

The Book of Acts

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The Lord's Ministry During the Forty Days

It must have been thrilling for the disciples to speak with their resurrected master and to listen to His familiar voice, discussing the "things concerning the kingdom." Apart from the incident recorded in the Gospels, the only fragment of teaching during the transitional period of Jesus' forty days after His resurrection is found in Acts 1:1-8. The instructions recorded here are a greatly condensed summary of the principles given to the men to whom the Lord was entrusting the evangelization of the world and the establishment of His kingdom on earth.

Jesus Sends Witnesses with the Holy Spirit

"You shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria and unto the outermost parts of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Their witness was to extend from Jerusalem in ever-widening circles until it had reached earth's remotest bounds. These circles of extension would begin first in Jerusalem, then out to Judea, then to Samaria, and finally the outermost parts of the world. Jesus revealed to them the source of their power for such a stupendous enterprise. They may have protested, "We are not capable of this! We are only poor fishermen. We have little education and no experience." At this point, the Lord reveals to them the source of their power, saying, "Tarry in Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:48-49) They would learn the lesson written by the prophet Zechariah in Zechariah 4:6: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." The story of Jesus'

baptism by John the Baptist might also have come to the disciples minds at this point as they remembered "the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him." (Matthew 3:16) These superhuman tasks could not be carried out through inadequate human resources, rather through the power of the God-given Holy Spirit.

Jesus Commands His Kingdom Extended

Most of the Lord's post-resurrection appearances had some relation to the extension of His kingdom. In His attitude is revealed the passion for souls that blazed in His heart; he was the perfect evangelist. When He appeared to the ten disciples in John 20:21, His commission was very clear: "as the Father has sent Me, even so I send you." As He had been commissioned by His Father for the work of redemption in His earthly ministry and death on the cross, He in turn sent them forth as missionaries under His authority and direction. To the seven on the sea of Tiberias in John 21:1-6, Jesus commanded them to "cast the net on the right side of the boat." They had fished all night and caught nothing. All of their human skills had failed, and despite their expertise their nets were empty. Here the Lord took control, gave directions, and under His supervision they caught a multitude of fish. The Lord Jesus is the "Lord of the harvest." He knew where the fish were, and if we expect to reap a harvest of souls we must be under the control of Christ and completely directed by Him. When Jesus spoke to His disciples on the mountain in Galilee in Matthew 28:16-20, the Lord outlined His program of world evangelization. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you;

and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.” This divine command has never been rescinded or modified; it is binding on believers in every age. Finally, when Jesus appeared to the eleven in Jerusalem in Luke 24:44-53, Jesus reminded the disciples that repentance and remission of sins should be preached to all nations. But more importantly, He commanded them to “tarry in Jerusalem” until they had received the power of the Holy Spirit, which alone would enable them to execute this staggering commission. (Luke 24:48-49)

It is important that we consider this great emphasis on the Spirit that Jesus’ teaching had on the utter and absolute abandonment of fleshly energy as the power of evangelistic work. Let us meditate on the words of Alice J. Janvrin in the hymn He Expecteth:

“Shall we - dare we - disappoint Him?

Brethren, let us rise

He who died for us is watching

From the skies.

Waiting till His royal banner

Floateth far and wide

Till He seeth of His travail

Satisfied.”

Acts 1 & 2

“He was seen by them for forty days.”

He showed Himself at frequent intervals.

Luke 24:36-43

“Why are you troubled? And why do you question in your hearts?”

“Behold my hands and my feet, see it is I, myself; handle me and see; for a spirit does not have flesh and bones like Me.”

The number “forty” in the scripture speaks of testing.

Israel in the wilderness—describe the manward side, Israel a failure—the Godward, despite the frequent and sinful provocations, He never failed.

The ark—it rained forty days and forty nights. The ark was safe. God was faithful as promised.

The temptation “Forty days tested by the devil.”

“Stone into bread”—“The kingdoms of the world in a moment of time”—The pinnacle of the temple.

Two things at least He did during the forty days:

1. He gave infallible proofs of His physical resurrection.
 2. He spoke of things pertaining to the kingdom of God.
- He spoke of things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is in the world today.

God rules in His kingdom—you become a citizen by being “born again” into the kingdom.

The “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God” in most references are interchangeable terms.

From man’s viewpoint the professing Christian Church is the kingdom of Heaven.

From God’s standpoint there is the true kingdom within the professing kingdom. This true kingdom is composed of all true born again believers.

It was this kingdom that He spoke to them of.

Some of the things He said.

John 20:21 “As my Father has sent me so send I you.”

Mark 16:15 “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Matthew 28:20 The promise of His ever abiding presence.

“I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.”

Lesson 3

Acts 1

Verse 4 Wait for the fulfillment of the Fathers promise.

John 7:37-39—John 16:7-11—John 12:15

Verse 5 John’s baptism. Describe.

Baptism of the Spirit.

Verse 6-7 For forty days the risen Lord had been teaching the disciples “things pertaining to the kingdom of God” Verse 3

One point was not revealed—the time that the kingdom would be restored to Israel.

Hence the disciples question "Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Verse 7 Conveys the idea that the time of restoration is God's secret. There was something that they would receive before the earthly kingdom would be established:

1. They would receive divine power.
2. Then they would be witnesses.
3. Then they would evangelize the world.

1. Power = ability dunamis

This power was given in the Person of the Holy Spirit. He was the Power.

In other words it was God, omnipotent imparting Himself and His power to His servants.

Peter's address after Pentecost is an example of this power. 3000 souls saved.

See also Acts 17:6 "These that have turned the world upside down have come here also" Thessalonica.

Show the power at Philippi. Acts 16. The conversion of the jailer.

2. Witnesses = martyrs martus

A witness is one who tells what he knows.

The great thrust and emphasis of the apostle's message was to be the resurrection.

Peter said Verse 22 "We are ordained to be witnesses of His resurrection."

Witnessing to His resurrection cost some of them their lives.

Acts 17:32 “When they heard of the resurrection some mocked.”

3. The extent of their evangelization or witness.

Beginning at Jerusalem they were to reach to the uttermost part of the earth.

Note the means God used to do this:

Persecution in Jerusalem forced some to go into The province of Judea (preaching).

Persecution drove others into Samaria.

Others fled to far away places.

Then the Ethiopian eunuch took the Gospel to Africa.

Paul came along and evangelized in the Near East and then into Europe and from Europe most of the world has been evangelized.

Talk now of the personal aspect of witnessing.

“Go you”—“You shall be witnesses of Me.”

So far as Luke is concerned at this time, these are the things that Jesus talked to His disciples about during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension.

Lesson 4

The Ascension

Luke 24:50-51

“And He led them out as far as to Bethany; and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.”

Acts 1:10 “And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel” etc. Quote Verse 11.

Luke in his Gospel says “He was parted from them, and ‘carried up’ into heaven.”

The suggestion here is that a mighty host of angels carried our Lord Jesus into heaven.

Consider Psalm 24.

Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.

This being carried by angels into heaven had happened at least once before. Elijah. 2 Kings 2:11.

Another facet of work carried on by angels is described in Luke 16. Lazarus was carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom.

This would teach us that the believer’s spirit receives an angelic escort to heaven at death.

Before we lay the body of a believing loved one in the grave, an escort of angels has born his spirit and soul into heaven.

The Ascension of our Lord is a very important point of doctrine.

They looked steadfastly—beheld.

They saw Him go—they realized what was happening.

He was taken up from them out of their sight.

Praise God He has ascended.

God has set Him at His own right hand.

Stephen saw Him there.

Saul of Tarsus met Him on the Damascus road.

Ephesians 1:20-21 “And set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come.”

Not only should we preach “Christ Crucified” but we should also preach “Christ Glorified.”

We also have the truth of His Second Coming introduced here.

Quote the words of the angels. Verse 11.

Our Lord Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives. He will come back to the same spot. Zechariah 14:4.

Verse 12 They returned to Jerusalem—to the upper room. They continued in prayer (one accord). Verse 14. There were 120 of them. Verse 15.

The death of the betrayer Judas Iscariot Verse 16-20.

He went to his own place. “None of them was lost but the son of perdition.”

Galatians 6:7-8 “Be not deceived God is not mocked” etc.

Lesson 5

Acts 2 Read Verses 1-13

John the Baptist said in each of the Gospels that he would baptize with water but the Lord would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Blessing—Judgment.

John did baptize with water. (Describe John's baptism.)

The Lord told His disciples that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence (after). Acts 1:5

Ten days after His ascension, the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost and those in the upper room were baptized.

The Baptism of the Spirit.

1. This was the beginning of the "6th Dispensation of the Spirit"

2. This was the "Birthday of the Church" See Exodus 40:35. 1 Kings 8:11.

"Upon this rock I will build my Church" Matthew 16:18.

Not on Peter—nor on Peter's statement—but upon the Christ the son of the living God.

1 Corinthians 3:11 "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Let me now describe the scriptural term "The Church."

Before doing so compare the Kingdom of Heaven or Kingdom of God with the Church. The Keys.

The Kingdom of Heaven or God is man's view of the "church" = Professing Church.

Matthew 13 describes this perfectly. "The tares" "The mustard seed"

This is a picture of the so-called Christian Church as we see it today.

If this is what man sees—what does God see?

God sees His Church within the kingdom.

What is the difference between a member of the kingdom and a member of the true church?

Ephesians 1:13...“in whom after that you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit is the seal.

A seal speaks of

1. A final transaction.
2. Ownership.
3. Security.

So then a member of the true church is one who is:

1. A true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ
2. One who has accepted Him as a personal Savior
3. One who is born again
4. One who is blood brought—Redeemed
5. One who is Spirit sealed.

Before a person can be born again there must be a combination of two principles.

1. The convicting work of the Holy Spirit John 16
2. The application of the blood of the Savior. 1 John 1:7. Exodus 12.

Paul talking to the Ephesian elders Acts 20:28 talked of the “church of God, which he has purchased with His own blood.”

The purchase price...”His own blood.”

Matthew 13 The Treasure and the Pearl

The traditional interpretation.

The first of these two parables is that of the treasure. This treasure was no doubt made up of many units of precious things...coins...jewels...trinkets, these would represent individuals, and the parable shows the individual aspect of Christ’s redemptive work.

An object to be admired.

Let us consider the Man who bought the treasure and the pearl.

He is the Lord Jesus Christ.

He sold all that He had to purchase the treasure and the pearl.

Ephesians 5:25 “Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it (not the kingdom).”

2 Corinthians 8:9 “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus.”

Philippians 2:5-8 “Who being God...humbled Himself... even to the death of the Cross.”

Isaiah 52:14 “His visage was marred more than the sons of men.”

What was the Lord’s purpose in purchasing with His own blood the treasure and the pearl?

Ephesians 5:27 “That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

Ephesians 2:7 “That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

Verse 10 We are His workmanship—masterpiece.

Lesson 6

Peter’s address on the Day of Pentecost

Read Acts 2:14-36

This was probably the greatest and most powerful message ever preached.

The reason for it being preached was the varied reaction of the people after the coming of the Spirit.

Verse 12 Some were perplexed—astonished—amazed and asked the question “What does this mean?”

Verse 13 Others mocking, said, “these men are drunk.”

To answer the question of the one group and the allegation of the others Peter presented his defense under three headings:

Verses 15-21 The Explanation

Verses 22-36 The Exposition

Verses 37-40 The Exhortation

Verse 15 Peter absolutely repudiated the allegation that they were drunk with wine.

Jews did not drink wine in the morning (9am).

Then Peter goes on to explain the recent happenings and their strange behavior.

Verse 16 This phenomenon was not entirely unexpected. Joel the prophet talked about it Joel 2:28-32.

In effect Peter averred that the recent happenings were at least a partial fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

It will be completely fulfilled at the coming of Christ in judgment, in other words on The notable = terrible Day of the Lord.

So first of all Peter gives a logical and a scriptural reason for Pentecost—the coming of the Spirit, and their extraordinary behavior when being filled with Him.

The Exposition Verses 22-36

Verse 22 “Ye men of Israel.” (only 53 days since the crucifixion).

Jesus of Nazareth. He was well known.

The demons knew Him.

The accusation over the Cross.

The despised Jesus from the despised city.

“Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” John 1
Approved by God.

By miracles = an act of power.

Demons into the swine. The stilling of the storm.

By Wonders = some supernatural act that causes people to marvel.

Luke 5 The paralytic healed.

Verse 26 They all were amazed—filled with fear—said we have seen strange things today.

By signs = a proof of identification.

The signs of John's Gospel: blind man healed, feeding 5,000 people, healing of a man who was sick for 38 years, etc.

Verse 23 "Delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God."

A. The human side—"you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

B. The Divine side.

Verse 24 "Whom God has raised" The Resurrection

In the early preaching the Resurrection was mentioned twice as often as the death of Christ. "The center of the center."

Thousands saw the death of Christ.

Not one person saw Him rise from the dead, further more not one unbeliever saw Him after His Resurrection Acts 10:40-41.

The Resurrection is not human in any shape or form, it is absolutely Divine.

We must believe in the Resurrection before we can be saved.

"Died for our sins—raised for our justification."

Romans 10:9 "Confess with your mouth believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead."

The resurrection is necessary for positive and victorious Christian living. "All power is given unto Me."

“That I might know Him and the power of His resurrection.”

Describe this power.

Then the Resurrection of Christ is necessary to ensure our own resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15)

Peter said earlier, “Joel prophesied concerning the coming of the Spirit, and it happened.

Now he says, David the greatest king we ever had prophesied concerning the resurrection of Christ.

Verse 27 “Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt thou permit thy Holy One to see corruption.” Psalm 16

Verse 34 David also prophesied of His ascension.

“The Lord God said unto my Lord. “Sit Thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool.”

Verse 36 Peter accuses his brethren the Jews of forcing the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.

Then he tells them, that this One whom they crucified as an imposter, God has raised from the dead—seated Him at His right hand—made Him Lord and Christ.

The Exhortation Verses 37-40

Verse 37 Those who heard Peter speak were conscience stricken.

They asked, “What shall we do?”

Peter’s answer, Verse 38.

Repent—be baptized for remission of sins—then you will receive the Holy Spirit.

What do we do for salvation today? See Acts 10.

1. The Word is preached.
2. Faith comes with hearing the Word.
3. Immediately on believing we receive the Spirit.
4. Then we are baptized because we are believers.

Lesson 7

Acts 2

“Whom God has raised up.” Verse 24

Verse 27 “Because you will not leave my soul in Hades.”

Let me explain a misunderstood word. “Hell”

When we think of “Hell” we usually think of a permanent place of torment.

While in some instances this may be true, in other instances it is far from the truth.

Sheol—Hades

Sheol is the Hebrew word (65 times in O.T.)

It was used in the O.T. to describe the temporary place in which the dead await resurrection.

It was a place of conscious existence.

It was divided into two compartments.

1. A place of conscious bliss to which those who died in faith went.
2. A place of conscious suffering to which those who died in unbelief went.

Hades is the Greek word used in the N.T. to describe the same place. (11 times)

Generally when mentioned in the N.T. it has in view the unsaved dead who are in misery, awaiting the resurrection unto the “great white throne.”

In point of time it is an intermediate place between death and the final judgment.

For the condition of lost ones in this place See Luke 16.

At the final resurrection death and Hades will deliver up their dead to stand before the great white throne.

After the judgment each soul will be taken and cast into Gehena, which is the eternal state of the unsaved dead.
(12 times)

The resurrection body of the unsaved, evidently will be of such a character that it is indestructible.

The question could now be asked, “Where are the saved dead?”

They are “at home (present) with the Lord.” 2
Corinthians 5

“Absent from the body present with the Lord which is far better.” Philippians 1

In their state of bliss they await the resurrection of the body at the Rapture.

Body and soul will be reunited—then into His presence forever.

The Resurrection of Christ is one of the more important doctrines of the Christian faith. (1 Corinthians 15)

1. Christ’s resurrection is the basis for our own Resurrection.

2. The resurrection of Christ is necessary for positive and victorious Christian living.

He can supply the power for this—He said “all power is given unto me” etc. “I can do all things” etc.

“That I might know Him and His resurrection power.”

Peter had pointed out that Joel prophesied concerning the “coming of the Spirit.” Chapter 2.

Then he reminds them that David—their greatest king prophesied concerning the resurrection of Christ.

Verse 27 “Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades (hell), neither wilt thou permit Thy Holy One to see corruption.”

Verse 34 David also prophesied of His ascension “The Lord God said unto my Lord, ‘Sit thou on my right hand until I make your foes your footstool.’”

Verse 36 Peter accuses his brethren of forcing the crucifixion.

Then he tells them that the One whom they had crucified as an imposter is the same One whom God has raised up from the dead and seated Him at His right hand, and made Him both Lord and Christ.

This was Peter’s explanation and exposition of the recent events.

The Exhortation Verses 37-40

Verse 37 Those who listened to Peter were conscience stricken and asked, “What shall we do?”

Verse 38 Peter’s answer

Repent—be baptized for the remission of sins—then you will receive the Holy Spirit also. 3,000 responded to the invitation.

What do we do for salvation today? Acts 10

1. The Word is preached
2. Faith comes by the hearing of the Word
3. Immediately on believing they received the Spirit
4. Then they are baptized because they were believers.

Acts 2:41-47

Verse 38. The Method of Salvation.

The Jews. Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins—ye shall receive the Holy Spirit. Acts 2.

The Gentiles. Heard the Word—Believed—received the Holy Spirit—baptized.

The growth of the Church

Verse 41 3,000 added to the 120 who were formed into the church at Pentecost.

The conduct of the new converts.

1. They were baptized.
2. They continued steadfastly etc.
3. In fellowship “Partnership.”
4. Breaking of bread “Lord’s Supper.”
5. Prayers.

Verse 43 “And fear came upon every soul.”

1. Believers were struck with a sense of awe.
2. Unbelievers—mockers (Chapter 1) were astonished at what they saw and heard.
3. “Wonders” and “signs” were performed by the disciples.

4. Verses 44-45 They had all things in common—fellowship. No one was in need—they shared their possessions.

They were a happy people.

Verse 46 They not only shared their possessions but they also shared their new found faith “with gladness” and “with singleness of heart”...for the honor and glory of God.

They were a praising people.

Praising God.

Verse 47 The Lord worked through them—many were converted and joined themselves to this happy group.

Acts 2

Pentecost—The Holy Spirit is given.

Note first of all. “They were all with one accord in one place.”

The “feast of weeks” or “Pentecost” was held 50 days after the feast of first fruits.

The Holy Spirit came from heaven at Pentecost 50 days after the resurrection of Christ.

The Gospels said that, “John the Baptist would baptize with water, but the Lord would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire” = judgment.

Pentecost is also the baptism of the Spirit. Chapter 1:5.
There is only one baptism.

The only other time baptism is used is in 1 Corinthians 12:13 “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”

When the tabernacle was dedicated—the glory of the Lord filled it. Exodus 40:35.

The same happened when the temple was finished. 1 Kings 8:11.

When the Church on earth is inaugurated again the glory of the Lord fills it. Acts 2:2.

Note what the Spirit did

1. He filled the house. Verse 2
2. He came upon each believer. Verse 3
3. He came into each to abide. Verse 4. Quote.

Consider the Holy Spirit as a Teacher.

As to the past: He brings all things to our remembrance.
John 14:26

As to the present: He takes the things of Christ and
shows them to us. John 16:14-15

As to the future: He will show us things to come. John
16:12

As to the world: He convicts of sin, righteousness, and
judgment. John 16:8-11

Consider Joel's prophecy Chapter 2. Page 931.

See also Matthew 24.

The partial fulfillment of Joel's prophesy. Page 931.

Read from Verse 16 to 21. See Matthew 24:29. Luke
21:25-29.

Verse 13 These men are full of new wine (drunk).

See Ephesians 5:18. Be filled with the Spirit.

One baptism—many fillings. See John 7.

Peter's sermon.

Using the keys of the kingdom. See Matthew 16:15-18.

First to the Jews Acts 2 to the Gentiles Acts 10.

Notice the important place the Holy Spirit had in the life
of the Lord Jesus.

His conception Matthew 1:18-20.

His baptism Matthew 3:16.

His walk and service Luke 4:1-14.

His resurrection Romans 8:11.

As His witness throughout this age John 15:26; 16:8-11, 13-14.

We, as Christians cannot do anything for the Lord unless we are motivated and controlled by the Spirit.

There are those who would vehemently object to the position we have taken here.

Objection No. 1. See Verse 39.

“Forbid not to speak with tongues.”

Tongues speaking was a valid gift and was valuable at that time, when used for the purpose given, so it would have been wrong to forbid this use.

Objection No. 2. See Verse 5.

“I would that you all spake with tongues.”

This is answered by what we have just said. What could be more valuable as a sign, for communication with fellow men and far edifying, than a gift of tongues.

We learn foreign languages today for this very purpose.

I believe the reason for speaking in a tongue or language in the first place was because there were those present who spake and understood that language.

Isn't it strange that tongues speaking advocates can leave this country and go to foreign countries and speak in tongues, but it is never the language of the people of that country.

In fact some of those people do not speak the language of the country very well.

Objection No. 3. See Verse 18.

“I speak tongues more than you all.”

No one could deny this. Tongues were still in use when Paul wrote this.

During all his missionary travels he could have profitably employed this gift and possibly did—not for show—but to communicate and edify.

Verse 19 Shows that he did not use either the gift or the ability the way some Christians were using it.

He says under inspiration of the Spirit that he would “rather teach with five words from my understanding than pour out 10,000 words he did not understand.”

That is a ratio of 2,000 to 1.

So in this case the plain Biblical teaching is, that it is better to speak one word and be understood than 2,000 words and not be understood.

This is a shattering blow to tongues advocates today.

Verse 23 Who killed Jesus? See John 19:10-11.

“Being delivered by the determinate counsel of God.”

Verse 24 Note the strong emphasis on the resurrection. Mentioned twice as often as His death.

Thousands saw His death.

No one saw His resurrection.

No one but His disciples saw Him after His resurrection.

Anyone who believes in the resurrection must believe that Christ is God.

It is also necessary to believe this for salvation Romans 10:9.

The modern theory—a spiritual resurrection.

Verse 33 Where is Jesus now?

See Chapter 1:9-11 Verse 33 “Exalted at the right hand of God.”

See also Chapter 7:55-56. Stephen saw Him.

Verse 36 The exalted Christ

Men crucified Him.

God exalted Him—made Him both Lord and Christ.

“Who moved the stone?”—Frank Morrison.

“Rapture of Saints” Mid—Pre.

Verse 37 Conviction is produced by the Holy Spirit.

They were pricked in their heart—What shall we do?

They realized their guilt—they realized that the Jesus whom they had crucified was God’s beloved Son.

They realized that this Jesus had been raised from the dead, and was now exalted in heaven—What shall we do?

Verse 38 Peter’s answer. Quote.

At first glance it would appear that this verse teaches baptismal regeneration.

1. This is impossible in the light of such verses as John 1:12, 3:16, 3:36, 6:47; Acts 16:31; and Romans 10:9.
2. The thief on the cross was assured of salvation apart from baptism. Luke 23:43.
3. The Savior is stated not to have baptized anyone, a strange omission if baptism is essential to salvation.

4. Paul was thankful that he baptized only a few of the Corinthians—a strange cause for thankfulness if baptism has saving merits 1 Corinthians 1:14-16.

Only Jews were ever told to be baptized for the remission of sins.

The nation of Israel had crucified the Lord of Glory.

They had cried out “His blood be upon us and on our children.” Matthew 27:25.

The guilt of Messiah’s death was claimed by the nation of Israel.

As Peter spoke, some of these Jews came to realize their mistake.

They repented at this time and acknowledged their sin to God.

By accepting Christ as Savior they were saved and received forgiveness of sins.

By baptism they desecrated themselves from the nation that crucified Him and identified themselves with Him.

The order for us today is found in Acts 10:44-48: (1) Faith, (2) Reception of the Holy Spirit, and (3) Water baptism.

Verse 39

1. Peter reminds them in this verse, that the promise of the Spirit is for them and for their children.

2. It is also to them that are afar off (the Gentiles) ever as many as God would call.

Verse 40 Not all of Peter’s message is recorded here.

The gist of the message was that his ??? should separate themselves from the generation who had rejected and crucified their Messiah and Savior, by being baptized.

Verse 41 Immediately there was a tremendous response.

3,000 people surged forward for baptism.

Note the Holy Spirit's ministry—Peter spoke the words—the Spirit did the work.

Verse 42 The proof of reality is in continuance.

1. They continued steadfastly in the “apostles’ teaching.”

2. In Fellowship—they desired to be with those of like precious faith.

3. The breaking of bread.

This expression is used in the N.T. to refer both to the Lord's supper and to eating a common meal.

Here it means the Lord's supper. (See also Verse 46)

The early disciples broke bread every Lord's day Acts 20.

(4) Prayer's.

The early church was completely dependent on the Lord for all its activities.

Verse 43 Great fear came upon every soul.

Reverential awe.

The power and work of the Holy Spirit was so evident that their hearts were hushed and subdued.

Astonishment filled their hearts as they saw the apostles performing many miracles.

Verses 44-47 These verses tell us that their love for each other was so great that they did not look on their possessions as their own. They shared them with each other.

They were a happy people. Gladness Verse 46. Praising God Verse 47.

Favor with the people—temporary.

Many were added to the church.

The opening of a new dispensation... The Church Age... The dispensation of the Spirit. God-Christ-Spirit. The Deity of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit.

Each of the Gospels declare that John the Baptist baptized with water. They also declared that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

The Lord refers to this in Acts 1:5. John truly baptized with water, but “ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

This shows that the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is spoken of as the “Baptism of the Spirit.”

“Pentecost” was the advent of the Spirit to abide in the world in the Church. (See Sheet No 3).

Prior to Pentecost, His appearances were infrequent and temporary. David-Gideon-Bezalel. John 14:16.

When He came permanently into the world He baptized those gathered in the Upper Room into the Body of Christ. The unity of the Spirit Eph 4:3. One body. 1 Corinthians 12:13. (No 1).

There is only one baptism of the Spirit spoken of in the Scripture. Ephesians 4:5. One baptism (See Sheet No

2)... but many fillings. Believers were incorporated into the church...into Christ. Indwelt and filled with the Spirit...Endowed with power.

Not once in Scripture, after Pentecost, is the term baptising of the Spirit found. Despite this evidence there are some who speak freely of the baptism of the Spirit, and an accompanying power to speak in tongues.

There is an interesting point of comparison there, with some great events in the O.T. When the Tabernacle was dedicated...the glory of the Lord filled it. Ex 40:35.

When the Temple was set apart...the glory of the Lord filled it. 1 Kings 8:11.

When the Church was formed at Pentecost as God's spiritual house...and molded into a living organism...the glory of the Lord filled it.

God, the Holy Spirit, under the simile of a mighty rushing wind, filled all the house.

The Holy Spirit did three things at this time.

1. He filled the house. V2. He "filled the house where they were sitting."

2. He came "upon" each believer. V3. He "sat upon each of them."

3. He came "into" each believer to abide permanently. V4. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. See Acts 4:31

He came into each believer to furnish power for Christian life and testimony.

He filled each believer to furnish power for Christian life and testimony.

He filled each believer with Himself, for He has a threefold ministry—for-in-and through the believer. Note: Some of the other works of the Spirit. He seals each one for security. Eph. 4:30. The earnest or foretaste of eternal blessings, for satisfaction. Phil 3:10. Eph 1. Finally, He anoints for service. The greatest unused power in the world.” The energy of the spirit. Where is it?

The Holy Spirit’s coming into the world was accompanied by three things.

1. He came as a mighty rushing wind. Speaks of fullness and power.
2. He came as tongues of fire.
3. His coming was manifested in tongues, i.e., the speaking of (living) known languages. To separate = set apart.

He made Himself... Felt... Seen (in the fire)... and Heard (in the languages).

The Origin of the Church

We noted last week that the book of Acts is by no means a full history of the period it covers, but is rather a selection of incidents revealing the lines and tendencies, the principle and the passion, of that first generation of Christianity in the world. Each page flames with some surprise and we are held in suspense to the end—and then left to dream of all that was not recorded—all that followed after.

Nevertheless, every story reveals principles and laws, operating with unswerving regularity and showing the secrets of the amazing spread of that which seemed doomed to extinction at the Cross—but which rose into power on the Resurrection morning, and began a growth of increasing victory at Pentecost.

We must be impressed with the glorious regularity of the irregular in the work of the church by the Holy Spirit. It is a powerful argument against the stereotyped approach in church activity and method, and consequently a plea for room for the operation of that Spirit, who, like the wind, “bloweth where He listeth.” The very incompleteness of the story is, in itself, part of the method of the Spirit. When we come to the last sentences, we have a hundred questions we want to ask. We would like know if the feet of Paul ever stood on the soil of Britain but the book does not tell us—it is an unfinished fragment. It is the start of the story of the first movements of the Christian fact in the world; revealing principles, indicating methods, showing failure; and all in order that there might be at least one page of inspired Church history, which, men reading,

might know the true meaning and mission of the Church in the history of the world.

The study of the Acts of the Apostles will have a two-fold effect on us—it will fill us with hope; it will fill us with shame. Before this risen glorified One passed out of human sight to return in spiritual power at Pentecost, He said to His own, “Ye shall be My witnesses, My credentials, My evidences—in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth” and almost two thousand years later the church has not fulfilled that commission. There is failure all through this book, but yet there is gracious victory also. As we read it, we find a revelation of purpose and power; and we shall find the indication of the dangers that confront us as members of His body.

