

Acts 1:6-7

Sunday 5/15/2005

We are into the book of Acts today. I do not know of another key book in all the Bible than the book of Acts. I suspect that the truth of the matter is that the book of Acts is certainly the key book in the New Testament that you have to learn. I would say the key book you have to learn in the Old Testament is Genesis. I do not think you can know your Bible without breaking down these two books.

That is why we have spent so much time coming through the Word of God book by book. We are in a program here, like a three-year program, to really bring everybody up to speed because of what God is doing in our midst and the ministries that He has given us and people we have seen saved. We just had a tremendous outpouring of God's Spirit. It is absolutely necessary that those of you who really want to be used of God learn how to use your Bible. That is why on Thursday night we are doing the reference material, showing you how at a glance, at your fingertips, to have your Bible as a ready reference book so that when you start working with people, you have the ability to really open up the Scriptures and show them.

I do not know of any other book in the New Testament that you have, and I am just going to tell you, you have got to learn the book of Acts. You have got to. If you are ever going to rightly divide the Word of Truth, you are going to have to understand the book of Acts. There are more people that died and went to hell because of the book of Acts than all the booze and drugs in the world today, and I am not kidding you.

You ask, "Why is that book such a dangerous book?" Let me tell you why. We are going to lay out a lot of things about the book of Acts today, and I want to give you an overview so that when you leave here today, you can really begin to get a grasp for it. At least you will have a process by which you need to know how to study it, and you will go away with a lot of keys today that maybe you did not have before.

I. The Danger and Purpose of the Book of Acts

The book of Acts is a dangerous book because as we enter into the New Testament, we have Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John lay out for us the first coming of Christ. We see, as we have already studied it, Christ's earthly ministry, and then we saw Him coming to the nation of Israel. We saw Israel reject Him, and they crucified Him. Then He resurrects at the end of the Gospels, and now we suddenly enter into the book of Acts.

The reason why the book of Acts is so dangerous and why it is a book that you as a child of God have to get down, and why there are so many people that die and go to hell because of the book of Acts, and I am not kidding you, and you will see it before we are done, is because the book of Acts bridges the Old Testament to the New Testament. The book of Acts is the transitional book in the New Testament that brings you from the Jew to the Gentile.

You are going to find that we are going to start out with the Apostle Peter running the show and being the main character, and then he fades out and we see the Apostle Paul taking over, and then

he finishes out the book. It starts in Jerusalem, and then it literally ends to the ends of the earth. A lot is happening in the book of Acts, and the book of Acts is the last place, it is the absolutely last place that you want to base your church doctrine on of what you believe about being saved and going to heaven, because everything is changing in the book of Acts.

You cannot find God dealing the same way with any one person or group of people anywhere in the book of Acts. The book of Acts is not a solid place to build your church doctrine. It is the beginning of the church. It is the church in its infancy, but it also is a time when God is working back and forth with the nation of Israel, bringing this thing through to the body of Christ. It is a very dangerous place to hang your theological hat on as, "This is where I build my church." The safe place that you build your church starts in the next book, Romans, which is the handbook of Christian doctrine for the New Testament church, and we are going to get into that one next week.

A lot is happening in the book of Acts, and many people break their neck in the book of Acts. But if you follow the biblical format, and I have given you the biblical format, that it is the Apostle Paul who we are going to see in this book where he comes on the scene when he takes over for Peter and the transition begins, you will find that Paul is the man that is the Apostle to the church. He writes a lot of his books during the last half of the book of Acts, and we are going to talk about that a little bit later on too.

II. The Key Verse: Acts 1:6-7 and Israel's Three Chances

Let us come to Acts chapter 1, and in Acts chapter 1, I want you to look at verse 6 and verse 7. We are going to talk about this. Let us go to the Lord and ask God to give us wisdom today because there is going to be a lot that is going to be said.

Let me just say this: I know that as always, we have had a lot of people saved here. We have a lot of people that have come to our church that are visiting today that you have not been part of the process. Let me just tell you about this. First of all, do not necessarily worry about trying to get everything that I am talking about today. Just sit back and relax and get the message that God has for you in here. God will speak to you today through this message. He is going to speak on different levels. We have people who have been around for a long time who know their Bibles fairly well. He will speak to them and show them things on that level. We have a group of people that are on the way of learning the Bible, and they are well into it. He will speak to them on that level and give them what they need. Then we have brand new Christians. We have people that maybe are here this morning that you do not know for sure where you are at with God. He will speak to you on your level. That is what God does because He does not speak just to your intellect. He looks inside your heart this morning, and He speaks to you on the basis of that attitude of heart and where you are at with the Lord.

So, I never worry about it. Sometimes people say, "I do not know if I will understand." I promise you, you will get exactly what God wants you to have, whatever level you are at today. That is what you need to know.

Let us go to the Lord today and ask God to bless us as we come to His word.

Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We love you. We thank you for all that you do for us. We know your word is true. We know it is power. We know that Lord, sitting here today, everybody needs something from you today. Starting with me, working right down the line, Lord, everybody, whatever spiritual level they are at, they need something today. I pray, Father, that Holy Spirit of God, you will do the work of your office, but on every level in everyone's heart, that you will touch them, speak to them, and give them what they need. Lord, we will thank you and praise you for all you do for us now. In Jesus' name, for the sake we ask it, amen.

Acts chapter 1, verse 6 is the key verse in the book of Acts. The whole book of Acts is built around this verse right here. Acts chapter 1, verse 6 is the place in your Bible in the book of Acts where everything else in the book of Acts is built on this. Here is what it says:

Acts 1:6

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

I told you from day one when we opened up the Bible for the first time that the theme of the Bible is a kingdom. The theme of the Bible is a kingdom that God gives to the nation of Israel. In your Bible, you will find the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. We have defined it many, many times. The kingdom of heaven is the literal visible kingdom that goes to the nation of Israel. The kingdom of God is the spiritual kingdom that you and I are born into the day you and I get saved.

