fellow pastors were recruited at the onset and on other occasions, leaders were recruited and trained to carry on the ministry after the apostolic church planter’s departure. Looking closely we also witness certain times and places where the early church planters not only find minimal response or disheartening conflict, they were guided by God to avoid or exclude some places and people.

All in all, we see church planters both called internally or commissioned externally. We see a man go alone into Antioch soon to be joined by a partner contrasted with a leadership development approach of 8 working anew in Greece. We find local believers inviting in by proactive design or welcoming in by reactive response a new planter. Other places and people were often but not exclusively positively responsive to the work of Christ originated by a leader from the outside. We see works launch in the most logical locations in synagogues to the convenience and comfort of local homes to the least likely in the public square. In each occurrence we seem to find the confirmation of God’s Spirit on changed lives resulting in the presence and growth of a new church accompanied by returning visits from outside church leaders to further strengthen, equip and encourage the fledgling work of God called a Church Plant.

The above summary may appear to leave a door of church planting wide open to many and even any approaches to further the kingdom of God. A more close analysis confirms the ways and means by which God began His new work in Christ through the Holy Spirit in the early church. The call and challenge for today’s church leadership is to discern biblical, spiritual and circumstantial criteria for effective church planting in today’s world.

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Thank you and God bless you for venturing into a life that is really life with Jesus as your Master and Maestro. We trust you have had a fresh hearing of Jesus through the minds and souls of two humble followers of Jesus in Dallas & NT alongside a cadre of the crucifixion of friends from around the world. May your quietly transforming, conversational friendship with Jesus immersed in the Trinitarian community be pervaded with joy and relaxed with shalom, as you willfully seek the good of God, others & yourself.

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*The Study Guide was prepared with love, diligence and enthusiasm by Doug Webster of Jesus College. We welcome your comments, suggestions and ideas on how we might better help you actually do the things Jesus commanded in your pursuit of Christlikeness.*

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JESUS COLLEGE

*A good school*

## Studies in the Book of Apostolic Acts: Journey into the Spiritual Unknown

*Dallas Willard*

A General Outline of the Book of Acts — Compiled by our friends at [Renovaré](#)

### **I. The Divine Society or Community Comes within the Jewish Nation**

*The New Wine in the Old Bottle, Before the Bottle Burst (Luke 5:37) – Jewish Christianity: Judaism’s Fullest, Christianity’s Oldest Form.*

- 1) The New – Supernatural and Spiritual – Community formed *within* Judaism (Acts 1:1-3; 26).
- 2) The Initial Jewish Resistance to the New Society of God – the Struggle *within* Judaism, in the ministry *at* Jerusalem and to Jews *only* (Acts 4:1-6; 7).
- 3) Persecution and Propagation. The Flight *from* Judaism – “The blood of the martyrs as the seed of the church” – Ministry *outside* of Jerusalem to Jews *as well as* to Gentiles (Acts 6:8-12; 25). The “Old Bottle” bursts.

### **II. The Divine Community Moves its Center Outside of Judaism**

*The Initial Attempt at a Divine Community without Cultural Presuppositions of Any Kind (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11) – New Bottles for the New Wine.*

- 1) The “Christians” of Antioch (in Syria) (Acts 11:19-26; 13:1-2a).
- 2) Paul and Barnabas separated and sent out to evangelize westward from the church at Antioch (Acts 13:2b-14; 28). (The 1<sup>st</sup> “Missionary” journey of Paul).
- 3) The Council meeting at Jerusalem of 50 A.D. on the Momentous Question: Can people (males) with foreskins be saved? (Acts 15:1-35).
- 4) Paul and Silas travel through Asia Minor and Eastern Greece evangelizing (Acts 15:36-18:22). (The 2<sup>nd</sup> “Missionary” journey of Paul).
- 5) Paul re-traverses the area previously covered with Silas, and – at some point – takes Luke as Companion (Acts 18:23-21:20). (The 3<sup>rd</sup> “Missionary” journey of Paul).
- 6) Final rejection of God’s new way and community by the Jews (Acts 21:21-23:10).

- 7) Paul and Luke go to *Rome*, the center of the Gentile world (Acts 23:11-28; 31). (The 4<sup>th</sup> “Missionary” journey of Paul).

The Book of Apostolic Acts in the Plan of God for All of Mankind

1. **In the Beginning God** – The Maker of all things, who is a personal agency working for righteousness and joy in human history and society, and whose moral features are seen in Jesus Christ, the reconciler of men to God (Rom. 1:19-20; Acts 14:17; Acts 17:23-29; Ps. 19:1-4; II Cor. 4:6; John 1:9; 18).
2. **God’s Aim in History** – The creation of an all-inclusive Community of loving persons, with Himself included in that community as its prime sustainer and most glorious inhabitant (Isa. 11:9; Isa. 65:17-25; Hab. 2:14; Jer. 31:33-34; Heb. 8:10-12; Eph. 2:19-22).
3. **The World-Wide Revelation of This Aim** – An actual, historical event. With the appearance in India of the Upanishads (800 to 600 B.C.), Gautama, the Buddha (560 to 480 B.C.), and Mahavira (599 to 527 B.C.), of Confucius (551 to 479 B.C.) and Lao Tze (604 to 517 B.C.) in China, Zarathustra (660 to 583 B.C.) in Persia, and the Pre-Exilic prophets (750 to 586 B.C.) in Israel, sacrifices, ceremonies, propitiations, and other externalities ceased to be enough to make up the religious life of man. In this period, the principle of peace on earth to men of good will swept across the face of the earth (Micah 6:6-8; Isa. 58:1-59; Isa. 15; Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:6-11).
4. **The World-Wide Barrier to the Realization of This Aim** – *Pride and fear*, complicated by the individual’s relation to his *group* or *culture* (the “world”) and by the *spiritual warfare* (the “devil”) now in process (Gen. 3:1-11; Gen. 11:1-9; Acts 5:17-18; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 6:12).
5. **The Vocation of Jewish People in God’s Plan** – To be the Divine/Human Community, which is God’s Aim in history (see #2), by dwelling in God and by bringing all nations in (Gen. 12:3; Micah 4:1-5; Ex. 20:1-17; Isa. 43:10-12; Isa. 44:1-8).
6. **The Failure of the Jewish Nation** – By becoming just another, but still very special, social-natural unit.
  - a. Mediators called for (Ex. 20:18-26).
  - b. Kings called for (I Sam. 8:4-22).

