

The Acts: Its Transition from the Gospels

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] I would remind you that in the midst of our grief and our sorrow, we must face the reality that these things have to be viewed in the light of eternity.

And it is the Word of God that is alive and abides forever. And therein is the only place that we will find the instruction, the comfort, and the solace that we need to keep on going.

Let's go, please, to the Acts of the Apostles. Chapter 6. I'd like to preface today's study with a few introductory remarks, some of which are review and some of which may be new, but they are essential to what is coming.

For the past few sessions now, we have been spending our time together in this important document, the Acts of the Apostles. It is a book which is one of the most critical and surely the most controversial in all of the New Testament.

I think it is safe to say that so far as Christendom is concerned, more believers are divided over the meaning of the contents of this book, the Acts of the Apostles, than they are of any other in all of the New Testament.

[1 : 27] We have told you that there are two essential things always to be remembered when you engage a study of the Acts. First of all, and here I think is where many get off the track right away, and that is, it is a book of predominant Jewishness.

And I would challenge anyone to read the book with that in mind, and you will see ongoing and frequent references to the Jews, to the term brethren, which the context always indicates are Jews, to the synagogues, to the temple, and to all of the things that are Jewish.

It is a fatal mistake to drag the church, which is the body of Christ, from the Pauline epistles back into the Acts of the Apostles.

And that is a mistake that we feel many have made. Rather, we must allow the obvious Jewishness of the four Gospels to naturally flow into the book of Acts.

And there is an undeniable continuity there. We saw earlier, for instance, the importance of allowing the Old Testament to naturally flow into the four Gospels, despite the fact that there is a 400-year period between the Old Testament and the Gospels.

[2 : 52] And despite that, the connection is obvious. The second essential thing to remember in engaging the Acts of the Apostles in the study is that the flow and progression of Revelation continue within the body of the document.

Acts 1.1 through 28.31 consumes about 30 to 35 years. Yet, as we sit down and read the book chapter by chapter, verse by verse, you can read all 28 chapters in several minutes.

And it's very easy to lose sight of the fact that 35 years of history were consumed in those 28 chapters. And they are not static years.

They are years of great progression and movement and development. Things are really happening in the Acts. And it is moving along. We saw how the book opens with the gracious offer of the kingdom to Israel based upon their national repentance.

Because God has already fulfilled His part of what is needed for the establishment of the kingdom. And that is that His Christ must suffer. And He has.

[4 : 03] And therefore, the opposite side of the coin then is the national repentance of Israel, which was to be forthcoming, but has not been realized, not even to this date.

So the Acts opens with the gracious offer of the kingdom to Israel. And Peter is unmistakably the central character in that drama. For the first 12 chapters, you read repeatedly about Peter and the 12 apostles.

It is quite obvious. And the headquarters for all of these events is Jerusalem. That's where it all centers. But there is a very noticeable change that takes place halfway through the book.

Because at the conclusion of chapter 12, Peter, the one to whom the keys of the kingdom was given, the one who was selected as the chief spokesman for the 12, the one who made up the principal character of the band of three, Peter, James, and John, completely fades off the scene. After Acts chapter 12, you do not even find Peter at all. And another person takes the predominant role from chapters 13 through 28.

[5 : 20] And he is none other than Saul of Tarsus to become Paul the apostle. And the geographical center moves. No longer is it Jerusalem. It's Antioch.

Everything begins in Antioch. It is the hub of all missionary activity. And while throughout those first 12 chapters, all of the emphasis is upon Israel, the last half of the book does not disregard Israel. But that which becomes patently obvious is that Saul of Tarsus has become Paul the apostle with a commission to the Gentiles. He magnifies his office.

God raises him up and commissions him to go to the Gentiles. In our last session, we concluded with the stoning of Stephen in Acts chapter 7.

And I should like to go there and tidy up a few things that we didn't cover. Look, if you would, please, to Acts chapter 6. And we'll get to 7 in just a moment. We pointed out to you that those who were responsible for stoning Stephen constitute almost as important a factor as the idea that he was stoned itself.

