

THE ACTS: A “CHURCH” PERSPECTIVE

OR

WHY I SAID GOODBYE TO ACTS 2



COMMON GROUND

- Scripture is God-breathed and without error (2 Tim. 3:16)
- Christ is Creator, Redeemer, and Lord (John 1:1,3,10)
- Our redemption and resurrection life come only through faith in Christ's substitutionary death and resurrection (John 20:31)
- God set apart Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's descendants as a great nation from whom all families of the earth will be blessed (Genesis 12:2)

NOT FUNDAMENTAL, BUT ESSENTIAL TO CORRECTLY UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

- Israel and “The Church” are distinct groups with different commands and hopes. These two groups must not be confused.
- There are no distinctions between Jews and Gentiles today

THE “ONE BODY”

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross,... (Ephesians 2:12-16)



ALL SCRIPTURE

¹⁵ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

(2 Timothy 2:15)

We must understand that while all Scripture is for us, it is not all addressed to or about us.

BEFORE PENTECOST



THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVEN

²¹ Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost (John 20:21-22)

The Lord gave His disciples the Holy Spirit before Pentecost.

THE DISCIPLES UNDERSTOOD

⁴⁴ And he said unto them [His disciples], These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

⁴⁵ Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,
(Luke 24:44-45)

The Lord gave His disciples the *correct understanding* of the Scriptures.



40 DAYS OF TEACHING

² Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

³ To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

(Acts 1:2-3)

The disciples had only **one** question - and it wasn't a stupid one.

⁶ When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? (Acts 1:6)



PENTECOST



NO GENTILES PRESENT

⁵ And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

¹⁴ men of Judaea

²² Ye men of Israel

²⁹ Men and brethren,... the patriarch David,...

³⁰ ... God...would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

³⁶ all the house of Israel

PETER'S MESSAGE (PART I) – ISRAEL RESPONSIBLE

²² Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

²³ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

³⁶ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:22-23; 36)

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (Acts 2:37)



BAPTISM WAS REQUIRED TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

³⁸ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:38)

Baptism was a ***prerequisite*** to receiving the Holy Spirit.

Compare this to Ephesians 1, verse 13:

¹³ In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (Ephesians 1:13)

We received the indwelling Holy Spirit when we believed – completely apart from water baptism



ONLY THOSE PRESENT IN JERUSALEM RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT ON PENTECOST

¹ And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

² He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

⁴ Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. (Acts 19:1-2; 4-6)

MARK 16: SIGNS

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. (Mark 16:16-18)

Not these signs may follow – these signs SHALL follow them that believe.

Does this describe what happened to you when you trusted Christ?



PETER'S MESSAGE (PART 2) – CHRIST'S REQUEST FULFILLED

¹⁹ And I will give unto thee [Peter] the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:19)

The Lord gave Peter a great responsibility

³⁴ Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do... (Luke 23:34)

The Lord was not asking the Father to forgive mankind's sin – His death would be the payment for our sins. He wasn't asking to forgive the Romans, or Pilate... He was asking the Father to forgive the nation of Israel for rejecting their Messiah.



DID JOEL PROPHECY OF THE CHURCH?

¹⁶ But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh:... (Acts 2:16-17)

The events that took place at Pentecost were prophesied in the Old Testament by Joel.

Consider what we read in Ephesians 3:9 and Colossians 1:26 regarding The Church:



THE CHURCH IS NOT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

⁹ And to make all men see what is the fellowship [dispensation] of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world [from the ages] hath been hid in God,... (Ephesians 3:9)

²⁶ Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints (Colossians 1:26)

The Church as we know it – the “**one new man**” where Gentiles and Jews are “**fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel**” (Eph. 3:6) with no distinctions to divide them - is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament.



PENTECOST VS. THE CHURCH

No one disagrees that the Holy Spirit came upon man at Pentecost, but...

- (1) Only Jews (and proselytes) present at the feast in Jerusalem received the Holy Spirit – Acts 19 showed us this wasn't a global indwelling,
- (2) They had to FIRST be baptized to receive the Holy Spirit
- (3) Ephesians and Colossians confirm there are no Old Testament passages speaking of the Church.

