

CLASS NOTES -- THE BOOK OF ACTS

CHAPTERS NINE THROUGH FIFTEEN -- PETER AND PAUL

Surely the church of this age did not begin at Acts two, as is so commonly taken for granted (see "Acts Dispensationally Considered" by C. R. Stam, vol. 1, pages 68 - 70). It seems equally clear it did not begin as late as Acts twenty eight (see "Help in Hard Places" by W. P. Heath, pages 99 - 142 [first printing] or 91 - 131 [second printing]).¹ When, then, did the Body of Christ begin?

Some years ago the three mid-Acts views concerning the genesis of the Body of Christ were presented to a class in the Mindanao Grace Bible Institute (in the Philippines) and the following comparison of views was tabulated:

A. The Acts nine view -- as presented by W. P. Heath.

1. It was determined by God in eternity (Eph. 1:4).
2. The foundation was laid for it by the judgment visited upon Christ at Calvary (1 Cor. 3:11).
3. **Acts 7** - the way was prepared for it by the setting aside of Israel as a nation (Rom. 9:22 - 24; 11:12, 15).
4. **Acts 9** - It took place in history.
5. **Acts 11** - It was made evident in practice.
6. **Acts 13** - It began its missionary extension to the Gentile world.
7. **Acts 28** - It entered into its full maturity (the conclusion of the transition period).

B. The Acts 11 view -- as gleaned from Robert Brock, as I recall.

1. **Theoretical** - before the foundation of the world.
2. **Sacramental** - by the Cross.
3. **Acts 7** - Judicially.
4. **Acts 9** - Symbolically.
5. **Acts 11** - Historically.
6. **Acts 13** - Manifestly.
7. -----

C. The Acts 13 view - as presented by Daniel Sidebottom.

1. ----- *²
2. ----- *
3. ----- *
4. **Acts 9** - Preparation of Paul - his conversion.
5. **Acts 11** - Preparation of Paul - his training.
6. **Acts 13** - Took place in history.
7. ----- *

The statement which is accepted by all three above is, "**The Body of Christ began with Paul before he wrote his first epistle.**"

¹ This book is out of print, but the materials included in it are available as Bible Studies by writing to; W. P. Heath, 423 Burke Ave., Leavenworth, WA 98826, U.S.A.

² I am sure Dan Sidebottom would agree to items 1 through 3 and item 7 as listed in the acts 9 view -- though he did not include them in his outline. -- W.P.H.

9:1. Paul comes on the scene here (though still the unsaved Saul of Tarsus at this time). Paul compares with the OT (Old Testament) Daniel in some interesting ways. He is related to the times of the Gentiles spiritually (when Israel was set aside religiously), as Daniel was with the "Times of the Gentiles" politically (when Israel was set aside politically -- Luke 21:24). Each introduces his period of Gentile supremacy, lays down its principles, prophesies its course in history, delineates its conclusion, etc. Also both had a double prophetic ministry -- to Jews and Gentiles. The Times of the Gentiles politically was prophesied (as in Deut. 28:48 - 51; 63 - 67 and in the prophetic books). The times of the Gentiles spiritually was not a subject of prophecy, it was a mystery (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:9).

9:4. Compare "My God, my God, why -?" (Matt. 27:46) with "Saul, Saul, why -?" here.

9:4, 5. Saul was persecuting Jewish believers (8:3) but Christ said, "Why are you persecuting Me?" See the same principle in the judgment of the nations in Matt. 25:40, 45.

9:6. This is not all that Christ said at this time. See Acts 26:16 - 18. It may be possible that in Acts 26 the vision on the road is merged with the message by Ananias -- but the wording there does not seem to indicate it.

9:9. See Hosea 6:1 - 3. Is there some connection between the conversion of Israel and the three days here? Notice also the three days of Christ's abiding in death.

9:11. How very appropriate that he who was so very **crooked** in his theology as a Pharisee should be found on "**Straight** street"!

"Behold he prayeth." As a Pharisee he had been "saying prayers," but the Lord would not hear them because his hands were full of blood. See Isa. 1:15.