In Acts chapter 1, you have just seen Christ coming to the nation of Israel. He laid out the kingdom of heaven and said, "Here I am, the promised Messiah, I brought the kingdom." We have also seen the scribes and the Pharisees rejected Him and they wound up crucifying Him. We see now that during this time when He is hanging on the cross, Jesus makes an interesting statement. He says:

Luke 23:34

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

He is making a statement for God to forgive the nation of Israel because the nation of Israel does not understand that who they are killing and crucifying is the one that was bringing Israel the kingdom. God honors that request. If you start to come through the Bible from the New Testament on, and I have said this before, you will find that the nation of Israel gets three chances to get this kingdom.

The first chance was John the Baptist. When he showed up, he showed up preaching the kingdom of heaven. The second one was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. When he showed up, He showed up proclaiming to be the Son of God and bringing the kingdom to Israel. They crucified and rejected Him. On the cross of Calvary, Christ asks one more time, "God forgive them, Father

forgive them, they know not what they do." God honors that and gives the nation of Israel one more shot at getting that kingdom.

That is why in Acts chapter 1, when all the events are taking place, you are going to find from Acts chapter 1 and Acts chapter 7, a very crucial portion of the Word of God that you have to see. This is where a lot of people break their neck. We begin to see here in Acts chapter 1, verse 6 that the apostles are coming to the Lord Jesus and their question is, "Okay, we know what has happened now, we know what is going on, let me ask you Lord, are you now at this time going to give this kingdom to Israel?" That is their question. They are not asking about when the church starts, how we are going to do this, where we are going to do this, or where we build the first Baptist church of Jerusalem. They are not asking that. They are saying, "Okay, with all that has happened, are you now going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Look at verse 7, He does not answer them. He does not give them a clear answer. He simply says to them, verse 7:

Acts 1:7

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

He does not give them a direct answer because God is now going to give the nation of Israel one more chance and it is up to them what they are going to do. So God does not, or the Lord does not give them the answer one way or the other. He avoids the question, gives them an answer that simply says it is not for you to know. One of those things like, "Well guys, you are on a need-to-know basis and you do not need to know that right now." That is what He does.

That is the key verse. If you do not get that verse, you are going to miss everything else in the book of Acts because nothing else is going to make sense if you do not have one place where you start that defines what is going on here. Christ has come, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They reject Him and they crucify Him. On the cross, in Luke 23:34, He says:

Luke 23:34

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

They have had two chances: John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ. Now they get a third. You might know it was three if you have been coming on Thursday night. The book of Acts is built around that third chance that they get. God honors His son's prayer.

If you come over to Acts chapter 2, around verse 39, you will find that Peter says:

Acts 2:39

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

This is the promise of the second coming to Israel, unto you, the Jews in Jerusalem, and to your children, Israel, and to all that are far off, the Jews that have been dispersed since 606 BC when the time of the Gentiles starts, even as many as the Lord shall call. In Acts chapter 1 through Acts chapter 7, there is not one Gentile getting saved anywhere. You could not find a Gentile in Acts chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, walking down the aisle to somebody singing "Just As I Am" with a laser beam and a flashlight. It is not in there. You are going to find, and you have got to see this, in Acts chapter 1 through Acts chapter 7, He is coming to the nation of Israel.

III. The Defining Nature of Acts

The book of Acts, without a doubt, is the most defining book in the Bible. We have talked about this and I have showed you on Thursday night how the way to really get your Bible is to get whatever you are studying or whatever the concept is down to the lowest common denominator where it is defined. We looked at a lot of different things, and you should have that well ingrained in your mind now if you have been laying it out on Thursday night, and we are on our way, and I am pleased as I could be with the results we are seeing. I guess that probably the two greatest definitive books in the Bible in the Old Testament would be Genesis, and in the New Testament, the book of Acts. You just have to see that.

In Proverbs chapter 22 and again in Proverbs chapter 23, you find two great verses which are really keys to your Bible and history. Those two verses talk about the landmarks. One of them says:

Proverbs 22:28

Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.

That would be for the nation of Israel. The other landmark is in chapter 23, verse 10, and it says:

Proverbs 23:10

Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:

There are two landmarks down through history that you must follow to stay on track. In the Old Testament, it is the nation of Israel. In the New Testament, it is the body of Christ.

I am going to be very honest with you. Studying history is an overwhelming concept. You could actually spend the rest of your life laying out history, and it will encompass you in everything that you do. Trying to lay out church history and sorting it all out is really a hard task too. We are talking about 2,000 years of man's history and what God has done. How many times I am asked, "Why are there so many churches? Why are there so many different religions? Why do so many people believe so many different things?" The answer to that question or those questions is found in the study of church history.

What happens is that when you just jump into church history and you just plow into it without using the Bible as the base textbook for church history, you enter into what the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 23, "the fields of the fatherless." You become an orphan. You do not know where you come from. You do not know where you are at, and you certainly do not know where

you are going. When you lose sight of, I am telling you, in the Old Testament, God will never be far from the nation of Israel. You want to find God in history? Find the first landmark, the nation of Israel. You want to find God in the New Testament church? Find the landmark, the body of Christ. You will never be far from it.

When you get into the book of Acts, you realize that the book of Acts defines everything that we need so that you and I do not get messed up. Acts is your point of departure to trace your heritage and the body of Christ, the church, through your Bible and then through history. It is the key of all the books in the New Testament to help you do that. It defines everything.

