

Acts: Recovering a Way Forward

A Study of the book of Acts: The Rev. Jeffrey S. Miller

Why Acts?

I. Nothing New – Ecclesiastes 1:9-11

II. The Church is Broken

II. Understanding How We Got Here...

A. The 19th, 20th, 21st Centuries (Austen, Dickens, Huxley)

III. The Post-Modern World

A. Relativism – What is truth? (John 18:33-38)

B. Multiculturalism – “Tolerance”

C. Secularism – “Carl Sagan”

D. Philosophical Humanism – “A Facebook Society”

1. Materialism – “He who dies with most toys wins”

2. Pragmatism – “It works for me”

“All of this corresponds with the microchip revolution, which has generated and sustained a world in which creating new apparent realities, living in one’s private world, and telling one’s own story, even though it does not cohere with anybody else’s story, becomes easier and easier. This, on one level, is what the Internet is all about. We live in a cultural, economic, moral, and even religious smorgasbord. Pick-n-mix is the order of the day.”

-- N.T. Wright

IV. Old is New Again... First Century Greco-Roman Culture

A. Relativistic

B. Multicultural

C. Secular

D. Obsessed with Self

E. Materialistic

F. Spread Thin.... (Lacking Social Identity)

V. The Church changed this World

A. Edward Gibbon

B. Wil Durant

VI. How does the Church Do it Again?

A. 2 Chronicles 33:1-23; 34: 14-33

Acts 1:1-11 Basic Information

I. Second Volume

II. Authorship

A. Luke? (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16)

III. Date?

A. circa AD 63

B. No reference to later events...

1. Persecution under Nero

2. Apostles’ martyrdom

3. Destruction of Jerusalem

4. No reference to Verdict of Paul’s Trial

IV. Purpose:

A. Historical Record

B. Blueprint

C. Give Encouragement to Persecuted

Acts 1:1-11: Essential Elements of Christian Witness in Any Age.

I. The Acts of Jesus – Acts 1:1

II. Apostolic Witness – Acts 1:8

A. Matthew 16:19; 18:18

B. John 14:12-14

C. Mark 3:14-19

III. An Historical Faith – V3

A. Jesus of History vs Christ of Faith

IV. A Missionary Faith – vv7-8

V. The Return of Christ! – vv11

Acts: Recovering a Way Forward

I. The Kingdom!

A. A Central Theme

1. The Ministry Of John – Matthew 3:2; Mark 1:15

2. The Testimony of the Lord

a. Matthew 9:35 – The Message

b. Matthew 5:1ff – An Actual Sermon

c. Mark 4:26ff -- Pictures of the Kingdom

d. John 18:36ff – A Claim to Kingship

e. A Deadly Serious Message

What kind of a Kingdom?

- I. A Profound Misunderstanding: Acts 1:6
 - A. The Disciples' Post-Resurrection Expectations
 1. Physical Kingdom – “restore”
 2. Ethnically Restricted Kingdom -- “Israel”
 3. Geographically Restricted Kingdom – “Jerusalem”
- II. A Shocking Revelation!!
 - A. A Spiritual Kingdom – Acts 1:5
 - B. A Powerful Kingdom -- Acts 1:8
 - C. A Kingdom of Truth – John 18:36-37*
 1. Hymn #555
 2. Witnesses – “to know”
 - D. A Worldwide Kingdom – 1:8
 - E. A Mandated Kingdom – 1:8 (Mark 16:15)
 - F. Getting the Adam Project back on Course

Acts 1:12-26: A Time of Preparation

- I. A Ten-Day Wait!
 - A. A Time to be Obedient -- V4
 - B. A Time for Fellowship – VV 13-14
 1. Hebrews 10:25
 - C. A Time For Prayer – V14
 - D. A Time for Study – V16
 1. Luke 24:32
 2. Joel 2:28-32
 - E. A Time to Choose Leaders – VV 15ff

The Day of Pentecost: Acts 2:1-13

A Promise Fulfilled!

- I. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit
 - A. A Person not a Power!
 1. Nicene Creed – “Lord and giver of Life”
 2. *ekeinos* – (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8,13,14)
 3. Simon the Sorcerer – Acts 8:9-24

4. The Unforgivable Sin – Mark 3:28-30

B. The Work of the Holy Spirit

1. Wind (Ruach, Pneuma)
 - a.. Genesis 2:7
 - b. Ezekiel 37:1-14
 - c. John 20:22
 - d. John 3:5-8
2. Fire
 - a. Symbol of God's Presence
 - i. Genesis 15:17 (Abraham)
 - ii. Exodus 13:21 (Pillar of Fire)
 - iii. Exodus 19:18 (God on Sinai)
 - b. What does fire do?
 - i. Illuminates – John 8:1-11
 - ii. Warms – John Wesley
3. Tongues
 - a. What about *glossolalia*?
 - i. Acts 2
 - ii. I Corinthians 12 and 14:1ff
 - iii. A Way Forward with Tongues
 - * Test the Spirits – I John 4:1 and I Corinthians 12:3
 - * Many gifts and tongues are just one
 - * The gifts of the Spirit for a purpose: Edification and Unity
 - * Tongues low on the list of Spiritual Gifts – I Cor 12:28-14:12
 - * Fraught with Danger/ Needs safeguarding – I Cor 14:13-38
 - b. What's the difference between the Baptism and the Filling of the Holy Spirit?

A Fiery Sermon that Started a Blaze

Acts 2:14-41

“The effect was wonderful... Change was soon made in the manners of our inhabitants. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if the whole world were growing religious, so that one could not walk thro' the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street!”

