

Bible Survey - ACTS

The Church in Action

The Book of Acts is the inspired account of the origin and initial expansion of the Christian Church throughout the Roman Empire. In Acts we see Christianity, full of energy and power, in action conquering the pagan cultures of Asia Minor and Southern Europe. As the sacred History Book of the early Church, Acts is a Missionary Manual. Acts is the second part of a two-volume history. The first part, the Gospel of Luke, tells of all Jesus **began** to do and to teach (1:1) and so the second part, Acts, tells of some of what Jesus **continued** to do through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Culture and Christianity

In recording these beginnings of the cross-cultural Missions of the Church, Acts clearly proves that Christianity is for every nation. It also shows how culture can be both an **obstacle** to, or an **opening** for, the communication of the Gospel.

Sacred History

Luke, the beloved physician (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11), is the author of Acts. Luke stands out as the only non-Hebrew author in the New Testament and also the author of the largest amount of material in the New Testament. Written before the death of Paul and before the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (as it makes no reference to either), this is a powerful account of the Mission *"to the ends of the earth."* Luke clearly shows how the events recorded in Acts were brought about by the will and purpose of God, in fulfilment of the Scriptures and prophecies of the Old Testament, as directed by God Himself, who confirmed by signs and wonders that this Mission is His work. The Gospel of Luke ends with the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is where Acts begins:

- Acts 1:9 - The Lord went **up**.
- Acts 2:4 - The Holy Spirit came **down**.
- Acts 2:4 - 8:4 - The Disciples went **out**.

The Structure of Acts

Acts 1:8 summarises the progression in Acts: ***"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."***

From Jerusalem to Rome

Acts records the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria to the gentiles of Syria, Asia Minor and Greece. The account starts in **Jerusalem**, the **spiritual** capital of the world, and it ends in **Rome**, the **secular** capital of the world.

Five Summary Statements that Mark Sections off in Acts

Acts 6:7 ***"Then the Word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the Faith."***

Acts 9:31 ***"Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied."***

Acts 12:24 ***"But the Word of God grew and multiplied."***

Acts 16:5 ***"So the churches were strengthened in the Faith, and increased in number daily."***

Acts 19:20 ***"So the Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed."***

These five statements mark transitions between: ministry amongst the Jews in Jerusalem, the Hellenists and Samaritans, the Gentiles and Antioch, Asia Minor, Europe, and the final section in Rome.

The Messengers

Acts clearly shows that the Church, composed of both Hebrews and Gentiles, is a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. The Apostles, in their preaching, often quoted the Law of Moses, the writings of the Prophets, and the Psalms. Peter spoke of: *"The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers..."* (3:13). He quoted the Prophets (3:19), Moses (3:22), David (2:25, 2:34), Joel (2:16) and the Psalms. He preached in the Temple and proclaimed *"the Messiah."* When Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin, he clearly showed that Christianity is completely in keeping with the Faith delivered to Abraham, Moses and the Prophets (7:2-53). The disciples addressed the crowds as *"fellow Israelites"* (13:16), and *"descendants of Abraham"* (13:26), proclaiming Jesus as the long-awaited *"Messiah"* (2: 36).

The Method

When Jesus instructed His disciples that they were to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth, He promised them supernatural power to accomplish their Mission. Acts 2 records the fulfilment of that prophecy when God poured out the Holy Spirit upon them. Now, in God's Sovereign Will, the circumstances surrounding that event underlined the purpose of God's blessing. The day the Church was born was Pentecost; the Harvest Festival, held seven weeks after the *"first fruits"* (which was Christ's Resurrection from the dead), when the wheat was harvested. On that day the great Missionary *Psalm 67* was sung:

"May God be gracious to us and bless us.

*May your ways be known on **earth**,*

*Your salvation among **all nations**.*

*May the **peoples** praise You, O God;*

*May **all** the peoples praise You;*

*May the **nations** be glad and sing for joy...*

Then the land will yield its harvest...

*And **all the ends of the earth** will fear Him."*

Power from on High

This is exactly what God did on the day of Pentecost. He blessed the waiting disciples. He made them a blessing to the peoples gathered in Jerusalem from the various nations (2:5). The land yielded its harvest, and 3,000 were converted to the Faith (2:4). From that harvest were people from Europe, Mesopotamia, Persia, Asia Minor, North Africa and Arabia. Not only did the Holy Spirit empower the disciples, but they were enabled to miraculously speak in the many Gentile languages represented by that crowd gathered in Jerusalem.

