**From Verbs to Nouns**

Guide to the Gospel in Acts

Paul R. McCuistion

Teaching4Jesus Ministries

**Verbs**

Teaching, Calming the storm, and healing

**Nouns**

Subject of the Speeches in Acts

Diagram

Description automatically generated

Copyright © 2023

Teaching4Jesus Ministries

3232 Egret Landing

Zephyrhills, Florida 33541

www.Teaching4Jesus.org

From Verbs to Nouns

The Gospel in Acts

Unless otherwise noted, all scriptures are from the New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update. LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995.

Section 4 Page design by

Christine Mantush

ISBN 978-0-9989730-8-1 (Pending)

All Rights Reserved

Printed in the United States of America

Table of Contents

Introduction i

Section 1: *Good News* 1

Restoration Movement 2

Two Questions 3

From Verbs to Nouns 4

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:14–36 5

Peter, at Solomon’s Portico, Acts 3:12–26 6

Peter before the Rulers and Elders, Acts 4:8–12 8

Before the Council, Acts 5:29–32 9

Stephen’s Defense, Acts 7:2–56 10

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch, Acts 8:25–35 11

Peter, before the group assembled by Cornelius (10:34–43) 13

Paul, at the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch (13:16–41) 14

Traveling through Amphipolis and Apollonia, 17:1–3 16

Paul, at the Areopagus (Mars Hill) in Athens (17:16–34) 17

Conclusion 22

Excursus – Paul’s Gospel 22

Romans 1:1-4 23

1 Corinthians 15:1-5 23

2 Timothy 2:8 24

C. H. Dodd Lecture Summary 24

Dr. McCuistion’s Gospel Summary 25

Section 2: The Contemporary Message 26

Question #2 27

Paradigm Shift 27

Reduced Gospel 27

The Gospel and Revivalism 29

John Wesley 29

Jonathan Edwards 29

George Whitefield 29

Charles Finney 29

Dwight L. Moody 31

Billy Sunday 32

Billy Graham and Bill Bright 32

Section 3: Acts as Model for Contemporary Preaching 35

Methodology Revealed in the Evangelistic Speeches 36

The Setting 37

Luke’s Idea of Discipleship 38

The Containers 38

Preaching

The Setting 39

The Containers 39

Conception of Proclamation 40

The Christological Kerygma 40

Jesus, the Heart of the Message 40

The Message 41

Death and Sin 41

Conclusion

Section 4: Gospel Expectations 43

Discipleship Across the Gospels 44

It Matters Who the Master Is 44

His Master’s Voice 44

Follow Me 45

Leaving 45

Following 45

If Jesus is Lord 46

If I am Lifted Up 46

Testimony 47

Words and Works 47

His Imminent Passion 48

Set their Mind on God’s Interests (Mark 8:31-38) 48

Be Last and Servant of All (Mark 9:30-37) 48

Be Able to Drink the Cup that Jesus Drank (Mark 10:32-45) 48

Conclusion 49

Postscript: A Final Word 51

Obey the Gospel 50

*En passant* 51

Introduction 52

Jewish Heritage 52

Luke’s Jewish Emphasis in Acts 53

Genesis 1-11 as Foundation 53

Disruption of Unity 54

Uncreation to New Creation 54

Further Disunity 54

Exodus Motif—Out of Disunity 55

Israel’s Failure 55

The Pentecost Sermon 56

Jewish Heritage and the Sermon 56

Repentance and Remission of Sins 57

Content of Peter’s Message 57

Forgiveness of Sins in Acts 58

Forgiveness of Sins in Paul 59

Application 60

Works Cited 61

Illustrations, Additional Tables, Special Sections

Theological Context 12

Dionysus of Thebes 14

Pictorial Gospel in Tracts 28

Charles Finney Invitation 30

“Means to be Used with Sinners” (Charles Finney) 30

Reductionist Gospel 31

Henrietta Mears’ *What the Bible is All About,* Appendix B 32

Mears’ Gospel based on Romans 33

Willard’s Three Questions 33

Comparison of Acts 5:42 and Matthew 28:19-20 39

Niagara Falls 50

Obey from the Heart (Illustration) 51

*En Passant* 51

Sander’s List of Commonly Held Jewish Beliefs 53

**Introduction**

The layout of the Christian Scriptures is not by accident. As the earlies manuscripts show us, the four accounts of Jesus’ birth, life, and passion was the voice that broke four-hundred years of silence. Finally, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things (Hebrews 1:1–2). The last recorded revelation from YHWH in Malachi 4:5-6 was the promise of one like the prophet Elijah who will offer *Good News* that will bring repentance to the people and no more curses.

To satisfy this promise, Jesus, Son of David, Son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1), Son of God (Mark 1:1) must become a curse that will execute the New Covenant, initiate the exodus of God’s chosen people, the church, into the kingdom of God, satisfy what YHWH tried to teach the Hebrew nation about purity with a once for all sacrifice, reconciling a perverse generation back to God. This is certainly *Good News* that the contemporary church has reduced to God loves you, you’re a sinner bound for judgment, Jesus died for you, believe this so your sins will be forgiven (and all the fringe benefits received), so you can go to heaven when you die. WOW! Sounds good but not to be found in God’s revelation, the Gospel about Jesus in the written account of the Gospels, Acts, and letters to the church.

*From Verbs to Nouns, The Gospel in Acts,* explores the biblical account of how the early church understood Jesus. The result of knowing Jesus and becoming His disciple meant that your life was no longer your own. It now belonged to King Jesus. Compare the reduced gospel in the last paragraph to one that might be offered to a person living in the first three centuries when Christians were persecuted.

Christian: Have you ever heard about Jesus, who was the legitimate heir to the throne of King David?

Non-Christian: I have heard some. Tell me more.

Christian: Gladly, Jesus was a Jew who satisfied everything the prophets of Israel said about the one who would be their messiah and deliver them from their bondage. He was approved by their God with miracles and teaching authority not known among their leaders. Of course, the leaders hated him and persuaded Rome to kill Him. They did. The Good News is that God vindicated Him by raising Him from the dead. In this, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God. He went back to sit at the right hand of YHWH, waiting to be both the judge and rescuer of humanity.

Non-Christian: Do you know this for a fact?

Christian: I did not see Him myself after the resurrection, but there were hundreds of witnesses. These witnesses tell us He came to restore His Father’s kingdom. If you believe the evidence, you can be His disciple and He will be the Lord (ruler) of your life.

Non-Christian: Yes, I do believe the evidence. I want to be His disciple.

Christian: Praise the Lord. But I need to let you know that you will be persecuted because the world hated Jesus and it hates us.

Non-Christian: That does not matter. I will die for Him because I believe He is the King God set over His kingdom.

Persecution was the lot for the first couple of centuries until in 313, Emperor Constantine published the Edict of Milan to stop the killing and torturing of Christians. Now, imagine a conversation between a contemporary Christian and a non-Christian use the salvation gospel.

Christian: Have you ever broken on of the ten commandments?

Non-Christian: Sure, hasn’t everybody?

OR

Christian: If you died today, do you know if you would have a home in heaven?

Non-Christian: No, I am not sure. I have not thought much about it.

Christian: God loves you and does not want to condemn you (wants you to live with Him in heaven). He sent Jesus to die for you so you can be forgiven and go to heaven.

Non-Christian: Do you know this for a fact?

Christian: We have a church full of people who believe this. I do. Jesus has been exceptionally good to me. So, do you want to go to heaven?

Non-Christian: I want to be forgiven and go to heaven.

Christian: Praise the Lord. But I need to let you know that you will be persecuted because the world hated Jesus and it hates us.

Non-Christian: What? I thought all I would have to do is go to church sometimes. You said I would be forgiven and would go to heaven if I believe Jesus died for me.

The second conversation is not uncommon. I have led those many times in my younger days when I was trying to lead someone to Christ. I knew about Acts 2 and thought I knew the Gospel. As I grew older and studied more, I realized I did not know the true story of King Jesus. This led me to my current place of telling people about the King Jesus story.

First, let me be open about the use of Scot McKnight’s book. You will see him referenced often. I use his work because it is the most succinct and easiest to understand of all who are saying what I say here. This is the reason I use him as the basis for much of what I say. However, I had come to this point in my theological journey before I had even heard of him. I became aware of other writings when I presented a paper on the speeches of Acts as a Model for Contemporary Preaching (The content of the paper is Section 3 of this work). When we had a Q&A after I read the paper, someone asked me if I knew Matthew Bates and his work. They said my position was identical to his. I told him I did not know Mr. Bates but went out after the conference and bought his books *Gospel Allegiance.* I was impressed as to how close we were in our thoughts about the Gospel. It was in this publication that I was introduced to Scot McKnight and his *King Jesus Gospel.* His work fell in line with my own and N. T. Wright. I found Dr. McKnight’s publication to be helpful in my search for the real Gospel.

This work represents much of the study I have put into this over the past two years. It will not be the easiest read as it is full of tables. I thought this would give the clearest view of the story of Jesus. I pray it could become a useful resource for your own studies.

The book contains four sections and a Postscript:

1. The Good News examines nine speeches in the book of Acts to understand not just the content but also the theology of the speeches.
2. The Contemporary Message provides a historical sketch based on Dr. McKnight’s study as well as my own showing the gospel presented during the revival period.
3. The Speeches as the Model for Contemporary Preaching is the paper I presented at the Stone-Campbell Journal Conference at Johnson University in 2020. It and Section 4 are a bit more academic, but I think reads well.
4. Gospel Expectations is another paper read at the 2020 SCJ Conference that looks at the result of the King Jesus Gospel for making disciples based on the teaching in the Gospels.
5. The Postscript closes with the idea of obeying the Gospel according to Paul in Romans 6:17. The picture he gives mandates cross-bearing discipleship.

There was a dual motivation for this writing. Originally, it was to be an 8-page summary of the Gospel in the speeches in Acts. As I dove deeper into the study, I realized that more needed to be said that could be expressed in eight pages. Thus, I set my sights on a twenty or so page paper that could be handed out when I set up the Teaching4Jesus Ministry table at a conference. As the Spirit led the Emmaus journey, I began to see how this work contributed directly to the new training ministry of T4J, *Teaching the Church to Go …*. This program transforms your church into a Royal Ambassador Academy! More details and information are available at

**www.Teaching4Jesus.org**

I ask our gracious, heavenly Father to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

**Royal Ambassador Academy**

Diagram

Description automatically generated

**Section 1**

***Good News!***

The Gospel According to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are action books. They tell the story of Jesus’ birth, baptism, cross, and resurrection. Between these, the writers paint the portrait of the Son of David, Son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1) satisfying prophesies (Matthew 1:22, 2:15; Luke 4:21), the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah (Mark 1:1) fulfilling messianic expectations (Matthew 21:1-11), God with us (Matthew 1:23; John 1:14). On the other hand, Luke wrote about things accomplished. Genesis 1:1 states, “In the beginning, God created (*Bereshit bara Elohim*) that express the Hebrew idea of expectation. If God creates, there is a reason, purpose, and design. The Greek expression used by Luke translated as accomplished, carries the same concept. All that Jesus did was not without purpose or design. It gave to us the fulfillment of the backstory of the Hebrew cultic experience so that YHWH could recreate the perfect (good) world that was in the beginning.

***The Gospel*** According to Those who Knew Him ***Acts***

Jesus Teaching Teaching Jesus to Others

A picture containing clipart

Description automatically generated A group of people in clothing

Description automatically generated with low confidence

Section 1 reveals the excitement that the Good News about Jesus created in the early church. This section shows us the authentic Gospel that has been reduced in the contemporary church to a narcissistic encounter with Jesus, anticipating what He will do for us rather than becoming His disciple and becoming His Royal Ambassador.

**Section 1**

***Good News!***

That there is *Good News* is beyond doubt or discussion. However, since the Reformation, there has been a change in thinking from a Gospel culture to a salvation culture. What this means is that the focus on human sinfulness and what I very unlovingly call *Jesus soap!* replaced the King Jesus Gospel. This means using Jesus for forgiveness (savior) with little or no emphasis on the resurrection and resulting Lordship producing *pew-sitting church members* instead of *cross-bearing disciples*. Oh, we may call Him Lord, but there is little emphasis or focus on it, especially at conversion. Prompted by this issue, two questions will be answered regarding the original Gospel message recorded by Luke in the speeches in the book of Acts. After an introduction that examines the growth of the church in Acts and whether that message is the same one presented today.

Restoration Movement

The Restoration Movement formed on the triune principles of unity, truth, and evangelism as prompted by our Lord’s prayer in John 17, which was a “very influential and highly important” passage for the early restorationist. In this passage, unity is evident as Jesus prayed for the disciples to, “be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us” (17:21). That unity was created when they were set apart (sanctified) in the truth of God’s Word (17:17). Unity and truth combined to generate and empower the mission of winning the world to Christ, even as Jesus prayed, “so that the world may believe that You sent Me” (17:21) (Cherok). Picture it like this:

Unity & Truth🡺*Evangelism*

The early restorationist mined unity and truth from the Word of God based on the conviction that there was a duplicatable model. My conviction is not only is there a duplicatable model, but that the model used today should produce the same results as Luke recorded in the book of Acts:

* Those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand
* The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase (6:7)
* They entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks (14:1)

Luke described himself as a detail person in the prologue to his Gospel by, “having investigated everything carefully” (1:3). Thus, it is no surprise when he makes twenty-eight statements about the growth of the early church. Please review the table below, noting in the statements the ones with an asterisk (\*). These are conversions given in Luke’s account.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Acts** | **Place** | **Statement** |
| 2:41 | Jerusalem | About 3,000 souls were added to them\* |
| 2:47 | Jerusalem | The Lord added to the church daily those being saved |
| 4:4 | Jerusalem | The number of the men came to be about 5,000 |
| 5:14 | Jerusalem | Believers were increasingly added to the Lord |
| 6:1 | Jerusalem | The number of disciples was multiplying |
| 6:7 | Jerusalem | The number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem |
| 8:4 | Jerusalem | Those scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word |
| 8:12 | Samaria | (Samaritans) Both men and women were baptized\* |
| 8:13 | Samaria | Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized\* |
| 8:38 | Judea | Ethiopian Eunuch was baptized\* |
| 9:18 | Damascus | Saul (Paul) was baptized\* |
| 9:31 | Judea, Galilee, Samaria | (The churches) They were multiplied |
| 9:42 | Joppa | Many believed on the Lord |
| 10:48 | Caesarea | Cornelius & his household were baptized\* |
| 11:21 | Antioch, Syria | A great number believed and turned to the Lord |
| 11:24 | Antioch, Syria | And a great many people were added to the Lord |
| 12:24 | Jerusalem | But the word of the Lord grew and multiplied |
| 13:49 | Antioch, Syria | the word of Lord was being spread throughout the region |
| 14:1 | Iconium | A great multitude of both of the Jews & Greeks believed |
| 14:21 | Derbe | And made many disciples |
| 16:5 | Lystra (The churches) | Increased in number daily |
| 16:15 | Philippi | Lydia & household baptized\* |
| 16:33 | Philippi | Jailor & his household were baptized\* |
| 17:4 | Thessalonica | A great multitude of devout Greeks |
| 17:12 | Berea | Many of them believed |
| 17:34 | Athens | Some men joined him and believed |
| 18:8 | Corinth | Many Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized\* |
| 19:5 | Ephesus (12 men) | They were baptized in the name of the Lord\* |

Two Questions

At least two questions come to mind from this list:

1. What was the message that produced such a response?
2. Is the same message given today, producing the same response?

The first question explored below rehearses the background of the message in Acts found in the Gospels. Next, nine of the ten speeches given by Christians to non-Christians the study unpacks the major elements of the message that produced the growth. After the examination of the Gospel in Acts, an evaluation of Paul’s Gospel reveals the elements of his Gospel, comparing it to the message Luke puts on the lips of Christians in Acts. The answer to the second question follows the study of the Gospel in Acts and Paul.

The Backstory of Jesus: The Gospels

The Gospel is the story of Jesus. This is evident from the prologues of the first four books of the New Covenant Scriptures.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Matthew 1:1 | Mark 1:1 | Luke 1:1b, 4 | John 1:1, 14 |
| The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham | The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. | An account of the things accomplished among us … so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught | In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God … And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us |

These accounts base their work on the following about Jesus:

* Jewish Messiah, Son of David (Matthew 1:1)
* Hebrew Covenant, Son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1)
* Messianic Son of God (Mark 1:1)
* Accomplishments (Luke 1:1b)
* Know the *exact* truth (Luke 1:4)
* Eternal Word (John 1:1)
* Supreme, divinity; God (Jon 1:1)
* Living Word dwelling (lit., tabernacled) among (lit., in) us (John 1:14)

According to the four accounts, the Gospel record shows Jesus on the move (throughout all Galilee [Matthew 4:23], through all the cities and villages [Matthew 9:35], to Jerusalem [Matthew 16:21]), just to name a few. Mark summarizes that He was busy preaching (1:14-15), calling disciples (1:16-20), teaching in the synagogue (1:21-22), casting out demons (1:23-28), and healing (1:29-34). This is part of the first chapter of Mark and is validated by more of the same in all four accounts. Finally, the account presents the *Man of Action* as stopped cold in His tracks by the religious leaders only to defeat death, rising from the grave (Matthew 28:1–8, Mark 16:1–8, Luke 24:1–12, John 20:1–13). This is the great climax of the Gospel story. Mark and Luke follow this with the ascent to the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9). This was the coronation of the Son of God, placing Him in the place of prominence. “God highly exalted Him … Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).

From Verbs to Nouns

God gives authority to coronated Jesus (Mark 16:19; Luke 22:69; cf. Matthew 28:18), who sits at His right hand (Matthew 26:64; Mark 16:19). As a result, the story told by His followers changed the ***Man of Action* to the *subject of speeches***!

The Gospel in Acts

Luke makes summary statements in speeches Christians gave to non-Christians, whether individuals or a group. The following section reveals the major elements of those presentations. Mounce surveyed the speeches in Acts 2, 3, 4, and 10 “proceeded from the Aramaic-speaking church at Jerusalem), yielding the following elements (60):

1. The age of fulfillment has dawned.
2. This has taken place through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
3. By virtue of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted at the right hand of God, as Messianic head of the new Israel.
4. The Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ’s present power and glory.
5. The Messianic Age will shortly reach its consummation in the return of Christ.
6. An appeal for repentance (61)

While I agree with these, my concern is that there is much interpretation built into this list that is more implicit rather than explicit, drawn from the teaching in the Gospels and the letters. Additionally, #6 is part of the conclusion to the message, not one of the essential elements of the content of the message. Being as faithful as the Berean disciples (Acts 17:11), we must examine the content ourselves.

Speeches in Acts – Gospel Presentations

With one-third of Acts presented in speeches, Luke focuses on Christological conversations throughout his account. As Dodd as pointed out, a common structure is obvious, although “the content and argument often run in quite different directions” (Polhill, 46). The following tables use quoted text from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update to identify the common elements that form a definitive structure. After a brief explanation of the content of the speeches, a table using the quoted text from the previous table will be put into the appropriate column that designates it as historical or theological. The intent of this section is to show how the speeches gave both the historically significant elements of the Gospel as well as what theologically significant information. After the table, a brief discussion provides insights to show how the elements contributed to the salvific plan of YHWH. This section starts with Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost.

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:14–36

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Content | Verse |
| spoken of through the prophet Joel | 16 |
| Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst | 22 |
| delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God | 23 |
| nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death | 23 |
| God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death   * God had sworn to him with an oath to seat *one* of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ * This Jesus God raised up again | 24  30b-31  32 |
| the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear | 33 |
| Therefore, let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ | 36 |

The whole of the sermon reinforces the main principles given in the first table. I have attempted to pull out the main points with some repeated, supporting ideas. The audience is Jewish as identified by “Men of Israel” (22). The content is meaningful to these “devout men from every nation under heaven” (5). While every point is important, Peter’s gives his proposition in 22-24.

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power” (Acts 2:22-24).

This section can be identified within two contexts – historical and theological. Review the following table that puts the summary within these contexts:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Historical** | **Theological** |
| Jesus the Nazarene | attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs |
| God performed through Him in your midst |  |
| just as you yourselves know— this *Man*, delivered over | the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God |
| you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. |  |
| God raised Him up again | putting an end to the agony of death since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power |

We must not understate the importance of the historical elements of the Gospel. Jesus reinforces this with the statement to His Father regarding “a body you have prepared for me” (Hebrews 10:5; cf. Hebrews 2:14) and the Gospel accounts of the incarnation (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:31). YHWH’s intervention in history validated Israel as His chosen people and the promise of a Messiah, the Son of Man who would invade this crooked generation to rescue humanity (Acts 2:40).