- c. Rituals – later, Circumcision – as the principle of inclusion among the “saved” (see the book of Leviticus).
  - d. The prophetic response (Hos. 6:6 and above passages).
  - e. Destruction of the Jewish Nation-State (Jerusalem) (II Chron. 36:15-21; Lam. 1:1-4).
7. **The Success of the Jewish Nation, in Spite of Itself, for God’s Purposes** – A social basis was prepared which was adequate for the reception of the Community (or Kingdom) of God. The “fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4) was come. A Divine/Human Community which did not rest on *pride* and *fear* could get its start in the ashes and cinders of the Jewish Nation, left by the killing of the best man by the best people, and by the physical destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
8. **Christ as the End of the Jewish Law and Nation** (Rom. 3:20-31; Rom. 10:1-4; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Acts 15:5-11).
9. **The Unity of God’s Community** (Ps. 119:63; Eph. 4:1-6; Gal. 3:28-29).
10. **The Book of Apostolic Acts in the Process of Holy History** – This book shows acts of two main apostles – Peter and Paul – in the process of God’s deliverance of the Universal Community of God from its “Jewish Captivity.” The “administrative” headquarters of the community moves from Jerusalem, to Antioch, and finally to Rome in the course of the book of Acts. Galatians 6:14 is the heart of the message of Acts: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.” Yet, the lesson is not learned, as we now know the Community only moved from a Jewish captivity to a Roman or Christian captivity. The Jews came to be despised by the “Christians” just as the Jews despised Gentiles. We today find the way of Christ cumbered by what we may, in general, call the “Cultural Captivity of God’s Community.” Who is willing to accept as an equal in the righteousness of God anyone who *only* “does justice, loves mercy, and walks humbly with his God?” (Mic. 6:8). They are always better if they are like us in ways *other* than these.



**The Kingdom Comes in Power**

(Mark 9:1 & Acts 1:8; 2:2)

(Study Acts 1:1 – 2:13)

**I. Last visible contact with the Incarnate Word with His Jewish followers (Acts 1:1-9).**

1) Luke and his mission (v. 1-3).

2) The final gathering (v. 4-8).

A. Final instructions (v. 4-5)

B. The enduring error (v. 6)

Addenda:

1. Power *without* a kingdom. Note the contrast between *kingdomless power* and *powerless kingdoms*. We will see this juxtaposition throughout the book of Acts (v. 7-8).

2. Where the kingdom is to come – your “neighbor”hood.  
Compare this with today’s popular forms of evangelism.

3) A final concession of the *Logos* to the limitations of His followers (cf. Phil. 2:8) (v. 9).

4) *Why* He had to go away – John 16:7.

A. From John the Baptist to Jesus to *ο παρακλητος* [the Comforter, Helper].

B. Christ no more known after the flesh – II Cor. 5:16.

**II. Life as viewed from a blind alley** – Where the only way out is up: Following the instructions of 2A (Acts 1:10-26).

1) Assurance that Jesus is not done with them (v. 10-12).

2) The “upper room” – what went on there (v. 13-14)

3) Selection of a replacement for Judas (v. 15-26). Why and how this was done.

Addendum:

The significance of the fact that God had finally found a people who would wait (v. 4-5 & 2:1). Consider what it might *mean* for us who wait today – what form would it take?

**III. Fountains opened in high places (Isa. 41:18).** The kingdom comes in power (Acts 2:1-3; 26).

- 1) The initial fact of the new presence (Acts 2:1-13).
  - A. The posture of reception (v. 1).
  - B. Manifestation to sight and hearing (v. 2-4).
  - C. Response of non-participants to strange hearings (v. 5-13).
  - D. The nature of these “tongues”.

**The New Community of God Reaches out In Power  
to the Old Jewish Community**

(Acts 2:14 – 3:26)

- 2) Power to witness (Acts 2:14 – 2:47)
  - A. Peter explains the behavior of his fellows by reference to the promise of God by the prophet Joel (v. 14-21).
  - B. Peter charges the Jews with murdering their own Messiah (v. 22-36).
    - a) FACT – God commended Jesus by “wonders, portents and signs” which he did (v. 22).
    - b) FACT – The Jewish leaders murdered Jesus anyway (v. 23).
    - c) FACT – But Jesus arose from the dead (v. 24 & 32).
    - d) PROPHECY OF DAVID  
That the Messiah shall rise from the dead (v. 25-32).  
That the Messiah shall ascend to God’s place of power (His right hand) to work by His Spirit (v. 33-35).
    - e) CONCLUSION  
The Jewish nation has become so opposed to God that it has killed the one (Jesus) whom God appointed to save it (v. 36).
  - C. The Spirit strikes home with Peter’s discourse (v. 37-47).

Addenda:  
The way by which popular forms of evangelism abrogate the word of the Spirit.

    1. The work of the Spirit in Conviction (v. 37 & John 16:8).
    2. Man’s part in salvation—but *only* after the Spirit has done His work (v. 38-39).

- i. Repent – The turn in the heart from *my (our)* way, governed by pride and fear, to God’s way (v. 38).
  - ii. Be baptized – A standard, well-understood way of *showing* forth repentance to others (v. 38-41 and see Matt. 3:7-8 on connection between repentance and baptism).
3. The work of the Spirit *after* conviction and the appropriate human response – a life lived *in God* and *in His New Society* (v. 38, 39, 42-47).

Addenda:

- i. The practical character of the New Society of God.
  - The importance of their remaining together.
  - The experiment of common sharing.
- ii. The differences between first century Jewish culture and American Nuclear Families.

3) Power to heal for blessing and a witness (Acts 3:1-3:26).

- A. The place of the Temple in the New Community (v. 2:46 & 3:1-4).
- B. Kingdomless power heals a man lame from birth (v. 5-10).
- C. Peter witnesses through the physical event (v. 11-26).
  - a) He disclaims any power or piety of his own did the healing (v. 12-13a).
  - b) He ascribes this miracle to Jesus the murdered one (v. 13b-16).
  - c) He acknowledges that God’s plan was fulfilled in the events of Jesus’ death, and that the Jews acted in ignorance (v. 17-18).
  - d) He tells how Jews may yet receive their Messiah (v. 19-20).
  - e) But not for the purpose of forming another little exclusive, mutual appreciation club (v. 21-26).

**Jewish Christianity Attacked from Without and from Within**

(Acts 4:1 – 6:7)

IV. **The first attack by official Judaism and its effect on the New Community (v. 4:1-37).**

- 1) The Sadducees offended at the teaching of the resurrection (v. 1-4).
- 2) The encounter with “officialdom” (v. 5-22).
  - A. The human, worldly question, “Who are you *in* with?” (v. 5-7).
  - B. Peter answers, “We’re in with Jesus, murdered and yet living, the only present savior.” (v. 8-12)
  - C. “Officialdom” silenced by the fact of a supernatural presence and its manifest effect (v. 13-22).
- 3) The New Community rolls on in lives of praise to God (v. 23-37).
  - A. In prayer of thanks for deliverance from “officials” (v. 23-31).
  - B. In deeds of *trust* and *love* (v. 32-37).

V. **The first attack from within: Lying disciples (v. 5:1-12).**

- 1) What Ananias and Sapphira did – *why* they lied (v. 1-3).
- 2) What was wrong in their deed – pride and fear again (v. 4 & 9).
- 3) The effect of the truth upon Ananias and Sapphira (v. 5-10).  
(Vindictiveness nor punishment not necessarily implied here.)
- 4) The effect of these events upon the Community of believers (v. 11-12a).

