**The Acts Period**

**Twenty-Nine Continuing Years**

*Invariably Misunderstood and Mistaught*

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**At the Beginning:**

*“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”* (Acts 1:8).

**After Twenty-Nine Years:**

*“Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.*

*And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves”* (Acts 28:28-29).

**BOOK COVER**

An individual’s interpretation and understanding of the Book of Acts will invariably be governed by his interpretation and understanding of the four introductory gospels. Go right in the gospels and a correct transition into Acts would naturally follow. *BUT*, go wrong in the gospels, and the error can only continue in Acts.

And the whole of the matter doesn’t end in Acts but continues into the epistles as well — both correct and incorrect interpretation and understanding, depending on how an individual begins in the gospels.

Then, matters in this respect can only be moved back behind the gospels, for the gospels are simply an outgrowth and continuation of previous revelation, going all the way back to Moses.

The gospels have to do with the offer of *the kingdom of the heavens to Israel* — a kingdom introduced in the first chapter of Genesis (Genesis 1:26-28), seen after different fashions throughout the Old Testament, re-offered to Israel in Acts, offered to Christians during the Acts period and beyond, and realized in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 11:15), as foreshadowed at the beginning in the foundational type (Genesis 2:1-3).

Understand this in the Old Testament, and it can be easily understood in the gospels; understand this in the gospels, and it can be easily understood in Acts; understand this in Acts, and it can be easily understood in the epistles; understand this in the epistles, and the goal toward which *ALL* previous Scripture moves can be easily understood.

*BUT*, go wrong at the beginning, in Genesis, and…

Another way of stating the preceding has to do with *foundations and building on these foundations*.

*ALL of the foundations* have been laid in the Old Testament, particularly in Genesis, and more particularly early in Genesis. And *ALL* subsequent Scripture *MUST* be dealt with in complete accord with the foundation upon which it rests.

Thus, beginning in the gospels, Acts, or the epistles is beginning in the middle of the Book. And, when this is done, *there is ONLY one proper way to handle matters. Data in later revelation MUST be dealt with in complete accord with data in earlier revelation, particularly taking matters back to Moses, back to the foundations*.

**FOREWORD**

Events during time covered by the Book of Acts (from 33 A.D. to about 62 A.D.) center around a re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to the nation of Israel.

The original offer was made during about a three and one-half-year period, covered by the gospels; and the re-offer was made during about twenty-nine continuing years, a period covered by the Book of Acts.

Properly understanding the re-offer of the kingdom in Acts is dependent on properly understanding the previous offer in the gospels. And properly understanding the previous offer in the gospels is dependent on properly understanding the place which the kingdom occupies throughout the Old Testament, beginning with Moses in the opening chapters of Genesis.

Individuals invariably go wrong in the gospels and Acts, leading into the epistles, when they attempt to understand and interpret this part of Scripture apart from preceding Scripture, apart from the Old Testament.

And this is the primary reason individuals erroneously attempt to teach salvation by grace from numerous New Testament passages which have NOTHING to do with this message (e.g., being brought forth from above in the account of Nicodemus in John 3, parables in the gospels, signs in the gospels and Acts, Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2…).

And that brings up a corresponding thought — the simple gospel message, *salvation by grace through faith*.

*NEITHER* Acts *NOR* the gospels (all four) are primarily about salvation by grace. Though this message can be found in the gospels and in Acts, it can *ONLY be found sparingly*, *for ALL five of these books are about an offer/re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, NOT salvation by grace*.

*NOR* are any of the twenty-eight epistles following Acts — Pauline, Hebrews, General, and Revelation 2; 3 — primarily about salvation by grace, though, as in the gospels and Acts, the message can be found different places throughout (but, again, sparingly).

(Note that the preceding has to do with primary interpretation. Secondary application can often be a different matter.)

One of the great tragedies in present-day Christendom has to do with reading salvation by grace into numerous passages in the four gospels and Acts, *passages which, as previously seen, have NOTHING to do with this message*. That invariably *NOT ONLY* does away with the message being dealt with in the account(s) *BUT* often results in a corruption of the simple message of salvation by grace.

The gospel of John is sometimes singled out and separated from the other three gospels (the synoptic gospels) in the preceding respect, with the claim made — on the basis of the stated purpose for the eight “signs” in the gospel (John 20:30-31) — that this gospel has been written to and for the unsaved, relating the salvation message.

Suffice it to say, *this is NOT at all what John’s gospel is about; NOR is this even what John 20:30-31 clearly states*.