The theological emphasis is given to validate Jesus as the Messiah. The attestation by signs, miracles and wonders seems to validate Jesus’ miracles as messianic in intent. In Matthew, using his own construct of Isaiah 53:4 (Hagner, 208), as used by early Christians who saw this to point to the messianic atonement for sin (Blomberg, 144). The plan for Jesus began with the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4-5), designed to reverse the curse of Genesis 3, freeing believing humanity from the fear of death that held us in slavery (Hebrews 2:15).

Do you notice what is missing from the sermon? There is no reference to human sinfulness! In fact, the only accusation brought against the audience was the crucifixion of Jesus (Acts 2:36). In context, the repentance of verse thirty-eight would refer to the accusation of killing Jesus, not the human, sinful nature. Yet, this is the most common approach to the Gospel heard today. For now, we need to move to the next speech, Peter at Solomon’s Portico.

Peter, at Solomon’s Portico, Acts 3:12–26

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Content | Verse |
| The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus | 13a |
| You delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate … the Holy and Righteous One | 13b-14a |
| Put to death the Prince of life | 15a |
| *The one* whom God raised from the dead | 15b |
| Faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus | 16 |
| Repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away | 19a |
| He may send Jesus, the Christ | 20 |
| Moses said | 22 |
|  | 23  24 |
| God raised up His Servant | 26 |

This brief presentation of the Gospel follows Paul’s summary in 1 Corinthians 15 of “according to the Scriptures” with the reference to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets, followed by the death and resurrection without a reference to the burial. As at Pentecost, Peter accuses the audience of rejecting and killing Jesus, but countered by God with the resurrection. In context, the miracle of healing is used to validate Jesus as Peter did with God’s validation through acts of power. Verse 19 serves as the appeal to repent and return. Here, the general reference to sins (plural) would, by context, include the rejection of the Messiah but not limited to that single sin as at Pentecost. It is possible that the plural represents the combined sins of Israel for rejecting the prophets, but especially the current generation that rejected Jesus.

As above, it is noteworthy that the Gospel message focused on Jesus and not human sin. Rather, as indicated, the inclusion of sin was at the conclusion, the “so what” of the Gospel. That is, a conclusion answers the question “so what” about the study. “So what” that God glorified Jesus. “So what” that they killed Jesus. “So what” that God raised Him. The “so what” demands repentance for rejecting Jesus. The historical and theological perspectives support this position.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Historical** | **Theological** |
| God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob |  |
|  | God of our fathers |
|  | Glorified His servant Jesus |
| You delivered and disowned |  |
|  | the Holy and Righteous One |
| Put to death |  |
|  | The Prince of life |
| *The one* whom God raised from the dead |  |
| Faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus |  |
|  | Repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away |
| He may send Jesus |  |
|  | The Christ |
| Moses said |  |
|  | Every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed   * All prophets who have spoken from Samuel and *his* successors onward |
| God raised up |  |
|  | His Servant |

Peter is in trouble because of his actions and must explain himself before the rulers and elders. This speech offers considerable detail, supplying ample historical and theological information. Historically, the emphasis is on the Jesus and His verifiable death and resurrection. Many in the audience may have been aware of what had happened just weeks before, knowing that the historical the literary history of Moses and the prophet’s supported the death and resurrection in what they spoke and wrote (John 1:45, 5:46, 12:38). Please note the double references to the death and resurrection. This may be the Greek version of Hebrew parallelism where the second statement reinforces the idea. As noted below, these are historical references without theological implications.

As at Pentecost, rejection is the sin mentioned. Peter gives the attitude that prompted the action that put Jesus on trial before Pilate. Not only rejected but *disowned!* “The vb. refers to the expression of the subject’s attitude of refusal (1) in relation to a claim or demand (cf. Schlier 469), therefore, refuse (decline, reject: Wis 17:10; 12:27; 16:16; Heb 11:24), or, similarly, (2) in relation to an assertion or counterquestion, therefore, dispute (deny: Gen 18:15; Luke [redactional] 8:45; Acts 4:16)” (Schenk 153). They did not believe Jesus. This is the definitive charge brought against the audience in verse sixteen.

Of equal importance is the statement of *sending* Jesus as this would have messianic and/or prophetic significance. Jesus served as the prototype Apostle (Hebrews 3:1), establishing the model for those sent with the authority of God. Interestingly, the original concept of apostle was with a bill of lading that gave the authority of the sender to the messenger. Matthew’s “all authority given” is the ultimate confirmation of Jesus’ apostleship and messianic mission.

Theologically rich, this speech offers key phrases and concepts that are part of the Hebrew cultic history and experience. Please consider this quick list as reference:

* God of our fathers reminds them of the covenant experience that sets them apart
* Glorified His servant Jesus gives a fresh understanding to Isaiah 53
  + Could it be that verses 10-11 are veiled references to the resurrection and coronation?
* Messianic concepts
  + Holy and Righteous
    - Possible allusion to Isaiah 53:11 (Bock, 170; Thompson, 156)
    - Righteous was a more common in the prophets (Thompson, 156).
  + Prince
    - Holds the idea of author or prince/leader
    - Double meaning is possible (Bock, 171)

Peter before the Rulers and Elders, Acts 4:8–12

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Content | Verse |
| Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified | 4:10 |
| God raised from the dead | 4:10 |
| Cornerstone rejected (Psalms 118:22) | 4:11 |

The same pattern is obvious, but in a different order. The scriptural validation given at the end of their defense references the Psalms. This is used to accuse the leaders of rejecting Jesus, as in the previous sermons. This accusation is stated in most of the speeches, whether Jew or non-Jew. The charge is always against the Jews, never against non-Jews. This element emphasizes the idea of rejection. For either group, acceptance or rejection of Jesus is the issue. The second question about the Gospel presented today deals with this issue. Before we leave this passage, review the historical/theological context:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Historical** | **Theological** |
| Jesus Christ the Nazarene |  |
| whom you crucified |  |
| God raised from the dead |  |
|  | Cornerstone rejected (Psalms 118:22) |

To remind you, for this paper, theological is equivalent to “according to the Scripture.” In this speech, the scriptural support drawn from the prophecy in Psalm 118 points to the Messiah’s rejection. While Isaiah 53 is a common reference in the New Testament, cited eighty-five times (Willmington, 1), this passage emphasizes Jesus’ authority as the stone from which the whole building aligns.

Before the Council, Acts 5:29–32

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Content | Verse |
| The God of our fathers raised up Jesus | 30 |
| whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross | 30 |
| the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior   * grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins | 31 |

This short response to the Council’s demand that the Apostles stop preaching about Jesus starts with the resurrection to reinforce their decision to “obey God rather than men” (5:29). This is a good place to emphasize the preeminence and prominence of the resurrection in the Gospel. Paul will state that this is the declaration of Sonship (Romans 1:4), while Luke uses it to announce the exaltation of Jesus’ royal status and power to rescue humanity the perverse world (Acts 2:40).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Historical** | **Theological** |
| God of our fathers raised up Jesus |  |
| you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross |  |
| God exalted to His right hand |  |
|  | a Prince and a Savior |

This is the first of only two times that the writer uses the term savior to describe Jesus. The other is Acts 13:23. The term is associated with Jesus in Philippians (once), Timothy (twice), Titus (3 times), 2 Peter (4 times), and Jude (once). Luke uses a form of the term in his Gospel (2:11) to announce the birth of a savior identified as the Messiah and Matthew 1:21 in reference to Jesus’ name “for He will save His people from their sins.” Since Matthew’s reference is in context with the expression “son of David,” it is to be understood as a messianic-type savior and salvation is realized as the redemptive change of ownership as taught in the life of the children of Israel who were taken from Egypt where they were non-status slaves and made slaves of the Most High God (Leviticus 25:55).

This is the second reference to Jesus as “Prince” (3:15; here). The position at the right-paints the image of royalty. This supports the raised/exalted imagery that gives Jesus the right to grant repentance and forgiveness. These are judicial as well as authoritative. This validates the point of this paper that the Gospel is focused on the exaltation of the Jesus who invaded our world to regain kingdom control for God. “Thy Kingdom Come” becomes the mantra for the Gospel!

The next speech is also before the Council. This is Stephen who is not one of the Apostles. Rather, he is one who was set aside for service in Acts 6. This speech is the last before a Jewish audience.

Stephen’s Defense, Acts 7:2–56

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Content | Verse |
| The God of glory appeared | 2–52a |
| the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become | 52b |
| he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and | 55 |

After an impressive review of the important highlights of the Hebrew cultic experience, Stephen brings the story to a climatic conclusion with the accusation of being “stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart … resisting the Holy Spirit … as your fathers did” (7:52). The accusation directed toward the Jews places the same rejection on every hearer of the message of Jesus. I will explain this in detail later, but this passage certainly supports what we have seen in Acts. The primary issue is rejection/acknowledgement of Jesus’ messianic authority, not human sin. The latter flips the focus onto the believer while the former places the attention on the historical Jesus as the declared Son of God, both human and divine.

This passage more than any other in Acts demonstrates the significance of the historical intervention of YHWH into the cursed world. This aligns with the New Covenant emphasis “according to the Scriptures” as Israel’s story is the written history and theology of God’s chosen nation and His interaction with them to teach us about Jesus (John 1:45, 5:46; Galatians 3:24).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Historical** | **Theological** | |
| The God of glory appeared | * Abraham’s calling (7:2-8) * the Patriarchs in Egypt (7:9-16). * life of Moses (7:17-36) * Moses and Israel in the wilderness (7:37-43) * The Tabernacle of Testimony (7:44-50) (Kroll) | * The promises to Abraham (vv. 2–8) * The deliverance through Joseph (vv. 9–16) * The deliverance through Moses (vv. 17–34) * The apostasy of Israel (vv. 35–50) (Pohill, 188) |
|  | Righteous One | |
| whose betrayers and murderers you have now become |  | |
| saw the glory of God and Jesus standing |  | |
|  | the right hand of God | |

I pray it is becoming apparent that the Gospel cannot be told without the story of Israel and Jesus’ life. The Gospel is about Jesus, not the human condition. The first Christians made every attempt to persuade the people to become a disciple of the resurrected and coronated Jesus. Any mention of the human condition is secondary to the message, if mentioned at all.

Nonetheless, the historical is of little or no significance if the story is about an ordinary human. As I have stated often, it does matter ***who*** was on the cross. Only the Son of God could ascend that tree to accomplish the Father’s intentions. Only the virgin born child, bearing divine DNA, would be able to accomplish YHWH’s will. As already emphasized, “Therefore, when he comes into the world, he says, “Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a ***body*** you have prepared for me … ‘behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of me) to do your will, O God’” (Hebrews 10:5-7). The combination of right judgment (righteousness) and authority (right hand of God) validates the historical Jesus as God’s anointed.

Please study the two lists under the theological. Both emphasize the work of YHWH in and through the Hebrew people. At one point, Stephen compares the works of “their hands” (41) to that made *without human hands* (48) that sets up the accusation of resisting the Holy Spirit by both ancient Israel and the current generation.

To this point, Luke confines the Gospel to Jerusalem fulfilling Zachariah’s prophesies to return to the city of YHWH’s choice (1:17, 2:12, 3:2) (thus, restricted by the Spirit?). Persecution in Jerusalem sent the Ambassadors for Christ throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria (8:1). The Spirit opened the door for Philip, south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza (8:26). On this mission, he encounters an Ethiopian eunuch who had come to Jerusalem to worship. The eunuch was reading Isaiah 53 and had questions about the passage.

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch, Acts 8:25–35

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Content | Verse |
| beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him | 35 |
| Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Implied) | 37 |

I have included this passage because it is a summary of the message given by early Christians. “He preached Jesus to him.” Philip’s starting point, like Jesus, was the Hebrew cultic background that gives the clearest picture of Jesus. Isaiah was the perfect starting point because this is what the eunuch was reading. This passage naturally brings Genesis 3, the covenant, and the Law into the discussion, all Jesus came to satisfy (Matthew 5:17).

Please note the “Implied” in the table. Luke did not include the entire conversation (message more than a speech), but the conclusion of the requirement to confess faith in/about Jesus before baptism implies that Philip included this in his message. Oh, that the hearer would interrupt the contemporary speaker with the request for baptism! Such an occurrence would be a blessing and encouragement to continue sharing the Gospel.

Another implication is that the historical Jesus and the resurrection were part Philip’s Gospel. What else would produce the conviction evident in the eunuch’s confession. Certainly, a message about human sinfulness would not generate such a response. In fact, according to John and Paul, the confession of the Lordship of Jesus is evidence of the activity of the Spirit in the life of the person (1 Corinthians 12:3;). John is explicit that the confession prompted by this Spirit is “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God” (1 John 4:2). This great confession moves us naturally into the historical/theological arena.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Historical** | **Theological** |
| Scripture – the Story of Israel; the Story of Jesus |  |
|  | The confession of the messianic (Jesus Christ; Jesus Messiah) and Sonship (Divine nature) |

This account provides an appropriate time to introduce the idea of the theological context of the Gospel. This graphic and key may help clarify the theological context based on Hebrew Scripture showing the perspective of according to the Scriptures as understood in the New Testament.

**Key:**

* **Immediate** – Last week of Jesus’ life
* **Preceding** – Jesus’ Birth to the Ascension
* **Comprehensive** – Genesis 1 to the birth of Jesus within the Hebrew perspective
* **Traditions** – Theology looking backwards
* **Apostolic** – Theology completing the Hebrew story reaching forward

Diagram

Description automatically generated

The passion of Christ is the focal point of all biblical teaching. The story of Israel from Genesis 1 to the birth of Jesus sets the theological context. As indicated by the “Apostolic” arrow, the story covers both directions in history – back for context and forward for the completion of the Jesus story in the church. However, the later traditions maintain a backwards look, using their experience to understand and explain the Jesus story. The importance of their situation determines their understanding. In example, the questions asked by the reformers may have been appropriate regarding indulgences, but the answer to those questions does not explain Scripture and salvation within the biblical context. Yes, there was a major concern over what was happening with indulgences and the questions were appropriate for that time and that reason. However, that situation can in no way give the fullest explanation for God’s purpose in Messiah Jesus. The protestors wanted to revise Catholicism, not destroy, or oppose it. The original plan was to correct the ills of and return to the Catholic tradition that gave them their theological foundation. However, neither side wanted to give way, so a movement was initiated that destroyed the unity of the church. To continue to use that historical setting is to move away from the intent according to the Scriptures. Any restoration appeal must take the Apostolic perspective and ask the questions that would have been asked in the first century and answered by the only Bible the church possessed – Hebrew Scripture as understood by the writers of the New Covenant.

The messianic expression “Christ” indicates YHWH’s intervention into the created arena. It is an unfortunate happenstance of translation that the transliteration of the Greek *Christos* (*Christus* in Latin) replaced the more literal “anointed.” This expression becomes a theological basket where a variety of systematic and biblical ideas reside expressing what the concept of anointed means or implies. In the Hebrew context, “two office bearers are expressly described as *māšîaḥ* i.e., as anointed (with oil): the high priest as the one responsible for the official cult (Priest) and the king (Rengstorf, 335).

The Gospel presented today must produce the same great confession, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37). This acknowledgement should not be the response of the desire for forgiveness and going to heaven. It should be the response of *beginning with Scripture* (like Isaiah and the slaughter of YHWH’s chosen), and having Jesus preached. Nothing more, nothing less is the Gospel.

The historical journey through Acts takes a turn away from the Hebrew children, moving into the non-Jewish world of a God-fearer. This person knows of Israel’s God (Like Kind Cyrus) and worships that God to the best of their knowledge. Peter opens the kingdom to a God-fearer named Cornelius. While there are some who see a different message for the non-Jew (faith alone without the Law or works such as baptism), it will be obvious that the same message and responses are evident in the story of the faith journey of Cornelius.

Peter, before the group assembled by Cornelius (10:34–43)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Content | Verse |
| The word which He sent to the sons of Israel | 36 |
| Peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all) | 36 |
| Jesus of Nazareth … and *how* He went about doing | 38 |
| Put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross | 39 |
| God raised Him up on the third day   * granted that He become visible | 40 |

One could imagine that Cornelius may have wondered why any God would choose Israel a His messenger. Why not powerful Rome? That Romans were religious is beyond question, with a close tie between religion and government. Temples, shrines, and family memorials supports the place of religion and religious practice (Reasoner, 851). Yet, the influence of the Jewish cultic experience gave insight into this God-fearer who gave alms and lifted prayers (McNicol, 189; Easton, 163). With Cornelius, YHWH has now entered a broader history through the man of Nazareth. Cornelius does not dispute Peter’s affirmation of the public awareness, stating “you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee” (Acts 10:37). The “you” would include Cornelius and those with him. In verse thirty-eight, picking up the “know” from verse thirty-seven, connects it with Jesus and the anointing with the Spirit and power as well as His ministry. To confirm what he states they know, Peter, as in other instances (Acts 2:32, 3:15, 5:32), tells the company that “we are witnesses,” satisfying the legal requirement of two or more witnesses. Peter connects the theological with the historical in four ways.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Historical** | **Theological** |
| Sons of Israel |  |
|  | Jesus Christ (Messiah) |
|  | Lordship of Jesus |
| Jesus of Nazareth |  |
| Put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross |  |
| God raised Him up on the third day |  |
| Granted that He become visible |  |

Heritage, birthplace, and death are three historical ideas that validates Jesus’ historicity. As in every case so far, the cross is a historical reference, lacking a theological connection with forgiveness. Peter adds a new concept here with the idea of *visibility*. Interestingly, we get the English word *emphasis* from this Greek word. Thus, this becomes a plan on words from an English perspective that aligns with Paul’s statement that God *exalted* Jesus above all others (Philippians 2:9-11).

As demonstrated by the centurion’s statement recorded by Matthew and Luke, their idea of authority is consistent with that of the world. “I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it” (Matthew 8:8; cf. Luke 7:8). Peter’s confirmation of Jesus’ authority was associated with the messianic concept in the use of *Christos.*

Lordship is not a concept with which independent Americans can relate. Monarchs on TV movies are either benevolent benefactors or tyrants. Jesus is neither, having come to initiate recreation under LORD God (*ʾelōhîm* YHWH; the eternal God of Power and Covenant).

Paul, at the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch (13:16–41)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Content | Verse |
| Men of Israel, and you who fear God | 16 |
| The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great | 17a |
| Condemning *Him* … they asked Pilate that to execute Him | 27b–28 |
| They took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb | 29 |
| God raised Him from the dead   * God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children in that He raised up Jesus * He raised Him up from the dead * You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay * He whom God raised did not undergo decay | 30  33  34  35  37 |

Please note that the speaker takes the audience into consideration when presenting the message. Few today are evangelizing Jews, so the recounting of the Hebrew cultic experience does not seem to be useful. However, Paul’s Gospel summary in Romans 1:2-3 includes the basic elements of “promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh.” Accepting that the Roman church consisted of Jew and non-Jew, this statement is significant. To Paul’s point, it is not in the details, but in the significance of Jesus having human history (“according to the flesh”) that is part of a divine plan (“promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures”) that should attract people to Jesus, encouraging cross-bearing discipleship.

You should be seeing the consistent message with the same elements of the Gospel presented. However, as opposed to the Gospel shared today, these messages focus on the humanness of Jesus. That is, the historical reality. Without this, Jesus is just a myth, no different from Dionysus, the god of wine. Their stories compare element by element until we mark the differences. Examine the next table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Dionysus of Thebes** | **Jesus of Nazareth** |
| Son of Zeus, king of the Greek gods | Is Son of God (Mark 15:39) |
| Son of Semele, a virgin princess of Thebes | Is son of Mary, a virgin of Nazareth (Luke 2) |
| Survives an attempt by Hera to kill him as an infant | Survives an attempt by King Herod to kill him as an infant (Matt. 2) |
| Performs miracles to inspire faith in his divinity | Performs healings and other miracles (Mark 1—2) |
| Battles supernatural evil in the form of Titans | Resists Satan; exorcizes demons (Mark 1-3; Matt. 4; Luke 4) |
| Returns to his birthplace, where he is denied and rejected by family and former neighbors | Returns to his hometown, where he is rejected and threatened with death (Mark 6; Luke 4) |
| Invents wine; promotes his gift to humanity throughout the world | Transforms water into wine (John 2); makes wine the sacred beverage in communion (Mark 14) |
| Suffers wounding and death at the hands of the Titans | Suffers wounding and crucifixion at the hands of the Romans (Mark 15; John 19) |
| Descends into the Underworld Rises to divine immortality, joining his father, Zeus, on Olympus | Descends into the Underworld (1 Pet. 3:19; 4:6) Resurrected to glory; reigns in heaven at God's right hand (Phil. 2; Acts 7:55-57) |
| Evangelizes the world, establishing his universal cult Punishes opponents who denied his divinity | Directs followers to evangelize the world (Matt. 28:19-20) Will return to pass judgment on nonbelievers (Matt. 24-25; Rev. 19-20) |
| **Differences** |  |
| Mythical—no historical evidence he ever existed | Real—historical evidence (biblical and non-biblical) that he existed |
| No existing following today | The church has impacted the world since its inception |

The emphasis on the resurrection is most magnified with the four descriptions in verses 33-35 and 37. This language is victorious in nature and attractive, portraying a Gospel built on Jesus’ resurrection and not human sinfulness and the need for forgiveness.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Historical** | **Theological** |
| Men of Israel |  |
|  | God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made |
|  | not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay   * He whom God raised did not undergo decay |

Both the historical and theological are bound up in the Covenant and the Exodus Motif indicated in this speech. “Men of Israel” who are descendants of the fathers is a confirmation of a covenant that YHWH executed when He used Moses to change the non-status slavery of the Hebrew children to that of servants of the Most High God.