9:17. For a more detailed account of the meeting with Ananias see Acts 22:12 - 16.

9:20. The trip to Arabia evidently comes between vs. 22 and 23. See Gal. 1:16, 17. / Compare the note at 17:3.

9:22. See also Acts 9:20; 17:3; 18:28.

9:23. "Many days" was **three years** -- evidently after a short time in Damascus (Gal. 1:18).

9:23 - 25. Paul came to Damascus to kill Christians -- but is nearly killed himself **as a Christian**. The ones he came to **kill**, now **save his life**.

9:26 - 30. This occupied only 15 days (Gal. 1:18).

9:31. See 2 Cor. 5:11; 1 Tim. 2:2 - 4.

9:36, 37. Dorcas was full of good works -- but **DEAD**, like the nation of Israel at this point (Rom. 10:1, 2). However the day will come when, like Dorcas, Israel will **live** (Rom.

11:26)!

9:37 - 39. By the time all of these things had happened, Dorcas must have been dead for a day or more, for Lydda is about ten miles from Joppa.

10:2. Cornelius was not, however, a proselyte -- for he was uncircumcised (11:3). He was considered unclean and "of another nation" (10:28).

10:6. "- What thou oughtest to **DO** -." This does not indicate a salvation by works any more than the jailer's question ("What must I **DO** to be saved?") in Acts 16:30 does. The NASB omits this part of the verse for some unexplained reason.

10:14. "Not so, Lord." This is really contradictory. If He is **Lord**, we cannot say "**No**." If we say "**No**," He is **not Lord**. See Luke 6:46.

10:15. See 1 Tim. 4:4, 5.

10:16. If the "Unclean" animals were taken into heaven, they must have been acceptable to God, so why not to Peter?

10:22. Cornelius was prepared for a "Bible class."

10:25, 26. See 14:11 - 18; Matt. 4:9, 10. These would be good verses to call to the attention of Catholics in regard to their "veneration" of Peter and the Pope.

10:28. This would have been unlawful **only** because to do so would by-pass the prophetic order -- "to the Jew first."

10:30. The distance between Joppa and Caesarea was about 25 - 30 miles. Evidently it had taken two days each way for the trip.

10:35. Peter is only saying here what Paul says in Rom. 2:7 - 11. He is not saying that Cornelius is **SAVED**. That he was **not** a saved man at this point is certain from Acts 11:14.

10:36. As **Lord** He relates to Gentiles as much as to Jews. Christ would not even talk to the Syrophenician woman when she called Him "Son of David" (Matt. 15:22, 23), but when she called Him "Lord" He spoke to her (Matt. 15:25, 26). See Mark 7:26.

10:41. **ONLY** those chosen for a special testimony, those who **SAW** the Lord in resurrection with their physical **EYES**, are "witnesses" in the sense of Acts 1:8. Note their testimony in 1 John 1:1. See Acts 1:21, 22.

10:42. See John 5:22; 2 Tim. 4:1.

10:43. **This** much of the prophetic message was consistent with the message of the mystery -- so God stopped Peter's message here, before he said **TOO MUCH**. Peter **did** have

more he was intending to say ("As I **began** to speak" - 11:15). It would be interesting to know what the rest of his sermon would have been if God had not cut it short.

10:44. Scofield says, "Now the normal order for this age is reached: the Holy Spirit is given without delay, mediation, or other condition than simple faith in Christ" (footnote # 1 on page 1164 of the 1917 edition of the Scofield Bible). This is only partly true. Here the bestowing of the Spirit is accompanied by **tongues** (v. 46) -- which is not the **normal** course for this Age of Grace. See 1 Cor. 13:8.

10:45. The Jewish believers accompanying Peter were amazed because the Holy Spirit was poured out without either baptism or the laying on of hands. **Compare 2:38; 8:17.**

10:47. This water baptism was not carried out in obedience to a **command**, but for **lack** of any **objections**. Since Matt. 28:19 was spoken to Peter, as well as the other apostles, he indicates that this situation is not the carrying out of **that** "great commission."