In the book of Acts, you find:

- The model church.
- The model ministry.
- The model pastor.
- The model missionary.
- The model evangelist.
- The model Christian.

You begin to find that places and concepts are now defined for you that as you move down through church history, you have got to watch out for. For instance, take the word "council" like the Council of Churches, World Council of Churches, Council of Nicaea. You are going to find in the book of Acts that the Bible tells you and defines for you that councils in the New Testament are always against the Lord Jesus Christ. You will find it every time.

Somebody says, "Why is that?" Because the book of Acts is defining when you start your little journey down through church history, you are going to find at least 20 church councils. He wants you to know right off the bat that when you are studying church history, these church councils will always be against whatever God is doing. They are in the wrong system, so to speak. The book of Acts defines that for you. It is very important to see it.

You will find that the book of Acts defined Peter's role. It also defines Paul's role. In fact, the name of the book we are studying is simply called "The Acts of the Apostles." That is what it says. Do you know what that means? Have you ever broken that name down? Because there are two men who are apostles, and it is following the acts that they do. One of them is Peter, one of them is Paul. So the title itself, "The Acts of the Apostles," shows you the role played by two men who are absolutely imperative that you see their ministries and understand it as it relates to you.

Peter, in Matthew chapter 16, you remember that story back there? Jesus gave him the keys to the kingdom.

Matthew 16:19

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

When He gave him the keys of the kingdom, He said the kingdom of Israel, "You are going to use these keys to open up different opportunities." Of course, that is exactly what Peter does in Acts chapter 1 through Acts chapter 7. He uses the keys of the kingdom to open up doors of opportunity for the nation of Israel to get that kingdom. When he fades off, Paul comes on the scene and Paul gets the gospel that God had kept secret.

Romans 16:25-27

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

The body of Christ was a mystery and a secret that God kept and never revealed from the foundation of the world till He gave it to Paul. But it was always in God's mind, and He always knew what He was doing. So we find all of these things laying out. We find in the book of Acts the true church line, the true biblical line defined for us. We also find the line of the true Bible believers defined for us. So when you get down through history, you always know where to start. If you find where to start and follow those lines, you will never get messed up because you are following the landmarks. The book of Acts is the foundation of what we call church history. Church history is built on those landmarks. If you get them, you will stay right on track. If you miss the book of Acts, you are going to wind up being messed up in your theology and certainly messed up in your understanding of where you are at and what you are supposed to be doing for the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. The Tale of Three Cities

We could change the name of the book of Acts, and it could be just as appropriately called "The Tale of Three Cities." Because in the book of Acts, three cities are defined for you. You have to get these cities down. I told you earlier that the book of Acts is probably responsible for more people dying and going to hell than anything in this world, bad drugs, booze, whatever. The book of Acts will also be the most responsible book for God's people showing up at the Judgment Seat of Christ and losing every reward they had. Because it is the book of Acts that leaves no stone unturned. You cannot approach the book of Acts from an honest, open heart standpoint and not see everything that God wants you to see so that when you enter into church history, it is all there. It is an incredible study.

You are going to find that in the book of Acts, there are three cities defined.

- 1.) The first city you are going to find is Alexandria, Egypt. Alexandria, Egypt will always be bad. It will never be good. He wants you to know, starting in the foundational book of church history, that when you get 300 years, 400 years, 500 years down the line in church history, and you pick up somebody's book that tells you how great it is in Alexandria and all that they

brought to Christianity, somebody does not know what they are talking about because the Bible defines Alexandria as a type of the world.

- Do you know what Joseph said when he died, before he died? He said, "They are down in Egypt." He said, "When you guys come out and God brings you out, do not leave my bones in Egypt." Do you know what Jacob said? Same thing. "When you die, when I die and you guys come out, do not leave my bones in Egypt." Why? Egypt is a type of the world. Always has been.
- Alexandria, Egypt was founded by Alexander the Great around 332 BC. It became the scientific and cultural pagan center of the world. They worshipped the great philosophers: Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, and they worshipped the ground that those great philosophers walked on. You are going to find that the great Bible heresies begin in Alexandria. You are also going to find the first quote-unquote Bible college starts in Alexandria. You are going to find men like Philo, 20 years before Christ, already corrupting the Old Testament. You are going to find men like Pantanous, men like Clement of Alexandria, and you are going to find men like Origen, who when you read books on church history are held up as great Bible teachers, and the truth of the matter is those men did more to corrupt the Word of God than anybody on the face of this planet. It all starts in Alexandria.
- 2.) Then you have the next city is Rome. Of course, the founding of Rome, the date of that is really unknown. It is such an ancient city, but it grows in time to be a world power, becoming the dominant world power 100 years before Christ shows up. It gained control of the Italian peninsula in about 275 BC, and by 133 AD, it runs the world. It is an incredible, credible thing to study. Let me just say this. We are going to come back to Rome in a little bit, but just so you know this, the greatest enemy that Bible Christianity has ever had has been the city of Rome, and we will talk about that when we get to it a little bit later on.
- 3.) Then you have a breath of fresh air. The third city is Antioch of Syria, and the book of Acts defines Antioch as the model church. Antioch is where they are first called Christians in the book of Acts, Acts chapter 11. You will find the first biblical Bible teachers in Antioch. You will find the first missionary trips out of Antioch. You will find that the standard and the hotbed of New Testament Bible Christianity starts in Antioch. Antioch is training men for the ministry. They are sending men out, and Antioch will always represent for you the biblical line.
- You and I are Baptist. A lot of people do not know what that is today, and very frankly, there are a lot of weird Baptists out there. A lot of Baptist churches are taking their name Baptist off because they do not want to be associated with other Baptists. I will never take the name Baptist off this church simply because I understand what Baptists are. I do not run to any political league one way or the other. I am not a member of any fellowship. I do not run with any crowd except the crowd that is sitting here because that is what a pastor's job is.
- I also understand this: I know where the Baptists come from, and they do not come from Lynchburg, Virginia. They do not come from Greenville, South Carolina. They do not come from Springfield, Missouri. The first Baptist church in America was in 1610 in Providence, Rhode Island, started by a man by the name of John Clark. John Clark was a Waldensian. Do you know where you trace the Waldensians back to? Antioch of Syria. That is where they start. So if you are a Baptist, you have a tremendous heritage in spite of the Baptists that are