[6 : 36] Of course, it was an unauthorized execution. The Jews were not permitted by the Romans to carry out capital punishment. And that's why they had to take Jesus to Pontius Pilate in order for him to give an order of execution and put him to death.

It was not lawful for them to slay anyone. But they made an exception in Stephen's case. These men were so completely covered up with behemoths and bitterness and anger and jealousy that they rose up on the spot and stoned Stephen.

And that which precipitated it, of course, is his powerful message. And I would like to look at what led up to it a little bit, beginning in chapter 6 and verse 8.

I want you to get the setting here. This is very important to what is coming. Acts chapter 6 and verse 8. And Stephen, who has just been selected as one of the deacons, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.

But some men from what was called the synagogue of the free men, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, but make no mistake, they are Jewish Cyrenians and Jewish Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, also Jews, rose up and argued with Stephen.

[7 : 59] And yet they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the spirit with which he was speaking. They wanted to disagree. Well, they did, in fact, disagree, but they didn't have an argument.

They didn't have a base. They had their objections. They had their opinions. They had their ideas. But Stephen had the word of God, and he just kept coming back with them, and they were absolutely unable to refute his arguments.

They couldn't put the man down. They couldn't say, Stephen, in the word of God it says thus and so and thus and so, and that's where you're wrong. They couldn't do that. And their anger just got the best of them.

And we find a kind of syndrome that is perpetuated among evil men, and that is simply this.

When you cannot defeat a man's arguments, then you eliminate the man. When you can't quiet the man's arguments, and you can't answer his charges, then kill him.

[8 : 59] Murder him. Get rid of him. That's what they did with Jesus, and that's what they're going to do with Stephen. Notice how it came about. Because they were unable to cope with his wisdom and the spirit with which he was speaking, they secretly induced men.

They're going to manufacture some trumped-up charges to say, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God, and they stirred up the people.

It is a shame that people can be so easily stirred up. It is a shame that there were not more thoughtful, insightful, level-headed people here.

What we're talking about is a lynch mob mentality. Somebody makes accusations, and they foment the thing, and they get the people all stirred up.

Same thing as outside of Pontius Pilate's residence. Crucify him! Crucify him! They got the crowd whipped up into a frenzy.

[10:09] Crowds can be so manipulated and so used. They stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and dragged him away and brought him before the council.

This council is the Sanhedrin. This council is the supreme court of Judaism. It was comprised of 70 men.

They were supposed to be the embodiment of wisdom and integrity and justice and truth in all of Israel. This was the most august body that could be formulated in the land.

These were the most revered, respected patriarchs throughout all of Israel. They are the council, the Sanhedrin. And Stephen is brought before them, and they put forward false witnesses who said, This man incessantly speaks against this holy place in the law, for we have heard him say that this Nazarene Jesus will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us. No doubt, this is a reference to the comment that Jesus made, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Well, it's all taken out of context. It's all distorted. It's all used in a way that it was never intended.

[11:38] But they capitalized upon it. And fixing their gaze on him, verse 15, that means he was the center of attraction. All of these men who sat in a semi-circle, convened in a semi-circle, with the defendant in the middle, and all of them are just sitting there, looking at him.

I suspect Stephen knows right then and there, that's it. He knows he's finished. He knows he doesn't have a prayer. But he's going to make his statement, and indeed he does.

And what he does is recounts the history of the nation of Israel and points out to them their continued obstinance and rebellion against a gracious and loving God who had called them to himself and brought them out of the land of Egypt and led them through the wilderness and established them in the land and made every provision for them.

And Stephen recounts this history saying as much as, and at every turn of the way, you rebelled against God. You became ungrateful and unthankful.

And do you know what? You, says Stephen, you, this present generation of Jews, you're not a bit different than they were. You're just like them. Notice his conclusion in verse 51, chapter 7.

[13:06] Here he is wrapping up his message. You could have cut the atmosphere with a knife. You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit.

You are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the righteous one, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become.