Addendum: Why the experience of Acts 5:1-12 is not occurring today – “low voltage Christianity.”

VI. **The second attack by official Judaism and its effect (5:12b-42).**

- 1) Offense taken at the influence of the Apostles – Pride and envy or jealousy at work (v. 12b-17) (see 13:45 & 17; 5 as well as Matt. 27:18 & Mark 15:10).
- 2) Imprisonment and angelic deliverance (v. 18-20).
- 3) Officialdom perplexed—*where are our prisoners?* (v. 21-25).

- 4) Before the “Officials” again (v. 26-40).
  - A. The complaint against the Apostles: Authority vs. Power, or the powerless kingdom vs. kingdomless power (v. 26-28).
  - B. Peter: when forced to choose, we obey God rather than men (v. 29-32).
  - C. The urge to Kill! Kill! Kill! (v. 33, but see James 3:16).
  - D. Gamaliel’s advice: God is able to manage His Kingdom, which is larger than our preconceptions (v. 34-39, but see Matt. 15:12-14).
- 5) The Apostles come off *flogged* but *fervent* (v. 40-42, but see also Phil. 1:29-30 as well as Acts 9:16 and I Peter 4:12-13 and II Tim. 3:12).

**VII. The second attack from within: Racial and cultural discrimination**  
(v. 6:1-7).

- 1) Old oppositions break out within the new Community: the Jews against the Greeks (v. 1).
- 2) The necessity of different sorts of ministries—*Administrative* means of resolving a *spiritual* problem (v. 2-4).
- 3) The qualifications of assistants or “deacons” (v. 3 & I Tim. 3:12-13).
- 4) The appointment process for deacons (v. 5-6).

*Addendum:* Note: it was mainly Greeks who were appointed—they chose the deacons from the aggrieved party.
- 5) Once again, the New Community rolls on! (v. 7)

**Jewish Persecution Drives the New Community to the Gentiles**

(Acts 6:8 – 8:40)

**VIII. Stephen brings the Jewish opposition to a head (v. 6:8 – 8:1).**

- 1) The Work of God through Stephen (v. 8-10).
- 2) The charge against Stephen – *he would change the customs* (v. 11-15).
- 3) Stephen's indictment of the Nation of the Jews – that they with their God-given institutions are opposed to God (v. 6:15 – 7:53).
  - A. He first shows how God's people have always been the outsiders, the rejected, the cast-offs, which God has yet make victorious (v. 7:2-50 and see I Cor. 4:13 "the *περιψημα* [scum, dirt] of all things" and Lam. 3:45, as well as Heb. 13:12-14).
    - a) The case of Abraham (v. 2-8).
    - b) The case of Joseph (v. 9-16).
    - c) The case of Moses (v. 17-50).
      1. As a babe (v. 17-22).
      2. As a man (v. 23-36).
      3. As a prophet and priest (v. 37-50).
  - B. He aligns his hearers—the Jewish leaders—with the long tradition of God rejecters, by pointing out that they had rejected the Messiah Himself (v. 51-53 and see Matt. 23).
- 4) Stephen's martyrdom (v. 7:54-81).
  - A. His 'blasphemy' (v. 54-56).
  - B. The manner of his murder; "cast him out of the city," i.e. off the city wall, and drop boulders on him (v. 57-58).
  - C. The spirit in which he died: praying for his killers (v. 59-60).
  - D. Saul the killer introduced (v. 58, 8:1, and see I Cor. 15:9).

**IX. The general persecution under Saul's direction and the use to which God put it (v. 8:1-4).**

**X. Philip brings the Gentiles into the Kingdom (v. 8:5-40).**

- 1) The despised Samaritans saved, brought into God's New Community, *without* becoming Jewish proselytes (v. 5-25, see John 4:9).
  - A. Philip preaches Christ and heals in a "city of Samaria" (v. 5-8).
  - B. Philip wins Simon Magnus, chief Witch-doctor of the area (v. 9-13).
  - C. Peter and John come to inspect this wonder of God reaching the *Samaritans* (v. 14-15).
  - D. They (1) prayed for them and (2) laid hands on them that the Samaritans might also receive the fullness of God's Spirit (v. 15-17).
  - E. Simon Magnus misconceives the conditions of transmittal of the Holy Spirit – the Spirit not to be merchandise of (v. 18-25).

Addenda:

1. The Doctrine of the Laying on of Hands

The Laying on of Hands is a teaching found both in the Old and New Testaments. It is a real and valid ministry ordained of God in the church for the benefit of the body of Christ. It is not a mere church form, nor an empty ritual, but a clear understanding of the law of *contact* and *transmittal*. It is one medium through which God imparts to men and women what they desire or need, or what God, in His infinite wisdom, knows is best for an individual. The Laying on of Hands is used in Scripture in a number of ways, such as:

BLESSING. A common form was the tribal blessing. In Genesis 48:14-16, Jacob laid his hands on the heads of Ephraim and Manasseh saying, "The angels which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." Often times it went beyond mere tribal blessing, i.e., Moses laid hands on Joshua and he received "the spirit of wisdom" (Deut. 34:9). When the people brought children to Jesus it was not for him to play with them or talk to them, it was so he would lay hands on them and bless them (Mark 10:13-16). One of the great ministries that God's people can perform is to take our children in our arms and bless them – when we do so in faith God's blessing actually comes upon the child. The thing which will keep us from it is *pride* and *fear*!

BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT. According to the book of Acts, there are three principal ways by which the Baptism in the Holy Spirit was received. (No doubt there are others – who can confine the Spirit!) 1) Through obedience of faith (Acts 1:4, 5; 5:32). 2) Through the ministry of the word (Acts 10:44-46; 11:15). 3) Through the laying on of hands. In Acts 8:5-17, the Samaritan believers received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by Peter and John. In Acts 9:17, Paul received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands of Ananias. In Acts 19:1-6, the disciples at Ephesus received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands of the apostle Paul. This is a ministry which should be gladly received and freely exercised. The thing which will keep us from it *pride* and *fear*!

DIVINE HEALING. While healing can occur in many, many ways (for examples see II Kings 20:1-11, James 5:16, Acts 19:11-12, James 5:14-15, Ps. 107:20), the Laying on of Hands is *one* means through which the power of God flows. Jesus laid hands on the sick at Nazareth and healed them (Mark 6:5). The blind man received his sight through the laying on of Jesus’ hands (Mark 8:22-25, note the unusual nature of this experience). Consider the following passages: Luke 4:40 – everyone was healed; Mark 16:18 – believers did it; Acts 28:8 – Paul did it. The laying on of hands in itself does not heal the sick – it is Christ who heals the sick. The laying on of hands is a simple act of obedience which quickens one’s faith and gives God the opportunity to import the healing virtue. The thing which will keep us from this good work is *pride* and *fear*!