around the world today. I mean, there are, I do not ever pick on anybody's religion more than I do the Baptists because we have our own brand of Baptists. So I mean, you have got to believe in everything. But I am just telling you, I understand where I come from, and I am proud to be a Bible-believing Baptist, even though there are Baptists today that I would not want to be associated with. They probably would not be associated with me either, but that is fine. It is a two-way street, and we can drive both ways. But it is a thing where I understand. I understand what Antioch of Syria does in the Book of Acts, and I understand the line that comes from that. When I come down through history, I can always trace that line because I know the landmark. Learn the landmarks, learn the definitive concepts, and you will be just fine when it comes to the Bible and studying history and learning the Book of Acts.

V. The Three Divisions of Acts

With all that in mind, let us begin walking through this transitional book. I am going to break it down for you real easy. The first thing I want you to understand is that there are three divisions in the Book of Acts, or three sections. We are going to break that down first, and then we are going to look at it section by section because that will really help you understand the Book of Acts in a definitive way.

Somebody says, "What, you know," and I will tell you this, and this is how I do this. You could go out and buy every commentary in the Book of Acts or any book of the Bible, and you will find that guys divide books up different ways. Everybody has their own way of doing it. I do not argue with anybody. I am my own man, but I understand this: when I give you a division in the Bible, it is not because Bob sat down and said, "Well, that looks like a nice place for a division. I think I will make one there." Or, "I outlined the Book of Acts one time, and this was really a neat outline." No, no, no, no, no. My outline will always be, my rule of thumb for divisions in the Bible is when God naturally divides something. Not when I decided to divide it. When God changes doing something one way and goes another direction, that is a division in the Bible.

The Book of Acts has three places where God says, "Okay, done with this, moving here." Three places. When you understand that, the Book of Acts, which looks so complicated, becomes pretty easy to understand.

- 1.) The first division will be Acts chapter 1 through Acts chapter 7. We have already talked about that. You will find in those first seven chapters that it is strictly to the Jews, and it is dealing with Peter and the kingdom, and he is giving the nation of Israel the last shot of getting what God has for them.
- 2.) Then in Acts chapter 8, we are going to go through it in detail here. I am going to show you. In Acts chapter 8, it changes just like that. From Acts chapter 8 to Acts chapter 20, you are going to see the gospel going from the Jew to the Gentile. Peter is going to fade out. Paul is going to come in, and the gospel moves into the Gentile world, and it all changes.
- 3.) Then the third division will be Acts chapter 21 to Acts chapter 28. This will spin it really, and we are going to see it in a minute, but the Book of Acts really ends by Acts chapter 20. I know you still have eight chapters left, but those eight chapters, the missionary trips are over. Paul goes to prison, and he spends the last three and a half, three years of his life in prison,

and really does not effectively minister in the sense that he was. He still does, and we will talk about that when we get there.

Those are the three divisions: Acts chapter 1 through Acts chapter 7, Acts chapter 8 to Acts chapter 20, Acts chapter 21 to Acts chapter 28. We will come through, and we will look at those natural divisions, because that is how we are going to study it, and that is how we are going to lay it out.

VI. Section One: Acts 1-7

Let us look at section one. Section one will run from Acts chapter 1 to Acts chapter 7. Let us focus on Acts chapter 1 for a moment. I have already told you that there are no Gentiles here. There is no church here. There is nothing going on like you and I know of today, because God is dealing with the question of Israel and what they are going to do about getting the kingdom. So it is a different little scenario coming through here, and this is why it is so dangerous.

We have already seen the question of the book: "Give us the kingdom of Israel." He does not answer them. You are going to see in verses 9 through 12 where Christ goes back to heaven. Then look at verse 4. Here is a key. In verse 4, notice that they are all assembled together in Jerusalem, waiting for the promise. That promise is the second coming of Christ to Israel. They are in Jerusalem. That is where they know He is coming. They were assembled together because they know they have got to be together, and they are waiting for the promise. That promise is not the promise of the church. That promise is the promise of the Christ coming, that is the second coming of Christ. The rest of the chapter and the next six chapters, you are going to find the ministry of Peter using those keys that God gave him in Matthew chapter 16, preaching under the assumption that the kingdom is coming to Israel, and all he is preaching to is the nation of Israel.

Now, look at Acts chapter 2. Here is where people get screwed up. Acts chapter 2. When you do not understand the book of Acts and how it lays out, then you mistake Pentecost for some kind of New Testament experience. Somebody said, "Have you experienced the experience of Pentecost?" Let me tell you something. No, I have not because Pentecost was an Old Testament feast. There is never a place anywhere in the New Testament church after Acts chapter 1 where anybody is keeping the feast of Pentecost. There is not any place where anybody is running around in Acts chapter 4, after Acts chapter 7, where anybody is running around talking about the feast of Pentecost. "Have you experienced the experience of Pentecost?" Pentecost was an Old Testament feast. We are dealing with an Old Testament Jew here who was looking for the kingdom coming to Israel. When God chooses to send the Holy Spirit of God to them, it is on the day of Pentecost, because that is the day that they are looking for. That has to do with the nation of Israel and the Jews, and that is who we are dealing with here.