--Benjamin Franklin on George Whitefield

A Model for Evangelism:

I. Biblically-based Sermon

A. Isaiah 55:11; Isaiah 40:8

B. Luke 24:13-26

C. A Three Text Sermon

1. Joel 2:28-29 (Acts 2:17-18)

2. Psalm 16:10 (Acts 2:27)

3. Psalm 110:1 (Acts 2:34-35)

II. A Christ-centered Sermon

A. What is Christianity?

B. Acts 2:22-39

1. His Ministry -- V22

2. His Atoning Death – V23 (Revelation 13:8)

3. His Burial and Resurrection – V24; 29-32

4. His Ascension – V33

5. His Present Ministry -- Pentecost

In Greek: Kerygma

III. Fearless Preaching!

IV. An Eminently Reasonable Address!

A. Acts 17:2; Acts 18:4

Acts 2:42-47

A Model Church

I. A Learning and Studying Church – Acts 2:42; I Cor 12:28

A. The *Apostolic* Teaching

1. John 14:12-14

B. Evidence of Apostolic Witness

1. Acts 2:43

2. 2 Corinthians 12:12

3. The Holy Scriptures

a. Catholicity

b. Orthodoxy

c. Antiquity

d. Apostolicity (The Creed)

C. Where did they Study the Scriptures?

1. Home Groups...

II. A Fellowshiping Church – Acts 2:42

A. *koinonia*

1. I John 1:3

III. A Worshipping Church

A. Acts 2:42, 46

B. Worth-ship and Doxology

1. In Spirit

2. In Truth

“As long as you notice, and have to count, the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance. A good shoe is a shoe you don’t notice. Good reading becomes possible when you need not consciously think about eyes, or light, or print, or spelling. The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God.” -- C.S. Lewis

IV. A Generous Church – Acts 2:44-45

A. Communism?

1. Acts 5:3-4

B. Socialism?

C. Something Else?

1. Luke 12:15; Acts 20:35

2. I Chronicles 29:10-14

3. I Corinthians 12:12-27

V. A Witnessing and Evangelizing Church – Acts 2:47

A. In their Various Vocations

B. Colossians 3:15-17

Acts 3:1-26: Silver and gold have I none...

I. The first RECORDED miracle.

A. Signs and Wonders – Acts 2:43

“You are probably right in thinking that you will never see a miracle done... They come on great occasions: they are found at the great ganglions of history – not of political or social history, but of that spiritual history which cannot be fully known by men. If your own life does not happen to be near one of these great ganglions, how should you expect to see one? If we were heroic missionaries, apostles, or martyrs, it would be a different matter. But why you or I? Unless you

live near a railway, you will not see trains go past your windows. How likely is it that you or I will be present when a peace-treaty is signed, when a great scientific discovery is made, when a dictator commits suicide? That we should see a miracle is even less likely. Nor, if we understand, shall we be anxious to do so. Nothing almost sees miracles but misery. Miracles and martyrdoms tend to bunch about the same areas of history – areas we have naturally no wish to frequent.”-- C.S. Lewis

II. Why is this particular miracle recorded?

- A. Occasion of Peter’s Second Sermon
- B. Occasion of First Persecution of the Church

III. Peter’s Second Address

- A. Carpe Diem!
- B. Christ centered NOT Peter focused
- C. Acknowledging our manifold sins...
 - 1. VV13-15
- D. A Call to Repentance --
 - 1. Acts 3:19 (Flee)
- E. Reasons to Repent...
 - 1. “Sins may be blotted out” – v19
 - a. Whatever happened to sin?

“Sin was once a word on everyone’s mind, but it is now rarely if ever heard. Does that mean that no sin is involved in our troubles? Has no one committed sin? Where, indeed, did sin go?... Many former sins have become crimes and therefore the responsibility of the state. Others are now classified as sicknesses, and as a result a psychiatrist and their medications deal with these sins. Something called ‘collective responsibility,’ has made it possible to transfer sin from our own responsibility to the society as a whole...”

“But sin is an aggressive quality – a ruthlessness, a hurting, a breaking away from God and from the rest of humanity, a partial alienation, or act of rebellion... Sin has a willful, defiant or disloyal quality: someone is defied or hurt.”-- Dr. Karl Menninger

E. Reasons to Repent...

- 1. “Sins may be blotted out” – v19
- 2. “That times of refreshing may come...” – v19
- 3. “To you first of all...” – V26

Acts 4:1-12 “No good deed goes unpunished”

I. Expect Persecution

- A. Mark 13:9-11
- B. John 15:18-21

II. “Zion Stands by Hills Surrounded”

- A. The Christians are Few
- B. The Enemy is Numerous 4:1-6
 - 1. Priests – V1
 - 2. Captain of the Temple Guard – V1
 - 3. Sadducees – V1
 - 4. Rulers – V5
 - 5. Elders – V5
 - 6. Teachers of the Law – V5
 - 7. Annas – V6
 - 8. Caiaphas – V6
 - 9. John, Alexander, other members of High Priest’s family

III. Why Were the Rulers Upset?

- 1. “Teaching the People” – V2
 - A. Matthew 7:29; Mark 1:21-22
 - B. John 7:32, 45-49
- 2. Teaching about Jesus
- 3. Teaching about Jesus’ Resurrection!
 - A. Acts 23:6-9

IV. The World’s Weapons

- 1. Intimidation – Acts 4:3
- 2. Threats – VV 18, 21
- 3. Imprisonment – V3
- 4. Death...

V. Stamping out a Forest Fire...

- 1. V4

VI. The Apostles' Response

- A. "Filled with the Holy Spirit" – V8
 - 1. 2 Kings 6:8-17; 2 Chronicles 32:1-8
- B. Carpe Diem! (2 Timothy 4:16-17)
 - 1. They were guilty of crucifying the Lord – v10
 - 2. Jesus rose from the dead – v10
 - 3. The purpose of God can't be thwarted – V11
 - 4. In Christ Alone is Salvation – V12

VI. The Name!

- A. V7 – BY what Name?
- B. V10 – BY the Name of JESUS!
- C. V12 – NO other Name by which men may be saved!
- D. V17 – Speak NO More in THIS Name!