SPIRITUAL GIFTS. Spiritual gifts are received by the sovereign act of God (1 Cor. 12:7-11; I Kings 3:5-12) and by the laying on of hands and by... and by... Paul laid his hands on the disciples at Ephesus and they received the gift of prophecy (Acts 19:6). The young leader Timothy was encouraged to continue the effective use of the gift that was given to him by the laying on of hands (I Tim. 4:14 and II Tim. 1:6). The importance of this is to underscore the fact that the gifts of the Spirit are given and exercised within the context of the Divine Community. We need the body of Christ. An individual is severely limited in the good which he can accomplish – we are to receive the life and power of God from one another.



SPECIAL MINISTRY. Read and carefully consider the significance of the following passages: Deut. 34:9; Num. 8:10-26; Acts 6:6; Acts 13:3. Note: the laying on of hands is considered one of the elementary matters of the Gospel, without which one cannot go on to maturity (Heb. 6:1-6). Further this is not something that is to be done lightly or carelessly. You simple do not go around plopping your hands on anyone you please. We are to “lay hands on no man suddenly” (I Tim. 5:22) because to do so means that we become a partaker in his sin, i.e., we bring him/her into something for which he/she is not ready and thus do not help but hurt his/her spiritual walk.

2. The Sin of Simon Magnus.

The sin of Simon Magnus was to attempt to take the power of God and use it for his own ends. This is the sign of all false religion. But before we dismiss Simon Magnus out of hand we must understand how totally saturated American Evangelical “Christianity” is with exactly this mentality. Further, we must understand how very easy it is for us personally to fall into this very trap – to desire the power of God for our own ends.

- 2) The Kingdom goes to Ethiopia – without a mission society (v. 26-40)
  - A. Philip’s leading in the Spirit (v. 26-27).
  - B. Who the Ethiopian was (v. 27-28). He was a high official in the Ethiopian Government, and a proselyte or a “God-fearer.”
  - C. The ease of the guided, unforced witness (v. 29-35).
  - D. The Ethiopian invites himself into the New Community and “goes with God” (v. 36-39).
  - E. Philip preaches to yet another ethnic group – descendants of the Philistines – at Azotus and north to Caesarea (v. 40).

**Saul, Killer of Christians, is Conquered by the Risen Jesus**

**XI. Saul’s (Paul’s) conversion and calling (Acts 9:1-31, 22:1-21, 26:1-23).**

- 1) Saul’s zealous war on the disciples (9:1-2 & 26:9-11).
- 2) The encounter on the road to Damascus (v. 3-9).

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A. The sensuous manifestations involved (v. 3-4 & 7, compare 22:9).

(Note: apparently no vision of Jesus *in human form* was involved.)

B. How the invisible Lord dealt with Saul (v. 4-6).

C. Saul’s obedience (v. 8-9 & 11b) waiting in fasting and prayer.

3) The ministry of Ananias to Saul (v. 9:10-19).

A. The Lord speaks to His servant (v. 10-12).

B. The servant talks back, requesting clarification (v. 13-14).

C. The Lord explains and insists (v. 15-16).

D. Ananias ministers by the laying on of hands (v. 17-18).

E. And by baptism, food and fellowship (v. 18-19).

Addendum:

God directs and blesses *through* His people. See Eph. 4:15-16.

4) The early years of Saul’s life in Christ (v. 9:20-30).

A. Saul powerfully preaches Jesus as the Christ of the Jews (v. 20-22).

B. He escapes his would-be assassins *via* a basket-drop over the wall of Damascus at night (v. 23-25).

C. Saul spends three years in Arabia and back in Damascus (Gal. 1:15-18).

D. He then is with the brothers at Jerusalem briefly, through the aid of Barnabas (v. 26-28).

E. He disputes with the Grecian Jews in Jerusalem, who set out to kill him (v. 28-29).

F. He flees to his old home town, Tarsus, for a number of years (v. 30 & 11:25-26).

Addendum: The hidden preparation through which God puts His ministers.

5) The Church rolls on (v. 9:31).

**The Concluding Acts of Peter Recorded in the New Testament**

**XII. Peter ministers to Jews only, outside of Jerusalem (v. 9:32-43).**

1) In his travels, he comes to Lydda.

A. Aeneas – eight years an invalid – is made whole by Jesus (v. 33-34).

B. The impact of this wholing (v. 35).

2) Peter's trip to, and stay at, Joppa (v. 36-43).

A. He goes because Dorcas, a disciple whose services were still needed, had died (v. 36-39).

B. What Peter did when he came:

Addenda:

The importance of the life of simple goodness in the kingdom of God. "Who has despised the day of small things."

1. He considered her works (v. 39).

2. He prayed for her to continue them (v. 40).

3. He spoke to her and lifted her up (v. 40-41).

C. The impact of this wholing (v. 42)

D. Peter *tarries* in Joppa (v. 43).

Addenda: Peter *had* tarried at Jerusalem until endued with power, as the Lord had commanded (Luke 24:49). But *many* tarrying places are needed, all along our way. Note in 10:9f what Peter did while tarrying.

**XIII. Like Jonah, Peter without fully intending it – goes from Joppa to be a "minister to the despised Gentiles." (Acts 10:1-48)**

1) How Cornelius reached God – prayers and alms (v. 1-4).

2) How God reached Cornelius.

A. By the visionary messenger (v. 3-8).

B. By the human messenger (v. 9-43).

a) Peter prepared for his work as he "tarries" (v. 9-16).

- b) Peter gets a "letter of recommendation" concerning Cornelius (v. 19-20).
- c) Meshing of the messages to Cornelius and to Peter (v. 17-18 & 21-23).
- d) Peter – signals straight – delivers the word.

Addenda:

"Respect for persons" means to hold people as "better" because of things which have nothing to do with love of God and neighbor.

- 1. He spells out his new insight that God does not "respect persons" (v. 34-35).
- 2. He preaches the by-now-standardized truths *about* Jesus and announces that belief *in* Jesus brings remission of forgiveness of sins (v. 36-43).

C. By the gift of that Spirit in which Jesus (see v. 38) lived and worked (v. 44).

- 3) How God reached Peter through Cornelius, to confirm, without any qualifications, the content of v. 34-35 as well as 2:39 (v. 44-47).

Addendum:

The role of supernatural languages here, and compare the bystanders of 10:45-56 with those of 2:6-12. In both cases the effect was to convince them that God was at work in a group previously held to be *outside* His blessing. See I Cor. 14:22: "Wherefore tongues are for a sign... to them that believe not."

- 4) Peter carries some more (v. 10:48).

**XIV. Peter explains his heterodox behavior in associating with Gentiles to his Jewish brothers (v. 11:1-18).**

- 1) Outrage at Peter for eating with the uncircumcised (v. 1-3).
- 2) Peter describes the series of events in question (v. 4-17).
- 3) The Jewish brothers (temporarily) concede that God loves people who aren't circumcised (v. 18).