11:8. You cannot consistently say "no" and "Lord" in the same breath. It must be the one or the other. See note at 10:14.

11:11. The sheet let down **three** times seems to indicate that the three **messengers** were "cleansed" and not to be considered unclean. Thus the change of program here was not due merely to the "righteousness" of Cornelius (10:22), for these three messengers are also "accepted with Him" (10:35). It was not Cornelius alone who, later, was converted (11:14, 15), but also his household and friends (10:24).

11:14. "- **Words**, whereby thou and all thy household shall be saved." It was not his good **works** which saved him, but faith in the message he heard.

11:20. The Scofield margin indicates these Grecians are "Hellenists" or Grecian **Jews**. But if these "Grecians" are not Gentiles, then why the contrast between v. 19 and v. 20? (The "and" with which this verse opens is "but" or "however" in most other translations) And why the special trip by Barnabas to investigate (vs. 22, 23)? Unless Paul had already been preaching to Gentiles, this demonstration of the grace of God among Gentiles precedes Paul's ministry!

11:23. Compare 13:43. In neither passage is there instruction to cling to the Law.

11:25. He went to get an **expert** -- the one whose very call was to reach **GENTILES**. If Paul had not already been working with Gentiles why go to get **HIS** help?

11:28. The famine would not have happened if Israel had turned to the Lord in early Acts. Compare Ezek. 36:29 and the preceding context there.

11:29. Evidently, in this church, they did not have "all things common," as in Acts 2:44; 4:32. This offering sets the pattern for those mentioned in Rom. 15:26, 27 and others.

12:2. James was not spared, and not replaced -- an indication that the Pentecostal

program was being with-drawn. James and John were brothers, the sons of Zebedee. James was the first of the true apostles (Judas doesn't count) to die, while John was the last.

12:9. Peter is spared, as far as the record reveals (there were other reasons – that he might write his two epistles for instance), so he can testify in Acts 15. If God had not inserted this Age of Grace, perhaps Peter might have been killed as James was (instead of being rescued to vindicate Paul's ministry), thus fulfilling the prophecy of John 21:18, 19. However John 21:18 indicates he will not die until he is old. Aside from the insertion of the Age of Grace, John could easily have lived until Christ's coming. This is suggested as a possibility in John 21:22 (though Matt. 20:23 seems to indicate it would be God's will -- even then -- that John should die).

12:10. This gate is in contrast to the one in vs. 14, 16. The believers had to open that one, kept closed by their unbelief. It was easier for Peter to get out of prison than it was for him to get into the assembly. (Perhaps, sadly, some former convicts who have come to Christ in prison have found that true even today)

12:12. A study of Mark's life would be profitable. Here is a glimpse of his home background.

12:14. It seemed "too good to be true."

12:15. Evidently they did not have too much faith as they prayed. However they doubtless had prayed for James also -- and he died. So they may have expected the same kind of answer here.

12:17 - 19. Peter probably knew that the house of Mary and Mark (being, evidently, the meeting place of the believers) would be the first place Herod would look for him -- so he went elsewhere. Contrast 5:18 - 25 where, after a miraculous release from prison, they are told to go back to their preaching in the Temple the next day. Is this another indication that God has set Israel aside now and is bringing about a change of program?

12:18. Likewise, there has been "no small stir" among theologians as to what became of Peter in the book of Acts! There is no mention of him in the rest of the book, except where he steps forth from obscurity, in chapter 15, to back up the ministry of Paul.

12:22, 23. Contrast this with 10:25, 26; 14:11 - 18.

12:25. See 11:30. Paul probably didn't see Peter at this time for Peter was in prison -- and, when released, evidently went into hiding.