You, who received the law as ordained by angels and yet did not keep it. Now the indictment is intensified because he is saying, you not only violated divine standards, but you were the ones who were given more information and more data and more insight than anybody.

You had more to work with than anyone. And you turned out just like they did. Well, I can promise you this was not welcome news. These men considered themselves to be holy, loyal, pure, the elite of Israel.

They heard this, they were cut to the quick. That means Stephen's message penetrated them like a knife. They just, they began gnashing their teeth at him.

[14:43] These are grown men. This is anger. This is, Game! Kill him! You could see the veins pop out in their neck. Look what they did.

They rushed on him. Verse 57, En masse, Get this, if you will. This, this, serene, supposedly august body of men just in one mass movement like a charging line of football players.

They all up and out of their seats and converge on this man Stephen. They cried out with a loud voice. It doesn't say what they were crying out. I can imagine what they were crying out. Shut him up!

Stop him! Get him! Pandemonium had taken over. Their anger was overflowing. Their hatred. And they covered their ears and they rushed upon him with one impulse.

Just a massive action and they all come after him. And they'd driven him out of the city. They began stoning him. They must have hurled those stones with everything they had.

[16:00] And the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they went on stoning Stephen. It's only a question of time until one of those stones finds a mark that renders a man unconscious.

And that's merciful. These are just stones of all sizes raining down upon this man's body. Crush and break virtually every bone in his body.

Some stones were picked up that it would take a man two hands to handle. Brought up over his head and come crashing down on the body. Crush the skull.

Crush the chest cavity. Crush the legs. Crush everything. Man has just left a pile of bleeding flesh. Broken bones. anger. This is what hatred does. Anger. Let me tell you something. You might find this hard to believe. But I'm convinced that it's so very true.

[17 : 14] This was all directed against God. Directed against the truth. This is man's hatred and how it manifests itself.

These men who were in a coveted kind of religious position who were looked upon as so holy were people who in fact nothing more than haters of God.

Isn't that something? Really? Stephen falling on his knees cried out with a loud voice Lord do not hold this sin against them.

Reminiscent of Father forgive them for they know not what they do. And having said this he fell asleep. I see an interesting kind of correlation in the stoning of Stephen and this by the way is one of the great negative milestones in the history of Israel.

I never lose sight of the fact that it wasn't just a group of angry Jews who stoned Stephen. Stephen. It was the leadership elite of the whole nation that stoned Stephen.

[18 : 29] And these are the same people who refused the baptism of John. Luke tells us that the Pharisees and the scribes and the elders and the priests and so on rejected the counsel of God against themselves not being baptized of John.

They didn't accept John his authority or his message. And when John was taken prisoner by Herod they were silent and they permitted the execution of John the baptizer by their silence.

And when Jesus was brought before Pontius Pilate they didn't merely permit his execution they demanded it. Crucify him! Crucify him! We'll not have this man to reign over us.

And now they've graduated they've gone even further. They haven't permitted the death of Stephen and they haven't demanded the death of Stephen they've committed the death of Stephen.

They are actively involved here. Tragedy. Someone has said that Stephen is regarded as the first martyr and in verse 56 Stephen says I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

[20 : 02] I never can escape the implication of that what I think the implication of it is. this is the only place that I know of where we are told that Jesus is standing at the right hand of God.

All other places with which I am familiar he is seated at the right hand of the Father. Here he is standing. Someone suggested that Jesus Christ rose to his feet to welcome this martyr.

I don't find that difficult to believe at all. The stoning of Stephen as near as we can tell chronologically occurred about two years after Pentecost.

So what we are saying is that the time from Acts chapter 1 and the ascension and the Pentecostal experience that followed until the stoning of Stephen here in Acts chapter 7 there is approximately two years that have lapsed.

The persecution of believers under Saul of Tarsus is going to begin with Stephen and it will continue for about three years. Now some of these figures are open to question but the variations that are suggested do not differ greatly from what I have said so if this isn't it it is rather close I'm confident and I want you to note some things of real significance here.

