

THE WORD OF TRUTH

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NOT FOR YOUR SAKES

The book we call the Bible gives to mankind an authoritative record of God's dealings with many people. It is a report of His ways with men and His works among men. If we give careful consideration to the declarations of God, if we become familiar with the record of His works and His ways, we will come to know His attributes and to understand His character.

To imagine things concerning God is an ancient as well as a modern practice. These imaginations of men about the nature and character of God often become things "most surely believed," and are given a place in the theologies of men. The god created by the reasonings and imaginations of men and enshrined in the theology of men is as surely an idol as the one carved by the hands of men and erected in a heathen temple. It is tragic indeed that men have fixed ideas about the nature and character of God before they come to the one Book that reveals Him.

For example, there are those who fervently believe in an imaginary god who predetermines, orders, and arranges every detail that transpires in the lives of men. They feel that this belief brings great glory to God, and that they are attributing great honor to Him when they make Him to be the arranger, director, and disposer of every event that takes place upon earth. They ransack the Scriptures for proof texts in support of this idea. A text that tells of God's dealings with certain men is spread out to teach God's dealings with all men. However, this belief cannot be held by anyone who is familiar with the Old Testament record of the works and ways of God with men, if this record is honestly considered and believed. The Old Testament record reveals that God permitted men to walk after their own ways, a conclusion that is both affirmed and proclaimed by Paul in Acts 14:16. If God ever permitted even one man to walk in his own ways, then God did not arrange or direct that man's ways, neither were his ways necessarily the ways of God.

Because men are ignorant of the works and ways of God, and because the record of His dealings with men is ignored, men do not know the true God and He is not understood. Men are told to glory in the possession of the knowledge and understanding that God is One who practices kindness, justice, and righteousness on the earth, and that He delights in these things. See Jeremiah 9:23-24. However, no one can truly glory in such knowledge or understanding except those who have learned

of these things from the record of God's works and ways with men. This record alone fully reveals His character. God may tell us in His Word that He is kind. He may be kind to us. But the kindness of God can best be understood from the records of infinite kindness that He has shown to men.

The record of God's works and ways with men will demonstrate that God does not always deal the same with all men at all times. He may enter into covenant with one man and then deal with him on the basis of that covenant, but he may deal with another apart from covenants altogether. However, whether He deals with men on the basis of a covenant, or deals with them apart from a covenant, we know that the same principles always adhere in His dealings with men. Honest men will always deal honestly. The absence or presence of a written contract will not affect their honesty in the least. Moral men are always moral whether they are at home or among strangers. If a man goes to extremes to maintain good character on one occasion, we consider it a normal thing for him to do so on every occasion.

Even so it is with our God. His works and His ways upon one occasion are an indication of what He will do on another occasion of like circumstances. The principle He establishes by His dealings under one circumstance is a sure indication of His principles under similar circumstances. Therefore, if we find in the Bible a clear, unmistakable record of God on one occasion doing something that results in great blessing for many people, and yet not doing it for their sakes, we need not be surprised to find God acting in this same way on other occasions. In other words, we expect to show a record of men being blessed by the work of God, even though God did not primarily intend that His work should be a blessing to them. We find a clear example of this in Ezekiel 36:16-38, and this passage will provide the sure foundation for the truth to be presented in this study. We will consider this portion by portion.

Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before Me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Wherefore I poured My fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for the idols wherewith they had polluted it: And I scattered them among the heathen. and they were dispersed through the countries according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. Ezekiel 36:16-19.

From this we learn that Israel's sins brought tragic results. They were driven from their land and scattered among other nations. God poured His fury among them and judged them in harmony with their ways and their doings. This was the God of justice and righteousness dealing justly and righteously with Israel.

And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned My holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the Lord and are gone forth out of His land. Ezekiel 36:20.

When Israel went among the nations they profaned the name of the Lord. This was done when the people of these countries said of the men of Israel, "**The people of Jehovah are these! Yet from His land have they come forth!**" These words were in all probability spoken sarcastically against Israel. If they were Jehovah's people, why were they scattered? If the land were His land, why had they left it? This was the taunt of the people into whose lands they entered. Thus, Israel's presence in other lands profaned the name of the Lord. What this means will be considered later. At present it is desired only to establish the fact that men have and men can profane or misrepresent the name of the Lord.

But I had pity for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore, say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned

among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify My great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. Ezekiel 36:21-23.

In each verse of this portion we are told of God's great concern over the profanation of His name, and of His determination to redeem and sanctify it. God's judgment upon Israel had laid His name, Jehovah, open to ridicule among the nations where they had gone. He will cause these nations to know that He is Jehovah. The method by which He will sanctify His name is revealed in the declaration that follows:

For I will take you from among the heathen and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh, And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep *my* judgments and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and ye shall be my people and I will be your God. Ezekiel 36:24-28.

These words set forth great, spiritual blessings. Israel is to be regathered and brought back to her own land. By means of His word God will cleanse them from all their filthiness and from their dirty idols, He will give them a new heart and put His spirit within them. These marvelous spiritual blessings come to Israel as the result of God sanctifying His great name, which they profaned among the nations. But this is not all. They will be blessed materially.

I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Ezekiel 36:29-30.

These great spiritual and material blessings will result in the repentance and self-judgment of those who are benefited by them. Truly, the goodness of God will lead them to repentance. This is declared in the next verse.

Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Ezekiel 36:31.

Following this God repeats His great assertion, which He has already stated in a twofold way in verse twenty-two.

NOT FOR YOUR SAKES DO I THIS, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Ezekiel 36:32.

Thus we have before us a clear and unmistakable record of God doing a thing that will result in great blessing for many people, and yet the thing, which He does is not for their sakes but for the sake of His own name. God does not do this work in order to bless Israel. He does not do it in regard to, or with respect to Israel. He does not do it with Israel in view. He does it with His own name in view, and the blessing of the people is the by-product of His work. The primary purpose of this work is the sanctification of His great name. The by-product of it is the blessing of many people.

With this portion of Scripture before us we are now ready to consider certain great truths which it suggests to our minds. The first of these is:

God's Holy and Great Name

The obvious should never be pointed out, but it needs to be stated that as a rule a name is the title or term by which a person or thing is designated. This being true it matters little what a person or thing may be called as long as the name is recognized as signifying that certain person or thing. There are few names that have any meaning. Our personal names are merely the titles by which our parents decided we should be designated. The names of things are the terms that men agree a certain thing shall be called. If they agree to do so they can drop one designation and adopt another. As Shakespeare has said:

**What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.**

However, the names of God are not like this. They are descriptive appellations which He has declared concerning Himself because of His character. Thus by a simple transition the name of God stands for His character. His name is what He is. It is not the title by which we designate Him.

Of Jesus Christ it has been declared:

His NAME shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6.

Here it is plain that His "name" is His character, what He is. In telling of His character His people will say, "He is Wonderful, He is Counsellor, He is the Mighty God, He is the Everlasting Father, He is the Prince of Peace. This is seen also in **Psalm 9:10**, where it is said:

And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee.

Those who know God, those who are acquainted with His character, those who know what He is are the ones who put their trust in Him. Some put a feigned trust in an imaginary God, but those who have come to know the God of the Scriptures place their unfeigned faith in the true God.

That God's name is His character is a fact that is established by Scripture. However, there is an additional truth, which we need to recognize. God's name is also His reputation. Character and reputation are closely allied yet they are distinct. The distinction between these is seen in the saying, "Some men lose their character trying to save their reputation." It is seen more clearly in this quotation from Abbott.

"It would be well if *character* and *reputation* were used distinctively. In truth, character is what a person is, reputation is what he is supposed to be. Character is in himself, reputation is in the mind of others. Character is injured by temptations, and by wrong doing; reputation, by slanders and libels. Character endures throughout defamation in every form, but perishes when there is a voluntary transgression; reputation may last through numerous transgressions, but be destroyed by a single, and even an unfounded, accusation or aspersion."

God's dealings with Israel could never touch or change in the least His character. In fact it was the holiness of His character that required Him to punish them for their idolatry. Israel under judgment, when seen by other nations, damaged the reputation (name) of God, for these were His people! He could have saved His reputation (name) by ignoring their sins, but this would have destroyed His character. They caused His reputation (name) to be profaned among the nations. But, we have His word for it that He will someday sanctify His great name among the nations, and that they shall know that He is Jehovah; that is, the One who makes and keeps covenants with men. See Deuteronomy 7:9.

Having established from Scripture the significance of the "name" of God, we are now ready to consider:

God's Great Name Proclaimed

The Bible reveals that in many places and on many occasions God has proclaimed His name. He has told men who He is and what He is. He has announced His character-and His attributes. God desires to be esteemed in harmony with the revelation He has given of Himself. One of the first of these-proclamations is found in His revelation to Abraham.

I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect. Genesis 17:1.

The truth is almost lost here by the translation. The Hebrew for "Almighty God" is *El Shaddai*. *El* is the strong One, the mighty Creator of the universe. *Shaddai* is formed from the Hebrew word *shad*, meaning the breast. It is used throughout Scripture for a woman's breast. The two names used together signify the mighty Creator as the Nourisher and Strength-giver, the One who is able to satisfy every need of believing lives. Even as the mother gives of herself to the babe, even so He pours Himself into the lives of His believing people. Thus in this great proclamation we find God declaring Himself to be the source of grace. He announces, not that He is Creator, but that He is the Giver. Abraham had been separated from all men, even his nearest kin. God had caused him to walk and live as a solitary individual. In view of these circumstances, God revealed Himself to Abraham, and indirectly to us as the One who is the source and supply of every need. Here Abraham learned that Elohim is a God of all grace.

The next great proclamation of the Name of God came when Moses made request that God would show him His glory. (Exodus 33:18.) Inasmuch as the context of this passage concerns God's grace, no conclusion is possible but that Moses desired to know of the glory of His grace. In answer God declared that He would make all His goodness pass before Him, that He would proclaim the NAME of the Lord, that He would show grace to whom He may show grace, and mercy (tender love) to whom He would show mercy. The words *goodness*, *grace*, and *mercy* in the *King James Version* are three distinct Hebrew words, all of them revealing some aspect of God's grace. The full answer to Moses' request is found in Exodus 34:5-7.

And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with Him there. and proclaimed the NAME of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and the fourth generation. Exodus 34:5-7.

This proclamation by God of His character has been called *The Refrain of the Bible*. Over and over, parts of this fundamental revelation are repeated, bringing it to the attention of the reader again and again. The refrain, the burden, the chorus of the Bible tells us again and again that God is a God of grace. Some of this great truth is lost in translating the first half of this portion (verse 6) and it is denied by the mistranslation of the last half (verse 7). The interpretations men have founded upon this mistranslation have further obscured the great proclamation of the graciousness of God's character.

