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The Book of Acts

“THIS book is to the Gospels what the fruit is to the tree that bears it. In the Gospels we see the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying; in the Acts we see it bringing forth much fruit (Joh 12:24).”

—Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary

Other Helpful Links:

Additional Commentary:

http://preceptaustin.org/acts_commentaries.htm

Adam Clarke Commentary:

<http://www.studylight.org/com/acc/view.cgi?book=ac>

Matthew Henry's Commentary:

<http://www.studylight.org/com/mhc-com/view.cgi?book=ac>

David Guzik's Commentary:

<http://www.studylight.org/com/guz/view.cgi?book=ac>

Introductory Notes



Author: Luke

The Book of Acts begins with a reference to the author's "former account" written to a man named Theophilus (1:1), a clear reference to the Gospel of Luke (see Luke 1:3). Even though the author does not mention himself by name in either the Gospel or Acts, early tradition identifies Luke as the author of both volumes. (William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*)



Time: Between A.D. 61 and A.D. 64

The Book of Acts does not record Paul's death. Instead it ends abruptly during Paul's residence in Rome (see 28:30). Paul's house arrest in Rome occurred around a.d. 61, marking the earliest possible date for the book's completion. Acts makes no reference to the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 or to Nero's persecution of Christians following the fire of Rome in a.d. 64. Surely Luke would have mentioned these significant events if they had occurred when he wrote. Moreover, the many references to Paul's vindication before Roman officials would not make sense if Nero had already started his vehement persecution of Christians. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Acts was written between a.d. 61 and 64. (William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*)



Themes

The Book of Acts provides a condensed history of the early church, an eyewitness account of the miraculous spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. The book details how the Holy Spirit authorized our spiritual forebears to carry out Jesus' mandate to be His witnesses throughout the world. The accounts in Acts include stirring examples for us to follow, but the recurring theme of the Book of Acts is that our spiritual ancestors were empowered by the Holy Spirit. That same power is available to us. God has not left us at the mercy of our own weaknesses; He has sent the Holy Spirit to help us follow their example (see Eph. 5:17, 18), and to be Jesus' witnesses in all of the earth. (William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*)

An Outline of The Book of Acts

- I. Preaching the Gospel "in Jerusalem" and Judea.
 - A. Preparation for the work (1:1-26).
 - B. Events of Pentecost (2:1-47).
 - C. The Church unfolding in miracle and endurance of persecution (3:1-4:37).
 - D. The Church unfolding in penal power (5:1-16).
 - E. The Church in the second persecution (5:17-42.)
 - F. The Church forming its economy (6:1-8).
 - G. The Church in last struggle and dispersion (6:8-8:4).
- II. Preaching the Gospel "in Samaria" and about Palestine.
 - A. The deacon Philip evangelizes Samaria (8:5-25).
 - B. The new Apostle of the Gentiles called (9:1-30).
 - C. Gentile induction; new Christian center, Gentile Antioch (10:1-11:30).
 - D. Desolation of Jerusalem Church by Herod; its avenging (12:1-25).
- III. Preaching the Gospel "in the Uttermost Parts of the Earth".
 - A. Paul's first mission from Antioch (13:1-14:28).
 - B. Jerusalem Council on Circumcision (15:1-34).
 - C. Paul's second mission from Antioch (15:35-18:23).
 - D. Paul's third mission from Antioch (18:23-21:17).
 - E. Paul in council with James--Arrest--Sent to Cæsarea (21:18-23:35).
 - F. Paul's two years at Cæsarea (24:1-26:32).
 - G. Paul en route for Rome; at Rome (27:1-28:31).

(adapted from *The People's New Testament*)

Chapter 1 Notes

THEOPHILUS [thih AHF uh luhs] (**lover of God**) — a Christian to whom Luke dedicated the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). The fact that Luke spoke of Theophilus as “most excellent” indicates that he was a prominent man of high rank and possibly a Roman. He may have chosen the name when he was converted to Christianity. According to tradition, both Luke and Theophilus were natives of Antioch in Syria. Much speculation surrounds Theophilus, but little is known for certain about him.

Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., Harrison, R. K., & Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1995. Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary.