Resurrection is not about resuscitation. Jesus was resurrection to a new status, a new existence. John Stott states this concept best.

Now, let us be clear that while we are talking about the resurrection, what is the Christian claim that Jesus rose from the dead. It is not that his influence survived death. It is not that we can sing “Jesus lives” as the Latin American students’ chant, “Che Guevara lives!” That is not what we mean. Che Guevara was not resurrected from the dead. And again, we do not mean that Jesus was resuscitated. In other words, he was brought back to this life. That’s what Jesus did, for example, Lazarus when he raised him, as we say, from the dead. He brought him back to this this life and it’s that that roused C.S. Lewis’ sympathy when he said, “Poor Lazarus had to do his dying all over again.” But not Jesus. He was not brought back to this life. He went on to a new life. He had new powers. Well, I should have begun by saying, of course, he was rescued from the natural post-mortem process of decay and decomposition. And after that, his body was changed into a new vehicle for his personality, which had new powers, undreamed of faculties and which was immortal and would never die again. That’s what we mean by resurrection (qtd. in McCuistion, 46)

“The natural post-mortem process of decay and decomposition” is one reason we bury the dead. I once met Peter McIntosh in Northwest Ohio who died in 1946. He was in decent shape when I first saw him in the mid-1990s. The mortician placed him on display so that children could see what grandpa would look like after several years in the grave. However, the mortician had a problem. Peter’s skin continued to dry and shrink so that his beard continued to “grow.” Well, not exactly. As the skin tightened, the formed hair under the epidermis pushed through. Additionally, his eye lids and lips began to shrink to such a point that regular repair helped to maintain a respectable appearance. They finally buried him some years later.

According to Hebrews 2:15, the fear of death captivates us to live for the present life only. Thus, we become body-led, controlled by the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). All of these are the enemy of death. They are the attempt to live forever. Jesus’ resurrection opened the door to freedom from the slavery of death by knowing that there is more to life than life the way we know it. You can check this out by doing a New Testament search sometime for the expression “go to heaven.” You will be surprised to know that was not a driving motivation for the early Christians. In fact, since the Father and Son are coming back to the recreated earth (Revelation 21:3), why would I want to “go to heaven.” They will not be there!

Traveling through Amphipolis and Apollonia, 17:1–3

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Content | Verse |
| Reasoned with them from the Scriptures | 2 |
| Explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead | 3 |
| This Jesus … is the Christ | 3 |

This short presentation to Jews in the synagogue gives a good summary of the Jesus Gospel. One would do well to memorize 17:3, “explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying,* “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.” This is like his Gospel summary in Romans 1:1-4 and 1 Corinthains 15:3-5. Short, sweet, to the point! Learn this and you learn the true and complete Gospel

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Historical** | **Theological** |
|  | The Scriptures |
|  | Christ had to suffer and rise again |
| This Jesus |  |
|  | Is the Christ |

At one time and/or in some setting, something was lacking that needed to be filled, completed, satisfied, or accomplished. Jesus is that satisfaction. Jesus’ claim to satisfying His Father’s intentions is stated early in His ministry. Before He calls His first disciple, He states, “fulfilled is the time.” In the Gospel writings, there are twenty direct references and thirteen indirect references to the use of Scripture that validate claims regarding Jesus. Is it any wonder that this is part of a Gospel summary. However, it must be stated that these *Scriptures* are the Hebrew writings. They are the historical evidence of the theology of YHWH.

The use of a term of necessity (“had to;” *dei*) in verse three is important. “The Christ **had** to suffer and rise again.” The “had” relates to at least four facts stated in Scripture:

1. The death executed the will of God (Hebrews 9:15)
2. The death initiated the redemption of the world (Colossians 1:13-14; Hebrews 9:15)
3. The death satisfied the sacrificial necessities with a “once for all” sacrifice (Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:5-7)
4. The death broke down barriers between God and Man as well as man to man (Reconciled) (Ephesians 2:16)

This concept of necessity in the Greek mind was *fate*. “The Heb. OT does not have any word corresponding to the Gk. *dei*. The reason for this is that the Gk. conception of a necessity which works in the manner of fate is foreign to Israel” (Tiedtke, 664). While YHWH wills a plan, He still gifted humanity with the freedom to choose. Adam’s transgression did not change human nature to the point that humanity was no longer able to decide about God. Parenthetically, basing New Covenant (Testament) doctrine on the Hebrew cultic experiences stands against any type of Greek fatalism or predestination. Thus, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and the Reformers stand opposed to the apostolic idea of freedom of the will.

“This Jesus” points to a verifiable human who partook (shared) flesh and blood with us (Hebrews 2:14). The importance of having a “real” Jesus is vital to our faith. John validates this as a test of the Spirit. “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God (1 John 4:2). While Stott was right that that “Questions about Christianity are all ultimately questions about Christ and Christianity without Christ is Christianity no longer” (qtd. in McCuistion, 7), to question that the historical Jesus lived who said and did what the Gospels recorded borders on doubt and rejection as the Jews did when confronted with Jesus in ministry.

This Jesus … the Christ is Paul’s agreement with the messianic ideal. Jesus, the man, is the one anointed by God. John confirms this, stating the Father’s pleasure with Jesus, commanding that the apostles listen to Jesus. This Jesus, the child of the virgin Mary (Matthew 1:18), the son of David and Abraham (Matthew 1:1), the Son of God (Matthew 3:17, 17:5) is the Messiah to which many Jews agreed and welcomed into Jerusalem during Passover (Matthew 21:9).

“‘What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?’ Although Tertullian polemically poses this rhetorical question to show the futility of philosophy, it encapsulates quite nicely the topic of this essay” (Foreman, 353). Foreman is using this to introduce his commentary on Acts 17 about Paul’s presentation of the Gospel to non-Jews.

Paul, at the Areopagus (Mars Hill) in Athens (17:16–34)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Content | Verse |
| Reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles* | 17 |
| Jesus and the resurrection   * New Teaching * Strange things | 18  19  20 |
| God who made the world | 24 |
| Lord of heaven and earth   * Does not dwell in temples made with hands * Nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything * He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things * He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth * Having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation * That they would seek God * in Him we live and move and exist | 24  25  25  26  26  27  28 |
| He has fixed a day   * In which He will judge the world in righteousness | 31 |
| A Man whom He has appointed   * Having furnished proof to all men * By raising Him from the dead | 31 |

The speeches examined have been to a Jewish audience. In Athens, the mixed audience is one we have seen – Jews and God-fearing Gentiles (There is no Greek expression for *Gentile* in this verse, which is why it is in italics in your Bible) to distinguish someone in the synagogue who is not a Jew but is worshipping the Jewish God. I recall growing up in Tennessee where a select group of preachers thought the Gospel to the Jews was based on work and to the Gentiles based on faith (alone). This has not been evident in our study. Rather, the Hebrew cultic experience gives the backstory for the passion of the Suffering Servant YHWH raised from the grave. The historical events of the death and resurrection have been at the heart of every message.

While this speech begins with the Jews and God-fearers (17), the audience changes to philosophers who acknowledge Paul’s “strange deities” as “Jesus and the resurrection.” Given the opportunity to speak, Paul moves quickly through their religious experiences and expressions of his audience to the idea of a common deity through whom all exist. He acknowledges that everyone in the audience is a child of God (29) who is overlooking the ignorance of these worshippers.

At this point in the sermon, Paul drops the proverbial bomb informing them of the divine requirement to change their mind (repent) about the God in whom “we live and move and exist” (28). With no context for the repentance other than a “fixed” day in which righteous judgment will be made “through” a select (appointed) individual (man). The validation given for this man is the resurrection (31). From this speech, several key theological points can be drawn that are based on the historicity of the events.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Historical | Theological |
|  | Reasoning |
| Jesus and the resurrection |  |
|  | New Teaching |
|  | Strange things |
|  | God who made the world |
|  | Lord of heaven and earth   * Does not dwell in temples made with hands * Nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything * He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things * He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth * Having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation * That they would seek God * in Him we live and move and exist |
| He has fixed a day | Having overlooked the times of ignorance   * God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent |
|  | He will judge the world in righteousness |
|  | A Man whom He has appointed |
|  | Having furnished proof to all men |
|  | Being then the children of God |
| By raising Him from the dead |  |

This presentation may well serve as the best example of a Gospel presentation for our times. Few of us have opportunity to share Jesus with a Jew, but all in the church have ample occasions to share with non-Jews. This is the world in which most of us live. Based on this, we will give more detail that will help you understand the Gospel in a logical way that should make it easier to present. We will examine this in the order given as this is the logical progression.

*Theological:**Reasoning.* Luke’s eye for detail starts this dialogue with what I consider to be **the** weak spot in contemporary efforts to share the Gospel. They have not thought through their own faith. Nor have they developed a logical defense for what they believe about Jesus. Peter tells us to be ready to do this. “Sanctify (set apart) Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (1 Peter 3:15). As shown, Jesus’ resurrection is at the heart of the message. This is His right of passage to the coronation, sitting at the Father’s right hand. Preparation for your defense mandates you bow before Him as your Lord and Master.

*Historical: Jesus and the Resurrection.* I have consistently put the references to the name Jesus under the historical with the exceptions of when used with Servant and Christ as Messiah. This is based on the theology of the humanity of the Son of God and the essential requirement of His having a body (Hebrews 10:5-7), sharing flesh and blood (Hebrews 2:14). The same principle applies to the resurrection. A spiritual resurrection borders on mythology (remember Dionysus?). The anticipation (fear; Hebrews 2:15) of death captivates humanity with a body-led mentality (lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life; 1 John 2:16) that enticed Eve (good for food [lust of the flesh], delight to the eyes [lust of the eyes], desirable to make one wise [pride of life]) and enslaved Adam and humanity (condemnation; Romans 5:16). Only a physical resurrection would overturn the death that introduced by the transgression of Adam.

*Theological: New Teaching/Strange Things.* Growing up in East Tennessee in the 50s-60s, you would be hard pressed to find someone who did not know about Jesus. Such is no longer the case. Children raised by a generation disappointed with the church (*Dones*) know little other than the distorted picture painted by the arts (movies, music, literature). I have had recent opportunities to share the Gospel with Asian and mid-European individuals. When I ask what the know about Jesus, the response is little or nothing. This is understandable in an Asian culture where traditions like Buddhism and Confucianism are common. However, this Asian person was living in California, mid-forties, and Americanized. My undergraduate students faired some better, but with limited knowledge, most held the common idea that someone died for them. One other anecdote, I like asking the person calling with a spam, scam, or sales call what they know about Jesus. As with my undergraduates, they respond that they know little or nothing. In this sense, like the Athenians, today’s world will think some of the things we say about Jesus are new and/or strange. In Paul’s day (and I believe in our day as well), the cross is a foolish idea to the non-believer (1 Corinthians 1:18). Paul is talking about the theology of the cross. Preaching Christ crucified does not work for them, but for “the called,” the Messiah (*Christos* in the text) is the power and wisdom of God. Notice, Paul did not include the cross as the power. Coupled with his statement about the power of the Gospel being based on the prophetic message, Jesus’ Hebrew lineage, and the resurrection, it is obvious that the new teaching and strange things would be that a Jew lived, died, and resurrected to demonstrate the authority of God on earth and in Him.

*Theological: God Who Made the World.* While this topic has a historical setting (the foundations of the world [Ephesians 1:4]; Cf. Genesis 1-2), the context makes this theological. This statement is set in the arena of *objects of worship.* While mythology is all but dead in the United States and other *civilized* countries, the lack of faith in a creator offers a far greater challenge. With mythology, it is a battle of the gods and surely, resurrection and recreation trumps gods who abuse and misuse humanity. However, the god of science reigns in the hearts and minds of many today. Asking an undergraduate class if they would believe in the resurrection if given *substantial* evidence, an acknowledged agnostic stated emphatically, “NO!” Motivated and guided by subjective emotion and morality, today’s world wants to make their own rules. I later told that same class that the reason most do not want to believe in a god was because they would have to immediately admit to a judgment and that God makes the rules. That young student on hearing that statement said, “I hope that is not the reason I don’t believe.” Anyone knowing anything about grammar and syntax knows that a double negative (not … do not) is a positive. Thus, this student stated, “This is the reason I am an unbeliever.”

To the issue at hand, sharing the Gospel may begin at defending the presence of a creator entity who is logical and interactive. If you can establish this, the next question to answer is if that entity would communicate. Establishing that it is only logical that they would, the deity recognized as *God* did communicate in His Son about whom there is much historical evidence. While it is not the point of this work to detail how to defend the use of the Bible, please allow one statement. At this point in a conversation, Christ’s Ambassador would state that the Bible as we have it today has been verified scientifically and historically to be an ancient document that originated during the early years of Christianity and that there is more evidence for the reliability of these documents than those for Julius Caesar, Confucius, or any other ancient, historical figure.

*Theological: Lord of heaven*. As creator, the heavens belong to Israel’s God (Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalms 115:16; Matthew 11:25). In this case, possession is 100% of the Law and He is the Law Maker and Enforcer. Psalm 115:16 offers an interesting perspective. While the heavens belong to the Lord, “But the earth He has given to the sons of men.” This certainly indicates that humanity has a free will to do as he pleases with the earth. Additionally, humanity is without excuse in this regard, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made” (Romans 1:20).

The bulleted statements demonstrate God’s control as Lord of heaven and earth, making the point that we need Him, not the other way around.

* *In Him we live, move, and exist*
* Does not dwell in temples made with hands
* Nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything
* He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things
* He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth
* Having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation

*Historical: A Fixed Day.* I have made this historical as this is a calendar day sometime in human history. It is an actual event that *will* happen. This is part of a plan that is based on the principle that if there is no penalty, there is no law! Paul details this in his letter to the Thessalonian church. “The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

*Theological: He will Judge the World in Righteousness.* At this point in the contemporary setting, the question of absolute truth comes into play. So many, especially in the under thirty want truth to be relative. This avoids judgment. However, for God to be fair (righteous), He must judge by absolute true. Jesus is that truth (John 14:6). More specifically, John tells us that whoever rejects Jesus and his sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day (John 12:48). Having these in recorded form and understandable provides an absolute truth by which we can be judged rightly. This ties directly to Paul’s next point.

*Theological: A Man whom He has appointed*. We have already identified Jesus as the prototype Apostle in the speech on Solomon’s portico. Sent by the Father, Jesus becomes the focal point of history and theology. Please note in verse thirty-one the language of judgment “through” (NASB 95 Update) and “by” (NRSV, New International Version, and KJV). This expression in the original signifies “a marker of the manner in which an event occurs” (Louw and Nida, 787).

*Theological:* *Having furnished proof to all men*. That proof was in the resurrection. This was not the first. There were resurrections in the Old Testament. Elisha raised the son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:34), the dead body that touched Elisha’s bones (2 Kgs 13:20), and Elijah raises the widow’s son (1 Kings 17:17-24). In the Christian Scriptures, Jesus raises a widow’s son (Luke 7:11-17) and Lazarus (John 11:43-44). At the crucifixion, graves and tombs opened and the dead raised (Matthew 27:52-53) and in Acts, Peter raised Tabitha by (9:40-41) and Eutychus who fell asleep during a long Pauline sermon (Acts 20:9-13). As C. S. Lewis lamented over Lazarus having to die again (qtd. in *C. S. Lewis Institute Chicago*), so did all of these. Jesus rose to die no more. As James Street states so succinctly, “Resurrection will be eternal, because death will be permanently put to death.” Jesus guarantees this. Again, Scripture becomes an ancient validation of this event as does the church and changed lives.

*Historical: Raising Him from the Dead.* This statement is the grand theme and conclusion to the Gospel. In every speech includes the resurrection as a historical event, either stated or implied (as in Stephen’s defense). It is worth noting that the crucifixion was not always stated or implied in the speeches. Of course, resurrection assumes a death, else it is not historical, but mythological as we have already stated.

Conclusion

At the beginning, this work posed two questions. The first question asked about the message that produced great growth in the church in the first century in the face of persecution. In an article on the New Testament Gospel, Chamblin offers the following features:

* Risen from the dead, Christ again evangelizes (Eph. 2:16–17) through his representatives (Rom. 15:16–18; 1 Cor. 1:17; 9:12–18; 2 Tim. 1:9–11)
* Christ has become the gospel’s major theme, repeatedly affirmed in Acts and in Paul’s writings
* Mark describes his whole book as “the gospel about Jesus Christ” (1:1) (307)

Before moving to the second question regarding the contemporary salvation Gospel, review the following table that gives us Paul’s Gospel, drawn from three passages where he specifically identifies these elements as “his” Gospel (Romans 1:1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5; 2 Timothy .2:8). I arranged these tables differently to afford a quick preview of these passages.

**Excursus – Paul’s Gospel**

The term *Gospel* is used nineteen times in the Gospels, eight times in Acts, seventy times in Paul and only four times in the rest of the New Testament (1 Peter, three times: Revelation one time). The term appeared late in Greek use, referring to either the reward of the messenger or the message itself “chiefly a technical term for the message of victory, but also used of political and private messages bringing joy” (Becker, 107). It is a compound word with the first part (*eu*) holding the idea of what is good. The English word eulogy used this concept as the idea of good words (*logia; logos*). The second part is a familiar word, *angelion*, from which we get angel. It represents the concept of a messenger used in connection with the announcement of a future event and in classical Greek, takes on a religious notion when used with royal activity. Thus, it was a fitting word for the church to use that benefited both the messenger and the recipient of the message as it related to the royal decrees of YHWH.

From the numbers above, it should be obvious that the Apostle Paul is the Grand Messenger of the Gospel, including it in every letter except Titus. It is noteworthy to see how Paul uses the term.

1. Gospel of God: ten times in ten verses
2. Gospel of Jesus: one time
3. Gospel of His Son: one time
4. “The” Gospel: sixty-six times

In response to this, it is helpful to consider Chamblin’s response to Paul’s “two Gospels” in Galatians 2:7-9.

* Galatians 2:7–9 speaks not of two gospels but of two mission fields; Paul (apostle to the uncircumcised) and Peter (apostle to the circumcised)
* Peter and Paul are both entrusted with the “gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:7)
* The message ordained for the salvation of Jews and Gentiles alike (Rom. 1:16) (307)

In Galatians 1:6–9 Paul writes about “a different gospel” and in 2 Corinthians 11:4 he references “another Jesus” and a “different Spirit.” Chamblin contrasts these against the real Jesus. He contends that this wrong Jesus is a made-up Jesus. But “to preach the true Christ is to preach the true gospel, however questionable one’s motives (Phil. 1:15–18); to respond rightly to the gospel is to turn to Christ (Acts 11:20–21; Rom. 10:8–17; Gal. 2:14–16)” (307). Chamblin is spot on with about “another Jesus.” While the Jesus (soap) preached today is not another one and has scriptural basis, it is a different Gospel. The glory Jesus receives is based on Jesus satisfying human need, not Jesus Himself.