The Great Commission

In the context of the Lord's Great Commission (Matthew 28:19), to take the Gospel *"to the ends of the earth"* (1:8), the giving of that miraculous ability to speak Gentile languages had missionary purpose. The power of the Holy Spirit is given for world Evangelisation. Whenever Jesus promised the power of the Holy Spirit, and whenever that power was given, it was always in connection with proclaiming the Gospel and making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:47-49; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8; 4:31).

Overcoming Opposition

There was much opposition to the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles (11:2-3; 13:45; 15:1) and God had to initiate every stage of its early development. An angel of the Lord led Phillip to the Ethiopian Treasurer (8:26). The Lord Himself appeared to Saul to commission him as the leader of the Mission to the Gentiles (9:6; 26:17-18). An angel instructed the Roman centurion, Cornelius, to call for Peter (10:3-5). The Lord gave Peter a vision (three times) to prepare him for the Mission to the Gentiles (10:15-20). The Holy Spirit guided the Church at Antioch to send Barnabas and Saul on the Mission to the Gentiles (13:2-3). God gave Paul a vision to lead him to take the Gospel to

Europe (16:9-10). The Lord instructed Paul to testify in Rome (23:11). Unquestionably, God wanted the Gentiles to be Evangelised!

Abundant Blessings

God not only guided the Mission to the Gentiles. He also poured His blessings upon every aspect of it. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon Samaritans (8:15-17). The Gentiles in Cornelius' house received the Holy Spirit in the same miraculous way. The Lord was with the Gentiles in Antioch; a great number were converted, and showed much evidence of the Grace of God (11:20-24). God put His seal of support on the first Mission to the Gentiles by performing many signs and wonders during the outreaches (15:12).

Mission Sending Model

The Missionary sending model of Antioch (13:1-3), is of a praying and fasting congregation, which sends out two of its best leaders - Paul and Barnabas. It was at Antioch that the believers were first called "*Christians*" (11:26). The power base of the church shifts from **Jerusalem** to **Antioch**, from **Peter** to **Paul**, from **Hebrews** to **Gentiles**. The child quickly outgrows the parent.

Advantages

The Early Church's advantages included: a common (lingua franca - Greek) language, Roman peace, good roads and a reliable postal system.

Difficulties to Overcome

Their difficulties included: there were so few of them (only 120 to start with), they had no learning, no organisation, (no printing presses, radio stations, films, tapes, etc. obviously). They had to contend with tremendous racial barriers, class structures, religious pluralism, extreme decadence in society, persecution from the Jews, political suspicion (and later persecution) from Rome and general cynicism of pagan society.

Strategies for Success

Yet, they succeeded in conquering the Roman Empire because: they lived their message and were transformed by it, their dedication and willingness led them to obey no matter what the cost, their obvious love for one another, their enthusiasm and joyful sense of discovery, their endurance, their concern for strangers, widows and orphans, their priorities of "*prayer and the Word*", were evidence of the overflowing, life-changing, character-transforming power of the Holy Spirit. They exercised an "*every-member ministry*"; they had shared leadership, dynamic, fresh and varied worship; they emphasised teaching and obedience to God's revealed Word.

Every member was involved in regular Evangelism

There was a spontaneous, natural, **continuous**, joyful sharing of the Gospel (Acts 8:1,4).

They worked from where they were (Jerusalem) outwards in ever-widening ripples (Acts 1:8).

They started by concentrating on the "*God-fearing fringe*" (e.g. Acts 10; 13).

They ran a lot of **home meetings** (Acts 17:5; 18:7; 21:8; 12:12; 20:7; 2:46; 5:42; 28:23; 16:32; 19:22) - informal, relaxed gatherings for Evangelism fellowship, prayer, communion and follow-up.

They often held discussions on **neutral ground** (Acts 3; 22,28).

They wrote and used the **Scriptures** and **literature**.

They engaged in **missionary journeys** (e.g. Acts 13-14; 16-20).

They relied on personal conversations.

Creation Evangelism

As the apostle Paul taught in Athens: God is the Creator of the whole world and everything in it (17:24). God created all the races of mankind (17:26). God now commands all men everywhere to Repent (17:30). God will Judge the whole world (17:31). Clearly, Christianity is also for the Gentiles, because they too must be saved (4:12).