Apostle = “The messenger or ambassador (Phil. 2:25 [see also Phil. 4:18]) can never be greater than the one who sends him (John 13:16; Sept.: 1 Kgs. 14:6). The Lord chose the term apóstoloi to indicate the distinctive relation of the Twelve Apostles whom He chose to be His witnesses because in Class. Gr. the word was seldom used (Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2, 26). Therefore, it designates the office as instituted by Christ to witness of Him before the world (John 17:18). It also designates the authority which those called to this office possess.”

Zodhiates, S. 2000, c1992, c1993. The complete word study dictionary : New Testament (electronic ed.) . AMG Publishers: Chattanooga, TN

Note v.5 = Spirit Baptism—“Many times this is interpreted to mean that the Holy Spirit did the baptizing. The correct understanding of this, however, is that the Holy Spirit is the element of the baptism just as water was the element of the baptism of John. This is the fifth time that the phrase, “baptized with the Holy Ghost,” occurs in the NT (see Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). In each of the previous four instances Jesus Christ is said to be the One performing the baptism.” (Zodhiates, S., The Complete Word Study Bible)

Note v.8 = Note that the three locations which Jesus speaks of make a solid outline for the entire book of Acts. In Jerusalem; in all Judea and all Samaria; and in all the world the gospel (good news) of Jesus was to be preached. These men and those to follow were and are to teach it under the power and conviction of none other than the leading of the Holy Spirit. Here we see the giving of the power for witness of Jesus Christ as being one element and function of the Holy Spirit.

****SEE MORE ACTS 1 NOTES ON PG. 18****

Chapter 2 Notes

Note vs.1-13 = “This is the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to send the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the coming of the Holy Spirit was to glorify Jesus Christ (John 16:7-14).

The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost and filled not just a selected few, but every believer that was present in the upper room (Acts 2:4). One result of this baptism was that these people spoke in languages that they did not previously understand. In Acts 2:6, 8, the writer uses the Greek word *dialéto* (1258), which referred to known and understood ethnic languages, or “dialects.” The “other tongues,” mentioned in verse four should not be confused with the “unknown tongue” spoken by the Corinthians (see 1 Cor. 14:24, 13, 19, 27). This “unknown tongue” is always in the singular and is accompanied by a singular personal pronoun. The Apostle Paul demanded that this unknown tongue always be interpreted. The tongues that were spoken in this passage, however, needed no interpreter because each man heard the message of the Lord in his own language.” Zodhiates, S., & Baker, W. 2000, c1991, c1994. The complete word study Bible: King James Version. (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers: Chattanooga

proselyte = one who has come over from a Gentile religion to Judaism

Note v.14 = Here we see Peter stand and give preach the famous sermon at Pentecost. It is marvelous and uplifting to consider all that this man Peter had to endure to get to this point of being used radically by the Lord. He went through many humbling trials; he went through much joyous exaltation; and we even see that the devil had a turn at sifting him. And yet, the Lord prepared Him for this day by using all of the moments we see recorded in the scriptures (and many more I am sure) to shape, mold, build, create and humble this impetuous man, Peter, to be used on the day of Pentecost to proclaim the name of Jesus before many who would be saved. Amen.

Note v. 38 = “**Repent**, and let every one of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins...”

****SEE MORE ACTS 2 NOTES ON PG. 19****

Chapter 3-4 Notes

Note chapter 3 verse 2 = Beautiful Gate -The name of one of the gates of the temple (Acts 3:2). It is supposed to have been the door which led from the court of the Gentiles to the court of the women. It was of massive structure, and covered with plates of Corinthian brass. (Easton's Bible Dictionary)

Note chapter 3 verse 2 = Alms - The duty of alms-giving, especially in kind, consisting chiefly in portions to be left designedly from produce of the field, the vineyard and the oliveyard, Lev_19:9-10; Lev_23:22; Lev_15:11; Lev_24:19; Lev_26:2-13; Rth_2:2, is strictly enjoined by the law. Every third year also, Deu_14:28 each proprietor was directed to share the tithe of his produce with "the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow." The theological estimate of alms-giving among the Jews is indicated in the following passages:

1. Job_31:17; Pro_10:2; Pro_11:4; Est_9:22; Psa_112:9; Act_9:36: the case of Dorcas;

2. Act_10:2 of Cornelius; to which may be added Tob_4:10-11; Tob_14:10-11, and Sir_3:30; Sir_40:24.

The Pharisees were zealous in almsgiving, but too ostentatious their mode of performance, for which our Lord finds fault with them. Mat_6:2. The duty of relieving the poor was not neglected by the Christians. Mat_6:1-4; Luk_14:13; Act_20:35; Gal_2:10. Regular proportionate giving was expected. Act_11:30; Rom_15:25-27; 1Co_16:1-4. (Smith's Bible Dictionary)

Note chapter 4 verse 8 = "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost - Which guided him into all truth, and raised him far above the fear of man; placing him in a widely different state of mind to that in which he was found when, in the hall of Caiaphas, he denied his Master, through fear of a servant girl. But now was fulfilled the promise of Christ, Mat_10:18-20; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake; but take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (Adam Clarke's Commentary)

****SEE MORE ACTS 3-4 NOTES ON PG. 20 AND 22****

Chapter 5 Notes

Ananias = “whom Jehovah has graciously given”

Sapphira = “a sapphire”

Note vs. 1-16 =

“Ananias and Sapphira were not only guilty of lying to the Holy Spirit (v. 3, 9), but of hypocrisy and coveteousness as well. They were obviously concerned with what the other believers would think of them once they gave their gift. Christ also noted this characteristic among the Pharisees when he contrasted them to the widow who gave all she had (Luke 21:2, 3).”

Zodhiates, S., & Baker, W. 2000, c1991, c1994. The complete word study Bible: King James Version. (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers: Chattanooga

Chapter 6-7 Notes

Hellenists = used in the NT of Jews born in foreign lands and speaking Greek

Hebrews = all Jewish Christians, whether they spoke Aramaic or Greek

Note v.2-4 = “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.”

Stephen = “crowned”

Note chapter 6 verse 9 = Freedmen or Libertines = Descendants of Jews who, having been taken prisoners by Pompey and other Roman generals in the Syrian wars, were enslaved and afterward emancipated, and who returned to their native land. Many Jews at Rome were freedmen allowed by Augustus to settle beyond the Tiber. Four thousand freedmen were expelled to Sardinia, others were to leave Italy unless they gave up Judaism (A.D. 19 under Tiberius (Tacitus, Annals ii. 85; Josephus, Ant. 18:3, section 5; Philo Legat. ad Caium). Humphrey conjectures that, having made their way to Jerusalem, they naturally were Stephen's bitterest opponents as having suffered so much for that religion which Christianity was supplanting. They had a synagogue at Jerusalem. (Fausset's Bible Dictionary)

Note chapter 7 verse 58 = We can be sure that Stephen being martyred had an impact on the life of young Saul who looked on and consented Stephen's death. J. Vernon McGee wrote the following comment on the encounter: “The other young man there that day was a Pharisee, and he thought he had everything. He looked up into heaven when Stephen said that he saw the heavens open. I am sure that Saul looked up longingly and admitted to himself, *I don't see anything, but I'd like to see what he sees. I have an empty heart.* Stephen was a tremendous witness to Saul. Stephen was the one, I believe, who prepared Saul for the appearance of the Lord Jesus on the Damascus road, as we shall see.” (McGee, J. V. 1991. Vol. 40: Thru the Bible commentary: Church History (Acts 1-14).) Further than the short-term impact, we can also guess that Paul had might have had Stephen in mind when he wrote passages like 1 Corinthians 1:18. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” Stephen died for his relationship with Jesus. This type of love, young Paul knew very little of until he encountered Jesus for himself. Do you know this type of love for Christ?

****SEE MORE ACTS 6-7 NOTES ON PG. 23-24****

Chapter 8 Notes

Note v.1, 4 = In the scattering of the believers throughout the land, the word of faith in Christ began to be spread among the surrounding nations. God's ways are not our ways for sure and here we find Him using the persecution of the new believers in Jerusalem to scatter the word abroad into the regions of Judea and Samaria.

Note v.3 = "**Saul made havoc of the church.**" We can only guess that Stephen's death was used to influence Saul, but here we see its initial affect being that of increased fury against the church. "He who exalts himself will be humbled..." fits Saul here before his encounter with the Head of the church that he is persecuting.