We have examined Luke’s record of the Gospel preached. We will now shift to Paul’s description of the Gospel where he gives the basic elements in outline form to support the letters he is writing. The approach in the following table gives the elements and then an explanatory concept (theology) or explanation of that element.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Romans 1:1-4** | **Concept** |
| * The Gospel of God | * Gospel: Good News (Gk. *Announcement of what is good or of goodness*) * Of God:   + Of = belonging to, or   + Of = about; concerning |
| * Promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures | * About 110 references from the OT, predominantly Messianic from Deuteronomy, the Psalms, and Isaiah (Ryrie, Biblical 104) |
| * Concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh | * Focused on Jesus’ humanity   + Sonship (not virgin birth; cf. Galatians 4:4)   + Messianic emphasis |
| * Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead | * Focused on the resurrection   + Identifies the Son of God |
|  |  |
| **1 Corinthians 15:1-5** |  |
| * The gospel which I preached | * This emphasizes that the Gospel is a message, a story, the story of Jesus * “It pleased God by the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe” (NASB95, 1 Corinthians 1:21) |
| * By which also you are saved | * rescue, save, preserve, help (Radl 319) * save, keep from harm, preserve, rescue (Brown and Schneider 205)   NOTE: The idea of preservation or rescue from a life-threatening danger is most prominent; does not hold the idea of salvation as a future place or existence. |
| * If you hold fast the word | * Considering “according to the Scriptures,” reinforces the idea of covenant faithfulness |
| * Of first importance | * Understood as the core or most prominent feature * Contends for the idea that there is more to the Gospel, but this is the essential beginning |
| * Christ | * The focus of the Gospel * The subject, therefore, what the whole of the thought points to and results from |
| * Died for our sins according to the Scriptures | * Three key thoughts   + Historical death: this is not a myth   + Theological purpose relation to human sin   + Understood in the context of Hebrew Scripture |
| * He was buried | * Historical Fact essential to validate that this was not a myth |
| * Raised on the third day according to the Scriptures | * Historical Fact * Understood in the context of Hebrew Scripture |
| * He appeared | * Historical validation |
|  |  |
| **2 Timothy 2:8** |  |
| * Remember Jesus Christ | * The focus of the Gospel * The subject, therefore, what the whole of the thought points to and results from |
| * Risen from the dead |  |
| * Descendant of David |  |

C. H. Dodd delivered a series of lectures in 1935 in which he examined the content of the Apostolic preaching in the New Testament. This is a difficult but excellent read that I highly recommend. There are ample used copies online. The following list is the conclusion he drew regarding the major elements of the Apostolic preaching:

1. The prophecies are fulfilled, and the new Age is inaugurated by the coming of Christ
2. He was born of the seed of David
3. He died according to the Scriptures, to deliver us out of the present evil age
4. He was buried
5. He rose on the third day according to the Scriptures
6. He is exalted at the right hand of God, as Son of God and Lord of quick and dead
7. He will come again as Judge and Savior of men (17)

While in substantial agreement with Dodd, I would narrow his list. He includes

Paul’s teaching that comes after conversion. In my study and conclusion here, I have limited my content to the actual message preached. Here is the way I see Paul’s Gospel:

1. Prophecies fulfilled
2. He was born of the seed of David and/or Abraham (the “Fathers)
3. He died according to the Scriptures, to deliver us out of the present evil age
4. He was buried
5. He rose on the third day according to the Scriptures
6. He will come again as Judge

Regarding #1, I do not find in Paul’s direct reference to the Gospel (a term used seventy times in sixty-five verses in his writings) as inaugurated by the coming of the Messiah. Obviously, this infers Jesus’ presence, and becomes a vital or necessary element in the Gospel presentation. Regarding #6, Paul makes no reference to this in the passages considered above. However, he does include this in his summary of Jesus in Philippians 2, but this is not a Gospel presentation in the sense of the message given to the non-Christian/non-believer. Rather, this is a Christian teaching, part of Jesus’ command to “teach them all I have commanded.” (Matthew 28:20). Paul’s emphasis in his great Christological passage in Philippians is for the Christian as the model for humility. Finally, #7 is not included in a description of Paul’s Gospel in the three primary passages (Romans 1:1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:8) where he provides the essential elements of the message. However, while dealing with the non-Jews who do have not have knowledge of Jesus or the covenant Law, he refers to, “the day when, *according to my gospel* (my emphasis), God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus” (Romans 2:16). This passage does not make a direct reference to Jesus’ salvific work other than what the term Christ (Messiah) infers.

**Section 2**

**The Contemporary Message**

While the value of the Reformation cannot be over-estimated, it did open doors that have caused substantial damage to the church. While the Catholic Church of Martin Luther’s day was infected by a toxic tradition that robbed it of power of the Word that it possessed in the beginning years. Rather than fixing the issues with the Church, the reformers reacted with a knee-jerk response that I call the pendulum effect. Whatever the Catholic Church taught, the reformers were opposite. This practice rolled over into their language. A sign became representative instead of actual. As a result, the reformers were free to do as they wanted theologically. This produced division and a reduced gospel that did not produce disciples.

Diagram

Description automatically generated

Section 2 explores the historical trajectory taken by the preachers of the Reformation that produces an ineffective message that fails to produce cross-carrying disciples of King Jesus.

**Question #2 – The Contemporary Message**

he absence of emphasis on the Lordship of King Jesus in the conversion message, producing *pew-sitting church members* instead of *cross-bearing disciples* drives this study. Prompted by this concern, we raised two questions:

1. What was the message that produced such a response?
2. Is the same message given today, producing the same response?

The original plan was to offer a reasonable answer to the questions in an eight-page overview of the Gospel speeches. As I studied and wrote, I realized that this was not enough if I wanted to help churches multiple like those recorded in Acts.

The second question reflects the opinion that there is not New Testament type growth experienced by most churches. At least, there is little multiplication, and the additions do not duplicate those in the early church. This also raises the question of ***who*** the messengers are. Jesus’ final command was not to elect professionals “called to be the minister.” Paul senses that all who love Jesus are His Ambassadors. Further, the question focuses on the content of the message the church is giving, “Is the same message given today” anticipates that there may be a different message that is not producing the same response, reflecting a paradigm shift away from God’s plan and message. The answer to the question comes from examining the historical church to see if there has been a shift in thinking and practice.

Paradigm shift

I can hear some saying (and have had it said to me), “Of course, the message is the same. The message is about Jesus.” Immediately, these same people who just confessed that the message centers on Jesus makes the Augustinian inspired, Reformation practiced, and Revival-spirit shift to human sinfulness. Please understand that it is not that this lacks biblical support because forgiveness is *a vital part* of YHWH’s plan, *but it is not the plan!* Rather, it is a matter of which message produces cross-bearing disciples. After fifty plus years in service to my King, it has become very evident that the focus on human sinfulness produces what Dallas Willard calls “massive nominal, non-disciple ‘Christianity.’” (15). Yet, it cannot be denied that the presentations of the Gospel in the book of Acts seldom involves the idea of sin but always, without exception, focuses on the person and historical ministry of King Jesus, producing committed Ambassadors who were willing to die for their King (as many did in the first three centuries).

Anyone even vaguely familiar with the New Testament knows the central character. The Christian Scriptures focus on Jesus. Theological jargon calls this *Christology*. That is, Jesus is the heart and soul of the message. As noted above, “Questions about Christianity are all ultimately questions about Christ and Christianity without Christ is Christianity no longer” (Stott, qtd. in McCuistion, 7). However, a review of the current Gospel message presented by most non-Catholic traditions sounds something like this, “

Step one: God loves you

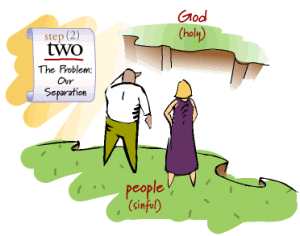
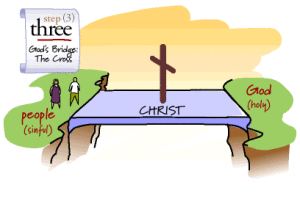
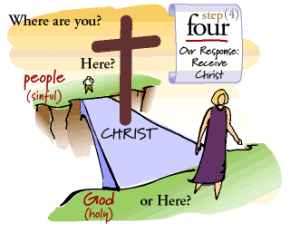
Step two: You have sinned

Step three: God paid the price

Step four: God will forgive you (if you admit and believe)

Step five: You can live as God’s child (qtd. in McKnight, 90)

Does this sound even remotely like any of the speeches in Acts? Can you parallel this with Paul’s descriptions? We could introduce the famous *Romans Road* and ask if cherry picking verses (that typically leave out Chapter 6) produces the Gospel found in Acts. Only if you take the right road that is in the first four verses and sets the outline and content for everything Paul will tell the Romans. The issue with the Romans Road is that it usually is full of billboards about human sinfulness that Paul plainly is telling us is part of what Jesus identified as “all I have taught you,” (Matthew 28:20) designed for those becoming a disciple of King Jesus. Consider this cute portrayal of the gospel presented in the *Four Spiritual Laws* and boundless other tracks:



(Meadowbrook Baptist Church)

Gospel Culture to Salvation Culture

Dallas Willard is on the same page when he writes, “If you ask anyone from that 74 percent of Americans who say they have made a commitment to Jesus Christ what the Christian gospel is, you will probably be told that Jesus died to pay for our sins, and that if we will only believe he did this, we will go to heaven when we die.” What created this shift in thinking and practice? The answer is available with a quick survey of history. I wish I could copy and paste chapters 6 and & of Scot McKnight’s *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited.*” (Zondervan, 2011). I will share the summary statement he makes that created the shift and then walk through a brief history with him. Please know that my studies prior to reading McKnight had confirmed this. He is a better historian and writer. Thus, I step aside to his thoughts expressed so well:

The singular contribution of the Reformation, in all three directions – Lutheran, Reformed, and Anabaptist—was that the gravity of the gospel was shifted toward justification by faith, and justification by faith laid bare the importance of faith—even if the modern emphasis on “personal” faith was not yet an emphasis.

This is not to deny the important and real differences between these three movements, but it is to say that the one thing that emerged in each was a heavy sense of the need for justifying faith. I do not mean that such was not found in Roman Catholicism; rather, the Reformation said, in effect, that the “gospel” must lead to justifying faith—and the rest is history.

But with that emphasis, regardless of how important it was and remains, came a price. The gospel culture began to shift to a salvation culture. Our contemporary equation of the word *gospel* with the Plan of Salvation came about because of developments from and after the Reformation. (70–71).

WOW! Wish I had said that. Please let it sink in. This is verifiable history, not a diatribe by someone wanting is selling a book. Let us follow McKnight’s stroll through history to understand the shift from the Gospel culture to the Salvation culture.

*Revivalism.* I am not a historian but if I were to make history an academic major or draft a thesis now, it would be on the revivals of England and America. It was a fascinating time. McKnight begins here with the conversion of John Wesley and his “strange feeling” in his heart. Wesley wrote, “I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death (76). Interesting, “I felt.” This is quite different from 2 Timothy 2:8, *Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel …* (McKnight, 76-77).

*The Gospel and Revivalism.*

The Nicene Creed grew out of the debates regarding the person and nature of Jesus. This statement reflected the writing used in the church as well as the traditions of the church such as the Apostle’s creed. There was not a formal canon at the time of the writing of the creed. Therefore, the oral tradition played an important part. However, it is obvious that the content of the creed is in line with written Scripture. While the salvation gospel may have originated from the Reformation, McKnight blames the revivalist for the transition (82). We will follow McKnight at this point as he moves through a series of the better-known preachers of the revival period. I will pull some short quotes from McKnight and then add additional information, if needed.

**John Wesley.** “His gospel was more or less the Protestant Reformation’s doctrine of justification by faith” (83). I found sermons of Wesley online and these were traditional Reformation emphasis on free grace and salvation. See https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=1505 and https://www.ccel.org/ccel/w/wesley/sermons/cache/sermons.pdf.

**Jonathan Edwards.** “Wesley and Edwards preached a robust doctrine of salvation” (83). “There is no doubt that Edwards’s famous sermon contrasts too dramatically with the gospeling of the apostles in the book of Acts” (84). His very well know sermon, “Sinners in the hand of an angry God” exemplifies this well. See https://www.biblesnet.com/Jonathan Edwards Sermons.pdf and https://www.cusd80.com/cms/lib/AZ01001175/Centricity/Domain/971/sinners.pdf.

**George Whitefield.** “He is Wesley-like—to plead with people to turn to Christ” (85). Statements like the following express his salvific emphasis: “The fall of man is written in too legible characters not to be understood” (6). McKnight concludes, “The early revivalists, those in the First Great Awakening, are not the problem when it comes to gospel reduction” (85). https://www.monergism.com/sermons-george-whitefield-60-sermons-pdf-format.

**Charles Finney.** Though later recanting, he gave the impression early in his ministry that a successful revival depending on having the right conditions (85). Nonetheless, his sermons certainly had a salvation gospel emphasis. Here are the first six listed in his book of sermon themes:

* 1. God's Love for a Sinning World
  2. On Trusting in the Mercy of God
  3. The Wages of Sin
  4. The Savior Lifted Up, and the Look of Faith
  5. The Excuses of Sinners Condemn God
  6. The Sinner's Excuses Answered

While there are print and eBooks available, this is also online. If interested, you can find it with this URL: https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=category&cid=96. McKnight puts him into Wesley corner for preaching style, while Charles Hambrick-Stowe thinks him more like Edwards (85-86). This long section does bear repeating here. It is an invitation from the sermon, “Christ the Mediator.”

O sinner, let me tell you, that without a Mediator you are undone; but there is one provided, and he is now offered for you to embrace; it will not take you long, if you are disposed to do it; you can do it now—even now. If you accept him not into your hearts, his blood for you has been shed in vain. There is no middle course; you must be either the friends of Christ, or his enemies. God offers mercy now, but he has not promised that he will ever offer it again!

Remember that! There is no angel in heaven, or minister upon earth, who is authorised to say that salvation will ever be offered to you again. Suppose that Christ himself should now come and take his stand in this pulpit with the book of life in his hand, and should say to you all, “Whose name shall I write in this book? Whoso will accept of me as a Mediator? WHO WILL GIVE ME HIS HEART?” Should we have voices responding on all sides, “I will! I will! I will! O Lord Jesus, take my unworthy name, take my heart; I renounce my sin, and gladly give all my being to thee.”

Would you reply thus to the personal invitation of the Saviour? Why not do it now? God invites you! Jesus invites you! the Bible invites you! the Spirit invites you! the Preacher invites you! Will you come to Jesus, and come now? Why not? Are you not prepared? What preparation do you want? Cannot you get your own consent? This is the difficulty—the great and the only difficulty! If you can get your own consent, there is no being in the universe that can stand in the way of your salvation. But may you not obtain your own consent if you so will it? What say you? Will you consent? Will you allow Christ to have your name? Will you give him your heart? This is a momentous question, will you decide it to-night?

We are going to pray. Now, let those who are willing to accept Christ as their Mediator bend their hearts at a throne of grace; and, Christians, let us seek to get the arms of our prayer round every impenitent sinner in this house, and bring them to Jesus. Let us pray (86-87).

One final thought on Finney’s view of the conditions for a revival that seems to have been shared by others is the power to cause or prompt a decision. McKnight consider this one of the major problems with revivalism (87). In Finney’s *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, chapter three considers how to promote a revival. This chapter does not state directly that the goal is to produce emotion but that an emotional response is to be expected from the preaching of truth (28-29). “To do all this, you must set yourself at work to consider your sins” (Finney, 29). He clarifies how this is done in Lecture IX. “Means to be Used with Sinners” where he enumerates ten testimonies of Christians.

1. To the immortality of the soul. This is clearly revealed in the Bible.
2. The vanity and unsatisfying nature of all earthly good.
3. The satisfying nature and glorious sufficiency of religion.
4. The guilt and danger of sinners. On this point they can speak from experience as well as the word of God. They have seen their own sins, and they understand more of the nature of sin, and the guilt and danger of sinners.
5. The reality of hell, as a place of eternal punishment for the wicked.
6. The love of Christ for sinners.
7. The necessity of a holy life if we think of ever getting to heaven.
8. The necessity of self-denial and living above the world.
9. The necessity of meekness, heavenly-mindedness, humility, and integrity.
10. The necessity of an entire renovation of character and life, for all who would enter heaven. These are the subjects on which they are to be witnesses for God. And they are bound to testify in such a way as to constrain men to believe the truth.

It is obvious from this list that the focus is on the sinner, not on Jesus. Oh, that Finney would have realized that preaching the Gospel of the New Testament would have made fertile ground for all these biblical principles to take root. Yes, these are biblical, but they are not the Gospel. As I stated above, these are Christian principles that fall under Jesus’ “all that I have taught you” (Matthew 28:20).

This is enough on Finney. Moving to the end of the nineteenth century, the next in line is Dwight Lyman Moody. Before we do, allow me to introduce a nuance that is a concern of McKnight and many of us today who are working diligently to restore the biblical Gospel – *a reductionist gospel.* It looks like this:

(McKnight, 80).

Willard identifies *sin management* as *bar-code faith*. God scans your *salvation code* and whatever it says is correct. He uses the illustration of an ice cream sticker on dog food. No matter what is on the inside, it must be correct because that is what the scanner reads. Same with sin management conversions. Does not matter if there was a change if God has forgiven you because you did the right things. (36). Mont Smith stated once that the Restoration Movement has been guilty of selling remission of sins for a dip in the water (“The State of the Adopted”). This happens when the goal is to get people wet rather than making them a disciple. We have experienced this with all ages. An eight-year-old child is raised in the church and has memorized the good confession. They repeat it saying they believe it even though they nothing more than their parents want them to say it. The same has happened with older adults who have been guilt-ridden had want relief. The reductionist gospel has infected all traditions that do not preach the biblical gospel as it was presented in Acts and by Paul.

**Dwight L. Moody.** While Moody falls in line with much of Wesley and Finney (“a more robust and moral-transforming gospel” [McKnight, 87-88]), we find a transition that opens the door for Step one: God loves you as he shifts from the severity of God, removing the image of a judge, focusing on the love of God. Following the thinking of Finney, Moody used publicity and journalism “to create a spectacle” event in relation to his evangelistic work. McKnight also sees in Moody the start of the reduction of the gospel found in tracts (88).

**Billy Sunday.** While McKnight does not state this directly or indirectly, the teaching of the betterment of humanity is threaded through his review of the revivalists. Whether it be in Wesley’s sanctification, Edwards scaring people into salvation, Wesley-like Whitefield, or Billy Sunday’s happier, better, or useful humanity, there is the desire to see people forgiven so they can be better people, if not better citizens. Lyle Dorsett paints the same picture by offering the following as the “typical” message Sunday presented:

“Years ago, Jesus came to take up his abode in my heart and life. I am honored. He is my guest and will be until the end.

1. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for me.
2. I have accepted Him as my Savior.
3. I have confessed Him before the world.
4. I trust Him from day to day” (70).

Sunday’s goal of improving humanity by conversion can be seen in his illustration of the broken watch. What it needs to be fixed is a new mainspring. This single part of the watch enables it to work the way it was designed. Sunday states that his own life gained in a new “mainspring” that “totally revived and changed his own life” (71). His conclusion regarding the change is revealed in the following summary:

I know salvation has done three things for me:

1. It has made me a happier man.
2. It has made me a better man.
3. It has made me more useful (Dorsett, 71).

**Billy Graham and Bill Bright.** Moody and Sunday provided a model of mastering publicity and larger-than-life personality at home with a crowd for Graham (McKnight, 90). The question raised by McKnight is the sources of Graham’s reduced gospel. This question was raised when McKnight received a free copy of Henrietta Mears’ *What the Bible is All About,* observing that Appendix B was called “Becoming a Member of God’s Family.” Graham’s Evangelistic Association gave this book to the respondent of the crusades who decided to receive Christ. Here is the gospel from her book:

Step one: God loves you

Step two: You have sinned

Step three: God paid the price

Step four: God will forgive you (if you admit and believe)

Step five: You can live as God’s child (McKnight, 90)

With the help of a librarian friend, a reprint of her first edition did not contain the Appendix. However, another publication of Henrietta Mears was her publication *God’s Plan: Past, Present and Future* (Glendale, CA: Regal/Gospel Light, 1971) had a chapter on salvation that McKnight called “a narrative exposition of the gospel of Billy Graham and Bill Bright” on pages 231–39 (91). Mears’s earliest sketch of the gospel was based on Romans having four scenes. Her most notably sketch of the plan of salvation is in this series:

I’m a sinner!

How can I be saved? By Christ’s righteousness

Christ died for me

I accept his righteousness

I have eternal life (qtd. in McKnight, 91–92).

While McKnight does not think that Graham and Bright got their form of the gospel from Mears but does consider that “they floated on the waters of an evangelical *soterian* understanding of the gospel, and as a result each in his or her own way made a singular contribution to evangelicalism’s own perception of the gospel” (91).

Conclusion

Our answer to the second question has been in the form of a brief, historical survey showing how the contemporary *plan of salvation* has been the victim of a change in thinking that was a direct result of the Reformation. What Luther intended to reform; the reformers opposed. Reformation became a counterattack to 1500 years of tradition in the Catholic Church. However, the transition from community to individualism had its roots in the teachings of Augustine as is evident from his confessions. This seed was planted deeply into Luther’s soul as he lamented his fear of God.

