

Acts 086

How the New Testament Uses the Old, Part 1

Acts 15:10-12


November 5, 2025

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Let us take our Bibles this evening and open them to Acts 15:10. We are continuing, Wednesday night, our verse-by-verse teaching through the Book of Acts. We are in the third section of the book, of which Jesus said, "You shall be My witnesses to the remote parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8). That is the longest section of the Book of Acts—Acts 13-28. It begins with the journey of Paul and Barnabas into southern Galatia, preaching the gospel, reaping a large harvest amongst the Gentiles.

Structure (Acts 1:8)

- Jerusalem (Acts 1–7)
- Judea and Samaria (Acts 8–12)
- **Remotest part of the earth (Acts 13–28)**
 - 1st missionary journey (Acts 13–14)
 - Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1-35)
 - 2nd missionary journey (Acts 15:36–18:22)
 - 3rd missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:17)
 - Trip to Rome (Acts 21:18–28:31)



Now the issue is, what do you do with all these saved Gentile people? Do you put them under the Law of Moses to be part of the church? The legalists had come into Antioch, where Paul ended that journey, insisting that all of these newly saved Gentiles should come under the Law of Moses. So, Paul and Barnabas are dispatched from Antioch up north to go up to Jerusalem, to have a meeting with the apostles and the elders.

Remember, the Jerusalem church is the mother church where everything started. They try to figure out what they are going to do with all of these saved Gentiles. Do they have to come under the Law of Moses to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ? A meeting is convened, and whatever decision is made here is going to affect the whole church and Christianity for the next 2,000 years.

Only the apostles could call such a meeting. We could not have a meeting like this today. We could not say, "Let us all get together and make a decision that is going to affect all of Christianity," for the simple reason that we do not have any apostles today. If you are an apostle, you look really good for your age because you should be about 2,000 years old by now. This is a big deal what is happening. It is a big step in the

growth, development, and maturity of this new move of God that has started on the Day of Pentecost, called the church, or the Body of Christ.

The first guy to speak at this meeting in Jerusalem is none other than the Apostle Peter, the apostle to whom Jesus said of him, "You will be given the keys of the kingdom" (Matthew 16:19). This is the last we hear of Peter. After this speech, he disappears from the Book of Acts. As I tried to explain last time, he would go east to Babylon, where the Jews were in great number. I gave you some quotes from Josephus demonstrating that. It is from Babylon, modern-day Iraq, that he is going to write two letters to the Christians up north in the north central Turkey area.

That is where Peter is going to go, and we do not hear of Peter anymore in the Book of Acts. Even though he has been so dominant in the first half of the Book of Acts, the spotlight is going to move on to the Apostle Paul, who is going to get the gospel all the way to Rome. He is going to go on two more missionary journeys. He will get the gospel to Rome, and then he will be imprisoned in Rome for two years. Then the Book of Acts ends.

We made it through Acts 15:10 last time, which I want to revisit because there are some things in it that I did not have a chance to talk about because of the sake of time. Peter has said God chose the Gentiles for salvation, referring to how he led Cornelius, the first Gentile in the Church Age, to Christ. He talked about how God authenticated that Gentile conversion through the giving of the Holy Spirit to Cornelius and his entourage, just like we Jews receive the Holy Spirit all the way back in Acts 2 (Acts 15:8-9).

Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35)

- I. Occasion (1-5)
- II. Declarations (6-21)
 - A. Meeting convened (6)
 - B. Peter's address (7-11)
 - 1. God chose Gentile salvation (7)
 - 2. Spirit authenticated Gentile salvation (8-9)
 - 3. Peter's challenge (10)
 - 4. Peter's conclusion (11)
 - C. Barnabas' and Paul's testimony (12)
- III. Decision (22-29)
- IV. Delivery (30-35)

Peter is going somewhere as he is making his argument. We come to Acts 15:10, and he makes this statement here that I think is just incredible. It is a commonsense statement, but I love it. It says:

"Now therefore, why do you put God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke..." (Acts 15:10).

When he uses that word "disciples," he is not talking about leading people to Christ; he is talking about, do you make these new Gentile Christians, members of the church, adhere to the Law of Moses?

"Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" (Acts 15:10).