13:2. "Separate" is present tense, while "have called" looks back to a previous time. If the work referred to here is specifically, and for the first time, to reach **Gentiles** (which it does not say) it is very strange that they go at once to the **Jews** (vs. 4, 5). Is this not a sending forth (geographically) on the basis of the commission Paul had already been given? See 26:17. Also, **IF this** commission marks the beginning of the Body of Christ, the Age of Grace

must have been committed to **two** men -- with Barnabas as the **first one mentioned**. How, then, could Paul say later it was committed to **him**? See 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25.

13:6 - 16. These verses illustrate quite well the dispensational changes taking place, but to insist that the Body of Christ began here is to confuse the fact with the illustration -- the type with the anti-type. Bar-Jesus pictures Israel. He has a good name ("Son of Jehovah Savior") but rejects the message himself, and tries to keep the Gentile from hearing it. For this he is judicially blinded -- but only for a season. However the dispensational change is not due to one ungodly Jew -- but to the ungodly **leaders** of the **whole nation**. Thus the event itself (the setting aside of Israel) should be tied to the decision already made in Jerusalem, not this one in Paphos.

13:7. Barnabas is listed **first** -- not only here (and in other places in this chapter) but also in 14:12, 14; 15:25 (and **both** are called **apostles** in 14:14).

13:9. It is **Paul** who speaks here, but because he was the **chief** speaker (14:12), not because he was the **only** one.

13:10. "Child of the Devil." "The oriental hearer would understand his words as describing the man's character and nature" -- "The Lord from Heaven" by Sir Robert Anderson, page 28.

13:13. He deserted the missionary party and thus eventually caused an alienation between Paul and Barnabas (15:36 - 41).

13:14. If we follow Paul **here**, as to the **day**, we must follow him also as to the **place** (the synagogue). Seventh Day Adventists, take notice! Any other day there would be no one there to hear him.

13:20. Samuel was a **judge** as well as a prophet. See note at 3:24 and compare Heb. 11:32. He was also a priest (1 Sam. 2:35).

13:28. See Matt. 27:24, 25.

13:31. Paul is not of this group. It is **Paul** here who limits the witnesses to the Twelve.

13:33. The "begetting" in Psa. 2:7 is applied His resurrection rather than to His birth in this passage (v. 34). See Heb. 1:6 where it is applied to the incarnation.

13:39. Compare Rom. 3:28.

13:41. "I **am doing** a deed in your days" (Amplified Bible). It was a work of **judgment** -- Israelites sharing **individually** in that setting aside which had already happened to Israel **as a nation** at Acts seven.

13:42. This indicates Paul was **not** offering the kingdom -- or else he was offering it to

Gentiles as well as to the Jews!

13:43. Is this not a continuation of the grace of God seen in 11:23?

13:45. "Envy" -- See Prov. 27:4.

"Blaspheming" -- This is not the first time the word "blasphemy" is applicable to Israel's rejection of the risen Christ. See Paul's description of his own actions in 1 Tim. 1:13 -- and at that time he was working hand in hand with the leaders of Israel (Acts 9:1, 2). Notice that Paul went to the Gentiles, not because the Jews blasphemed, but because they thrust the word of God from them (v. 46). Israel's blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and their resulting rejection by God (Matt. 12:31, 32), took place in Acts seven, not here in chapter thirteen.

The Jews who blasphemed here are not the Sanhedrin, or even members of that body:

-- The location is wrong. This is not Jerusalem, but Antioch, a city in Asia almost half way to Greece.

-- The circumstances are wrong. These leaders were not antagonistic until they became envious against Paul's success. Any member of the Sanhedrin would have been against Paul as soon as he appeared, due to his defection from their ranks at his conversion.

-- Verse 46 would mean little when it says, "- it was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you -" if these were a part of the Sanhedrin to whom the word of God had already been presented in Acts seven.

13:46. Not "unworthy of the **KINGDOM**" but "unworthy of **EVERLASTING LIFE**." "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles." See 18:6; 22:18, 21; 26:17; 28:28.

13:47. Paul quotes Isa. 42:6, 7 to prove that Christ's work would extend to Gentiles, not to prove it would be extended to them apart from the prophetic program.

13:48. "Ordained to eternal life" -- here is the sovereignty of God. "Believed" -- this is man's responsibility.