There is not any place, any place down in history where you find anybody in the second century, third century, fourth century, fifth century, sixth century, seventh century, eighth century, ninth century, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, anybody making anything to do about Pentecost. It does not happen until the 20th century, around 1920, 1930s, where it pops up.

Notice down here, they speak in tongues in verse 6. Notice how the book of Acts defines tongues for you. The Bible takes for granted that we are stupid. That is a very good assumption on God's place. He made us and He knows we are dumb. So many times He will tell you the same things four or five different ways because if you are like me, you are slow. So He says, "and they speak with tongue." In verse 6, He tells you tongues are a language. If you could not get that tongues were language, He says in verse 8, "and every man hears in his own tongue." If you still could not get it, because you are thick-headed, He gives you the countries that the languages that they are talking out in verse 9, 10, 11. You could not miss it unless you wanted to. Tongues are not some heavenly language that nobody understands. Wherever you find it in the Word of God, tongues are always a language and it is always associated with another nation.

When the tongues come down here, you will find that the reason they come here is because you are told in 1 Corinthians 14:22 and 1 Corinthians 1:22 that tongues are for a sign, and that is the Jew that requires a sign. So tongues were for him. Isaiah 28:11, long before this day happened, Christ prophesied that with stammering lips and tongues that He would speak to the nation of Israel. This is a fulfillment of that.

Lest we all jump on the bandwagon here and try to get tongues into the church, I want you to just to see it again. Look at verse 5. You want to look at this in chapter 2, verse 5:

Acts 2:5

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

Verse 14:

Acts 2:14

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

Verse 22:

Acts 2:22

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

Verse 36:

Acts 2:36

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

There are no Gentiles here. You have got to see this. The first seven chapters are dealing with the nation of Israel and what God is doing with them based on the question they ask.

Look at chapter 3. We will see the same thing. Verse 12:

Acts 3:12

And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

Verse 15: "Ye men of Israel that killed Jesus." He goes to verse 22, he talks about Moses. Verse 13, "the God of Abraham." That is Israel. Verse 17, "brethren, Jews." Verse 19 and 20, talks about the second coming to Jews. Verse 23, "Old Testament prophet, therefore the Jews." In verse 25, he winds up talking about the covenant that God made with the nation of Israel. It cannot get any clearer. There are no Gentiles. There is no church in the sense that you and I know it. In the first seven chapters of the book of Acts, he is dealing with the nation of Israel based on his son's prayer for God, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," and they are getting the third chance that they are going to get. When you come through all the way through it, you are going to see it.

When Peter preaches his famous message in Acts chapter 2, verse 38:

Acts 2:38

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

There are more people who die and go to hell with Acts 2:38. There are churches across this world that tell you that is the way you get saved. Those same men that preached that, go down through there and see those verses that say "to the house of Israel," "to the Jews," "to the whole house." They could not find one Gentile anywhere, but because they rejected truth and they cannot see the Bible the way it breaks down, they take Acts 2:38 and put it into your world and say, "You have got to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to go to heaven." They never stop and consider that two chapters later, somebody gets saved that does not get saved the same way. Then two chapters after that, somebody else gets saved and they do not get saved the same way the last guy gets saved, but it was not the same as the first guy got saved. God is not doing, it does not even out in the book of Acts till you get to Acts chapter 10. Because in this transitional time, God is dealing with different aspects. He is dealing with the nation of Israel on different subjects, and God is covering a lot of bases. If you do not break down the book of Acts and see it for what it is, a flexible transitional book that God is coming from one to another, changing from the Jew to the Gentile, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, from Israel to the body of Christ, you will break your neck in the book of Acts. I am not kidding you.

So we see Acts chapter 4 and 5, more of the same. Peter is preaching. He is using those keys that God gave him, and he preached to the nation of Israel. In Acts chapter 6, we see some men are chosen as deacons, seven of them. One of those men is named Stephen. I know we take our deacons and we look at it and we have deacons in our church and all of those things, and that is one of those things that carries through. But you do not find the real jobs laid out for the deacon till you get a long time after this when Paul writes it in 1st and 2nd Timothy.

You call out these men, and one of the key men of these deacons is a man named Stephen, and here it comes. I know you thought I was lying to you, but here it comes. In Acts chapter 6, verse 8 and 9, here is what I am talking about. The Bible talks about Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, power of God. He gets up and he starts preaching in Acts chapter 6, verse 8 and 9, and where does the opposition come from? It comes from the Libertines and a group from Alexandria, Egypt. What do they do? They stir up the people against the preaching and the power of the Word of God.

Then we come to Acts chapter 7. In Acts chapter 7, I do not know how you do it, but you better put a big circle around Acts chapter 7 and put a big star on top of it because Acts chapter 7 is the pivotal chapter in your Bible in the New Testament, certainly in the book of Acts. It all changes in Acts chapter 7. It all changes, and when you get to Acts chapter 7, Stephen gets up and he comes up to the pulpit and he is going to preach. Peter has been preaching, now it is Stephen's turn. Stephen comes up, and all the assembled nation of Israel and all the leaders are there. He comes in there and he says, "Good morning, brethren," and he starts to let them have it. From Acts chapter 7, verse 1 through 60, 60 verses, it is his message, and he lets them have it. He preaches the same format that Peter has been preaching, that "you guys killed the Messiah." What he does, he goes back in a masterful stroke. He goes back and he lays out the whole history of the nation of Israel from its beginning. He talks about every element of the nation of Israel and how that at every turn when God did something, they gave God the short end of the stick. He just lays it out all through that chapter. He hits them right between the eyes with a two-by-four. He does not hold anything back. He comes down through there, and then he brings it down to the end. In verse 52, look what he says. He is preaching. He is coming it down. He is talking about Moses and Abraham and David and all this and the prophets, and he is laying them having, and they are sitting down there, and the longer he goes, their faces are starting to scowl, and they are looking at him, and they are saying, "Who does he think he is to tell us? He has not ever been to school." He just keeps laying it on. He is coming down here at the end of his sermon in verse 52. I can just see him. He is coming down there and he says:

Acts 7:52

Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers;

He never got to give the invitation. He did not even get to take up the offering. He comes down there and he is preaching that thing and laying that thing out, and they go bananas. They got there, and the Bible says that they were cut to their heart in verse 54. That is what the book does. When that book goes forth and cuts you in your heart, you have one or two approaches to it. You either come to the place where it breaks you, or you do the same thing that the scribes and the Pharisees do, and you hate not only the messenger but you hate the message. It goes one or two ways, and in this case, it does not work out good for old Stephen. He gets killed, and they take him out there and they stone him.

In verse 56, here is a great verse. They take him out there and stone him, and the Bible says down there in verse 56:

Acts 7:56

And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

That is the second coming of Christ. That is an interesting deal. Every place in the New Testament it tells you that He is sitting at the right hand of God the Father. Here is the only place in the Bible, only place in the Bible that says after He goes back to heaven, when every other verse in the Bible says He is seated at the right hand of God the Father, here it says He is standing.

Every preacher in this world teaches and every Bible college in the world teaches that. How many times I have heard it. How many times I have heard them come down through that thing, and there was that famous preacher Stephen, and he dies down there, "Jesus was standing up to welcome that martyr home to glory. Amen, brother, praise God." You do not know your Bible. That Bible says that Jesus is no respecter of persons. If He had to stand up for Stephen, He had to stand up for everybody. Do you know how many people die a second to go to heaven? Jesus would be. When you do not know your Bible, you have got to come up with goofy little things like that because you do not know what the scriptures say.

Do you know why He is standing here, the only place in the Bible? The first key was "heavens opened." If you have been coming on Thursday night, that is the second coming of Christ wherever you find it. Revelation chapter 19. Go through the Bible sometime and find the places where it says "the heavens opened" and look at the context. Every one of them, and I think there are seven of them, every one of them will be a context of the second coming of Christ. Why? Because the whole book of Acts is about, in the first seven chapters, Him honoring the prayer of His son on the cross, and here is where Israel gets their last chance, and He is standing because if Israel would have accepted the prayer and the preaching of Stephen, Christ would have come back and brought the kingdom to Israel, and every Old Testament prophecy would have been in there.

I know what the average argument is, and you say, "What about?" The only reason you know "what about" is because you have the New Testament and you have the rest of the revelation. They did not have it then. All they have is an Old Testament, and all these Jews are looking for is the coming kingdom, the question they ask in Acts chapter 1, verse 6. God has not revealed to anybody yet, Romans chapter 16, the last four verses. He has not revealed to anybody yet about the church. Nobody knows anything about the church at all yet. You have got to understand that to figure out the book of Acts, or you will be "booktizing" somebody to get the Holy Ghost in Acts chapter 2. I am telling you, that is one of the greatest places in the Bible where you see, and it all changes, and of course, they do not get it. They reject the third time, from which your common phrase comes from, "third time is a charm." They reject it the third time, and then the kingdom gets postponed.

VII. Section Two: Acts 8-20

Watch what happens. You could not miss this unless you had a degree in. Look what happens. Enter the second section from here on in Acts chapter 8. It all changes. There is not one miracle done in Jerusalem after this time. The whole thing shifts. The Holy Spirit of God leaves Jerusalem, never to come back again, and starts on His westward journey to the Gentile. We find Peter fading out, and now we find a new name, and we find this new name in Acts chapter 7.

Look how God does this. Look how God has the bases covered. They are down there. God's Son on the cross says, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." God gives them one more chance, and they are down there, and He sends them. Peter and the boys and Stephen shows up. I have been asked this, "Brother Bob, let me ask you a question. How come if Jesus knew they were not going to do that, why did He bother standing up if Jesus knows everything?" That is a good question. That brings up a tremendous lesson you have got to learn in life.

I read back there in Genesis that God put Adam and Eve down in the garden, fellowshiped with them. One day the devil showed up. God, Adam and Eve sinned. Eve first, then Adam. Then God had at three o'clock in the afternoon had Bible study with them that day. The Bible says the Lord God walked down through there, and they must have had a tremendous time together. Suddenly God is waiting down there, and they did not show up. What Adam and Eve had done now in the meantime, they now know they are sinners, and now that they are sinners, they do not want to have fellowship with God. The same thing happened in your life and my life. We do not do what is right. Do you know what they did? They tried a camouflage approach. They figured if they got fig leaves and sewed them together and looked like trees that God was so stupid He would not see them. We laugh at them, but we do the same thing. If some of you sit here right now thinking you are camouflaged, you are thinking that God cannot see what you are doing.

Here is a good test for you. The Bible says God, the Lord, is coming down through there, and He says, "Come out, come out, wherever you are. Adam, where art thou?" What? God did not know where Adam was? God is going to walk by. Here is this big old tree. Here is Adam with his fig trees. All he is over him going, "Shh, shh, shh." God walking by saying, "Hey Adam, how are you doing, Eve? How are you today? Good to see you. I am going to be over here waiting for you whenever you get done fooling around." Why? God would have walked down there like we were bunny hunting sometime. You know that old 12-gauge shotgun kicking the bush. There you go. He knew right where he was. Do you know why God stood up even though He knew that Israel would reject? Do you know why He came to Adam and Eve and said, "Where are you, Adam?" when He knew where Adam was? God always knows where you are at. Sometimes God just wants to find out if you know where you are at. You better learn that lesson. You better worry about the thing in Acts 7 and find out where you are at this morning. But God already knows. That is God. That is what He does. God always allows you and I to fess up first before He comes knocking on the door. He comes knocking. That is why the Bible says keep short accounts with God. It does not say that exactly. He said, "Do not let the sun go down in your sin." But Martin Luther said, "Keep short accounts with God," and he had a good point.