Peter is saying, "At Mount Sinai, God gave us His Law as Jews, 1,500 years ago." The Law that He put the nation of Israel under is something called a Suzerain-Vassal Treaty. It is a big scary word, but it has a simple meaning. It was a well-known treaty structure, from the days of Moses. The Suzerain is the superior; the vassal is the inferior. When a superior nation wanted to enter into a covenant with an inferior nation, this was the type of treaty arrangement that was given. All of the Suzerain-Vassal treaties that we have knowledge of had these elements in it that I have on the screen. The whole Book of Deuteronomy is organized exactly this way, like a Suzerain-Vassal Treaty.

The suzerain said to the vassal, "I will guarantee your protection, but you have to submit to me according to the covenant text. If you submit to me, I will bless you. If you do not submit to me, I will curse you." Every Suzerain-Vassal Treaty had built within it blessings and curses. That is exactly what you have in the Book of Deuteronomy, as God, the suzerain, is entering into a treaty with the vassal, the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai.

There was always a preamble and then a historical prologue of what the parties went through before they entered into this treaty. There were the things that the vassal had to do. Those were the covenant obligations, the Ten Commandments and the 613 total commands of God emanating from what I would call the Big Ten, the Ten Commandments. There were instructions related to where the covenant text was to be stored and how frequently it was to be read to the vassal. There were witnesses, and then there were these blessings and curses—blessings for obedience, curses for disobedience. This is what God did for the nation of Israel. He took an existing, well-known covenantal structure, and He entered into a relationship with Israel nationally on that basis.

There was a preamble and a prologue. There were covenant obligations. God even had instructions related to where to store the covenant text. It would be within the Ark of the Covenant. Then God even called witnesses, just like they did in these treaties. It is only with God who can witness God. He called heaven and earth as His witnesses. Then he laid out the blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.

It is almost as if God knew what would happen. There were 14 verses for blessings for obedience to Israel. "If you obey Me, your crops are going to multiply. You are going to lend and not borrow. You are going to go out and fight your battles, and you are going to win against overwhelming odds. If you disobey Me, then the curses are going to pile

up. Your crops are going to fail. You are going to go out and fight your battles and you are going to lose, and you are going to be the borrower rather than the lender."

Deuteronomy 28:1-14 are the blessings for obedience. Deuteronomy 28:15-68 are the curses for disobedience. There is a parallel chapter in Leviticus 26. If you were to go home tonight and you read Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, you would understand the whole Old Testament because God specifically said, "Here is what will happen to the nation if you disobey Me. Here is what will happen to the nation if you obey Me."

There are only 14 verses for obedience and blessings. The rest of the chapter is curses for disobedience. It is almost like God knew what would happen. They would disobey Him, and history has borne that out. These curses, the way they work, is they roll up like a snowball. When they reach their apex, Deuteronomy 28:29-50 talks about how they will be invaded by a foreign nation and kicked out of their land.

As you go through the 800 years, Israel is in the land before they got kicked out of the land in the Babylonian deportation, all of the prophets are warning about this and referencing back to what God gave them at Sinai. So what happened is that Solomon was very disobedient. He was the third king of the united kingdom. Everything God told the king to do, he went and did the opposite at the end of his life.

God said, "Do not multiply wives." Solomon multiplied wives. "Do not multiply wealth for yourself." Solomon multiplied wealth for himself. "Put yourself under the Law, not over the Law." Solomon put himself over the Law rather than under the Law. When he left the throne, the nation of Israel was divided in two—ten northern tribes, two southern tribes. That division happened as an outworking of the discipline of Deuteronomy 28.

The northern tribes continued in their disobedience, and they were scattered by the Assyrians in 722 BC (2 Kings 17). This left the two southern tribes, Benjamin and Judah. You think they would have learned the lesson from what happened to the north, but they actually were more harlotrous in the south than they were in the north. God put them into deportation at the hands of the Babylonians in 2 Kings 25, in 586 BC.

When the 70 years of captivity were over, they went back into the land. You think they would learn their lesson, but they were very rebellious during the Greek period and during the Roman period, to the point where their own Messiah showed up there, Jesus Christ, and they turned Him over to Rome for execution. To quote that great theologian, Yogi Berra, "It is déjà vu all over again."

Here comes the covenant discipline, it is just that this time it happened through the hands of the Romans that sacked Jerusalem in AD 70 and pushed the nation of Israel into what we call the diaspora, in which they have been in for 2,000 years. Only in modern times have they been recycled. We are watching it happen gradually back into their homeland in preparation for the End Times scenario.