**XV. The beginnings of the Gentile church.** The first church which was not a Jewish organization (v. 11:19-30).

- 1) The intent to preach to Jews only (v. 19).

- 2) But some non-Judean Jews spoke to Greeks, who caught fire at the word (v. 20-21).
- 3) Barnabas sent from Jerusalem to check this out (v. 22-24).
- 4) He sees that this is God's work, and that brother Saul is just the man needed here, and brings him in (v. 25-26).

Addendum:

The significance of: "And the disciples were called 'Christians' first in Antioch" (v. 26b). Here it first became clear that the way of Christ was not a movement *within* Jewry.

- 5) The famine of these years led the Gentile church to minister to the Jewish church in material things, by the hand of Saul and Barnabas (v. 27-30).

Addendum: Missionary enterprise then and now were two very different things. This is studied in Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), but will be obvious to anyone who considers the relation between established churches and missions in the book of Acts.

**XVI. Peter has a run-in with Herod (v. 12:1-25).** (This is essentially an attack by Jewish non-Christians, see v. 3)

- 1) Herod attacks the church at Jerusalem (v. 1-2)
- 2) Peter is imprisoned (v. 3-4).
- 3) The Apostolic method of victory –
  - A. Prayer together, without ceasing (v. 5 & 12b).
  - B. The Angelic deliverer (v. 6-10).
  - C. Peter dazed by this heavenly intervention (v. 11-12).
  - D. His prayer group dazed by the answer to their prayers (v. 13-16).
- 4) Peter goes to Caesarea and Herod rages (v. 17-19).
- 5) Herod takes God's Glory to himself and dies of it (v. 20-23).
- 6) The Church rolls on (v. 24-25). But the focus from here on through Acts is on Paul and Gentiles.

**The Church Turns to Missions**

Addendum: Why Missions?

Why are missions to the world necessary if, as we have seen, all men *have* a knowledge of God (Ps. 19; John 1:9; 14:6; Acts 10:34-35; Rom.1:20; 2:6-29) and *can* be pleasing to God without any special revelation, whether Jewish or Christian? Jesus as the Logos (Prov. 8:22-31; John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:3) is present everywhere and is *not* blotted out or overwhelmed by the powers of darkness (John 1:5). Why, then, are we to go into all the world and preach the gospel? The answer is, very simply – “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened,” etc. (Rom. 1:21f). The world is full of rebels toward God and failures before God, both Jewish and Gentile. Jesus said: “They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark. 2:17). All sorts of human beings are equally loved by God, and to love God is to share this love of His for all men alike, without thinking it necessary to proselytize them for our culture – even our religious and ethical culture, where it is not (and for the most part it is not) *necessary* as an expression of love to God and neighbor. We must distinguish the heavenly treasure from the earthen vessel in which we carry it (II Cor. 4:6-7), and remember that it is the *treasure* which we are to pass on. The treasure is the “knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” The earthen vessel consists of the body and the cultural forms in which it is enshrouded, including most of the doctrinal and ritualistic forms in which we concretely express our apprehension of the treasure. We cannot redeem people by imposing our earthen vessel upon them. Too often missionary efforts have involved just such an imposition. In fact, cultural proselytizing only enslaves the proselyte – “ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Matt. 23:15). Ours is to share the good news and presence of Jesus as redeemer and deliverer of evil human beings, and to see God call people to Him on the basis of that message.

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**We now enter into the second main division of the book of Acts (See point II of the “A General Outline of the Book of Acts: The Divine Community Moves its Center outside of Judaism”)**

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**I. The "Christians" of Syrian Antioch – who and what they were (Acts 11:19; 22-27; and 13:1-2a).**

*Addendum:*

Why only at this point the New Community could reach out with conscious, voluntary effort – not just as a result of being scattered by persecution (as Acts 8:4) – in an attempt to reach all men, according to Mark 28:19-20. Only now do the disciples of Christ understand that all men are equally precious to God. It is worth pondering whether or not the church today understands this point.

**II. The manner of guidance in the Church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3).**

- 1) A *number* of people – "prophets and teachers" – constantly working together over a lengthy period of time (v. 1).
- 2) During periods of worshipping and fasting, an impression grows that Barnabas and Saul have a special work to do (v. 2). (How the Holy Spirit "speaks.")
- 3) The *group* response to this impression: fasting/prayer/laying on of hands (v. 3).

**III. The first "missionary journey" of Saul (Acts 13:4-14:28).**

- 1) The events in the Isle of Cyprus (v. 4-12).
  - A) They go from the east end of the isle to the west, preaching mainly in the synagogues (v. 4-5).

*Question: Why did Paul and Barnabas first go to Cyprus?*
  - B) At Paphos, on the west end of the isle, they encounter Sergius Paulus, a Roman official, with his friend Elymas (v. 6-12).
    - a) Elymas resists Paul's message, whereupon Paul places him in spiritual irons (v. 6-11).
    - b) Thus causing Sergius Paulus to believe the word (v. 12).
- 2) The journey to Pisidian Antioch – involving little significant incident except the desertion of John Mark (vs. 13-14; 15:38).
- 3) The work in Antioch, one of the Galatian cities (v. 14-52).
  - A) The open door at the synagogue (v. 14b-16).
  - B) Paul's first address to the Galatians (v. 17-41).
    - a) A review of the history of Israel (v. 16b-22).

- b) Jesus announced as the culmination of that history.
    - 1. As son of David (v. 23).
    - 2. As endorsed by John the Baptist (v. 24-25).
  - c) The rejection of Jesus at Jerusalem means that the message of salvation is sent to Jews and Gentiles elsewhere (v. 26-28).
  - d) Jesus overcame the rejection and used it to God’s own purposes by fulfilling the prophecies, and especially those concerning the resurrection from the dead (v. 29-37).
  - e) The promise of redemption stated to people who are not ‘the best’ (v. 38).
  - f) The *superiority* of Jesus’ way over the way of Moses proclaimed (v. 39).
  - g) Finally, a warning not to join those who reject God’s way in the Christ (v. 40-41).
- C) The good response to God’s word here (v. 42-43).
- D) The local Jewish rejection and its motives – *jealousy* (v. 45).
- E) Paul and Barnabas denounce the opposition and go to the Gentiles – taking, of course, their converts with them (v. 46-47).
- F) The word prospers *without the support of a special culture* (v. 48).
- G) Officialdom and devout women go on the warpath and drive Paul and Barnabas out of Antioch (v. 50-51).
- H) The lasting effect of the ministry in Antioch – people of all sorts, Jews and non-Jewish, filled with joy and the Holy Spirit (v. 52).
- 4) The work in Iconium, another Galatian city (Acts 14:1-7).
- A) The local synagogue addressed again (v.1).
  - B) Many believe the word again (v. 1).
  - C) The Jews against the disciples again (v. 2-4).