Acts 1:6-26

This paragraph serves as a link between the things of the “former treatise” of Luke and those of his new story. Here we have our last glimpse of the disciples before Pentecost and our last vision of Jesus “after the flesh” (as Paul says)—present among His disciples in bodily form. Surely the artistic hand of Luke is evident in the placing of this paragraph here. Yet we notice that this is the same Jesus as before, whose birth was recorded, whose ministry was chronicled, whose crucifixion was described, whose resurrection was declared, and who was finally revealed as One ascended to the Father. He is spoken of as “Jesus,” as the “Lord Jesus.” The Person is very familiar, coming from the olden days. We shall never in this book see Him again in the same visible and material relationship to these men. Henceforth know we not Christ after the flesh.

But we shall see these men again; and yet, all the way through the book, they will be changed and different; not in the visible externals but absolutely changed in the hidden facts of life. A new light will shine through the same eyes. A new tone will come into the same voices. A new atmosphere will be generated by the same presences. Peter will be the same man, and yet absolutely changed. All the old impulsiveness will be present, and the enthusiasm and the fire and the fervor. But there will be something else. The change will not be that which denies the natural, but the change that baptizes it with the supernatural, until the natural becomes a fitting instrument for the supernatural, the Holy Spirit Himself.

Notice also the ‘grouping’ of the apostles here. The moment we get into the Acts the grouping changes. Peter and John had never agreed in the Gospel story. They never understood each other. Peter was the practical man, John was the poet. Peter was always doing, John was always dreaming. Even when we get to the last chapter of John, John is still troubling Peter —“Lord, what shall this man do?” In the new grouping, they have gone into partnership: the doer and the dreamer; the practical man and the poet. Then James and Andrew, the courteous and the curious. Next Philip and Thomas. Philip the reserved man, who believed everything, and was willing to be on the edge of the crowd and bring strangers to Jesus, with Thomas, the skeptic, who demanded proof or he would believe nothing. Then Nathaniel and Matthew, the guileless worshipper and the astute tax-gatherer. Does this new grouping of these men not suggest something to us? Does it not seem to say to us that the Cross and the

Resurrection brought men into an affinity that cancelled all merely temperamental discords?

Thus we see gathered about Jesus a group of men with perfect confidence in their Lord, with joyful confidence in each other, with an absolute confidence in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. These things all resulted from the things He began to do and to teach.

We then notice their inability to execute His commission. He had said to them that they were to be witnesses, but here they were in the upper room; of one accord; steadfast in prayer; happy in each others company; still loyal; but unable to witness. These men were perfectly sincere, proceeding on the lines of revealed truth, but they were ignorant of God's next method; unable to organize themselves for the doing of the work; needing the coming of the Comforter.

A little later we see these men gazing up into heaven. The cloud had enshrouded Him, and He was gone from their vision. Then two men stood by them—not angels—but men. They had lost one Man, the ONE was gone, but two were there. "This same Jesus...shall so come in like manner." The form that you have loved to look upon will yet be seen of your eyes. For today, He is out of sight; but He is not away from you. So they knew that the One was not lost, but that at any moment He might appear again.

We do not understand it, but the sweet fragrance of His presence is still with us. Although we worship the eternal, the unseen Christ, we still work in comradeship with the Man of Nazareth. "The Lord working with them..."

Acts 2:1-4

Here we have the actual formation of the Christian church. The location is not identified but it was likely the temple. (Luke 24:52, Acts 1:14, 2:1, 2:46). Upon this company of individuals, united by a common love for and a loyalty to the departed Jesus there came the mystery of the baptism of the Spirit. Two symbols were given—one appealing to hearing, and the other to seeing. The symbol of sound—"a mighty rushing wind"; the symbol of sight—"tongues of fire"; (more than one and yet one—"it sat on each of them").

These were but symbols, of no value except as signs for the moment. It is necessary that we recognize that fact, for there is always a hunger in the carnal heart for signs. What is of extreme importance is the experience described in the words "They were all filled with the Spirit." The wind was but the chosen symbol—they did not hear the coming of the Spirit. The Spirit is not fire, and did not come in the fire they saw. That was the symbol granted but never granted since because unnecessary. The abiding fact was that of the Spirit filling these waiting souls.

So a new day dawned in human history, a new departure was initiated in the economy of God. Not a change made necessary by the failure of the past but rather a change following the accomplishments of the past.

In order for us to understand all that is to follow in the book of Acts and so for us to understand the things of our own life and service, we must consider two matters; first, the new facts following Pentecost; and secondly, the limitations of the Pentecostal age.

First, the new facts as to the Christ; the new facts as to the Church; the new facts as to the world. In reference to Christ, we remind our hearts of the Incarnation and the Exodus. His incarnation—Revelation; His exodus—Redemption. He came to reveal and to redeem. The new things that came with Pentecost were those of the administration of redemption in the actual lives of men. On the day of Pentecost, Christ by the coming of His Holy Spirit, was able to make over to trusting souls, the actual value of His Cross and the virtue of His Resurrection. In reference to the church, it is good to remind ourselves that the word church does not adequately convey the sense intended. The Greek word ECCLESIA means an assembly. The word ‘assembly’ in every instance refers to a select and gathered-out company, having certain qualifications, and being committed to certain work. Christ took hold of a common word when He said “My ecclesia.” The Jew understood it, it meant one thing to them. The Greeks understood it; it meant another thing to them. Combine the principles of the Hebrew and Greek uses of the word and we have exactly what Christ meant when He said—My assembly. He referred to His called-out ones, who, fulfilling certain qualifications, are committed to certain work. In that sense the Christian Assembly did not exist prior to Pentecost. Prior to Pentecost the disciples were disciples, standing away yet very near—we must not undervalue the nearness of those days, but they were not one with Him. When the Spirit came, they were made sharers of the life of Christ. His actual life passed into their lives and they became equipped to be “His witnesses.”

What else did the coming of the Spirit do for these men? Did it change the old relationships? By no means; it fulfilled them. They were still disciples, but they had a new vision. Not a vision coming upon them from the outside but a new vision coming from the actual shining in them of His life, so they began to see as He sees. Peter became the Apostle who proclaimed the Cross in Jerusalem, and gloried in it, because Christ looked through his eyes, and spoke with his tongue. This is the mystery of Christianity, "Christ liveth in me."

As we remember Peter in his first Spirit-filled presentation we see that a new conviction came into the world, and we recall the words of the Master Himself "He, when He is come, will convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment" and this through those who would allow the Spirit liberty to "blow whether He listeth." As well as new convictions there were new constraints; the constraint of His love evidenced in the lives of the believers, shining out to the hearts of men, luring them, drawing them. The constraint of the Church's light probing into dark places, revealing sin, and indicating the way to cleanliness and holiness.

Indeed, through the infusion of the Spirit at Pentecost, a new day dawned on the world, the day of the church, which is His body.

Let us now look at the limitations of the Pentecostal age. As to Christ Himself, His resources are limitless. While He was in the world He said, "How am I straitened..." Now in the bestowing of the Spirit, that restriction is gone but He is limited in His Body, the Church. He cannot reach China, save through her. He cannot accomplish the purpose of His Word in Africa except

through His Body. Not by angels can He preach the redeeming, reconciling Word, but through His Body, the Church.

How is the Church herself limited? She is limited when she grieves the Holy Spirit, when she quenches the Spirit. These are two significant words: “Grieve”—having to do with the Church’s life. “Quench”—having to do with the matter of the Church’s service. How often has the Church grieved the Spirit, quenched the Spirit, and so limited herself.

As to the world, are there limitations? Again, as in the other areas, limitless resources are available in Christ. There is nothing the world needs that is not found in Him. Everything that makes for the uplifting of the race is in Christ. But the world is limited in the Church’s failure. That is not the world’s fault, the guilt lies at the Church’s door.

So we see that in the risen Lord, the Christ, the resources are as limitless as they were at Pentecost, when the Church was born. The question we should be asking is: Is Christ limited in us? We needn’t waste time talking about a revival in the world until there is a revival in the Church. It is when, in this the Assembly of the Christ, that He is allowed full sway by the indwelling Spirit, and He is unlimited, that the light will again flame upon the darkness and Pentecostal power will be seen again.

The Founding of the First Church

Acts 2

There was a tremendous response to the exhortation of Peter. Under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, 3000 souls repented and were baptized.

At this point we see the prophecy of Jesus regarding Peter being fulfilled. “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men”—Matthew 4:19.

1. These repentant and baptized souls continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching. This teaching was delivered orally at first, and now preserved in the books of the NT.

2. Fellowship—this was an evidence of the new birth to be in the company of those of like precious faith.

3. The breaking of bread—the Lord’s Supper. According to Acts 20:7 the early Church broke bread on the first day of the week. During the early days a love feast was held in connection with the Lord’s Super. However, abuses crept in and the love feast was discontinued.

4. Prayers—this was an important part of the life of the early Church. In praying they expressed their complete dependence on the Lord for worship, guidance, preservation, and service.

They continued steadfastly in these things.

Verse 43—“And great fear came upon every soul.”

A great sense of reverential awe came upon the church as the mighty power of the Holy Spirit swept over and through believers.

So great was their love for the Lord, and for one another, that each one gave their possessions into a common fund which was used to meet the needs of the needy.

The Marvels of Pentecost

Of all the marvels wrought at Pentecost none was greater than the change wrought in the disciples themselves.

Previously they had met behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. Now this fear had given place to lion-like boldness.

Would you recognize Peter, the denier, as the preacher who faces the Jewish authorities and fearlessly charges them with the Lord's murder? See Acts 2:23—"You have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

Peter was not alone in this holy boldness. The other disciples exhibited a like spirit. The indwelling Spirit had transformed them.

These early disciples in their Spirit-filled state exhibited:

Great joy—Acts 8:8; 13:52.

Great boldness—Acts 4:29, 31.

Great fear—Acts 2:43; 5:5, 11.

Great grace—Acts 4:33.

Great power—Acts 4:33.

Illustration: During the American Civil War, Sherridan's army was attacked during his absence. They were routed and fled from the battlefield in disorder. Suddenly they stopped, formed into ranks, then advanced toward their foes and drove them back. What

had happened to turn an army of frightened men into an irresistible force? General Sherridan had suddenly ridden into their midst and immediately his dynamic power infused his men and they were changed.

The disciples were changed in like manner by the coming of the Holy Spirit into their midst.

The second marvel of Pentecost was the spontaneous joy which welled up in their hearts. "Joy in the Holy Spirit."

Nothing attracts the attention and arouses the envy of the world than the joy of the believer.

The Jews could not account for it and said they were drunk with new wine. But Peter identified the source of their exhilaration as being the Holy Spirit's presence and power and now new wine. V. 15-21.

The unbelieving world was shocked at their impact on society. They were not able to resist the wisdom and power by which he spoke. Acts 6:10; Stephen.

Notice how the multitudes were moved by these so-called ignorant and unlearned men.

Three thousand souls were saved—2:41.

Five thousand men believed—4:4.

Multitudes of men and women believed—4:32; 5:14.

The Word of God increased, the disciples were greatly multiplied—6:7.

A great company of priests were obedient to the faith—6:7.

This was the effect that Spirit-filled men and women had on their neighbors and society.

Very soon, thereafter, their sphere of influence widened. Samaria was evangelized by Philip (Acts 8). Prejudice was overcome. Philip preached and a mighty revival broke out in Samaria.

Later, the Spirit overcame Peter's prejudices and Jewish exclusiveness and through him opened the door to the Gentiles.

Finally, God sent Paul forth to the regions beyond. Spirit-filled men penetrated into a godless world with the Gospel.

When the Spirit dwells in a believer, ungrieved and unquenched, certain changes take place within him.

1. There is progressive sanctification.
2. He is taught by the Spirit.
3. He is guided by the Spirit.
4. His prayer life deepens.
5. His worship is more intelligent.
6. His service is more fruitful.

v. 8—On the day of Pentecost the church received power to evangelize the world. When the hundred and twenty came down from the upper room, they came in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It was a spiritual phenomenon flowing out in joyful ecstasy and miracle working power, resulting in the conviction of sin, repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some were empowered for special service, but all received power to witness.

The real power of the church is not found in:

1. Modern buildings or unique methods of preaching or teaching.
2. Its great riches or how those riches are made.
3. The church's prominence or popularity.

The Laodicean church was the first self-sufficient, Spirit-less congregation, but not the last.

You can always recognize a Spirit-filled church. 1 Thessalonians 1:8—"From you sounded out the Word of the Lord." They shared their faith with the lost and souls are saved. Total involvement. Each one in fellowship tries to make full proof of their ministry.

When a church is not involved in winning souls, it grieves the Holy Spirit and is void of power.

Souls are born into the family of God by the Spirit through the imperishable seed, which is the Word of God. The Spirit-filled believer sows the seed; this is evangelism. The Holy Spirit hovers over the seed, convicting and leading the lost to repentance.

They have the power to turn the world upside down. Acts 17:6.

This is the power that filled the upper room congregation on the day of Pentecost. This same power is within the reach of each believer today in the person of the Holy Spirit. He is the power of the Church.

Expansion to the Gentiles

Acts 11:19—21:16

Two impressions are quickly felt when we read these chapters with a view to the early church. First is the lack of organization or structure. Churches were established in every place but almost nothing is said about how they function. A closer look will show us some details but there is no clear structure to be seen. It is a forcible reminder that the church is an organism not an organization. It is designed to be much more fluid and spontaneous in action that we see in practice today. The secret seems to be the awareness that the Lord Jesus Christ is the head, not in some far off way, but that He is present locally through His Spirit to guide and direct.

Second is the strong emphasis on church planting. Evangelism is not seen in isolation. Churches were always established. This was done by personal evangelism and mass evangelism; by well known Apostles and unknown saints. Everyone, male and female, was involved in reaching out to his own community. Expansion of the church is a priority if we are to be a truly “New Testament” assembly.

These chapters reveal five sections. We will look at each one and attempt to draw out information regarding the local assembly. The five sections are:

1. Beginnings. 11:19-12:25
2. Paul’s first journey (Asia). 13:1-14:28
3. The council at Jerusalem. 15:1-35

4. Paul's second journey (Europe). 15:36-18:22
5. Paul's third journey (Asia and Europe). 18:23-21:16.

Beginnings

The first thing we hear of is persecution (11:19). It is not the only case of persecution (see 12:1; 13:45, 50; 14:2, 19; and more). It seems to be a consistent means of the Holy Spirit in furthering the Gospel. The early believers considered persecution to be an opportunity for effective preaching (14:3). What better way is there to show the fruit of the Spirit and to demonstrate to the world the victory that lies in having Christ as Lord. By definition the church is opposed to the world. The idea of a church that is at home in the world and at peace with it is foreign to the book of Acts. Our modern practice of competing with the world rather than opposing it has no part in a truly "New Testament" assembly. Here then is one means of Holy Spirit guidance not available today until once again we take our proper place.

Notice that the evangelists and church-planters were not Apostles or missionaries but men (verse 20). Some of them were originally from Cyprus, the area they went to. When the assembly at Jerusalem sent someone to investigate they chose Barnabas who was also from Cyprus (4:36). This seems to be another method of Holy Spirit leading. People from the area were chosen when possible without regard to position, education or party-line. In fact, when Barnabas needed help he didn't send back to Jerusalem. He sought out Paul (verse 25) from the same general area. They stayed for about a year (verse 26) to teach and build-up. Here was an early indication that there was no party spirit. The church at

Jerusalem was not the head of the church at Antioch. It wasn't consulted when Barnabas needed help.

Another glimpse at church structure is seen in Verse 23. They were taught the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ was present and they must not let go of the head. They were not to follow another assembly or a man but Christ Himself via His Spirit. Compare this with Paul's teaching in Colossians 2:4, 8, 16, 18, 19. See also Acts 20:29-30. It is always easier to organize than to follow our Lord. It may yield success as man measures it but spiritual success can only be had as we struggle to hold fast our head in living union. Verses 25-30 give us a prophecy of famine. Prophecy was one of the gifts of the Spirit, providing knowledge ahead of time. Notice the immediate response of the church in Antioch. They gave of their substance without regard to personal hurt in order to help their brethren in Jerusalem. The early church was a giving church not a begging church. God provided everyone's need without solicitation. It is the groundwork of the financial policy of dependence on the Lord. Clearly the principles of the church are exactly opposed to those of the world. Let us never make the mistake of learning from the world how to succeed in the church. It is these differences that created the world's opposition to the Lord's work in the book of Acts.

Chapter 12 gives us another case of persecution. It was political in nature (12:1) but was intensified and continued for religious reasons (verse 3). If the church were content to conform to Judaism (organized religion) it would not have suffered so. We too must learn not to put any faith in political solutions to the world's

problems. The ultimate victory is with the church (verses 20-23).

Once again we see the church. They held a prayer meeting (verse 5) in a home. Many attended (verse 12) and fervent prayer was made. God answered and set Peter free (verses 7-10) even though there was not a lot of faith mixed with their requests (verses 14-15). Peter was not aware of any supernatural event taking place until he was outside and alone (verse 11). We have to use hindsight and our own intelligence sometimes to discern God's hand in our lives. Prayer is a most powerful part of our spiritual battle.

The result of all this (the gift from Antioch; persecution; prayer; victory) was that the word of God grew and multiplied (verse 24). Once again the best came out of the worst and victory was the Lord's. At this point we are taken back to Antioch for Paul's first missionary journey.

Paul's First Journey

This journey begins with the Holy Spirit (verses 2, 4). It is a contrast with 11:19. There the whole church was sent by persecution. Here two men were sent from the comfort of worship and service (13:1). We can observe here that everyone knew of God's guidance, not just Paul and Barnabas. The picture given is of men active in a service of love. They were not waiting around anxiously to find out God's will. They were doing it right where they were. It was then God's sovereign choice to interrupt and separate two of them. Let us see the importance of God's call (see Romans 10:15; Jeremiah 23:32). It's not enough to follow the flesh and go because you feel inclined to do so. Notice also that the

Spirit chose men who were older, mature and established. This is quite a contrast to today's emphasis on youth in missions.

The assembly commended these men to God's care and direction (verses 2-3; 14:26). The assembly did not assign work to these men nor were they commended to full-time work in Antioch. The assembly in Antioch was responsible to reach the people of their own area.

This first journey was to Asia. The first event mentioned was a confrontation with evil (verse 6). The Devil is the god of this world. It's not surprising to see a sorcerer acting as counselor to the deputy of the county. Paul's words were direct and strong and they led to faith (verse 12). Preaching was never separate from the living practice of faith. It was no theoretical teaching that was being propagated.

The next main event took place in Antioch of Pisidia. This is not the Antioch in Syria that commended Paul and Barnabas. They began their work in the synagogue (13:14). Paul preached a sermon that was not at all entertaining. It was forceful and direct (verses 40-41). The main point was the resurrection and the offer of forgiveness and justification. Such preaching is another hallmark of the New Testament evangelism evident in every Gospel message that Paul preached. The effect is seen in conversions (verses 48-49).

The result was religious persecution (verses 45, 50). Paul and Barnabas were expelled. Once again the Holy Spirit used persecution to tell these men to move on. It only caused the spread of the Gospel. The beginning in Antioch was small and weak but it was God's work. Paul and Barnabas were not afraid that this young assembly

would fall. They were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit (verse 52).

Iconium is next mentioned. The synagogue was the forum for the Gospel (14:1). The response was great so persecution broke out almost immediately. Verse 3 tells us that because of this (therefore) Paul and Barnabas stayed there a long time. For us it would seem a discouragement. To them it was an open door they were looking for. There were not many places in which they stayed a long time.

Finally they were driven out (verse 5) and went to Lystra, then Derbe (verse 6). In Lystra they healed a cripple. This resulted in a different kind of opposition. Paul and Barnabas were worshipped as Gods themselves (verses 11-13, 18). This too is common in the Christian church today. Many worship their favorite preachers and follow their favorite line of doctrine. A "New Testament" assembly will see Jesus in all believers and in all Bible truths.

Religious persecution followed them to Lystra. Paul was stoned and left for dead (verse 19) but God spared his life (verse 20). The next day he went on to Derbe (verse 20). There they preached and taught many (verse 21) then returned the way they came. Persecution was taught to be expected (verse 22). They also ordained elders in every church (verse 23). This ordaining of elders is specifically said to be according to the choice of the Holy Spirit (20:28). It is also clear that the Holy Spirit guided in this selection by the use of recognizable guidelines (1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:5-9). Notice too that these elders could not have been Christians for a long

time. There is a spiritual reality that we must regain to be truly “New Testament.”

The return trip took Paul back to Lystra, the place of his stoning. The Spirit’s leading is not simply a matter of logic. There is no fear of man or death for the believer. There is a real commitment to doing the Father’s will.

When they reached Attalia, it is said they had “fulfilled the work” God had given them to do (verse 26). They set out for home. When they arrived they gave a missionary report (verse 27) and stayed “a long time with the disciples.”

The Council At Jerusalem

Chapter 15 gives a glimpse into the internal struggles of the church. A problem arose in Antioch originating with men from Jerusalem (verse 1). The assembly in Antioch tried to correct the problem but the men from Judea refused to repent. A trip to Jerusalem was made (verse 2). This was no submission to Jerusalem as the seat of ruling authority. It was spiritual handling of a spiritual problem. We learn the following:

1. Autonomy is not independence. Each assembly is self-governing with direct responsibility to Christ the head. Each assembly is also a part of the whole body of Christ. The testimony of one affects the testimony of others. When problems arise they must be faced for the sake of the world-wide testimony of Jesus Christ.
2. Spiritual discipline is important in inter-assembly affairs as well as personal matters. It is sin to gossip and harbor resentment. We must go to the offenders even in their own settings. Only then can unity and truth prevail.

Notice that several men from Antioch went to Jerusalem (verse 2). They were sent at the expense of the assembly at Antioch (verse 3). They went with joy and purpose not with scheming and bitterness. They were received by the church as well as the Apostles and elders (verse 4) in Jerusalem. A meeting was called (verse 6) and much disputing occurred (verse 7). There was freedom to discuss and to differ strongly provided the intention of all was to arrive at God's truth and will.

Peter spoke saying that fellowship is only dependent upon conversion. If the Spirit was in them they were brothers (verse 8). All this was of grace alone, not of works of the law, ritual or moral (verse 11). When James spoke he confirmed that it was grace through faith that is effectual to salvation. He did however remind them of the need for social grace in dealing with others. Moses (the Old Testament law) was preached in every city. People respected the holy laws. Meaningless offense is pointless. Idols fornication, blood and strangulation must be avoided. It is a clear reminder that our message is spiritual, not social. We must not waste time trying to change culture. We must challenge the spirits of men. The change must come from within.

A delegation from Jerusalem was sent back to Antioch to confirm the decision (verse 22) by letter (verse 23). They wanted no association with the legalists (verse 24). Their decision was made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (verse 28). Notice that it "seemed good" (verse 28) to encourage the social patterns of respect. It was no command for the eternal church. The result was consolation (verse 31) not command or harshness.

Paul's Second Journey

Paul's second journey begins at 15:36. It began with an intelligent decision to re-visit and encourage the brethren established on the first journey (verse 36). There was a difference of opinion between the two missionaries. They couldn't resolve it so they went in different directions (verse 39). Once again we see the Holy Spirit make something good out of bad. If they had traveled together, no good results would be gained. There needs to be unity in God's work for it to be effective. In the end the outreach was doubled.

Paul went overland to Derbe and Lystra where he met Timothy (16:1). The Holy Spirit prompted Paul to take Timothy with him. It was the report of respected brethren that provided the leading. They had good success together (verse 5).

Again the Holy Spirit led in their lives (verse 6) forbidding them to preach in Asia and not permitting them to go to Bithynia (verse 7). Galatians 4:13-14 tells us that the Holy Spirit led by means of illness and weakness. There was then positive leading to go to Macedonia (verses 9-10) via the "Macedonian call." Notice that it says "assuredly gathering" (verse 10). This call was not purely mystical. But we must not err in the other direction. The Spirit's leading is never purely mechanical either. Notice the "immediately" of verse 10 and compare with John 7:17.

Arriving at Philippi they stayed for "certain days" (verse 12). They went to the place of prayer, as there was no synagogue. Lydia was saved (verses 14-15) and immediately opened her house for the Lord's work. Conversion produces real change in our material lives.

Then came spiritual opposition (verses 16-24). This was Gentile opposition (see also 19:23). Notice how closely it is tied to economics. It is one of Satan's most consistent means of opposing the Gospel. A rich church is a weak (dead?) church.

Now comes the story of the Philippian jailor. For our purposes we should look closely at the attitudes and actions of Paul and Silas. Their joy in suffering; restraint in the face of miraculous release; evident care for the jailor all help us to see New Testament realities so we can compare our own actions and attitudes.

In Thessalonica Paul stayed only three weeks (17:2). They preached in the synagogue (verse 1) and again faced religious persecution (verses 5-9). Then they went on to Berea and preached in the synagogue there. Once again religious persecution caught up with them (verse 13).

Next stop was Athens to wait for Silas and Timothy (verse 16). Here we see a new method of the Holy Spirit in leading. The pagan idolatry stirred up Paul's spirit (verse 16). We often admire pagan idolatry as "art" or "culture." The Holy Spirit was grieved by it. This led to the famous Mars Hill experience of Paul (17:22).

In Corinth, a city given over to lust and vice, Paul preached in the synagogue again (18:4). He stayed for about a year and a half (verse 11) teaching and then for a good while (verse 18) before leaving. There was nothing to encourage Paul in Corinth so God spoke in a night vision (verses 9-10) and revealed His will for Paul. This led to more religious persecution (18:12-17).

In Ephesus Paul preached in the synagogue (verse 19) and later arrived back at Antioch (verse 22) where he

spent “some time” (verse 23) before leaving for his third missionary journey.

Paul’s Third Journey

The third missionary journey covered both Asia and Europe. It too was to strengthen the disciples. The story of Apollo is in verses 24-28. He knew of the Lord Jesus but it was according to John the Baptist’s teaching only. A godly couple, Priscilla and Aquilla were used of God to perfect his faith. Here we see a husband/wife team involved in spiritual instruction. It gives insight into the active role of women. Apollo’s relationship to the Lord was according to John’s teaching. This fine Christian couple taught Apollo “the way of God more perfectly” (verse 26). Priscilla no less than Aquilla taught him. Notice this was not a meeting of the assembly. Nor was it a portion of the assembly that was dissatisfied with God’s ways. It was a one-on-one situation that arose naturally and was guided by love for Christ and love for Apollo too. It was also not a permanent arrangement. May our women be equally zealous for our Lord’s glory. When women are active in such ways they have no cause to complain at submission, silence and head covering within the assembly.

At Ephesus, Paul met “certain disciples” (19:1). Like Apollo they were only familiar with John’s baptism. By God’s grace these 12 men (verse 7) were saved and added. Paul then preached in the synagogue for about 3 months (verse 8). When trouble arose he moved to the school of Tyrannus (verse 9) where he taught for 2 years (verse 10). Altogether Paul stayed in Ephesus about 3 years (20:31). The Gospel was then threatened by some

spiritists. They attempted to use the name of Jesus in their spiritism (19:13) but it backfired (verses 15-16). Many turned from witchcraft unto Christ (verses 18-20). Once again good was brought out of a bad situation. Verse 22 says Paul “stayed...for a reason” but there arose more economic persecution (verses 23-41).

When Paul came to Troas, a meeting of the assembly was held (verse 7). It was the Lord’s day so the believers met to break bread. Paul preached and the next day left. Notice that the early church met to break bread on the first day of the week (Sunday). It is not wrong to do some more frequently or less frequently, but the New Testament practice was every first day of the week. Notice too that Paul’s visit was unusual and short so he took full advantage by preaching until midnight. Time was not worshipped in the early church. No doubt some came and went. We often do the same in our personal lives today when a relative comes from afar. Sad to say that much of what we do as an assembly is far more formal and routine.

Notice too that there was both preaching and talking. It was not all monologue. There was dialogue also. It seems that the stale ritual of formal religion did not exist in the church then as it does now. Let us strive to regain “New Testament principles.”

On his way home Paul did not want to return to Ephesus. He was in a hurry so he sent for the elders at Ephesus to meet him (verse 17) and challenged them as to their responsibilities. This story should be read by all elders and workers too. Notice the leading of the Holy Spirit (verse 23) concerning Paul’s future. This causes many questions because Paul acted against this revelation

(21:4, 11-14). Clearly the forewarning of danger was to prepare him, not to discourage him. The same thing happened at Corinth before (18:9-10). This is an important aspect of Holy Spirit leading. Paul had a clear idea of God's will. He would do it at any cost. Without the will of God we are tossed by circumstances and rationalizations. Can this be the reason why we have drifted so far today? Is this the dynamic we are lacking?

Notice also the Holy Spirit's leading concerning elders in 20:28. Paul warns that there will always be believers who want to rule (verse 30). What we need is God's rule as we hold fast the head (Christ) (20:32; 11:23). Only with a multiplicity of Holy Spirit ordained elders can this be our experience.

New Testament financial principles are re-emphasized here (20:33-35). Paul reminds us that spiritual men give, not ask. They would not take anything from non-believers (3 John 7) nor were they constantly making needs known. Rather it was a matter of working so as to help others. The words alone are enough to convict us today.

Paul took ship and returned to Jerusalem (21:15) stopping at Philip's house on the way (verse 8). Philip had four daughters that prophesied (verse 9). Again we find clear evidence of women active in God's word. There is no reason to assign this activity to any meetings of the assembly. Nor is there any idea of a back door ministry. Clearly this is in the same spirit as Aquilla and Priscilla earlier. May we all be active in the Gospel according to the will of God and for His glory.

It seems important when looking at the functioning of the assembly that we see the Bible doctrine of the

priesthood of all believers in action. In fact this is what the functioning of the church consists of. Here then are a few verses organized under headings to bring this truth to our minds.