Peter's point is, "If you look at our track record as Jews keeping God's Law, we stink at it. We are lawbreakers through our whole history. You guys, you Pharisees, want to put the Gentiles under the Law. Are you kidding me? We Jews could not even keep the thing. How in the world would we ever expect the Gentiles to keep the Law of Moses?" That is what Peter is making reference to.

*"He declares His words to Jacob,
His statutes and His ordinances to Israel.
He has not dealt thus with any nation;
And as for His ordinances, they have not known them.
Praise the Lord!" (Psalm 147:19-20).*

The Bible is very clear that the Law of God, the Sinai revelation, is only for the nation of Israel. It is not something to put the church under. It is not something to put Gentile Christians under today. It was an arrangement that God made only with the nation of Israel. We are not under the Law of Moses today.

There are many people that would like to put you under the Law of Moses. They talk a lot about tithing. 'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, and see if I will not pour out so great a blessing that you do not have room to contain it' (Malachi 3:10). They say that you are under a curse because you are not tithing.

People promote that from the pulpit constantly, but that comes from which prophet? That comes from the prophet Malachi. Malachi is written to the nation of Israel under the Law of Moses. The curse is, if you do not bring the tithe into the storehouse, then your crops will be cursed. If you do bring the tithe into the storehouse, then you will be blessed. It has nothing to do with the Church Age, although it is a good fundraising device since I hear preachers use it constantly.

I am only giving you an example of how you cannot take the church and put it under this arrangement. If you come under that arrangement, you should not be tithing. You should be giving 23 and a third percent of your money to the Lord, because there were three tithes under the Law of Moses—two annually, and one every three years. That would be an example of trying to put the church under the Law of Moses.

If you want your instructions for giving, you will find it in 2 Corinthians 8:9 which are the principles of grace giving, which do not give you a number. Give secretly, give generously, give hilariously, give proportionately, adverbs modifying how to give. In the Church Age we do not put people under a number system, because that was for the nation of Israel under the Mosaic Law.

Here is another example of putting the church under the Mosaic Law. I love patriotic sermons. Coming of age as a Christian, I would listen to the late Jerry Falwell give all kinds of patriotic messages, and I enjoyed them. One of the verses that he would quote is 2 Chronicles 7:14. This one comes up in every patriotic message these days. You probably know this one.

"And My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

In fact, Ronald Reagan, when he was sworn in, had the Bible open to that verse because of the influence of Jerry Falwell. Of course, they take the land there—"I will heal their land"—thinking it is America. The problem is that this is a statement given to Israel operating under the Suzerain-Vassal Treaty system, and it has nothing to do with the United States of America. It is taught as we have to get rid of pornography, we have to get rid of abortion, and when we really humble ourselves, God is somehow obligated to heal.

The way this was taught in the Jimmy Carter years when Reagan was coming along is, we have to get rid of inflation. We have to get rid of these long gas lines. All America has to do is come back and do these things mentioned in 2 Chronicles 7:14 in this order. If we did, then it is like a lever: you pull it and God is obligated to get rid of inflation and gas lines and all of that stuff.

You will hear people preach this kind of thing constantly around the 4th of July. It is another example of putting the church under a Suzerain-Vassal Treaty that God never put the church under. The land is not America. I recognize the letters USA show up in the word Jerusalem, but that is about as close as you can get. The land is not America. The land is the land of Israel.

God was telling the Israelites, "Go back to the Suzerain-Vassal Treaty and I will bless your land, which is what I promised to do in Deuteronomy 28." That is another example of how preachers, for whatever motivation, put the church under the Suzerain-Vassal Treaty. Peter is saying, "Let us not do that because us Jews messed everything up. That is why we went into deportation. We cannot expect these Gentiles to obey a yoke that we ourselves could not obey."

What system are we under then? People say, "If you are not going to put the church under the Mosaic Law, then are you just teaching lawless living?" No. We are under a different system called the Law of the Spirit. You will see that expression in Romans 8:2. It is also called the Law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). It looks similar to the Law of Moses at points. Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament.

Although it looks similar, it is not the same. It is like this. I am from California and I moved to Texas. I got to the Promised Land as fast as I could, by the way, but that is another story. California has a legal system, and Texas has a legal system. They look pretty similar. Murder is illegal in California, and murder is illegal in Texas. But if I murder someone in Texas, I am going to be tried in Texas. I am not going to be tried in California. Although, as a murderer, I would probably rather be tried in California than Texas. Texas and California's legal systems look similar, but they are two totally different legal systems.