Acts 4:13-22: Civil Disobedience

(Disobedience changed history, ex. Rosa Parks)

I. A Question of Authority!

- A. Genesis 9:1-7; Romans 13:1; Ephesians 6:1
 - 1. The Function of Government
 - a. Restrain sin -- Genesis 6:5

"God establishes government and gives it the sword to hold wantonness in check, lest violence and other sins proceed without limit." – Martin Luther

II. The Problem Facing the Sanhedrin...

- A. V13 – Courage of Unschooled Men
- B. V14 – They could not deny the Miracle!
 - 1. *anastasis*

III. The Sanhedrin's Solution...

- A. Stop It!! (Naked authority)

IV. How Should the Christian Respond?

- A. Monastic Option (God's Authority, Caesar's Denied)
 - 1. St. Simeon Stylites (390 AD – 459 AD)
 - 2. Amish
 - 3. Contrary to Great Commission!
- B. The Secular Option (Caesar Alone, God Denied)
 - 1. No means of calling State to Account (Nazis, Stalin, etc)

2. Might makes Right?

- C. The Cowardly Option (God and Caesar, but Caesar first)
 - 1. The Position of Pontius Pilate – Matthew 27:19
 - 2. "Nuremberg Defense"
 - 3. Called to expose works of darkness -- Eph 5:11; I Tim 5:20
- D. Biblical Option (God and Caesar, but God First)
 - 1. John 19:11

Acts 4:23-37: What to do in Times of Trouble

I. Take it to the Brethren

- A. Galatians 6:2

II. Take it to the Lord

- A. I Peter 5:7

*What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!*

III. The Right Kind of Worship

- A. Prayerful Worship (We Talk to God)
- B. Scriptural Worship (God speaks to us)
 - 1. Psalm 2
- C. Scriptural Prayer and Prayerful Study of Scripture
 - 1. Luke 24:13-35
 - a. Jesus opened the Scriptures – v32
 - b. Jesus Opened their Eyes – v31
 - c. Jesus opened their minds – v45

IV. Get on with the Work...

- A. "They were one in mind" – V32
 - 1. John 17:20-23
- B. "They had everything in common" – V32
- C. "They testified to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" –V33

Acts 5:1-11 Ananias and Sapphira

- I. Severe Punishment for Trivial Offense?
 - A. lex talionis, Code of Hammurabi – 1754 BC
- II. Two Other Examples...
 - A. Leviticus 10:1-2
 - B. 2 Samuel 6:3-8, I Chronicles 13:5-11
- III. How are we to regard these things?
 - A. Periods of New Beginnings...
 - B. No room for Compromise....
- IV. An Illuminating Contrast, Barnabas and Ananias
 - A. NO perfect Church...
- V. Peter's Reply to Ananias
 - A. Right to Ownership
 1. Exodus 20:15
 - B. The devil made me do it?
 1. I Peter 5:8-9; Luke 22:3; John 13:27
 2. If you're not catching flak...
 3. Resisting the devil...
 - a. James 4:7
 - C. Sin is ALWAYS against God
 1. Psalm 51
- VI. The Sin of Sapphira
 - A. V2 – “with his wife's knowledge”
 - B. No Excuses!
 1. C.S. Lewis on Morality
- VII. Consequences of Sin are felt by all...
 - A. V11 – ekklesia
 - B. Acts 2:42-47 VS Acts 5:11-13

Acts 5:12-42

A Pattern for the Church today...

- I. Believers Alone and Believers in the World
 - A. Acts 1 – The Church alone
 - B. Acts 2 – The Church engaging the World
 - C. Acts 2:42 – The Church alone
 - D. Acts 3-4:22 – The Church engaging the World

1. Experiencing Persecution
 - E. Acts 4:23-37 – The Church alone
 - F. Acts 5:1ff – The Church and the World
- II. A Necessary Balance
 - A. Church in the World but NOT of the World.
- III. Acts 5:12-42 – Two Main Sections
 - A. Restoration and Blessing – Acts 5:11-16
 1. A Difficult time
 2. God had not forsaken them
 - a. vv12-16
 - B. Opposition to the Gospel – Acts 5:17-42
 1. Catching flak
 - A. The Name of Jesus
 - B. The Resurrection – V17
 - C. Jealousy – V17
 1. Jealous that it was not their name
 2. Jealous that they could not do the works
 - a. Acts 13
- IV. Persecution Escalates!
 - A. Detained and warned – Acts 4:18
 - B. Arrested and Beaten – 5:40
 - C. Arrested and Facing Prospect of Death – 5:33ff
- V. The Officials are afraid – v26!
 - A. Anger is *often* an indicator of fear!
 1. John 8:56-59; John 10:27-36 (Angry enough to stone)
 2. Afraid of what?
 - a. V28 (Matthew 27:24-25)
- VI. The Accusations made against the Apostles
 - A. You have disobeyed our orders! – V28
 - B. You have filled Jerusalem with this teaching – v28
 - C. You have made us guilty of this man's blood – v 28
- VI. Peter's Response
 - A. Need to be obedient to God! – 4:18-19; 5:29
 - B. Kerygma not Didache
 1. The Crucifixion – v30
 2. The Resurrection– 30

3. The Ascension – v31

4. The Witness – v32

VII. Gamaliel's sage advice

A. Who was Gamaliel?

1. Acts 22:3

2. Giver of Sound but Worldly Advice

Acts 6:1-7: The First Deacons

I. Growing Pains

A. Acts 2:41; Acts 2:47; Acts 5:14

B. Divisions Arise

1. Aramaic

2. Greek

3. Daily distribution of food

II. Meeting the Challenge

A. The Difference between a Problem and Opportunity?

1. They did not throw complainers out!

2. They did not ignore/shun the complainers!

3. They did not outvote the complainers!

4. They did not leave the complainers!

5. They did not kick the can down the road! (Committee)

B. They Did not Neglect the Word!!

C. They Delegated the Duty

1. To those who were Complaining

III. The First Seven Deacons

A. Stephen – “A man full of faith and the Holy Spirit”

B. Philip – Acts 8; Acts 21:8 (an evangelist)

C. Procorus – Tradition holds early Bishop and martyr

D. Nicanor -- ?

E. Timon -- ?

F. Parmenas -- ?

G. From Antioch and a convert to Judaism

IV. Sound Principles of Church Leadership

A. A Division of Responsibility

1. Ephesians 4:7-13; I Corinthians 12:4-6; Romans 12:4-8

B. A Plurality of Leadership – Acts 13

C. Spiritually Mature People

1. 6:3 Spiritual VS Administrative ability

V. Deaconal Ministry

A. Philippians 2:1-11

B. John 13:12ff

Stephen: The First Christian Martyr

Acts 6:8-7:60

Stephen's Defense:

I. Anticipated Attack -- Mark 13:9-13

II. The climax of history

A. vv 2-8 – The Calling of Abraham

1. God appeared to Abraham in *Mesopotamia* – v2

2. God *Himself* appeared to Abraham.

3. Abraham *remained* a pilgrim even in Canaan.

a. Hebrews 11:10

B. The abuse of Joseph – vv 9-16

1. By His own brethren

2. Humiliated

3. Falsely accused

4. Raised above all

C. The case of Moses the Lawgiver

1. Moses is rejected by Jewish people – Exodus 2

2. God appeared to Moses when he was in Midian

3. Moses was rejected *again* after the Exodus

D. Where God Dwells – vv44-50

1. The Tabernacle

2. Solomon's Temple

3. Rebuilt after Exile

4. Herod's Temple

a. Mark 13: 1-2

b. John 4:20-21

c. Matthew 27:51

E. Three accusations – vv51-53

1. Resisting the Holy Spirit

2. Persecuting and killing prophets as usual

- 3. Breaking Law of Moses as usual
- III. The Result of so bold a witness
 - A. Death!
 - B. At the feet of a man named Saul
 - C. Kicking against the goads – Acts 26:14
 - D. The word never comes back void – Isaiah 55:11
 - E. I Samuel 2:30

Acts 8:1-25 Persecution and God's Power

- I. The Death of Stephen
 - A. Shocked but not Surprised
 - 1. Matthew 24:9
 - B. Persecution spreading beyond leadership...
 - C. Main threat to the Church in First Century
 - 1. Jewish Authorities
 - 2. Rome
 - D. Main threat to Church in Twenty-first Century
 - 1. Secularism
 - 2. Islam
- II. The Church's First serious opponent
 - A. Saul
 - 1. A Jew, a Pharisee, and a Roman citizen
 - 2. A Ravager – V3 (Imperfect tense)
- III. A Romans 8:28 Scenario
 - A. *diesparesan (Greek)*
 - 1. *jezreel*
- IV. Philip in Samaria
 - A. Acts 1:8
 - B. Courageous thing to do
 - 1. Intense Hostility, 722 B.C. (N. Kingdom vs Assyria)
 - a. Half-breeds
 - b. Rival Temple
 - c. Rejected all but Pentateuch
 - C. An "evangelist" and Miracle worker (v7)
 - 1. Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13

Simon Magus: Acts 8:9-25

- I. A Strange Case
 - A. Simon the Great!
 - 1. A magician
 - B. A believer or unbeliever?
 - 1. v13 – "Simon believed and was baptized"
 - a. v21 – "No part in this matter (ministry)" – See Jn 13:8
 - 2. Matthew 15:8/Isaiah 29:13
- II. If Simon was Born Again...
 - A. Warning against "simony"
- III. If Simon was NOT Born Again...
 - A. Lacked a True and Lively Faith...
 - 1. Visible vs Invisible Church – Matthew 13:24-30
- IV. The Holy Spirit a Divine Person not a Power to be Harnessed!
 - A. Pray for Me!
 - B. Pray for YOURSELF! – Luke 15:21

Acts 8:26-40

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

The Calling of Philip

- I. A Deacon and Evangelist
 - A. Acts 6:5; 8:4-5
- II. A Time of Growth and a Widening Stream
 - A. Desert Area
 - 1. God's Ways are Mysterious – Isaiah 55:8
- III. A Chapter in a VERY ancient story...
 - A. Ethiopia
 - 1. Queen of Sheba – I Kings 10:1-13; Matthew 12:42
 - B. A Eunuch – Isaiah 53
- IV. God leapfrogs Philip... Acts 8 vs Acts 9
- V. A Particular Passage
 - A. Isaiah 53
- VI. Baptism...
 - A. A Response to Faith
 - 1. See BCP pg 301
 - 2. N.T. Baptism and O.T. Circumcision

- a. Importance of Confirmation
- B. Necessary to Salvation?
 - 1. Born Again?
 - a. Bishop J.C. Ryle

The Conversion of St. Paul

Acts 9:1-19

The Hound of Heaven

By Francis Thompson (1859–1907)

I FLED Him, down the nights and down the days; I fled Him, down the arches of the years; I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears I hid from Him...

- I. One of the Pillars of the Faith
 - A. Story told three times – Acts 9; Acts 22; Acts 26
- II. Lord Lyttleton And Gilbert West
 - A. Gilbert West (1703-1756)
 - 1. *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*
 - B. George Lyttleton, 1st Baron Lyttleton (1709-1773)
 - 1. *The Conversion of St. Paul*
- III. Saul's history in Judaism
 - A. Well-educated!
 - 1. Fine Secular Education (Acts 17:28)
 - a. Moses – Hebrews 11:24-28
 - 2. Fine Religious Education (Acts 22:3)
 - B. A Patriot and a Zealot!
 - 1. Christianity more than just a nuisance – Matthew 28:11-15
 - 2. Violence justified – Numbers 25
- IV. God's Preparation of Saul
 - A. Acts 26:14
 - 1. Acts 7:56-60
- V. Damascus Road!
 - A. Concern for Growth of Christianity
 - B. Encountering the Risen Christ!
 - C. I once was Blind!
 - D. Now I See
 - 1. Ananias

- VI. What are the Options?
 - A. Paul an Impostor?
 - 1. What did he have to gain?
 - B. Paul an Enthusiast?
 - 1. A Skeptic
 - C. Paul Deceived?
 - 1. By Whom?
- VII. Be encouraged!

Acts 9:19-31

Paul's first Preaching

- I. The Basis of a Balanced Christian Life
 - A. Acts 9:5 – “Who are you Lord?”
 - B. Acts 22:10 – “What shall I do?”
 - 1. Acts 9:20 – “At once he began to preach...”
- II. The Necessity of the New Birth
 - A. John 3:1ff
 - B. I Peter 1:23
- III. The Cry of New Birth!
 - A. Verbal Witness – Romans 10:9; Matthew 10:32-33
 - 1. Personal NOT Private!
- IV. A Time of Growth and Maturation Was Required...
 - A. Galatians 1:11-18
- V. The Message Saul Proclaimed
 - A. Jesus is THE Son of God
 - 1. John 1:1-5, 14; John 5:16-18; Matt 16:13ff
 - 2. The great Trilemma!
 - B. Jesus is the Christ/Messiah!
 - 1. Prophets (Hebrews 1:1-2)
 - 2. Priests (Hebrews 9:11-14) (BCP 334)
 - 3. King (Psalm 110, Matthew 22:43-46)
- VI. No Good Deed Goes Unpunished....
 - A. Inevitable Persecution
 - 1. The Jews – v23
 - 2. Fellow Believers -- V26
 - B. The kind of People God Saves...