1) All believers are priests - 11:20

2) We offer spiritual sacrifices a) our bodies - 14:3,19; 20:24 b) our praise - 13:1; 16:25 c) our possessions - 11:25-30; 15:3; 16:15; 20:33-35

3) We intercede a) in prayer - 12:5 b) in action - 13:6; 15:36

4) We bless others - 16:31; 19:4-6

Summary of Principles

1) The church is a dynamic, living organism without hard structure.

2) The church is lead by its head (Christ) through the Spirit.

a) He leads by persecution.

b) He leads by men - multiple elders - called men.

c) He leads by the revealed will of God for us.

d) He leads by stirring up our spirits (not emotions).

e) He leads those who are following.

f) He leads in opposition to the world's leader (values).

3) Every local assembly is autonomous but not independent.

4) The church met on the first day of the week to break bread.

- 5) The church didn't meet by tradition. There was variety and spontaneity in all that was done.
- 6) The church is a giving body not a soliciting body.
- 7) Prayer is a major function of the church.
- 8) Evangelism is a major function of the church.
 - a) All believers (male & female) must evangelize.
 - b) Our hometown is our area of first responsibility.
 - c) Evangelism occurred everywhere but a church meeting.
 - d) Evangelism is never a set formula. It is a living reality that is seen as well as heard.
- 9) Maintaining unity is a major function of the church.
- 10) The church functions as a priesthood.

Acts 3

The chapter divides into two.

1. The first apostolic miracle Verses 1-11.
2. Peter's second sermon Verses 12-26.

Verse 1 The hour of prayer. 3 p.m. The hour of the daily burnt offering. The hour Christ died.

Verse 2 The beggar lying at the Beautiful gate (describe).

This gate was gifted by Herod—made of brass—stood 80 feet high and 65 feet broad. It took 20 men to open and close it.

What a contrast—such wealth—such poverty.

Verse 3 Day after day this man begged from those entering the temple.

Verse 4 Peter fixed his eyes on the beggar.

“If we are led by the Spirit, we will fix our eyes on those God intends to bless, instead of firing blank cartridges and beating the air.”

Verses 5-8 The lame man healed.

In the name of Jesus Christ. What does this mean?

There is power in the name of Jesus Christ.

The power of Christ is in His name. (33 times in Acts)

See also Verse 16.

All blessing is found in that Name, and faith releases that power for our benefit.

Notice how faith is exhibited by Peter as well as the lame man. Luke 4 Paralyzed man. “When He saw their faith.”

1. Peter fastened his eyes on him Verse 4.
2. The man gave heed unto Peter Verse 5.
3. Peter had faith in the name and power of the Lord Jesus Verse 6.
4. Peter took him by the right hand.
5. The lame man leapt up.

Then notice his conduct: walking—leaping—praising God.

Application

We are encouraged to ask what we will—in the name of Jesus. John 14:13-14.

We have the assurance of His presence when we meet in His name. Matthew 18:20.

Verses 10-11 The healed man continues to hold Peter and John.

The people gather around in wonder. Describe.

Verse 12 Very quickly Peter turns their attention from themselves to the Lord Jesus. “That in all things He should have the preeminence.” Colossians 1:18.

Verses 13-16 Peter says the source and Author of the miracle is the Lord Jesus.

God has glorified His Son—Resurrection—Ascension.

1. You delivered Him up to the Gentiles for trial Verse 13.

2. You denied Him before Pilate, who desired to let Him go Verse 14.

3. You denied the Holy One and to your shame asked for the release of a murderer Verse 14.

4. You killed the Prince of life Verse 15.

Notice by contrast what God did with Jesus.

1. God raised Him from the dead Verse 15.

2. He has glorified His Son Jesus Verse 13.

Verse 16 And His Name, through faith in His name.

Faith in His name means faith in Christ.

See Verse 12 of Chapter 4.

Verse 17 Through ignorance they crucified Christ.

They did not know that Jesus was God incarnate.

They did not know that Jesus was God's Son.

This probably accounts for our Lord's saying on the Cross.

"Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

Luke 23:24. See also 1 Timothy 1:12-13.

Verse 18 Shows us as Peter said, that the recent happenings in Jerusalem were the fulfillment of O.T. prophesy.

Verse 19 Peter calls upon these men to repent and to be converted to Christ.

Verse 20 When they repent—future—God will send Jesus again.

Verse 21 When the time is right and God's purpose have been fulfilled, Christ will come and set up His kingdom. Millennium.

Verse 22 As Moses was the prophet of God for the deliverance of Israel from bondage, so Jesus Christ will be raised up for the establishment of the Kingdom.

Verse 23 During the reign Christ will rule with a rod of iron.

Verse 24 The prophets all spoke of this time.

Verses 25-26 All the blessings of the kingdom were promised, not only to the patriarchs, but to those who believe in Christ.

Peter is urging the nation to repent of the sin of crucifying their Messiah, and to accept Him as Savior and Lord.

Acts 3:1-11

The lame man healed.

This is the first recorded miracle in the church era.

Peter and John went up to the temple to pray at 3:M (the ninth hour).

Deadness of temple ritual.

This was the time of the offering of the daily burn-offering.

The exact time that our Lord died.

Verse 2 The lame man is introduced...he had been lame from his birth.

He was brought by friends and laid at the Beautiful gate of the temple to beg.

This gate was provided by Herod—made of precious Corinthian brass—was 80 feet tall and 65 feet wide—it took 20 men to open and close it. C/e Parable of Good Samaritan—Priest and Levites passed by. All similar healing miracles in the Gospels and Acts imply that physical healing is but an illustration of God's way in saving a soul.

This present miracle is no exception.

The lame man was helpless—describe.

Compare John 5. The man at the pool of Bethesda.

Apply Ephesians 2. Without God—without hope—without Christ.

Explain Divine love here in contrast to human love.

Now consider the gate...this was the gate into the so called house of God. "Your house is desolate." Contrast to Christ as "The Door."

John 9 The blind man (healed) is cast out of the temple, Jesus is waiting...He proclaimed Himself to be "the door." "I am the door" etc. John 10.

Verse 3 This man needed help—he recognized his need—and asked for help.

This is the first step in the process of salvation.

The Spirit's work.

Verse 4 Peter said "Gaze intently on us."

Verse 5 "He gave heed unto them expecting to receive."

This is the second ingredient in the process of salvation. "Faith."

Give examples of faith Mark 1:40-42, Luke 7:1-10.

Verse 6 Physical healing was to come through Jesus of Nazareth. "Rise up and walk."

Third and final step.

Verses 7-8 Peter took him by the hand—his strength returned—he sprang to his feet—entered the temple, walking, leaping and praising God.

This man's "faith" was rewarded. God's power transformed him.

"New birth." "If any man be in Christ etc."

The people saw this and gathered around Peter and John and asked for an explanation.

The rest of the chapter is Peter's explanation.

Verse 12 Peter declares, "We did not do it"—The God of our Fathers has glorified His Son Jesus.

You killed Him, even when Pilate sought to free Him. God...has raised Him from the dead and glorified Him at His right hand.

Verse 16 "It is through His Name and through faith in His Name that this man has been healed."

Verse 19 "Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out."

Chapter 4:1 The priests—the military—the Sadducees were annoyed at this furor, so they took them and put them in jail.

The next day they were tried.

Verse 7 By what power, or by what name have you done this?

Peter's reply Verse 8-12.

Verse 8-9 The introduction.

Verse 10 The message.

Verse 11 The application.

Verse 12 The conclusion.

“Neither is there salvation in any other” etc.

Hoshea—Jehoshua—Joshua = Jesus.

Thou shalt call His name Jesus, etc.

I am the door—I am the Bread of life.

I am the way.

Acts 4

Power of God.

Power of man.

Power of the Holy Spirit.

Verses 1-4 The first persecution of the infant church.

It arose from the religious leaders. See Verse 1.

The priest's represent religious intolerance.

The captain of the temple political enmity.

The Sadducees rationalistic unbelief.

The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection.

The keynote of the apostles preaching was the resurrection—this brought them into open conflict.

Note the phrase in Verse 2 “and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”

This is an important phrase—it disproves the idea of a general resurrection. Stress “from among the dead.”

Paul expressed the same truth in Philippians 3:11.

“If I might by any means attain unto the resurrection from among the dead.”

Revelations 20:4 There were some who had been martyred for Jesus who were resurrected and reigned with Christ 1,000 years.

Verse 5 There were others who were not resurrected until the 1,000 years were over.

The first resurrection is a great joy and blessedness to the participants. Resurrection of life.

The other resurrection is one of great sorrow.
Resurrection of judgment. Great White Throne.

Verse 4 The result of the preaching was that 5,000 men received Christ and were brought into the fellowship.

Verse 5-6 describe those who were present at the trial.

Verse 7 The question put to them. “By what power, or by what name, have you done this?”

Verse 8-12 Peter’s reply

First of all he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Verse 10 He gives the answer. The name of Jesus—and in the power of the resurrected Christ.

Verse 11 Is an O.T. reference to prove the resurrection.

Verse 12 There is no salvation without Him—He is the only Savior.

These wonderful words were spoken by the same man who had denied the Lord three times with a thousand curses.

Verses 13-22 The council forbids the disciples to teach or preach.

Verse 13 The Sanhedrin’s opinion of the disciples.

1. They were ignorant and unlearned.
2. They had been with Jesus.

Verses 16-17

The council was in a predicament.

They could not deny that a miracle had been performed.

The healed man was there—he was over 40 years of age.

Verse 18 They decided to prohibit the disciples from speaking or teaching.

Verse 19-20 is Peter and John's reaction.

Verses 23-31 When the disciples were released they went to their own company.

Verse 24 They praised God. "Lord" Absolute Master.

They praised Him as the Creator—therefore superior to the creatures who were opposing them.

Verses 25-28 They see the prophecy of David partially fulfilled in their present circumstances.

Verse 31 When they had prayed

1. The place was shaken. A physical expression of the spiritual power that was present.
2. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. Obedience—yieldedness to God.
3. They spoke the word with boldness.

There are seven times in the Acts when men are said to be filled with the Spirit.

Notice the purposes on the results.

1. For speaking Chapter 2:4, 4:8, and 4:31
2. For serving Chapter 6:3
3. For shepherding Chapter 11:24
4. For rebuking Chapter 13:9
5. For dying Chapter 7:55

Read Acts 4:1-12, Verse 31, Chapter 5:1-11

These are four things for today's study.

1. The power of God.
2. The power of man.
3. The power of the Holy Spirit.
4. The power of Satan.

1) The power of God.

The healing of the lame man. Chapter 3

2) The power of man. Chapter 4:1

The priests—organized religion.

The military—Herodians.

The Sadducees—the intellectual intelligence—no resurrection.

Verse 5 The next day.

Rulers—priests and officials.

Elders—the heads of the chief families of Israel.

Scribes—the interpreters of the law and the teachers of the people.

Verse 6 Annas—Caiphas—John—Alexander. Plus the friends and family of the High Priest.

Possibly the Sanhedrin was present. 72 of the most prominent of the nation.

There were judges: the greatest and highest in the nation. The power of man.

Now for a look at the accused.

Peter and John—Galilean fishermen—unlearned and ignorant...then there was the healed man. (See Verses 10-14) and also the unseen but ever present Holy Spirit.

Illustrate the Hebrew children—Daniel in the lion's den.

Verse 7 Quote

Verse 8 Peter's reply. Filled with the Holy Spirit.

The old Peter...the new Peter.

When Peter was finished they admitted four things.

1. That they were bold
2. That they were unlearned
3. That they had been with Jesus
4. They noted that a notable miracle had been performed.

Verse 18 The verdict. No more preaching—miracles.

The Power of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 23 "And being let go, they went to their own company." The fellowship of Spirit-filled believers.

"They lifted up their voices to the Lord."

Did they ask for the persecution to stop? NO

Quote Verse 29 here.

Verse 31 The disciples again filled with the Holy Spirit.

The powers of Satan.

Give the background to the incident.

Chapter 4:34-37 Example of Barnabas.

These were tremendous days for the young church.

They were happy in the Lord, and with each other.

But somehow Satan got inside.

Wherever there is a work of God, there is always opposition from Satan.

Ananias and Sapphira, true born again believers, suddenly decided to become liars and hypocrites. They lied to the Holy Spirit.

Describe this—the consequences.

Sin is a serious thing.

No sin is little...Eve...Abraham...Miriam...Prodigal...David.

Does God judge sin today?

See 1 Corinthians 11:30...Some are sick...weak...and some sleep.

Verse 4 “Great fear came upon all the church.”

These believers had felt the love of God.

They had experienced the power of God.

Now they were seeing His purity and absolute holiness and because of this, a great reverential fear came upon them.

Acts 5

Chapter 5 really begins at Chapter 4:34.

Verses 1-11

1. The sin and punishment of Annanias and Sapphira.
2. The power of Satan.

These were bright happy days of Christian love and fellowship.

We read of “gladness of heart,” of praising God, of rejoicing.

They were of one heart and one soul.

They had all things in common.

Many were added to the Lord—despite persecution from the world.

The days were characterized with spiritual power.

Persecution from without drives the sheep together, but once the wolf gets inside the flock then he scatters the sheep.

This is the sad story related in the eleven verses read.

A brother named Barnabas—later Paul’s fellow laborer—sold his property, then brought the money to the apostles for the general use of the church. Chapter 4:36-37

This incident probably prompted Annanias and Sapphira to pretend equal devotions—but they only gave a part of the money received.

Their sin was that they pretended to give the full price of the land but only gave a part.

The first sin in the Church was hypocrisy caused by materialism.

This sin is diagnosed and declared to be lying to the Holy Spirit, which is lying to God. Verse 4.

Verse 5 On hearing this, Annanias fell down dead—an act of God (Judgment).

Verses 7-11 Peter accuses Sapphira of collaborating with her husband in this great evil of lying to God.

He told her of her husband's fate and predicted her fate, immediately she collapsed and died.

Sin in the Church—in whatever form—is a very serious thing.

See Verse 11 “And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.”

A revelation of the awful holiness of God was given them.

Prior to this they had known God's love.

Now they feared God's purity—holiness.

A pure church is a powerful church.

Verses 12-16 Continuous miracles—continuous outreach.

The apostles were given special power to perform signs and wonders.

People did not flock to them because of curiosity; only those who were really convicted and drawn by the Spirit came. Verse 13.

Verse 14 Multitudes of both men and women came.

The healing ministry of the apostles was to authenticate the message which the apostles preached.

Verse 17 At this point persecution broke out.

On the one hand God was blessing.

On the other Satan was busy.

The apostles were put in prison. Verse 18.

They were released by an angel of the Lord, and told to go back to Solomon's porch and teach the people. Verse 20.

When the high priest sent for the prisoners the next morning, they found the prison empty. They couldn't believe it. Verse 23.

Verse 25 Someone came in with the news where the apostles were.

Verse 26 Temple guards were sent to apprehend them.

Verse 28 They accused them of filling Jerusalem with their doctrine.

Verse 29 No man can overrule God's commandments.

"We ought to obey God rather than man."

Verse 30 Note the affirmation of the resurrection.

Verse 31 The ascension of the resurrected Christ is stressed also. Then comes the declaration that the forgiveness of sins is through Him.

Verse 32 Peter says that we are Christ's witnesses (these things)

1. Witnesses of His crucifixion

2. Witnesses of His resurrection

3. Witnesses of His ascension

So also is the Holy Spirit—referring to Pentecost (explain).

Verse 33 They were convicted by the message and took counsel to kill them.

Verse 34 Gamaliel offers advice.

Do not harm these men. If the work be of men it will fail. If it be of God, it cannot be overthrown.

Verse 40 They then beat up the apostles—commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus.

Verse 41 The apostles left the courtroom rejoicing that they were “counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”

Verse 42 Witnessing continues in the temple and throughout the city.

Our Adversary the Devil Acts 5:1-11

The titles of the devil.

1. Satan—Adversary
2. Devil—Accuser
3. Serpent—Deceiver
4. Dragon—Power

Revelations 12:9 brings all these titles together.

“And the great dragon was cast out of heaven, that old or ancient serpent, called the devil and Satan, who deceiveth the whole world.”

In Chapter 3 of Acts we have the power of God displayed.

In Chapter 4 of Acts we have the power of man displayed.

In Chapter 4 of Acts we have the power of the Spirit displayed.

In Chapter 5 of Acts we have the power of Satan displayed.

Satan's origin and fall.

Isaiah 14:12-17 He fell because of his pride. The Lord may have been referring to this in Luke 18:10 "I beheld Satan as lightning falling to the earth." What happened after his fall? Creation from God's hand was perfect. Genesis 1:1. Satan fell, result of this fall was that God's judgment fell on the earth and it became "Without form and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep."

The recreation

The world as we know it today.

The garden of Eden—the first view of Satan in Eden.

His first action was to deceive Eve—describe the repercussions.

The seriousness of sin (David—Prodigal).

Satan's future.

His defeat and doom are certain. There is a short period of seeming victory during the Tribulation. Then there is war in heaven...Satan is cast out, he and his hosts are defeated at Armageddon. He is then bound and cast into the abyss, where he remains for 1,000 years.

At the close of the Millennium, he is loosed for a short season, then finally he is cast into the lake of fire.

Satan's work today.

Satan means adversary—prince of evil.

Satan is the chief opponent of God and man.

John 13:27 After the sop...Satan entered into Judas.

He was the cause of Peter's fall.

"Get thee behind me Satan."

Luke 22:31 "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat."

He seeks to persuade men to sin.

Matthew 4 The temptation

He steals the Word from the careless who hear the Gospel.

Mark 4:4 The parable of the sower...the fowls of the air came and devoured it.

Unregenerate men and women are under Satan's power.

Acts 26:19 "To open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

1 John 5:19 "The whole world lieth in the wicked one."

"He is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8.

II Corinthians 11:14 "He is an angel of light."

The only means of survival in the spiritual warfare.

1. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."—1 John 4:4

2. We must put on God's armor. Ephesians 6.

Sin In The Church Read Acts 5:1-11

The early days of the Church were joyful days.

We frequently read, in its short history, of “gladness of heart,” “praising God” and “rejoicing.”

They fellowshiped together as a family—they shared their possessions with each other.

God honored their testimony—many believed the Word—multitudes were added to the Lord: The reason—a pure church.

Persecution from without only drove them closer together.

Now the scene changes. Chapter 5 describes this change.

Compare at this point the combined action of Annanias and Sapphira with that of Barnabas. Chapter 4:36-37.

The problem was not in selling the possession.

This was not obligatory, but optional.

The sin was two fold.

1. The sin of pretension.

They invited the attention and admiration of their fellow Christians even though they knew that their claims were false.

2. The sin of hypocrisy.

This is the practice of feigning to be what one is not.

They promised to give all to the Lord but kept back a part for themselves. Application of this truth. Quote and apply Romans 12:1.

Bring the tithes and see “if I will not open heaven.”
Malachi 3:10.

What was it that caused them to do this?

Quote Verse 5. “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, etc.”

Their lie cost them their lives. Purity in the Church is essential. Sin is a very serious offence. David against thee...sinned.

Prodigal...sinned against heaven.

Can Satan fill the heart of an individual?

These two people were Christians—Satan can fill and will fill our hearts if we allow him, whether Christian or non-Christian.

Examples.

1. Peter. “Satan has desired to have you” etc. “Get thee behind me Satan.”

2. Judas. John 13:27 “And after the sop—piece of bread, Satan entered into him—Judas went out—it was night. There is no depth too deep to which a man will sink, and length to which he will not go when Satan enters in. Judas betrayed the Lord.

3. Simon. Acts 8.

“He was amazed at the miracles and signs which were done.”

He offered to buy the gifts of imparting the Holy Spirit. Peter said—Your money perish with you—your heart is not right, in the sight of God—Repent of your wickedness—You are in a state of bitter jealousy and being chained by wickedness.

Who was Simon?

He was a sorcerer in the city of Samaria.

He made a profession of faith in Christ under the preaching of Philip.

He so convinced Philip of the seeming genuineness of his conversion that he baptized him.

Finally; it is said that he continued with Philip—he helped him in the preaching.

Despite all this, subsequent events proved him to be a false professor.

Why have I brought this to your attention: So that I might show you the depths to which someone will sink and the length some will go when controlled by Satan.

1 John 5. “The whole world lieth in the wicked one.”

John 17:15. Jesus prayed “That you should keep them from the evil...one.”

Let us consider now the struggle between the two great powers for my body—my time—my service—my money—my all.

The first of these powers is Satan.

Satan will show you the “kingdoms of this world and the glory of them” and having dazzled your eyes, will captivate your heart as he whispers in your ear. “All these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me.”

In the search for these elusive bubbles many a one has lost his soul. Essau. Sold his birthright etc.

“What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

“The wages of sin is death.” Romans 6:23.

The second power who wants you is “Jesus Christ.”

“Son give me your heart”—Emotions—intellect—will.

In return for this I will give you “rest” Matthew 11:28,
“peace” Romans 5:1.

I will make your life more meaningful. I will give you
“abundant life”—Life with a capital “L.”

I will be your shepherd—Guide—Provider.

I will walk through the valley of the shadow of death
with you.

My goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of
your life.

And when life is finished you shall live with me forever.

“The gift of God is eternal life.” Romans 6:23.

Acts 5:12-32

The progress of the infant church.

1. Prior to Pentecost there were 120 in the upper room.
Acts 1:15.

2. Subsequent to Pentecost and after Peters’ sermon
three thousand were converted. Acts 2:41.

3. The first persecution was triggered off when Peter
spoke in the temple...many of them believed and the
number was about five thousand. Chapter 4:4.

4. And believers were the more added to the Lord,
multitudes of both men and women. Chapter 5:14.

Miracles and signs were performed with the object of
authenticating the new message. See Verses 15-16.

The miracle of healing was perhaps the most common.

Does God heal in this manner today?

In some segments of the Christian church “faith healing” is widely practiced.

“Faith healers” figure in an ever-increasing role in radio and television. There is nearly always money involved.

Is this Scriptural?

While I believe that God is sovereign and can and does heal whom He chooses to heal, the claims of “faith healers” are unscriptural.

What is the Scriptural way to deal with sickness? James 5 tells us to “pray for the sick”—in the case of critical illness, James says, “call the elders of the church,” and “let them pray, and let them anoint with oil in the name of the Lord.” I take that anointing with oil to mean, use the medicine which medical science has made available, and as prescribed by a sympathetic medical doctor.

When we pray we should always add, “Thy will be done.” Give examples.

The Miracle Of The Opened Door. Verses 20-28

Verse 18 They were put in the common prison.

Verse 19 An angel of the Lord opened the prison doors.

Verse 22 They were not found in the prison.

Verse 25 They were in the temple doing the very thing that they were commanded to do.

Persecution from the world has never hurt the Church of Christ upon earth.

In many instances the devil has outdone himself.

1. Samuel Rutherford wrote a letter from the dungeon of St. Andrews castle, Scotland, and addressed it as from "Christ's Palace," St. Andrews.

2. Paul was imprisoned—the result of this is the prison epistles.

3. John Bunyan was imprisoned for preaching, while in prison he wrote "Pilgrims progress."

4. Own experience as a P. O. W.

These early Christians were not intimidated by threats nor prison.

Verse 28 They filled Jerusalem with the Gospel. The outflow of the Spirit John 7.

Everybody in the city was talking about the death—burial—resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth.

Ignorant and unlearned men were spreading this message.

Multitudes were believing and being converted.

Verses 30-32 Three great facts of the faith.

1. God raised up Jesus - (Judgment is by a risen Christ)

2. God exalted Him - (Stephen saw Him, John saw Him)

3. God has given His Spirit to them that obey Him.

These apostles saw their accusers through the eyes of God. Isaiah 40.

Verse 29. "We ought to obey God rather than man."

To believers: We cannot have the Holy Spirit in its fullness unless we obey.

Why is there a great lack in my life?

Why am I so powerless and joyless?

It is because we are not obeying God.

“It is better to obey than to sacrifice.”

We must obey...not just trust Him, or believe Him, or admire Him.

We must obey.

You can preach Him, sing of Him, teach Him, and follow Him...but He only gives the Holy Spirit to them who obey Him.

To unbelievers

Acts 2:38 “Repent, and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sin.”

Acts 3:19 “Repent, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out.”

Acts 17:30 “God commands all men everywhere to repent.” See Matthew 21:28, 29.

Romans 10:9 Confess—believe.

1 Peter 4:17 What shall the end be of them who obey not.

II Thessalonians 1:7, 8. Taking vengeance on them who obey not, etc.

Obedience Acts 5:29

“We ought to obey God rather than man.”

Christina Rossetti wrote: “Obedience is the fruit of faith.”

See how this works out in the lives of the apostles. In Acts 1:8 the Lord said to His disciples "You shall be witnesses unto Me.

This is a very profound statement. A witness is one who testifies to what he has seen or heard or knows. But there is a deeper meaning here. The word "witness" comes from the word "Martus" or "Martyr," one who bears witness by his death if necessary. The disciples knew the implications of our Lord's statement "You shall be my witnesses." In Chapter 4 the Sanhedrin "threatened them and let them go." In Chapter 5:18 they were put "in the common prison."

Chapter 5:33 The rulers "took counsel to kill them."

Chapter 5:40 The rulers beat them up.

But they were true witnesses. Their obedience to God grew out of faith in God.

See Verses 41-42 Quote.

1. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer.
2. They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

They said:

"We ought to obey God rather than men." The apostles at this point were looking at their accusers through the eyes of God the Holy Spirit.

What did they see? Consider Isaiah 40.

Verse 15 "Behold the nations are like a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the fine dust of the balance."

Verse 17 All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted to Him as less than nothing.

Verse 22 He sitteth upon the circle of the earth and the inhabitants are like grasshoppers.

With this perspective, they chose to obey God rather than men.

It was not easy, this obedience to God cost many of them their life. (Describe)

The Lord when He was here spoke significant words
“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.”

Describe the incident.

Where man’s laws are contrary to God’s laws then we must obey God.

Examples Daniel 6

Daniel obeyed God rather than the King.

Daniel was cast into the lion’s den, etc.

Daniel 3 The Hebrew children refused to worship the image.

They were cast into the fiery furnace.

Take the example of Gideon. Judges 6.

The fleece.

The army was composed of 30,000 men.

1. Those who were afraid were to return home. 22,000 did so leaving 10,000.

2. Those who bowed down and drank the water were put on one side. Those who lapped the water up with their hands were put on the other side. God took these men, only 300 were in the group.

Gideon obeyed God: And though the Midianites lay in the valley like grasshoppers for numbers, though their camels were without numbers, as the sand of the seashore for multitude. Gideon's obedience led to victory.

Let us talk about "obedience."

To the Christian.

Obedience is the criterion by which we should measure our love for Jesus Christ.

"If you love me you will keep my commandments."

Verse 32 declares that we cannot have the Spirit of God in fullness unless we obey. Quote.

Is your life powerless and joyless...the reason could be "disobedience."

Not reading the Word—Not praying—Not fellowshiping—Not Witnessing.

"It is better to obey than to sacrifice."

To the unbeliever:

Obedience is necessary for salvation.

Acts 2:38 Repent and be baptized.

Acts 3:19 Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out.

Acts 17:30 God commands all men everywhere to repent.

1 Peter 4:17 What shall the end be of them who obey not the Gospel.

II Thessalonians 1:7-8 Taking vengeance on them who obey not the Gospel.

Quote Romans 10:9.

Acts 5:28-33

Last week we discussed the “miracle of the opened door.”

The early Christians were not intimidated by threats and prison.

Verse 28 Despite persecution. They filled Jerusalem with the teaching of Jesus Christ.

This is the outflow of the Spirit John 7

Consider at this point:

1. The indwelling of the Spirit John 3.
2. The upspringing of the Spirit John 4.
3. The outflowing of the Spirit John 7.

Jerusalem was filled with the teaching of Christ.

Everyone was talking of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth.

Ignorant and unlearned men were being used to do this.

Multitudes were being saved.

Verses 30-32 The Message—Three great facts of the faith.

1. God raised up Jesus. All judgment is given to Him.
2. God exalted Him. Seen by Stephen—Saul—John.
3. God has given His Spirit to those who obey Him.

This truth was manifested before their eyes.

Verse 33 Conviction.

“They were ‘Cut to the heart,’ and took counsel to slay them.”

“Pricked in their conscience” and asked “What shall we do?” Acts 2 (“Conscience seared as with a hot iron.” “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.”)

Usually there are two forces at work during the period of conviction.

1. The Word of God. Hebrews 4:12

2. The Spirit of God. John 16 (Mention Satan’s power during this period).

The outcome of conviction is manifested in one of two ways.

Antagonism...Repentance.

1. Conviction can antagonize. Acts 7:54

2. Conviction can bring people to repentance. Acts 2:37.

The first reaction is the work of Satan.

The second reaction is the work of the Spirit of God.

This brings to our attention the picture of the struggle between the two great powers for our body—time—money—our all.

The rich young ruler—the devil victorious (Quote When I survey the, etc. The hands appeal “Shall have” etc.)

The first of these powers is Satan.

(“Satan has obtained you by asking”).

“Satan has desired to have you” etc. Luke 22:31.

Luke 4:5 “In a moment of time.”

Satan will show you the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, and after dazzling your eyes he will captivate your heart and whisper in your ear, “All these things will I give you if you will fall down and worship me.”

In the fruitless search for these elusive bubbles (Kingdoms—power—glory), many a one has lost his soul. Luke 16 (The rich fool).

Examples

1. Wealthy mill owners.
2. Esau.
3. Lot.

“What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lost his own soul.” “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

“The wages of sin is death” Romans 6:23.

The second person, power, who wants you is Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 23:26

“Son give me your heart”—Emotions—intellect—will.

In return for this I will give you eternal life—peace—rest.

I will be your shepherd. Psalm 23.

I will walk through the valley of the shadow with you.

My goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life, and when life is over, you shall live with me forever.