We are under a completely different system called the Law of Christ or the Law of the Spirit. It looks similar to the Law of Moses, but it is not the same thing.

This is where Reformed Theology messes this whole thing up, because what they do with the Law of Moses is they say, "There are three parts to the Law of Moses. There is the ceremonial stuff, sacrifices. There is the civil stuff, stoning to get to death, blasphemers. Then there is the moral stuff, the Ten Commandments.

They will say, "We are under the moral teachings, but not the civil teachings or the ceremonial teachings." First of all, the Law of Moses never divides itself up that way. That is totally man made. Secondly, if you put one little finger under the Law of Moses—the smallest finger nail you have—if you stick your little pinky under the Law of Moses in any way, shape, or form. Guess what? You are under the whole thing. James, who is going to speak in a minute at this council, says that if you are guilty of part of the Law of Moses, you are guilty of the whole thing (James 2:10).

If you want to play this game of being under the moral stuff, but not the civil stuff or the ceremonial stuff, sorry, it does not work that way. If you go into the Law of Moses, you are under the whole thing. The truth of the matter is, you are not under the Law of Moses at all as a Church Age believer. You are under the Law of the spirit, or under the Law of Christ.

Romans 6:14 is pretty clear on this:

"For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

Our system is a lot more graceful in the sense that we have empowerment to fulfill the Law of Christ, that quite frankly, the Israelites did not have. They had a bunch of obligations with no power. This is why 1 John 5:3 of Christ's commandments says:

"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3).

Everything God calls me to do under the Law of the Spirit or the Law of Christ, He gives me the power to do. You did not have that in the Old Testament times. The Law of Moses was ruthless. It was really good at showing you your faults. It was terrible, or incapable, of empowering you to live a godly life. That is why the New Covenant that Jeremiah announces for Israel is such a big deal.

God says through Jeremiah, "The day is going to come when I am going to take My commandments and inscribe them on your heart" (Jeremiah 31:31-33). They did not have that under the Law of Moses. It was something yet future, but in our system we have empowerment. Jesus said this, referring to our system that was coming:

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Could you imagine how those words sounded to people that were laboring under the Law of Moses? Six hundred and thirteen commandments in addition to the myriad of obligations and regulations that the Pharisees imposed on people. Here are all these people struggling under this religiosity, and here is Jesus coming along, talking about how His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Later in his epistle (1 John), John talks about how His commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:3).

This is a very important thing to understand concerning the Church Age. You hear preachers constantly trying to put people under the Law of Moses with tithing or God blessing America. We should pray that God blesses America, but it is not the kind of arrangement that if we get rid of this national sin and this national sin and this national sin, then you pull the lever on the slot machine and some goodies are going to pour out. Israel had that relationship with God. That is what the Suzerain-Vassal Treaty structure is about. The church does not.

I am not teaching lawless living. People hear me talk about this and they say, "You are antinomian—"nomos," law. You are against the law." No, I am not teaching lawless living, because we are under a legal system. But it is the Law of the Spirit or the Law of Christ. That looks a lot like the Law of Moses, but it is not the Law of Moses.

As my professor Jay Dwight Pentecost used to say, "Selah." Have you ever heard that word "selah"? You will see that in the Psalms. The psalmist will give a psalm, and at the end it will say "selah," which means "consider carefully." In other words, ruminate on this one. Do not believe it just because I said it. Study this one out. Let this one sink into your soul. You have a lot of people out there that are under all these artificial burdens, that God never put them under. So, "Selah."

That is Peter's, shall I call it a spiel? That is what he says. What is Peter's conclusion? In Acts 15:11, he says:

"But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the same way they also are" (Acts 15:11).

He is saying, "Why in the world are we going to put these Gentiles under a legal system when us Jews got into this whole Church Age because of grace, by faith alone? How exactly were we saved as Jews going back to Acts 2? By grace, by faith alone. So if that is how God got us into the body of Christ, then why in the world would we take these Gentiles that are coming to Christ in droves, and put them under a legal system that did not get any of us saved, and that we Jews historically have never been able to follow and adhere to?"

This verse is a big deal, because Peter preached the opening sermon on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:38. It looks like he is teaching salvation by baptism here at first glance, if you do not handle this correctly. This is Peter's conclusion in that great opening sermon on the Day of Pentecost.

"Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38).