On one occasion Johann von Staupitz, Luther’s confessor, admonished him to forget his scruples and simply love God. ‘Love God?’ retorted Luther, ‘I hate him.’ Luther experienced the dark night of the soul, when he seemed to tremble on the verge of the abyss, when the rustling of a mere leaf was enough to produce in him the terrors of hell. Luther later described these bouts of dread as *Anfechtungen*, times of testing and fierce assault from the devil (George, 376).

This fear grew out of the Catholic tradition of the real presence. Sovereign power and holiness in the hands of a mere man. The ontological marking of the Holy Orders was designed to balance this just as baptism makes us partakers of the divine nature (Acts 2:38; 2 Peter 1:4). Calvin joins the cause of God’s sovereignty, which makes man small and insignificant, unable to do anything for himself unless God turns his dial (unmerited grace and election). Is it any wonder that the reformers needed a salvation gospel? Edward’s “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” becomes the mantra of the Reformation. In the sermon, Edwards is taking implications from Deuteronomy 32:35, “Their foot shall slide in due time.” He writes, “Another thing implied is, that they are liable to fall of themselves, without being thrown down by the hand of another; as he that stands or walks on slippery ground needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down” (2).

The driving question for this section was about the contemporary gospel and what it is producing. When we talk about results, we are not limiting that to just the number of conversions. Rather, of greater importance, what are the results. Willard asks three questions that drives to the very heart of the matter:

1. Does the gospel I preach and teach have a natural tendency to cause people who hear it to become full-time students of Jesus?
2. Would those who believe it become his apprentices as a natural “next step”?
3. What can we expect would result from people believing the substance of my message? (58)

Willard cites as “*the natural consequence*” (emphasis Willard’s) the deplorable condition of so many churches today. He draws on a saying among management experts today is, “Your system is perfectly designed to yield the result you are getting (58). Thus, the message being preached produced the contemporary church that is losing influence in the world.

Is it too late to turn this around? If Jesus tarries, there is time. How do we turn it around? Simple, preach the Gospel of transformation that makes disciples. While we have examined the speeches in some detail, there is more to say about producing cross-carrying disciples. I propose that we go back to the book of Acts and find in the speeches a model for contemporary preaching.

**Section 3**

**Acts as Model for Contemporary Preaching**

The church growth movement ignited by Donald McGavran in the early sixties was founded on the principle of making disciples over making decisions (“Church Growth”). While there were good features of this movement as well as a major flaw in the theology that became the cancer that infected many churches after the apex of the movement. That flaw was in their understanding of discipleship. While McGavern realized the difference between “discipling” and “perfecting,” his approach was to warn “of the inherent tendency of the church to give priority to perfecting (Shenk). However, with the emphasis on the salvation gospel as discussed in Section 2, discipleship became a programmed attempt to make disciples after they are converted rather than at conversion.

A group of people standing outside a church

Description automatically generated with low confidence

Section 3 looks at the Speeches in Acts as the model for contemporary preaching that produces disciples at conversion as in the New Testament.

**The Speeches of Acts as a Model for Contemporary Preaching**

Luke’s record of the early church in Acts takes two forms – narrative and speeches. While speeches were common in histories, Luke’s thorough investigation from which he promises “to write in consecutive order so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:3b-4) reveals via the speeches of Jesus’ disciples the common confession of the faith once delivered. Put into context, they take the form of gospel proclamation intended to convict and convince the listener of Jesus’ nature and intent. This article contends that the disciples’ speeches form the model for the Christocentric confession of the early church that should be used today, modeling Matthew’s Great Commission for disciple-making. The thesis will be defended exploring the methodology revealed in the evangelistic speeches, emphasizing an approach beneficial to contemporary preaching and unpacking Luke’s Christology revealed in the speeches given by Jesus’ disciples. From this, the author’s conclusion stresses that the Lukan model of making disciples must be based on a conscious decision regarding Jesus’ nature and mission rather than salvific in emphasis ­– forgiveness and going to heaven – as is common in contemporary evangelism. This conclusion is based on the rapid, sustained growth reported by Luke that is duplicatable today.

The Gospels present the historical Jesus in action. He is preaching, teaching, healing, and performing other miracles to demonstrate His authority and right to initiate the Kingdom of God as the worthy Lamb exalted to the right hand of the Father. While the verbs employed by the Gospels depict Jesus as a man of action, Luke moves Him from the historical setting, making Him the subject of the primary speeches spoken by His disciples. Changing from verbs to nouns, Luke focuses the attention on Jesus, promoting the preeminence that Paul declared to be the intent of the Father (Colossians 1:18). With one-third of Acts presented in speeches, “Luke has used the technique of placing Christological conversations in the mouths of key figures at important times throughout the story.” (Walaskay, 37) These conversations promoted explosive growth in the early church, and that growth is duplicatable today.

Thus, the key theological question raised by Luke’s record is: “How does Luke understand disciple-making in light of the Christology revealed in the speeches of Acts?” The answer is found in the evidence from the speeches delivered by followers of Jesus, forming the model for the Christocentric confession of the early church that should be the contemporary model of preaching, forming the basis and practice of Great Commission disciple-making. The focus of this work will be on speeches given to non-believers, demonstrating their approach and content. Thus, the first task is to expose the methodology used to present the Christological Kerygma.

Methodology Revealed in the Evangelistic Speeches

The task of finding a representative statement that epitomizes the commission intensity of Acts would seem daunting even if one chooses from an oft-repeated verse – “you shall be My witnesses …” in 1:8, “No other name …” of 4:12, or the ever-popular, Restoration plea, “Repent and be baptized …” in 2:38. However, as David Peterson remarks, “Luke presents a final summary of the first main section of his book that began with a description of life in the Jerusalem church in 2:42–47,” (Peterson, 227) summarizing growth by “added to the church” (2:47) to “more added to the Lord” showing constant expansion in Jerusalem (5:14). Rick Flanders observes that “The math begins with addition.” Then we read that “the number of the disciples was multiplied (6:1, 7)” (Blomberg, 431). Acts 5:42 provides the transitional key prompting change from addition to multiplication by introducing two terms still employed in contemporary disciple-making – teaching and preaching. How Luke uses these terms reveals part of his methodology. Before unpacking them, it is necessary to identify the issue in the current method of disciple-making.

*The Issue at Hand.* Following Craig Blomberg’s understanding of disciple-making in Matthew’s commission, there is a contemporary view of discipleship described as a “perennially incomplete, life-long task” (431). Disciples are always forming and never reaching. This attitude describes the typical Adult Sunday School class from which no one graduates, suggesting that there may be an unachievable level of knowledge to be a *true* disciple of Jesus.

Further, it is a reasonable assumption that most in church leadership, as well as academia, might agree with this assessment. The multitude of books on the subject strongly suggest you must teach someone to be a disciple. Greg Ogden contends that discipleship is spiritual formation based on the basic practices, core biblical/theological truth, character, and engagement of church and world (iv). The contention is that a disciple must know basic church doctrine, especially that of the group (denomination) to which they belong. Thus, discipling classes emphasize teaching basic doctrines and right living to make disciples (Ogden, iv).

This approach is based on the *save and disciple* method that is the outgrowth of the Great Awakening and the advent of the *being saved* theology revealed in “a liturgical rite which, when performed, grants one assurance that one is a genuine believer. By reciting the ‘sinners’ prayer,’ parents and friends assure you that you are an actual Christian now” (Sanders, 44). Or, as Mont Smith contends that Restorationists “sell remission of sins for a dip in the water” (Smith, “God’s Plan). This type of evangelism has created and duplicated the *sit and worship* believer who seldom becomes involved in ministry and, less seldom, makes a disciple. This is not the pattern in Acts that multiplied believers. Rather, “they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ” (5:42; literally “Jesus the Christ”) that supports making disciples as the point of conversion, not *discipling* after conversion as practiced today. This is supported by the approach illustrated in 5:42 under the terms teaching and preaching, to which this essay now turns.

*Teaching.* Luke’s use of the term teach(*didaskō*) in 5:42, and elsewhere in Acts, reveals instruction in a setting that can be either formal or informal (Louw and Nida, 412). Seldom does the modern-day evangelist employ the idea of teaching non-believers, yet this was the practice of the early church. The primary subject was the person and nature of Jesus, not the sinful nature of the listener or remission of sins.

Twelve of the sixteen times Paul uses the term, the object of teaching is Jesus and the Gospel (4:2, 18; 5:21, 25, 28, 42; 11:26; 15:35; 18:11, 25; 20:20-21; 28:31). Ten of the twelve are evangelistic in nature (4:2, 18; 5:28, 42; 11:26; 15:35; 18:11, 25; 20:20-21; 28:31). Only two imply that the teaching was done in a church setting (homes or temple with believers; 5:21, 25). To reinforce the usage of *teaching* as evangelistic, consider the setting and the content.

**The Setting**

Teaching takes place in two settings – public, in the temple or some common place of public assembly (2:46, 5:20, 5:25, 5:42) and in homes (2:46, 5:42, 20:20). A similar expression occurs in 20:20 where Luke contrasts the public (*dēmosios*) with house to house. In 2:46, the same settings are given, but Luke states that the houses are for fellowship. Considering the use of “and” (καὶ) in 2:42 connecting the teachings to fellowship, it is feasible that they shared the apostles’ doctrine as part of the fellowship. Two of these passages were evangelistic with the stated content of “the whole message of this life” (5:20) and “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (20:20). While the impression of many today is that preaching takes place in a church setting and teaching is something done *after* someone claims salvation, these passages do not support this. Rather, teaching happens before someone is a disciple to convince them of who Jesus is and why He should be followed. Focusing on the death of Christ, as the modern evangelist does, does not make disciples. Rather, it produces *sit and worship* church members.

**Luke’s Idea of Discipleship**

For Luke, as well as in the Gospels, being a disciple is a completed state or condition of being “in Christ.” In this relationship, the disciple is ready to be baptized and taught (the order in Matthew’s commission). Parenthetically, this does not change the purpose of baptism as the disciple now needs to be made clean (remission of sins) and empowered for service (gift of the Holy Spirit). This observation is obvious in the twenty-eight times Luke uses the term disciple as someone capable of being numbered (6:1, 7), form a congregation (6:2), be part of a group, (13:52, 18:27, 20:1) or named individually (16:1). As a verb, teaching (μαθητεύω) is used only once in 14:21 about which Hans Weder correctly states, “This verb characterizes the central quality of existence as a disciple” (Weder, 207 This statement supports the idea that discipleship is not a process. Rather, it is a state in which one enters. While Paul does not use the term disciple, his comparable concept is to be “in” Christ. This graphic demonstrates this principle as given in Matthew’s Commission.

Baptize the disciple

Disciple: Someone Convicted of who Jesus is

**The Containers**

Luke places his theology in *containers* that are general concepts summarizing the specifics of his Christological emphasis focused on the person of Jesus and His ministry. Luke used four containers to reflect his theology:

1. The name of Jesus controlled by ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι where the preposition ἐπὶ signifies the content (4:18; 5:28) (Louw and Nida, 800).
2. The person of Jesus controlled by περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ where the preposition περὶ signifies content as well (18:25; 28:31) (Louw and Nida, 777).
3. The word of the Lord (τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου) as the direct object of teaching and preaching (εὐαγγελιζόμενοι) (15:35) and the word of God (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ) (18:11)
4. “In Jesus” as a catch-all container used to convey the idea of the resurrection of the dead (4:2), literally, “in Jesus the resurrection” for emphasis (Cf. 26:23)” (Conzelmann, 32).

The conclusion drawn is that Luke’s understanding of teaching is the common confession (ὁμολογέω) of who Jesus is and why that should matter. The very same message should be *taught* today, producing believers who want to learn the church teachings and, finding their giftedness, serving the family of God effectively.

Preaching

Teaching is connected to preaching in 5:42 where the first occurrence of εὐαγγελίζω – to preach good news – appears, having Jesus as the object of the message. The term provides a technical, Christological-soteriological meaning with the containers of Jesus (8:35; 17:18), Christ Jesus (5:42), and Lord Jesus (11:20). (Strecker, 69). Donald Hagner confirms that the universal authority of Jesus is the basis of the universal mission of the church (Hagner, 886–887).

Commenting on 5:42, John Polhill visualizes the practices of preaching and teaching in an A-B-B-A chiasm (Polhill, 174), which closely follows the pattern of the Great Commission:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Acts 5:42 | Matthew 28:19-20 |
| A – The Temple – Preaching | The World |
| B – Homes  B – Teaching | Teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:20) |
| A – Preach the Gospel | Making Disciples |

As before, the setting gives a picture of the mission field of the early church.

**The Setting**

Leon Morris gives *“Go”* an imperatival force in Matthew’s commission where “Jesus was commanding his followers to go as well as to make disciples, though the emphasis falls on the making of disciples” (Morris, 746). From the references below, it is obvious that the first disciples took Jesus seriously:

5:42 in the temple and from house to house

8:4 Those scattered from Jerusalem

8:25 Many villages of the Samaritans.

8:35 In a chariot, to the south on the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza (Philip and the eunuch)

8:40 Passing through Azotus, until he came to Caesarea

11:20, 15:35 Antioch

14:6-7 Cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region

16:10 Macedonia

17:18 Athens

These passages are indications of the satisfaction of Luke’s commission in 1:8, with disciples advancing across cultural thresholds. These missionaries that William Larkin states, “must also be theologians,” discover the “true power of the gospel” (Acts 8:4).

**The Containers**

The verb εὐαγγελίζω is used fifteen times in Acts and is associated with different topics (containers):

1. The word (non-specific) (5:41–42; 8:4)
2. Jesus/Lord Jesus (5:12, 25, 35, 40; 10:36–38; 11:20)
3. Word of God (13:32–33; 14:5–7, 15–17, 21–22; 15:35)
4. Jesus and the resurrection (16:10; 17:18) (Bock, 253).

Please note how the content of preaching and teaching parallel each other: number two is like numbers one and two above, numbers three and four are the same. A further example is found in 14:21, connecting preaching the Gospel(εὐαγγελισάμενοί) to making disciples (μαθητεύσαντες), using the conjunction *καὶ* that marks the “sequence of closely related events” (Louw and Nida, 788). Thus, for Luke, a disciple is someone who has made a conscious decision in response to the gospel message that God was in *Christ*, reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19), all according to the Scriptures. The response was to a proclaimed message about Jesus, a common theme in Acts.

**Conception of Proclamation**

Gerhard Friedrich lists twenty-eight different Greek verbs translated by the English *preach*, confessing not only a “poverty of vocabulary, but of the loss of something which was a living reality in primitive Christianity” (Friedrich, 703). Like the two on the road to Emmaus, the early Christians “spoke” the message burnt into their hearts. “We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard” (4:20) declare Peter and John. What they had seen and heard gave them the message – their Christological Kerygma.

**Evangelistic Speeches**

Simon Kistemaker counts twenty-six speeches made by apostles, Christian leaders and non-Christian Jews and Gentiles (Kistemaker, 8), all with a definable structure as the message was the Lord’s and not their own. Hans Conzelmann states that they had “persistent elements in the structure,” including among other elements, a Christological kerygma with scriptural proof (Conzelmann, xliv). Martin Dibelius came to the same conclusion, identifying the kerygma as “Jesus’ life, passion, and resurrection,” typically emphasizing Apostolic witness (Dibelius, 67, 142), which is the same structure Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 15.

The Christological Kerygma

The aim of this research is to present evidence that the speeches in Acts form the model for the Christocentric confession of the early church that should be the contemporary model of preaching. Having examined the methodology of the evangelistic speeches, the topic now turns to the specifics of Luke’s Christology. This must start with Jesus, the heart of the message.

**Jesus, the Heart of the Message**

While this may sound like a given, it raises the question regarding the contemporary, evangelistic message that is focused on the death of Christ and forgiveness. Darrell Bock makes the point well, “If the gospel were only about death for sin … Romans 6, alive to God” (Bock, “Chapel”). The intent of this is to show that discipleship is about the power of the resurrection. Marion Soards emphasis validates Bock’s sentiment by noting that the speeches are about “God’s will and work in terms of Christology” (Soards, 186). It was the Christological kerygma that motivated the rapid expansion, not the pleas for forgiveness and going to heaven that marks the contemporary approach. It is by duplicating the Christological message as closely as possible that the contemporary church will have multiplying results, **producing serving disciples**. Thus, the Christological Kerygma was based on two basic elements – the death and resurrection of Jesus and why He was the only one qualified for this ministry. To validate this, a cursory review of the evangelistic speeches confirms the emphasis on the resurrection. Additionally, it will demonstrate that the focus on the crucifixion was not related to the “sins of the world.” Rather, it tied directly to the sin of the rejection of the Messiah.

**The Message**

An overview of nine speeches (2:14-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 7:2-53; 10:34-43; 13:16-41; 17:22-31; 26:2-23) shows that all accounts reference the resurrection, but the crucifixion is not mentioned in three (7:2-53; 17:22-31; 26:2-23). It would seem natural for Stephen to include it before the Sanhedrin (7:2-53), but he only inferred a resurrection by stating that he sees Jesus at the right hand of God. However, there would be no need to include the method of death in Paul’s discourse in Athens. Rather, he made the resurrection the climax of his message. Additionally, the way Paul presented the message before Agrippa put the emphasis on resurrection because of the appearance of Jesus on the road to Damascus. The manner of death was incidental. Finally, the resurrection received multiple references in some accounts.

How then, does the contemporary evangelist justify beginning with the nature of humanity as sinner and work so diligently toward forgiveness? Bock asks, “Is the gospel about being somewhere for a long time?” His reply, “The gospel is about more than death for sin” (Bock, “Chapel”).

**Death and Sin**

By way of explanation, the relation of the cross to sin is found more often in the writings after Acts. Luke relates sin to the message in five of the nine passages (2:14-36; 3:12-26; 5:29-32; 10:34-43; 13:16-41). In the conversion of Saul, Ananias connects washing away sins to baptism (22:16). In context of the speeches, the sins would be the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus (2:36; 3:17-18; 5:30). Only in 10:43 and 13:38 is sin generic relating to judgment. By count, sin and forgiveness are mentioned only six times and repentance only four, while the resurrection is included twelve times in eight of the accounts and implied in the ninth.

**Conclusion**

It is fitting to bring this journey through Acts to a conclusion. The growth of the church over the first few years was phenomenal. Today, facing a post-church era “celebrated as New Age Apostasy that flourishes in what is known as the Emerging Church” (Hill, 11), the contemporary disciple must revisit the message of the evangelistic speeches and make a major paradigm shift to move the salvific emphasis off the believer and forgiveness of sins and onto Christ Jesus and the resurrection. Such a shift to a Christocentric message requires the application of the Acts pattern for completing the Matthean commission. To do this, the following shifts are mandatory:

1. Focus on the person *on* the cross, not the cross. “We preach Christ, the crucified one” places the emphasis on Jesus as Paul uses the perfect tense of the participle crucified (*estaurōmenon*), indicating that he remains the crucified one (1 Corinthians 1:23) (Garland, 69–70).
2. The emphasis of the message should be on the resurrection and the resulting new creation of which the disciple learns when he is taught all that Jesus commanded.
3. From the sinfulness of the person to the universal authority of Lord Jesus.

This shift will make disciples – disciples committed to Jesus’ lordship, desiring to know and serve.

In closing, consider the judgment of the Sanhedrin regarding Peter and John, “They observed their confidence and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and *began* to recognize them as having been with Jesus” (4:13). Can this be said of the disciples being made today? If not, why? Could it be that the focus on Jesus is missing? So, as the Lord told Paul, “Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you” (Ac 18:9–10a).

**Section 4**

**Gospel Expectations**

Prompted by the decline and closing of churches, Using the biblical Gospel in contemporary preaching promotes a renewal of disciple-making based on the concepts the King Jesus Gospel. Focusing on the initial interactions between Jesus and His first disciples, the four Gospels are examined to determine if they provide the model for the disciple Jesus intended when He gave the commissions recorded in the Synoptics. The investigation centers on the person and nature of Jesus, giving evidence that it does matter who the master is as only Jesus is qualified to receive that honor. This quest is strengthened with what it means to ask, “If Jesus is Lord.” The evidence comes together with the examination of discipleship in the mid-section of Mark (chapters 8, 9, and 10), drawing the conclusion that the foundation of discipleship is Jesus who is also able to claim ownership as the disciple is ransomed to serve King Jesus, who paid the price.