BEYOND PENTECOST: ACTS 3



PETER'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

¹⁴ But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

¹⁵ And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. (Acts 3:14-15)

Notice how his comment in verse 17 connects Peter's message to the words of our Lord on the cross in Luke 23 when He said, "**they know not what they do**":

¹⁷ And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.

(Acts 3:17)



WILL CHRIST RETURN IF “*THE CHURCH*” REPENTS?

¹⁹ **Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.**

²⁰ **And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:**

(Acts 3:19-20)

Peter’s message to his audience is that if Israel repents, Christ will return. This has absolutely nothing to do with The Church.



GENTILES (CORNELIUS)



THE KINGDOM OPENED TO GENTILES

Peter already opened the kingdom to the Jews at Pentecost. Peter now opens Israel's promised kingdom to the Gentiles:

²² And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. (Acts 10:22)

Cornelius is called “**a just man, and one that feareth God**” – he is a believer. Peter retells Cornelius the events of Lord's ministry in verses 36 through 43 but also informs us that Cornelius is already aware of these things - “**The word which God sent unto the children of Israel ... That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea ...**” (10:36, 37) Peter wasn't telling Cornelius anything he didn't already know and believe.



HOLY SPIRIT GIVEN TO GENTILES

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord... (Acts 10:44-45, 48)

Those Jews were amazed that the gift of the holy spirit had also been poured out on the Gentiles because the Holy Spirit was promised to Israel, not Gentiles.

Notice these Gentiles were baptized AFTER receiving the Holy Spirit – unlike the Jews at the time.



JEWES ONLY

¹⁸ When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

¹⁹ Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

(Acts 11:18-19)

If THE Church had started at Pentecost, how can this be?

PAUL (ACTS 13)



TO WHOM WERE PAUL & BARNABAS SPEAKING?

⁵ And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews...

¹⁴ But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

⁴² And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. (Acts 13: 5, 14, 42)

They began their ministry speaking to Jews only.

If THE Church started at Pentecost, how can this be?



REJECTED BY THE JEWS/TURNING TO GENTILES

⁴⁴ And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

(Acts 13: 5, 14, 42)

Only when the Jews reject their message, do they turn to Gentiles.



TWO MINISTRIES

¹⁵ But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

¹⁶ To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen [Gentiles]...
(Galatians 1:15-16)

⁷ But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (Galatians 2:7)

Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles, while Peter (and the twelve) are apostles to the Jews

PAUL: TO THE JEWS *FIRST*

¹ Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

² And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, (Acts 17:1-2)

The apostle to the Gentiles went to Jews first.

We don't go to Jews first today – *why not?*



GALATIANS 3



NEITHER JEW NOR GREEK?

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

If we apply the “**neither Jew nor Greek**” phrase to mean that God has removed any earthly distinctions between Jews and Gentiles, then to be consistent, we must apply it to the phrase “**neither male nor female**”.

THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL (ACTS 15)



PUTTING GENTILES UNDER THE LAW?

⁵ But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them [Gentiles], and to command them to keep the law of Moses. (Acts 15:5)

The suggestion made by these believing Pharisees was that since believing Jews were still keeping the Law, Gentile believers must obey the Mosaic Law as well.

²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you [Gentiles] no greater burden than these necessary things;

²⁹ That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. (Acts 15:28-29)



THE EXISTING LEVITICAL LAW CONCERNING GENTILES/STRANGERS TO ISRAEL

⁸ And thou shalt say unto them, Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers [Gentiles] which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice,

⁹ And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the LORD; even that man shall be cut off from among his people. (Leviticus 17:8-9)

¹² Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood. (Leviticus 17:12)

¹³ And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust.

¹⁵ And every soul that eateth that which died of itself, or that which was torn with beasts, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even: then shall he be clean. (Leviticus 17:13, 15)

²⁶ Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you (Leviticus 18:26)



JAMES & PAUL (ACTS 21)



PAUL TOLD THEM EVERYTHING THEY NEEDED TO KNOW

²⁰ And how I [Paul] kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, (Acts 20:20)

²⁶ Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. (Acts 20:26-27)

If this was during “The Church Age”, Paul must have told them that the Moasic Law was now optional, and that Jews and Gentiles are “**fellowheirs**”... but he didn’t.