Almost every legalist I have ever encountered who wants to teach that you have to be baptized to get to heaven—the Church of Christ people—go right to this verse because my understanding is that their idea of justification is faith plus baptism. If you are not water baptized and you are just a believer, then you are not going to heaven, which is a real problem for the thief on the cross who could not get water baptized. It is hard to get water baptized when you are nailed to a cross.

"And He said to him, 'Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise'" (Luke 23:43).

"Quick! Throw water on him before he dies, because he might go to hell." No, it does not say that. You should get water baptized, but it has nothing to do with your justification before God. There are a lot of people out there teaching an idea that Peter's gospel—because they think he was still offering the kingdom in Acts—was different from Paul's gospel. They will go right to Acts 2:38. "See, there it is. You have to be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. If you just repent or change your mind about Christ, that is not enough. You gotta be water baptized to get your sins forgiven."

What I have tried to teach when we were back in that verse is that there has to be a different way of handling that. Whatever you are doing in Acts 2:38 has to harmonize with Acts 15:11. All these Scriptures have to go together. In Acts 15:11, Peter is very clear that we Jews at the beginning were saved by grace alone through faith alone.

"But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way they also are" (Acts 15:11).

How are they being saved? Peter says, "Not by the Law, but by grace alone, through faith alone. That is exactly what happened to us. We were saved by grace alone, through faith alone." He does not mention water baptism here. So whatever I am doing with Acts 2:38 must line up with Acts 15:11. There must be a different way of handling Acts 2:38 than using it to teach that you have to be baptized to get to heaven; you have to be baptized to get your sins forgiven.

There is a different way of handling it. It is understanding the Greek word "eis" translated "for" in Acts 2:38.

"Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for ["eis"] the forgiveness of your sins'" (Acts 2:38).

The question becomes, how do we handle that word "eis," translated "for"? There is a way to handle it that harmonizes with grace and harmonizes with Acts 15:11. That Greek word "eis" can also mean "because of." That is exactly how it is used in Matthew 12:41, where Jesus says:

"The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at [because of, "eis"] the preaching of Jonah" (Matthew 12:41).

"Eis" can be understood as "because of." If "eis" is understood as "because of" rather than "for," then that changes the whole meaning of Acts 2:38.

"Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of the [Lord] Jesus Christ for [because of, "eis"] the forgiveness of your sins'" (Acts 2:38).

It is not "for the forgiveness of your sins," but "because of the forgiveness of your sins." Doesn't that change everything?

You should get baptized. We will baptize you here. We do that pretty regularly. Just contact the church office and we will get that done for you, but we will have you take a little class first. Usually that is taught by Pastor Jim, explaining that baptism is a very important step for a new believer, but it has nothing to do with salvation. You do not get baptized to get your sins forgiven. You get baptized because your sins have already been forgiven.

What have I done here? I have come up with an exegetically legitimate understanding of Acts 2:38 that harmonizes with Acts 15:11. If you keep it as "for" rather than "because of" then you have Acts 2:38 where Peter speaks, contradicting Acts 15:11, where Peter speaks. All of these people that are always dragging you to Acts 2:38 to preach salvation through water baptism are not telling you this stuff. They are not saying, "I am going to give you an interpretation of Acts 2:38 that contradicts what Peter says elsewhere.

When you study the full council of God's Word, you have to make those verses harmonize, because God cannot contradict Himself. This is how I choose to harmonize those verses. I pay attention to "for" and understand that it can be translated as "because of," which makes those verses harmonize. Acts 2:38 is a big deal.

It reminds me of a lady. Her house was burglarized, and as the thief was breaking in, in the middle of the night, she yelled out, "Acts 2:38!" The guy disappeared, and he was later arrested and questioned. "Why did you break into her house and suddenly run away?" He said, "The lady said she has an ax and two 38's." Five years from now, that

is what you will remember from this presentation. There we go. Sometimes you need a mental bookmark reminding you that Acts 2:38 is a big deal.

Acts 11:15 is also a big deal. This was the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10) and Peter explaining this to the Jerusalem church:

"And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15).

"Cornelius was saved, like we Jews were saved." How was Cornelius saved? Was he saved through baptism? When you study the chronology of Acts 10, it is very clear that he was not saved through baptism. Baptism came later.

"Of Him all the prophets bear witness through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).

"All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also" (Acts 10:45).

Peter speaking here again says, "Cornelius was saved, just like we Jews were saved." How was Cornelius? By faith alone; by grace alone. It was totally independent of water baptism. Peter says, "We Jews were saved the exact same way."

