

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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TRUTHS CONCERNING ACTS

Truth is that which accords with the facts. Divine facts are declared in the Word of God, and what we believe must be in harmony with them. Seventeen facts representing the same number of truths will be set forth in this study. These can be accepted or rejected. What will the reader do with them? A request is made for honest consideration.

1. The 120 that assembled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1: 15) were without exception Jews who believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and the Son of God. This fact and truth had been generated in them by the Father in heaven (Matt. 16:17). They were the result of the personal ministry of Jesus Christ, whose words and works had led them to this belief. They did not cease to be Jews because of this new-found faith. As Sir Robert Anderson has so well said: "The divine religion of Judaism in every part of it, both in the spirit and the letter, pointed to the coming of a promised Messiah; and to maintain that a man ceased to be a Jew because he cherished that hope, and accepted the Messiah when He came-this is a position absolutely grotesque in its absurdity" (*The Silence of God*, page 85).

2. Those who heard the Word on that memorable day of Pentecost were "**Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven**" (Acts 2:5). They had been of the diaspora but had returned to the land of their fathers. The 3000 who became believers on that day (Acts 2: 41) were without exception "Jews, devout men." They remained such after they believed (Acts 2:46).

3. The salvation-bringing message of God was authorized to everyone in Israel from the day of Pentecost onward (Acts 2:39, 10:36, 13:26). This message centered in the fact that the man Christ Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah (the Christ) and the Son of God. He was presented as an object for personal faith, offered to Israelites as a personal Savior. Forgiveness of sins was promised to all who believed in Him (Acts 2:21, 36, 38). This salvation-bringing message could be heralded by any believing Israelite who was commissioned of God to do so. This commission consisted of the Word of God coming to a man as a message intended for another. See Luke 3:2 for an example of this. It seems that every believing Jew in the Acts period had the blessing of this experience. The message may have come to them for only one person, but there could be no proclamation apart from such a commission (Rom. 10: 15).

4. In the eight years that elapsed between Pentecost and Peter's visit to the house of Cornelius the gospel was to the Jew only. Every believer during that time was a Jew, a man of Israel. No one was authorized to speak the salvation-bringing message to anyone else. Even if a Gentile overheard it as it was being proclaimed, as Cornelius certainly had (Acts 10:37), it was still not for him.

5. The thrice-repeated vision which Peter saw while on the housetop (Acts 10:9-16) was a special commission and authorization for him to go to the house of Cornelius, a God-fearing, devout Gentile. This proclamation of Jesus Christ to the household of one Roman centurion represents Peter's entire ministry to the Gentiles. He had no commission to any others outside Israel. He was not God's commissioned one to the Gentiles. This was Paul's prerogative (Rom. 11: 13). This one act of Peter served to prepare the believers in Israel for the ministry of Paul among the Gentiles, which began six years later.

6. Cornelius did not become a herald of the salvation-bringing message to the Gentiles. He did not abandon his military position and return to Rome to herald the Gospel. He may have wished to do this but could not do so without a divine commission. If he had such a commission it would have made him, and not Paul, God's commissioned one to the Gentiles.

7. It was God's purpose and program in the Acts period that every responsible person in Israel should hear the salvation-bringing gospel and have one clear-cut opportunity to receive the Lord Jesus as the Messiah and

to believe in Him as a personal Savior (Rom. 15: 21). This witness was made to every Israelite in the land and to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1: 8).

8. God's purpose in this period was accomplished. Every Israelite was covered (Rom. 10:18, Rom. 15:23). Those outside the land lived in tight pockets and could easily be reached by the herald going to the synagogue in that locality (Acts 17: 1-3).

9. In the Acts period the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ was always done by God-commissioned men (Rom.10:15), the message they heralded was always spoken by divine inspiration (1 Cor. 2:13), every word of it was the Word of God (1 Thess. 2: 13), it was always absolute truth (2 Cor. 13:3), it was not written, it was not memorized and repeated over and over, and it was always fresh from God each time it was spoken. It was varied each time to meet the exact needs of those who heard it, but these variations were inspired by God and were not made by the heralds. One man could proclaim it as well as another. Ignorant fishermen spoke it as well as the educated statesmen.