Obstacles to Communication

In order to communicate the Gospel to *"the ends of the earth"* the Christian has to overcome many obstacles. There are geographical obstacles and distances to travel. There are languages to learn, customs to understand and cultures to penetrate. Racial differences, political divisions and tribal loyalties have to be understood. Cultural misunderstandings have to be cleared up, and confusing aspects of the message have to be explained. In many ways, the greatest obstacle to the spread of the Gospel is the cultural barrier. Acts records the problems caused when people saw the Gospel as a threat to their culture: ***"And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, 'These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe.' Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods."*** 16:20-22.

Pride and Prejudice

Those people at Philippi saw Paul and Silas as of a different race, with another religion, advocating foreign customs and this they fought against. The charge against Stephen was that he was trying to change the customs of the Jews (6:14). A riot was caused in Ephesus when the people felt that their idol worship was being threatened by the preaching of Paul (19:26-29). The Apostle Paul described some of the cultural obstacles that he encountered in this way: ***"For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness."*** 1 Corinthians 1:22-23

Deceivers Damned

In Acts 5, we see the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who engaged in deception to seem more spiritual before the church. ***"But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...'"*** (5:3). Here we see the seriousness of sin. The principle here is not, as some claim, socialism. There is a world of difference between **voluntary** Christian generosity and sharing and **compulsory** socialist coercion and confiscation. As the Apostle Peter declared: ***"While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."*** Acts 5:4. To Sapphira, Peter said: ***"How is it that you have agreed to test the Spirit of the Lord?"*** (5:9). The Gospel affects every area of our lives, even our money and possessions. The issue in Acts 5 is pride and deception. Peter declares that they have lied to the Holy Spirit. They had lied to God. ***"So great fear came upon all the Church and upon all who heard these things."*** Acts 5:11

The Sermon of Stephen

The longest sermon in Acts is that of the first Christian martyr, the deacon, Stephen. Acts 7 is not an academic lecture. Stephen was on trial for his life. This records his last earthly opportunity for ministry. Stephen ignores the false charges placed against him and directly challenges the pride and prejudices of the Jews. He points out that Abraham was still in Mesopotamia when God chose and called him. The Patriarchs of Israel were jealous of their brother Joseph and treacherously sold him to be a slave. But God protected and used Joseph to obtain the good will of the pharaoh of Egypt. Joseph was faithful to God and forgiving to his brothers, saving them from famine through providing sanctuary and food in Egypt.

Moses and Israel

Moses was born outside of Israel, educated in Egypt, exercised all of his ministry outside of Israel, was commissioned by God outside of it, ministered in Egypt, Midian and in the wilderness. Moses never actually stepped foot in the land of Israel. The people of Israel rejected Moses at the start of his ministry and even after the incredible miracles, the ten plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea, they still rejected Moses as leader. They rejected his deliverance from Egypt and they rejected God. ***"whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt."*** Acts 7:39.

Rebellious and Idolatrous

Thus were the seeds sown for future idolatry and rebellion of the children of Israel. The Jews placed great emphasis on the Law of Moses on the Temple and on the land of Israel. However, Stephen points out the limitations of all these. No temple, city, or land, could contain Almighty God. *"However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: 'Heaven is My Throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me?' says the Lord, 'or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?'"* Acts 7:48-50.

Betrayers and Murderers of the Messiah

Stephen exposed the excessive preoccupation of the Jews with their land, their law and their temple. They were blind to the Messiah who had come right into their midst and ministered amongst them, healing the sick, delivering those under bondage, giving sight to the blind, making the cripple walk and the dead to rise. *"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the Law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."* Acts 7:51-53. Despite claiming to be students of the Word of God, the Jews had misunderstood, or ignored, the prophecies and now had missed the Messiah. Worse than that, they had rejected, betrayed and murdered the Messiah!

Murdered by the Mob

"When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, 'Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him..." Acts 7:54-58. Stephen died as he had lived - filled with the Holy Spirit, with a prayer on his lips for his killers, committing of himself back to God - a similar death to that of His Lord, with forgiveness, courage, vision, purpose and joy. The councils verdict on Stephen was: *Death!* But God's verdict on Stephen was: *Glory!*

Jewish Opposition to Christianity in Acts

"But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, 'It was necessary that the Word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.'" Acts 13:45-46

"But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region." Acts 13:50

"But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren." Acts 14:2

"Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead." Acts 14:19

"But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people." Acts 17:5

"But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the Word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds." Acts 17:13

"Therefore **bear fruit worthy of repentance**, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones." Luke 3:8

"Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of One, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ." Galatians 3:16

Religious Racketeer

In Acts 8, we read of Simon, the sorcerer of Samaria. *"And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the Apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.' But Peter said to him, 'Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.'* Then Simon answered and said, *'Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.'*" Acts 8:18-24.