1. Christopher Pike
2. William J. Murray
3. Chuck Colson

C. One man who dared...

1. Barnabas – v27 (Acts 4:36-37)

VII. Preparation for Lifelong Ministry

A. Acts 9:19,23 and 2 Corinthians 11:24ff

1. Leaves Jerusalem to seek Fugitives
2. Returns a Fugitive

B. Worth it all!!!

1. Romans 8:18; I Corinthians 2:9

Acts 9:32-43

“Meanwhile, back at the Ranch...”

I. One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism... One Task

- A. Acts 1-11 PETER
- B. Acts 13-28 PAUL
- C. Acts 9-12 PETER and PAUL

II. Historical Dialectic

A. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

1. Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis
2. Ferdinand Bauer
 - a. Peter vs Paul = Catholicism

III. Peter is first Apostle to Gentiles!

1. Lydda – vv32-35 (Reminiscent of Mark 2:1-9)
2. Joppa (Joffa)
 - a. Dorcas (Reminiscent of John 11 and Mark 5:21-43)

IV. Peter an unlikely Vessel...

- A. An inauspicious beginning – Luke 5:1-11
- B. Passing the Test and Flunking the Course – Matt 16:13ff
- C. The lowest point of all... --Luke 22:33; 54-62
- D. The Race to the Empty Tomb – John 20:1-9
- E. The Recommissioning – John 21:15-22

V. In the Lord’s Steps, Growing in Grace, Changing the World

- A. What a Difference Christianity Makes
 1. No doctors, No hospitals, No orphanages,

No leprosariums , No Disaster Relief Agencies,
No Common Education.....

No Favoritism!

Acts 10:1-48

I. The Keys to the Kingdom – Matthew 16:13-19

- A. Roman Catholic Interpretation
- B. Protestant Interpretation
- C. A Third Possibility...

II. Turning Point in Acts narrative...

- A. Ministry to Jews fades and Ministry to Gentiles appears
- B. Ministry of Peter fades and Ministry of Paul appears

III. God’s Preparation...

- A. The Big Picture – Romans 8 and 10:11-11:36
 1. “The Mystery”-- Eph 3:1-9;
- B. Cornelius
 1. A Centurion (Matthew 8:10)
 - a. Devout and God-fearing
 - b. PiOus and Generous
 - c. Prayerful
 - d. Converted? (Prevenient Grace)

No Favoritism! (continued)

Acts 10:1-48

I. Peter is growing....

- A. Christian who still thought like a Jew
 1. Rahab – Joshua 2 and Matthew 1:5
 2. Ruth the Moabitess
 3. Naaman – 2 Kings 5:1-17
- B. Guest of Simon “The Tanner” (Acts 9:43)
- C. The Vision
- D. Invites visitors in as guests – Verse 23
- E. No Favorites (v34)

II. “Creeping Things”

- A. John Ironside
- B. Us!

Acts 10:34-11:18

The Gospel, Straight Up!

I. Peter's Sermon

A. The Straight Gospel

1. The Good News of Peace – v36
2. The Baptism of Jesus – v37
 - a. Identification with us...
 - b. Identification as God's Son
3. Public Ministry of Jesus
 - a. No mention of the teachings
4. The Crucifixion – v39
5. The Resurrection – vv40-41
6. The Coming Judge – v42
7. Repent and Believe! – v43

II. What other Gospel is There?

- A. Acts 4:12
- B. Same Gospel because Same Problems!

Acts 11: 1-18

Opposition from Within!

I. Objections! (11:1-18)

A. The "Circumcision" Party

1. A Major Readjustment

II. Peter's Response

A. Gentle and Patient

1. Education
2. Leadership = Giving up the "right" to be understood.

B. His explanation = Lessons in Divine Guidance

1. He was praying
 - a. Need to follow God before you know His will.
 - b. God speaks through Scripture
 - c. Need to look to God always not just "some" times.
2. He received a Revelation
 - a. For us this would be the Scripture – Matthew 4:4
3. He noted the "circumstances" (Timing of guests arrival)
4. He appealed to (6) witnesses – v12 (Call through Church)

5. He found the Ground Prepared (Gentiles eager to hear)

III. The Result...

Christians First...

Acts 11:19-30

I. Acts 11:19 – All Things for the Good...

A. The Gospel to Jews...

1. Acts 2-7

B. The Gospel to God Fearers...

1. Acts 8-10

C. The Gospel to Pagans...

1. Acts 11

II. The City on the Orontes

A. 323 B.C. Death of Alexander the Great

1. Antioch established by Seleucus
2. On *Orontes River* – Strategic Location

B. A Highly Important City

1. Political Center (Ptolemy defeats Seleucus)
 - a. Capital of Syria
 - b. 25,000 residents
 - c. Third Most Important City in the Empire!
2. Commercial City

3. Chiefly a Business City

3. Cosmopolitan City

a. Very Tolerant

4. A Very Corrupt City

IV. The Gospel Comes to Antioch

A. Stoning of Stephen

B. Sending of Barnabas to Investigate!

V. Who is Barnabas?

A. Acts 4:32-37

1. A Jew and A Levite
2. From Cyprus (Gentile Area)
3. Generous
4. An Encourager
5. A Good Man to Send...

VI. The Reaction of Barnabas to the Lord's Work

- A. V23 – He was Glad!
 - 1. *Good* Man Full of Holy Spirit and Faith
- B. Self-effacing... Humble enough to get help.

VII. The First *Christians* – V26

- A. disciples, saints, believers, brothers, witnesses
- B. What is a Christian?
- C. Who gave them this name?