- D) The Apostles run out of town again – leaving converts behind (v. 5-8).
- 5) The work in Lystra, another Galatian city (v. 8-20).
- A) The contact with the people of this city made through the wholing of a crippled man (v. 8-11).
- B) Here, for the first time, the religious tradition within which the Jesus people are met is *Greek religion* – Zeus and Hermes (v. 11-13).
- C) Paul and Barnabas preach to them within the Greek tradition (of Acts 17), and do not lay Jewish history on them (v. 14-18).
- D) Yet, the Jewish people from Antioch and Iconium hunt them out in Lystra, and persuade the (some) people to stone Paul until he appears dead (v. 19-20).
- 6) But the next day after being stoned, Paul gets up and goes on with Barnabas to Derbe, the final Galatian city which they will visit, where many disciples again are made (v. 20-21).
- 7) Then the two great missionaries return through the Galatian cities already evangelized (v. 21b-23).
- A) Strengthening the disciples which were made on 1<sup>st</sup> visit (v. 22).

Addendum:

We are commanded, not only to make disciples, but also to teach "them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). This is today what could be called "the Great Omission from the Great Commission," in almost all churches of our nation and others. Paul supposed that the ministry was to "perfect the saints" (Eph. 4:12-13).

- B) Appointing elders in every church (v. 23).

Addendum:

Paul had a ministry of the Spirit. Hence, those affected by his preaching were immediately in the school of the Spirit, and made rapid progress in the things of the Kingdom. A ministry of the Spirit yields (almost) "instant elders," unlike current American churches, where the vitality and level of spiritual nutriment in the 'body' of the church is so low that the people brought to birth in her must spend years recovering from the

deficiencies of the ‘womb,’ and perhaps remain spiritual cripples for life.

- 8) They return to the Mediterranean Coast, preaching at Perga on the way (v. 24-25).
- 9) Paul and Barnabas sail home to Antioch (in Syria), where they report.

*Note:* This beautiful and accurate description of what had happened – “all that *God* had done *with* them, and how *he* had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.” And now they are here at home again for some while (v. 26-28).

### **The Jerusalem Council of A.D. 50**

(Acts 15:1-35)

- IV. **The Council of Jerusalem in 50 A.D.:** On the question of whether one can be in God’s Community without obeying the Rules of the Jewish Culture (v. 15:1-35, but also see Gal. 2:1-16).

#### Addendum:

Note that Paul’s account of the upshot of the Council differs from that recorded in Acts 15 by Luke. Compare especially Gal. 2:10 with “these necessary things” of Acts 15:28 and 20-21. The Lord’s work does *not* depend upon the agreement of His people even about what happened at certain meetings.

- 1) Some “brethren” come from Judea to lay Moses upon the Christians then in Antioch, and a debate ensues as to the necessity of obeying the Mosaic Code (v. 1-3).
- 2) Paul and Barnabas (with Titus – see Gal. 2:1) go to Jerusalem to settle this question.
  - A) Initial discussion and dissensions upon arriving in Jerusalem (v. 4-5).
  - B) The solemn assembly convenes for business (v. 6-29).
    - a) Peter leads off with a statement that the Mosaic *burden* is not to be imposed (v. 6-11, but see Gal. 2:11f).
    - b) Paul and Barnabas tell of God’s work in the Gentiles (v. 12).

- c) James – blood brother of our Lord Jesus – proposes what is essentially a compromise solution, requiring not the whole Mosaic Code – especially not circumcision – but only right sex and proscription upon blood food and meat of animals which had been offered to idols (v. 13-21).
  - d) Essentially James’ position is passed as a resolution and sent by letter to the Gentile churches (v. 22-29).
- 3) The church at Antioch rejoices in this liberty from Moses and continues to prosper, with many able persons involved in the word of the Lord there (v. 30-35).

*Addenda:*

1. “These *necessary* things” of v. 28 is another reminder of how certain parts of the “earthen vessel,” even culinary culture, are often imposed as necessary parts of the “treasure” (II Cor. 4:6-7).
2. In the first century, the critical issue was circumcision. Paul knew that if the Judaizers succeeded the Gospel was doomed – culture religion would take over. (Which did in fact happen after Paul’s death.)  
*What is the issue(s) today?*

**Paul’s Good News about God as Seen in Galatians**

The Apostle Paul concerns himself with three major arguments in his epistle to the Galatians: 1) a defense of his authority and independence as an apostle, 2) a defense of the truth of his message of justification by faith, and 3) a defense of the liberty found in justification by faith.

The whole of Paul’s influence and teaching to the peoples of Galatia had been endangered by Judaizers who had sought to throw disrepute upon his teachings by seeking to discredit his authority as an apostle. Hence Paul includes in his greeting to the churches a terse declaration of his apostleship. He claims to derive his right to be heard directly from Jesus Christ and not from men. He denounces their turning to a gospel of a different kind and mocks its inferior quality (v. 7). He argues that his gospel, unlike theirs, was not the result of men’s teaching but of God’s. One evidence of this was that Paul did not seek to please men but God (v. 10).

To further demonstrate that his gospel was not a result of the teaching of men, Paul gives a brief history of his past life. His life under Judaism was diametrically opposed to his teaching. His actions and emotional make-up were in opposition to his present life. His past could in no way account for the present. Upon his direct confrontation with the living Christ and subsequent conversion, Paul

did not go to Jerusalem to be taught by the Apostles but spent three years in Arabia. Since the trip to Arabia replaces the teaching of the Apostles, Paul thereby implies that these three years were spent being taught by Christ. After this period of training Paul made a hurried visit to Jerusalem and saw only Peter and James, not to confer with them on doctrinal matters again for fourteen years.

In chapter two, a slight shift in Paul's argument is noted. He continues to show how little he is indebted to the Apostles for his gospel, indeed, when conferring with them it is found that the Apostles agree with him and if any were found inconsistent it was not Paul but Peter. Thus Paul not only shows his lack of indebtedness to the Apostles but his equality with them. In addition it is significant to note the carefully chosen examples Paul uses to prove his point. Paul brought Titus with him to Jerusalem but absolutely refused to give in to the Judaizers who wanted Titus to be circumcised. Next, Paul cites the results of the Jerusalem council which placed no burden upon the Gentile believers in regard to the Jewish ritual. Finally, Paul cites the inconsistency of Peter at Antioch where, through pressure by Judaizers from James, he leaves the Gentile fellowship – an act which in essence declares that faith in Christ is imperfect without the righteousness of the law. *Paul opposes Peter not as vacillating under pressure but as sinning against the light.* Each example is cited to emphasize what Paul is next to argue – namely, that justification is by faith alone (*sola fide*) and that all attempts to require cultural trappings as "necessary" destroy the good news of the gospel. To mistake the "vessel" for the "treasure" spells doom. Paul argues for a gospel without cultural presuppositions of any kind because he saw that God loves all men/women equally and requires only that people do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before God *plus nothing.*

Paul concludes the rebuke given to Peter and at the same time introduces the second major concern of epistle. Emphatically he states that submission to the righteousness of the law produces death; for no man can keep the law. This is contrasted to submission to be crucified with Christ which produces life. In essence the law brings death; redemption by the cross, life.