Philip = "**lover of horses**"

Note v.5 = "Philip went to preach the gospel to Samaria as Jesus had commissioned (1:8). In the first century, the Jews and the Samaritans hated each other. The Jews considered the Samaritans half-breeds and religious deviants. Following the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 b.c., Samaria had been resettled by colonists brought to the land by the Assyrians. These colonists intermarried with the remaining Jews, and the Samaritans were descendants of these mixed marriages. The Samaritans rejected the Old Testament Scriptures beyond the five books of Moses. Furthermore, they built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. To express their disdain for the Samaritans, Jews traveling to Galilee would generally avoid Samaria by crossing over the Jordan River into Perea. But the gospel message transcended the first-century barrier between the Jews and Samaritans. The Spirit of God created a loving fellowship of believers out of the hate that existed. The formation of the Samaritan church indicates that there is no room for racism in the church (see 1 Cor. 12; Gal. 3:26), for Jesus died for the sins of the whole world."

MacDonald, William, *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, Atlanta, London, Vancouver

Note v.6 = Here we see the phrase with one accord being used again to describe the results of the gospel being preached and people believing according to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. It is safe to say that unity among believers is a bi-product of the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of believers.

****SEE MORE ACTS 8 NOTES ON PG. 25****

Chapter 9 Notes

Saul = Hebrew for “desired”

Note v.5 = “to kick against the goads” A goad was an sharp object used to prod a stubborn ox forward. In Jesus stating that it was hard for Paul to kick against the goads, he was addressing Paul’s hard-heartedness and lack of submission to all He had for Paul. Do you remember a time when you might have kicked against the goads that the Lord was trying to use to move you forward into all He had for you? It could be that you are kicking against the goads right now. Surrender your will to the Lord’s mighty and loving hand.

Note v.10 = Ananias = “whom Jesus has graciously given”

Note v.15 = “My chosen vessel” Paul was the Lord’s chosen vessel and he was to be used for a specific purpose. He was to bear the Lord’s name before the Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel.

Note v.14,15,16,21,27 = **The name of the Lord**

“NAME — a label or designation that sets one person apart from another. But in the Bible a name is much more than an identifier as it tends to be in our culture. Personal names (and even place names) were formed from words that had their own meanings. Thus, the people of the Bible were very conscious of the meaning of names. They believed there was a vital connection between the name and the person it identified. A name somehow represented the nature of the person.”

“The connection between a name and the reality it signified is nowhere more important than in the names referring to God. The personal name of God revealed to Moses in the burning bush—“I AM WHO I AM”—conveyed something of His character (Ex. 3:14). According to Exodus 34:5–6, when the Lord “proclaimed the name of the Lord,” He added words that described His character. The name of the Lord was virtually synonymous with His presence: “For your wondrous works declare that your name is near” (Ps. 75:1). To know the name of God is thus to know God Himself (Ps. 91:14). For this reason, to “take the name of the Lord your God in vain” (Ex. 20:7) is to act in any way that is inconsistent with the profession that He is the Lord God.”

Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., Harrison, R. K., & Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1995. Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary.

****SEE MORE ACTS 9 NOTES ON PG. 27****

Acts 1 Notes

Baptizo vs. Bapto

“The clearest example that shows the meaning of baptizo is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be ‘dipped’ (bapto) into boiling water and then ‘baptised’ (baptizo) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptising the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to our union and identification with Christ than to our water baptism. e.g. Mark 16:16. ‘He that believes and is baptised shall be saved’. Christ is saying that mere intellectual assent is not enough. There must be a union with him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle!

Bible Study Magazine, James Montgomery Boice, May 1989.”
Strong, J. 1996. The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : (electronic ed.) . Woodside Bible Fellowship.: Ontario

Note v.8 = “The disciples were to be made instruments in the establishment of the kingdom of Christ; but this must be by the energy of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; nevertheless, this energy would be given in such times and seasons, and in such measures, as should appear best to the infinite wisdom of God. Christ does not immediately answer the question of the disciples, as it was a point savouring too much of mere curiosity; but he gave them such information as was calculated to bring both their faith and hope into action. St. Chrysostom has well observed, ‘that it is the prerogative of an instructor to teach his disciple, not what he wishes to learn, but what his master sees best for him.’” (Adam Clark’s Commentary)

Note v.12 = “**A Sabbath Day’s Journey**” according to the tradition of Jewish scholars would have been anything less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. The Mount of Olives was said to be about six furlongs from Jerusalem which would put it at the $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile distance.