VIII. How did these early Christians behave?

- A. Acts 11:27-30
 - 1. First act of recorded charity – See Acts 2:42ff
- B. First Christians or Christians first?

How About You?

Acts 12:1-25

I. Renewed Persecution

- A. Relative Quiet Since Acts 8:1
- B. New wave under King Herod

II. Who was Herod?

- A. Herod the Great **10 marriages 15 kids**(reigned 34-4B.C.)

- 1. Matthew 2:2

- B. Herod Archelaus **Son** (reigned 4B.C.–A.D.6)

- 1. Matthew 2:22

- C. Herod Philip the Tetrarch of Galilee **Son** (4B.C. – A.D. 30)

- 1. Luke 3:1

- D. Herod Antipas **Son** (reigned A.D. 6-39)

- 1. Reigned in Galilee until Banished to Gaul (John and Jesus)
 - 2. Matthew 14; Luke 23

- *E. Herod Agrippa I **Grandson** (King of Judea A.D. 41-44)

- 1. Son of Aristobulus, son of Herod by Second Wife, Mariamne

- E. Herod Agrippa II **Great Grandson** (A.D.50-100 –various areas)

- 1. Acts 25-26

III. Herod Agrippa I

- A. Raised in Rome and Friend with Caligula
- B. Contributed to fall of his uncle, Antipas
- C. Helped Claudius to the Imperial throne in AD 41

- 1. Rewarded Judea and Samaria (All Territory of Herod I)

D. Eager to Please Jews...

- 1. Half-Jew
 - 2. Consummate Politician!!

IV. The Disintegration of Christian-Jewish Relations

- A. James becomes test case – v3

- B. Peter arrested

- 1. Passover*
 - 2. Public Enemy #1 (What was Peter's Crime?)
 - a. Acts 16:20-21

V. Peter Delivered – Acts 12:6-11

- A. Attitude of Apostles

- 1. Peter is doing what? (I Peter 5:7)
 - 2. Acts 5:41 (rejoicing to suffer persecution)
 - 3. Acts 16:25 (Singing hymns)
 - 4. James 1:2-3 (Realizing persecution produces endurance)

VI. Lessons in Deliverance

- A. Peter's Deliverance Comes at LAST moment...

- B. The Experience of Peter must be balanced with James

- C. The Story Illustrates Spiritual Deliverance

- 1. Charles Wesley

- D. The Deliverance Comes as a Result of Church's Prayer!

VII. Four Points about Prayer in Acts 12

- A. Prayer to God!

- 1. Matthew 6:1-8

- B. Corporate Prayer

- 1. Common Prayer for Common Purpose – Matthew 18:20

- C. Earnest Prayer

- 1. I Samuel 16:7

- D. Specific Prayer – V5

- E. Doubting Prayer

- 1. Matthew 17:20

VIII. The Word of God Unchained

- A. The Death of Herod Agrippa I

- 1. Josephus (AD 37-100)
 - 2. Daniel 4:1ff

3. Acts 12:24; 13:49

IX. Why Does Word of God Spread in Spite of Persecution?

A. It's the Word of GOD! – Isaiah 55:10-11

1. Effective – 2 Timothy 3:16-17
2. Penetrating – Hebrews 4:12
3. Eternal – Matthew 24:35

X. Opposition will always come...

1. By Force
2. By Ridicule
 - a. Voltaire (1694-1778)
3. By Substitute

The Missionary Era

Acts 13:1-12

I. A Turning Point

- A. Third Stage in Gospel Expansion – Acts 1:8
1. Acts 1-7 (Jerusalem)
 2. Acts 8-12 (Judea, Samaria)
 3. Acts 13ff (The Ends of the Earth)

II. The “Missionary” Era

A. “To send”

III. The Church at Antioch

- A. An “Established” Church -- Acts 11
- B. “Well-Taught” Church – Mark 1
- C. “Integrated” Church – Ephesians 2
- D. “multi-staff” Church
- E. “Worshiping, Praying” Church
- F. “Seeking” Church

IV. A Person not a Power!

- A. Acts 8:18ff vs Acts 13
- B. HE went with them – Acts 13:9

V. The First Missionary Journey

VI. The Work on Cyprus...

- A. A Great Opportunity
 1. Sergius Paulus
 - a. “Proconsul” 57BC to 22BC

B. Serious Opposition

1. Elymas (Bar Jesus)

C. Divine Empowerment

1. Justice or Mercy?

D. Significant Success

E. Barnabas and Saul, Paul and Barnabas!

Acts 13:13-43 The “Other Antioch”

Not an Easy Journey...

A. A Shift in Leadership

1. Acts 13:2; Acts 13:13; Acts 13:42
 - a. Change is difficult

B. John Mark's Desertion

C. Sickness? (Galatians 4:13-15)

D. What should we Expect?

E. God is at work...

Paul's First Sermon – Acts 13:13-43

A. The Synagogue

1. Two groups – v16

B. A Sermon in Three Parts

1. Old Testament Kerygma -- VV 17-22
2. New Testament Kerygma – VV23-31
3. Well-Reasoned Biblical Argument – VV32ff
 - a. V33 – Psalm 2
 - b. V34 – Isaiah 55:3
 - c. V35 – Psalm 16:10

C. Announcement of the Gospel – VV 38ff

- a. Forgiveness of Sins!
- b. Justification!

E. A Warning! – V41 (Habakkuk 1:5 – Coming of Babylonians)

F. The Response – VV 42-43

The Next Sabbath...

A. The Whole City Gathered...

1. What brought them?
 - a. Curiosity?
 - b. Dramatic Presentation?

c. The Word of the LORD – VV 44, 46, 48, 49

d. What Passes for Preaching Today?