[21 : 36] Continuing on with chapter 8 and ignoring the division between 7 and 8 we read and Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death and on that day that means on the day that Stephen was stoned something happened a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem and I have pointed out to you before that this church is a Jewish constituency there are no Gentiles who make this up and this is one of the reasons why I am personally persuaded that this is not the church that we will find later that the apostle Paul will address in his epistles because the unique thing about the New Testament church which is the body of Christ that which makes it what it is its dynamic and its uniqueness is rooted in the fact that it is made up of neither Jew nor Gentile bond or free male or female all are one in Christ and the thing that was so difficult for the people of

Paul's day to conceive was that Paul was preaching and it got him in a lot of trouble Paul was preaching that God has accepted non-Jews on the same basis and the same footing as he has

Jews who have come to faith in Jesus so the distinction is gone the barrier is broken down and Jew and Gentile are wedded together as it were in one body and they make up that one fellowship which is the body of Christ that is not the church that exists here in chapter 8 because this church is holy Jewish now if you want to call it a Jewish church I wouldn't argue with that if you want to call it an assembly of early believers surely that's what it was but the body church is made up of Jew and Gentile this is an assembly of believers and we have noted the derivation of that word before great persecution rose against the church in Jerusalem what that means is the incident with Stephen was a triggering device and this thing had been building for quite some time because you see as these believers began shortly after the day of

Pentecost as this ministry believers in Christ got underway they were enjoying a certain amount of popularity among the people they were still and don't lose sight of this fact they were still meeting frequently in the temple most of their preachments about Jesus and the news that they were sharing about him was delivered in the temple in the Jewish temple and it was tolerated by the authorities and it was welcomed by many of the common people we are told things such as great fear came upon them all and they had favor with all the people surely this constituted what many recognized to be a real spiritual revival in Judaism and they were looked upon with a lot of favor and the miracles that were performed and the healings and so on but the persecution began with Peter and John in chapter 4 and they put them in prison and then they're out again and the thing is heating up and keep in mind now that a couple of years are transpiring between

Pentecost and the time that Stephen is stoned and when Stephen is stoned it is as though opposition to the followers of the Nazarene had reached a fever pitch and it has culminated in the stoning to death of this man and that led those who did the stoning the Sanhedrin and others like Saul of Tarsus to say alright we've done this we've put that blasphemer to death now what say let's go right on and clean house let's take care of all of them let's rid Judaism of this evil perverse religious disease right now let's root them all out let's root them all out and there's a big campaign that goes on it is a pogrom if you will against the Jew committed by the Jew great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria well what else would you expect them to do same thing that the

Jews did in Germany when Hitler came to power and began persecuting the Jews the Jews started fleeing all throughout Europe and Hitler began pursuing them these people were fleeing for their lives and so were they here later on when Saul of Tarsus is converted on the Damascus road he is going to the city of Damascus clear out of the country into a foreign land Syria way up to the north 120 miles because he had heard that there is a whole contingent of followers of Jesus the Nazarene and they fled to Damascus of Syria and they are thinking that they'll be safe there well they won't be safe there because I'm going to go up there and get them and I'm going to serve them with extradition papers and bring them back here to Jerusalem and that's what he was about to do now I want you to notice something that is extremely significant here in verse 1 and it is the last three words except the apostles does that strike you as strange it surely does me it says that they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria fleeing for their lives except the apostles and my question is this what are they doing here

[27 : 58] I mean the apostles now listen folks we aren't talking about disciples we're talking about apostles the disciples have already fled all apostles are disciples but not all disciples are apostles apostles were those twelve whom Jesus chose Peter James John Nathaniel Matthew so on they are apostles ones to whom special authority is delegated everybody else is scattered because of the persecution but the apostles they've stayed right there in Jerusalem and my question is this they were told in Matthew 28 go you therefore into all the world and preach the gospel they were told to do that two years earlier in Acts chapter 1 you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem Judea Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth they're still here in Jerusalem what are they doing there why haven't they gone why didn't