Jerusalem = “**foundation of double peace**”

Note v.14 = “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.”

“**continued**” = 4342. přoskartěřō; from 4314 and 2594; to be earnest toward, i.e. (to a thing) to persevere, be constantly diligent, or (in a place) to attend assiduously all the exercises, or (to a person) to adhere closely to (as a servitor). Strong, J. 1997, c1996. The

new Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words. Thomas Nelson: Nashville

“one accord” = 3661. homothumadón; adv. from homóthumos (n.f.), unanimous, of one mind, which is from homós (n.f.), one and the same, and thumós (2372), temperament, mind. With one mind, with unanimous consent, in one accord, all together (Acts 1:14; 2:1, 46; 4:24; 5:12; 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 15:25; 18:12; 19:29; Rom. 15:6; Sept.: Ex. 19:8; Jer. 26:21). Zodhiates, S. 2000, c1992, c1993. The complete word study dictionary : New Testament (electronic ed.) . AMG Publishers: Chattanooga, TN

Unity and Prayer

“As the disciples gathered together, it was with one accord. This expression, occurring eleven times in Acts, is one of the keys that unlocks the secret of blessing. Where brethren dwell together in unity, God commands the blessing-life for evermore (Ps. 133). “A second key is given in the words, continued ... in prayer. Now, as then, God works when people pray. Ordinarily we would rather do anything than pray. But it is only when we wait before God in desperate, believing, fervent, unhurried, united prayer that the reviving, energizing power of the Spirit of God is poured out.

“It cannot be emphasized too strongly that unity and prayer were the prelude to Pentecost.”

MacDonald, William, *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, Atlanta, London, Vancouver.

Acts 2 Notes

Note v. 1 = The Nations of Pentecost

“In the first Christian century, Jewish communities were located primarily in the eastern Roman Empire, where Greek was the common language. There were Jewish communities as far west as Italy and as far east as Babylonia. In addition to people from the nations shown here, those present on the Day of Pentecost (2:9) included visitors from Mesopotamia and even farther east, from Parthia, Media, and Elam (present-day Iran).

“Pentecost was one of the three major Jewish festivals; the other two are the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. From the Greek word for "fifty," Pentecost was so named because it fell on the fiftieth day after the Sabbath of the Passover. Pentecost was also known as "the Feast of Weeks," "the Firstfruits of the Wheat Harvest," and "the Day of Firstfruits." During this harvest celebration, the Jews brought to God the firstfruits of their harvest in thanksgiving.

ing, expecting that God would give the rest of the harvest as His blessing. This particular Day of Pentecost was the day of firstfruits of Christ's church, the beginning of the great harvest of souls who would come to know Christ and be joined together through the work of the Holy Spirit. they were all . . . in one place: The place may have been part of the temple. It is difficult to imagine how the large crowd mentioned in v. 5 could have observed the activities in the upper room or congregated in the narrow streets outside the house where the disciples were meeting."

MacDonald, William, *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, Atlanta, London, Vancouver.

Note v. 39 = After being "cut to the heart" by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the people asked, "What must we do?" Peter quickly replied, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Then in our noted verse, he states that "the promise is for not only the Jews, but also for those afar off." He then adds the statement, "as many as the Lord our God will call." The word *call* used here is the greek word *prōs-kalēōmai*, which means "to call toward oneself, i.e. summon, invite (Strong's)." Has the Lord called you to Himself, summoned or invited you personally to give Your life over to Him today? Seek this one thing with all you have for it is the only way to eternal life with the God of the universe and the Source of love neverceasing.

Note v. 42 = This is the third time in the first two chapters of Acts that we see the phrase *with one accord*. It is worthy of noting and praising God over that His Spirit always leads to unity and not discord. In looking at the state of the church today, oftentimes we see disharmony coming from the same people who proclaim the Holy Spirit to have been poured out amongst them. The fruit of the Spirit is love and here we see strong evidence of the joy brought about by the outpouring of God's love into the hearts of men. Amen.