Simony is Sin

Here we see the dangers of counterfeit religion. The *'name it, claim it and frame it'* crowd who proclaim the *'health and wealth gospel'* are actually guilty of the sin of simony, attempting to buy spiritual power, healing, or wealth, through money. The prosperity cult is a false gospel and needs the firm rebuke that Peter gave Simon: **"Repent therefore of this your wickedness..."**

The Demands of the Judaizers

Acts records that the main opposition to the spread of the Gospel did not come from the Gentiles, but from Jewish believers. The Apostle Paul was criticized for being a guest in the home of *"uncircumcised gentiles"* and for eating with them when on a mission to Caesarea (11:2-3). Some men from Judea caused division by telling the Gentile Church at Antioch: *"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved"* (15:1). Some of the believers who belonged to the Pharisees demanded: *"...It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses"* (15:5). These challenges led to the Conference at Jerusalem (15).

Salvation is By Grace Not Race

Peter responded to the Judaizers by reminding them of the time when God had guided him to preach to the Gentiles in Cornelius' house: **"So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by Faith.."** 15:8-9. If God had accepted the Gentiles on the basis of their faith without requiring them to keep the law, then who were they to do otherwise? **"Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers, nor we, were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."** 15:10-11.

God is Saving Gentiles

For their part, Barnabas and Paul answered the Judaizers by reporting on their work of planting churches amongst the Gentiles. The miraculous results showed that God approved of their direct Evangelism of the Gentiles and of their acceptance - without being required to keep the Jewish ceremonial law (15:12).

Faith Alone

James concluded by showing that the acceptance of Gentiles as God's people was prophesied by Scripture and he quoted from Amos 9:11-12 to show that all mankind will come to God, all the Gentiles whom He has called to be His own. This Jerusalem Conference was of supreme

importance as it completely rejected the notion that circumcision was necessary for salvation. It accepted that salvation was by God's grace alone and had nothing to do with observing the Jewish law. The Jerusalem Conference rejected the Judaizers and opened the way for the free access of Gentiles into the Church. A Gentile did not have to become a Jew in order to be a Christian. Acts records how Christianity moved from being a Jewish religion with some Gentile converts to the place where it is unquestionably a Gentile religion with Jewish converts. **"...God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him."** 10:34-35.

Conversions in Acts

The Ethiopian treasurer was led to Christ through reading of the Scriptures **"...Do you understand what you are reading?"** (8:30).

Saul of Tarsus was confronted by Christ as a blinding light **"...Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?..."** (9:1-19).

Lydia, the first convert in Europe responded to the proclamation of the Gospel **"...The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul."** (16:14).

The Philippian Jailer was struck in fear by the earthquake that struck the foundations of the prison. He fell down before Paul and Silas and asked, **"Sirs what must I do to be Saved?"** **"...So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household'"** (16:25-31).

The Kingdom of God Advancing

The Kingdom of God is spiritual in character, international in membership and relentless in expansion. The Disciples moved out with a zeal that could not be quenched and a courage that was unflinching. Salvation includes: Repentance from sin, Faith and Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, a public confession of Faith through baptism and daily discipleship, following, worshipping and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ.

Roman Peace and Roads

Culture does not have to be the missionary's enemy; it can often be used as an ally. The Roman peace throughout the Empire gave the believers an unprecedented opportunity for cross-cultural Evangelism throughout the Mediterranean world. Under Roman rule, Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy and others could evangelise without the problem of tribal warfare or political borders. Acts also records several instances of Paul being protected from Jewish mobs by Roman officials (18:12-16; 21:31-32; 23:29-30). The Roman civilisation also provided the excellent roads that speeded up the spread of the Gospel message, and the postal service that was used for the distribution of the Apostolic Epistles to the churches.

Greek Evangelism

So great was the influence of the Greek culture upon the Roman Empire that believers were able to use the Greek language to spread the Gospel, and other Scriptures, throughout the civilized world. Not only was Greek one of the most widespread languages in the world at that time, but it was one of the best mediums for communicating Theological thought.

Synagogue Evangelism

Much use was made of the synagogues that *diaspora* Jews had established throughout the Mediterranean world. Paul used them as an initial base for many of his missions (e.g.: Pisidia, Iconium, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, Ephesus and others), and the influence of the Hebrew religion prepared many people for the message of God's Salvation through Christ.