Peter and James and John and the other fellows get together and say well you heard what the Lord said what do you think Thomas says well I've got a burden for India I'm going to head that way and someone else says I'm going over into Europe and I'm going into Asia and they all just spread out and go their several ways into all the world like Jesus said why didn't they do that two years later and they haven't carried out his orders what are they doing here in Jerusalem it's remarkable the answers that some give to this some have said well the problem is Christians just get disobedient and they don't obey the Lord and they should have gone they should have gone a long time ago but

the reason they haven't is because they're fearful and they're afraid to go to the regions beyond because they don't know what's out there and you know a lot of people today are scared to go to the mission field because they don't know what awaits them and they're fearful that's absolute nonsense all you have to do is read the chapters that precede this and you'll know if you know anything these men were not fearful they were fearless they were intrepid they were they were adventuresome they were dynamic they were trusting and throughout the whole region of action they are filled the spirit

I cannot assign timidity or fear or disobedience to these men and to say that they are cowards seems to me that had they been cowardly they would have been the first to leave seems to me that it takes a whole lot more courage to stay there where the persecution has developed and where it is fomenting all around you that would take a lot more courage than it would to get out lots of people when persecution really heats up and things get hot lots of people feel called to other places would have been logical for them to have felt that too and others were but the apostles stayed right there and I'm satisfied that that's what they should have done I don't think they were cowardly and I don't think they were disobedient the reason they are still there in Jerusalem is because they are anticipating the kingdom the return of

Jesus the throne of his father David and they are going to share in Israel they continue on there preaching and proclaiming their message offering this kingdom to Israel and Israel on every page repeatedly rejects and it goes on the offer is extended and they reject and the offer is extended and they reject and do you know what this means it means that the more opportunity and the more offers that the nation of Israel has the more guilty and culpable they become in that rejection the more solidified the decision becomes now I should like you to look at the verses that follow and note beginning with verse four Saul is doing his thing ravaging the church persecuting and so on therefore those who had been scattered went about preaching the word and

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them that's interesting when Jesus sent the twelve forth he says go not into the way of the Gentiles neither to the Samaritans but go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel now the scope is being broadened and he is going to Samaria and he turns out to be quite a fellow too doesn't he notice if you will that he is performing miracles and signs all of which are in keeping and attendant to the kingdom and there is an incident that occurs with this Simon and Peter certainly puts him in his place but the verse that I would like you to note particularly is verse 14 of chapter 8 now when the apostles in Jerusalem they are the same ones as the apostles who remain behind in

[33 : 37] Jerusalem of 8 1 when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God they sent them Peter and John why would they do that Peter and John were apostles they had authority that no one else had and they are going up to check this thing out it is absolutely befuddling to them that the Samaritans have received this message so Peter and John go and when they get there they came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit for he had not yet fallen upon any of them they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord the Holy Spirit that is because Peter and John had apostolic power to convey this as was delegated to them by the Lord Jesus Christ that's why it was necessary that they go there they couldn't send just anyone it had to be someone with apostolic authority and that's who

Peter and John were and then the unfortunate incident about Simon happens but notice if you will in verse 25 and so when they had solemnly testified that is Peter and John and Philip they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord they started back to Jerusalem and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans but notice where they're headed for they're going back to Jerusalem back to their headquarters back at their base of operations because for Israel this is where everything was going to happen and they are right in doing that an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip and told him to go to Jerusalem to Gaza and we have the incident of the Ethiopian eunuch now come over if you will please to Acts chapter 10 I want you to note something else that is very enlightening in connection with all of this chapter 10 is the incident regarding Cornelius this is a very important breakthrough chapter it is extremely extremely valuable that you understand this because Cornelius is a Gentile and the interesting thing is that Peter is prevailed upon if you will by the spirit of God with his sheet let down from heaven three times before he gets the message that it is okay not only is it okay it is divinely required of him to go to the house of Cornelius and as you read Acts chapter 10 and we won't take time to do it now it is lengthy but Acts chapter 10 and 11 makes it very clear so that nobody could miss it that Peter's reluctance to go to

sit at table with a Gentile or to have anything to do with him in social concourse like that I just can't do that because you see I'm a Jew and I will be contaminated now the question that puzzles me is this why in the world should