If you are coming up with an interpretation of Acts 2:38 that adds water baptism as something that has to be checked off before justification can occur; if you are understanding "eis" as "for" rather than "because of," then you have Peter in Acts 2 contradicting himself in Acts 11. Then you have Peter in Acts 2, contradicting himself in Acts 15. That is not how to read the Bible.

Whatever you are doing in one text, you must ask yourself, "Is the interpretation I have come up with in one text in harmony with the rest of the Bible?" That is what these Church of Christ's type people never talk about. All they want to talk about is Acts 2:38. I am like, "Wait a minute. Hold the phone here. If what you are saying is true, then you have Peter saying something here where he contradicts himself in Acts 11 and 15."

When you show this to them, it is almost like they have never heard the argument before because they are so myopically focused on micromanaging Acts 2:38 to support their doctrine of baptism as necessary to go to heaven. You, as a Christian, can say, "That does not sound right, because I have some clear statements in Acts 11 and 15 where Peter seems to be saying the opposite." You do not step back from that and say, "The Bible contradicts itself," because it cannot. You say, "Maybe my interpretation of the Bible—not the Bible, but my interpretation of it—is in error." This is just a basic Bible study habit.

The kingdom of the cults, I tell you, are really good at finding verses but giving some kind of interpretation of those verses that is in disharmony with the rest of the Bible. The cults do this constantly. Do you know who the cults prey on? We just had two of them come to the house this afternoon—two Jehovah's Witnesses. Do You know who they prey on? They prey on people who believe the Bible is true—who have a conviction that the Bible is true, but who do not really know much about the Bible. They never read it. If you have a strong conviction that the Bible is true, but you do not know much about the Bible, you will be pulled in because the kingdom of the cults use the Bible.

In Ezekiel 37, the two sticks come together in the Millennial Kingdom—the northern and the southern kingdoms coming together. They are not divided anymore in the Millennial Kingdom. One of those sticks representing the north is the stick of Joseph. The Mormons will tell you that Joseph is Joseph Smith—not the tribe of Joseph representing the north, but that it is Joseph Smith.

They will use the expression brother or sister, and they will tell you, "What you have in the Bible is incomplete. It is a great book, but it is not enough. Have you not heard about the revelation of Jesus Christ in North America, spoken of in the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine of Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price?"

Brigham Young University, BYU, has one of the most academically successful archeological programs of all universities. They cannot find one archeological shred of evidence that Jesus showed up in North America. There is no proof of it at all. Yet when practically any shovel goes into the ground in Israel, they find something like Pontius Pilate's name, for example, that the Old Testament and New Testaments confirm what the Bible says. Where is there any evidence that Jesus made a guest appearance in North America? Give me one sliver of archeological proof for that. Believe me, if they had found something, we would have heard about it a long time ago. They cannot find anything.

Why do people, good people, believe that somehow the Bible is incomplete and you have to consult these Mormon texts to be complete? As a Christian, why do you believe that? They will come to your door and show you that it is in Ezekiel 37; it is the stick of Joseph. They are merging together one stick. "Here is the Bible stick, and here is Joseph Smith."

If you are in a church that is giving you every Sunday three points and a poem—because most Christians, I am very sad to say, are going to church every week and what they are going to is a pep rally—you are not really in an environment where you are being systematically taught the Word of God. If you are going to your pep rally every week, and your pastor really is not equipping you the way he should then Joseph, Joseph Smith, Ezekiel 37—I guess this Mormon stuff is true.

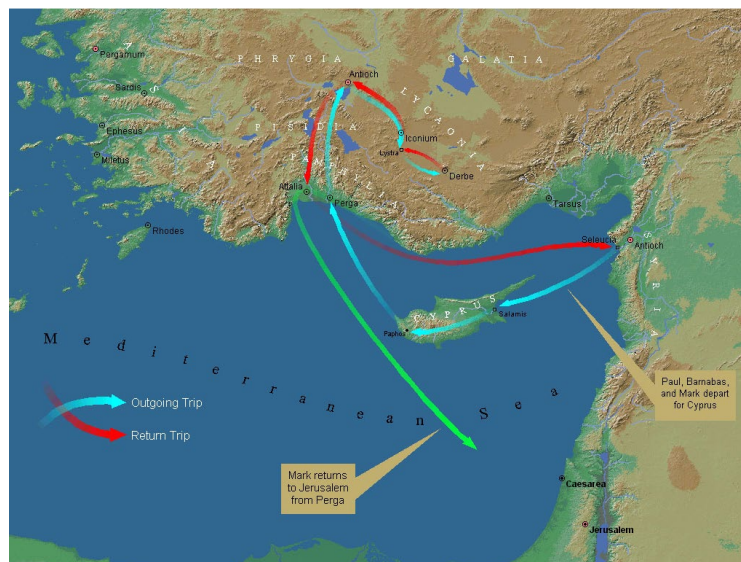
That is why I go into things like this, because if you do not understand some of these truths, you will be one of those people that believe the Bible is true but do not know