A picture containing text

Description automatically generated

Section 4 moves back to the Gospel accounts of Jesus to examine His expectations for His disciples. The command to “Go and make” (Matthew 28:19) sets the expectations that Jesus not only gave a reason to go (“all authority has been given” gives Him the right to command), but also what to do when we go.

**Discipleship Across the Gospels**

Christian leaders in churches and the academia should be painfully aware of the decline in church membership in the last decade (Pew). Church plants are not keeping up with church doors closing. Thus, there is no greater need today than that of dedicated leaders and devoted disciples. The latter is the focus of this article and should be at the heart of every concerned Christian and academic, based on the commission given by Lord Jesus as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, where Matthew’s *go and make* is reinforced by Mark and Luke’s *proclamation of good news* (Mark 1:1; Luke 24:46-48)*.* The growth of the church recorded in Acts, and Paul’s summary statement of the transformation into a new creation that is appointed an Ambassador for Christ demonstrate a duplicatable potential and power available in this post-church era. Since the Day of Pentecost, there has been no greater need for true disciples.

Thus, the key, theological question raised regarding discipleship is: “Do the Gospels provide the model for the disciple Jesus intended when He gave the commissions recorded in the Synoptics?” The answer is found by a synopsis of “Discipleship Across the Gospels.” Questions that naturally emerge are: 1) Where did Jesus place the emphasis in discipleship? 2) What common concepts are shared by the four gospels? 3) What is the single motivation used by Lord Jesus as the foundation for the commissions given and how should that inform the making of disciples today?

It Matters Who the Master Is

The first question identifies the foundation of discipleship and will be developed under the heading of “It Matters Who the Master Is.” The notion of who is leading should be obvious, yet it is more often assumed and seldom discussed with the passion required to establish it as the fundamental foundation. The shift to this foundation mandates a church-wide change in basic assumptions to deliver a gospel focused more on Jesus and less on salvation and forgiveness, producing a serving disciple rather than a *sit and worship* church member. As Darrell Bock states, “The gospel is about more than death for sin” (Bock, “Chapel”). It is about the only one who is qualified to initiate God’s Kingdom on earth, establishing the church as the Father’s client agent until King Jesus returns.

*His Master’s Voice.* In the 1950’s, various companies making gramophone and recording devices used a painting from the late 19th century called “His Master’s Voice.” The painter had “the hilarious idea of painting Nipper (the Jack Russel in the painting) on canvas, depicting him as absolutely confounded and wondering how the sounds could be coming out of the unusual object” (Smithfield, “His Master's Voice”). Yet, the message of the advertiser was loud and clear – Nipper could not distinguish the difference between the recording and his master. This reminds one of Jesus’ statement, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:27). George Beasley correctly identifies the emphasis falling “on the Shepherd’s calling and establishing a relationship with the sheep” (Beasley-Murray, 174).

The relationship with His first followers was initiated by Jesus Himself. These who were to become his Apostles (discipleship precedes giftedness and ministry) had the privilege of a face-to-face invitation from Jesus. Nolland rightly contends that the “discipleship of the Twelve, though unique and unrepeatable, embodies patterns of discipleship which are of a more general relevance” (Nolland, 1265).

The invitation had a single intent – fall in behind Jesus as He was on a mission. Based on the accounts of the first call to discipleship in the Gospels, this question must be answered, “Why would they respond to this call?” They were on the front side of the empty tomb, yet the reason was obvious, and that same reason should still prompt someone to follow Jesus today. That reason – the same conclusion Thomas drew when confronted with the resurrected Jesus – “My Lord and My God” (John 20:27). This gives Jesus the authority to say, “Follow Me.”

*Follow Me.* All four gospels record Jesus’ initial encounter with Peter and Andrew. Matthew and Mark describe a simple picture of Jesus walking along the beach, asking two men to come with him (Matthew 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20). However, Luke and John offer more dramatic accounts (Luke 5:1–11; John 1:35–51). Seen together, these four witnesses present a leave/follow model that is repeatable in the contemporary church.

The concept of following is expressed in two ways in the four accounts. Matthew and Mark use an adverb (δεῦτε) to support the main verb of making them fishers of men. This adverb is used to exhort or incite and is normally followed by an imperative or aorist subjunctive (Mounce, 291). However, Matthew and Mark use a future tense to indicate progression. Louw and Nida group this adverb under “spacial extensions,” marking movement in a specified direction (Louw and Nida, 722), which, in this case, is the future work of fishing for men, that is, making disciples. The summary statement of *follow* appears in all four Gospels using the aorist, active, indicative – punctiliar aorist – indicating the moment a conscious decision was made (Matthew 4:22; Mark 1:18; Luke 5:11; John 1:37). In each case, there was a linguistic emphasis on leaving and following.

**Leaving.** Leaving was not without cost. Mark, in his typical, simple manner, states they left nets (1:18). Matthew adds value by stating the loss of the family business (4:22). Finally, Luke declares that they left *everything* (5:11)*!* In these and John’s report, the aorist active participle was used to express the leaving and hearing that prompted leaving, which John’s context required (John 1:37). A. T. Robertson supports the idea that it was the aorist active participle that “made the participle so powerful in Greek” (Robertson, 1098). The participle in this form reveals the idea of an expressed nature. Leaving was the indication of a paradigm shift regarding their life’s calling (Guelich, 51). Bill Hull confirms the need for this conscious decision as being “at the heart of the transformational process” (Hull, 63).

Jesus had come to do the will of the Father (Hebrews 10:7). His mission of serving the Father by initiating his kingdom through preaching and teaching would need faithful servants to continue this task after he returns to take His rightful place at the Father’s side. Now that the kingdom has come, it is required of the disciple to drop everything, “because entering the kingdom is more important than even life itself (Mark 8:36)” (Stein, 79).

**Following.** Nolland rightly contends that “The abruptness of the call is matched by the immediacy of the following. Following Jesus involved the abandonment without delay of their lifestyle and material possessions: the call of Jesus is totally disruptive” (Nolland, 179). The disruption was not the end of the story. Rather, the drama unfolds with a leave/follow scenario that establishes Jesus’ first followers.

The “come after”/follow portrayals graphically illustrates a “follow the leader” commitment (Guelich, 50–51). Early in Mark, Peter comes after Jesus. However, the scene changes when Jesus is ready for Jerusalem and suffering, the hour for which He came (John 12:27). Here, Peter moves in front of Jesus, taking the lead by rebuking Him (Mark 8:32). Jesus’ response was to put Peter back in place, “Get behind Me.” The reason was clear. “You are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s” (Mark 8:33). The shift in perspective was the result of a shift in purpose. A similar modification in contemporary outreach redefined *making disciples,* moving it from making the conscious decision to serve King Jesus to the comfort of *sit and worship* Christianity. The former is God’s interest while the latter belongs to humanity. The same, stern response from Jesus creates the desired change in thinking – “Get behind me.” This knee jerk reaction by Jesus gives evidence of His authority, asking Peter, “If I am Lord, then who are you?”

**If Jesus is Lord.** The question of Lordship asks the average *sit and worship* church member what Jesus should mean to them. To facilitate a master/slave response, consider Francis Chan’s insight that prompts some important “**if**” questions, “…we don’t get to write our own job description. **If** Jesus is Lord, then He sets the agenda. **If** Jesus Christ is Lord, then your life belongs to Him” (Chan, 216-217). Thus, the solid rock on which discipleship stands is in the *who*, not the what you may learn or know.

Jesus **is** the *why* of discipleship*,* but it is more complex than just saying He is Lord. We know that saying this is not enough (Matthew 7:21). Rather, discipleship is a decision, a commitment that determines the reason for being a disciple in the first place. Like Jesus who emptied Himself to take the form of a bondservant and become obedient by dying on a cross (Philippians 2:7-8), the decision must be made to empty one’s self and take the form of a bondservant to King Jesus, who is the prototype disciple for whom emptying and humbling were the driving forces in taking up His cross. No less is expected of the Christian today.

The Gospel accounts being considered offer three insights into creating this driving force in someone who has yet to commit to Lord Jesus. As should be evident, this perspective puts disciple-making at the point of sharing the Gospel not after the salvific experience as practiced in the contemporary church. Albert Einstein once said, *“doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results is the definition of insanity* (quoted author’s emphasis) (Einstein, qtd. In Renee Delgado-Riley). Thus, Einstein would call the contemporary church insane for continually repeating a process that results in churches closing their doors.

This shift in practice must turn back to the New Testament, especially as revealed in the Gospels and Acts. The epicenter of discipleship is Jesus, not the believer. Believer orientation evangelism focuses on forgiveness and salvation. New Testament evangelism focused on the person and nature of Jesus. It does matter *who* was on the cross.

**If I am Lifted Up.** In John Stott’s emphasis on the uniqueness of Jesus’ claims, he states:

He spoke like a megalomaniac, but he was the most balanced and modest of human beings. His teaching was fundamentally self-centered – I, I, I; me, me, me – but he was absolutely unselfcentered and gave himself away in the self-sacrificial service of others. He made himself the central figure on the Judgment Day and then got on his hands and knees and washed his Apostles feet (“Is Jesus Veritas”).

Now, sitting at the right of the Father, Jesus’ call to become a disciple extends through His Ambassadors when we exalt Jesus. Only then will people be drawn to Jesus (John 12:32).

Looking again into the call of the first disciples, two common traits are evident in the making of disciples. These are the testimony of others as well as Jesus Himself and the miracle Jesus performed. To begin, consideration will be given to the testimony of John the Baptist and Andrew, Peter’s brother. Both are from John’s account.

Testimony

Supporting the prologue of the nature of Jesus, John puts high Christological statements on the lips of others (1:29, 34, 36, 41, 45, 49). Thus, “the confessions provide a credible motive why these men would make the dramatic decision to leave everything behind to follow Jesus” (Köstenberger, 72). The response to the “Behold, the Lamb of God” statement would be understood in the light of John as only the forerunner of the anticipated Messiah. From his response, Andrew appeared to understand that the Baptist intended to send them to the someone else (Carson, 154).

Andrew’s response indicated some type of messianic expectations, which is not the case today. People are not looking for someone to rescue them. The American identity of self-worth stands against the need for any type of messianic figure intent on changing their status quo. Science offers answers that are comfortable as they eliminate the need for a God, judge, or supreme entity. No God mandates self-rule, commonly known as relativism. As Lincoln confesses, “the messianic conviction can be taken for granted” (Lincoln, 118).

Andrew stood outside the norm and not only readily accepted but acknowledged Jesus by the proclamation to his brother, Peter, “We have found the Messiah.” So strong was this conviction in Andrew that when John mentions him, he is always giving testimony of Jesus (6:8; 12:22) (Köstenberger, 77.). John includes another example of this type of testimony with the woman of Samaria who insists that her neighbors “Come, see a man who told me all the things that I *have* done” (4:29). John uses the same adverb here indicating that the woman was coming after Jesus. Come was controlled by the verb “see,” an aorist, active imperative. Insight into her life, the prophetic language: “a time is coming,” and the assertion that “salvation is from the Jews” seems to confirm her conviction of Jesus’ messianic nature (Köstenberger, 155-156). However, contemporary evangelism does not focus on the person and nature of Jesus. Rather, using a believer-oriented approach of having a home in heaven, being a sinner, or Jesus lifting burdens, the offering is an answer to life’s problems. Jesus *is* the answer, but they have the wrong question. The question is not “What must *I do* to be saved?” Rather, the question should be “Who is this Jesus and *what should that mean to me.*”

*Words and Works.* In addition to the testimony of others, Jesus Himself offers evidence as to why they should leave and follow. Luke records two activities of Jesus that confirm Andrew’s messianic message. Robert Stein contends that Luke’s intent is to demonstrate Jesus’ nature (Stein, 170–171). The first is His authority in teaching and the second, His power over creation.

Jesus uses Peter’s boat as his pulpit to speak to the crowds. While Luke does not give the details of the lesson, it is feasible that something Jesus said convinced Peter to go against his judgment as an experienced fisherman and his human weakness, being tired from working all night. Peter complies to Jesus’ request, calling Him *Master,* a term used in the New Testament only by Luke (5:5; 8:24, 45; 9:33, 49; 17:13), principally in miracle stories and typically by someone addressing Jesus (Grimm, 37). Stein confirms this by noting that the *someone* was a disciple (Stein, 169). Luke adds further confirmation to Peter’s assessment of Jesus by his response to the miracle where Jesus shows control over nature. Seeing this miracle, Luke changes the title to “‘Lord’ (5:8), acknowledging his own human frailty and sinfulness (Stein, 171).

Moving from this first account into the Gospels, the disciple is soon confronted by the reality of Jesus’ intentions and ultimate hour for which he came (John 12:27). That hour involved a cross – a challenge to every disciple, forming the focus of discipleship.

The Focus of Discipleship

Every believer must be a cross-carrying disciple who is a blood-bound bondservant to King Jesus. This is discipleship *DNA,* taken from the prototype disciple, Jesus, and best realized in Jesus’ statements in Mark 8, 9, and 10 that require a *cross-bearing* attitude and commitment.

*His Imminent Passion*. “He began to teach …” (Mark 8:31) is Mark’s time marker, designating that Jesus’ intentions were set, and His course determined. He was going to Jerusalem to die! Brooks ties the *new* teaching to the reason the disciples *did not have a clue* about Jesus’ identity. He contends that they were not “ready to proclaim Jesus as the Christ. He had to die first” (Brooks, 136). Mark 8:31 gives the first of three predictions, each using different wording, but all including the core elements of the passion – death and resurrection. Having set this backdrop, Mark reveals exchanges between Jesus and the disciples, giving insight into being a cross-bearing disciple.

*Set their Mind on God’s Interests (Mark 8:31-38).* This passage has the exchanged reference previously where Jesus commanded Peter to get back in line. Like Jesus, disciples must focus on the will of God that mandates the death of Jesus and cross-carrying disciples. In this, Mark insists that a *disciple must deny himself before he can put his mind on God’s interests*. This proposal is in the language of obligation (*must*) with the expectation that the disciple will respond positively to the intended purpose.

Cross-bearing is not just an inconvenience, it is a sacrifice. Cross-bearing is the passion to give Jesus everything He needs to advance the kingdom. “Such ‘self-denial’ is on a different level altogether from giving up chocolates for Lent. ‘It is not the denial of something to the self, but the denial of the self itself’” (France, 340).

*Be Last and Servant of All (Mark 9:30-37).* The next exchange built on Jesus’ announcement of His self-sacrifice deals with the attitude of the disciple (Brooks, 4). Jesus’ disciples must learn that “in the kingdom ordinary human values are reversed” (Edwards, 256). Edwards suggest that cross-bearing requires taking the journey with Jesus on “the road of humiliation to Jerusalem” (Edwards, 287). Before anyone can pick up a cross, they must put their own interests away and walk the path of self-denial that was at the heart of the first conversation about Jesus’ death and resurrection (8:34). Following Jesus to get to heaven is focused on self-interest, not doing the will of the Father. Whereas cross-bearing sets the mind on God's interest.

Discipleship is about *being* a follower of Jesus. The idea of *being* means the disciple devotes themselves completely to Jesus by incorporating His nature and Spirit into their lives. Jesus is clear that humility produces a *servant mentality* that is not thinking less of yourself but thinking about yourself less.

*Be Able to Drink the Cup that Jesus Drank (Mark 10:32-45).* Jesus’ final trial uses His own motivation to serve as the standard for His disciples. His willingness to offer Himself challenges His followers to be willing to “drink the cup Jesus drank” (10:38). By this, Jesus is asking them to pick up crosses, take bullets, or whatever phrase that speaks to total commitment. As with the second prediction when Jesus added the betrayal (handing over), He adds some very descriptive forms of torture and humiliation – mocking, spitting upon, and scourging, asking if they are willing to suffer the same.

It is now necessary to bring this to a close. Mark’s conclusion is the most appropriate. “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (10:45).

Conclusion

Being convinced of the person and nature of Jesus is the foundation of discipleship. Nowhere is this more evident than in the picture of ownership the Gospels paint with the image of ransom. This picture conjures up the notion of a slave sold on the open market. “Who gives me five, no, make it six for this fine specimen of a slave. He is strong, works hard and can be left alone to finish a job. You will get your money’s worth with this one. Who will give me five?” Jesus steps forward, lifts both hands to His side, crying, “I will pay the price.” Jesus sacrifices all He is for this slave, bringing him into His kingdom.

Now, what to do with this ransomed person. Does Jesus free him to go his way? May it never be! Jesus does free him from the bondage of the tyrant who had enslaved this person. However, His intent is to make them His servant, designed (gifted) for kingdom work. **This is a disciple**! It is a slave freed from the tyranny of the fear of death (Hebrews 2:15), transferred into the kingdom of the Beloved Son (Colossians 1:15), bought with a price and is now a *living sacrifice* fully devoted to his Lord. **This is a disciple**! Now, teach the slave how to please his master.

Postscript

A Final Word

My prayer is that the Spirit of the Lord Jesus will motivate the love of Christ in you to respond positively to what I believe to be Spirit-led writing. My goal is to motivate you with the controlling love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14). The term “control” in the NASB95 holds the double idea of control and restraint – positive and negative. The negative can be understood like the railing at Niagara Falls, Canada side. You can climb over it and not fall, but the safest place is on the side opposite the cliff. In the same way, the love of Christ tells us to stay close to Him. Paul uses the concept of “in” to portray the fence. Being “in Christ” sets a boundary where, if we stay within it, we are close to the heart of King Jesus. The Colossians were told that they were transferred into the kingdom of the Beloved Son. This was the redemptive process by which we changed allegiance (Colossians 1:13-14). To be transferred, we must become disciples of King Jesus. Paul connects this to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in Romans 6. He gives the *teaching* to which we are united, freeing us from sin based on our death *with* Christ. Verse 9 picks up ne language with the idea of a *master.* He uses a verb form of lord (*kyrios*). He continues this with the concept of reigning (6:12, 14) and slaves (6:16). In verse sixteen, Paul gives the option of “either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness,” and then thanks God that they were obedient. This option is present by Paul to the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 1:8) and by Peter (1 Peter 4:17). In both instances, there is a negative consequence for the lack of obedience. However, this raises an important question. How do we obey the Gospel.

A waterfall with a bridge in the background

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Obey the Gospel

The term used by Paul involves paying attention to what was heard. Obviously, for Paul, it was the Gospel that was heard (Colossians 1:5, 23). Since Paul’s Gospel was the message of Jesus, how do you obey the message? In Roman 6:17, obedience is to the “form” of the teaching. Schunack, Louw and Nida indicate that the word used by Paul was the idea of a model or pattern (Schunack, 372; Louw and Nida, 591). Peter used a different term. His term reflected the attitude or decision to submit to an authority (Louw and Nida, 467). In either case, the idea is clear. There is something that must be done that was part of the message and to refuse is to disobey. To determine what Paul meant, we have to discover what teaching he was referencing to which there is a form that can be obeyed.

Paul identified the teaching as the death, burial, and resurrection. THIS IS THE GOSPEL! This has been shown and is without a doubt. Thus, for Paul, obedience is the only form that has been given to humanity that is a passive act so that there can be no human claim to accomplishment other than submitting. That form is baptism. That water is understood can be seen in the book of Acts where someone baptized (dipped or plunged) someone. The Ethiopian made it clear that preaching Jesus relates to water baptism. “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized? (Acts 8:36). Spirit baptism is under extraordinary circumstances and not something in which everyone participated. Here is a version of the extremely popular graphic for obedience to the form:

This graphic depicts the elements of faith and obedience as obedience that is not of faith is mere religions action that does not “bury you with Him” (Romans 6:4), unite with Him (Romans 6:5), or be raised like Him (Romans 6:5). “From the heart” commitment is made. This is Paul’s way of talking about becoming a disciple of King Jesus. While Paul does not use the term for disciple, he digs deeply into what it means. It is found in his concepts of faithfulness and commitment. The term used to reflect commitment portrays Paul’s understanding of redemption. He knows from the Hebrew experience that redemption is a change of ownership. As Israel was delivered from non-status slavery in Egypt to servants of the Most Holy God (Leviticus 25:25), so we are freed from the fear of death that held us subject to slavery all our lives (Hebrews 2:15).

*En passant*

In the game of chess, there is an interesting move that the weakest piece on the board can perform. The pawn typically captures its opponent by moving diagonally (Figure 1). If the opposing pawn takes advantage of the two space first move, it may by-pass the opponent, seeming to avoid capture (Figure 2). However, if the second player chooses to capture the pawn that passed by it performs *en passant*, making the diagonal move as if their opponent was in the first spot (Figure 3).