B. The Pattern of Jewish Rejection

1. Rejection of the Law?

2. Filled with Jealousy – V45 (Gentiles)

C. Turning to the Gentiles – VV46-47

D. God's Work not Paul's Work

1. Acts 13:48

E. The "WORD" Spreads

—A Tale of Three Cities

Acts 14:1-28

I. Three/Four Missionary Journeys

A. First Journey – Acts 13:4-14:28

B. Second Journey – Acts 16:1-18:22

1. Turkey, Europe (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus)

C. Third Journey – Acts 18:23-20:38

1. Turkey and Ephesus

D. Fourth Journey – Acts 25-28

A Tale of Three Cities: Acts 14:1-28

A. The Pattern for Paul's Ministry

1. Preaching and Signs (2 Corinthians 12:12)

2. Division

a. Matthew 10:34

3. Persecution

4. Growth

B. Galatia

1. Old Area of the Gauls?

2. New Roman Province?

Iconium

A. The Pattern Played out

1. Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 (Parable of Sower)

B. "Poisoned Minds"

1. *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, circa AD 190.

a. Matthew 5:11

C. How do we respond to persecution and false accusations?

1. Isaiah 53; Matthew 27:11-14

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III. Lystra

A. A Miracle – Acts 14:8-10 (2 Corinthians 12:12)

B. A Misunderstanding

1. vv11

2. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* – AD 8

a. Tale of Philemon and Baucis

C. Preaching to A Pagan Audience

1. Acts 13 Sermon vs Paul's Sermon in Acts 14

a. Appeal to Natural Revelation

i. One God, maker of heaven and earth – v15 (Romans 1)

ii. God has given man free choice – V16

iii. God will restrain evil – V17

D. A Fickle Audience

1. Persecution!

2. Captain James Cook, RN – February 14, 1779

3. Galatians 6:17

—

IV. Derbe

A. To Everything There is a Season...

1. Verse 21

2. Acts 20:4 Representative for Jerusalem Fund

V. The Road Home...

A. Under Authority

B. Strengthening the Disciples

1. They Gave Encouragement (V22)

2. They Taught the Believers (V22)

3. They Organized the Church (V23)

4. They Prayed (V23)

C. THE TASK COMPLETED (V26)

1. Matthew 10:22
2. 2 Timothy 4:7

—The First Church Council Acts 15:1-35

I. The Most Difficult Christian Doctrine: Sola Gratia

II. The Problem: Growth among Gentile Believers

1. 2 Kings 5:1-19
2. Focal Point of debate – Circumcision (Genesis 17:1-14)
3. The Circumcision Party believed the Bible

B. Implications of Judaizer’s Argument

1. Paul and Barnabas are False Teachers.
2. Faith is NOT enough.
3. Gentiles past and present are LOST!

III. The Flow of the Debate...

A. Acts gives us the Public Side of the Debate

B. Galatians gives us the Details....

1. Paul took with him an Uncircumcised Gentile – (Gal 2:3)
2. Paul gave no ground – Galatians 2:5
3. Paul is not impressed with the Other Side – (Galatians 2:9)

*ALL OF THIS SUGGESTS GREAT PRESSURE TO COMPROMISE

The First Church Council Acts 15:1-35

A “Good” Problem Arises

A Great Deal at Stake

- A. Paul and Barnabas are false teachers!
- B. Faith is not Enough!
- C. Gentiles past and present are NOT saved!

Deeply Personal Issue for Paul

A. Story of his own life...

1. Philippians 3:1-5

C. The Public Side of the Debate – V 6

1. “Much” Debate – V7
2. Peter Speaks First
 - a. Reference to Holy Spirit – V7

i. Acts 10:1-35; 44-48

b. No reference to circumcision but a “Yoke”

i. What is the Purpose of the Law? (Romans 7:7ff)

c. Very Gracious Words – v11

3. Paul and Barnabas Speak Next

a. Emphasis on “Signs and Wonders”

4. James Speaks Last

a. James is convener

b. James refers to “Simon” Peter NOT Paul

c. James quotes from Amos 9:11-12

The Letter to the Gentiles...

1. Did this Council err?

a. No mention of the presenting issue

b. Mention of other rules and regulations

i. I Corinthians 8:1-13; 10:14ff

ii. Four important Outcomes of the First Church Council

1. Gospel of Grace Reaffirmed

a. True nature of circumcision – Romans 2:17-29

2. Unity of Church Preserved

3. Evangelism of Gentiles Continues Unhindered

4. Gentiles Churches Encouraged – Acts 16:4-5

5. The Future of the “Catholic” church guaranteed

Acts 15:36 -16:15 “Come Over and Help Us”

I. The Work is NOT Done...

A. NO Vacations, NO Retirement, NO Term of Office

B. Four New Things

1. A New Alignment of Missionaries
2. A New Worker
3. A New Vision
4. A New Church

II. A New Alignment

A. Acts 15:39 – A “Sharp Disagreement” (Proverbs 27:17)

1. Romans 8:28,

a. Two Groups Are Now Working

b. There is Reconciliation – 2 Timothy 4:11

- B. Paul visits some churches North of Antioch
- III. A “New Worker” – Acts 16:3
 - A. Who was Timothy?
 - 1. Philippians 2:19-24
 - a. Timothy was unique (“Like-Minded”)
 - b. Timothy was concerned for others (Pastor)
 - c. Timothy looked out for interests of Christ
 - d. Timothy was a “team player”
 - B. Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised?
- IV. A “New Vision”
 - A. “Closed Doors”
 - B. Why Should We Do Foreign Mission Work?
 - 1. Jesus Comanded It – Mark 16:15-16
 - 2. Christ’s Love Compels us – 2 Corinthians 5:14
 - 3. The World is in Need – Acts 16:9
 - C. Acts 16:10-11; 40 (We and They)
- V. A New Church is Founded – Acts 16:11-15
 - A. The “Man” from Macedonia was a “Woman?”