Every statement in Exodus 34:6-7 proclaims and magnifies the grace of God. Various words are used to declare this, various acts are set forth to illustrate it, but they all declare that God is a God of grace. Let us examine these:

1. **Merciful.** The Hebrew word here means compassionate. It will become clearer in meaning if we translate it by the phrase "full of tender love."

2. **Gracious**. This means full *of* grace or favor.
3. **Longsuffering**. This means patient, or slow to anger.
4. **Abundant in goodness**. Or, to express it in other words, abundant in lovingkindness. Our word *abundant* comes from a Latin word meaning wave. The proclamation here tells us that God deals with His people in wave upon wave *of* overflowing goodness. He treats His own with a kindness that is based solely on His love.
5. **Abundant in truth**. The word *truth* should be faithfulness. It tells *of* the manner in which God deals with His people.
6. **Keeping mercy for thousands**. This means that He maintains lovingkindness to a thousand generations.
7. **Forgiving** iniquity and transgression and sin. He is not unforgiving. All classifications of guilt are forgiven by Him. He does not clear the, guilty until forgiven, but He does clear the forgiven.
8. If God had visited the sin of Israel upon the generation which made the golden calf, there would have been no second, third, and fourth generations. He did not punish all at once, but settled it on installments through three or four generations. This was an act of divine grace to *four* generations, for the generations that inherited a part of the punishment also inherited the exceeding rich and precious promises that God made to Israel. This statement applied only to Israel, and there is no indication that God ever did such a thing before or that He has ever done it again. He did do it once as an act of grace toward four generations of Israelites.

Thus we see that when God proclaimed His name (character) to Moses, He proclaimed that He is a God of grace. Every statement in Exodus 34:6-7 magnifies and exalts the grace of God. They reveal the graciousness of His character.

In the Old Testament, six or more Hebrew words are used to set forth God's grace. These words appear again and again throughout the Old Testament in connection with the revelation of the character of God. They give a constant witness to the fact that He is the God of every grace. While the heavens declare the glory of God's creative power, the Bible declares the glory of His grace.

God's Name Profaned

In spite of the oft repeated declarations of the graciousness of God's character, men in all times have steadfastly refused to believe Him to be a gracious God. This is seen throughout the Old Testament. For example, the very people who had the written testimony that revealed Him as a God of grace, imagined Him to be a God who required of them that they offer their children as a burnt offering. Concerning this God said, "which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into My mind." See Jeremiah 19:5. If men had believed His witness of Himself they would have come to Him, trusted Him, and found their all in Him. The desire of God, the grace of God, and the people's refusal to respond to that grace is summed up in the words of Christ in **Luke 13:34**:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

The failure of mankind to respond to God's revelation of the graciousness of His character profaned the name of God. Therefore, if God acts upon the same principle that He acted upon when Israel profaned His name, it is reasonable to expect that He will take the steps and do the thing, which will forever demonstrate that He is a *God* of grace and establish this fact beyond all question. This is what *God* is now doing. This is His present purpose.

What God Is Now Doing

"Everything is so confused. Nothing seems to make sense. I sometimes wonder if God knows what He is doing." These were the words of a chance acquaintance, spoken in reference to the confusion that exists in the world today. His statements revealed his lack of knowledge concerning God's present purposes. If he had known what God is doing now, these words *of* doubt would never have come from his lips.

An understanding of God's present purpose, the accurate knowledge *of* what God is now doing, the full appreciation of the goal of His present operations toward the world and in the world would do much to dispel doubt and to put the hearts and minds *of* His children at ease. In the day when men's hearts are failing because *of* fear, we need the full assurance of understanding that comes *from* knowing God's present purpose.

Men decide that *God* should do a certain thing, then they reproach Him *for* not doing it. On every hand God is blamed for not doing things, which at present He has no intention of doing. Many believe that God's only purpose today is to sit as a servant, awaiting man's orders, requests, or wishes. They think that His sole duty is to fulfill the desires of men, and they often reproach Him bitterly when some demand they have made of Him is ignored. Some think that God has no program, that He improvises from day to day, hoping some new scheme or effort will work some unexpected good result. Others believe that if God has a purpose, we cannot know what it is.

But God has spoken. The pages *of* His Word reveal that He does have a definite purpose, that He is working toward a positive goal that He is seeking to accomplish a definite mission. His present purpose is steadfast. It will not change until it has been fully accomplished.

In order to gain a true understanding of what God is now doing, we will need to consider some things He is *not* doing. This is necessary because of the gratuitous assumptions which mislead so many. Many believe that God's present operations are for the purpose of establishing the kingdom of heaven upon the earth. They hold that He is producing the subjects *for* His kingdom. In order to help Him as much as possible, they are busily engaged in what they are pleased to call "kingdom work" But, even though they are sincere, they are sincerely wrong, for God is not seeking today to establish His kingdom upon the earth. If this were His purpose, the goal would have been reached long ago. Facts are stubborn things, and the evident facts tell us that the world as a whole is as far removed morally and spiritually from the kingdom of God as it was 1900 years ago.