A screenshot of a game

Description automatically generated with medium confidence A screenshot of a game

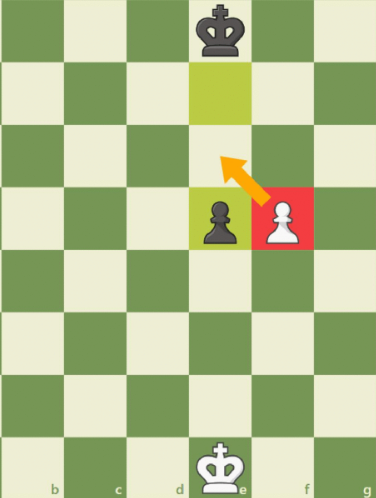
Description automatically generated with medium confidence 

Figure 1 Figure 2 Figure 3

This illustrates what obedience to the form of the teaching does for the disciple. Rather than being the focus of the Gospel, our baptism is *en passant* to servanthood. Paul impresses this on Titus, Jesus “gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds (2:14). Paul is telling the Romans, Titus, and us that the Gospel about Jesus is designed to make a people of His own choosing who are clean enough to serve him.

I authored the following article in 2014. As I was thinking through this paper, I had dated my own shift in thinking on this from the tradition salvation gospel to the biblical gospel back about five years. This article indicates that the shift was already taking place.

Introduction

Armed with the directness of Acts 2:38 during a time of religious fervor that took the form of revivalism, the Restoration Movement was born[[1]](#footnote-2). The significance of this is witnessed at Alexander Campbell’s baptism when he quoted this verse (Highers), giving direction to Elder Luce to perform the ceremony precisely according to the pattern given in the New Testament (Richardson). While the revival spirit may (debatably) not be as strong today, the cry of baptism for remission of sins has weakened little in most Restoration Churches today.

However, this emphasis has been so strong that our message has come across to some as “selling remission of sins for a dip in the water” (Smith, “State of the Adopted”). That is, the significance of baptism seems focused on and limited to this single aspect (remission of sins) so that the primary concern often appears narcissistic. The narrow vision of salvation, freedom from sin and guilt and the promise of eternal life, become the focus. While Galatians 3:27 and Romans 6 are often cited to support arguments for the essential nature of baptism, the significance of these and other baptismal references are not considered with their intended focus. Thus, the accusation that salvation is sold for a bath may not be too ill-conceived.

Proposition

The intent of this article is to show that Peter’s message is better understood from a Hebrew perspective regarding repentance and sin, rather than from the introspective consciousness of the west[[2]](#footnote-3) that drives the contemporary hearer to find in Peter’s message a relief for a guilty conscience. The methodology used will be to survey the Jewish heritage of Peter’s audience (and his own heritage) and then examine his message to determine if this heritage is present. This serves as the theological foundation on which Peter builds his call to repentance.

Jewish Heritage

Peter, as a Jew from Galilee (Mark 1:16; Luke 5:2–3; John 21:3), knew something of his own heritage (Matthew 17:4, Mark 9:5, Luke 9:33; Mark 8:29, Luke 9:20[[3]](#footnote-4); Acts 2:16, 29). Having been given the keys to the kingdom (Matthew 16:19) and the ministry to the circumcised (Galatians 2:7-8), Peter becomes the primary speaker for the first gospel presentation on the day of Pentecost. Speaking to a Jewish audience, Peter would certainly have assumed a certain level of understanding on the part of his audience.[[4]](#footnote-5) Sanders insists that the everyday Jew (as today, most would assume the same for our *average* church member) would understand certain base elements of their religious heritage. At the core, the agreement “depends on two figures: Abraham and Moses. God chose Abraham and his descendants and later he gave them the law, requiring obedience of the elect” (Sanders, 13). If Peter’s audience was made up of the common Jew, then they may have agreed on the following:

1. Believed in and worshipped the God of Israel
2. Accepted the Hebrew Bible (often in translation)
3. Observed most aspects of the Mosaic Law
4. Identified themselves with the history and fate of the Jewish people (Sanders, 18)

While Luke’s audience was culturally diverse (Acts 2:8-11 provides a list of the various birth locations), they shared one thing in common—the synagogue. Levine describes the various physical differences in the synagogue in various areas but concludes that the single desire was to maintain their Jewish identity while integrating fully into their residential culture (Levine, 45). Thus, it would seem natural to conclude that Peter’s audience would use a Jewish filter when listening to the first gospel message.

*Luke’s Jewish Emphasis in Acts.* Luke’s account in Acts picks up where he left off in his Gospel, where, in his commission of 24:47, he states that repentance would be preached to the world, beginning in Jerusalem. Why? It was Israel’s message, belonging to priests, scribes, city, and country Jews. This would mimic the rabbis who later would quote Isaiah regarding the law going out from Zion (2:3). We will see Luke following this pattern, citing Peter who speaks to the *all the house of Israel* and, along with the apostle Paul who, while not recognizing human authority, still showed a deep respect for the Jerusalem church (Skarsaune, 147-148). Following Peter in the book of Acts, his second speech was at the temple where he proclaimed repentance with the additional concept of return. Paul uses this term twice in 26:17-20 where the message is based on the resurrected Jesus and his mission to Jew and Gentile.

Thus, it should be obvious that Luke intends that contemporary readers hear Peter’s message, and later the message of Paul, within the same context as the Jerusalem audience. What is that context? As noted above, all Jews of that day would be familiar with the tradition as recorded in their sacred writings. This means that they would be familiar with Genesis 1 – 11, which sets the stage for the covenant with Abraham and the ultimate appearance of the promised seed, who according to Paul in Galatians is Jesus. For this reason, it is necessary that we explore these chapters, often called pre-history in that it is a timeless narrative that gives meaning to Genesis 12 and the call of Abraham.

*Genesis 1-11 as Foundation.* Brueggemann explains that the pre-history (Genesis 1-11) is often stereotyped and thus, misunderstood. Rather, he insists, “These chapters embody a peculiar and perceptive intellectual tradition…discerned that all other philosophical and political questions (meaning and power) are subordinated to this fundamental issue of the relation of the creator to the creation” (Brueggemann, 11-12). He further explains that there are two principals at work in this. First, there is purpose and will for creation and, second, creation exists only for this purpose (Brueggemann, 13). The literary form used for this has little historical particularity. Brueggemann further notes that with minor exception regarding specific people in chapter 10, there is not “concrete identification of historical persons, groups, movements, or institutions” (Brueggemann, 11). von Rad supports this idea by when he insists that Genesis 1-2 is about salvation and election. He connects this with the Abrahamitic covenant and Sinai. Regarding this, he concludes that this, “points the course that God took with the world until he called Abraham and formed the community...Israel looked back in faith from her own election to the creation of the world” (von Rad, 45-46). Rashi, the Jewish scholar of the late 11th century, maintains that the creation account is there to confirm that the world was created for the sake of the Torah and for Israel (*Pentateuch with Targum*).

*Disruption of Unity.* However, the narrative moves very quickly from creation out of chaos to the disruption of the created order via the deception of Eve (cf. 1 Timothy 2:14) that elevated created humanity to be like God, having the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:5, 22). In possession of this knowledge, they have moved from the innocence of being naked and shameless to hiding because they did not want God to see their nakedness. With the unity and fellowship disrupted, man is now in need of redemption. Thus, God sets in order his will to release humanity from the disruptive world to which he now belongs. God drives him from the tree of life, securing his mortal destiny, living out his days responsible for this new found knowledge.

It is worth noting that man as depraved (Calvin) or stained (Augustine) is not the Jewish perspective. Man has a balanced knowledge of *both* good and evil. He is like God. The image of God in which humanity was made now co-habitats with an evil inclination (Genesis 8:21) (*Jewish Bible*).

*Uncreation to New Creation.* Placing the flood account at the center of the pre-history puts it in a position counter to the creation, depicting a new creation. Brueggemann pictures this as creation/uncreation/new creation (Brueggemann, 21). Recognizing that the flood narrative depicts a truism of Israel as well, he concludes that the premise agenda of this narrative is the “essential fracture” of creator and creation. Creation was called into covenant with God only to fracture it by trying to attain a god-like stature to enhance the image of God in them (Brueggemann, 73-74). At the core is human irresponsibility with divine knowledge. For this, God brings judgment on humanity, a cleansing that designed to recreate the individual and give a fresh start from which the disciple accesses divine knowledge (Spirit-led).

*Further Disunity.* As the saga continues, this is not the case. Rather than finding unity with God after the uncreation/new creation, humanity develops cultural diversity based on language and location. This is visualized in chapters 10-11 with the separation of the sons of Noah and the tower of Babel. Both chapters deal with the same topic—formation of culture—supporting the idea that these two chapters do not represent linear flow. Rather, they are two versions of the same idea. They enhance the picture of division and diversity. Speiser supports this by concluding that the story of Babel is a “means of explaining the multiplicity of languages throughout the world” (Speiser, 76). In addition to the idea of culture, both the table of nations and tower pericope emphasize the theme of dispersal (Mathews).

The whole of the Genesis account is to show the desired unity of creation—unity of the Sovereign God who is creator with the creature. Brueggemann will move beyond the traditional view that the Hebrew understanding of the image of God in man is primary to that of the bond between Sovereignty and obedience, human freedom, and the balance between these two (Brueggemann, 451-459). Man with uncontrolled knowledge has created an imbalance between a sovereign God and obedience. With Noah as with Adam, all humanity is named from one individual, indicating this divine plan (Foot, 445-446). Genesis 11 has man using his knowledge to make his own plan. Brueggemann will insist that “God is the One about whom Israel speaks” (117). When humanity turns its speech to making its own name, God is displeased and further divides humanity not only by location but now by language.

This is an essential element of the narrative. Pre-history demonstrates the exodus motif by having man go into a land not his own, waiting for God to restore him. The unity of the created order has now gone farther into disunity.

*Exodus Motif—Out of Disunity.* As a precursor to the exodus account as the central historical marker for the new culture, God calls Abraham out of the disunity of cultural development. A man of culture elected to the primal position of Father of the promised son whose grandchildren will head the tribes of Israel, a new culture ordained by God for his purpose. Out of diversity has come unity, unity in a promised son. This unity is based on a covenant through which God will restore the lost fellowship, reinstating humanity to a position of honor as children of God. Speiser catches the spirit of this well when he states that the introduction of Abraham begins an integral history of a particular group in juxtaposition to the whole of humanity divided by culture (Speiser, 87). Abraham separates himself at God’s bequest to form yet another culture. However, in this cultural heritage will arise a Son who will be a blessing to the nations.

On the far side of the flood, God rejects annihilation as the means to accomplish this reformation and graciously chooses a more vulnerable, long-term engagement, working from within the very life of the world itself…God makes a gracious, unconditional commitment to stay with the world, come what may in the wake of human sinfulness. And that commitment shortly becomes evident in a new divine strategy to work through one family to save and bless all families (Birch et al., 58).

Before this nation can be blessed, they must go through the symbolic dispersal, exodus, and return to the Promised Land. Thus, the Exodus finds full meaning at Sinai, Israel is born and commissioned to be the light of the Gentiles. Isaiah connects this to the created order, instructing Israel in 49:6 that they are called in Righteousness, with a binding covenant. This call is a commission to be bearers of light so that God’s salvation would reach the ends of the earth. The light they would bear would be Torah, God’s Word. Israel’s responsibility is made abundantly clear in chapters 40-55 of Isaiah. They are responsible to show God’s light to the world, even in exile. However, “Israel did not respond to Yahweh’s goodness adequately nor to Yahweh’s command faithfully, and thereby Israel jeopardized its existence in the world” (Brueggemann, 433-4).

*Israel’s Failure.* Israel had failed. Rather than being a light to the world, they felt themselves elite, special, and possessive of their gift of the Law. Thus, instead of being a city on a hill, they hid their light, encapsulated in their own pride. Their pride was in the very gift that they were to give to others—Torah! Since they failed, does this nullify God’s covenant? May it never be!

“If God is going to bless the world through Israel and they have failed, where will he find a faithful Israelite” (Wright, 839), who will fully satisfy his mandate regarding Israel as light bearer. The Gospels give witness to the reality of this in Jesus who, rather than just being a light bearer, is the light! He is lifted by means of a cross so that humanity may be drawn to the light. In him was life and the life was the Light of men (John 1:4). Then, in the fashion of Greek drama, the great reversal reveals a martyred prophet who has defeated death, validated by the resurrection as God’s Messiah and the Promised Son whose venture is put into the hands of a small band of Jews empowered by the faithfulness of the Messiah to fulfil covenant.

The Pentecost Sermon

This provides a segue back to the Pentecost sermon in which Peter skillfully convinces his Jewish audience that they had killed God’s Messiah, the faithful Israelite who is the redefinition of the idea of election first revealed in Israel (Wright, 869). Brueggemann makes this same Christological connection with Ephesians 1:9-10 and the summing up of all things in Christ, those things in heaven and on earth (Brueggemann. *Genesis*, 18). With this backdrop, Peter’s command to repent takes on new meaning. Understanding repentance as a change of mind (GK. *metanoia*; lit. with (*meta*) the mind (*nοια*), thus, to change your mind), Peter is demanding that his audience evaluate God’s redefinition of covenant election in the Messiah that they not only rejected but killed! While the *Jewish Annotated New Testament* maintains that the reference to repentance is general (Levine and Brettler, 203), Polhill understands the audience response to Peter called as “the complete turnabout that comprises true repentance, to turn away *from their rejection of the Messiah* (emphasis mine) and to call upon his name” (Polhill, 117).

However, the Western culture will read Peter’s statement of the remission of sins as a reference to human consciousness just as they do Paul who is “hailed as a hero of the introspective conscience, wrestling with inner sin and guilt” (Stendahl, 78-79). In this, and as is evident in the revivalism and our own Restoration Movement, the emphasis becomes soteriological, focusing on freedom from guilt and the heavenly vision. This was far from what Peter intended with his plea for repentance and far from the New Testament understanding.

*Jewish Heritage and the Sermon.* First, consider what the idea of a sinner held for the first century Jew. What was the collective memory of Peter’s audience? When Peter demands the repentance, what concept of sin would they understand that would demand repentance? To grasp this, consider the following that may have been the thought of the common Jew. That is, the Jew in Peter’s audience.

Brueggemann reports that sin is a distortion or violation of that proper ordering of creatureliness through a refusal to be dependent and responsive (Brueggemann. *Reverberations*, 196). This concept relates specifically to the Adamic attitude that leads to the transgression and expulsion from the garden. Additionally, the Talmud will insist that all generations are affected by the sin of the Golden Calf built by Aaron when Moses was on the mountain. The people said to Aaron, “Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him” (Cohen, 96). The people rejected God’s messenger, just as Peter’s audience had rejected his Messiah.[[5]](#footnote-6) Cohen will summarize sin in the Rabbinic[[6]](#footnote-7) mind as “nothing more or less than rebellion against God…an act of revolt against the divine will” (Cohen, 96). Further, Brueggemann will define sin as deficit, failure, or mistake (*stumble*), as resistance and rebellion (*wander*), and as moral violation (*miss the mark*) (Brueggemann. *Reverberations*, 195). Additionally, Eichrodt encapsulates Israel’s internal despair, describing it as “at bottom a wanton jeopardization, nay, dissolution” of their relationship with God as summed up by Hosea as the sin of ingratitude (Hosea 2:10ff, 15; 4:1; 5:4; 9:17; 13:6) (Eichrodt. Vol. 1, 375).

Jesus confirms this by referring to himself as the rejected stone (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10). According to Mark, he is specific in identifying the leaders (elders, chief priests and scribes) as those who reject him (8:31). Luke then takes this one step further, reflecting on the sin of the Golden Calf by stating that when he is rejected, it is actually God that is rejected (10:16; cf. John 12:48). Peter will point the finger directly at his audience and declare, “Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God… you nailed to a cross...and put *Him* to death…this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:23, 36). They were guilty of absolute rejection! This was a greater rejection than building a Golden Calf; they rejected the Lamb of God.

Recalling how classical artist were accustomed to using conventional features of their day to represent ideas from lands unvisited, Cadbury concludes that many treat the Bible with the same anachronistic manner. He contends that it is not their aim to always be true to the setting. Rather, it has practical objectives and is seldom unconscious, unobtrusive, or inoffensive (3). Bird writes on the peril of modernizing Jesus, which he defines as “the process whereby the portrait of Jesus drawn by an author more readily reflects and represents the beliefs, aspirations, values and judgments of the author and his environment than they do of a first century Galilean Jew” (Bird, 291-312). While it is understood that the Bible is a contemporarily relevant book, the content cannot be wrenched from the context in which it was first written and understood.

The same is true of any historical person or incident in the New Testament. To put Peter’s message and audience into our western culture and impose the Western introspective conscience (see footnote 4, page 2) on his demand for repentance and remission of sins forces a hermeneutical methodology on the passage that robs Peter’s message of the intended and achieved impact, mandating a conclusion that focuses on moral sins rather than the perspective of sin held by common Judaism and Peter’s audience.

*Repentance and Remission of Sins.* Thus, Peter’s call for remitting sin is not a plea to ask God to remove personal or moral sins. Rather, it is a call to allow God to reconcile these lost Israelites who killed the Messiah. Thus, repentance and baptism move the hearer from the state of disruption, dispersal, and disunity to the elect kingdom of the beloved. To demonstrate this point, a three-fold argument is raised. The first argument will come from a brief examination of Peter’s message. The second will take a quick view of Luke’s use of the concept of *forgiveness of sins* in the book of Acts. Finally, the third argument will look for Pauline support of this concept of forgiveness.

*Content of Peter’s Message.* Peter’s first point is to validate the presence of God in the setting using fulfilled prophecy. Polhill emphasizes this by noting that Peter’s use of Scripture dominates the sermon (Polhill, 107). He does this because he is speaking to fellow Jews (men of Judah; later he calls them men of Israel, appealing to their religious pride [Kistemaker and Hendriksen. Acts, 88]). The use of the Psalms and the Prophets confirms the Jewishness of his audience and their Jewish mindset. The first clue that the sermon would follow Hebrew thought is the reminder that salvation is by calling on the Lord (v. 21).

Peter then presents the gospel, connecting his audience to the historical death (v. 23: “you nailed…you put…”), concluding with the resurrection, which he validates by again using their own Scripture. Peter brings his sermon to a crescendo with the exclamation of the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God, drawing the conclusion that Jesus is both Messiah and Lord. “In fine homiletical style he returned to his original text (v. 21) and, along with the prophet Joel, extolled the messiahship of his Lord” (Gangel, 30).

Forgiveness of Sins in Acts

It is based on this message that the audience in unison cries, “What shall we do?” (2:37). Peter’s response is familiar. He demands repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins.[[7]](#footnote-8) Luke uses this formula only five times in Acts (2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18). Acts 2:38 is the only one of two places where he uses the article with the plural sins (“forgiveness of the sins), referencing rejection and murder of the Messiah. The other is Colossians 1:14, which will be dealt with below. Normally, the article is used to specify a “specific member or group of members of a class” (Elliger, 489). Did Luke intend anything specific using the article here? It is not likely in that 5:31 has a direct accusation of killing Jesus, yet the article is not used. 10:43 mentions the death of Christ but does not have a direct accusation made toward the audience. In 13:38, Paul is directing his speech toward a group of fellow Jews (13:16; Men of Israel) but uses the general *they* (13:29) as the ones who killed Jesus. In 26:18, it is used by Paul as part of the commission given him in the Damascus experience. Twice Luke uses various forms of the term sin without the idea of remitting or removing. In 3:19, sins are modified by the pronoun your and is used with the idea of repentance (same word as in 2:38). In this case, repentance is controlled by “*Οὖν*, which functions as an inferential and connective conjunction” (Balz and Schneider, 542). Thus, the call to repent is tied directly with the personal accusation of killing Jesus (in ignorance; 3:17). Finally, in 7:60, the article is used to specify the sin of killing Stephen but is not used in the context of forgiveness.

Luke is specific to tie together the concept of “forgiveness of sins” (with or without the article) with the crucifixion of Jesus and, in most cases, with an accusation against the audience. This pattern supports the concept that repentance of sins is related to the death of Jesus, whether the audience had a direct part in that historic drama. In this vein, Peter’s demand in Acts 2:38 would expect his audience to understand as we must today, that the demand for repentance and the hope of forgiveness is in the fact that all humanity stands condemned for their rejection of Jesus. John clarifies this by stating that judgment has already been pronounced on any who does not believe in the name of the only begotten of God (3:18)!

The connection can be made to Paul from the Acts accounts by his own defense statement before Agrippa. Paul tells Agrippa that he was sent “to open their (Gentiles) eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me (Jesus) (Acts 26:18).” Each of these expressions are based on the Exodus motif where redemption is a change of ownership. This provides a connection to the third argument with the place (and purpose) of forgiveness in Paul. The parallel to his description of his commission is found in Colossians 1:12-14.