much about the Bible, and you will be pulled into a maze and a myriad of false teaching. Once again, "selah"—consider carefully.

Peter's address stops and we do not hear from Peter anymore in the Book of Acts. Now at this meeting Barnabas and Paul step up to the plate. Notice what they say there in Acts 15:12. Peter was finished speaking, and he spoke with such logic and common sense that no one else had much to say other than Paul and Barnabas.

"All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles" (Acts 15:12).

Paul and Barnabas had been dispatched from Antioch to go up to Jerusalem to get some kind of ruling on this matter: "Are we going to put the Gentiles under the Law in order to join the church?" Now they start talking and they say, "Do you know what? When we went out on that first missionary journey, God showed us unbelievable favor."



Here was the first missionary journey that we have studied (Acts 13-14). They rehearse what happened on that first missionary journey. They said, "While we were out on this missionary journey God prospered us. God prospered us doing what? Not Jewish salvations, but Gentile salvations." This is the first time the gospel left the borders of Israel and went into Gentile territory. "In every city we were in, we went to the place where the Jews gathered—the synagogue."

There were Jewish gatherings and synagogues all over the Greco-Roman world. "Everywhere we went, you know what the Jews did to us? They threw us out and we said, 'If you are going to throw us out, we are going to go to the Gentiles.' So we started preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, the non-Jews, and they got saved by the bushel, by the bucket load. In fact, we were so successful amongst the Gentiles that the Jews

and the synagogues got mad at us and drove us out of the city. That is why we went from city A to city B."

They are describing the unusual favor that God gave them on that first missionary journey. Their point in Acts 15:12 is that God would not have prospered that first missionary journey the way He did if He did not want the Gentiles to be saved. "As we went from place to place, preaching to the Gentiles, we never put them under the Law, ever. They got saved without the Law, so why in the world do you want to put them under the Law now?"

You will notice that the names of Paul and Barnabas are reversed there. Usually it is Paul and Barnabas, because Paul is the leader and Barnabas is the second-in-command, but here the names are reversed. Barnabas is first and Paul is second, probably because they are in Jerusalem now. Barnabas was probably a little bit more well-known in Jerusalem than he was in Antioch.

"As we went on this journey, do you know what happened? There were signs and wonders that God performed through us to these Gentiles that God loves so much and wanted to see saved." What do you do with these signs and wonders? These were signs and wonders that were occurring in great regularity because these were the apostles.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes:

"The apostles did many signs and wonders. In fact, the only ones who performed miracles in the book of Acts were the apostles or their delegates, such as Stephen (Acts 6:8). These apostolic delegates were appointed by the laying on of hands by the apostles. Signs and wonders were not performed by the believers at large."¹

A lot of people are going to the Book of Acts, and they see signs and wonders. Then they want to do signs and wonders themselves. We want to raise the dead. We want to lay hands on people and they will get well. They get frustrated because they do not see the same regularity of miracles that you find in the Book of Acts. There is a reason for that. The reason miracles are occurring with such frequency here and do not occur with the same frequency today, is because this is a generation that God used to start the church called the apostles.

Ephesians says of the church:

"Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20).

¹ Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 83.

Here the church is analogized to a metaphorical temple. When you built a temple in the Greco-Roman world, the first stone you put in was the cornerstone, because that stone was used as a measuring device for any other stone in the temple. You knew that any other stone in the temple was in the right place because of its alignment with the cornerstone.

Who is the cornerstone? Jesus. He is the foundation of the church. After the cornerstone comes in, then comes the foundation stones. You cannot have a building without a foundation. Then the apostles were put into the mix. How many times do you lay a foundation? One time. This apostolic generation was totally unique.