(In a secondary respect, John’s gospel *DOES* lend itself to proclaiming salvation by grace more so than the three synoptic gospels.

*BUT, even so, this is NOT the primary subject of John’s gospel, NO more so than salvation by grace can be seen as the primary subject in any one of the synoptic gospels*.

*ALL FOUR gospels deal, centrally, with EXACTLY the SAME thing, which has to do with the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel*.)

John’s gospel is about *the SAME thing* that the other three gospels are about, *with all four, together, leading into Acts, dealing with the SAME central message, presenting a complete word picture*.

And the statement regarding “signs” in John 20:30-31, unless read apart from its context and place in the book, *clearly shows this inseparable association with the other three gospels, clearly stating matters in a manner which should NEVER be missed by anyone*.

To erroneously associate this statement in John’s gospel with the unsaved and salvation by grace *can ONLY have ONE end result*.

Such can ONLY completely remove the entire gospel from its proper New Testament setting and intended purpose, leaving the reader without a proper introduction to the other three gospels and the Book of Acts.

And where matters could *ONLY* go from such a scenario, all a person has to do is look around in today’s Christendom, for this erroneous approach to John’s gospel is widely followed and taught.

(On the preceding, John’s gospel should begin the New Testament as the introductory gospel, the Genesis of the New Testament, introducing the three synoptic gospels, along with Acts.)

All of the preceding comments on John’s gospel and the synoptics are taken up and dealt with at length in this book (*ref*. Ch. V). Thus, comments on the gospels will be dropped at this point in the foreword.

A major part of this book will deal with Paul and his ministry. Though Paul is not seen in the book of Acts until chapter eight, his persecuting actions — prior to the events in Acts 9 — possibly extended all the way back to pre-Acts days, covering time during the original offer of the kingdom, as seen in the gospels.

Paul’s pre-conversion actions though, contrary to popular teaching and thought over the years, *were NOT centered upon the early Church*. Aside from the one hundred twenty, immersed in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, *there was NO early Church for him to persecute*.

Rather, Paul persecuted believing Jews, possibly, as previously stated, even preceding Calvary, but definitely during time covered by part or all of the early chapters of Acts (Acts 1-7).

Believing Jews in Acts were as believing Jews in the gospels. One had believed the offer of the kingdom in the gospels, the other had believed the re-offer of the kingdom in Acts.

And, upon belief, *one NO more became a member of the one new man “in Christ” than the other. Believing Jews throughout Acts were simply added to those Jews who had believed during the gospels, NOT added to the Church*.

Aside from the one hundred twenty disciples on the day of Pentecost, *throughout the Acts period*, the beginning formation of the Church was reserved for Gentiles who had been saved following Acts 10 (when the first Gentile was saved), *NOT* for believing Jews either before that time in the gospels or after that time during the Acts period, preceding Acts 28:28.

(The eunuch from Ethiopia in Acts 8 is often associated with the Gentiles. However, this man was evidently *a Jew in the diaspora*, living in Ethiopia, who had been to Jerusalem to worship.)

Thus, as previously seen, believing Jews during this twenty-nine year period were added to the numbers of believing Jews preceding Calvary (*e.g.*, the thousands referenced in Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7), *NOT* to the one hundred twenty immersed in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, forming the beginning of the Church, *the one new man* “in Christ.”

And that brings up something else which MUST be understood about the Acts period. And this has to do with how two words describing individuals, used during this time, were to be understood — the use of the words “Church” and “Gentile.”

The word “Church,” from the Greek word *ekklesia*, meaning “called out,” was used during this time to reference both saved Jews called out of the nation and saved Gentiles called out of the world (*e.g*., Acts 5:11; 7:38; 8:1, 3; Romans 16:4; I Corinthians 1:2 Galatians 1:13, 22-23).

And the word “Gentile” was used during this time, in connection with the word, “Jew,” to distinguish between believing Jews (a believing part of the nation, *NOT* part of *the one new man*) and believing Gentiles (new creations in Christ, part of *the one new man* [*e.g*., Romans 1:16; 2:9-10]).

Following the Acts period, this type usage, necessary during the Acts period for obvious reasons, would have been out of place.

The Acts period is a twenty-nine-year, one-of-a-kind time. There was *NOTHING* like it before this time; and there has been *NOTHING* like it after this time.

And certain existing conditions, peculiar to this time, *MUST be understood, else the Book of Acts, or the epistles written during this time, CANNOT be properly understood, reflecting negatively on a proper understanding of the preceding gospels or the epistles* (*both during and following Acts*).

All of this is dealt with at length in different chapters of this book.

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