Acts 3 Notes

Note v.6 = "...but what I do have I give you." Stop for a moment and set your mind on this situation. What did Peter have? We can certainly see from the text that what he had was something worth giving, but what was it he had? Christian, what do you have that the spiritually lame of the world do not? Isn't what you have to give of the same substance of that which Peter gave to this man who was lame from his mother's womb? What a strong testimony of the power of God! Peter, as we know had been brought to being

fully yielded to the Lord's Spirit. And the Lord used him mightily to feed His sheep. What does this say to you today? Are you yielded to all the Lord has to give through you today?

Silver and gold have I none. "Though the early church had poured out its gifts abundantly (Act_2:45), Peter had not enriched himself, and was a poor man, presenting a great contrast to the popes who claim to be his successors. It is related that Thomas Aquinas came to Rome and visited Innocent IV. He looked somewhat amazedly upon the mass of plate and treasure which he saw there. "So," said the pope, "you see, Thomas, we cannot say as did St. Peter of old, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "No," said Aquinas, "neither can you command, as did he, the lame man to arise and walk." Peter had that which the popes have not." (The People's New Testament)

Note vs.13-14 = Peter here rightly accused the crowd surrounding him of denying Christ. We don't have to think too hard to remember that Peter himself denied Christ three times after so boldly saying he would stick with Christ even to death. What was different about Peter now that could make him able to point this shortcoming out to the crowd? Peter had repented of his crime. The crowd had not and Peter knew that in the path to their knowing the power of the risen Christ was a full turn away from self-preserving to self-dying for life in Christ Jesus. Have you ever considered that life without Christ is actually a life of denying the King of kings. Have you repented of this treason? Repentance of this type leaves one no crutches to hold onto and allows of no preservation of self. Acknowledging Christ as King over your life begins with full repentance--turning away from self-serving denial of Christ and to Christ-loving denial of Self. The Lord had seen Peter through this process and used him greatly for His glory. Can you say the same for yourself today? Everyone begins life denying Christ as the only way to relationship with the living God. Few truly turn with their all to serve Him. Are you one of those few? "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord..." (Acts 3:19-21). Amen.

Note v.19 = "**Repent** therefore and be converted..." This is Peter's second recorded response in two chapters to the people of "Repent." Why? What is the importance of repenting? In looking into the meaning of the word repent we find the importance of the action. The Greek word for repent brings with it not only of regretting sin but also that of a true change of heart towards God. Repen-

tance is not just an action of the mind, but is something that requires change in the will, emotions and heart of a person in turning completely from their ways toward God's.

Acts 4 Notes

“Though God's servants are chained, His word is never chained (see 2 Tim. 2:9).”

--William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*

Note v. 1 = It is worthy of noting that the result of the Sadducees taking two disciples into custody and questioning them is that 5000 people were added to the church. How often it is that persecution of believers leads to more converts in the church. Nero described the Christians as a mythical monster who when one head was cut off, ten more grew in its place. Persecution through the years has been a catalyst to growth in the church and also to bring purity into the church. Peter and John and all the saints through the years who have gone through such events have had the joy and honor of living out Matthew 5:10: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Amen.

Note v.6 = “The Sanhedrin, which consisted of 70 men plus the high priest, was the highest Jewish court. The group consisted of the wealthiest, most educated, and most powerful Jewish men in Israel. Annas the high priest: Annas had been removed as high priest in a.d. 14 by the Romans. At the time of Christ, the high priests were appointed by the Roman governors. Apparently Annas had become a political threat to Rome. The Jewish people refused to acknowledge Roman authority over such matters; so even though Annas was officially removed from his office, the Jewish people still considered him high priest. Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas, was the actual high priest. John was most likely the son of Annas who succeeded Caiaphas in a.d. 37.”

MacDonald, William, *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, Atlanta, London, Vancouver.

Note v.8 = “Filled with the Holy Ghost”

“Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit: This is the second description in the Book of Acts of someone being filled with the Holy Spirit (see v. 31; 2:4; 9:17; 13:9). The initial filling accompanied the baptism in the Spirit. This filling brought boldness for God's work. Jesus had promised His disciples that they would stand before kings and rulers and that the Spirit of God within them would implant in their

minds exactly what to say to these leaders (see Matt. 10:16).”