“The gift of God is eternal life” etc. Romans 6:23.

Verse 29 “We ought to obey God rather than man” See Mark 12:13-17.

The apostles at this point were looking at their accusers through the eyes of God the Spirit.

What do they see? Isaiah 40.

Verse 15 “Behold, the nations are like a drop of the bucket and are counted as the fine dust of the balance.”

Verse 17 “All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted to Him less than nothing.”

Verse 22 “He sitteth upon the circle of the earth and the inhabitants are like grasshoppers.

With this perspective they chose to Obey God rather than man. Let us talk about obedience.

To the Christians

Obedience is the criterion by which we should measure our love for Christ.

“If you love me you will keep my commandments.”

Verse 32 declares that we cannot have the Spirit of God in fullness unless we obey. (Quote)

If there is a great void in your life, if it is powerless and joyless, it is because you are not obeying God.

Disobeying because we do not heed the Word...Pray...fellowship with Christians...Witness.

We must obey...not just trust Him—believe Him—admire Him...we must obey Him if we are to enjoy fullness of blessing.

It is better to obey than to sacrifice.

To the unbeliever. Obedience is necessary for salvation.

Acts 2:38 Repent and be baptized, etc.

Acts 3:19 Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out.

Acts 17:30 What shall the end be of them who obey not the Gospel.

II Thessalonians 1:7-8 Taking vengeance on them who obey not the Gospel.

Quote Romans 10:9.

Acts 6 & 7

Acts 6

The sin of murmuring is exposed here.

Then was a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

These Grecians were Jews who had settled in other countries.

While they had the same basic culture they were very nationalistic.

This was the second sin to be exposed within the Church.

The first being hypocrisy.

The second being murmuring.

This incident teaches us a great lesson that what the devil cannot do from without he will seek to do by dissension from within.

Note the practice of caring for the widows. (Explain).

These were cared for because of the gifts given by the brethren. See Chapter 4:34-37.

In all probability this was abused, so Paul laid down guidelines in I Timothy 5. (Explain these).

Verses 2-3 To help prevent this inequity in the future, the apostles made it known that they would cease to be engaged in the work of providing for the needy, then asked the church to find seven men. Note their qualifications:

1. honest report. Good testimony within and without.
2. full of the Holy Spirit
3. full of wisdom

“Do all things without murmuring.” Philippians 2:14.

One of the sins of Israel in the wilderness was murmuring. (13 times).

1 Corinthians 10:10 “Do not murmur as some of them did.” “God was not well pleased with them.”

Murmuring stems from discontent. A whisperer separates friends. Proverbs 16:28.

Discontent breeds grumbling.

When one murmurs they say something in a low tone of voice.

A murmurer is a grumbler or complainer—what that person does is a sin of a grievous nature—God abhors it.

In the O.T. God destroyed murmurers—Serpents (example). Numbers 21.

The inference of Verse 10 is that as God destroyed the murmurers of old He will destroy murmurers today.

Usually it is the carnal Christian who murmurs.

The spiritual Christian glorifies Christ.

Joseph as a Type of Christ.

1. Both were special objects of the Father’s love. Genesis 37:3 and Matthew 3:17.

2. Both were hated by their brethren. Genesis 37:4 and John 15:25.

3. The superior claims of both were rejected by their brethren. Genesis 37:8 and Matthew 21:37-39.

4. The brethren of both conspired against them to kill them. Genesis 37:18 and Matthew 26:3-4.

5. Joseph was, in intent and figure slain by His brethren, as was Christ. Genesis 37:24 and Matthew 27:35-37.

6. Each became a blessing among the Gentiles and gained a Bride. Genesis 41:1-45 and Ephesians 5:25-32.

7. As Joseph reconciled his brethren to himself and afterward exalted them, so will it be with Christ and His Jewish brethren. Genesis 45:1-15 and Romans 11:1-15, 25-36.

Genesis 41:55 The people were famished and came to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said, "Go to Joseph." He held the lives of the nation in his hands (the world).

Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

These were the first deacons ever appointed in the church.

A deacon is a servant, one who ministers to the needs of God's people.

Paul gives the qualifications of deacons in I Timothy 3.

Anyone whom God used in His service were men of these qualifications. Barnabas. Acts 11:24.

When God wanted an earthy home built, the man whom He chose to do this had certain qualifications. See Exodus 31:1-3.

God is very concerned about the spiritual state of his servants.

I believe He only uses such people today.

Verse 4 This verse tells us what the apostles were going to devote them full time to. Prayer—Ministry of the Word. John 14:13-14. Matthew 21:22.

Verse 5 Of the men who were chosen we only know two of them.

Stephen the first martyr. Chapters 6-7.

Philip the evangelist. Chapters 8-21.

Verse 6 The apostles prayed for them—they also laid their hands on them. Identification.

Verse 7 Stress this verse.

1. The Word of God increased—spread abroad.
2. The number of disciples were multiplied.
3. A great company of priests were converted.

Verse 8 We are introduced to Stephen.

Note his spiritual qualifications.

Full of the Holy Spirit. Verses 3-5.

Full of wisdom. Verse 3.

Full of faith. Verses 5-8.

He had a good testimony. Verse 3.

This is the man God is about to use.

He did great wonders and miracles.

Verse 9 Notice how Satan zeroed in on Stephen.

One who is being used of God is always the target of Satan.

Verse 10 No man or men can prevail against one who is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Verse 11 They employed men to say that they had heard him blaspheme Moses and God.

Verse 12 They stirred up the people—elders—scribes and brought him to trial.

Verse 13 They bribed false witnesses to testify against them.

Verse 14 The accusation.

Verse 15 Stephen is transformed by an inner force. The Holy Spirit.

The Call, Defense And Death Of Stephen—Acts Chapters 6 & 7.

Stephens Call Chapter 6.

Stephen was a wonderful man. He had unique qualifications.

1. He had a good testimony.
2. He was full of wisdom.
3. He was full of faith.
4. He was full of the Holy Spirit.

According to Verse 8 Stephen was also “full of power” and did Great Wonders and miracles among the people.

This is the first time we hear of miracles being performed by any other than the apostles.

Stephen's unique gifts made him a target for the unscrupulous rulers of religion.

They could not dispute successfully with him the claims of Jesus Christ.

"They were not able to resist the wisdom nor the Spirit by which he spoke" Verse 10.

Verse 11 shows us the dishonesty to which men will stoop to justify their own positions.

They suborned men, that is, they bribed men to bear false witness.

These people said that they had heard them speak "blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

They were "rabble rousers," they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes until they arrested Stephen and brought him before the council. As he faced his accusers, they were astonished when his face appeared to be the face of an angel.

Chapter 7

Verse 1 When the witnesses had told their story, the high priest said to Stephen "Are these things true?"

Before entering into some of the details of Stephens' defense, let me point out to you some striking similarities between Stephen's death and that of our Lord Jesus.

1. Jesus did miracles to prove who He was. Stephen did miracles to prove that his mission was of God.
2. Both were accused by false witnesses. Acts 6:13-14, Matthew 26:60-61.

3. They cast Stephen out of the city (7:58). They led the Savior outside Jerusalem.
4. Stephen prayed for his murderers (7:60). On the cross our Lord prayed, "Father forgive them etc."
5. Stephen committed himself to the Lord as he prayed, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Verse 59. Christ said to His Father "Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."
6. Stephen in his dying moments cried with a "loud voice." Verse 60. The Lord did this too. (Matthew 27:50). These deaths were not tragedies but triumphs.

As John the Baptist's testimony was a voice to the nation before Christ...so Stephen's testimony is a convicting voice to the nation after they had crucified Christ. (In rejecting Stephen, they actually rejected Christ a second time.)

A Study Of Stephens' Defense Acts 7:54-60

Stephens' defense is really a brief review of the history of Israel. Note the names of the patriarchs mentioned. Abraham—Isaac—Jacob—Joseph—Moses. Stephen marshals the salient facts of Israel's history to show that as a nation they had always rejected God's grace and God's messengers. From the five patriarchs mentioned, Stephen selects two, Joseph and Moses to show that although ultimately they became the nations deliverers, at one point they were rejected.

Joseph Verse 9-19

1. Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brethren. Verse 9.
2. The rejected one raised to power and glory in Egypt. Verse 10.

3. Joseph's brothers driven to Egypt because of famine but failed to recognize him. verses 11-12.

4. Joseph became their Savior.

Moses Verses 20-43

1. Verses 20-22 Stephen describes the birth—early life and education of Moses in Egypt.

2. Verses 23-28 His first rejection by his brethren. See Verse 25.

3. Verse 29 His exile in the land of Midian.

4. Verses 30-35 God appeared to him in the burning bush.

5. Verse 36 He became the Savior of the nation.

6. Verse 37 Moses prophesied that God would raise up a prophet like him.

7. Moses rejected a second time by the people as they worshipped the golden calf. Verses 39-41.

Stephen is pointing out here that history repeats itself they were guilty of the sin of their forefathers in rejecting the Lord Jesus and resisting the Holy Spirit.

Consider at this point the parable of the householder who planted a vineyard. Matthew 21:33-46.

The householder leased the vineyard. At harvest time he sent his servants for the fruit. The farmers took the servants and beat some, stoned others, and killed some. He sent more servants with more authority, they were treated the same way. Last of all he sent his son..."Surely they will receive my son." They said, "This is the heir, come, let us kill him." The question now was what would the owner do when he came? They said, "he

will miserably destroy these men” etc. Describe the reaction of the people when they realized that they had just condemned themselves.

Stephen’s final indictment Verses 51-53.

The Jewish leaders had accused him of speaking against the law. He turned this around to show that they were guilty of breaking the law and resisting the Holy Spirit. “As your fathers did so do ye” Verse 51.

The stoning of Stephen Verses 54-60.

When the judges and the people heard these accusations, “They were cut to the heart and gnashed on him with their teeth” Verse 54.

Stephen was unperturbed. Quote Verses 55-56.

The people’s reaction Verses 57-58.

The triumphant death of the first mentioned martyr. Verses 59-60 Quote.

Acts 6

The subject of Chapters 6-7 is Stephen.

This is what we have been told of him this far.

He was full of faith.

He was full of the Holy Spirit.

He was full of power.

He did wonders and miracles among the people.

A miracle is a work of a supernatural origin and was used as a sign of divine authority.

Wonders is something strange causing the beholder to marvel.

Stephen's enthusiasm cost him his life.

Note the prominent men in the Acts.

Peter Chapters 1-12 Stephen and Philip Chapters 6-8

Paul Chapter 9 his conversion Chapter 13 first missionary journey.

Stephen was mightily used of the Lord. Verse 8

He is the first man who is said to have performed miracles and wonders in the Acts other than the apostles.

Opposition arose against Stephen from various synagogues. Verse 9

In the confrontation that followed they were no match for him. See Verse 10.

They resorted to subterfuge, employing false witnesses.

They accused Him of blasphemy. Verses 11-14

Verse 15 As they hurled their fake accusations at him, Stephen's face was changed and his accusers saw it as the face of an angel. Change = Transfigured. Matthew 17:2. 2 Corinthians 3:18. Romans 12:2. Changed. Transformed.

They saw a transformation—the outshining from within, of a life fully surrendered to God and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

They saw something of the glory of Christ reflected in His servants.

Acts 7

In his defense, Stephen gives a review of Jewish history.

As he develops his theme he concentrates on two prominent figures: Moses and Joseph.

They had something in common. They were raised up by God—rejected by Israel—then exalted as deliverers and Saviors.

The analogy is unmistakable here—Christ.

Finally, Stephen launches a scathing attack at Israel's leaders, charging them with rejecting Christ—murdering the Just and Righteous One—resisting the Holy Spirit—and disobeying the law of God.

Verses 1-8 contain a summary of Abraham's history.

He cites the call of Abraham as the beginning of the nation.

Verses 9-19 Joseph rejected and received.

Joseph as a type of Christ

1. Joseph sold by his brethren—rejected
2. Raised to power and glory
3. Joseph's brethren failed to recognize Him.
4. The second time, Joseph was made known to them and he became the Savior of the family.

This was exactly what happened to Christ and what will happen when Christ comes the second time.

Verses 17-19 Stephen talks of the growth of the family—the increased bondage.

This prepares us for the next step in his argument.

The treatment of Moses at the hand of the people.

Verses 20-53 Stephen is showing them that in the past the nation was guilty on at least two occasions of rejecting saviors whom God had raised up to deliver them.

Verses 20-22 Birth—early life and education in Egypt.

Verses 23-28 His first rejection.

Verse 29 His exile in Midian.

Verses 30-35 God's appearance to him in the burning bush.

Verse 36 He became the Savior of the nation.

Verses 39-51 Moses rejected a second time as the people worshipped the golden calf.

Verses 51-53 Stephen's final accusations

He said that they did with Jesus what their fathers had done with the prophets.

Verses 54-60 These accusations stung them to the heart.

Then as soon as Stephen told them of his vision, Verse 56, they refused to listen.

They then dragged him out of the city and stoned him to death.

Stephen's death resembled that of the Lord.

He prayed, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit."

The Lord prayed, "Father into your hands I commend My Spirit."

Stephen prayed, "Lay not this sin to their charge."

The Lord prayed, "Father forgive them" etc.

Then having prayed he fell "asleep." (explain)

“Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” 1
Thessalonians 4.

The Period of Transition

Acts 6:1—11:18

Two weeks ago as we looked at the origin of the Church, we probably felt a twinge of envy as we re-read of 3000 souls being added to the Church—we wished we could experience some of that kind of visible result to the presentation of the Gospel in Shoreacres.

We left the meeting that night asking ourselves if we could, in any way, be hindering the Holy Spirit in his operation in our midst.

We previously had said that ‘The study of Acts’ would do two things to us: it would fill us with shame—we have been humbled and subdued in the Lord’s Presence and tonight we go on the other side of the coin: it will fill us with hope. We are thrilled to see that the road from Rome to Jerusalem that took 500 years to build eastward is traveled westward by the Gospel Messengers in the short span of some seventy years.

Tonight we look at the start of this transition—this moving out—from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

We Remember That:

The first period in the history of the early church can be characterized as that of establishment. At the outset there is no evidence that the believers broke sharply with Judaism. Pentecost was a Jewish feast before it became a Christian anniversary. The preaching of the apostles interpreted the Old Testament Scriptures and stressed Jesus’ Messianic office, even avowing that if the

nation repented, the Messiah Jesus would return (3:19, 20). The addresses of Peter were gauged for a Jewish audience, and so was the great appeal of Stephen. When the apostles went to worship they went to the temple (3:1), and Stephen debated in the synagogues (6:9, 10) of the foreign residents in Jerusalem.

But:

The sudden persecution, which burst like a storm at the death of Stephen, marked a sharp change in the affairs of the church. Up to this time the believers had been tolerated, or else the arrests, interrogations, and imprisonments had been spasmodic. The genuineness of the miracles which had been performed (4:15, 16) and the popular favor which they enjoyed (2:47) prevented the ruling priesthood from treating the church too drastically. Stephen's arraignment of the nation for the rejection of Christ, however, so enraged them that they did not wait for legal action but stoned him on the spot. (7:54-60)

After:

The violent death of Stephen and because of the sternly repressive measures taken by the Jewish leaders to crush the new movement, the majority of the Christians in Jerusalem were scattered abroad through Judea and Samaria. From this point to the last chapters of Acts little is said of the Jerusalem church. It was strongly Judaist in character and maintained some observance of the law, as the later controversies showed (15:1, 21:17-26). The scattering of its adherents, however, resulted in numerous missionary projects, which are recorded in chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11.

The Preaching In Samaria

Evidently the seven who had been appointed to care for the widows of the Jerusalem church had not been content to remain servers of tables. Stephen became an apologist; Philip became an evangelist. Driven from Jerusalem, Philip made his way to Samaria, where he opened a preaching campaign.

Samaria was inhabited by a population of mixed ancestry. When the northern kingdom of Israel fell before the Assyrians in 721 B.C. they deported to Assyria a large number of people, replacing them by settlers from other lands. In the resulting mixture of population both the Jewish blood and the Jewish worship were affected. The Samaritans were half Gentile by descent, and they retained some of the features of heathen worship, although they adhered to Jehovah also (II Kings 17:24-33). The tension between the two peoples was so strong that the Jews who traveled between Judea and Galilee usually avoided Samaria by crossing the Jordan and by using the roads on its eastern bank.

Philip's preaching among the Samaritans was, therefore, a surprising action for a Jew. It showed that he had a vision of the possibilities of his message for other peoples than his own. The response was amazing. The Samaritans forsook their superstitions and believed on Christ.

The mission of Philip was reinforced by the aid of Peter and John, who visited Samaria to see what had been accomplished and to make sure that the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts recounts four occasions on which the Holy Spirit came to man in a

spectacular manner: to the disciples at Pentecost (2:1-4), to the Samaritans (8:17), to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius (10:44-46) and upon the disciples of John the Baptist at Ephesus (19:6). Each of these instances represents the introduction of the Holy Spirit to a different class of people. Collectively they mark the beginning of the Spirit's work in the lives of individual believers at the opening of the church era. The gift of the Holy Spirit was the proof of conversion (Romans 8:9) and was the stamp of divine approval upon the apostles' work.

The Ethiopian Eunuch

The eunuch was an official of the Ethiopian court who was probably a proselyte returning from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The interview of Philip with this man was illustrative of several principles in the growth of the church. As in the case of the Samaritans, racial backgrounds and prejudices were overcome, the ministry to an individual was proved to be as important in the eyes of God as a mass revival, and the method of preaching Jesus from the Old Testament was demonstrated. Acts does not relate the consequences of this interview and makes no allusion to the effect of the gospel in Ethiopia. It does indicate that the period of transition from Jerusalem as the center of Christianity to the Gentile world involved a large number of contacts and that the message went in many directions.

The Conversion Of Paul

The ministry of Philip illustrated the outreach of the church to new localities and groups; the conversion of Saul of Tarsus was the provision of a new leader. Next to

the work of Christ Himself, the conversion of Saul was probably the most important event in the history of Christianity, for it not only removed an active enemy of the Gospel, but also it transformed him into one of its chief propagators.

Saul of Tarsus appeared first in the pages of Acts as a young man holding the garments of those who stoned Stephen and “consenting unto his death” (8:1). Three separate accounts of his conversion are given in Acts; one by Luke in chapter 9 as an integral part of the general historical account, and two which are included in quoted speeches of Paul (22:1-21, 26:2-23). Each had a different emphasis. The first account is historical, as part of the movement of the church; the last two are personal, and were given as defenses of Paul’s life and doctrine before hostile or questioning audiences. Taken together with certain passages from his epistles, they afford the sum total of available data concerning the great crisis of his life.

Saul, or Paul as he is generally known, was born into a strict Hebrew family near the beginning of the first century. His native city was Tarsus, a busy metropolis in Cilicia, situated on the northeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea. From Tarsus, a land road went north and west through the pass in the mountains known as the Cilician Gates, and the docks of the city were a center of shipping. The university of Tarsus was noted for its courses in philosophy and medicine, and the temple of Aesculapius, the god of healing, served as a hospital and clinic for the use of the medical students.

He was educated strictly in good Jewish fashion, learning the Hebrew language and the Scriptures, and also the trade of tent making (18:3).

At the age of twelve he was sent to Jerusalem to study with Gamaliel (22:3), and according to his own testimony he made good progress in his studies (Galatians 1:14). By conviction he was a Pharisee, and his zeal was measured by the intensity with which he persecuted the church (Acts 26:9-11). By the time that he came to manhood he was already a leader in Judaism. The language of Acts 26:10, "...I gave my vote against them" if it is taken literally, implies that he was a member of the Sanhedrin. If that be so, he must have been thirty or more years of age at the martyrdom of Stephen, since a man was not eligible for membership in that body until he had attained maturity.

The moral antecedents of his conversion are suggested by his account of his inner life as given in Romans 7. Plagued by the consciousness of sin which was aroused by the law, he found that the good that he wanted to do he could not produce, and the evil that he sought to avoid was always present with him (Romans 7:19). Whether Romans 7 applies to the converted or to the unconverted man has been long debated by theologians, but there can be little doubt that it refers to man under the law as Paul was. Certainly the law itself could produce the consciousness of sin even apart from the Gospel. Paul's zeal for persecution, then, may have been the effort of a misguided conscience to do something for God which would compensate for the evil in his soul.

The death of Stephen was also a rankling thorn in his mind. According to Paul's way of thinking, Stephen was

a blasphemer and stood condemned by the law. Nevertheless, Stephen's argument was essentially sound and could not be refuted. Furthermore, the vision of the risen Christ which Stephen professed to have and the job which illumined his face in spite of impending death gave his life a reality which the legalistic arguments of Saul could not shake. He alluded to this event in his speech from the castle of Antonia (Acts 22:19, 20) as an experience which he could not forget. His conversion may not have been caused by it, but it made part of the foundation for the transformation which took place on the road of Damascus.

The conversion itself was distinctly a supernatural revelation of the risen Christ to this implacable persecutor. Paul classes it as the last of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances (1 Corinthians 15:8). No theory of disease or hallucination can account for it adequately. Luke notes that it took place at a definite locality near Damascus (Acts 9:3); that it was accompanied by a great light (9:3) which Paul says was brighter than the noonday sun (26:13); that an audible voice spoke to Paul which was heard by the men with him (9:7), although they did not understand what was said (22:9). Paul himself suffered physical effects (9:8), which could be observed by those who accompanied him. The objective character of the conversion is above doubt.

The subjective factor deserves some attention also. When the unknown voice spoke to him from the blazing light of the heavenly glory, Paul's natural question was, "Who art thou?" (9:5). The answer, "I am Jesus" (9:5), would have been unbelievable to him had not his experience with Stephen prepared him for it. In one

flash of revelation he saw that Stephen was right, that all the arguments of Judaism against Stephen and the disciples had been wrong, and that a new world of revelation had been opened to him. Parallel with the reversal of his theological thinking came a call to service in the Gentile world. He acceded and was filled with the Spirit for his new task (9:10-19).

The ministry of Paul began immediately in Damascus. Galatians says that he visited Arabia at this time (Galatians 1:17). Probably he did so between his initial testimony in the synagogues (Acts 9:22) and his final departure from Damascus (9:23-25). Quite possibly the shock to his thinking was so great that he had to retire for a while to readjust his beliefs to the new light that had come in Christ. His sudden reversal of position was as disconcerting to him as it was to his associates.

Paul's new faith in Jesus as the Messiah brought him into a clash with his former Jewish colleagues in Damascus (9:23), and for his own safety he was obliged to flee the city. In Jerusalem he was regarded with cold suspicion by the disciples who, logically enough, looked upon him as a wolf who was adopting the sheep's garb in order to raid the flock. Under the sponsorship of Barnabas, however, he was accepted into the apostolic circle (9:27). He maintained a bold program of preaching, especially among the Hellenistic Jews, quite similar to the work that Stephen had done. So great was his success and so violent was the reaction against him that the church sent him away to Tarsus (9:30) where the opposition that he aroused would endanger them less.

Paul, according to all testimony (9:15; 22:21; 26:17; Romans 15:16; Galatians 1:16, 2:7-8; Ephesians 3:1-7), was God's choice as the apostle to the Gentiles. His conversion was part of the transition from the Jewish-centered church of Jerusalem to the Gentile church of the Roman world.

The Preaching Of Peter

The conversion of Paul brought into the church a new personality who was destined to become the outstanding apostle to the Gentiles, but the Spirit of God was working also with the personalities within the church, chief among whom was Peter. Beginning with the period of transition, he began to enlarge his ministry by preaching in the coastal plain of Sharon, where his activities were concentrated in the cities of Lydda and Joppa (Acts 9:32-43).

The important case in this period was the conversion of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, who was in command of a military detachment at Caesarea. Evidently he had already been interested in Judaism, for he is called "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house" (10:2).

The divine direction of Peter to the house of Cornelius is important in the history of Acts for a number of reasons. First, it indicated that God's provision of salvation was not to be confined to one race or people. Cornelius, the Roman Gentile, had as much right to hear the message of Christ as any Jew in the synagogues of Palestine.

Second, the conversion of Cornelius was the opening wedge for bringing Gentiles into the church. Peter's initial reaction to the divine command was a refusal to

participate in anything that was unclean (10:14, 11:7-12). At God's behest he went to a Gentile home, preached, and subsequently remained for a few days (10:48). The conversion of these Gentiles was so convincing that Peter proposed their baptism and accepted them into fellowship (10:44-48).

The reception of these Gentiles precipitated a question within the church that remained a point of controversy for some time thereafter. Should a Jewish Christian eat with the uncircumcised Gentiles who did not observe the Law? If the Gentiles became believers, how much of the law should they observe? Was legal observance the final criterion of righteousness or of a right relation with God? Not all of these questions were raised immediately by the conversion of Cornelius, but the whole principle of law versus grace was brought forward in the thinking of the church by the accession of the Gentiles, and the subsequent missionary movement made it even more acute.

The immediate answer of Peter illustrates the point that the history of Acts seeks to teach. The transition from law to grace was not an evolutionary drift, nor was it the policy of expediency, nor a whim of a few leaders. It was prompted by the Holy Spirit (10:19), explained by Spirit-led preaching (10:43), and confirmed when the Spirit came upon the Gentile believers (10:44, 11:15-18). "To the Gentiles also (had) God granted repentance unto life."

The sermon of Peter in the house of Cornelius is an excellent example of evangelistic preaching in the apostolic age. It is really a brief historical summary of the life of Christ, which places its emphasis upon His

death, His resurrection, and His coming to judgment. In general substance it is virtually an outline of the gospel narrative. The novel element in it is universality: "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins" (10:43). Up to this time Peter had been preaching to the "men of Israel" (2:22), the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (3:13, 25), the "rulers and elders" (4:8). Here he adapted the message to an audience that did not possess the heritage of the covenant and of the law, and he said that it was directed "to everyone that believeth."

Therefore, we see the period of transition was thus marked by a change from Jerusalem to the wider sphere of Palestine, including Samaria and extending to Syria and Damascus. The preaching message began to expand as the purpose of God in reaching the Gentiles became increasingly evident, and the center of its thought shifted from the restoration of the kingdom to forgiveness of sins. The church began to face the problem of the interpretation of the law as it should—or should not—be applied to the Gentiles. A new leadership was provided for the missionary expansion that came as a result of the persecution and that was accelerated by the response to the preaching of this period. A new stage of growth was opening before the church, for which the period of transition had been a preparation.

Acts 8

Chapters 8-10 have at least one thing in common.

There is a conversion recorded in each.

Chapter 8 The Ethiopian eunuch.

Chapter 9 Saul of Tarsus.

Chapter 10 Cornelius the Roman centurion.

One was a black man—one a Jew—one a Gentile.

They represent the whole human race.

The Ethiopian was a descendant of Ham—Saul of Shem—Cornelius of Japheth.

The first was a politician (first aroused by reading the Word)—secretary of Candice's Treasury.

The second a theologian—saw and heard the Lord from glory.

The third a militarist or soldier—by angelic vision.

They had one thing in common, they needed to be saved, and they accepted Christ as Savior.

The eunuch was a man who wanted to be saved, but didn't know how.

Saul was blind to his need. Blinded by self-satisfied religious blindness.

Cornelius needed only to have the message brought to him to be saved.

Verse 1 Great persecution against the Church.

"They were scattered around" etc.

See Acts 1:8 The Lord instructed His followers to begin witnessing at Jerusalem (when they had received the necessary power) then branch out to Judea—Samaria—the utmost bounds of the earth. The apostles remained in Jerusalem (explain).

Verse 3 Saul continued with unbounded energy to harass the Church, dragging men from their homes and having them committed to prison.

Perhaps he is trying to drown out the memory of Stephen—such poise—such unshakable conviction—the angelic face.

The blood of the martyr's—the seed of the Church.

Verse 4 Persecution could not silence the Church.

“Everywhere they went they preached the Word.”

The winds of affliction scattered the seed of the Gospel to distant places.

Verses 5-8 These verses describe for us the results of Philip's preaching.

The people were moved at Philip's presentation of Christ.

They were amazed at the miracles he did.

Demons were driven out.

Paralyzed folks and lame folks were healed.

The people believed the message—great joy resulted.

Verses 9-25 describe the profession of Simon the sorcerer.

The final sin in the Church was hypocrisy.

The second sin was murmuring.

The third sin was profession.

Simon was a great man in the eyes of the people.

He was the equivalent of a witch doctor. He bewitched them.

They said, "This man is the great power of God" Verse 10.

Verse 13 Simon himself believed also, fascinated by the miracles which Philip performed.

Verses 14-17 Those whom the apostle's, Peter and John, sent from Jerusalem had the power to impart to those who believed, the Holy Spirit. By the time they arrived, believers had been baptized but they had not received the Holy Spirit.

Verses 18-19 Simon coveted this gift and offered the disciples money to purchase it.

Verses 20-23 is Peter's answer to this request.

Some of the reasons why we believe Simon was never saved are as follows:

1. "Your money perish with you." No believer will ever perish.
2. "You have neither lot or part in this matter." He was not in the fellowship.
3. Your heart is not right before God.

This is a description of an unsaved person.

4. You are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

Could these words ever be said of a regenerate person?

Peter urged Simon to repent of his great sin, and to pray that he might be forgiven.

Verse 24 Simon urged Peter to act as mediator for him, “Pray you to the Lord for me.”

He was not sorry for his sin, but only for the consequences which it might bring him. Human mediator today.

It is from this man that we get over the modern word “simony.”

Making a business out of that which is sacred.

It includes the sale of indulgences—holy water—prayer cloths, etc.

Verse 25 When Peter and John’s work was finished in Samaria they returned to Jerusalem. On the way back they preached in many Samaritan villages.

The remaining part of the chapter describes the conversion and baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch.

Verse 26 An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip.