See Barnes' Notes on the New Testament. He says it is equivalent to "those who were under conviction believed." In his view it does not refer directly to election, though election is inferred.

The Greek word translated "ordained" here and in Rom. 13:1 is *tasso*. It is translated "appoint" in Matt. 28:16; Acts 22:10; 28:23; "set" in Luke 7:8; "determine" in Acts 15:2; and "addicted" in 1 Cor. 16:15.

According to Pastor Henry Hudson, it can be translated "were **disposed**." The idea he gets from this verse is, "those who were interested in [disposed toward] eternal life believed." See the note on 14:1.

13:50. Compare 16:13 - 15. Devout and honorable women can be either a help or a hindrance -- depending partly on who talks to them first.

14:1. "Spoke in such a manner" (NASB) that a great multitude believed. If 13:48 teaches absolute election -- as is supposed by many -- what is the meaning of this verse? Why was faith dependent on the **manner** of their ministry if salvation depends only on election to eternal life?

14:3. "The word of His **grace**" -- not "the word of His **kingdom**." Notice it is the Lord here who gives this testimony unto the word of His own grace. See Heb. 2:4. Signs and wonders are present, for this is still the transition period. See note at 4:29, 30.

14:12. Mercurius was the god of communications -- but Jupiter was the "king" of the gods. This gave Barnabas the place of **authority** -- as **they** saw it.

14:12, 14. In both of these verses Barnabas is mentioned first. It is not "Paul and Barnabas" as often elsewhere. See also 15:25.

14:14. Notice that Barnabas is also called an apostle, both here and in verse 4. It seems the word is not used here as it usually is in regard to Paul. In **that** sense he's **the** Apostle of Christ to the Gentiles, not one of several. Here it is used in the sense of "missionaries" -- as I understand it is also used in Eph. 4:11.

14:19, 20. This incident seems to be in view in Second Corinthians twelve. If so, Paul himself did not know whether he died or not (2 Cor. 12:1 - 4). However it seems that, if his disciples were standing around his body -- and if he ascended into Paradise "in the body," they would have missed that body and told him so later. In that case he would know whether or not he went into Paradise physically. Possibly the disciples could not approach him until the murderers left -- and the body could have been missing briefly in the interval?

14:20, 21. "He rose up and came into the city" -- that's courage! Later, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium. After what had happened before (vs. 5, 19, 20) this took courage also!

14:22. **If** the expression "kingdom of God" here proves that Paul was carrying out a "kingdom ministry" at this time, then the same expression in Acts 28:31 proves he continued to carry on such a ministry for two full years after Acts 28:28 -- the years when he wrote the "prison epistles."

14:27. "**A** door of faith -" not **THE** door of faith -" (see NASB). It is not said that this was the initial and only door opened to the Gentiles. See 15:7.

15:1. Thus this church (whose members were saved before Saul and Barnabas left on their missionary trip) was a Gentile church -- they were not circumcised!

15:2. In this chapter Paul did not go to the "church council" to make sure he was teaching the right doctrine. He went only because God had revealed to him that he should do so (Gal. 2:2). This council did **not determine** doctrine -- it was an opportunity to make it **known** (Gal. 2:6, 7, 9), and remove any hindrance to preaching it (Gal. 2:2). If the council had decided the Gentiles should be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses, Paul surely would have continued with the message he had received from the Lord (Gal. 1:10 - 12, 16, 17). However he would have had the considerable influence of the Apostles and the church in Jerusalem to contend with from that time on. The Judaizers did not abide by the decision when it went against them, but they could no longer claim they represented the twelve Apostles and the

Jerusalem church (Acts 15:24).

15:5. Unless there had been a dispensational change in connection with the gospel going to the Gentiles under Paul, these Pharisees were **right**. See Isa. 56:6, 7 and context.

15:7. Was this not also an opening of a door of faith to the Gentiles back in Acts 10? See 14:27.