That is why all of the miracles happening in the Book of Acts are done by these guys or people that they appointed. So what has God been doing for the last 2,000 years? He is not putting in the cornerstone anymore; that is already in. He is not putting in the foundation stones anymore; those are already in. He is building the walls, which is us. I am not a cornerstone. I am not a foundation stone. At best, I am stuck in the wall somewhere.

I would argue that the Church Age is getting ready to wrap up. It looks to me like God is putting on the roof. We know that when the last Gentile that is supposed to be saved is saved, the Church Age will be over. The church will be translated to heaven. So if anyone within the sound of my voice is not believing, then you are holding up the whole show. That makes me upset at you, because I have to stay here longer than I need to. I am ready to go. You have to understand this, as you read the Book of Acts, you are dealing with the foundation of the church. That is why they are doing stuff that we do not necessarily see recurring with great regularity.

Having said that, do I believe in healing today? Do I believe in miracles? Of course I believe in that, or else I would not pray for people. What is the point of praying for people if you did not want God's hand to move? What I am saying is that when God does something today, He does not do it through an apostle the way He was doing it here. He does it directly, and it seems to me that, although there can be examples of authentic healings, it seems to be less regular today than in the Book of Acts, because in the Book of Acts you are dealing with the foundation of the church.

Miracles in the Bible have a tendency to cluster around time periods when God is doing something brand new. You are going to see a ton of miracles in the Book of Exodus and in the life of Moses, because God is doing something new. He is giving to the nation of Israel the Law. You are going to see a ton of miracles in the Bible clustering around the Elijah and Elisha accounts, because God is doing something new. He is raising up the office of prophet to confront rebellious kings.

You are also going to see a ton of miracles in the life of Christ because God is doing something new. He is offering the kingdom to first-century Israel, because the Messiah was there and they could have had the king and the kingdom. You are going to see a

ton of miracles in the Book of Acts because God is doing something new. The Church Age has started.

"The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles." (2 Corinthians 12:12).

What is the next signs and wonders movement on the horizon? Because you have a whole branch of Christianity today waiting for the next sign or wonder. Do you know who is going to do the next signs and wonders? The Antichrist. If your whole worldview is, "I will not believe in God unless I see a miracle," then you are a sitting duck for the Antichrist, because the Antichrist is going to come with lying signs and wonders—pseudo signs. They are real signs. They just come from a more of a satanic source.

When you read about these signs and wonders that were done on the first missionary journey—like a man in Lystra that was lame from birth that was healed immediately—you have to understand that you are dealing with a unique time frame here, where the apostles were the premier servants of God.

I bring this up to you because there is a big Acts 29 movement today. They want to get to the book, back to the Book of Acts. I am thinking to myself, do you want to get stuck in the ocean too? Why do we not go back to Acts 27, where Paul was stuck in the ocean? They do not want to go to Acts 27; they want to go to Acts 28. Do you want to get thrown in prison? Do you have a house? You should sell your house, because they all sold their homes in the Book of Acts.

People are coming to the Book of Acts, not as a transitional book, but as a doctrinal book. The Book of Acts is doctrinal and it is historical, but it is transitional. You are dealing with people here at the foundation of the Church Age, which you do not have today. If you want to find a practice in the Book of Acts that is binding on the church today, you cannot find it in the Book of Acts. You need to find it in the Gospels, in the Book of Acts and the epistles.

Why do we take communion? We take communion because it is in the Gospels. Jesus said, *"Do this in remembrance of Me"* (Luke 22:19). It is also in the Book of Acts where the early church took communion together (Acts 2:42), and it is in the epistles. Paul makes reference to the Lord's table in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. So I am seeing a practice in the Gospels, in the Book of Acts, and in the epistles.

I say that is normative for the Church Age people that have not been taught correctly. They go only to the Book of Acts and find some practice and want it to be binding in the Church Age. That is not how to approach the Book of Acts.

The meeting has been convened. Peter has addressed the meeting. Paul and Barnabas have addressed the meeting. Who is the heavy hitter? James, the half brother of Christ. This was the guy that became the pastor of the Jerusalem church, and the guy that

wrote the Book of James. He is going to step up to the plate. Grand slam! He seals the deal.

In preparation for next time, read Acts 15:13-21, if you could, and ask yourself, "How is James using the Book of Amos. How is James using Amos 9 to make his point? Why is he using the Book of Amos?" Those are some questions you could ask yourself. "Why is he using the Old Testament to make his point? How is he using the Book of Amos?" That will finish the argument and the church will conclude, "We are not going to put the Gentiles under the Law of Moses to walk with God."