10. In order to avoid all delays, all misunderstandings, and any need for translation, the gospel of God was always spoken in the mother tongue of the one for whom it was intended. The gift of tongues was a meaningful reality in the Acts period (Acts 2:6, 8, 11). See Issue No.6.

11. In the Acts dispensation the proclamation of the gospel was always confirmed to the hearers by evidential miracles (Mark 16:20; John 14:12; Acts 2:43; Acts 5:12; Rom. 15:18, 19; 1 Cor.1:6; Heb. 2:4). These might precede the proclamation, accompany it, or follow it, but they were always there. No one was asked to believe without seeing. Physical evidence was always a part of the proclamation (1 Thess. 1:5).

12. Under the divine administration that prevailed in the Acts period a man was given only one opportunity to hear and believe the gospel (Acts 13:46). The heralds of the gospel never spoke it twice to the same people. A herald did not go over ground that had already been covered (Rom. 15:20, 21). The message was at once either a "savor of life" or a "savor of death" to all who heard it (2 Cor. 2: 16). If a man could not immediately believe the testimony of a God-commissioned man speaking a divinely-inspired message, the truth of which was confirmed by signs following, there was

nothing more that God would do. All who heard were enlightened, they tasted of the heavenly gift, they were partakers of the Holy Spirit, they had tasted the good Word of God, and experienced the powers of the coming eon (Heb. 6:4, 5). If after all this they fell away it was impossible to bring them back again to the place of submission (Heb. 6:6-7).

13. In the Acts dispensation the faith of a believer was always publicly accredited and confirmed by God. "These signs shall follow them that believe," was the promise of Jesus Christ (Mark 16:17). And they did (1 Cor. 1:6,7). A man's relationship to God was a manifest thing. There were no secret believers. The life of an Acts period believer was not "hid with Christ in God," as ours is today (Col. 3:3).

14. After Peter's visit to the house of Cornelius, Paul was the only man commissioned by God to herald His salvation-bringing message to the Gentiles. This ministry began in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:46, 47). Nevertheless, Paul's ministry even after Acts 13 was always to the Jew first and to the Jew primarily (Acts 13:46; Rom. 1:16; Acts 17: 1,2). He would go straight through a city without stopping if there were no company of Jews in it (Acts 17:1). The true, Biblical picture of the Acts period is one of thousands of heralds carrying the salvation-bringing message of God to every Israelite (Acts 11: 19), but only one herald taking it to the Gentiles, and this only after he had fulfilled every obligation to his own people, Israel. This may not be the picture that people want to see, but it is the true Biblical one nevertheless.

15. In the Acts period the children of Israel are likened to being "as the sand of the sea" (Rom. 9:27). It was God's purpose in these thirty-three years to sift through and test every grain of sand that made up this company. Among these were many true gems that would shine forth the moment they heard the message and saw its confirmation. These gems would have a special place and perform a special service in the day when He makes up His jewels (Mal. 3: 17). These become in truth "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6: 16).

16. At the close of the Acts period God had accomplished everything He set out to do. He had finished the work, He had cut it short in righteousness. A conclusive and concise work had been done on earth (Rom. 9: 28). Israel had heard the word and saw the works of God (Rom. 10:18). The Israel of God had been discovered (Gal. 6:16). The remnant had been established (Rom. 11:5). A definite company from among the Gentiles had been called

for His name (Acts 15: 14). Everything was ready for the full establishment of the manifest kingdom of God upon the earth (Rom. 13:11, 12). But it did not come. At the close of the Acts period all of God's kingdom purposes were suspended while He accomplishes a purpose that had never before been revealed.

17. The end of the Acts dispensation is marked by Paul's pronouncement in Acts 28: 28. The Bible student must discover when he comes to this declaration what things come to an end, what things carry through, and what new circumstances and conditions prevail. That the circumstances and conditions set forth above came to an end is obvious. That a new dispensation began is evident. The words of Acts 28:28 are of the utmost importance. Understanding that the word translated "salvation" (*soterion*) is an adjective, and that no adjective ever stands alone in a sentence (see Issue No. 8); knowing also that the word "sent" is *apostello*, and since it is used as an inanimate thing it means *authorized*, or, made freely available (see Issue No.5), I would accurately translate this passage as follows: "Let it then be known unto you that the salvation-bringing message of God has been authorized to the nations, and they will hear it."

END Issue SB009