Others assume that the work of God today is to recruit men from the inhabitants of the earth to make up the army of the redeemed in heaven. A companion idea to this is that God's activities today consist in His visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His Name. James' declaration in Acts 15:14 is freely quoted in support of this idea, but this passage describes the divine purpose in the Acts period, and it does not set forth the purpose of God in the present dispensation. God's purpose in the Acts period concerned a remnant in Israel and a people from among the Gentiles. But His present purpose is not centered in men, either Jew or Gentile, even though myriads out of both have been blessed as a result of the outworking of His present purpose. God's present purpose is related to Himself. What He is now doing is not for man's sake; it is for the sake of His name.

God's Present Purpose

At the present time the purpose of God is to fully demonstrate and establish the graciousness of His character. He proclaimed it in former times and exhibited grace in many ways, but at present He is making a full demonstration of it. This is being done through an administration (dispensation) of grace. (See **Ephesians 3:2.**) God's assertion that He is gracious is now being demonstrated in such manner that it will stand as a fact established in the coming eons.

Every man has a right to assert his honesty, if he is honest. However, once the assertion is made, it can only be demonstrated by many years of honest acting and honest living. God, having repeatedly asserted that He is gracious, is now demonstrating it by gracious acting in an administration that has already continued 1900 years.

In Ephesians 3:2 God announced through Paul that His administration would be one of grace. This statement is absolute, permitting no qualifications. An administration is a method of dealing. Therefore, God is bound by His word to deal only in grace. If He cannot act in grace, He will not act at all. He is pledged to deal with men only in tender love, patience, lovingkindness and goodness. He is doing this passively to such an extent that even though men should spit in His face, He will not punish them for it until this administration of grace has ended. He is doing this actively by convicting, drawing, quickening, and calling the sinner. And even if the sinner refuses to respond to this gracious work, it in no way alters the fact that God has been gracious in seeking him.

God's present purpose is not primarily related to men. What He is now doing is not for man's sake. It is for the sake of His own name. Man enters into the picture because God would have him to know that He is a God of grace. The by-product of God's present purpose to demonstrate the graciousness of His character has been millions redeemed and forgiven. These have not received the grace of God in vain. Responding by faith to God's gracious work, they have entered into life. Continuing in faith they have found Him able and willing to do exceedingly, abundantly above all they were able to ask or to think.

The Dispensation of Grace

The thirty-three years covered by the book of Acts is no part of the administration of the grace of God. Once we become familiar with the divine history of that period, and with the epistles written during that time, we will know that it was characterized by *some* judgment and *much* grace. In fact we see so many demonstrations of grace in the Acts period that we know more grace was shown then than had ever been shown before. Grace abounded; the gospel of grace was being proclaimed; grace was reigning through righteousness unto eternal life; a remnant in Israel was blessed according to the choice of grace; and grace had been the means of blessing to many Gentiles. In fact, so much of God's grace is seen in the Acts period that it is understandable why many should think that it was the dispensation of grace. But it was not. In spite of the abundance of grace, there was some judgment; and personal judgments always hung over the people as a threat. There was the threat that they would be cut off from Israel if they refused to believe; a judgment that occurred again and again during the Acts period (Acts 3:23; Romans 11:22). God's judgment descended on Ananias, and later on his wife Sapphira (Acts 5). Simon stood face to face with personal destruction (Acts 8:20). Saul was smitten with blindness (Acts 9:8), and King Herod died because He failed to give God the glory (Acts 12:23). Bar-jesus was blinded by a word from Paul (Acts 13:11). In Corinth many were sick and some were dead due to the fact that they had partaken of the sacred bread and cup in an unworthy manner (I Cor. 11:29-30). Truly the Acts period was a time when "goodness and severity" walked hand in hand. God's goodness was predominant, but the severity of justice was felt by many. Therefore, in spite of the grace that was manifested it was not an administration of grace. The presence of judgments altered its character, and God Himself made no claim that He was dealing solely in grace.

However, God does make such a claim after the close of the Acts period. Through Paul, He announces an administration (dispensation) of grace. This can mean nothing else save that His one method of dealing with the world and with His own in the world is to be entirely gracious. All judgment and punishment is in abeyance until the dispensation of grace has ended and a day of judgment begins.

If the prophecies are examined that set forth the events that take place at the close of this present evil eon, it will be found that that time is characterized by much judgment and little grace. There will be those who come out of the great tribulation and will wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the lamb. This is most certainly a manifestation of grace. But judgment predominates for we read of such events as **"the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pain and their sores, and repented not of their deeds"** (Revelation 16:10-11).

Therefore, if we look back at the Acts period we see much grace and little judgment. It was not an administration of grace. If we look forward to the closing events of this age we see much judgment and little grace. It will not be an administration of grace. But if we take God's word for it, we look at the present time and know that it is all grace. This is the administration (dispensation) of the grace of God. The purpose of this administration is to demonstrate and establish the graciousness of God's character.

Grace Magnified

There are two great truths in the Bible, which greatly magnify the grace of God. The first of these is set before us when Genesis is linked up with Ephesians. The first great act of God revealed in the Word is that of creation. This demonstrates the mighty power of God. The next great act that is set before us is one of judgment. By this the original creation became waste and empty. However, in Ephesians we are told that this act of judgment was preceded by a great act of grace. A company was chosen in Him before the overthrow (foundation) of the world (Eph. 1:4). Thus we have it, (1) The great act of creation, (2) the great act of grace, (3) the great act of judgment. This company that God determined upon before He judged the original creation is the ecclesia, which is His body. This company will sum up, express, and display the grace of God in the coming eons. See Ephesians 1:6 and 2:7. These facts tell us that the Creator is first of all a God of grace. Grace is predominant in His character.