Forgiveness of Sins in Paul

The connection is made with Luke’s account of the Pentecost sermon by Paul’s use of the phrase “forgiveness of sins,” which is identical to the Lukan expression in Acts 2:38. This Hebraic syntax[[8]](#footnote-9) influences the context, especially when there is a Semitic origin behind the Greek (Blass and Debrunner, 135). Connected by this phrase, Paul contributes much to the understanding of Peter’s intent.

Echoing his conversion experience in Acts 26: 15-18, Paul is true to his commission as he reminds the Colossians of their transfer from a dark rule into that of a Beloved Kingdom. In verse twelve, Paul mentions that God qualifies those sharing in the inheritance of the saints but does not specifically mention *how* he qualifies. However, the precursor for this is the transfer from the dark dominion where Satan exercises his usurped authority (Hendriksen and Kistemaker. *Colossians and Ephesians*), to the beloved kingdom. This word (*power or rule*) “points to a legitimate right to rule, rather than the power necessary for that activity” (Melick, 207). After all, Satan is the ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; cf. Matthew 4:9; Ephesians 2:2). This is contrasted with the kingdom of the Beloved, ruled by the “new king who will order the chaos of darkness, disorder, and death (Brueggemann, “A New King,” 963), thus restoring the Edenic order of the first creation. This language shares an exodus motif with similar expressions in the LXX found in Deuteronomy 14:1, Hosea 1:10, 11:1, and Isaiah 64:8 (Shogren, 173-80; Dunn, 77-78).

While Paul does not specify the qualification, he would seem to imply it with the phrase “forgiveness of sins.” While Berry does not show save (*sodzo*) to be synonymous with rescue (*ruomai*) (*Greek-English Lexicon*). Lichtenberger indicates a relationship with *sodzo* emerging in Romans 11:26 and 2 Timothy 4:18. He understands it as implied regarding Lot in 2 Peter (Lichtenberger, 214). This then becomes the qualifier for the transfer. In order to participate in the Beloved Kingdom, we must be washed, made holy, and righteous (1 Corinthians 6:11).[[9]](#footnote-10) Thus, “they were “qualified or made fit” to share in an inheritance for which they had previously been unqualified, that is, an inheritance thought to be exclusively Israel’s (Dunn, 75). Dunn explains that forgiveness is, “pardon for failure, expunging of offense from memory and conscience. The idea and language were familiar enough in the wider Greek world, and of course, it was wholly familiar in Jewish thought…forgiveness was at the heart of the sacrificial cult centered in Jerusalem (note, e.g., “” 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13, 16, 18) (Dunn, 81).

While Paul does not connect the forgiveness of sins to baptism for the Colossians as Peter did on Pentecost, he does connect it to the burial and resurrection in Colossians 2:12. Ferguson’s discussion after reviewing a selection of writings from the first three centuries concludes that baptism was the decisive act of conversion, marking the break from the past (exodus from the domain of darkness) into the church of Christ (the Beloved). Further, he notes that these early writers understood baptism as bringing the forgiveness of sins (Ferguson, 36).

Thus, we see Peter and Paul in full agreement that remission of sins is more than just a relief of the conscience. It does do this (Hebrews 9:14; 10:22). However, this was not the primary emphasis for these two great servants. They wanted their audiences to “consider (“to look closely at”) Jesus, the Apostle, and High Priest of our confession” (Hebrews 3:1).

Application

Peter’s message was clear. Repent of the rejection of Jesus as Messiah! Bringing this same message into our culture does not change that message. At the heart of all sin is the rejection of King Jesus. The contemporary message of salvation focuses on Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23). People are in a dark kingdom where they practice the deeds of unrighteousness. They will be released from the consequences of those deeds because of the effective work of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Many in the Restoration Movement are familiar with Walter Scott and the “five finger exercise. “Scott developed a ‘plan of salvation,’ which he held to be the ‘gospel restored.’ He demonstrated this ‘plan’ using a ‘five finger’ exercise and he used it to great advantage” (Hines). However, this does not fit either Peter of Paul’s gospel message. The human response is not the *plan*. Peter states that the plan was predetermined (Acts 2:23) act of God that resulted in the death of Christ (cf. Romans 5:8). Peter explains this further in his epistle (1 Peter 1:17-25) by stating that his appearing was for our sake and required his blood, that of a lamb, unblemished and spotless. God’s plan is the death, burial, and resurrection. When humanity is convicted (cf. John 16:7-13), they will ask what to do. We respond that they need to change their minds about who Jesus is and commit themselves to King Jesus.

Our desire as people of the book is to say what the Bible says. To do this, we must understand what the Bible is saying as well as merely repeating the words. Our focus must turn from ourselves and our self-interest in our personal salvation to our responsibilities to King Jesus. It is time to have the mind of Christ, becoming a servant. (Philippians 2:7-8), even if it means death.

Works Cited

Aland, Kurt. *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009.Balz, Horst Robert, and Gerhard Schneider. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Eerdmans, 1990–.

Arnold, Jeffrey, and Stephanie Black. *The Big Book on Small Groups*. InterVarsity Press, 1992.

Balz, Horst Robert, and Gerhard Schneider. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990–.

Beasley-Murray, George R. *John*. Vol. 36. Word Biblical Commentary. Word, Incorporated, 1999.

Becker, U. “Gospel, Evangelize, Evangelist.” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Edited by Lothar Coenen et al., Zondervan Publishing House, 1986.

Berry, George Ricker, *Berry’s Greek-English New Testament Lexicon with Synonyms.* Baker Book House, 1897.

Birch, Bruce C, et al. *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*. 2nd edition. Abingdon Press, 2005

Bird, Michael F. “The peril of Modernizing Jesus and the Crisis of not Contemporizing the Christ,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 78 (2006): 291-312.

Blass, F., and A. Debrunner. *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Translated and revised by Robert W. Funk. University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Blomberg, Craig. *Matthew*. Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992.

Bock, Darrell L. *Acts*. Baker Academic, 2007.

---. “Chapel - Dallas Theological Seminary.” *Chapel - Dallas Theological Seminary*. February 27, 2020.

---. “The Gospel of Good News.” YouTube. Dallas Theological Seminary, July 30, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1y4fq-euNI.

Brueggemann, Walter. “A New King and a New Order.” *Christian Century*, 109, 31, 963, 1992.

---.*Genesis: Interpretation*. John Knox, 1982.

---. *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

---. *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. Fortress Press, 2005.

Brooks, James A. *Mark*. Vol. 23. The New American Commentary. Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991.

Cadbury, Henry J. *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus*. Macmillan, 1937.

Carson, D. A. *The Gospel According to John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991.

Chamblin, J. Knox. “Gospel.” *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Electronic ed., Baker Book House, 1996, pp. 305–07.

Chan, Francis. *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God.* David C. Cook, 2008.

Cherok, Rick. “History of the Restoration Movement - Session 1: Philosophy and Background”. *Ozark Christian College.* Accessed 1 January 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74qi3H2xJY8&list=PLAhFi-fpiIJ11yln449kE1qcwJw5G96fT.

“Church Growth Movement.” *Encyclopedia.com*. 21 Dec. 2022. Accessed 11 January 2023. https://www.encyclopedia.com.

Conzelmann, Hans. *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*. Edited by Eldon Jay Epp and Christopher R. Matthews. Translated by James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel. *Hermeneia*. Fortress Press, 1987.

Dibelius, Martin. *The Book of Acts: Form, Style, and Theology.* Edited by K. C. Hanson. Fortress Press, 2004.

Dodd, C. H. *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development.* Hodder & Stoughton Limited, 1936.

Dorsett, Lyle. *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America*. Mercer University Press, 2004.

Dunn, James D. G. *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996.

Easton, M. G. *Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature*. Harper & Brothers, 1893.

Edwards, James R. *The Gospel According to Mark*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Eerdmans, 2002.

Edwards, Johnathan. “Sermons by Jonathan Edwards.” *Bibles Net.* Accessed 10 January 2023. https://www.biblesnet.com/Jonathan Edwards Sermons.pdf.

Eichrodt, Walther. *Theology of the Old Testament*. Edited by Peter Ackroyd et al., Translated by J. A. Baker, vol. 1 & 2, The Westminster Press, 1961–1967.

Einstein, Albert. Qtd. In Delgado-Riley, Renee. “Governance at UNM: Your Voice Is Needed.” *Governance at UNM: Your Voice is Needed: The University of New Mexico*, February 3, 2015. https://staffcouncil.unm.edu/blog/2015/01/unm-governance.html.

Elliger, Winfried. “*ὁ, ἡ, τό*.” *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament.* Edited by Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider. Eerdmans, 1990–.

Ferguson, Everett. *Early Christians Speak* (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing Co., 1971

Finney, Charles G. *Lectures on Revivals of Religion. Christian Classics Ethereal Library.* Accessed 10 January 2023. https://www.ccel.org/ccel/f/finney/revivals/cache/revivals.pdf

---. *Sermons on Gospel Themes.* E.J. Goodrich, 1876.

Flanders, Rick. “Book of Acts Arithmetic: Multiplying Christians and Churches.” Ministry 127, May 20, 2016. Accessed 15 February 2020. https://ministry127.com/outreach-discipleship/book-of-acts-arithmetic.

Foreman, Benjamin A. “What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem? (Acts 17:16–34).” *Lexham Geographic Commentary on Acts through Revelation*. Edited by Barry J. Beitzel et al., Lexham Press, 2019.

France, R. T. *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary. Paternoster Press, 2002.

Friedrich, Gerhard. “Κῆρυξ (ἱεροκῆρυξ), Κηρύσσω, Κήρυγμα, Προκηρύσσω.” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich. Eerdmans, 1964–.

Gangel, Kenneth O., and Howard G. Hendricks. *The Christian Educator’s Handbook on Teaching*. Baker Books, 1998.

Garland, David E. *1 Corinthians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Baker Academic, 2003.

George, T. “Luther, Martin.” *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals.* Edited by Timothy Larsen et al., InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Grimm, W. “ἐπιστάτης.” In *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Balz, Horst Robert, and Gerhard Schneider. Eerdmans, 1990–.

Guelich, Robert A. *Mark 1–8:26*. Vol. 34A. Word Biblical Commentary. Word, Incorporated, 1989.

Hagner, Donald A. *Matthew 1–13*. Word, Incorporated, 1993.

Highers, Alan E. “Baptism and the Restoration.” *The Freed Hardman University Lectures* (2006): 57-63. Cited 13 March 2014. Online: http://www.therestorationmovement.com/highers01.htm.

Hill, Robert E. Decep*tion in the Body of Christ: Unveiled Mysteries and Neurolinguistic Dialectics*. Resource Publications, 2010.

Hines, Michael. “Walter Scott: The Golden Oracle.” No Pages. Cited 10 June 2014. Online: http://www.christianchronicler.com/History2/walter\_scott.html.

Hull, Bill. The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ. NavPress, 2006.

Imperato, Robert. *Portraits of Jesus: A Reading Guide.* University Press of America, 2008.

Kistemaker, Simon J. *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*. Vol. 17. New Testament Commentary. Baker Book House, 1953–2001.

Köstenberger, Andreas J. *John*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Baker Academic, 2004.

---. *Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*. Vol. 6. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001.

Kittel, Gerhard, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Eerdmans, 1964–.

Kroll, Paul. “Studies in the Book of Acts.” Edited by Michael Morrison. *Grace Communion Seminary,* 2012.

Larkin, William J., Jr. *Acts*. Vol. 5. The IVP New Testament Commentary Series. IVP Academic, 1995.

Levine, Amy-Jill and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*. Oxford: University Press, 2011.

Levine Lee I. “Common Judaism: The Contribuion of the Ancient Synagogue,” Pages 24-46 in *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second-Temple Judaism.* Edited by Wayne O. McCready and Adele Reinhartz. Fortress Press, 2008.

Lewis, C. S. “Letters to an American Lady.” 1963. *Facebook – C. S. Lewis Institute Chicago.* Accessed 9 January 2023. https://ne-np.facebook.com/CSLIChicago/posts/how-awful-it-must-have-been-for-poor-lazarus-who-had-actually-died-got-it-all-ov/1869397049917945/.

Lichtenberger, Hermann. “*ῥύομαι*,” *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament.* Edited by Horst Robert Balz, and Gerhard Schneider. Eerdmans, 1990–.

Lincoln, Andrew T. *The Gospel According to Saint John*. Black’s New Testament Commentary. Continuum, 2005.

Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. United Bible Societies, 1996.

Martin, Ralph P., and Peter H. Davids, editors. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, Electronic ed., InterVarsity Press, 1997.

Mathews, K. A. *Genesis 1-11:26*. Vol. 1A. The New American Commentary. Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996.

Meadowbrook Baptist Church. “Steps to Peace with God.” Accessed 29 January 2023. https://www.mbcoxford.org/steps-to-peace-with-god/

McCuistion, P.R., C. Warner, C. and F. P. Viljoen, “The Influence of Greek Drama on Matthew’s Gospel” *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 70(1), 2014. 9 Pages. Cited 10 June 2014. Online: http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts. v70i1.2024.

---. *The Uniqueness of Jesus:* *Is He the Only Way to God?* Teaching4Jesus Ministries, 2021.

McKnight, Scot. The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited. Revised Edition, Zondervan, 2016.

McNicol, Allan J. “Cornelius.” *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. Edited by Paul J. Achtemeier and Society of Biblical Literature. Harper & Row Harper & Row, 1985.

Melick, Richard R. *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*. Vol. 32. Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991. The New American Commentary.

Moore, George Foot. *Judaism: In the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of Tannaim*. Vol. 1. Hendrickson Publishers, 1997.

Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to Matthew*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Eerdmans, 1992.

Mounce, Robert H. *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching*. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1960.

Mounce, William D. *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. Zondervan, 2006.

Nolland, John. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005.

Ogden, Greg. *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life*, Revised and Expanded. Intervarsity Press, 2019.

*Pentateuch with Targum Onkelos, Haphtaroth and Prayers for Sabbath and Rashi's Commentary, translated by* M. Rosenbaum and A.M. Silberman. Vol. 1, Shapiro, Vallentine and Co., 1946. Online: http://www.Bible-researcher.com/rashi.html#note1.

Peterson, David G. *The Acts of the Apostles*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009.

Pew Research Center. “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace.” *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*. December 31, 2019. Accessed March 4, 2020. https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/.

Polhill, John B. *Acts*. Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992.

Radl, W. “*sō̧zō*, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Balz, Horst Robert, and Gerhard Schneider. Eerdmans, 1990–.

Reasoner, Mark. “Rome and Roman Christianity.” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters.* Edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne et al., InterVarsity Press, 1993, 850–55.

Rengstorf, K. H. “*Χριστός*.” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology.* Edited by Lothar Coenen et al., Zondervan Publishing House, 1986.

Richardson, Robert. *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell.* 2 Vols. Lippincott, 1868.

Robertson, A. T. *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*. Logos Bible Software, 2006.

Ryrie, Charles C. *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*. ECS Ministries, 2005.

Sanders, E. P. “Common Judaism Explored.” *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second-Temple Judaism.* Edited by Wayne O. McCready and Adele Reinhartz. Fortress Press, 2008. 11-23.

Sanders, John. “A Tale of Two Providences.” *Ashland Theological Journal Volume 33* (2001): 41-54.

Schenk, W. “*Aparneomai*,” *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament.* Edited by Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, Eerdmans, 1990–.

Shenk, W. R. “Church Growth Movement.” *Dictionary of Christianity in America.* Edited by Daniel Reid G., et al., InterVarsity Press, 1990.

Schlier, Heinrich “*aparneomai*.” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Eerdmans, 1964–.

Shogren, Gary S. “Presently Entering the Kingdom of Christ: The Background and Purpose of Col 1:12-14.” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (1988): 173-80.

Skarsaune, Oskar. *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity*. IVP Academic, 2002.

Smith, Mont. “The State of the Adopted.” *National Missionary Convention.* Lecture. Knoxville, TN, 1976.

Smithfield, Brad. “‘His Master's Voice’ - The Origins of the Famous Jack Russell Terrier, Nipper, the Canine Advertising Icon for Many Gramophone Companies.” *The Vintage News*, May 25, 2017. Accessed March 4, 2020. https://www.thevintagenews.com/2017/04/28/his-masters-voice-the-origins-of-the-famous-jack-russell-terrier-nipper-the-canine-advertising-icon-for-many-gramophone-companies/.

Soards, Marion. *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns.* Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994.

Speiser, E. A. *Genesis.* *The Anchor Bible*. Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964.

Stein, Robert H. *Luke*. Vol. 24. The New American Commentary. Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992.

---. *Mark*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Baker Academic, 2008.

Stendahl, Krister. *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essyas*. Fortress Press, 1976.

---. “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” *The Harvard Theological Review.* Vol. 56, No. 3 (July 1963), 199-215.

Stott, John. “Is Jesus Veritas for the 21st Century.” Lecture. *Veritas Forum*. Cambridge, MA, 1995.

Strecker, G. “εὐαγγελίζω *euangelizō*.” In *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament,* Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider. Eerdmans, 1990–.

Street, James. “Resurrection in the Old Testament. *The Master’s Seminary Blog: Doctrine. Discourse. Doxology.* Accessed 9 January 2023. https://blog.tms.edu/resurrection-in-the-old-testament.

Telushkin, Joseph. Jewish Literacy. NY: William Morrow and Co., 1991. Qtd. in “Jewish Virtual Library,” 30 December 2022, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-messiah.

Tiedtke, E., and G. H.-Link. “*Δεῖ*.” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology.* Edited by Lothar Coenen et al., Zondervan Publishing House, 1986.

“The Complete Jewish Bible with Rashi Commentary.” *Chabad*. Accessed 13 July 2014. http://www.chabad.org/library/Bible\_cdo/aid/8172#showrashi=true.

Thompson, Alan J. *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke’s Account of God’s Unfolding Plan*. Edited by D. A. Carson, vol. 27, Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2011.

von Rad, Gerhard. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961.

Walaskay, Paul W. *Acts*. Edited by Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett. Westminster Bible Companion. Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.

Webb, Henry E. *In search of Christian unity: a history of the Restoration Movement.* Standard Publishing, 1990

Weder, Hans. “Disciple, Discipleship.” In *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. Translated by Dennis Martin. Doubleday, 1992.

West, Earl Irvin. *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement 1849-1906* (Indianapolis: Religious Book Service 2011.

Whitefield, George. “Selected Sermons of George Whitefield.” https://ccel.org/ccel/w/whitefield/sermons/cache/sermons.pdf.

Willard, Dallas. “Foreword.” *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited*, Revised Edition, Zondervan, 2016, pp. 15–16.

Willmington, Harold L. “What You Need to Know About the Book of Isaiah.” *Liberty University.* Accessed 2 January 2023. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/58821268.pdf.

Wright, N. T. *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. Fortress Press, 2013.

1. For a fuller history of this movement, see: Henry E. Webb, *In search of Christian unity: a history of the Restoration Movement* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 1990) l; Earl Irvin West, *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement 1849-1906* (Indianapolis: Religious Book Service 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. ## For a comprehensive understanding of this concept, please see Krister Stendahl’s “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” *The Harvard Theological Review.* Vol. 56, No. 3 (July 1963), 199-215.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Note that Mark and Luke limit Peter to say only that Jesus is the Christ. Matthew will add the statement “son of the living God,” possibly to include his Gentile element. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. For the author’s understanding of the intentionality of speaker and audience, see “Intentionality” in “The influence of Greek drama on Matthew’s Gospel.” (P.R. McCuistion, C. Warner, C. and F. P. Viljoen, ‘The influence of Greek drama on Matthew’s Gospel’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 70 (1), 2014. 9 Pages. cited 10 June 2014. Online: http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts. v70i1.2024) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Luke uses the term *ἠρνήσασθε* (2nd per. pl. aor. act. ind.) that holds the idea of refusal (W. Schenk, “*aparneomai*.” EDNT 153; Heinrich Schlier, “*aparneomai*.” TDNT 469.) in his second sermon in Acts 3:11-26). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. The Rabbinic conclusions of the Talmud most closely reflect those of the Pharisees of the first century. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. It is not within the scope of this article to argue the meaning of *εἰς* as it regards the sequence of the results that follow the actions. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. This syntax matches the Blass and Debrunner category of “The Article with Nouns Governing a Genitive” (*ἄφεσιν* would seem to control the genitive *ἁμαρτιῶν*) (F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (trans. Robert W. Funk; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961),135.) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. The first term is Aor. Mid. Ind. while the other two are Aor. Pass. Ind. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)