Peter need a special revelation repeated three times in order to do what the Lord had already told him to do in person two years earlier go into all the world preach the gospel to every creature doesn't that mean Gentiles why then should he balk at going to a Gentile here two years later is Peter confused is he mixed up is he disobedient what is this well Peter has tunnel vision he was given tunnel vision he was supposed to have tunnel vision he wasn't thinking in terms of Gentiles at all why because Gentile involvement comes later Israel must first be fed the gospel is to Israel first and when Israel as a nation gets on track then the blessing will flow to the Gentiles and what God is going to do is something that Peter never thought of in his wildest imagination and that is that God is going to do something regarding the Gentiles despite the fact that Israel is not going to cooperate at all that never entered Peter's mind and Acts chapter 10 and all that surrounds it proves that he is still thinking solely in terms of Israel and God is saying Israel is coming closer and closer and closer to being set aside and with the arrival of Saul of Tarsus on the scene and his conversion becoming Paul the apostle God is gradually moving away from the kingdom program and the gospel of the kingdom to

[38 : 59] Israel and the miracles and the signs and the tongues and everything else and is beginning with this one body concept made up of Jew and Gentile Peter did not have a clue as to what was happening but I want to emphasize this Peter wasn't supposed to he was not out of line he was not disobedient he was just doing what he was commissioned to do he didn't understand that God had a hidden agenda and this hidden agenda is going to be referred to as the mystery of the church which Paul will explain in detail in Ephesians and in Colossians and we'll see that when we get to it but before we do I want you to note here another item of great significance in chapter 10 notice verse 44 he doesn't even finish the Holy Spirit just interrupts and and it says in verse 44 while Peter was still speaking these words about Jesus while Peter was still speaking these words the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message and the thing that is so extraordinary about this is that the Holy Spirit is falling upon Gentiles he's not supposed to do that he's supposed to fall only upon Jews and the Jews thought that this was very exclusive notice verse 45 and all the circumcised believers that's just another word for Jews all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed shocked they're saying what is this these people aren't Jews they're Gentiles because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also well did you ever for they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God just as the Jews had done in Acts chapter 2 and Peter's presence and Peter's apostolic authority here is legitimizing this is putting a divine stamp of approval upon it if you will because there is absolutely no way at all without apostolic involvement here that these Jews would have ever considered this something legitimate but Peter's being there makes it so he is directly commissioned by God and he says surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did Kenny and he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and then they ask him to stay on for a few days the apostles and brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God

Peter came up to Jerusalem those who were circumcised the Jews took issue with him they called Peter on the carpet and they proceeded to ball him out what are you doing going into these uncircumcised men and eating with them what's the big idea anyway here you are the spokesman of the twelve the one to whom the keys of the kingdom is given the Lord's right hand man and you're going in there hobnobbing with Gentiles now just what do you have to say for yourself we're ashamed of you Peter and Peter says well I know exactly what you're saying and he tells them this whole thing about the vision the sheet let down how that he was reluctant to go didn't want to go and was forced to go and the Lord was in it and Peter closes out his explanation by saying what did you want me to do tell God how he has to run this thing who am I that I should withstand God I had to go along with what he told me to do it was a surprise to me too fellas but that's what God said and notice if you will after Peter has given his explanation in verse 18 it says of chapter 11 and when they heard this that is this explanation they the Jews quieted down that means they backed off they were really on Peter and they backed off and they glorified God and here is what they said well then

God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life now wait a minute yes he has but something is still the waters are muddy what about the kingdom what's happening here what part of the Gentiles going to happen what's taking place with the kingdom Gentiles do you see what I mean when I say this is transitional there are both existing one in the same time one's fading out one's fading in there is an overlap there is real difficulty here in understanding this these people are confused too they don't know what's happening either what is this what's God doing anyway now it is going to become abundantly clear what God is doing when Paul the apostle comes on the scene and begins his preaching but it isn't going to be well received by many in fact the very next verse verse 19 says something that just puzzles me further notice this