Peter and Paul

Luke focuses primarily on the Apostles, Peter and Paul. While both are distinctly different individuals, there are some startling similarities between the Apostles Peter and Paul: They both were filled with the Holy Spirit.

They both performed miracles.
They both saw visions.
They both presented powerful sermons.
They both proclaimed the Word of God with courage and boldness.
They both proclaimed the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles.
They both suffered for the Faith.
They were both imprisoned and miraculously set free.
They both healed the sick.
They both cast out demons.
They both raised the dead.
They both declared God's condemnation on false teachers.
They both refused worship.
They both died in Rome.

The Apostle Paul

Paul was ideal for the cross-cultural Mission to the Gentiles. Few men could have been better suited to bridge the gap between the Judaic traditions and the Gentile world. Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5). He was a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee (23:6), thoroughly trained in the Law by the famous Gamaliel (22:3), and zealous for religion (Gal. 1:14). Yet he was brought up in the prominent Hellenistic University city of Tarsus (22:3) and would have been exposed to its cosmopolitan life and Greek philosophy and literature. Paul's Roman citizenship (22:28) was a tremendous help in his Mission to evangelise and disciple the Gentiles.

Opening for the Gospel

Paul became *"all things, to all men"* in order to win them to Christ. He was a Hebrew to the Hebrews, a Greek to the Greeks, a Roman to the Romans, a Gentile to the Gentiles. Paul turned the **obstacle** of culture into an **opening** for communication. One example demonstrates this very clearly:

The Plague

Three ancient writers, Diogenes Laertius, Philostratus and Pausanias record a plague, around 600 B.C. that struck the city of **Athens**, decimating the population. Even though the people of Athens offered sacrifices to their thousands of gods, begging them to intervene and stop the plague, the people continued to die in their thousands. In desperation, the elders of the city sent for a Greek hero, Epimenedes, asking him to help them.

Admitting Failure

Assessing the situation, Epimenedes concluded that there must be some other more powerful god who did not consider himself represented by the thousands of idols in the city. He also reasoned that any god who is great enough and good enough to do something about the plague would probably forgive their ignorance if they openly acknowledged their ignorance of him. He called the people to bring a flock of sheep to a sacred plot of ground in Athens, called Mars Hill, and there sacrificed the sheep to *"the unknown God."* All three writers confirm that the plague lifted immediately.

God Now Commands Every Man to Repent

"...Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:" 17:22-23. In effect, Paul was saying *'Foreign gods? No! The God I proclaim is the One who did what none of your thousands of futile idols could do - He saved Athens from that plague.'* **"God... now commands all men everywhere to repent"** Acts 17:30

Let the Earth Hear His Voice

Acts boldly proclaims that Christianity is for all cultures, every race and nation. It shows how culture can be an obstacle, and how it can also provide an opening to the communication of the Gospel across all the various cultural barriers of Samaria, Syria, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Pamphylia, Crete, Macedonia, Greece, in fact **"to the ends of the earth."** Luke documents the irresistible force as Christ Jesus builds His Church and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Acts is an unfinished Book as Christ continues to build His Church by the power of His Holy Spirit working through His disciples. When the Great Commission is fulfilled Christ will return to Judge the living and the dead.

The Gospel in Acts

Peter at Pentecost:

- Preached a **Person**: A Christ-centered message, emphasising His death and glorious Resurrection.
- Proclaimed a **Gift**: The gift of forgiveness, of the Holy Spirit, of adoption and reconciliation with God.
- Looked for a **response**: Repentance, Faith in Christ, and baptism.

Gospel Messages in Acts Include:

- The **Incarnation**: *"God has come right into our midst"*. An Historic and unique event.
- Forgiveness** of sins: Striking at the heart of our problems.
- The **Cross**: God has acted. The Lord Jesus has been crucified. He is our Atonement, guilt-bearer and propitiation of our sins.
- The **Resurrection**: Christ Jesus is alive! He is Lord and reigning on High.
- The evangelists preached **Christ**: A Person, not a system. An experience of vital relationship to Christ is needed.

The Gospel in Acts Emphasises:

- The **Person and Character** of Jesus Christ as God incarnate.
- The **Teachings** of Jesus Christ on God, life, the Kingdom and human destiny.
- The **Death** of Jesus Christ as the Atonement for sin.
- The **Resurrection** of Jesus Christ. He is our living Lord.

Paul in Athens Proclaimed:

God is the **Creator** of the whole world and everything in it (17:24).

God created all the races of mankind (17:26).

God will **Judge** the whole world (17:31).

God now commands all men everywhere to **Repent** (17:30).

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