Acts 16:16-40 – Trouble in Ephesus

- I. The Deliverance of the Slave Girl
 - A. A “spirit of divination”
 - B. The Demons Know Jesus!
 - 1. Mark 1:24; Matthew 8:29; Mark 5:7; Luke 4:34; 8:28
 - 2. James 2:19
 - C. Not a Good “Character Witness”
- II. Messing with Money is not Preaching but Meddling!
 - A. Acts 19:21-28
 - B. Owners unhappy!
 - C. False Accusations – Acts 16:20ff
 - D. Paul and Silas abused – See 2 Corinthians 11:25
- III. The Real Kairos Prison Ministry!
 - A. Attitude of the Apostle and his companion
 - B. God’s Deliverance
 - C. The Jailer’s reaction(s)
 - D. Paul’s Response

- 1. God’s City of Refuge
- IV. Vindication and Encouragement

—Two More Cities Acts 17:1-15

- I. Paul’s Missionary Strategy
 - A. Jerusalem to Rome – Cities!
 - II. Thessalonica (Salonika)
 - III. How Paul operated in the Cities
 - A. Establish Contact
 - 1. Synagogues
 - 2. Establishing Contact Today...
 - a. Identifying Needs
 - i. Education
 - ii. Health Care
 - iii. Pregnancy Centers
 - iv. Youth Ministries
 - v. Declining Church
 - vi. Etc...
 - B. Paul Taught Them
 - 1. He “began” with the Scriptures
 - 2. He “reasoned” with them from the Scriptures (v2)
 - 3. He “explained” the Scriptures – Ephesians 4:11-16
 - 4. He “preached” Christ to them – I Corinthians 2: 1-2
- The Results of Paul’s Work in Thessalonica
 - A. A Church is established – v4
 - B. The Church experiences persecution – v5ff
 - 1. *politarch* – 16x
- The charges leveled against Paul and his companions
 - A. These men have turned the world upside down!
 - B. Teaching against the decrees of Caesar
 - C. Insisting there is another king beside Caesar.
- Paul’s own Assessment – I Thessalonians 1 and 2
 - A. Preaching blessed by God – I Thess. 1:5
 - B. People received the Word of God – I Thess. 2:13
 - C. Believers model their lives after Paul – I Thess. 1:6
 - D. They became models themselves – I Thess. 1:7

E. Church at Thessalonica engages in mission – I Thess. 1:8

The Church in Berea – Acts 17:10-15

A. More Noble!

1. Received the message *eagerly*
 - a. Not naïve!
2. They Examined the Scriptures!
3. They examined the Scriptures *daily*

What were the results?

A. V12

B. Paul goes on alone...

1. Luke has stayed at Philippi
2. Silas and Timothy stay in Berea

—On Mars Hill Acts 17:16-34

III. Paul in Athens...

A. The Sort of Place Paul would like...

B. The Sort of Place that appalled Paul

1. A City “full of idols” (V16)
2. A Depressing Place
 - a. Greek View of History
3. A Place of Worldly Wisdom
 - a. Epicureans
 - b. Stoics

C. Christians need to acknowledge accomplishments but not be overawed.

IV. Paul’s Address at the Areopagus – V22

A. Introduction

B. Four clear points

1. God is Creator of All Things
2. God is Sustainer of All Things
3. God is ordainer of All Things
4. We Should Seek HIM

C. Call to Repentance!!

I. Introduction

A. Acknowledges they are a “Spiritual” people – V23

1. Unknown God

2. Why is God Unknown?

B. How do you break through to such People?

1. Apologetics – I Peter 3:15

- a. The Gospel is never heard in isolation – Mark 8:27ff
- b. Strengthen Believers – John 20:26-28
- c. Evangelize Unbelievers – Acts 17:2-3, 17; 19:8; 28:23-24
 - i. Nabeel Quereshi

2. Two Types of Apologetics

- a. Offensive (Positive) -- Presents a Positive Case
- b. Defensive (Negative)

3. Proclamation – Acts 18

- a. “The Mystery of Faith”

Excurses on Apologetics...

I. Science in the Twentieth Century

A. Big Bang Cosmology vs Steady State Theory

1. 1917 Albert Einstein 1926 Edwin Hubble

B. The Anthropic Principle

1. Fine Tuning
2. Goldilocks Principle

C. DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid)

1. A Binary Code

—Acts 17:16-34 Paul on Mars Hill

II. Body of Sermon

A. God is Creator – V24

1. General Revelation – Romans 1

a. Men without Excuse

B. God is Sustainer – V25

2. Logos – John
3. Colossians 1:17

C. God is the Ordainer – V26

1. History is not Meaningless – Romans 8:28

D. We should Seek HIM! – V27

1. Homer’s Odysseus

III. The Conclusion – VV29-30

A. Men Should Repent.

IV. Three Reasons to Repent

A. God was patient, overlooking ignorance for a time – V30

B. God commands Repentance!

C. God has appointed a day of reckoning!

D. Note what Paul doesn't do...

1. Doesn't attack the wickedness of Athenians

2. Doesn't attack intellectual arrogance

V. Was Paul successful at Athens?

A. Interrupted when it came to the Resurrection!

B. Philosophy VS Proclamation?

C. V34 – Some Believed

D. Paul had a hard time of it in Athens...

—Acts 18:1-17 Corinth!!

I. Another Great City!

A. Paul spent 1.5 years in Corinth

II. What was it about Corinth that attracted Paul?

A. Location! Location!! Location!!!

1. Commercial Port

2. Cosmopolitan

a. Ancient cities were often homogeneous (more or less)

i. Philippi – Very Roman

ii. Athens – Very Intellectual

b. Corinth was a great melting pot!

3. Corrupt!

III. A Weary and Discouraged Apostle....

A. The Missionary Journeys had not been easy...

1. Opposition and Ridicule

2. Physical Abuse

3. Meager Results in Athens

4. Lonely

5. Living hand to mouth

a. Worked as a tentmaker... (not a tanner)

i. Increasingly the way to do missions today...

B. He came to his own, but his own received him not...

1. Paul's policy – Romans 1:16

IV. Encouragement!

A. V5 -- Silas and Timothy arrive

B. Financial Assistance arrives (2 Corinthians 11:9)

C. God bless Paul's efforts V7– V8

D. God spoke to Paul – V9

V. What did God say?

A. "Do not be afraid" (v9)

1. Afraid of Persecution

2. Afraid of Failure

B. "Keep on Speaking and do not be silent" (v9)

1. Don't give up...

2. Don't change your method... (Romans 10:17)

C. "I am with you" (v10)

1. Matthew 28:20 – Lord's Words at Great Commission

D. "No one is going to attack you to harm you" (v10)

E. "I have many people in this city" (v10)

VI. How did Paul respond to God's message?

A. He "tweaked" his strategy...

1. He stays on longer

a. 1.5 years in Corinth

b. 2 years in Ephesus

c. 2 years in Caesarea Maritima