However, it was not sufficient for Paul to show his authority as an Apostle. The Judaizers claimed to have the Old Testament Scriptures on their side and thus, after a brief appeal to their personal experience, he calls the Scriptures to his defense.

Paul appeals directly to Abraham as the proof for his case. Abraham "believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." (v. 3:6) Thus, argues Paul, only men of faith can be called of Abraham. Foreseeing this, the prophecy was that through Abraham the Gentile nations shall be blessed. "So then those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith." (v. 3:9)

The blessing of faith is then contrasted with the curse of the law. The law is a curse simply because its way of salvation, perfect obedience, is impossible.

Further Paul argues that the matter of prime importance is not the law but the promise given to Abraham. A simple example is given: when a will is made and ratified it is not later cancelled. So it is with the promise given to Abraham of which Christ is the fulfillment. The law which came four hundred thirty years after the promise was not given to annul the promise. The law is inferior to the promise in both time and origin. (Ordained by angels through Moses: 3:19, 20.)

Then, what is the purpose of the law? The law is not opposed to the promise of God but is rather our custodian to bring us to Christ. But now that we have faith, we are no longer under a custodian’s care.

Another analogy is presented. The child though destined to be an heir remains under tutors as long as he is a child, and thus Paul describes the era of the law as the era of tutelage. But Christ has done away with the need of a tutor and hence Paul rebukes them for going back to the tutor when they could have Christ.

At this point (4:11-20), Paul leaves his carefully thought out logic to make a tender appeal to their treatment of him when among them. His language is softened as he speaks of them as “brethren” and “my little children.” He reminds them of their affection for him when he was among them even during his “trial in the flesh.” The anxiety he holds for them is as one experiencing birth pains. They were not his enemies then, why are they now?

Returning to his original argument, Paul illustrates from Hagar and Sarah. One was born according to the flesh, the other according to the promise. Thus Hagar represents the covenant of Sinai and Sarah, the heavenly Jerusalem. Just as the one born according to the flesh persecuted the true Israel which is born according to Spirit, so now the Judaizers persecute the true Israel which is born according to the Spirit. (Note that “flesh” here refers simply to the natural human energies—Abraham needed no divine assistance to beget Ishmael upon Hagar, but the beget Isaac upon Sarah was totally beyond him. To operate in the flesh means to depend upon human energy and ability.)

In chapter five and six, the third major argument is presented – namely that this liberty from the law results in a holy life.

Again Paul emphasizes the essential dichotomy between seeking salvation by means of the law and by means of the faith in the finished work of Christ. To make the keeping of the law essential for salvation, the work of Christ is annulled. Therefore neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any matter.

For Paul, the fulfillment of the law in practice is not found in circumcision or other ritual but in love. This is what is meant by living and working in the Spirit.

Christian freedom from the law cannot lead to immorality because this would lead to a walk in the flesh which is diametrically opposed to the Spirit. Those who belong to Christ cannot walk in the flesh because the flesh has been crucified.

After destroying the basis for a Christian to live under the Jewish law, Paul calls the Christian to holiness by submission to the "law of Christ" (6:2), that is, to evidence concern for one another.

Several practical suggestions are given to show what it means to walk in the Spirit after which Paul warns them that God is not mocked but that He knows the kind of life each one lives.

Final warning is given against the Judaizers. Paul points out that their motive is to glory in gaining another convert (evangelical brownie points) while his glory stands only with the cross of Christ.

Significantly, Paul draws the epistle to a close by pronouncing a prayer of blessing upon those who live by the rule of the Spirit whom he calls "the Israel of God" (6:16). A final appeal is given to do what he asks because of all he has suffered. In keeping with the entire thrust of the epistle, the formal benediction emphasizes the blessing upon their "spirit" rather than the more traditional "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with *you all*."

In summary, Paul opposed the Judaizers in the same way Jesus opposed the culture religion of the Pharisees. Compare these words of Paul and Jesus: "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery." Paul (Gal. 5:1). "You compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." Jesus (Matt. 23:15).

### **Paul Finishes His Work in Greece and Asia Minor**

(Acts 15:36-20:38)

#### **V. Paul's second missionary journey to the West (Acts 15:36-18:22).**

- 1) Paul and Barnabas split up over John Mark, and Silas becomes Paul's co-worker (v. 15:36-41).

#### Addendum:

The problem of division in the community. These things happen even in the most Spirit-filled persons. Anytime a people get serious about living the life of God together there *will* be conflict. But note II Tim. 4:9-11.

*"Send John Mark to Me..."*

"Why should we take him along?  
He quit us as we sailed for Pamphylia.  
The fearful are not by Christ's command sent  
Out to evangelize the world. No soldier  
Of the Cross deserts his regiment  
When things get rough...  
Why, not even stonings came at Cyprus,  
Just that noisy cultist, Elymas.  
In the power of God we stopped him cold,  
And convinced the governor by bold truth.  
No, Barnabas, if storms and riots bothered him  
Before we even reached Iconium,  
In fighting principalities and powers –  
Satanic forces facing us – he's fail;  
He would hinder Truth. Count John Mark out."

"You have not patience with him, Paul.  
Before you even knew about the Way –  
A loveless Pharisee – John Mark, after all  
Had known our Lord. When but a boy he heard  
What Jesus speaking to the throngs had said.  
He saw him heal the sick and raise the dead.  
With older – also fearful – men he watched  
That fateful night Christ was betrayed. Shivering  
In the cold he watched forgiving love.  
...Take Silas with you into Asia.  
John Mark and I will sail home to Cyprus,  
To Cyprus to confirm the churches there,  
If someone cares enough, this man will find  
Love's road back up from fear to faith.  
I'll care for Mark, just as I cared for you,  
And introduced you to the Church, that day.  
Some day, some year, Paul, you will send for him."

Arthur O. Roberts  
*Move Over Elijah*, Page 138

- 2) Timothy (of Galatia) is circumcised to please the Jews, and also becomes Paul's co-worker, building up the churches in Phrygia and Galatia (v. 16:1-5).
- 3) The Spirit closes and opens doors to Paul's traveling party, bringing it through Troy (where Luke joins the group) and into unevangelized areas of Europe (Macedonia) (v. 16:12-40).
- 4) The mission to Philippi (in Macedonia) (v. 16:12-40).
  - A) How Paul begins his work in this non-Jewish context – as usual, he takes the religious life of the place – whatever it may be – as his starting point (v. 12-13).
  - B) How God honors his small effort (v. 14-34).
    - a) By converting the businesswoman, Lydia, thus giving Paul a basis for his operation in her establishment (v. 14-15).