The next great truth is seen when we consider the place of the dispensation of grace in relationship to the declared purposes of God. These purposes have been set forth in previous issues of this magazine. In those studies it was shown that when we come to the close of the book of Acts, two great purposes have been completed. A remnant in Israel has been blessed and a people from the Gentiles has been taken out for His name. God had committed Himself to make a "short work" of accomplishing these two purposes (Romans 9:27-28). He completed this work in thirty-three years, and upon completing it the way was clear for the accomplishment of His other purposes set forth in His prophetic program.

God's two purposes in the Acts period were a unit. They intertwined in such a way that they needed to be accomplished at the same time. The remnant of Israel required a Gentile complement. The steps that remain in order to bring this evil eon to its close are also connected and intertwined in such a way that once God starts there can be no delays, no postponements until the full end has been reached. The things set forth in the book of Revelation will come to pass "with speed" once they begin. This is the meaning of "shortly" in Revelation 1:1. Once these events begin they will move swiftly to their conclusion and bring about all the judgments designated by the seals, trumpets, and vials. One shudders as he reads of those things, which are surely coming upon this earth. It will be "the great day of His wrath."

Thus, the Scriptures give us a picture of God at the close of that period covered by the book of Acts, ready to take the steps which according to His revealed prophetic program should follow. It was the expectation of all of God's people that these steps should immediately follow. "The time is short;" "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly;" "the coming of the Lord

draweth nigh;" "the end of all things is at hand;" "it is the last time." These were the words of His servants in that time. But it did not come. For as God stood face-to-face with the beginning of those events which would eventuate in such frightful judgments, He postponed His whole prophetic program, while He demonstrates His grace in an administration of grace.

God is lingering long while He deals with men in grace. He has taken 1900 years to demonstrate that He is a God of grace. He will hasten when He executes judgments. The vials of His wrath will be poured out in thirty days. The tribulation covers only 1260 days. God must judge, but this is not His desire. He desires to be gracious.

The End

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS

These studies in the book of Acts are not to be a critical commentary. It is my desire that they shall be an honest effort to set forth what the Holy Spirit desired us to know and understand when He inspired Luke to set down the message recorded in this book. My personal love for this portion of the Word has led me to read it hundreds of times, to study and meditate upon every word of it, to read what other men have to say about it, and to expound it repeatedly as opportunities have arisen for me to do so.

It has never been my practice to keep detailed records of my personal ministry; therefore, it is not possible for me to say how many times I have read, studied, and taught the book of Acts in the past fifteen years. I clearly remember fifteen distinct times when I have expounded it verse by verse to groups of interested hearers. On numerous other occasions I have dealt with various portions, and feel sure that in so doing every part of it has been expounded an additional two or three times. These expositions have not been a set formal series of lectures, as each one has been preceded by a new study of the book and new development of each truth presented. In an eleven-year period I taught the book of Acts four times to the same group of people. Each presentation brought forth truth in advance of the previous one. I remember now the numerous questions asked by my hearers, the difficulties they presented, the problems brought up for solution, and the intimations of truth they at times offered, which when traced out proved to be light from God upon this book. All this has helped to develop, season and mature these studies. I believe. I now know how and what the average believer thinks when he reads Acts. These studies are written with him in view.

Commentaries and expositions on the book of Acts are innumerable. I have made a careful study of about twelve of these and cursory examinations of about twenty-five more. I am a student of the Book and not of books about the Book. Nevertheless, those treatises on the book of Acts, which I have considered have brought about the conviction that this book has not been treated fairly. A theory, an idea, or a theological system is brought to it, imposed upon it, then every passage is placed upon the torture rack and twisted until it is made to confess agreement with these theories. Such statements as "Acts is the earliest history of the church," and "Acts is the fundamental outline of church government, church discipline and church organization," are made as if they were the pronouncements of God concerning this book. These fictional ideas concerning Acts are so ingrained in the minds of many that they hold the mastery over the inner being of the student affecting his mental powers in such a way that they effectually pervert and nullify his vision to the extent that they drive him to false conclusions.

(Dear Readers - - take especial note of this following paragraph - - Archiver)

Thus it is that the most deliberate and studious (yes, even scholarly) attempts are made at the very beginning of Acts to get the Jew out of the picture and to bring the Gentile in, to exclude Israel and bring in a new thing called "the church," to eliminate circumcision and establish water baptism in its place, to get the law out and grace in, to do away with the Passover and to bring in a "sacrament," to eliminate Israel's sabbath and substitute "the first day of the week." In order to do this every fact about the Jew or Israel is ignored, every address to them is applied to others, every truth about circumcision is denied; then every fact about the Gentile is magnified out of all proportion, and every line about baptism is proclaimed from the housetops. So Pentecost, a Jewish feast day, becomes the birthday of the church; the seven men chosen in Acts 6 become "the first deacons of the church;" even the gift of tongues is made to be "the new language of the church;" and the simple breaking of bread is no longer a common meal, it becomes "the Lord's supper."