He directed him to leave Samaria—the place of blessing and go to the desert.

Verse 27 We are introduced to the Ethiopian eunuch. Note his prestige and power. Great authority—charge of the queen’s treasure. He was also a convert to the Jewish religion.

Verse 28 After worshipping at Jerusalem (or trying to) he was returning home and was reading Isaiah.

Verse 29 The Spirit said to Philip “Go near and join yourself to the chariot.”

Verse 30 Philip asks him if he understood what he was reading.

Verse 31 The eunuch's reply—he invites him to come on board and sit with him.

Verses 32-33 The portion of Scripture was Isaiah 53.
Quote. Explain these verses.

Verse 34 The eunuch's question.

Verse 35 Philip preached Jesus unto him.

Verses 36-37 The prerequisites for baptism. He believed this.

Verse 38 The chariot is stopped. They go into the water—he immersed him.

Verse 39 They came up out of the water.

The Spirit caught Philip away.

The eunuch went on His way rejoicing.

Acts 8, From Verse 5

Verses 5 through 8 describe for us the results of Philip preaching in the city of Samaria.

The people were moved as he preached Christ unto them.

Large numbers believed with one accord as Philip preached Christ unto them—their faith in Christ was reinforced as they saw the miracles he performed.

In the power of the Spirit—and in the power of the name of Jesus Christ—and in the power of the blood of Christ, Philip was able to command evil spirits to come out of possessed persons.

Paralyzed persons were healed. Luke 15 Joy in heaven over sinners repenting.

Lame persons were made to walk. Acts 15 Conversion of Gentiles brought joy to the brethren.

The result of all this was that, “there was great joy in the city.” Ezra 3 Altar—foundation land—great joy.

At this point we are introduced to Simon the sorcerer.

Verses 9 thru 25 describes the profession and the unmasking of Simon.

This incident is the third of a sinister trilogy which raised its ugly head in the early church.

1. The first sin was hypocrisy.
2. The second sin was murmuring.
3. The third sin was profession.

These sins are still with us today. Simon is an example of “profession.”

Note Simon’s character Verses 9-11.

He was a sorcerer—He bewitched people.

He had a high opinion of himself—he thought himself to be some great one.

The multitude said that he was the great power of God.

Verse 12 This verse describes the effect of Philip’s preaching on the people.

First, they heard the Word.

Secondly, they believed and received Christ as Savior.

Thirdly, they were baptized—both men and women.

This is the Scriptural sequence and there is no other way.

Note the sequence in Ephesians 1:13. In whom ye also trusted—after ye “heard” the Word of truth—in whom after ye “believed,” ye were “sealed with the Holy Spirit”—then baptism.

Verse 13 In this verse we are told that Simon believed also, and was baptized.

Subsequent events show that Simon’s belief was not sincere.

Instead of believing the Gospel about Jesus Christ the Savior, he was more interested in “the miracles and signs that were done.”

Simon’s insincerity was manifested in his conduct.

This brings up an important point—a person’s life is indicative as to whether he is really saved or not. James

3:12 No fountain can yield both salt and fresh water. A fig tree cannot bear olives. An apple tree cannot bear oranges.

Simon's downfall came when Peter and John arrived from Jerusalem.

Especially, when he saw that by the laying on of their hands, the new converts received the Holy Spirit.

There is no record that Simon ever received the Holy Spirit.

Simon coveted the power—it would serve him well in his evil profession—so he offered to buy it.

Peter urged him to repent of his sin—instead he asked Peter to be his mediator.

Many are following his example today.

Some of the reasons why we believe Simon was never saved.

1. Peter said, "Your money perish with you." No believer will ever perish.
2. "You have no lot or part in this matter." He was not in fellowship.
3. "Your heart is not right with God." This is a description of an unsaved person.
4. "You are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." These words could not be said of a regenerate person.

Wondrous Cross—Precious blood—Blessed Jesus—
Enough for God—Enough for justice—Enough for you.

Matthew 7 "Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in Thy name?"

“In Thy name we have cast out demons.”

“In Thy name done many wonderful works.”

“I never knew you; depart from Me ye that work iniquity.”

Matthew 22 The man without the wedding garment.

“Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Philip And The Ethiopian Eunuch Acts 8:26-40

Verse 26 Philip is called away from a very happy field of service. He is asked to leave by the angel of the Lord in the middle of a great revival.

He is called away from a harvest of souls and instructed to go south and wait on the highway, which ran from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert.

This command humanly speaking was unreasonable.

“But God’s ways are not our ways.” Isaiah 55:8-9.

God uses spiritual means to accomplish His will.

1. The fall of Jericho.

2. The defeat of the Assyrians by Gideon and 300 men.

Verse 27

Note the obedience of Philip

“And he arose and went.”

1 Samuel 15:22

“It is better to obey than to sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

Describe this incident.

Obedience is the mark of true spirituality and it always leads to spiritual victory and blessing. Compare Luke 5 Never-the-less at Thy word, etc.

This obedience brought great blessing.

Disobedience John 21 brought disappointment.

Later when Christ came into their lives and service and as they obeyed His commands great blessing came to them.

Contrast Jonah running away from God's will; consider the consequences.

Because Philip obeyed...an African was saved, he took the message home, and the Gospel spread throughout that great continent.

It seemed a pity for Philip to leave Samaria in the face of a harvest of souls, but God knew the end from the beginning. The African church at one time was considered to be stronger than most.

The Lord said, "You shall be witnesses...in Jerusalem... Judea...Samaria...and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

The Ethiopian Eunuch.

This man had been a heathen...tried all kinds of religion...worshipped all kinds of Gods.

Sadly disappointed he had turned into a Jewish proselyte.

His search for satisfaction had brought him 1500 miles to Jerusalem.

Describe what may have happened there.

The religious practices and ceremonies.

The talk of a man called Jesus.

He had bought a portion of Scripture and was reading it on his way home.

Verse 29. As this chariot passed by, the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and join yourself to this chariot."

Philip asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" Quote Verses 32-33.

Verse 34 I pray thee, "Who is the prophet speaking about? Is he speaking of Himself or some other man?"

Verse 35 Philip preached unto him Jesus.

As Philip preached the eunuch believed Verse 37. He believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.

On the strength of this testimony Philip baptized him.

The meaning of baptism.

In the early days of Christianity both baptism and the Lord's supper were called "sacraments" from the Latin word "sacramentum."

This word described the oath that a person took when he joined the Roman army. In taking the sacramentum at a public ceremony he renounced his civilian status with its privileges and freedom and confessed that he belonged to Caesar, whose command he promised to obey no matter the cost or to where it lead. The same word in a slightly different form was used to describe the two ordinances of the Christian church. Baptism—Breaking of Bread.

The Christian as he partakes and obeys in baptism confesses to the world that he now belongs to Jesus

Christ...spirit...soul...and that he owns Him as personal Savior, and Lord of his life.

The Spiritual significance of Christian Baptism.

1. It is a Divine command to be obeyed.
2. It is an illustration of each believer's identification with Christ in His death...burial...resurrection.
3. Baptism is a public testimony to our faith in Christ.

The message of Baptism.

1. To the unsaved...the message of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.
2. To the unbaptized believer...may it lead some to consider this step a necessity for a life of obedience and blessing.
3. To the baptized believer...may we go in spirit to the day of our baptism and as we review the solemn truths may we be more devoted to Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Conversion Of The Ethiopian Eunuch Acts 8:26-40

Text Verse 37

"If you believe with all your heart you may." And he answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Note the three conversions.

Chapter 9. The conversion of Paul.

Chapter 10. The conversion of Cornelius.

Chapter 8. The conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch.

Note the comparisons and contrasts in their conversions.

1. They were moral—upright men but needed to be saved.

2. One was a black man—one a Jew—one a gentile.

3. They represent the whole human race.

The Ethiopian was a descendant of Ham, Saul of Shem, and Cornelius of Japheth.

4. The first was a politician—second was a theologian—third was a soldier.

5. They had one thing in common—they accepted Christ as their personal Savior.

God's program for the church.

Jerusalem—Judea—Samaria—uttermost parts.

Here is God's program being implemented.

The persecution at Jerusalem. Saul the ringleader. The believer's were scattered abroad and they preached the Gospel wherever they went. Verse 4.

Philip.

Describe now the revival in Samaria.

The profession of Simon the sorcerer.

"Your heart is not right in the sight of God." Verse 21.

"Repent therefore at this your wickedness." Verse 22.

Verse 26 God's obedient servant.

He left the thriving gospel effort in Samaria for the desert at Gaza.

He found there one of earth's great men.

The treasurer of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians.

Consider him now.

His heathen background—his unsuccessful search amongst the heathen religions—his acceptance of Judaism.

His long journey to Jerusalem to worship God. (1500 miles)

Describe his fruitless search for peace in Jewish ritual.

He is now returning home still searching.

He is reading from Isaiah 53 at the place where it says “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so he opened not his mouth; In his humiliation his judgment was taken away, and who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.”

He could not come to a decision as to whether the prophet spoke of himself or someone else.

At this point Philip joined him and he assured him that it was Jesus of whom he spoke.

Philip told the story of the Savior’s humiliation—His sacrificial death—His glorious exaltation—he must have told him that the Lord desired those who accepted Him as Savior to confess him in baptism.

For he said Verse 36 “See here is water, what is there to keep me from being baptized?”

Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.”

The eunuch replied, “I believe” etc.

On this confession Philip then baptized him.

Baptism

1. Was instituted in the Gospels. Matthew 28:19.
2. Was practiced in the Acts. Acts 8 and 10 etc.
3. Was expounded in the epistles. Romans 6:1-10.

After Pentecost there is no mention of any person being baptized except those who were believers in the Lord.

Acts 2:41 They that gladly received His word were baptized.

Am I speaking to someone who is saved but not baptized?

Am I speaking to someone who is baptized and not saved?

The History of the Church from Acts 8

Acts 4:19-26 Acts 13:1-5

The third persecution broke out against the Church, and Stephen was martyred.

We are introduced to Saul of Tarsus who was the chief antagonist—v. 3.

He ravaged and devastated the church, and dragged both men and women to prison.

The result of this persecution was that the believers were scattered abroad, but wherever they went they preached the Gospel.

At this time Philip went to Samaria—chapter 8. Here we see the ever-widening sphere of the gospel: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria.

In chapter 9 we have the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. In chapter 10 the Gospel goes to the Gentiles. Cornelius and his gentile friends are saved. In chapter 11 we have the formation of the first Gentile church.

This is how it happened:

v. 19—Some who fled Jerusalem traveled to Phoenicia and to Cyprus, others came to Antioch. These men preached the Word to the Jews only.

v.21—Then there were other men who left Cyprus and Cyrene and came to Antioch. When they arrived in the city they preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. The results were spectacular: “great numbers believed and turned to the Lord.”

A church was formed by the local believers. As this church developed, the church in Jerusalem receded from view and Antioch became the center from which the Gospel radiated to the Gentiles.

Let us look now at some of the characteristics which made this church such a power for God. There are five.

1. They preached the Lord Jesus—v. 20.

Like their predecessors they preached the Lord Jesus. They were strong in the gospel, the full-orbed Gospel.

Describe the early days of the assembly movement: the preaching, the rapid growth. Many assemblies are dying or simply existing because instead of being fishers of men they live in an aquarium, and the elders become the keepers of the aquarium.

The assembly or local church was not meant to be a refuge from society, but the river of God into it.

Oh that God would give us the vision of a lost world and its ultimate end, because where there is no vision the people perish.

They also shared Christ in His fullness with each other. There is nothing more exciting, exhilarating, and uplifting than to listen to Spirit-filled, Christ-centered, and Christ-exalting ministry.

The wrongs of Colossae were corrected by a clear presentation of the person and work of Christ. Colossians 1. "How great the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear", etc.

In this assembly the Lord Jesus was preeminent and paramount. The believer's life and service was centered in Christ. They own His Lordship and Headship.

2. The hand of the Lord was with them—v. 21.

This phrase indicates that the presence of God and the power of the Holy Spirit was with them. This resulted in spiritual stability, spiritual progress, and an aggressive evangelical thrust into the city.

This is what most assemblies lack, and we should covet the presence of God and the power of the Holy Spirit in our meetings more than anything else. Acts 4:31.

3. There were results because great numbers believed—v. 21.

The Holy Spirit was active in this church. There was room for Him to move. He was working in them, with them, and through them in convicting power. Babes in Christ were continually being born.

This assembly had a labor ward built into the program/curriculum.

The elders and spiritual fathers were doing their jobs as evangelists and shepherds. They were seeking the lost sheep, and after finding them they led them, fed them, guided them, counseled them, and encouraged them in the faith.

Young believers were established, disciplined, and developed into soul-winners. The result of this ministry, by the spiritual leaders, was that each believer became an effective witness and a great harvest of souls was reaped.

They sowed in tears, and they reaped in joy.

Psalm 126—“They that go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.”

4. There was a missionary spirit and outreach among them—13:1-4.

The mother church in Jerusalem had fallen short of the great commission. They were still confined to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria. Now at this time God was about to open a new era, and complete His plan of evangelizing to the ends of the earth.

The focus of power and activity was moved from Jerusalem to Antioch.

This new, young, virile, enthusiastic, spiritual church with a vision of conquering a lost world for Christ became the base from which God would launch His chosen servants into the regions beyond.

There was no mistaking the work of God in this church.

They gathered with one accord to pray. This was no ordinary prayer meeting. They had a burden for the lost in the uttermost parts.

As they waited on the Lord, the Holy Spirit spoke through one of the prophets. “Separate unto Me Barnabas and Saul for the work into which I have called them.” This was a work of God, there was no intrusion of the flesh or human wisdom.

It was God the Spirit who spoke to them, called them, and sent them forth.

5. This church was a giving church—13:27-30.

v. 29—Then the believers, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren who dwelt in Judea.

The word “vanity” is so prominent in Ecclesiastes, and stands for the emptiness and shallowness of this world.

Solomon went in for this world and threw away a crown, a throne, and an empire. He set his heart and affection on the wrong world and lost everything.

Brethren, one of the reasons why we are losing out in spiritual things is because our heart and affections are set on the wrong world. Many assemblies have lost, and many more are losing their spiritual vitality, their growth in Christ, their fruitfulness in the Gospel.

Many among us have become materialists. We have become a status-seeking people.

The sin of prayerlessness is all too apparent. Our increased wealth has produced self-sufficiency, and we do not have many pressing needs drawing us to prayer. The worship meeting is often dull or dead. The Gospel meeting is often an exercise in futility. No conversions in years.

Instead of falling on our knees in confession of our sin, we continue to function under a façade of spiritual respectability, insensitive to our true spiritual state. Because of these things and more we have become a powerless church in a perishing world.

Acts 9

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus

This chapter marks a turning point in the Book.

Peter has been prominent—the Jew.

From now on Paul will gradually become the foremost figure, the gospel will increasingly go out to the Gentiles.

Saul was about 30 years of age.

He was one of the most promising young men in Judaism.

As to zeal he outstripped his fellows. Philippians 3:4-6.

As he watched the growth of Christianity, known then as “the way” he saw it as a threat to her own religion.

Therefore with unbounded zeal, he set out to destroy it.

He was supported in this by the authorities.

At this point they gave him official authorization to search Damascus for disciples and to bring them to trial in Jerusalem.

Verse 1-2 Describes for us the inward hatred Saul had for Christians.

It also discloses his false zeal for God.

He was a merciless persecutor. See 1 Timothy 1:13.

On his way to arrest others he himself was arrested by Jesus of Nazareth. Human cruelty was met by divine mercy. Grace arrested this great sinner—grace ever

afterwards was his theme. Marvelous—infinite—matchless grace.

Verse 3 As he came near Damascus, suddenly there shone round about him a light from heaven.

Verse 4 He fell to the ground—He heard a voice saying “Saul, Saul.” The Lord knew his name—He knows ours.

The voice said Why persecutest thou Me?

The Lord identifies Himself with His people.

Verse 5 Paul said Who art Thou Lord?

Read the answer. “I am Jesus!”

Think of the emotional upset Paul had. He thought Jesus of Nazareth was dead and buried in a Judean grave. Now with crushing force, he learns that Jesus is not dead at all, but has been resurrected and glorified at the right hand of God.

It is hard for you to kick against the goods. (Describe)

Verse 6 Lord what will you have me to do?

May this be the cry of our hearts this morning.

He then is led into the city to await further instructions.

Verse 7 The men who traveled with Saul were in a thorough daze.

They had heard a sound from heaven but not the articulate words which Saul had heard—they did not see the Lord, only Saul did. Conversion is an individual experience.

Verses 8-9 The proud Pharisee is led by the Lord to Damascus where he remained blind for three days.

Verses 10-19 Saul’s experiences at Damascus

Describe how the believers in the city felt.

Think of how Annanias must have felt when God spoke to him.

The vision Verses 10-12.

The reaction Verses 13-14.

God's assurance Verses 15-16.

Ananias' obedience Verse 17.

The effect on Saul Verses 18-19.

Verse 20 Immediately he preached Christ declaring that He is the Son of God.

Verse 21 Those that heard him preach were amazed.

The Arabian wilderness experience of Galatians 1:17 probably took place between Verses 21 and 22 (3 years).

Mention at this point the necessity of a period of preparation.

Saul who afterwards became Paul needed time for prayer, meditation, and communion with God.

Paul did not begin to preach immediately after he was saved.

He spent 3 years in the Arabian desert.

Verse 22 Upon his return from Arabia to Damascus he began to preach.

Verses 23-24 His preaching, which showed that Jesus was the Christ so stirred up his fellow Jews that they sought to kill him.

Verse 25 He escapes through a window in the wall, in a basket.

Verse 26 From Damascus, Paul went to Jerusalem—the disciples were afraid of him.

Verse 27 Barnabas took him and introduced him to the disciples. He then began to preach.

Verse 29 He spoke boldly—they tried to kill him.

Verse 30 The apostles sent him back to Tarsus.

Verse 31 Read this verse.

It looks as if Saul was out of the public eye for about 12 years. After he was saved...till he entered into what we call today “full-time service” for the Lord.

All these years were spent in preparation for his life’s work.

If Paul needed this preparation, so does every preacher today.

Moses had 40 years in the college of the desert.

Elisha humbly waited on his master Elijah as a common slave to be fitted to take up.

Elijah went for a forty-day walk to learn the council of God.

Jesus, the greatest Preacher of all spent 30 years in obscurity before His public amnesty.

Verses 32-35 Aeneas healed by Peter at Lydda.

Peter comes into the picture again—he evidently has moved out from Jerusalem.

He finds a paralytic who has been bed ridden for eight years.

Peter said to him, “Jesus Christ makes you well.” Peter announces that Christ is the Healer.

“Arise and make your bed”—similar to our Lord’s instruction. Luke 4.

The man did what he was commanded—many got saved.

Verses 36-43 The raising of Dorcas from the dead.

Verse 36 She was a good woman. Note her works Verse 39.

Verse 37 Dorcas died.

Verse 38 They sent for Peter.

Verse 39 Her friends were mourning for her.

Verse 40 Peter put them all out. (Jarius’ daughter)

He kneeled down—prayed—then commanded Dorcas to arise.

Verse 41 He presented her to her friends alive.

Many became Christians because of this miracle.

The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus

Read Acts 9:1-19

Let us take a look at the man Saul.

He was known as Saul of Tarsus.

Tarsus is described by Saul as no mean city. Acts 21:39

It was a place of great learning.

Acts 22:3 shows that Saul was born in Tarsus, he was brought up in the city, and was educated at the school of Gamaliel.

Then he moved to Jerusalem where he became the leader of those who persecuted the church. (30 years)

Paul's appearance was not impressive.

2 Corinthians 10:10. For his letters, they say, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.

He was small of stature, had very little hair, had crooked legs, but had a strong body, his eyebrows were bushy and seemed to meet, but despite this physical weaknesses he was full of grace and sometimes appeared as a man and sometimes like an angel.

There is no record of Saul ever having seen the Lord during His earthly ministry.

He evidently had Christian relatives. Romans 16:7.

"Greet Andronicus and Junias my kinsmen and fellow-prisoners."

This fact plus the martyrdom of Stephen may account for the words “It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” (More of this later).

We are introduced to a man called Saul in Acts 7:58.

In the 8th chapter his work as a persecutor is mentioned.

He made havoc in the church.

He entered every house.

He dragged men and women from their homes and put them in prison for believing in Jesus.

The result of his work was that the believers were scattered and they took the message of the Gospel with them.

Those who arrived in Damascus were a zealous group... soon a flourishing work was going on, this came to the ear of Saul who instantly made arrangements to visit the city.

Describe the events which took place enroute.

Read Verses 1-3 of Chapter 9.

As they came near to Damascus there shone a light around about him. Verse 3

This made a tremendous impact on Paul.

Giving his testimony before a mob he says that it was a great light that shone around him. Acts 22.

In Acts 26:13 while recounting this experience before Agrippa he said, “At midday, O king I saw in the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun shining around me.”

Why did Paul make so much of this incident?

Because he met Jesus Christ face to face.

Compare The Transfiguration Matthew 17.

The Lord was transfigured in three different ways.

1. In the glory of His person.

God and man in one Person.

2. The glory of His countenance.

“His face shone as the sun.”

3. The brightness of His garments.

White as light...exceeding white as snow.

This was the One Saul met, and Paul never forgot it.

Notice how personal a matter this was.

Acts 22:9 “They that were with me saw the light and were afraid, but they heard not the voice that spoke to me.”

Saul fell to the ground.

He heard a voice say, “Saul, Saul” etc.

The first shock that Saul received was that he believed Jesus was dead and buried in a Judean grave.

Now with crushing force he learns that Jesus is not dead—but alive at God’s right hand.

E/p Stephen’s testimony and Saul’s reaction. Acts 7:55-56.

This experience affected his ministry and preaching.
God is not dead...He is alive.

Every detail has not been written of this experience but one thing is certain, Saul met the Lord—and talked with Him—he saw Him in a special way as one born out of due time.

Peter says that one of the qualifications of an apostle is that he has to have seen the Lord after resurrection.

Acts 1:22.

Paul qualified for this special place in that he saw the Lord in resurrection glory on this great occasion.

“Saul, Saul why persecutest thou Me...it is hard for you to kick against the pricks.”

Saul’s kinsmen had shot the arrows of conviction into his soul.

The death of Stephen had probably haunted him, and as he kicked and fought he only hurt himself.

The truth of conviction.

Describe the goads for the rebellious oxen when plowing.

Sovereign grace shines forth here in all its fullness and glory. Marvelous—infinite—matchless. Only the grace of God could save this man.

The chief of sinners. 1 Timothy 1:15. Quote.

Grace mentioned 125 times in N.T. by Paul over 100 times.

Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace are you saved” etc.

The Meeting Of Saul And Annanias Acts 9:10-19

When Saul had recovered sufficiently to rise up from the earth, Verse 2, "He saw no man"...he was blind.

It also says, "and when his eyes were opened" Verse 8. These were spiritual eyes.

Being blind, Paul's cohorts led him into the city. They took him to the house of Judas in the street called Straight.

This was probably the house he was to stay in while in Damascus persecuting the believers.

Verses 10-16 The vision of Annanias.

This was incredible. Saul of Tarsus praying. Verse 11.

Verse 12 God is dealing with Saul.

Verses 13-14 The reluctance of Annanias.

Verses 15-16 God's assurance.

Saul had caused great suffering to God's chosen.

Verse 16 "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my names sake."

Verse 17 Annanias entered into the house as instructed. Putting his hand on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul." A few days ago he was a murderer, now he is a brother in the Lord.

Blood is thicker than water, but Spirit is thicker than blood.

The greatest relationships of life are in Jesus Christ. Saul received his sight (See Verse 12) and was filled with the Holy Spirit...for service.

Verse 18 Saul went the whole way...he was baptized.

Verse 19 Saul stayed a short time with the disciples.

One might think in reading Verse 20 that Paul began to preach immediately after he was saved.

This is not so. Galatians 1:17-18 shows that he went into Arabia for three years.

Those three years should be inserted between Verses 19 and 20.

Before Saul was ready for public service he heeded quietness for meditation—prayer and communion with God. Every servant of God needs this.

Saul went into Arabia with the Pentateuch and the O.T. prophets in his pouch.

He came out of Arabia with Romans and Corinthians and Galatians and Ephesians and Philippians and Colossians and the rest of his wonderful writings in his heart.

It was about 12 years after he was saved that Saul entered into “full-time service.”

Moses had forty years of college in the desert.

Elisha served Elijah as a common slave before he was fitted to take up his master’s work.

The Lord, the greatest preacher of all times, spent 30 years in obscurity.

As we understand this time lapse we can better appreciate Verses 20-22.

1. He preached Christ in the synagogues saying that He is the Son of God.
2. The people who listened were amazed.

3. His chief antagonists were confounded.

Such preaching brought persecution. Verses 23-24

Saul's escape. Verse 25 Over the wall in a basket.

Verses 26-27

Saul's reception at Jerusalem was very cool. "They were afraid of him."

Barnabas, who afterwards became Saul's fellow missionary, introduced him before he was accepted.

Verse 28 He fellowshiped with the church.

Verse 29 He preached boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, some of the Jews tried to kill him.

Verse 30 The church sent him back to Tarsus. Back to the hometown. c/p Mark 5:19.

"Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you."

Hometown is the most difficult place to be a Christian.

Verse 31 Then had the churches "rest."

1. They were built up.
2. They walked in the fear of the Lord.
3. They lived in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.
4. They increased in numbers.

Acts 10

In chapters 8-10 we have the conversion of one of the descendants of Noah's sons.

The Ethiopian eunuch was of the line of Ham. Chapter 8.

Saul of Tarsus was a descendant of Shem. Chapter 9.

Cornelius was of Japheth's posterity. Chapter 10.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is for all races and cultures.

Peter was given the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

Used them in Acts 2 for the Jews.

Is about to use them for the Gentiles. See Matthew 16.

Verses 1-8 The vision of Cornelius.

Cornelius was a military officer.

A centurion—in charge of one hundred men.

Verse 2 He was a devout God-fearing man. He showed great kindness to impoverished Jewish people and always prayed to God.

Verse 3 At about 3 p.m. one day Cornelius had a vision in which he saw an angel.

Verses 4-5 He was afraid. The angel spoke reassuringly of God's appreciation of his prayers and aims, then told them to send men to Joppa for a man called Peter who was living in the house of Simon the tanner. He will tell you what to do.

Verses 7-8 Immediately he sent off two of his servants.

Verses 9-22 Peter's vision of the sheet from heaven.

Verse 9 At noon the next day Peter went up to the flat roof of Simon's house to pray.

Verse 10 He was hungry and would have liked to eat, but the meal was still being prepared below.

Falling into a trance he saw a sheet being let down from heaven. The sheet contained all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, clean and unclean (explain). Law of Moses. See Verse 14.

A voice directed the apostle to arise, kill and eat.

"Not so, Lord" is historic contradiction.

Whoever says "Not so" should never add Lord.

Those who truly say "Lord" will never say "not so."

Peter said, "I cannot eat anything unclean." Verse 14

Verse 15 "What God has cleaned, that call thou not unclean."

This dialogue took place three times.

The implications of this revelation extended far beyond the mere eating of foods.

While Peter was pondering these things the servants of Cornelius arrived. Verses 17-18

Verses 19-20 The Spirit spoke to Peter.

They explained the vision of Cornelius and the purpose for which they came.

Verses 23-33 Peter goes to Caesarea

Peter and his party arrived the following day.

In anticipation of their arrival Cornelius had invited a number of his relatives and friends.

See Verses 25-26.

Verses 27-29 Peter explained that under normal circumstances as a Jew he would not have entered a gentile house. But God had revealed to him that he should no longer think of the Gentiles as unclean or untouchable. Then he asked why they had sent for him?

Verses 30-33 Cornelius explained his vision, then added, "We are all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

Verses 34-43 Peter's message to the gathered Gentiles.

The First Sermon Ever Preached To A Gentile Audience Read Acts 10:34-48

Salvation through faith. "Keys of the kingdom."

Give a brief resume of the events of the Chapter.

Verse 34 The universality of the Gospel.

"God is no respecter of persons." The Syrophenicean woman. The woman who was a sinner.

It is not the color of a person's skin...nor his social status...but the condition of his heart.

In every nation there are those who accept Him and are saved. The eunuch was in Africa with the Gospel. The Samaritans were being saved. The Church at Antioch was principally Gentile.

Verse 36 "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ."

Ephesians 2:14 "For He is our peace." The breaking down of the middle wall of partition.

Romans 5:11 “We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement or reconciliation.”

Describe the difference between atonement and reconciliation.

Atonement—sins are covered—hidden from sight.

Reconciliation—they are cancelled—obliterated—they pass out of existence.

When sins are gone—then there is peace.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

“He is Lord of all.” Philippians 2 “God has exalted Him and given Him a name above every name” etc.

Romans 9:5 Christ—“God over all, blessed forever.”

Revelations 19:16—a name written King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Revelations 1:14-15 “His hair white like wool, white as snow—eyes as a flame of fire—feet like bronze—voice like the sound of many waters.”

Verse 37-39 The life of Christ

From His baptism to His death.

Jesus Christ is a reality. He is the eternal figure of history. He is the pivot on which creation revolves. He is the Source of all blessing.

Verse 39 The crucifixion

“Whom they slew and hung on a tree.”

Mans greatest mistake—God’s greatest moment.

Verse 40 The resurrection

The greatest miracle. Not only was death eniquened but Satan's power was broken.

"Him has God raised up."

Verse 40-41 The manifestation

"And showed Him openly."

He was not seen by the world after the crucifixion.

He was seen by chosen witnesses. See 1 Corinthians 15.

Describe when He will be seen the next time.

Verse 42 The commission Matthew 28, "Go ye into all the world."