- b) By working a wonder upon a possessed child through Paul as he goes to that same "place of prayer" where Lydia was converted (v. 16-18).
  - c) By allowing Paul and Silas to be beaten and jailed on a trumped up charge, because the child could no longer be used by her "masters" to "tell fortunes" (v. 19-24).
  - d) By responding to midnight prayers and praises and opening door to the prisoners for Christ – *and* to their jailer (v. 25-34).
  - C) Paul uses his dignity as a Roman citizen to put Philippian officialdom in its place (v. 35-39).
  - D) Paul rounds out the work in Philippi with final meetings at Lydia's place (v 16:40).
- 5) The mission to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9).
- A) There is a synagogue here, and that is Paul's *launching pad* in this mission (v. 1-3).
  - B) The now-standard response to Paul's message: Many believe, but envy of those who are supposed to "have charge" provokes persecution (v. 4-9).
- 6) The mission to Berea (Acts 17:10-15). (Just another verse of the same song.)
- 7) The mission to Athens (Acts 17:16-34).
- A) Paul, greatly vexed by the bad religion here, attacks with the gospel medicine at all points (v. 17:16-17).
  - B) For making such a noise, he receives an invitation to address the Athenian Philosophical Society (v. 18-21).
  - C) The argument advanced by Paul to bring philosophers to Christ –
    - a) As usual, he takes the best available toe-hold, complimenting the Athenians upon the extent of their religious devotion (v. 22). His strategy is to avoid arguments about the existence of God, which the Greeks mainly granted, and concentrate on the issue of His *nature*, and how that relates to Jesus.
    - b) He refers to their public acknowledgement of God unknown to them (v. 23a).
    - c) He proceeds to reveal this "unknown God" to them (v. 23b-31).
      - 1) God (as creator of all) is independent of the acts of man in temple-building and rituals (v. 24-25).
      - 2) God made all ethnic groups out of the same stuff, thus establishing the *unity* of mankind, and yet fixed the groups in different "vessels," where each in its own best way might reach out and relate to the Divine Spirit who is near to all, as the Greek poets themselves teach (v. 26-28).
      - 3) Our human nature being spiritual or personal and also kin to God, from whom we sprang, proves the



- blasphemy of thinking of God as physical and as a *human device* or creation (v. 29).
- 4) God has borne long and forgivingly with this personality destroying blasphemy, but now calls all men everywhere to *quit it*, turn from it, repent (v. 30).
  - 5) The standard of religious devotion and understanding for all men henceforth is *Jesus*, who was certified as God’s standard of judgment by His resurrection from the dead (v. 31).
- d) The now standard Pauline result – some believe and some do not (v. 32-34). (There is a ridiculous myth that Paul’s attempt to speak philosophically to philosophers was a failure. But Paul’s results here are the same as usual, and the reasoning is of the same sort as he had used successfully earlier on, as at Lystra (Acts 15).)
- 2) The mission to Corinth (Acts 18:1-17).
    - A) Paul lives and works (making tents) with Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth (v. 1-3).
    - B) Paul preaches Christ to the Jews, who reject him (v. 4-5).
    - C) Paul then uses the house of Justus, right next door to the synagogue, as his preaching base for 1 ½ years, converting many (v. 7-11).
    - D) Roman law stands between the Jews’ wrath and Paul’s ministry (v. 12-17).
  - 2) Paul travels back to Antioch in Syria, speaking briefly in Ephesus and visiting Jerusalem on the way (v. 18-22).

## II. **Paul’s third missionary journey to the West (Acts 18:23-20:28).**

- 1) Paul revisits his earliest converts in Asia Minor (v. 23).
- 2) Apollos, an Alexandrine (Egyptian) Jew, is brought fully into Christ’s new community (v. 24-28).
  - A) He was a disciple of John the Baptist’s teachings, and comes to Ephesus preaching a baptism of repentance *only* (v. 24-25).
  - B) Aquila and Priscilla teach him and lead him into life in the living Spirit of Christ (v. 26).
  - C) Apollos goes on to Corinth, mighty in the Spirit’s power (v. 27-28).
- 3) Paul’s ministry of the Spirit (for about 2 ½ years) in Ephesus (19:1-41).
  - A) Completing the work in some of Apollos’ converts (v. 1-7).
  - B) Preaching (until rejected) in the synagogue (v. 8-9).
  - C) Preaching daily from a school-house belonging to Tyrannus for a period of 2 years, exuding power in word and miraculous deed (v. 10-12).

### Addendum:

Note the length of stay here as compared with previous missionary journeys. Could it be that Paul began to sense that it

was important to stay with some groups for extended periods to establish them in the faith?

- D) Overcoming abuse of the spiritual – exorcism and magic (v. 13-20).
- E) Putting idol-makers out of business (v. 21-27).
- 4) Paul is again protected by Roman “law and order” (v. 28-41).
- 5) Paul travels from Ephesus to Corinth through Macedonia, and then back to Troas *via* the same land route (v. 20:1-6).
- 6) Seven final days with the Brothers and Sisters at Troy, and a midnight sermon and miracle (v. 7-12).
- 7) The last meeting of Paul with the Ephesian elders and the Asian church (v. 13-38).
  - A) Paul’s travel plans (v. 13-17).
  - B) His personal testimony among the Ephesians (v. 18-27).
  - C) His charge to the elders of the Ephesian church (v. 28-31).
  - D) What he trusted his spiritual children to upon leaving them (v. 32).
  - E) Final, simple word of testimony and exhortation (v. 33-35).
  - F) How Paul’s spiritual children loved him (v. 36-38 and see 21:3-14).

*From here to the end of Acts there is no new principle brought into the picture. Hence, for the purpose of this study, the outline ends here, though each student should be thoroughly familiar with the final chapters of Acts.*

**Some of the "Spiritual Unknowns" Made Clear Through the Book of Acts**

- 1) That the power which blesses is that which comes without a "kingdom."
- 2) That God loves all kinds of human beings equally, whether "sinful" or "righteous," male or female, enslaved or free, young or old, Russian, Chinese or American, black or white, Catholic or Quaker – whatever or whatever!
- 3) That the Gospel has *no* cultural presuppositions – hence we must always distinguish between the "vessel" and the "treasure." We are to receive all persons with joy without imposing *our vessel* upon them.
- 4) That "faith" is better, as a basis of the relation of God and man, than "righteousness."
- 5) That every person – no matter what his "disadvantage" – can live in the very Spirit of God, bearing *all* of that Spirit's *fruit*, and exercising *some* of His *gifts*.
- 6) That life in God's Spirit is life in "the body" – that the blessings of God are mainly received and administered through other human beings. Though every person is unique within the body, none are independent of the other members of the body for their spiritual sustenance. None lives *solely* by communion with God alone, without drawing life through other human beings.
- 7) That the law is fulfilled in those who simple and fully love God and their neighbors in the power of the Spirit.
- 8) That what makes God good or right – His special "glory" – is His love – love even of those who are His enemies.

We are grateful to to [Renovaré](#) for compiling Dallas Willard's notes and for [Dallas Willard Ministries](#) sharing this amazing resource with the Kingdom ambassadors in the name of Jesus.