These fictional assumptions make a true understanding of Acts to be impossible for those who hold them. We know that today it is humanly impossible for the average Jew to form a true estimate of Jesus Christ. An inner force of fictional assumptions impels him to falsehood. Even so it is with the average churchman and denominationalist of today. An inner force also impels them to falsehood. They *must* see a church program in Acts. Yes, it must be their church, their denomination, their church program.

Some will probably accuse me of this same fault. They will insist that I come to Acts with a different set of fictional ideas, and that I will impose these upon the book of Acts. Having charged others with this fault, I would sin if I became angry when they lay the same charge at my door. If the charge is made in good faith, it calls for solemn self-examination before God. Having repeatedly done this I can honestly say that I approach Acts with no desire but to discover the truth that God has placed there. I have no theories to prove, no doctrinal platform to maintain, no certain belief to uphold. I believe that truth is that which accords with the facts; therefore, I shall seek to find the facts that God has deposited there. I will not imagine facts, distort facts, or ignore facts. I am entirely free to conform in thought, teaching and practice to every fact revealed in the Book.

The Character of the Acts Period

If the history of a period is honest, it will truly reveal the character of that period. The book of Acts is the history of a thirty-three year period, and its revelation of the character of that period is honest. When one becomes completely familiar with that period, he will realize that God's method of dealing with men at that time was somewhat different from what it is today. The character of the Acts period resulted from certain great truths that were operating in full force at that time. Chief among these truths is the divine program revealed in **Mark 16:15-18**.

And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

And these sign shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

These words tell us what the believer in the Acts period could expect of God, what God required of him and what God would do on his behalf. An examination of this passage step by step will reveal that it was in full force, and the expectations it created in the hearts of his disciples were fully realized in that era of which Acts is the history. When His servants preached the Word, God confirmed their message with signs following.

There are certain extraneous truths in connection with Acts that should be firmly fixed in the mind of the student. The writer was Luke, the same Luke who wrote the third gospel. The history covers a period of about thirty-three years. In the Acts period Paul wrote I and II Thessalonians, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans. These epistles take on the character of the time in which they were written. At the end of chapter seventeen I Thessalonians was written; II Thessalonians at the end of chapter eighteen; I Corinthians was written at the end of chapter nineteen; and II Corinthians at chapter twenty, verse two, just before Paul departed for Greece. Romans was written at the end of chapter twenty. There is much dispute about the date of the Galatian epistle. I am somewhat hesitant about locating it in relationship to the events recorded in Acts. It may have been Paul's earliest epistle.

In considering Acts, all of Paul's epistles written in the Acts period will be linked up with the history of that time. Thus sacred history and divine truth will be seen to be in perfect harmony.

Acts Chapter One

1:1-2. The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. until the day in which He was taken up, after that He through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen.

The former treatise is literally the first account, and it refers to the gospel of Luke. Theophilus is also mentioned in Luke 1:3. Acts is a continuation of the account of our Lord's ministries as recorded in Luke. The terminus of the gospel of Luke is the ascension, and this same event opens the account in Acts—even as the last note in an octave is the first note of the next. In the forty days that elapsed between His resurrection and ascension, He gave directions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen. These directions were not commandments, in the sense of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" with penalties fixed for violations. In Hebrews 11:22 we read that Joseph "gave commandment concerning his bones." If the record of this is read in Genesis 50 it will be found that Joseph gave his sons directions concerning what should be done about his remains when God delivered them from the land of Egypt.

It is generally believed that the "commandments" spoken of in Acts 1:2 are the commissions found in Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:27, and John 20:21-23. This is not necessarily so, for while we are not told what these directions were we can rest assured that they supplemented and explained the commissions. Therefore, when we see the disciples acting in a manner that appears to be out of harmony with these commissions, we can assume they were acting in full harmony with the directions spoken of in Acts 1:2. Thus, the apostles themselves never went out to all nations. In fact, Peter was opposed by them when he went to the Gentile Cornelius. They never baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (See Acts 2:38, 8:16). While we are not told what these directions were, we can find what they were by examining the deeds of the apostles recorded in the early chapters of Acts. Never before in the Word did men move more surely in the will of God than did these men in the days that followed their receiving directions from the Lord. If we know that a faithful workman has received directions from his superior, just watch him and you will soon discover what those directions were. We know these faithful apostles received directions from the Lord. By their acts we discover the content of these directions.

The word *chosen* here is the same word that is often translated "elected." This carries us back to Luke 6:13 where we learn that from among His disciples the Lord chose (elected) twelve. These men were elected from among disciples for special service in relationship to the Lord. In view of this, angels can be elected as well as men. See I Timothy 5:21. Election has no bearing upon the gift of eternal life. This will become plain if every passage in which the Greek word *eklektos* appears is examined.

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THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

My service for the Lord is now in its thirtieth year. This service has always been centered in the Word of God rather than in men. It has always been my goal to study, to gain knowledge, to interpret, and to proclaim the Sacred Scriptures. In the first ten years in the Lord's service, I was a student, but not the right kind of a student. Most of my study during those early years was devoted to what other men had written about the Bible. This was not altogether a waste of time. Possessing a retentive memory I gained an education through reading several thousand books and pamphlets that dealt with Biblical subjects. However, the Word was not neglected. Desiring to be a preacher and teacher of the Word, and with almost unlimited opportunities to exercise this desire, I began to grow rapidly in a personal knowledge of the Scriptures. This knowledge came from reading the Word, reading about the Word, and expounding it before groups to whom I ministered. Some groups did not relish Bible exposition on Sunday morning, as they felt this should be relegated to the Sunday School or Mid-week service, but they got it whether they cared for it or not. This ministry brought real familiarity with the Word, but my understanding of what the Word meant came from the writings of those men who were prominent in the system of theology that I had determined to follow. I did not interpret; I dared not interpret; I felt unqualified to interpret. I never once thought that God would show me something in the Word that was not already written in the books of my favorite teachers.