"Preach to the people."

Verse 42 Christ as the Judge of all men

"He will judge the living and the dead." Acts 17:31

Because He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He has ordained etc.

Verse 43 The Source of salvation

"To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins."

Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other."

The result of this sermon.

There were those who heard the Word.

There were those who believed the Word.

These received the Holy Spirit.

Then they were baptized.

Acts 11

Verse 1 When the news of the happenings of Chapter 10 reached the Jewish believers in Judea, there was great consternation among them.

Verse 2 When Peter returned to Jerusalem the circumcision = Christians of Jewish birth - contended with him.

Verse 3 They accused him of (condemned him for) eating with Gentiles.

They believed that a Gentile had to be circumcised in order to obtain the full blessing of God.

Verse 4 Beginning at this verse Peter gave an account of all that had happened.

He describes his vision of the sheet let down from heaven Verses 5-10.

The appearance of an angel to Cornelius Verse 13.

The arrival of the messengers from Cornelius Verse 11.

The Spirit's command to accompany them Verse 12.

The pouring out of God's Spirit on the Gentiles Verse 15-17.

Since God had worked in so many definite ways, to resist or oppose would obviously have been to oppose God.

In his message Peter added several interesting things not given in the previous chapter.

1. He said the sheet came right down to where he was Verse 5.

2. He spoke of fastening his eyes upon it and considering it carefully Verse 6.

3. He tells that when the Spirit ordered him to accompany the servants of Cornelius he was to go “nothing doubting.”

That is he was to make no distinction—he was not to discriminate against the Gentiles Verse 12.

4. Peter also adds that six disciples accompanied him from Joppa to Caesarea Verse 12.

5. In Verse 14 we are told that the angel had promised Cornelius that Peter would tell him words whereby he and his house might be saved.

Evidently Cornelius was not a saved man before Peter’s arrival.

Verse 15-18

Peter says that the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles, just as it fell on us at Pentecost Verse 15.

Then he remembered the word of the Lord that John would baptize with water and that his disciples would be baptized with the Spirit Verse 16.

He then realized that the promise had been partially fulfilled at Pentecost and was now being fulfilled again.

Then Peter faced the circumcision party with this question.

If God did this, who was I to hinder God in His perfect work Verse 17.

After hearing these things there was a complete about-face. Quote Verse 18.

Verse 19-21 The founding of the church in Antioch.

The events recorded here took place before the conversion of Cornelius.

They go back to the persecution that arose about Stephen.

Those who we forced to flee carried the Gospel to Phoenicia—Cyprus—Cyrene a port in northern Africa.

These people preached to the Jews only. Verse 19

Verse 20 Among those who came to Antioch were those who preached to the Gentiles (Greeks).

Verse 21 Blessing accompanied their preaching.

The hand of the Lord was with them.

A great number believed and turned to the Lord.

The introduction of Christianity to Antioch was a great step forward, in the outreach of the church.

Hitherto everything had been centered in Jerusalem and Judea.

Antioch was considered the third city in the Roman Empire at this time.

This was the base from which Paul and his companions went forth to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles. Chapter 13.

Verse 22-26

When the news of the great spiritual awakening reached the church in Jerusalem, they sent forth Barnabas.

We are introduced to him in Acts 4.

We are given his character in Verse 24.

Verse 23 when Barnabas came to Antioch he could see at a glance that the Lord was working mightily among the Gentiles.

He saw the grace of God at work.

He was glad; he exhorted them to cleave to the Lord with great determination. While he was there many were added to the Lord. Verse 24

This work was growing so fast that Barnabas wondered who could help them.

They needed a teacher, a shepherd.

Verse 25 Barnabas remembered Saul of Tarsus.

It was Barnabas who had introduced him to the apostles at Jerusalem Acts 9:27.

The Jews sought to kill him, and they had sent him home to Tarsus. Verse 30 He was there for approximately 8 or 9 years.

Barnabas remembered Saul and felt that his teaching would help the young church, so went and brought him to Antioch Verse 25.

Barnabas and Saul labored for a whole year in the assembly.

The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

Verse 27-30 Antioch sends help to Jerusalem

The church in Antioch worked in full fellowship with the church in Jerusalem.

The following incident illustrates this.

Certain prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch.

These men were gifted by the Holy Spirit to speak as a mouth piece for God.

They received revelations from the Lord and delivered them to the people.

One of them, Agabus, predicted that a great famine would come to the inhabited earth. It came two years later, A.D. 44.

The believers in Antioch promptly decided to send relief to their Christian brethren in Judea.

This is a touching illustration that the middle wall of partition had been broken down.

The grace of God was manifested in these new converts; every man gave according to his ability—unanimously—spontaneously—proportionately.

The money was sent to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

This is the first mention of elders in connection with the church.

Acts 12

The fifth persecution.

Satan's relentless attack on the Church continues.

Verse 1 This Herod was a grandson of Herod the great.

He was an observer of the law of Moses and went to great length to please the Jews.

In pursuit of this policy he afflicted certain in the church.

Verse 2 And killed James the brother of John.

This was the James of the mount of transfiguration.

His mother requested that he, with John his brother, sit beside Christ in His kingdom.

This chapter is an interesting study of God's ways in connection with His people.

James and Peter were put in prison.

James was put to death.

Peter was miraculously delivered.

Human reason asks why preference should be shown to Peter.

Faith rests on the love and wisdom of God.

Verse 4 When Peter was imprisoned it was the Passover season (Easter), inappropriate for executions.

He was kept under strict security (16 soldiers guarded him night and day).

Verse 5 The Church at prayer, for Peter. Prayer changes things. Prayer moves the hand of Him who moves the universe.

“That force of earnest, halting prayer was mightier than Herod, and mightier than hell.” Without ceasing = fervently - earnestly. How ridiculous it looked prayer versus the mighty arm of the law.

Verses 6-11 The power of prayer seen in the deliverance of Peter. Prayer removes mountains. This was a mountain. “Verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith” Mark 11:20-24.

Verse 6 Notice Peter’s composure...Sleeping, etc. Someone has called this sleep “the triumph of faith.” Peter was leaning on the Lord. Someone has suggested that Peter was the only saint sleeping in the city, the others were praying.

No doubt Peter had prayed and was now resting in the Lord. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.”

Verse 7 Suddenly the cell was filled with light—an angel appeared—struck Peter on the side—aroused him—and as he stood up, his handcuffs and shackles fell off.

Verse 8 The angel told him to dress and to follow him.

Verse 9 Though in a daze Peter followed the angel.

Verse 10 Past the first guard—then the second.

When they came to the main gate it opened automatically. The angel accompanied Peter one block into the city, then left him.

Verse 11 Peter came to himself and realized it was not a dream but that God had miraculously delivered him from the hand of Herod and the Jews.

Verse 12 Peter probably knew that the church would be praying in Mary's house—so he went there.

Verses 13-17 records the events after he knocked at the door.

Verse 13 Rhoda answered his knock. She was so excited when she saw Peter, she ran back into the house with the news that Peter was outside, and forgot to open the gate to let him in. Verse 14.

Verse 15 They thought she was crazy—when she insisted they said it must be Peter's angel (disembodied spirit).

Verse 16 In the meantime, Peter was standing on the doorstep knocking. When they finally opened the door and he stepped in, all their doubts vanished and they broke into expressions of joy.

Verse 17 Peter quieted them down—gave a brief description of his miraculous deliverance—asked them to convey the news to James (the son of Alphaeus).

Then it says that "Peter departed, and went to another place."

This is Peter's disappearance from the page of history.

We see no more of him in the book of Acts.

He disappears for good reason.

Paul is about to be brought in—to him God had given the revelation of the mystery of the church, which takes preeminence in this day of grace.

The execution of James and the disappearance of Peter was a tremendous loss to the early church.

These believers have often been chided for their unbelieving prayers.

They were surprised when their prayers were answered.

How do we act when God answers our prayers?

Instead of chiding others we should be greatly comforted that God answers such faithless prayer.

Verses 18-19 Herod's anger over Peter's escape.

When Peter's escape was discovered there was no small stir in the prison among the soldiers and also in the king's palace. The sixteen guards were put to death.

Verses 20-25 The death of Herod.

The Progress Of The Church

For some unknown reason Herod had become angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon.

They had befriended Blastus who was very close to his master; through him they requested the restoration of diplomatic relations.

Verse 21 One day Herod came forth in all his royal finery to address the people.

Verse 22 When he had finished speaking they shouted deliriously that his voice was the voice of a god and not of a man.

He made no effort to refuse such divine honors, or to give God glory.

Verse 23 Immediately an angel of the Lord smote him with a fearful disease and he died. A.D. 44.

“The wheels of God’s wrath grind slowly but they grind surely.”

The one who had executed James to please the Jews, is himself slain at the hands of Him who is able to destroy bath, body and soul in hell.

Herod reaped what he sowed. Galatians 6.

Verse 24 In the meantime the Gospel continues to expand.

God makes the wrath of man to praise Him. Psalm 76:10.

“The Word of God grew and multiplied.”

Verse 25 After Barnabas and Saul had completed their mission in Jerusalem, See Chapter 11:29-30, they returned to Antioch.

They took John Mark with them, he was a nephew to Barnabas and the writer of the second Gospel.

The Arrest and Release of Peter

Acts 12:1-19

Satan's relentless attacks continued against the church. The persecution came from a new source—Herod the king.

This Herod was Herod Agrippa I, a grandson of Herod the Great.

He was appointed king over Judea by the Roman Emperor, Claudius.

He observed the law of Moses and sought to please the Jewish rulers.

It was in pursuance of this policy that he afflicted certain of the church and killed James, the brother of John.

James: James is nearly always mentioned in relation to John. There were two disciples of Christ who were named James:

James the son of Alphaeus

James the brother of John.

There was also another James—the brother of the Lord.

He was the writer of the epistle of James.

James, the brother of John, was one of the favored three.

This then was the disciple whom Herod killed.

Peter: Peter was arrested just after the death of James (which had pleased the Jews greatly) and was put in

prison. Peter was an important prisoner; sixteen soldiers were commissioned to guard him.

For Peter to be in prison was no new experience. This was the third time. Chapter 4:3. Chapter 5:18.

The last time he was imprisoned he had a remarkable escape.

Why did God choose to allow Herod to kill James, but see fit to deliver Peter in a spectacular way?

Verse 5 begins, Peter, therefore, was kept in the prison.

Outside the prison, the church had gathered for prayer in the house of Mary, John Mark's mother. Verse 12.

The church was having an all night prayer meeting and was praying, no doubt for Peter's safety.

This imprisonment was far more serious. Herod was spilling the blood of martyrs, and would kill Peter just as he had James.

The church realized this and met together to employ a mightier force than Herod, mightier than the forces of hell.

"They prayed to God without ceasing" Verse 5.

Verse 6 Peter is calmly sleeping manacled to two soldiers.

Verse 7 An angel came and touched Peter, waking him, and his chains fell off.

Verses 8-10 He followed the angel past the first and second guard, through the main gate which opened as they approached.

Verse 11 Then the angel left him.

Verse 12 He made his way to Mary's house.

Verse 13 In response to his knocking, Rhoda came to the door.

Verse 14 She recognized Peter's voice and in her confusion ran into the prayer meeting without opening the door and told them the news.

Verse 15 They thought she was crazy.

Then they thought it could be his guardian angel or worse still his "disembodied spirit."

Verse 16 Peter continued knocking—they opened the gate—and there stood the man that they had been praying for.

Explain here the value of fervent prayer with the exercise of faith.

There is a very sad yet significant thing here.

Verse 17 "And Peter departed and went into another place."

This is descriptive of Peter's disappearance from the page of history.

We see no more of him in the book of the Acts.

Where Peter went, no one knows.

John also disappears from the public scene.

Verse 2 of this chapter is the last reference to him in the Acts.

The Death Of Herod Agrippa I Verses 20-23

For some unknown reason Herod had become angry with Tyre and Sidon. They took advantage of his being on holiday in Caesarea, and by befriending Blastus, a

very high official of the king, they sought with his help to restore diplomatic relations.

Verse 21 One day Herod came out in his royal robes to address the people.

Verse 22 At the close of his speech the people were delirious and shouted saying, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." See Acts 14:11-15

Verse 23 He made no effort to refuse such divine honors, or to give God the glory.

Therefore the angel of the Lord smote him with a dreadful disease and he died.

He was 54 years old when he died.

God's judgment

God is described as a Judge in many parts of the scripture.

Acts 10:42 Peter said that Christ has been "ordained of God to judge the living and the dead."

Hebrews 12:23 The writer describes Him here as the "Judge of all."

Hebrews 9:27 "It is appointed unto man once to die but after this, the judgment."

Galatians 6:7-8

"Be not deceived, God is not mocked" etc.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

"Don't you know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor

thieves, nor covetous, nor extortionists, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

“For whatever a man sows that shall he also reap.”

Hosea 8:7 “For they have sown to the wind, and they shall reap a whirlwind.”

Proverbs 22:8 “He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity” = emptiness – futility.

Job 4:8 “They that plow iniquity and sow wickedness shall reap the same.”

“He that soweth to the flesh—shall of the flesh reap corruption.”

Matthew 7:24-27 The parable of the two builders—two foundations.

The last great assize.

Revelation 20:11-15. Read this slowly.

The prophet says: “Flee from the wrath to come.”

In closing quote John 5:24 “Shall not come into judgment.”

Acts 13

Many Bible teachers believe that this chapter marks a distinct break in the Book of Acts.

Paul has now come into a place of prominence.

Antioch in Syria becomes the centre from which the Gospel radiates to the Gentiles. See John 4:21 “Not in Jerusalem.”

In Chapter 11 we learn that an assembly had been formed in Antioch. This assembly was fortunate in that it had several prophets and teachers. Verse 1.

A prophet was the mouthpiece of God.

A teacher was a man to whom the Holy Spirit had given the ability to expound the word of God.

Two of these men we have met before: Barnabas and Saul.

Symeon—(Niger = black) possibly came from an African Jewish community.

Lucius of Cyrene was probably one of the men of Cyrene who came to Antioch preaching the Gospel. Chapter 11:20

Manaen is reckoned to be the foster brother of Herod Antipas. He was very wicked. It is interesting to think of one who lived so close to evil and wickedness being one of the earliest converts to Christianity.

These men show that the early church was racially integrated.

Verse 2 “The assembly were gathered together to pray and fast.”

They spent time in prayer and intercession.

They fasted, that is, they denied legitimate claims of the body so as to give themselves more to prayer, etc.

It is not unreasonable to believe that they convened this meeting because of a deep burden for the evangelization of the world.

As they prayed, the Holy Spirit instructed them to separate Barnabas and Saul for a specific work. Their call These instructions probably came through one of the prophets.

Symeon—Lucius—Manaen.

It is interesting to note that at this time Barnabas is mentioned first. During the missionary journey the order is changed and on returning to Antioch Paul is always first.

Verse 2 shows us two things:

1. The tremendous role of the Holy Spirit in the guidance of the early church.
2. The sensitiveness of the disciples to His leading.

Verse 3 After the Holy Spirit had revealed His will, the men continued to fast and pray.

Then the three (Symeon—Lucius—Manaen) laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul.

This signified their approval—blessing—fellowship with these two, in the work to which the Holy Spirit had called them.

It is worthy of note that these two men had already been in the work of the Lord for about eight years.

They were not novices in the service of Christ.

The elders were simply expressing this identification with them in a situation which was already evident.

The words “they sent them away” (verse 3) is an unfortunate translation.

It was not they who sent them away but the Holy Spirit.

The thought is “they let them go” or “set them free for the work.”

Verse 4 is the beginning of the first missionary journey of Paul.

The record of this journey extends to Chapter 15:35.

It is concerned chiefly with the evangelization of Asia Minor.

The second missionary journey carried the Gospel to Greece.

The third missionary journey included return visits to the churches of Asia Minor and Greece, but is chiefly concerned with the Province of Asia—Ephesus.

Paul’s missionary labors covered a period of about 15 years.

The missionaries first went to Seleucia, a seaport approximately 16 miles from Antioch.

They then sailed to the island of Cyprus.

Verse 5 They landed in Salamis and preached the Word in several synagogues.

From Salamis they worked their way across the island to Paphos, the capital. Verse 6

There they met Bar-jesus, a sorcerer, who was associated with the proconsul Sergius Paulus, he is described as a prudent man. He called for the missionaries to come and instruct him in the Word of God. Verse 7

Verse 8 They were immediately opposed by Bar-jesus.

Verses 9-12 Then Saul who is called Paul (note the change of name) was “filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Verse 10 Paul revealed the character of the sorcerer.

Full of guile and mischief.

He labeled him as a son of the devil.

As an enemy of all that is good.

As one who worked ceaselessly to distort the truth of God.

Verse 11 Paul used his apostolic power and smote Bar-jesus with blindness (temporary). Chapters 4 and 5. Signs—wonders. Aeneas—Dorcas. Chapter 9.

In this condition he is a picture of the nation of Israel.

God has blinded their eyes—but eventually a repentant remnant of the nation will have the blindness removed and they will turn to Jesus and acknowledge Him as Messiah. Romans 11:25

Verse 12 The proconsul was impressed by this miracle, he also had been impressed by the teaching of the Word. The result of the two things was that he became a true believer. (Apply here)

Verse 13 Paul has now taken the place of prominence
“Paul and his company.”

They left Paphos and sailed to Perga.

At this point John Mark left them. Maybe he did not relish taking the Gospel to the Gentiles. See Verse 5.

His defection was grievous to Paul, so much so, that he refused to allow him to accompany him on the second journey.

This caused a sharp cleavage between Paul and Barnabas, resulting in them taking separate paths of service. Mark was restored—wrote Mark’s Gospel.

Verse 14 They eventually reached Antioch in Pisidia (100 miles north).

On the Sabbath day they went to the synagogue.

Verse 15 They were asked if they had a message for the people.

Verse 16 “Then Paul stood up.”

His message is contained in Verses 16-41.

The response to the message in Verses 42-43.

Verse 14 Paul and Barnabas came to Antioch, the first thing they did was to visit the synagogue.

Verse 15 After the lesson the rulers of the synagogue, possibly recognizing them as Jesus, asked them if they had a message for the people.

Verse 16 Paul who seized every opportunity to speak for Christ, stood up and said, “Men of Israel, and you that fear God, listen.”

Thus is introduced to Paul’s message.

1. His general plan was to lay a foundation of Jewish history.
2. Then to bring his heaven up to the events connected with the life and ministry of Christ.
3. Then to proclaim the resurrection.
4. Announce the remission of sins through the Savior.
5. Warn of the peril of rejecting Him.

Let us look into a few of the highlights.

1. The exodus from Egypt—the wilderness journey—the occupation of the land. Verses 17-19

2. The days of the judges—prophets Samuel.

The first and second kings Saul—David. Verses 20-22

3. John the Baptist's ministry. Verses 24-25

4. The death—burial—resurrection of Christ.

His body saw no corruption.

The days of manifestation. Verses 28-37

5. On the basis of Chris's work with special emphasis on the resurrection, Paul preaches the remission of sins—the doctrine of justification. Verses 38-39

6. Note the solemn warning for Christ rejections. Verses 40-41

7. The response to the message.

They asked for more teaching.

Many believed—many followed. Verses 42-43

Verse 44 One week later.

The whole city came to hear the evangelists expand the Word of God.

Verse 45 The Jews were very upset—they spoke against the message and in the process blasphemed God.

Verse 46 Since the rejection of the message and Christ was so complete and final—they turned to the Gentiles.

This was a tragedy for the Jews.

A great blessing for the Gentiles.

Verse 48 The Gentiles glorified the Word of God and many believed.

Verse 49 The Word spread throughout the area.

Verse 50 The Jews did all in their power to stop the message; they expelled them from the area.

Verses 51-52 The disciples did what the Lord commanded them to do with Christ rejections.

They were filled with the Holy Spirit and with joy.

Acts 13:38-52

This morning I want to divide my message into two parts

1. The blessing of receiving Christ as Savior
2. The tragedy of refusing Him.

Verses 38-39 are the heart of the Gospel message.

The world is full of failure and sin.

Amidst this failure and sin, the Grace of God shines forth.

Let me describe to you the world as God sees it.

Romans 8

“There is none righteous no not one.”

“They are all gone out of the way.”

“There is none that doeth good, no not one.”

“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

The statement “Grace of God” stands like a lighthouse on a dangerous shore, flashing continually.

“The forgiveness of sins.”

“Justified from all things.”

Forgiveness of sins was not really a new message for the Israelites.

Describe the sinner coming with his lamb.

Hebrews 9:22 Without the shedding of blood—no remission—forgiveness.

This principle of forgiveness by blood was introduced at the very beginning.

1. God clothed our first parents in the garden with skins

2. God approved of Abel’s sacrifice rather than Cain’s.

The Jews were still practicing this O.T. form, although God had forsaken His house years before.

“Your house is left unto you desolate.”

The message, which Peter and Paul in particular brought to them, was entirely new.

The principle was the same—the shedding of blood.

But the sacrifice was human instead of animal.

Paul says, “through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.”

Salvation for them was in the blood of Jesus of Nazareth. They had crucified Him as an imposter but Paul shows from the history of the nation that this was God's will and way of salvation.

In the preceding verses Paul lays great weight on the resurrection.

He says that this was God's approval on the sacrifice of Christ, but he says more. Through the death and the resurrection of Christ, we are not only forgiven of our sins but we are also justified.

While a Jew could understand forgiveness under the law, he could not be justified. Verse 39

Romans 4:25 "Who was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification."

A Jew's sins were covered over or hidden from sight.

A believer's sins are obliterated—forever taken away through the blood of the Lord Jesus.

Do you know anything of this forgiveness of sins through the death and this justification through the resurrection? Quote Verse 38

Psalm 82:1-2 The Blessing of accepting Christ

"Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered (taken away). Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Romans 8:30 "Predestinate—called—justified—glorified."

Joy of receiving Christ or Savior.

The tragedy of refusing Him. See Verse 46

The rich fool. Luke 12:16-21

He prepared for the fruits of his harvest—body—time.

He neglected his soul and eternity.

Examples of Reception and Rejection.

The themes on the Cross.

The Gospel is a savor of life unto life or death unto death.

Acts 13:46

Last Sunday we spoke to you of the blessing of accepting Christ as Savior.

This morning I would like to talk to you of the tragedy of refusing Him as Savior.

Quote Verse 46

This rejection was a cold, calculated action.

The nation decided to reject their Messiah, to absolutely refuse the good news concerning Him, and to reject everlasting life, as offered in Him.

The result

Paul and Barnabas said, “lo we turn to the Gentiles.”

This was a tragic day in Israel’s history.

They turned their back on God, and God turned His back on them.

Actually this rejection had taken place prior to the Cross.

The nation’s final answer to the claims of Jesus Christ was in the crucifixion.

God still was gracious, and after the resurrection presented Him again to the nation, through the apostle's but they absolutely refused. Verse 46

The nation's refusal of Him as Messiah almost broke His heart. Matthew 23:37-39

"O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem" etc.

Behold your house is left unto you desolate.

For I say unto you, you shall not see me again, till you shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Describe briefly God's disapproval of the nations action. The destruction of Jerusalem.

"God has given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that should not see and ears that do not hear." Isaiah 29:10

Psalms 69 "Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and I will make their backs to bend under their burdens always."

God has not cast off His people forever.

"Blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" Romans 11:25.

There is a glorious future for the believing Jews.

After suffering terribly at the hands of the Antichrist, Christ will appear to help them. They will receive Him as Messiah and Lord.

In the Millennial Kingdom they will experience the blessings of heaven upon them.

Let us go into the O.T. for another example of the tragedy of rejecting God.

Daniel 5

Before going into the details of the chapters let me give you the background.

Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.

In Chapter 4 of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar turned his back upon God and God punished him.

He was banished from his throne and lived in the fields like a wild beast for seven years, until he repented and acknowledged God as God.

Belshazzar, his grandson, knew of this but disregarded the lesson. Chapter 5 describes his sin of rejection.

1. Describe the feast.
2. The desecration of the holy vessels.
3. The handwriting on the wall.

Mene means to number. It was repeated for emphasis. God has numbered the day of the Babylonian kingdom.

Tekel (to weigh) means that the kingdom has been morally evaluated by God, and found lacking.

Peres means to divide and is a prediction that the kingdom is to be divided and given to the Persians.

Verse 30 "That night was Belshazzar king of the Chaldean's slain."

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Describe as time permits "The rich famous attitude"
Luke 12.

Refusal

To think the Master was here and I refused him the key.

Revelations 3:30

The rich young ruler refused Christ.

Daniel 5 Belshazzar rejected God.

He was weighed in God's scales and found wanting.

Verse 30 "During that night was Belshazzar slain."

Each of these men took tomorrow into their own hands.

Boast not thyself of tomorrow, etc. Proverbs 27:1.

Life at best is very brief,

Like the falling of a leaf,

Like the binding of a sheaf

Be in time

Fleeting days are telling fast

That the die will soon be cast

And the fatal line be passed

Be in time.

Fairest flowers soon decay

Youth and beauty pass away

Oh you have not long to stay

Be in time

While God's Spirit bids you come

Sinner, do not longer roam

Lest you seal your hopeless doom

Be in time.

The harvest is passed, the summer is ended and I'm not saved. Jeremiah 8:20.

God's Aggressive Servants

Acts 13:3-5 Acts 16:6-10

There are some who believe that chapter 13 begins part two of the Acts.

Peter has gradually faded from view and Paul emerges as the new leader.

A new era of missionary enterprise evolves as the Spirit of God launches His servants Paul and Barnabas from the Gentile church at Antioch, into the uttermost parts of the earth.

In this section the missionary journeys of Paul are outlined in capsule form.

Chapters 13 and 14 describe his first missionary journey.

Chapters 15:36—18:22 describe his second missionary journey.

Chapters 18:23—21:24 describe his third missionary journey.

Each journey became more extensive.

This is the beginning of the final phase in the ever-widening scope of the Gospel. The uttermost parts.

From then until now many brave men and women from every strata of society have gone to the four corners of the earth with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

To name a few: William Carey, Livingston, Robert Norrison, John Williams, Mary Slessor, Anthony Norris Groves.

One of the great turning points in this section is found in chapters 13 to 46. Paul and Barnabas said to the Jews, “Since you spurn and reject the Gospel and thus condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life, now we turn to the Gentiles.”

When the Gentiles heard this, “They were glad, and thanked God for His message.” Verse 47.

From this point Paul’s message was primarily directed to the Gentiles.

In chapter 14 Paul reached Lystra.

The Holy Spirit began to move in the area. People were being saved. A crippled man was made whole.

Suddenly, all hell let loose on God’s servants. The same crowd that wanted to treat them as gods now stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead. This stoning, and his many other physical and mental agonies described in 2 Corinthians 11, accounted for his bodily presence being weak. 2 Corinthians 10.

Paul was not pleasing to look at—he probably had a repugnant appearance. His body and face were indelibly scarred by stoning, beatings three times by rods, beatings with the Roman lash five times, and his eyesight was impaired.

His enemies at Corinth also said that his speech was contemptible. Some suggest that he had an impediment. Despite these physical handicaps, God, in His grace, used him mightily.

There are some scholars who link this stoning incident with Paul’s statement of 2 Corinthians 12:2. “I know a man in Christ, who fourteen years ago was caught up into the third heaven.” While there he heard sacred

secrets and saw sublime scenes, which human lips could not repeat nor describe.

At this time a veritable miracle took place. As the believers surveyed this unbelievable tragedy, Paul rose up and went into the city, and the next day he left Lystra with Barnabas and traveled to Derbe.

The experiences Paul had in this area remained vividly in his memory. He mentioned them in his last recorded letter to Timothy, chapter 3.

There are several outstanding conversions in the Acts:

1. The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. He was black, a descendant of Ham, and a politician. He was saved in his chariot.
2. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus. He was a Jew, a descendant of Shem. He was a religious leader and was saved on the open road.
3. The conversion of the jailer. He was a Gentile, a descendant of Japheth and a Roman. He was saved in prison.

These men had one thing in common, they needed a Savior, and they each accepted Him as such.

Acts 14

Verses 1-7 The Gospel preached at Iconium

Paul and Barnabas went into the synagogue.

They spoke with such power that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.

The unbelieving Jews stirred up the unbelieving Gentiles against the believers.

In the Acts unbelieving Jews were the instigation of much of the persecution against the apostles.

They were masters at persuading the Gentiles to carry out their wicked schemes. Crucifixion—Early persecution.

Though trouble was brewing, the apostles continued a long time speaking boldly for the Lord.

The Lord gave His approval, He empowered the message by performing signs and wonders through the apostles.

Signs and wonders are two different words for miracles.

The word “sign” simply means that the miracle conveys a lesson.

The word “wonder” suggests that the miracle creates a sense of awe.

As tension built up, sides were taken—the city was divided. Some took the part of the Jews—some the apostles.

Finally the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles rushed upon the apostles. To escape stoning they fled to Lystra and Derbe.

There they continued to preach the Gospel.

Verses 6-13 The healing of the cripple.

This man was cripple from his birth. Chapter 3

Verse 9 This man had faith to believe that Paul could heal him. Paul by the Spirit recognized this faith.

Verse 10 He commanded the man to “stand on his feet.” The man leaped and walked.

Verses 11-13 The result of this was that the people thought they were their gods come to visit them.

They then prepared sacrifices for them.

Verses 14-18 The apostles were shocked at this conduct.

They warned them of this folly.

And at the appropriate time Paul tells them of God.

The message had the desired affect.

Verses 19-20 Paul stoned at Lystra.

The same people who wanted to worship him—stoned him.

Jews from Antioch and Iconium caught up with Paul at Lystra.

They succeeded in turning the people against the apostles.