It all changes now. Look what happened. Stephen is down there, and he is being stoned. God knows they are not going to receive Him, but God stands up because that is what God does. He does what is right, honors His promises, even when you and I do not. Do you know what He did?

The Bible says down there at the end of that chapter, there was a young man holding the coats of the men that were getting the rocks to kill Stephen. Do you know what his name was? Saul, who becomes Paul. I do not know how many times when Paul gave his testimony later, he counted back to that day that he stood there and watched Stephen get killed and saw the look on his face. That is another great lesson. We do not have time to get into it. I have a message I preach on "Wipeouts in the Ministry," so-called wipeouts. Stephen is one of them. First message. Never even got to get the invitation. Never even got to collect the offering, and they killed him before you are back going. Somebody in the world would look at that and say, "What a waste." God saw that old boy down there, that old Jew standing down there named Saul, watching that man die, and he never forgot it, and it changed his life. It all changes after Acts 7. Never the same again.

Watch this. Next chapter. Acts chapter 8, around verses 5 through 25. Suddenly a revival breaks out. Where? At Samaria. Half Jew, half Gentile. We are no longer at Jerusalem. Then in Acts chapter 8, verse 26 through 40, the first man in the Bible gets saved like you and I get saved. What a study that is. An old black Ethiopian eunuch. You can go through that thing, and it is like the TV camera is panning down, and you see every aspect of New Testament salvation. He is a total Gentile, black man from Ethiopia, which brings up another great study. Why he is the first man in the Bible saved as a black man, because when you and I get saved, we are supposed to be a servant of servants as that Ethiopian was.

When we come to Acts chapter 9, you know what you have there, do you not? The conversion of Paul. It is changing. Acts chapter 7 was the line drawn in the sand for the first section. Now we start the second section, and we all of a sudden we see the revival going down to Samaria. We see an old black African Ethiopian getting saved as a Gentile, and now the conversion of the greatest apostle to the Gentile church the world has ever seen, the Apostle Paul. A man who writes three quarters of the New Testament, establishes a church doctrine for the body of Christ. We are on our way. We are making a clean transition here if you are following it.

Acts chapter 10, you know what you have? A man by the name of Cornelius gets saved. He is an Italian of the Italian band. Cornelius gets saved. A full-blown Gentile Italian. You know what you have in Acts chapter 10, verses 9 through 17? You have the great vision to Peter. What was that vision about? It was about Peter went up on a house top to pray, and he had a vision, and what did he saw? He saw a big old blanket come floating down from the sky, kind of like a picnic on the grounds. On that blanket was all kinds of stuff to eat that he was not allowed to eat. Barbecued ribs, snails. Everything that in the Old Testament, Leviticus chapter 11 says is unclean, is down there, and then the Lord looks at Peter and says, "Peter, go ahead and eat that stuff, son." Peter, in his religious fervor, stands up straight and says, "No, Lord, I could not do that. I have never ate anything that is unclean as far as the Old Testament is concerned." Do you know what God says? He says, "Son, when I clean something, do not call it dirty anymore. It is okay to eat those things." Why? Because the Old Testament is no longer. You can eat, you can go to all the barbecue you want now, it does not make any difference.

Do you know what the Bible says? Peter was dumb like we are. He saw that vision three times, and the Bible says Peter could never get it. Peter wondered in his mind what was going on, and he heard a knock at the front door. He just came down off the roof, and he was thinking, "What is

going on here? I do not understand. I cannot eat that stuff, and all my life I was told not to eat it. Now suddenly I see this vision, and there is a big old spread out there, and I heard somebody yell, 'Can I help you?' I walked out on the roof, and I saw the barbecue there. I just tell you, I do not know what else did, but I cannot eat that stuff, and God said, 'I will show it to you one time, two times, and three times.'" How do you say that three times? What was at the door? Now they show me that three times. "I am coming, I am coming." He walks down there, opens the door, and you know what you have down there? Three Gentiles. Do you know why God showed it to him three times? Because He was telling him Gentiles are clean now, and I have three Gentiles coming to see you, so I am going to show you this vision three times so two and two is four, Peter. You will not beat the book of Acts, it lays itself out.

Then we come to Acts chapter 11, the great chapter where they are first called Christian. That is a new twist at Antioch, the model church. You see, in every Bible college on the face of this planet today, they teach you that the model church is the church of Jerusalem, and that is wrong. The church of Jerusalem never did get it. The church of Jerusalem never could figure it out. Why? You have the church of Antioch training up men, sending missionaries, they have the plan of God, and they are moving with it. The church of Jerusalem is stuck in a rut. Do you know what God had to do with them? He had to bring Titus down in 70 AD to persecute them and scatter them out of Jerusalem so we would get the picture to get out there because they were not doing it. There are some lessons there we do not have time to get into, and it represents the two kinds of churches: churches that get stuck in the way they are, and Christians that get stuck in the way they are and cannot change when God changes.

I will tell you what, you find seven things. I wish I had time to preach on these seven things about this church.