It was about 1928 that I first began to see things in the Word for myself. At first I began to see in the Word some of the things I had already learned, but with a new clarity. I was now able to hold these and proclaim them with an assurance resulting from having seen them in the Bible. I felt somewhat in the position of the Samaritan men who had believed on Christ because of the saying of the Samaritan woman:

And many more believed because of His own word, and said unto the woman, Now we believe not because of *thy* saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world. John 4:41-42.

The Word was now speaking to me and I was seeing in it what other men had seen before me. But, I was also seeing that some things they taught were not in the Word, and that it would now be necessary for me to judge between truth and error whenever I read the writings of any man. The Word had become my teacher. Never again could I place myself under the authority of some great system, and let it dictate my beliefs and rule my thoughts and feelings. The first matter that had to be judged concerned that great system which men call "the church." I became convinced that men were using passages in which the word *church* appeared for the purpose of giving human organizations divine authority. These organizations were given a place of essentiality along with the Lord Jesus and exalted to a place of supremacy over the Word of God. As this conviction grew, I lost all interest in "the church" and its programs, and this loss of interest caused me in due time to find my ministry and sphere of service outside of the churches altogether.

Two events that occurred in 1929 had a profound influence upon my ministry. The first was a doctrinal controversy in the Baptist congregation of which I was the pastor. This concerned faith healing, the gift of tongues, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an experience following salvation. The leading man in that congregation had swallowed wholly the teachings of Mrs. McPherson. He was a capable and fearless man, and was logical enough to base every one of his arguments in favor of his views on I Corinthians. This put me in an exceedingly embarrassing position as I had swallowed wholly the Plymouth Brethren platitude that "First Corinthians is the charter of the church." Since I had preached this from the pulpit, he was calling upon me to abide by the charter. This drove me into a new and independent study of Acts and Corinthians, with the net result that I had more problems to solve and more difficulties to clear up than I had ever had before. I turned to every writer that was available to me but was disappointed. Writer after writer pointed out the obvious, but ignored the difficult. Simple truths were expounded at length, but obscure passages were passed over hurriedly.

The second event was the gift from a friend of a book entitled *The Silence of God* by Sir Robert Anderson. **In this I found the suggestions:**

"We must needs recognize the intensely Jewish character of the Pentecostal dispensation. The Jerusalem Church, then, was Jewish. Their Bible was the Jewish Scriptures. The Jewish temple was their house of prayer and common meeting-place. Their beliefs and hopes and words and acts all marked them out as Jews. My contention is that the Acts, as a whole, is the record of a temporary and transitional dispensation in which blessing was again offered to the Jews and again rejected."

These intimations of truth became the basis of a new approach to the problems of I Corinthians and Acts. They caused these books to glow with a new light and glory. And **while my teaching has gone far beyond the teachings set forth in *The Silence Of God*, it is to this book that I am indebted for my first glimpse of full dispensational truth.** I immediately applied the truth concerning Acts to the epistles written in that period. Thus, I avoided what I believe was Sir Robert Anderson's greatest weakness. He divorced the epistles of Paul written during the Acts from the Acts period. By so doing he divorced the truth of the period from the history of the same period. I have always contended that epistles get their character from the truth that prevailed in the time in which they were written. I refuse to consider that Paul ministered one system of truth when he spoke (as recorded in Acts) and another system when he wrote.

It was about this time that I became impressed with the truth that "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." This led me to put myself under the guidance of God's Spirit by continuously surrendering to Him in every detail related to study of His Word. I determined not to formulate a creed, not to become bound to my own teachings, and never to manufacture a doctrine. However, I determined that when as a result of my studies in the Word I saw a truth, I would embrace it, proclaim it, and take every consequence that came from so doing. **In 1934 the issue of water baptism and the so-called "Lord's supper" arose.** I sought truth concerning these from the Word, found it, embraced and declared it, and this brought about a complete severance from every religious system of this world. Since then I have been free to believe and to act upon every line of truth, which I have uncovered, recovered, or gained from any source whatsoever. No longer do I need to pay a price to get freedom to believe the truth. I have nothing to lose and everything to gain by receiving and proclaiming every bit of truth into which God leads me.

In the past fifteen years I have usually ministered the Word to three or more groups at the same time. Since these have mostly been small, informal meetings they have afforded wonderful opportunities to develop and season my findings and to clarify the presentation of the truth discovered in my studies. I readily admit that there have been times when I thought I had a golden

nugget of truth only to have it turn out to be worthless when presented to a class of students.

Familiarity with the Bible has increased every week during the past fifteen years, and by honest application of the divine laws of interpretation, I have found truth on almost every page of the Book. At times it has seemed to roll forth into my lap, but this has not been true in every case. I remember well the thousands of wells I have drilled hoping to find the water of truth only to discover I had drilled a dry hole. Many hours have been spent in investigation and research because of something that seemed to be an intimation of truth, only to find it flatly contradicted by the Word. But such efforts are never a total loss, for familiarity with the Word is increased by them.