The same crowd who wanted to worship Paul as a god, now stoned him and dragged him out of the city for dead.

Many believe that this was the incident that Paul spoke of in 2 Corinthians 12, where he was caught up into the third Heaven.

Paul tells us twice that he was not sure whether he was in the body or out of the body—he did not know whether he was dead or alive.

His restoration was a miracle—if he was dead, God raised him.

The same day he rose up and came into the city.

The next day he left the city for Derbe

Acts 14 from Verse 21

This evidently was a critical period in Paul's life. He mentions it in II Timothy 3:11. Read.

He gives God the glory for his deliverance.

They had to flee from Iconium Verses 1-6a.

Paul was stoned at Lystra by the same people who wanted to worship him. Verses 6b-20.

Next they went to Derbe. Verse 20.

This was the limit of their first missionary journey.

How did they return home? Verse 21

They returned to the place of execution—Lystra.

Possibly Timothy was saved during those visits.

He was undoubtedly one of Paul's converts for he speaks of him as "his son in the faith."

When Paul next visited Lystra—Timothy was already a disciple. Chapter 16:1.

Point out the difference between being saved and being a disciple.

When their work at Lystra was completed they revisited Iconium and Antioch. (Assemblies were established).

This is what we call today, “follow-up.”

Stress the importance of follow-up.

When a person is saved—the work really begins.

We should never be satisfied merely to witness and see souls saved. We must nurture their souls and establish them in the faith.

This missionary program had as its aim to establish self-governing—self-sustaining—self-propagating churches.

The exact nature of their follow-up is given in Verses 22 and 23.

1. They confirmed the souls of the disciples.

This means that they established the Christians in the faith by instructing them from the Word of God.

2. They exhorted them to continue in the faith.

This was timely in view of the widespread persecution.

Through severe tribulation some must enter the eternal glory of the kingdom.

Verse 23 “They ordained elders in every church.”

There are several things to notice about these N.T. elders:

1. They were godly men who exercised spiritual leadership in the local church. They are spoken of as bishops, presbyters, and overseers.

2. Elders were not appointed immediately; a period was allowed for those who had been appointed by the Holy Spirit to become manifest.

3. Due to the lack of knowledge of elders' qualifications among the new believers—the apostles ordained or pointed out the men who met the scriptural requirements.

4. We do not have apostles today who can appoint elders. We do have the requirements of elders in I Timothy 3—Titus 1. Therefore each local church should be able to recognize those men, whom God has raised up, as undershepherds or elders.

Finally Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted with the brethren, then commended them to the Lord. Verse 23

Verses 21-23 Gives us the apostolic pattern of Christian work.

1. Preaching the gospel.

2. Teaching the converts.

3. Establishing and strengthening churches.

Verses 24-26 Leaving the district of Pisidia they arrived back in Antioch via Pamphylia—Perga—Attalia.

Verse 27 What a joyful occasion it must have been when the church at Antioch gathered to hear the personal account of these two faithful servants.

They reviewed all that God had done through them.

And told how God had opened the door to the Gentiles.

Let us look for a moment or two at the missionary strategy employed in those early days.

A small group of disciples living in an obscure corner of the world were imbued with a glorious vision for the evangelization of the world.

Much of the evangelization was carried on by local believers in connection with their everyday duties.

They gossiped the gospel.

In addition to this the apostles accompanied by others traveled from country to country, preaching the gospel and establishing churches. (Went out by two's).

Basically there were two methods,

1. personal evangelism, and
2. mass evangelism

These men were very definitely under the control of the Holy Spirit.

This same thing can be done today if we are willing to be used.

Acts 15

This is one of the most important chapters in the Acts.

There were certain men who came from Jerusalem and taught the Gentiles that except they submit to the rite of circumcision as laid out in the law of Moses they could not be saved. Verse 1

This gave rise to a serious dispute, as Paul and Barnabas vigorously contested this teaching.

So fierce was the controversy over this matter that the church decided to send Paul and Barnabas with some other brethren to Jerusalem to settle this question once and for all. Verse 2

What was the question involved here?

Some of the converted Jews insisted that before a Gentile could be saved he must:

1. Be circumcised. Verse 1
2. He must keep the law of Moses. Verse 5

On the other hand...

Philip preached Christ unto the Samaritans. Chapter 8.

He also preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch. Chapter 8.

Peter taught the Gentiles that the remission of sins was procured by believing in Christ. Acts 11:43.

Paul also preached that forgiveness of sins could only be had in Christ.

He also taught that any who believe in Christ are justified from all sins. Acts 13:38-39.

He also affirms that justification was impossible under the law of Moses. In other words salvation was not in the law (condemnation) but rather through faith in Christ and because of the grace of Christ. Ephesians 2:8-9

This new decision was hard for the Jews to accept, and many of them tried to mix law and grace, and unfortunately taught this as a scriptural doctrine.

This is what happened in Antioch.

Also as we read in the epistles that the new churches were plagued with these false teachers. Galatians. Another Gospel. Who has bewitched you?

Verse 4 When the delegation from Antioch reached Jerusalem they were received by the church there, and they gave a full report of their activities—the results—their doctrine.

Verse 5 Immediately opposition arose.

Some Pharisees who were believers opposed the doctrine of salvation through grace.

They said that to procure salvation one must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and also must keep the law.

Verses 7-11 Peter's defense of salvation by grace.

He took them back to the event of Acts 10 where the Gentiles were saved by faith and received the Holy Spirit—in the same manner as the Jews did.

"There is no difference between us and them," Peter declared.

"Why put a burden on them, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear."

Finally, he declared, “We believe that we are saved through the grace of God, so are the Gentiles.”

Verse 12 Paul and Barnabas were given an opportunity to tell of God’s working among the Gentiles.

Verses 13-21 James adds his testimony. The Lord’s brother. Writer of the epistle.

Verse 14 He mentions Peter’s statement of God visiting the Gentiles.

Verses 15-18 Then he takes the words of Amos to substantiate this truth.

Verse 16 refers to the time when Christ will come and set up His kingdom.

Verse 17 The “residue of men” would mean the remnant of Jews.

“All the nations on whom My name is called” = Gentiles.

Verse 18 James says that God has made known all His works, including the receiving of the Gentiles by faith, through the prophets.

Verse 20 However James suggested that Gentile Christians should be advised to abstain from certain things.

This was not for their salvation, but rather to safeguard fellowship of all the believers.

Note the four things prohibited.

1. Pollution of idols.

James suggests that foods offered to idols should be avoided. To go on eating these foods—while they had liberty to do so—it might prove a stumbling block to

weak Jewish brethren. Therefore to do this would be wrong.

2. Fornication.

Sexual immorality was the cardinal sin of the Gentiles. Believers were to abstain from this sin. This command has never been revoked.

3. Things strangled.

This prohibition goes back to the covenant God made with Noah after the flood. Genesis 9:4.

This prohibition then would be for the human race not just for the nation of Israel.

4. Blood.

This also goes back to Genesis 9:4. This commandment was given prior to the law. It has never been abrogated, so could be in effect today. See also Leviticus 17.

Verses 22-29

This contains the report of the council sent back to Antioch.

It had been decided that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised in order to be saved.

The next step was to send official notice of this in writing to the church at Antioch.

They also designated Judas and Silas to return with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch.

The substance of the letter is given in Verses 23-29.

Verse 24 states that the false brethren who went from Jerusalem to Antioch had never received authorization or approval from the church in Jerusalem.

Verses 30-35 Subsequent events in Antioch.

When the letter was read it proved to be a great encouragement.

Verses 32-33 Judas and Silas had some meetings with the church.

Verse 34 Judas returned to Jerusalem—Silas remained.

He later became Paul's traveling companion and is referred to as Silvanus in the Epistles.

Verse 36 denotes the commencement of Paul's second missionary journey.

Verses 37-38 describe the difference of opinion between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark.

Verse 39 The contention was so great between them over this that they decided to go out separately.

Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cypress.

Paul chose Silas and were commended to the grace of God by the brethren.

This is the last time Barnabas is mentioned in the Acts.

Acts 16

Verses 1-5 Timothy joins Paul and Silas.

In this second missionary journey Paul and Silas went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches.

Chapter 15:41.

They came to Derbe and Lystra—there they found Timothy.

Timothy was saved possibly during the first visit to these cities.

Timothy's mother and grandmother were Jewish believers. 2 Timothy 1.

His father was a Gentile and may have died by this time.

Timothy had progressed in the Christian faith.

Paul invited him to accompany him on his missionary trip.

Paul circumcised Timothy—not for salvation—but because of the Jews.

Paul's reason for this action was that he might gain an audience with the Jews. Verse 3.

Verse 4 Paul went through the cities and delivered unto the churches the decrees to keep.

These decrees were:

1. As far as salvation was concerned faith alone is necessary
2. Fornication was prohibited for all believers

3. Meats offered to idols should be abstained from—things strangled should not be eaten—blood was forbidden as a food. Not as matters vital to salvation, but to facilitate fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers.

Some of these instructions were revised, see 1 Corinthians 8:10 and 1 Timothy 4:5.

The Macedonian Call Verses 6-10

Verse 6 The Holy Spirit forbade them to preach in Asia.

Verse 7 They then attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit would not allow them to go.

Verses 8-9 At Troas, Paul received instruction from God as to where he should preach.

The vision in the night, “Come over and help us.”

A man from Macedonia—Greece—beckoned him to come and preach the Gospel.

This man represented Europe—his cry for help showed this continents need of Christ.

Paul obeyed this vision and set sail immediately for Europe (Greece).

This raises a very interesting question. “Guidance.”

The early church was guided in various ways.

1. You shall be witnesses unto Me, etc. Acts 1:8.
2. On at least five occasions the Lord guided men through visions. Annanias Acts 9:10-16. Cornelius 10:3. Peter 10:10, 11, 17. Paul 16:9; 18:9.
3. Sometimes they were guided by circumstances—scattered abroad. Chapter 8:1-4.

4. Sometimes they were guided through the counsel of others:

(a) The assembly at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch. 11-22.

(b) Paul and Silas were commended by the brethren to the grace of God as they set out on their second missionary journey.

5. In addition to this there are men who seemed to have communications of the divine will directly.

(a) An angel of the Lord guided Philip to the Ethiopian. 8-26.

(b) The Holy Spirit spoke to the prophets and teachers at Antioch as they fasted and prayed. 13:1-2.

(c) Paul and Timothy were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word in Asia. 16-6.

(d) When they tried to go to Bithyima the Spirit would not allow them to. 16-7.

To summarize we can say that the early Christians received guidance:

1. Through the Scriptures

2. Through visions

3. Through circumstances

4. Through the advice of others

5. Through direct communication from God.

The Conversion Of Lydia Verses 11-15

They came to Philippi.

There was no synagogue here—but some Jews gathered by the riverside outside the city.

Reaching the spot they found a group of women praying.

One woman is brought to our attention. “Lydia”

She may have originally been a Gentile—but was a convert to Judaism.

As Paul talked to them Lydia’s ear was opened—her heart was opened and finally her home was opened.

She was baptized—so were those of her household.

We do not read that she was married; her household could have consisted of servants.

She opened her home to the Lord’s servants. Paul—Silas—Timothy—Luke.

Her appeal to God messengers is beautifully expressed in Philip’s translation.

“If you are satisfied that I am a true believer in the Lord, then come down to my house and stay there.”

And she insisted on us doing so.

Conversion in the Scriptures

The conversion of Andrew. John 1:35-39.

The conversion of Peter. John 1:40-42.

The call of service to Andrew and Peter. Mark 1:16-18.

Conversion is a very real and important thing.

There are five conversions recorded in the Acts.

1. The Ethiopian eunuch—a black man.

2. Saul of Tarsus—a Jew.

3. Cornelius—a Gentile.

4. Lydia—first convert in Europe (a woman).

5. The jailer—a rough heartless jailer.

Let us consider Lydia

Prior to her conversion she worshipped God.

She probably had never heard the Gospel.

She believed the first time she heard it.

She became Europe's first convert.

"The Lord opened her heart" Verse 14.

She believed the things spoken by Paul. Verse 14.

She proved her faith in Christ immediately by being baptized.

Then she extended hospitality to the servants of God.

God opened her heart then opened her home.

Lydia was not a bad woman nor a big sinner.

But she needed a Savior. (Apply this truth)

The conversion of the Philippian jailer.

Describe the treatment meted out to Paul and Silas.

The underground prison.

This was a dark, damp, windowless underground hole.

Verse 24 Describe their raw bleeding backs—feet in the stocks.

Verse 25 At midnight "they prayed and sang praises."
The prisoners heard them.

Verse 26 God answered the prayers and faith of His servants.

There was a great earthquake.

The foundations of the prison were rocked—all the doors were burst open—and the chains fell off the hands and legs of all the prisoners.

This was a unique earthquake.

Verse 27 The jailer woke from his sleep...and would have killed himself, etc.

Verse 28 Paul cried, “Do thyself no harm; for we are all here.”

Verse 29 He called for a light—sprang in—fell down before Paul and Silas.

Verse 30 He brought them out and said, “What must I do to be saved?”

Verse 31 The answer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

The Acts of the Apostles

Purpose

First of all, the title of the book as we have it, is unfortunate. The actual Greek title is “Acts of Apostles” or “some acts of some apostles.”

We recognize also that the book of Acts is by no means a full history of the period from A.D. 29 to A.D. 60, the time of Paul’s imprisonment in Rome. In fact, between the ministry of the Lord Jesus and the church as it emerged in the epistles there is a tremendous gap.

How did it happen that a movement that began among Jews, that centered in a Jewish Messiah and that was founded on the Jewish Scriptures became a religion accepted largely by Gentiles, as it is even today? How did preachers who were “unlearned and ignorant men” (Acts 4:13) make such an impact on the world? What changed the fear that drove these men to denial and flight at the crucifixion into a boldness that made them stalwarts for a new faith?

These, and other similar questions are answered by the book of Acts, which is the only existing link between the ministry and teaching of Christ and the Christianity that appears full grown in the epistles of Paul and the other writers.

The book of Acts, again, does not pretend to be an exhaustive account of all the events that took place in the growth of the early church but Luke selects those portions that serve his purpose. This purpose is readily identified if we look at the prologue to the Gospel of Luke (1:1-4) and then join it to the first verse of Acts 1.

The continuity is apparent on the surface. We can with assurance say: We have the same writer, Luke; the same reader, Theophilus; the same subject, Jesus. So as the Gospel of Luke is written to provide certainty of the gospel to the reader, the book of Acts continues that theme. The things that “Jesus began both to do and to teach” as the Son of Man are extended through His witnesses, the sons of men.

To achieve this purpose of instructing the reader in the certainty of the Gospel, Luke selects that expanding development of the church, His body, and northward through Antioch to Asia Minor, Macedonia, Achaia and to Rome.

He does not mention that expansion southward or eastward from Palestine, although there must have been Christians in Egypt and Syria from a very early date. There were believers in Damascus before Paul’s conversion but no account is given of the progress of the church there. The probable reason for this restriction is twofold.

First, the writer himself was best acquainted with this aspect of the expansion of Christianity and so could use it to best advantage as illustrative of his main theme. That theme was the growth of the church, particularly the transition from Judaism to Gentile Christianity. In this transition he took an active part as his use of the word “we” indicates and so he was well qualified to deal with the theme of which he wrote.

Second, as his main purpose was to instruct the reader of the certainty of the Gospel, he demonstrates that continuity from Jesus through the disciples to the time at which he wrote. Since Paul was the leader of the

Gentile mission, he deserved primary attention and the explanation of the transition from Jew to Gentile, from law to grace, from Palestine to the Empire did not require a comprehensive survey of all that took place in the missionary growth of the Christian church. For Luke's purpose the presentation of this one phase is sufficient.

"Acts" can be divided into 5 main sections:

I. Introduction 1:1-11

II. Origin of the church—Jerusalem 1:12-8:3

III. The period of transition—Samaria 8:4-11:8

IV. The expansion to the Gentiles: 11:9=21:16

The Pauline mission—Antioch and the Empire.

V. The imprisonment and defense of Paul. 21:17-28:31.
Rome.

Notice how, like the waves of the sea rising higher and higher on the beach, this logically follows the outline of geographical development given in Chapter 1:8 "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." The first section after the introduction deals with the beginnings in Jerusalem. The second gives glimpses of the work in Samaria and in the coastal plain. The last two sections take the message to the cities of the Mediterranean world, ending with Rome, the capital.

In review, then, "The Acts of the Apostles" is a collection of some of the acts of some Apostles, selected by the Apostle-Historian, Luke. His purpose—to reinforce the certainty of the Gospel to his friend Theophilus.

By its inclusion in the canon of Holy Scripture, all the readers of 'Acts' can be reassured of the continuity, now in the power of the Holy Spirit, of "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach."

Politics

At the time the book of Acts was written the entire civilized world, with the exception of the little known kingdoms of the Far East, was under the domination of Rome. From the Atlantic Ocean on the west to the Euphrates River and the Red Sea on the east, and from the Rhone, the Danube, the Black Sea and the Caucasus mountains on the north to the Sahara on the south, there stretched one vast empire under the dictatorship of the emperor.

"Rome" took its name from the capital city in Italy, the original settlement from which the Roman state grew. It was founded in 753 B.C., comprising a union of small villages and ruled over by a king. By a long succession of wars, Rome had complete control of the Italian peninsula by 265 B.C. The conquered peoples were bound by treaty and were absorbed gradually into the Roman domain.

For the next two hundred years Rome was engaged in a great struggle with Carthage, a powerful and wealthy nation whose ships carried the commerce of the Mediterranean. In 146 B.C. however, the Roman general Scipio Aemilianus captured the city of Carthage and burned it to the ground. So Rome had control over Spain and North Africa. At the same time Macedonia was made a Roman province and with the burning of Corinth in the same year, (146 B.C.) Achaia also came under Roman control.

In 133 B.C. the king of Pergamum died, bequeathing his realm to the Romans who organized it into the province of Asia. Pompey completed the conquest of Pontus and the Caucasus and in 63 B.C. he organized Syria into a province and annexed Judea. From 58 B.C. to 57 B.C. Caesar campaigned in Gaul and made it a Roman country.

So through 500 years of almost uninterrupted war Rome grew from an obscure village on the banks of the Tiber to become the ruling empire of the world. This rapid expansion brought great changes in the life of the Roman people. The military leaders began to use their armies to show their influence at home as well as for war. The century between the conquest of Carthage and the death of Julius Caesar was marked by a constant succession of civil wars. Marius, Sulla, Caesar, Antony, and Octavian—one after the other strove to make himself master of the Roman state, until finally Octavian, or Augustus as he was called by the Senate, succeeded in destroying his rivals in 30 B.C. and in 27 B.C. to A.D. 14 and effected many reforms. The people were tired of war and longed for peace. Augustus discharged a large part of the army and veterans were settled in colonies in the provinces where they could make a good living and also be community leaders loyal to Rome. He purged the Senate of unworthy members and sought to improve the morale of the people. He revived the state religion and rebuilt many temples. He organized the police and fire departments in Rome and appointed a supervisor for the grain supply. During his administration confidence was restored in government, peace and prosperity were promoted and the treasury was replenished. This is the

Caesar mentioned by Luke in his Gospel (2:1). After Augustus the Imperial succession was as follows:

Tiberias—A.D. 14 to 37

Caligula—A.D. 37 to 41

Claudius—A.D. 41 to 54

Nero—A.D. 54 to 68

The first five years of Nero's reign were very much under the unwanted control of his mother, Agrippina, whom he resented. In A.D. 64 he had her murdered and took full charge of the government himself. (This would be the 'Caesar' to whom Paul appealed). In A.D. 64 a great fire broke out in Rome which destroyed a large part of the city. The Christians were blamed and many were tried and tortured to death. It is generally agreed to by commentators that Acts was written during the reign of Nero, probably about A.D. 60.

Except for Italy itself, most of the Roman world consisted of territory under provincial government. This local government was of two kinds. The provinces that were relatively peaceful and loyal to Rome were under proconsuls (Acts 13:7) who were responsible to the Roman Senate. The more unruly provinces were governed by prefects, procurators, or proprietors who were appointed by the emperor and were answerable to him. For example: Achaia was ruled by the proconsul Gallio at the time of Paul's visit (Acts 18:12). Palestine in the time of Christ was governed by the procurator Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27:11—translated "governor"). Proconsuls held office for one year terms. Procurators held office as long as the emperor saw fit.

Governorship of the provinces was sought by public officials as it was a good source of income. Most of them ruled well and made use of the taxes to build roads and harbors, so that commerce was thriving and the economic level of life improved.

Ancient writers did not date events by a calendar but by the accession or by the reign of officials. For example, the chronology of Acts is identified by names of officials:

1. The death of Herod Agrippa I. Acts 12:20 (A.D. 44)
2. The famine under Claudius. Acts 11:28 (A.D. 44-48)
3. The proconsulship of Sergius Paulis. Acts 13:7 (before A.D. 51)
4. The expulsion of the Jews from Rome. Acts 18:2 (A.D. 49)
5. The proconsulship of Gallio. Acts 18:2 (A.D. 52-53)
6. The proconsulship of Felix. Acts 23:26, 24:27 (A.D. 52-56)
7. Accession of Festus, Felix' successor. Acts 24:27 (A.D. 58).

This review of the politics of the period of Acts should help in our understanding of conditions at that time.

Personalities

We readily recognize that the principal person whose activities are recorded throughout the book of Acts is none other than the Holy Spirit Himself, that power, that infusion, sent down by the risen Christ. However, for the purpose of this overview, we will briefly identify those human personalities through whom the Holy Spirit

continued to show the things that “Jesus began both to do and to teach.”

The book of Acts could be outlined by the personalities that appear in it. Chapters 1 to 5 centre in Peter; chapters 6 and 7, in Stephen; chapter 8 through 12 introduce several, chief of whom are Barnabas, Philip, and Saul of Tarsus; and from chapter 13 to the end Paul is the dominant figure.

The leaders of the early period were Peter, John and Stephen. Of the three, John was least prominent, being mentioned only in company with Peter. Peter was the preacher who dominated the scene. He made the opening address on the day of Pentecost, and he defended the position of the Christian believers before the Sanhedrin when he and John were accused (4:5-8). Peter's boldness and spiritual power stand out in amazing contrast to his weakness at the time of his denial of Jesus.

Stephen, who was one of the seven appointed for relief work, and who became the outstanding defender of the early church, was not one of the original twelve disciples. If his name has any bearing on his background, he was a Hellenistic Jew who probably came to Jerusalem as a pilgrim, and after his conversion stayed with the church. As a debater in the foreign synagogues he was without a peer (6:9-10). He did not confine his activities to social work but became an apologist and an evangelist as well as the church's first martyr.

A comparison between Peter and Paul is drawn in several instances:

Both were leaders, one to the Jews, the other to the Gentiles.

Peter labored largely in Jerusalem, Paul, in the Gentile world.

Each had at least one discourse recorded in full, which gives a summary of his preaching. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, (2:14-40); Paul, at Antioch of Pisidia (13:16-42).

Both performed miracles: Peter healed a lame man (3:1-10), and so did Paul (14:8-10).

Peter was freed from prison in Jerusalem (5:19-21, 12:1-11), Paul was released from jail at Philippi by divine intervention (16:19-30).

Both stressed the work of the Holy Spirit (2:38, 19:2-6).

Both made the resurrection a primary doctrine of their preaching (Peter 2:24-36, Paul 13:30-37).

One was the champion of the early church in Jerusalem, the other was the founder of the first Gentile churches.

There is, however, no suggestion of antagonism between the two, nor was the work of either confined to one class of hearers. Peter brought the gospel to the house of the Gentile, Cornelius, and Paul spoke to the Jews on every occasion he could find.

These then are the principal characters through whom the Holy Spirit demonstrated His power in the book of Acts.

In summary then of this overview:

PURPOSE: To reinforce and confirm the certainty and continuity of all “that Jesus began to do and to preach”;

POLITICS: The church in transition, in a world in transition; PERSONALITIES: The Holy Spirit, indwelling all believers and especially equipping those who were committed to the cause of the risen Christ so that they could become “witnesses unto Him...to the uttermost parts of the earth.”

The Acts of the Apostles: Summary

It was indicated in the introductory study that the Acts was the continuation “of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach,” and that this continuing of the testimony concerning Him was the result of the direct work of the Holy Spirit acting in the believers. Key leaders, the apostles, were empowered in special ways to give authority to their teaching, and to validate their ministry.

These same “sign gifts” were also distributed by the Spirit to the fledgling church, and were given, as Paul says, “as a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not” (1 Corinthians 14:22). They were intended to be a further indication that the gospel was indeed a message from God, and that the church was God’s vehicle to continue the spread of that message.

As an outline for our study, consider the following characteristics of the church as presented in the Acts:

- A. The Church’s Dynamic Power: Acts 4:31
- B. The Church’s Dynamic Growth: Acts 5:42
- C. The Church’s Dynamic Unity: Acts 11:17
- D. The Church’s Dynamic Witness:
 - 1) in Testimony Acts 20:24
 - 2) in Personal Living Acts 24:16

The Church’s Dynamic Power

Our reference verse indicates that the believers were filled in a unique and marvelous way with the Spirit of God. They were filled, and they demonstrated the power

of God with boldness. This demonstration of power focused on the Word of God that they spoke. The question is often raised, "Is this Power still available today?" The words of a hymn come to mind in answer:

I believe that the Christ who was slain on the Cross
Has the power to change lives today.

For He changed me completely, and new life is mine;
That is why by the cross I will stay.

The power is in the gospel, and is demonstrated in the lives of Christians. The evidence of the power of God was in their witness, and was stated to be so by the Lord Himself: "You shall be my witnesses," Acts 1:8.

The church was in its infancy. The Acts of the Apostles chronicles, at least in part, a very tumultuous period. We recognize the uniqueness of the era, and of the sign gifts which accompanied it. Do we also recognize that the visible effects, that is, the fantastic growth, was also a unique experience?

The intent of this question could be debated at length, but it is raised to merely highlight that, whatever the circumstances or era, in terms of actual physical growth and blessing in the gospel, it is God who granteth the increase. Our responsibility is to sow the seed, and to water the soil. The evidence of God's power is in our personal lives, not in the numerical evidence of souls saved. Yes, we want to see the blessing of God in salvation. But that is not the criterion either of our effectiveness in witnessing, or of our holiness and purity of life. It is the measure of God's grace.

We are certainly enjoined to be filled with the Spirit, and to walk as followers of God in holiness, and to

understand by so doing what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 5). It is only then that we can know the power of God in our lives, and confidently share that joy with others. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth...” (Romans 1:16)

The Church’s Dynamic Growth (Acts 5:42)

The evidence is clear that the Church grew at a fantastic rate. Three thousand souls were saved in a single day. Believers were added DAILY to their number. This growth was not without its own difficulties and tensions. The problems that were faced didn’t hinder the work. Rather, because of the leading of the Holy Spirit, they served to help the church grow.

The Holy Spirit’s work was hindered initially by inner challenges of hypocrisy (Acts 5:1-16) and discrimination (Acts 6:1-7). The outer challenges of jealousy (Acts 5:17-42) and persecution (Acts 5:17-42 and 6:8-8:4) also threatened to destroy the Church’s witness.

The response to these problems is critical. It is often not just the problem that is important, but also how we respond to it that makes the difference in God’s work:

a) Inner Challenges: Respond with judgment, confession, and commitment to allow the Holy Spirit to change us.

b) Outer Challenges: Respond with boldness and confidence in the Spirit’s power.

As we see the growth of the church throughout the Acts we are impressed with the recurring theme of the presence and working of the Holy Spirit. It is essentially God’s work through the Holy Spirit, and not the work of

any individual. Note the following principles as evidence of God's working:

The Life of the Church

1. Is by the will and purpose of God (2:23; 4:27-29)
2. Is in fulfillment of prophecy:
 - The outpouring of the Spirit (2:17-21).
 - The mission to the Gentiles (13:47).
 - The Gentiles as part of the church (15:16-18).
 - The refusal of official Judaism to respond to the Gospel (28:25-27).
3. Was directed by God:
 - Through the Spirit (13:2; 15:28; 16:6).
 - Through angels (5:19; 8:26; 27:23).
 - Through prophets (11:28; 21:10).
 - Himself (18:9; 23:11).
4. Demonstrated the power of God seen in signs and wonders performed in the name of Jesus (3:16; 14:3).
(The importance here is not the signs and wonders themselves. It is that they were done in the name of Jesus.)

The Church's Dynamic Utility

By far the greatest internal difficulty was the resolution of the differences between the believing Jews and Gentiles. This was specifically with respect to their initial inclusion in the plan of salvation, and secondly, with respect to circumcision and observance of the accepted practices of Levitical Law. As we read through

chapters 10 and 15, we can see the resolution taking place.

Acts 10: God worked in both parties: Cornelius (verses 1-8). Peter (verses 9-16).

Acts 10: Both parties responded to God: Cornelius (verses 1-2). Peter (verses 21, 23).

The result was unity in love and in accordance with God's word on an individual level.

Corporately, in Acts 15, there was a clear settling of the issue based on the Word of God (verses 14-18), and on Simon's and Paul's experiences and testimonies relating to grace. The result was a unity based on foundational principles of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

The early church's decision to grant freedom in Christ was motivated by the Holy Spirit, and was based on the principles of God's grace and holiness. Today that same Holy Spirit can unite us in love with other believers without requiring them to conform to every preference or conviction of our own.

"I...beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," (Ephesians 4:1-3).

D. The Church's Dynamic Witness

1. In Testimony (Acts 20:24)

In chapter 20, Paul makes his defense before Felix. It was not the first time he has had to stand and affirm his faith in God, and his commitment to the principles of the gospel. And it wasn't to be his last. It stands as a public

testimony, not just of Paul's personal commitment, but of the faithfulness of God through His servant. In knowing and experiencing that faithfulness, Paul can confidently present his case.