Word Focus

filled with the Holy Spirit

“(Gk. pletho pneumatou hagiou) (2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9; Luke 1:15, 41, 67) Strong's 4130; 4151; 40: The Greek word pletho is used for describing the filling of anything from a sponge to a boat (Matt. 27:48; Luke 5:7). Luke uses this common term to describe how the Holy Spirit influences a person. He uses the expression filled with the Holy Spirit eight times in his writings. In every case, the filling of the Holy Spirit enables the person so endowed to speak or preach for God. Thus, the filling of the Spirit is directly related to the prophetic ministry, the revelation or explanation of God's Word.”

MacDonald, William, *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, Atlanta, London, Vancouver

Acts 6 Notes

Stephen the Martyr

In the Book of Acts, the infant church faced opposition from Jew and Gentile alike. But with every successive wave of persecution, the church grew more and more. In hardships and trials, Christians depended increasingly on the Lord for strength and guidance. In so doing, they demonstrated their faith to others.

Stephen, one of the seven men chosen to minister to the needs of the neglected in the early church, became the first martyr of the Christian faith, but he certainly was not the last. Although falsely accused of blaspheming Moses and God, his unfair treatment and violent death would serve as an example to persecuted believers throughout the centuries who would face similar trials for upholding the name of Christ.

The Book of Acts tells us that right after the stoning of Stephen, a zealous young Pharisee named Saul continued the persecution of the new faith by hunting its members down and imprisoning them to face similar charges and similar fates. Although Saul was trying to stop the spread of the Christian faith, other eventual persecutors such as the Roman Emperor Nero (a.d. 37-68) cared little about the blaspheming of a Jewish deity. Nero was merely looking for scapegoats to take the blame for the great fire that destroyed most of Rome in a.d. 64.

Later Christian martyrs would face death at the hands of their so-called fellow believers. William Tyndale (1494-1536) was burned at the stake for heresy because he dared to translate the Bible into the English language, thus making it more accessible to the common person. Others have traveled into remote areas fully aware of the dangers of retribution from pagans. In 1956, five American missionaries were murdered in the jungles of Ecuador by headhunters called the Aucas. This same tribe was eventually converted to Christianity through the persistence of missionaries, who emulated the perseverance of the martyred missionaries who had gone before them.

Since Stephen's death, countless Christians have died for their witness to the truth of the gospel. They set their eyes on Jesus instead of on this world. They did not value the approval of people over the approval of their Savior. Therefore, they refused to disown Jesus. For their courage to stand up for the truth, Jesus promises to acknowledge them before His Father in heaven (see Matt. 10:32, 33). MacDonald, William, *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, Atlanta, London, Vancouver

Acts 7 Notes

It's not our doctrine that will impress the world; it is our dedication. And how we need that today!"

—J. Vernon McGee, *Love, Liberation & the Law : The Ten commandments*

Note v.51 = "You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you."

"They were disobedient children, of disobedient parents: in all their generations they had been disobedient and perverse. This whole people, as well as this text, are fearful proofs that the Holy Spirit, the almighty energy of the living God, may be resisted and rendered of none effect. This Spirit is not sent to stocks, stones, or machines, but to human beings endued with rational souls; therefore it is not to work on them with that irresistible energy which it must exert on inert matter, in order to conquer the vis inertiae or disposition to abide eternally in a motionless state, which is the state of all inanimate beings; but it works upon understanding, will, judgment, conscience, etc., in order to enlighten, convince, and persuade. If, after

all, the understanding, the eye of the mind, refuses to behold the light; the will determines to remain obstinate; the judgment purposes to draw false inferences; and the conscience hardens itself against every check and remonstrance, (and all this is possible to a rational soul, which must be dealt with in a rational way), then the Spirit of God, being thus resisted, is grieved, and the sinner is left to reap the fruit of his doings. To force the man to see, feel, repent, believe, and be saved, would be to alter the essential principles of his creation and the nature of mind, and reduce him into the state of a machine, the *vis inertiae* of which was to be overcome and conducted by a certain quantum of physical force, superior to that resistance which would be the natural effect of the certain quantum of the *vis inertiae* possessed by the subject on and by which this agent was to operate. Now, man cannot be operated on in this way, because it is contrary to the laws of his creation and nature; nor can the Holy Ghost work on that as a machine which himself has made a free agent. Man therefore may, and generally does, resist the Holy Ghost; and the whole revelation of God bears unequivocal testimony to this most dreadful possibility, and most awful truth. It is trifling with the sacred text to say that resisting the Holy Ghost here means resisting the laws of Moses, the exhortations, threatenings, and promises of the prophets, etc. These, it is true, the uncircumcised ear may resist; but the uncircumcised heart is that alone to which the Spirit that gave the laws, exhortations, promises, etc., speaks; and, as matter resists matter, so spirit resists spirit. These were not only uncircumcised in ear, but uncircumcised also in heart; and therefore they resisted the Holy Ghost, not only in his declarations and institutions, but also in his actual energetic operations upon their minds.” (Adam Clarke’s Commentary)