In spite of the burdens and problems of the past year, it has been one of intensive effort in the Scripture, and has resulted in the uncovering of much truth. About 340 actual hours of time have been spent with Messrs. Julien, Baudistel, Ribbens and Robinson in intensive study of the Scripture. The further opportunity of ministering to a new company of believers whom I had not taught before, except by the written ministry, has made possible the public review of many great themes of Scripture. Their labors have been exceedingly profitable and they have resulted in many new convictions concerning the interpretation of the Word of God. In all humility I wish to say that it has been my joy and privilege to uncover some exceedingly blessed and important truths during the past year. Men are sure to find gold if they look long enough in the right place, and they are just as sure to discover truth if they look long enough with the eye of faith into the Word of God. One discovery will always lead to other truths. I have found this to be true.

The truth that has been discovered on "Ecclesia" has already been presented to eight groups, and this study has resulted in great rejoicing among those who have heard it. Some readers having heard reports about these studies are writing in for them, but not a line on them has been printed up to this time. The new light from the Word on "the Head and the Body," has been presented only in Los Angeles. The friends here believe that this is one of the most illuminating truths they have ever considered. These truths are radically different and quite revolutionary, yet they are so simple in their nature and so overwhelming in their character that I feel sure they will commend themselves as truth to all who love truth. I cannot say when these will be available in print, as much work remains to be done in developing them to the point where they are ready for presentation in printed form.

In connection with this it seems apropos to add that the abundance of material I desire to present in printed form, the need for making reprints of literature which is now out of stock, the demand for literature (tracts and leaflets) for general wide spread distribution, indicates that it is time for us to make some more convenient and economical provision for the printing and reproducing of it. Numerous plans have been considered and some, after careful thought and study, have commended themselves as being good and filling our need. We are busily engaged now in working out one of these plans. The friends of this ministry will be hearing from us concerning this in the near future.

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

****My visit to Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New York State, and Pennsylvania was of such nature that it will always stand out in my mind as one of the most enjoyable experiences of my ministry. I was anxious to make this trip in order to present some newly recovered truths to the various groups to whom I had previously ministered. This afforded an opportunity to season, develop, and test these findings. My ministry was well received in every place visited and the friends of the ministry rejoiced in the advances that had been made in the labors of uncovering and recovering the truth of God's precious Word.

I left Los Angeles by train on Monday, September 20, and two days later I was ministering in Rockford, Illinois. Four nights were given to the conference there. The interest in the studies was most gratifying and the attendance was up to my expectations. On Sunday, September 26, I went to Chicago for a special afternoon and evening meeting in Evanston. Friends of the ministry gathered from many places, resulting in the largest attendance I have ever enjoyed in Chicago. The studies presented brought many sincere words of appreciation from those present. On Monday I traveled on for my first visit to Bremen, Indiana, where some friends I had made through the radio ministry had arranged a meeting. It was a joy to see about ninety present and to meet these friends of the ministry for the first time.

Tuesday night was spent with Carl Elleby and the friends of the ministry in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The attendance far exceeded his and my expectations and interest in the study presented was most gratifying. Wednesday night was spent with Garret Hazekamp and the Muskegon Bible Fellowship. Here we experienced the first and only night of bad weather, but the warm response to the message by those present more than made up for the loss of attendance. Thursday and Friday were spent in Grand Rapids, Michigan with the good friends to whom I ministered the Word for almost twelve years. The response here brought great joy to my heart. Keen interest was manifested in the studies presented.

On Saturday I journeyed to Buffalo, New York, where studies were presented on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. It was good to fellowship with these friends once more and to have in the audience friends from Toronto, Ontario, and Niagara Falls.

Thursday night marked the beginning of a four-day conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. My first visit to Philadelphia was made fourteen years ago. Since then I have come to look forward with happy anticipation to my visits there for the purpose of ministering the Word. The brethren there are good friends whom I prize highly. This visit with them fulfilled my highest expectations. I feel much was accomplished in the hearts of both teacher and hearers through the Word applied by the Spirit of God.

I wish to express my thanks to everyone who had part in making this trip such a pleasant experience. I look forward already to my next visit with you, which, if the Lord wills, should be about the last two weeks of April and the first two weeks of May.

****Two monthly meetings have already been held in Fresno, California. The next meetings will be on November 18 and 19 and December 16 and 17. These dates fall on Thursday and Friday. Three studies will be presented at each meeting, beginning on Thursday at 8:00 P.M. Friday at 2:30 P.M. and 8:00 P.M. The place of meeting is *Huntzicker Memorial Home*, 245 North Calveras Avenue. .

*****The Chicago Bible Fellowship and The Rockford Bible Fellowship have recently taken important forward steps which will greatly increase the value and effectiveness of these two testimonies. Mr. Hershey Julien has been invited by these two groups to be their minister. He has accepted the invitation and is now making his home in Rockford, Illinois. Regular Sunday services have been established by both groups. Readers of *The Word of Truth* are already acquainted with Mr. Julien as he was introduced to them in Volume 10, Number 1 of this publication, and they met him again in his excellent study on *The Case of Judas Iscariot* in Volume 10, Number 3. During the past year he has been studying with me here in Los Angeles. All friends of this ministry in these areas are urged to give these two Fellowships and Mr. Julien their wholehearted support in this step which they have taken.

End, Vol. X, No. 6