Gentiles are brought in right verse 18 they are glorifying God they are glad right for the Gentiles being brought in they've accepted Peter's explanation they are rejoicing about it but would you look at the next verse so then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen that's Acts 8 1 made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch speaking the word to everyone with whom they came in contact no they didn't did they speaking the word to no one except the Jews alone what word were they speaking let me tell you something friends get this this is very important the gospel of the grace of God is applicable to everyone for everyone it is believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved do you know what they're preaching the word to no one except to Jews alone they are preaching the message that is appropriate for the Jews alone they are preaching the message of the kingdom it is that Jesus is the Messiah Jesus is coming back Israel needs to repent that's the difference that's the difference you do not have to single out an audience and make it be a Jewish audience if you're going to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God because the gospel which I preach right now and the gospel which Paul the apostle preached was a gospel applicable to everyone and to anyone believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved but this is applicable for the Jew you preach the kingdom message to a non Jew and he wouldn't even know what you're talking about but he knows what you're talking about when you preach the gospel of the grace of God and Christ dying for the sins of all humanity

[46 : 52] Jew Gentile and whoever he can understand that that's the message that Paul is going to be commissioned to preach and it will incorporate not only Jews but Gentiles and it's going to get him in a lot of difficulty it is the gospel of the grace of God and it is established later on and preached with great clarity Romans is probably the best explanation of that gospel in great detail with chapter 12 of Acts we find the very last mention of Peter and what happens is that the kingdom is bogged down the kingdom is placed on hold it is postponed and God brings in the church which is the body the mystery and it begins to develop now the point that I wish to make in connection with this and I suspect that by now it is unmistakable

I hope that it is at least we labored long and hard to try and prove some of these very same elements to you in Acts chapter 2 and 3 and if what I have said today about Acts 7 and 8 and 10 and 11 is valid if what I have said in the last 45 to 50 minutes is valid if this far along in the Acts of the Apostles there is such intense Jewish involvement and the introduction of Gentiles is so novel and so new does that not then make a proof positive case to say that surely the same exists in Acts chapter 2 and 3 because Acts 10 and the conversion of Cornelius is 10 years 8 and a half at the inside after Pentecost we have an almost entirely

Jewish constituency for the first 10 years following the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and all during that time the kingdom offer is still extended to Israel it is still Israel repent Israel Jesus will come back again the nation needs to repent and they are not finally set aside with great finality until the temple is destroyed in A.D. 70 Paul the apostle is dead he has been martyred someone said exactly when then did the New Testament church begin the church which is his body my answer is I don't know I really don't know exactly when it began but I know that that's what we are today and we need to take our commands our marching orders in accordance and when you take present day believers and try to push them back in to a modus of operandi for Acts 2 and Acts 3 then you're confronted with innumerable contradictions and why aren't we then speaking in tongues and why aren't we healing and why aren't we performing miracles and why aren't we water baptizing as the Jews did and all the rest of it this is the progressiveness of Revelation and it is so absolutely critical the book of Acts is the hub of the whole thing it joins the gospels and the epistles next week we will conclude the Acts and we will see the predominance of Paul the apostle the radical change of direction that he introduces and the resultant disobedience and further rejection of

Israel and how God concludes that thank you father for this time we've been able to share together today thank you for the truth of your word thank you for the clarity that is there when we take the time to search it and to examine these things thank you for the teachability of these people we pray that each of us will before you take these things and examine them and see whether or not they be so give us we pray fruitful and insightful times together as we continue through this series in Christ's name amen

I would like to express my appreciation to Don and Shirley Locker for what they've meant to us over the past several years and I'm going to really miss that lanky song leader coming up here at 8 o'clock on Sunday morning but I do hope that you will be able to get back on occasion for a visit and you will grace us with your presence it's been a joy to know you you're dismissed and I'll mix ■■ I can tell you to write every book in your name and I until next finish I could did work to know you through this that you try to and you and this type of thing and this there it can't look at