THE RUMOR ABOUT PAUL

²⁰ And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

²¹ And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

²³ Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

²⁴ Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. (Acts 21:20-21; 23-24)

- Paul was accused of telling Jews they were no longer required to keep the Law
- James wanted the Jews to know that Paul still kept the Law

None of this makes sense in today's Church Age.



EVERYTHING PAUL PREACHED WAS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

²² Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: (Acts 26:22)

¹¹ These [in Berea] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. (Acts 17:11)

Remember that Ephesians and Colossians tell us the Mystery was hidden in God and therefore NOT found in Moses and the prophets.



HOPE OF THE PROMISE / HOPE OF ISRAEL



THIS IS NOT THE HOPE OF “THE CHURCH”

⁶ And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God, unto our fathers:

⁷ Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. (Acts 26:6-7)

²⁰ For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. (Acts 28:20)

Why would Paul mention the “*the* hope of the promise made of God, unto our fathers... twelve tribes” and “hope of Israel” in the Church age? This is not our hope.



ACTS 28



PAUL STILL PREACHING TO ISRAEL

²³ And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

(Acts 28:23)

Just as in Acts 26:22 (and his entire Acts ministry), everything Paul said could be found in the Old Testament



JUDGMENT UPON ISRAEL (*DURING THE CHURCH AGE?*)

²⁶ Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

²⁷ For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

(Isaiah 6:9-10/ Acts 28:26-27)

If Israel was already judged and put aside at either Calvary or Pentecost, how can there be a judgment fulfilled against Israel during the Church age?

²⁸ Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. (Acts 28:28)



FINAL THOUGHTS



PETER, JAMES, AND HEBREWS

- James is written **“to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad”** (James 1:1)
- 1 Peter is written **“to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”** (1 Peter 1:1)
- Hebrews, as the name clearly tells us, is written to Jews.

It makes no sense to consider these “Church” epistles unless one holds to replacement theology.

ROMANS

- **¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)**
- **¹ I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.**
- **² God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.... (Romans 11:1-2)**
- The olive tree in Romans 11: Jews and Gentiles are broken off or grafted in for different reasons.
- **¹¹ I say then, Have they [Israel] stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them [Israel] to jealousy. (Romans 11:11)**

THE NEW
TESTAMENT
RIGHTLY
DIVIDED

DURING ACTS

I, 2, 3 John
Revelation
I & 2 Peter
James
Jude
Galatians
I & 2 Thessalonians
Hebrews
I & 2 Corinthians
Romans

POST-ACTS

Ephesians
Philippians
Philemon
Colossians
I Timothy
Titus
2 Timothy

BEFORE/DURING AND AFTER THE ACTS (APOLOGIES TO STUART ALLEN)

BEFORE/DURING ACTS

Mystery hid in God

Law & prophets

chosen “since the foundation of the world”

The New Jerusalem

The Bride, The Lamb’s wife

The Jew is first.

Gifts of miracles

Two baptisms; water and spirit

New Covenant promised to Israel / Lord’s Supper

Believers looked to meet the Lord in the air on His way to the earth. Connected with the Archangel Michael, and the last trumpet, and the reigning of Christ over the Gentiles, i.e., the millennium on the earth

‘revelation’ (*apokalupsis*) and ‘coming’ (*parousia*)

AFTER ACTS

Mystery revealed

No OT connection

Chosen before the overthrow of the world

‘far above all’

The One New Man

Jewish and Gentile believers one in Christ, and on a perfect equality doctrinally and dispensationally.

No gifts of miracles

One baptism

Israel now *lo ammi* / *No Lord’s Supper*

Believers look to be manifested in the glory of heaven’s holiest of all, where the Lord Jesus is now seated, and where we are seated with Him, by faith, our hope being the realization of this glorious position.

‘appearing’ *epiphaneia*