15:9. "NO DIFFERENCE" -- and this looks back to **Acts ten**. If the conversion of Cornelius was a "purely kingdom" matter, how can it be used to justify Paul's ministry (v. 11) -- unless Paul's ministry is also a purely kingdom matter? Also, if the conversion of Cornelius is part of the kingdom program, why didn't Peter follow it up instead of turning the Gentile ministry over to Paul (Gal. 2:9)?

15:11. Not "**They** shall be saved even as **we**" -- but "**We** [Jews] shall be saved even as **they** [Gentiles]." Contrast Exodus 12:48, 49; Num. 15:15 (the kingdom program). See Rom. 4:12.

This decision came on the basis of the understanding of Paul's gospel, according to Gal. 2:1 - 10!

See Appendices # 1 and # 2 following.

15:12. Here is one of the reasons for the signs in Paul's early ministry. See 2 Cor. 12:12.

15:15 - 19. James is surely not saying Paul's ministry is a **fulfillment** of this Scripture -- for, as it is quoted (or paraphrased) here, it speaks of Gentiles reached after the **return** of Christ. He is only saying that what is happening is not inconsistent with what will yet happen, according to the prophets, in the kingdom program.

15:21. "That is, there are Jews in every city who would be caused to stumble if the believers did not abide by v. 20. The implication is that, in a case where v. 21 is not the situation, the stipulations of v. 20 do not apply." -- Cornelius R. Stam.

15:26. See Judges 5:18; 2 Sam. 23:15 - 17; Rom. 16:4; Phil. 2:30.

15:28. The decision was not reached through some miraculous indication of God's will, but was arrived at on the basis of:

- Peter's testimony of his vision and ministry to Cornelius.
 - Peter's conclusion based on his experience & the experience of all under the Law (v. 10).
 - The testimony of Paul and Barnabas.
 - The Scriptures in the hands of James.
 - The decision of James (v. 19).
 - The affirmative vote of the Apostles and elders present (v. 22).
 - The testimony (evidently in the men's hearts) of the Holy Spirit (v. 28).
- It was **confirmed** through prophetic sermons by Judas Barsabas and Silas (vs. 22, 32),

and the decision is now authoritative as a part of the inspired record.

15:32. "- With a **lengthy** message -" (NASB). "Sermonettes" hadn't been invented yet.

15:34. Even though Silas was a prophet, he remained in Antioch because he **wanted to**. Yet God used this decision of his to provide Paul with his new companion in the work.

15:35. Peter's visit to Antioch (Gal. 2:11 & following) takes place between verses 35 and 36 of this chapter.

15:36 - 41. Notice the following observations:

-- The contention between these two godly men was based on the **determination** of Barnabas (influenced, no doubt, by his relationship to Mark -- Col. 4:10) and Paul's **thinking** (based on Mark's past failure). They do not receive divine guidance here in a miraculous way, even though this is still early in Paul's Acts ministry.

-- The division did not result in Barnabas and Mark trying to take Paul's churches from him (evidently it was Paul who had the backing of the church in Antioch -- Acts 15:40). In all the trouble Paul had with people trying to steal his churches, there was no trouble with Barnabas. This was true in spite of the fact that the churches were partly the result of the ministry of Barnabas. Since he is the one who "resigned," he left the work to Paul and started over with his **own** work. Actually, of course, the Gentile churches were neither "Paul's churches" nor "Barnabas's churches." They were **God's** churches, but He put Paul, not Barnabas, over them.

-- The decision was a good one. Two missionary parties, instead of only one, were out preaching (not fighting one another), and it resulted in Mark proving himself to Paul (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11). Mark needed the stern rebuke of Paul lest he never learn to stick to a job. He also needed the encouragement of Barnabas lest he drop out of the work of the Lord. He went on to prove himself to Paul and write the Gospel which bears his name.

-- Possibly the split between Paul and Barnabas really began with the incident of Gal. 2:13. How wise of God to remove him from the ministry with Paul, in light of his weakness demonstrated there, before the battle with the legalizers was really fully joined.

See Appendix # 3.

--- William P Heath

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