Courage and boldness for Christ is, in part, a result of KNOWING and EXPERIENCING God's faithfulness. To know it, we need to examine God's Word as did the early believers who searched the scriptures to see if these things were so. That personal study will bring confidence as we see the hand of God in his word, in his servants, and in our own hearts. To experience it, we need to take God at his word, and step forward daily, looking to Him for power, wisdom, and strength to testify for Him. Notice Paul's attitude as he recounts some of the experiences that God has led him through:

- Steadfastness of Purpose (verse 18).
- Humility in Service (verse 19).
- Sincerity of Heart (verse 19).
- Completeness of Teaching (verse 20).
- Boldness in Testifying (verse 21).
- Total Commitment (verse 24).

2. In Personal Living (Acts 24:16)

paul declared that he strove always to keep his conscience clear before God and man. He did this primarily by keeping his teaching clear and understandable, and by keeping his life in line with his teaching. He was faithful in word and deed, and observed holiness in life and action.

A manner of life that was free from any substantive accusation was essential to Paul's ministry. He did not

want to become disqualified in his ministry, or a castaway. We too must strive to keep ourselves pure, to be ready always to give an answer to anyone who asks us the reason for the hope that is in us.

“We beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service,” (Romans 12:1).

Characteristics of a Scriptural Assembly

For an assembly to function scripturally it must have qualified elders.

Conversely, it must have obedient believers. Unity = blessings Psalm 133.

Sound eldership produces sound doctrine there (?) in turn produce a Scriptural Assembly. Titus We live in a day of changing values and uncertain priorities. Because of this it is good for us to see how important certain truths were to the early Christians.

These truths were abiding value and not subject to fluctuations of popularity, nor so-called advancement of thought. "Strengthen the things that remain."

In Acts 20 there are three very important facts of divine truth.

1. The importance of the Lord's Supper
2. The importance of elders
3. The importance of the Ministry of the Word

The application of these divine principles produced the most mature N.T. church (Ephesus)

There also must be a recognition of the "Headship of Christ" in the church.

Within the scope of this truth there lies several other principles.

- (1) The Lordship of Christ
- (2) The Presidency of the Holy Spirit
- (3) The Authority of the Scriptures
- (4) The

Sovereignty of God For an assembly to function at its best there must be the recognition and development of spiritual gifts.

Every believer has one or more spiritual gifts.

To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

But one and the same Spirit works all these things distributing to each one individually as He wills. I Corinth 12.

From Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 we learn that every believer has a special God-given gift for service.

1. Gifts differ in value, but are all equally honorable.
2. Gifts are to be used in love.
3. Gifts must not be regarded as an enlargement of natural ability; but should be used for the glory of God, the building up of the saints, in the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. Many individuals with little natural talent have been mightily used of God, through the spiritual gift He gave them.

The growth of an assembly is often hindered by members who do not recognize this gift, and even if they do, --neglect it—refusing to stir it up and develop it.

The success of the young church in Antioch can be attributed to at least five things. Acts 11 (1) They preached the Lord Jesus [See Corinth I] (2) The hand of the Lord was with them.

(3) There were results – great numbers believed.

(4) There was a missionary spirit and outreach.

(5) This church was a giving church.

My personal studies lead me to believe that the priorities of the Assembly are as follows:

(1) The worship of God.

(2) The building of saints in spiritual maturity.

(3) The outreach in to the world.

This order can be substantiated from Heb 11.

(1) Abel worshipped - He offered a more excellent sacrifice.

(2) Enoch walked with God - He pleased God.

(3) Noah worked - He built an ark to the saving of his household..

Some assemblies have died because they have concentrated entirely on the worship of God.

Others have attempted to survive by practicing worship and walk with the believers in fellowship. They are ineffective and dying.

Those who are prospering are the ones who worship and are walking with God and fellowshiping with each other, and reaching out into the sinful around.

The assembly should be a tributary into the world, rather than a refuge from it.

We must reach the lost with the Gospel - this is the great commission. "Go"

This is everyone's responsibility.

Sometimes we have to take it to them. This brings in the thought of visitation.

To grow numerically our visitation must supercede the bounds of the saints.

Give personal experience here.

Three Important Things

We live in a day of changing values and uncertain priorities. Because of this it is good for us to see how important certain things were to the early Christians.

These things were of abiding value and not subject to fluctuations of popularity nor the so-called advancement of thought.

In Acts 20 there are three very important facts of divine Truth

1. The importance of the Lord's Supper.
2. The importance of the Elders.
3. The importance of the Ministry of the Word.

Point (1)

Vs 6 and 7 give us a scriptural precedent and a N.T. example for holding the Lord's Supper on the First Day of the week. Paul and his companions arrived in Troas on Monday. They desired to break bread with the saints there, so they waited seven days for the usual gathering on the Lord's Day.

It was of great value and importance to Paul and his companions to remember the Lord in fellowship with the saints in Troas.

It is sad to say that there are some believers, so conditioned, that the slightest diversion becomes more important than the prior clam "This do in remembrance of Me."

This particular remembrance feast was held in the evening. Some have used this scripture as a reason to the B of B in the evening.

However we must consider that in those days there was no such thing as Sundays free.

It was a working day like the rest.

So it was for them the first spiritual exercise of the week – it had Priority.

This is always Divine Order.

First, as holy priests we offer up our spiritual sacrifices.
I Peter 2:5

Then, as royal priests, we go forth to declare the glories of Christ. I Peter 2:9

The “worship of God” is always before “service to men/”

Our “service and its fruitfulness” is always related to our “worship and its fragrance.”

It would seem from O.T. examples that the glory of God in the midst of His people did not depend on the activity of their service but rather on the quality of their worship.

Point (2) The importance of elders.

The importance of elders is seen by the fact that Paul called for them to come to him. (A distance of about 30 miles.)

These elders were important to Paul – he had a message for them – they were also important, because, they were responsible for the affairs of the local church at Ephesus, and for the case of the flock there.

First note their identity.

This was not just a group of “interested brethren.”

These were men whose identity was known and could be located.

Their names and addresses were known to all in the assembly.

The word “elder” suggests mature spiritual experience and understanding.

Not age alone, for in many instances it is sadly obvious that advancement of years does not necessarily mean spiritual maturity.

Job said, “Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment” 32:9.

Secondly, note their responsibility.

This is revealed in the word used in v. 28 “overseers.”

This conveys the character of the work undertaken.

It was to “watch over/”

The word “overseers” is sometimes translated “bishop,” but always in the plural.

In the early church there was never Bishop So-and -so set over a church or a group of churches.

The elders’ responsibility was:

1. To watch for his own life - v. 28.
2. Then to watch over the flock - v.28
3. To guard them and feed them - v. 28-30
4. To support the weak - with material assistance if necessary - v. 35

5. To be well acquainted with all facets of the truth - v. 35.

Point (3) The Importance of the Ministry.

This is seen in Paul's exercise to impart something to the church. And also to the elders.

He speaks of his own ministry - how it was accompanied with lowliness, tears and trials - v. 19.

The avenues his ministry followed were, what was Profitable, both Private and Public - v. 20.

There were three avenues or aspects of his Ministry.

1. Showing --- this is a word which means declaration - v. 20. It is a telling forth of the Word.

2. Teaching --- this is a word for instruction - v. 20.

3. Testifying --- this is a word meaning to "intensely witness" --- to strongly attest, and is related here to the Gospel - v. 24

The power of the ministered Word is seen in V 34.

It is able to Edify - Enrich - and Enable.

In a day when there is so much effervescence in the world, so much that is transience and triviality, it would be a good thing for us all to review the values in the local church.

Then set our priorities again according to New Testament principles:

The Worship of the saints - the Word of God - The Watching ministry of the elders.

The Call of God for Service

The Holy Spirit said, "Separate Barnabas and Saul unto Me for the work whereunto I have called them."

The choice of God's workers is never left to the church.

The Holy Spirit elects His own servants, and only works through those whom He calls.

Men and women down through the ages have known the call of God.

Paul knew that he was called, and endured everything in the light of that calling.

William Carey believed he was called by God to go to India.

His local church did not agree with him. They judged him a fool.

But today Carey is credited as being a man called of God, and the father of modern missions.

God called David Livingston from a Blantyre factory and put him in darkest Africa.

Robert Morrison went to China, and John Williams went to the South Seas because they heard the call of God.

Martin Luther heard the call of God and left the Roman Catholic church against the advice of his friends, saying, "So help me God, here I stand: I can do no other."

The result of obedience to God's call was the Reformation.

The greatest need of the hour is the presidency of the Holy Spirit in the church, calling believers to His service.

In this incident we have a marvelous picture of an assembly working in perfect harmony with the mind and will of God.

They were gathered together for a time of fasting and prayer.

This was no ordinary prayer meeting.

They were gathered together because of a heavy burden for the world of lost souls.

As they were met together in prayer, the Holy Spirit spoke to them.

“Separate Barnabas and Saul unto Me” etc.

He no doubt spoke through one of the prophets.

This verse is important as it emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the guidance of the church. It also shows the sensitiveness that believers should have to His leading.

V3. After the Holy Spirit had revealed His will, they continued to fast and pray.

Then the elders laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul

This was not an official act of ordination.

It was simply an expression of their fellowship and blessing upon these two men in the work to which the Holy Spirit had called them.

The words at the end of v3, “they sent them away” was an unfortunate translation. The church has no authority to send anyone, anywhere. The proper thought here is that “they let them go,” or “they sent them free for the work.”

It is God the Holy Spirit who sends forth those who have received the ordination of the nail-pierced hands. See verse 4

V4. With this verse we begin what is commonly called Paul's first missionary journey.

The record of this journey extends to Ch 15, verse 35.

Paul: The Teacher

In Acts 20:27, Paul proclaims to the Ephesians, “for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” Paul was certain that he would not see his beloved brethren from Ephesus again. Apparently he had no regrets and his conscience was clear in leaving them, because he had declared unto them the whole counsel of God. For three years he had not ceased to teach them night and day with tears. See Acts 20:19-21. He taught them the fundamentals of the Gospel and instructed them in all the truths that were vital to godly living. [See Ephesians 4-6 regarding Paul’s teaching on the lordship and headship of Christ.]

So then, as a faithful teacher, Paul could declare: “I have not shrunk from declaring unto you God’s purpose without reserve.” Paul was ordained by God to be an apostle and a preacher and teacher to the Gentiles, as he illustrates in 1 Timothy 2:7 and 2 Timothy 2:11. Additionally, in Galatians 2, he declares he has been appointed by God to preach the Gospel.

As a teacher, Paul was commissioned by God to unveil the unsearchable riches of Christ. Yet, Paul’s ministry was both unique and powerful because:

- 1) He was separated from God BEFORE his conversion. (See Galatians 1:15)
- 2) He was separated unto Christ AT his conversion. (See Acts 9:15)
- 3) He was separated by the Holy Spirit AFTER his conversion. (See Acts 13:2)

Humanly speaking, despite his superior education, he was a most unlikely channel through which God would reveal Himself. In 2 Corinthians 10:10, Paul quoted his critics slandering him by saying that “his letters are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech is contemptible.” Paul had indeed been battered and scarred because of persecution and an unknown cause that he referenced as a “thorn in the flesh” in 2 Corinthians 12:7. This unknown cause of pain and suffering Paul referenced could recall stigmata, which are wounds or marks that appear, much like Christ’s own wounds from his death on the cross.

By Paul’s own assessment, he also did not amount to much as an orator. For example, in 1 Corinthians 2:1 and 2:4 he claims, “I did not come to you with eloquence or philosophy” and “my preaching did not sway you with subtle arguments.” However, despite his physical frailty, Paul’s words were accompanied with the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, transforming him into the most powerful teacher the world has ever known.

Paul definitely knew the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and understood what it was to be filled with the Spirit. See Ephesians 5:18. He said, “I came to you in the demonstration of the power of the Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 2:4) By viewing Paul this way, it is evident that God can use the most unlikely person for his glory. Jesus even chose simple fisherman as his disciples for his earthly ministry!

So why was Paul such a great teacher? Because God revealed Himself to Paul as He did to no other man. For three years while alone in the desert of Arabia, God emptied him of the flesh and poured Himself into him,

revealing the deep counsels of His heart. Paul experienced both imprisonment and house arrest in his ministry for God as well. Paul assured his audiences that these revelations were not human invention, rather God-given revelations. Some of the counsels Paul received from God include: (1) The structure of the local church and its functions and purposes, (2) The pre-tribulation rapture of the church, and (3) The explanation of the Lord's Supper.

Paul's Ministry: His Teaching and Conviction

Paul was a defender of the "faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." See Jude 3. He was also extremely zealous of the deity and pre-eminence of Christ, as evidenced when reading through Paul's epistles written from prison, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Paul also guarded, protected, and defended the Scriptures against false teachers.

"All scripture is given by inspiration." (2 Timothy 3:16) Paul believed the Scriptures to be God-breathed as well as His final message to mankind. Scripture was not to be viewed as simply a textbook for believers, but the ultimate authority in matters of faith, conduct, and doctrine! They were "profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be mature thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Paul's Method of Teaching: Oral and Practical

Paul believed in discipleship. Note how he nurtured Timothy, calling him his "son in the faith," (Philippians 2:22) and the intimacy and care he had for him that is expressed in his letters. Paul's relationship with Titus is also noteworthy in Titus 1:4, calling him "my son." He

taught these young men the whole counsel of God, took them on his missionary journeys, and as they matured he sent them out as God's messengers to the saints. Eventually he commissioned them to teach the truths they had heard from him "before many witnesses to faithful men," who in time would be able to teach others as well. See 2 Timothy 2:2. Other models similar to this in the Old Testament Scriptures include Moses training Joshua and Elisha apprenticing and shadowing Elijah.

Paul's Dealing with Error

Paul refers to believers as "ye which are spiritual" in Galatians 6:1, warning them about transgression and temptation. He was fearless when he dealt with error amongst God's people. Paul warned against those "that are unruly" in 2 Thessalonians 3, and encouraged believers to "mark them that arouse divisions" in Romans 16. He equally abhorred false teachers that came from the outside, calling them "grievous wolves not sparing the flock" in Acts 20:29. He also warned of ambitious leaders within the church who would draw some away to follow them. Take for example 3 John, where he condemned Diotrephes, a false teacher and leader in the church.

Paul also hated immorality. In 1 Corinthians 5:6-13, Paul compared old leaven to evil people mixed in among the believers. He told the Corinthians to "purge out the old leaven," "put away that wicked person from among you," and "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh." Paul then spoke about the restoration of believers in 2 Corinthians 5:3-8, claiming, "we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord...for we must all appear before the

judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body." Paul believed in a pure church and taught absolute unity and purity in the church. In 2 Timothy 2:19-20 Paul exhorted believers to "depart from iniquity."

So did Paul practice what he preached? In Philippians 1:21, Paul declared, "for me to live is Christ." He displayed fruits of the Spirit and exercised discipline as shown in 1 Corinthians 9:26: "I keep under control the lusts of my body. I therefore so run with a purpose in mind. I so fight not as one that beats the air." Paul gave up all earthly honors that he may have Christ. See Philippians 3. We can see an example of this in Moses' ministry as well. He was also strong in his ministry to the end, serving the Lord until his death, even before entering the Promised Land and before receiving any earthly glory. Paul's life exemplified this too. He was so orderly and disciplined that very close to death he wrote: "I am now ready to be offered." "I have fought a good fight." "I have finished my course." "I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness." In his exemplary life Paul spoke to every generation, past, present and future. Three times he wrote and appealed to his readers to "be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." See 1 Corinthians 11:1.

Paul's Teaching: Spiritual Gifts

Paul taught that each believer was given a spiritual gift at his or her new birth, and we, as believers, have no choice in this. These gifts come from two sources. First, Ephesians 4:11-12 shows how Paul viewed believers as gifted distinctively to be evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The risen Lord gave these gifts and these men

to the church for its growth, both spiritually and numerically. The Evangelist has a burning passion for the lost, while the Pastor has a deep compassion for the saints, and the Teacher has an unbridled desire to reach others with the pure, uncluttered, unadulterated principles of the Word. The risen Head ultimately gives those gifted men to the church.

Secondly, Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12 that the Holy Spirit bestows gifts for service to men. These permanent spiritual gifts given by the Spirit are... (1) The gift of ministering or helps.

(2) The gift of administration or ruling.

(3) The gift of exhortation.

(4) The gift of giving.

(5) The gift of showing mercy.

(6) The gift of faith.

These six gifts of the Spirit combined with the three roles given by the risen Lord are necessary for the well being of the Church. What is your gift?

Conclusion and Challenge

Paul was a man zealous for God and nothing could deter him! In 2 Corinthians 4:1-4 we see this passion for the “light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.” He taught not only by his life, but also by his words. He was also determined to preach the Gospel in the “regions beyond.” (2 Corinthians 10:16) Furthermore, Paul separated himself from the world in order to take the Gospel to these places. He spoke of this separation in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, saying, “do not be unequally yoked

with unbelievers” and “come out and be separate from them.”

The result of Paul’s uncompromising stand and Herculean effort was that when he died thirty years later, there was a Christian church for the worship of God in every major city of the Western Roman Empire! He also desired to teach in every church everywhere, and his exemplary life should be an example to us. See 1 Corinthians 4:17. For instance, while a believer can be excused from public participation and active service if he does not have the mental ability or physical strength, no follower of the Lord can be excused if he does not have zeal for the things of God! If a believer’s heart is not aflame with red-hot passion for the Savior, he stands condemned.

Jesus said, “The zeal of your house has consumed me.” (John 2:17) Note the zeal of John the Baptist in his exalting of Jesus in John 3:22-36. His passion for and devotion to Jesus is like a shining light to others around him. We can consider zeal for God as being expressed in various ways. First, there is front line confrontation with the enemy. Second, if you cannot fight in the valley with Joshua, you can still pray like Moses, Aaron and Hur on the mountain in Exodus 17. Thirdly, if you cannot preach or fight, you can cry and sigh and pray in the sanctuary.

God is looking for men who are completely turned over to the control of the Spirit, like Paul. Here are some examples of this kind of zeal from some exemplary people in history:

C.T. Studd said, “Some want to live within the sound of the church or chapel bell. I wan to run a rescue ship within a yard of hell.”

John Wesley said, "Give me a hundred men who love God with all their hearts and who fear nothing but sin and I will move the nation."

Jim Elliot wrote, "Saturate me with the oil of your Spirit that I may be a flame for you," and "God I pray you light those little sticks of my life, that I may burn for you. Consume my life, my God, for it is yours. I seek not a long life but a full one, like yours, Lord Jesus."

Paul, the teacher, urges us by precept and example to present our bodies to God in Romans 12:1-2. How many of us will surrender our bodies to the Lord today?

The Imprisonment and Defense of Paul

Acts 21:17—28:31

This last section of the Acts deals almost exclusively with the Apostle Paul. We do not see the church except for a few verses at the beginning and then a few verses at the end. If we are to learn of the church—its structure and function we must learn from Paul as a representative member of the Church. He is a typical priest in action so we learn of our own priesthood in a living way. We also see the authority and power of our priesthood. There are three main parts to this section.

1. Conflict—Civil, Religious and Christian authority 21:17-23:35 (At Jerusalem)
2. Conflict—Civil vs. Christian authority 24:1-26:32 (At Cesarea)
3. Paul's priesthood—27:1-28:31 (At sea)

At Jerusalem

Authority and power are two of the most basic issues of human life. Parents have authority over children; employers over employees; Governors over citizens, etc. Often authority is founded on power in this world. The strong rule. Sometimes power is controlled by authority. Both are also basic to the Holy Scriptures. God rules with authority and power. Every day of our lives we are involved with this struggle. So was the Apostle Paul.

When he and his party arrived in Jerusalem they were well received (21:17). There was a meeting with the

elders (verse 18) in which Paul told of God's working in power and authority among the Gentiles (verse 19). The church then made a request of Paul aimed at appeasing the Jews. Paul was to join others that had a vow. He was to go to the temple, shave his head and offer the proper sacrifice (verses 20-24). It was to prove that Paul did keep the law (verse 24). The Gentiles however were not bound to do so (verse 25). It seems a strange compromise of true authority to that of religion. Paul obeyed. Rule in the church is not one of force but of submission. It was this act that led to Paul's imprisonment and trials. God works in every situation. His power is not like man's though much needless grief results from man's rebellion.

Paul was taken by force (power) on a charge (authority) of defiling the temple (verses 27-28). Here is religious power at it's worst. Deceit and force are the root of it all. The noise was so great that the civil rulers interceded (verses 31-33). Here was another form of authority. It too was based on force. Ignorance was also basic as there was no knowledge of the facts. There was only an abstract idea of law and justice. It was less emotional than religious rule but more physically powerful. So we see a great clash between Rome, Jerusalem and Heaven.

On each side we see the priesthood of believers. The Jews, Romans and Christians all believed in different things. Each one did the job of a priest. They sacrificed by laying their lives on the line (or Paul's). They interceded as when the Captain rescued Paul. In doing so they proclaimed blessing too. We too are priests of God. We are not toys for men to play with. We must live

in God's authority and power as we minister to the world.

The word of the Jew was confused (verse 34). The word of Rome was commanding (verse 33) and ignorant (verse 38). Paul by contrast spoke with an authority that was submissive (verse 27, 39), quiet (verse 40), and truthful (22:1-21). As always God's rule is rebelled at. When He speaks the response of the world is force and deceit (verses 22-24). Religion opposes head-on (verse 22) and civil rule opposes indirectly seeking more information (verse 24). Notice the power of each—religion; "...not fit that he should live." (verse 22); civil; "...examined by scourging..." (verse 24). By contrast God's power is seen in seeming weak things. Paul speaks (verse 25) and it is enough to overcome (verse 26). Paul was in control here for he was God's priest.

But the world doesn't give up so easily. Rebels never do. Chapter 23 continues the spiritual warfare. Once again Paul speaks (23:1) and religion answers with force (verse 2). Paul responded with strong words (verse 3) but also submitted to God's word when it worked against him (verse 5). The result was a great defeat of the evil purpose of these men (verses 7-9). Once again the civil rule intercedes to assert its authority over both (verse 10). It was the authority of force.

That night God spoke to Paul to comfort him (verse 11). He did not promise miraculous release. Nor did He promise any let up in physical suffering. He did promise that Paul would represent Him in Rome. To know God's will is His leading, strengthening and enabling. He does not live to serve us. We live to serve Him.

The Jews rebellion continues with a plot to kill Paul (verses 12-15). It is the same kind of force we saw in 22:22. As before, God's priest has nothing to worry about. God's power (in this case Paul's nephew) is greater (verse 16). He told Paul who sent him to the Captain (verse 17). The Captain was not about to submit to the Jews rule so he made plans for Paul to be sent away (verses 23-24). Notice the Captains trust in deception (verse 22) and military might (verse 23). The Captain got rid of his problem by referring both parties to the Governor (verse 30). The battle is now fought at a higher level of civil authority.

At Cesarea

The civil rule is clearly winning over the religious but Paul, in quietness, rules over all. Felix the Governor calls a trial when the Jews arrive (24:1-22). The Jews spoke first (verses 2-9). Their speech was more polite at this higher level but their authority was based on flowery words (verse 2) and emotional deceit (verses 5-8). There is no specific charge nor evidence produced.

Paul then spoke in clear, simple words (verses 10-21). His story was true and bare. There were no denials of his faith (verse 14). There was a challenge of truth (verses 13-20). The result was another victory for Paul (verse 22). Felix had no adequate knowledge (verse 22)—only God does—so he kept Paul in prison with privileges (verse 23). Paul and Felix talked together of the truth (verses 24-25). God's word was so powerful that Felix trembled. But his motives were less than pure. The world is corrupt and so are its rulers (verse 26). Paul remained like that for two years until a new Governor came (verse 27). God's rule was not under

Rome's power. Paul was right where God wanted him. The two-year confinement was no setback for Paul.

With a new Governor came a new hope for the Jews (25:1-5). Such is the world's struggle for power. Again Paul is brought to trial (verse 6) and these three forces meet. The Jews effort was as before (verse 7). Paul again speaks with confidence for God's rule is over all and therefore not against any. His priests have power and authority the world knows nothing of. We can afford to be humble and submissive.

Festus, the Governor, would not submit to God so he offered to give Paul over to the Jews (verse 9). It had nothing to do with justice and everything to do with politics. But it was the wrong direction for Paul. God's will was Rome not Jerusalem so again Paul speaks (verses 10-11) and God's will is done (verse 12).

Next, Paul has to face a King (verse 13, 22-23). While his authority was greater than the Governor he had no real jurisdiction in this area. Also, Paul had appealed to the highest Roman authority—Caesar—so Agrippa has no real sway here. There still were no charges against Paul (verses 26-27). Such is the shaky ground of civil rule. Paul states his case (26:1-23) in the same way as before—plain and true. This brings more opposition to God's authority, which is truth (verse 24). Paul would not be overcome by a lesser authority so he continued to press home his truth with power (verse 27, 29). Paul (a prisoner) could wish the King and Governor to be like him except for the chains. Truly he lived in God's Kingdom. Both civil rulers had to admit that Paul was innocent (verse 31). They would have set him free (verse 32) but God's will was Caesar.

At Sea

It becomes increasingly clear that Paul's witness and his gospel were not some religious doctrine. They were his life. He was a priest of the most high God. Everything was, for Paul, service to his Lord. Every event was a chance to witness and to serve as priest. It is this that we must learn in order to be faithful witnesses and to see souls won for Christ.

The rest of the book tells of Paul's voyage to Rome (27:1). Most of it takes place at sea. From this point on Paul seems to be more and more in charge of all things. He is constantly interceding and blessing others. His life is in constant danger, offered as a living sacrifice. The civil and the religious rule can never stand before the Christian.

The voyage has a good beginning (verses 2-8) without real danger. Things were about to change so Paul intercedes with words of authority (verse 10). We are not told how Paul knew of the impending trouble except that he "perceived" it. Still, the Centurion would not bow to God's rule (verse 11) but would rather serve his own comfort (verse 12). They sailed for Phenice (verse 13).

True to Paul's word a storm hit (verses 14-20) causing much loss and fear of life. Even the forces of nature seemed to resist Paul's obedience to God's will. Again Paul has to intercede (verses 21-26). He pronounced words of blessing in the form of an encouragement upon the ship's crew. God has spoken (verses 23-24) assuring that His will would not fail. Paul told of his faith in God's revelation (verse 25).

The storm continued (verse 27) and the sailors grew afraid (verse 29). They made plans to desert and save themselves at the expense of the others (verse 30). They used deceit to get their way. It was a desperate attempt to set up their own rule of life. But God was not so easily overthrown. Paul again intercedes (verse 31). Upon his authority the soldiers cut the ropes (verse 32). Paul continues to speak with authority (verses 33-35). He tells them to eat and he eats with them, giving thanks to God. He followed God and they followed him. It is a picture of Christian priesthood in action.

The shipwreck that Paul had foretold now came to pass (verses 40-41). The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners (verse 42) for fear of the civil rulers but they were stopped because of the Centurion's regard for Paul (verse 43). The result was that all were safe. None died and none escaped. God had done all that He had said through Paul. The ships crew was prepared by encouragement and food. The soldiers and sailors were spared as Paul continually exercised his priesthood. This is the great example of Paul for us today. We too are priests of God.

Once again nature seems to rebel as Paul is bitten by a poisonous snake (28:3). The local people who were so kind to the shipwreck victims thought it was God's judgment on Paul (verse 4). Paul was preserved from any harm (verses 5-6) so the locals went to the other extreme and said Paul was a God. It is one of the dangers of an effective priest. He becomes what he only represents. Still Paul continued to bless the local people with healing (verses 8-9). The kind locals responded with respect and provisions. It was a more proper response to God's priests.

They continued on by ship until arriving at Puteoli (verse 13) where they found some fellow-priests (believers) (verse 14). These men desired Christian fellowship so Paul and the rest stayed seven days before continuing to Rome. Every priest is part of the larger priesthood so such a stop was inevitable. By this time it seems even the Centurion was content to do what Paul wanted. Still, God's will must prevail so they left for Rome.

Another meeting with fellow-priests (believers) took place (verse 15). This time it was Paul who was blessed with encouragement. These believers knew how to function as priests too. They were not limited to a certain building or to formal times of meetings.

So they arrived at Rome (verse 16). God's authority had prevailed. His power had overcome. Intercession and benediction were constantly carried on at great sacrifice of self for Paul. We begin to see priesthood as involving great humility and the knowledge of God's will. Of all the prisoners it was Paul who was allowed the freedom of house arrest only. Surely his God was in control.

Paul immediately sets to work. He calls the local Jews to meet with them and explain the situation (verses 17-21). These men knew nothing except there were bad reports about the Christians (verse 22). The world's rebellion continues in a false authority and power. Still, Paul ministered God's word to them and some believed (verses 23-29). His authority was still true and powerful. He spoke strong words (verses 26-28). The Jews didn't know what to think because they had accepted a different rule and lived in rebellion to God.

Paul preached for two years in Rome (verse 30). It was in his own hired house. Paul was still paying his own

way and not looking for any handouts. He received all that came because God's priest is to be a blessing to the whole world. The blessing was all in Christ's name (verse 31). So the Acts ends with God's rule strong and active. In fact it says "...no man forbidding him" (verse 31).

The challenge here for us seems to be to practice our priesthood as did Paul. His authority was God's word. His power was the Holy Spirit. It was always unseen to natural man for Paul was meek and submissive at all times. He respected all men but feared none. He knew God's will and would do it at any cost to himself. He was a living sacrifice. He offered praise and his own substance to God. He interceded constantly for men and blessed them abundantly, all because he remained separate from false authority and power. Will we do so too?