Acts 8 Notes

Note v.16 = “...He had fallen upon none of them”

fallen upon = metaphorically, to seize, take possession of (spoken of the Holy Spirit, in his inspiration and impulse)

They had had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but had not yet been taken possession of or seized by the Holy Spirit. The point of all of this is not the order of how it happened or even the means by which it happened, but simply that it happened. Many read passages like this and follow forms set by man in effort to be possessed by the Holy Spirit. We must remember that the Holy Spirit is a person of the trinity and can be controlled by no

man and can only be imparted at the sovereign will of God. Our job is to submit to the living God. He does the rest as he sees fit.

“Peter and John were the official messengers from Jerusalem to tell the Samaritans what had occurred at Pentecost. The Samaritans had to know that salvation came from the Jews; the Jews, in turn, had to understand that the same salvation had come to the Samaritans. Jesus said in John 17 that the world would know that Jesus came from the Father when the world saw the unity of the body of Christ. With the tremendous hatred that existed between the Jews and Samaritans, God demonstrated to both sides that they would be united together as a church. The dependence of the Samaritans upon the Jews to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit was the healing sign that the two sides were to become one. When Peter later preached to the Gentiles, they immediately believed and received the gift of the Holy Spirit without the laying on of hands (ch. 10). This served as a sign to the Jews that the same gift was being given to the Gentiles as well. The Holy Spirit was the unifying factor that would bring Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles into one body.”

MacDonald, William, *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, Atlanta, London, Vancouver

Note v.23 = Simon, the sorcerer not only was greedy in that he wanted all the power he could have, but he was bitter and bound by iniquity. It appears that the motives of Simon for wanting the power to give the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands were generated from his lust for power. When he discovered this power that dwarfed his own (which was generated not by God), he had to have it. But he knew nothing of the means by which one went about receiving the Holy Spirit—absolute surrender to the living God. Simon knew nothing of this and Peter recognized his heart and rebuked him sternly. How often today, we see people longing to use God for power in their lives. Whether it be for the gain of influence, for a better position at work or simply to rise above others, we see the poisonous fruit of this in churches all over—people wanting power, but not wanting God.

Note v.35 = “Then Phillip opened his mouth...”

Note v.36 = Note the immediate obedience of the eunuch in being baptized. He did not delay in becoming a follower of Christ once he heard the good news!

Acts 9 Notes

Note v.20 = “Immediately he preached...” “Saul was now convinced that Jesus, whom they had crucified, and who had appeared to him on the way, was the Son of God, or Messiah; and therefore as such he proclaimed him.” (Adam Clarke’s Commentary)

Note v.22 = “increased more in strength...” This statement found here in verse 22 speaks not of physical strength, but gives more of the idea of increasing in spiritual strength and boldness. It is no secret that proclaiming the name of Christ can do no other than increase our strength toward doing more of it. Praise God for increased strength!

Note v.27 = Barnabas = “son of encouragement or exhortation” Here we find Barnabas doing what it was that the Lord had made him to do. In this passage he is seen as coming alongside of Saul and testifying on his behalf to the skittish disciples in Jerusalem. Barnabas is an interesting person who we find all throughout the book of Acts encouraging the saints. As William MacDonald writes, “Barnabas, who had the gift of encouragement, saw Paul's true heart and defended him to the other apostles.”

Note v.40 = Peter “knelt down and prayed.” It is interesting to think of all the different ways in which the Lord brings people to life in the Bible. Just like healings, he never does it the same way. This takes away all credit from man and gives it all to God.