- 1.) You will find in Acts 11:20 it is a preaching church.
- 2.) You will find in Acts 11:21 it is a witnessing church.
- 3.) You will find in Acts 13:1 it is a teaching church.
- 4.) You will find in Acts 11:26 it is a serving church.
- 5.) You will find in Acts 11:29 it is a giving church.
- 6.) You will find in Acts 13:2-3 it is a praying church.
- 7.) You will find in Acts 13:3 it is a missionary church.

It has everything you need. It is a great model of the New Testament church, and it starts here. This is your roots if you are a Bible believer this morning. You can trace your Bible and what you have and what you believe right back to Antioch if you just follow the landmarks. It is unbelievable.

When you have chapter 12, it is the great definitive chapter on showing you that Easter was never part of the Christian Bible-believing mentality. Herod calls it Easter. The Christians call it the unleavened bread. They knew the time it was. They knew the difference. They never called it Easter. Constantine called it Easter. The Roman Catholic Church called it Easter. Christian Bible believers understood what it was. I am not fighting Easter. I mean, I am all for it. I had an Easter egg hunt at our house. I am just saying, but I know where history comes from.

Then you have chapter 13, and we start now the first missionary trip, and we go from chapter 13 to chapter 14:28. Never before in the history of the world had men went to the world to carry the gospel. The Old Testament was just the opposite. The Old Testament, I have told you this before, the Old Testament was built around a fixed temple in Jerusalem, and all the world saw one go to that temple. Now it is changed. Now your bodies are the temple, and you are to take the temple to the world. It changed. It changed in Acts chapter 7 if you could not miss it. It changed, and you have got to see that. So in section two, we now find the great chapter on the missionary movement, and we find from chapter 13 to chapter 14:28 the first missionary trip, and we find in there missionaries and missions defined. We do not have time to get into it all now, but it is all there.

Then we chapter 15. Here is where you want to watch. Chapter 15, we have the meeting at Jerusalem. Let me tell you about this meeting. I told you the church at Jerusalem could not get it. Here is the church of Antioch doing all these things that God called him to do. Going out on missionary trips, going to the Gentiles, the church at Jerusalem having a problem with it. They are called a little gathering together here to say, "Hey, what are you boys doing? This is not what you are supposed to be doing. You are supposed to be down here waiting for the promise. We are still waiting for the second coming of Christ." The church at Antioch and the boys say, "Hey, you know, you missed some things along the way here." So they have a meeting in Acts chapter 15 down in Jerusalem, and this meeting is also talked about in Galatians chapter 2.

What had happened is this: the Christians in Jerusalem had gotten messed up, and they are trying to, they see the New Testament, but they are trying to hang on to the Old Testament because they do not clearly see what is going on. So what they do is they try to make the best of both worlds. They try to get you a Christian who has somebody who follows the Old Testament, but they add the New Testament, and that is not going to work. So Paul goes down there, and they have a meeting.

I have got to tell you this because I do not want this, you are defending a book. Every Bible college on the face of this planet, probably in your Bible, if you have any notes in your Bible, and probably 90% of the people that you have listened to, calls this the first Christian council at Jerusalem. That is a nice little "make it up as you go along." I will give you five million dollars if anybody shows me the word "council" in Acts chapter 15. Somebody says, "Oh, you are talking real big, Bob, you do not have that much money." I can get it together before you find the word because that is not in there. Let me show you how the book of Acts works. You want the word "council"?

- The first time you find it in the book of Acts is Acts 2:23, and it is bad against Christ.
- The second time you find it is Acts 4:15, and it is bad against Christ.
- The third time you find it is Acts 5:21, and it is bad against Christ.
- The next time you find it is Acts 6:12, and it is bad.

Four times in the book of Acts before you ever get here, he told you council is bad. That is why God never uses the word "council" because He does not want to confuse you that all down through history, every time a bunch of religious Pharisees get together to have a religious

council, God and you are going to come out on the short end of the stick. The last one was the Council of Trent in 1500, and it pronounced 176 curses on anybody that believed what you and I believe about the Bible. Happy New Year. So the Bible keeps you straight.

Then we have Acts chapter 16. Acts chapter 16:1 to 18:22. We have the second missionary trip, and on the second missionary trip, Timothy shows up. What a great study he is, the model pastor. Barnabas has already showed up, the model Christian, and you have here in Acts 16:1, we start talking about Timothy, and you get all kinds of insight into him. We talked about him last week a little bit on Mother's Day, and he becomes Paul's partner in ministry after Paul and Barnabas fall out over John Mark. You find that out in Acts 15:37-41, and it is an incredible thing to study that chapter.

Then you come to a lot of stuff in there that you, I am just giving you the breakdown here. You will have to go through a lot of great studies, a lot of great stories. We will have to come back through it some other time. We do not have time. We have got to get through this today. So you get the outline here.

Acts chapter 19 through chapter 21:19, you have the third missionary trip, third and final. During this time, this is where Paul writes a lot of his New Testament books between Acts chapter 18 and Acts chapter 19 and 20. It is Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, First and Second Thessalonians. A little bit later on, he gets thrown in prison. He writes Philippians, Colossians, First and Second Timothy, Titus, and finally, those are called the prison epistles.

You will find some great stuff here in Acts chapter 19. You will find the great study of the goddess Diana and the image. It fell down from Jupiter.

Acts 19:35

And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?

That is worth looking at. Chapter 20. You will find one of the greatest places in the Bible where he leaves the church at Ephesus, and he says farewell, and he preaches his farewell message to the elders of the church at Ephesus. This is a great study, and his message has six points in it. Those six points show the leaders of Ephesus how they are to carry on after he is gone. One of the most heart-moving, heartfelt messages anywhere in the Bible, which falls into that thing that I talked to before. Always study the last thing a man says. The last thing a man says in the Bible will always be the best thing he says because by that time he has got the perspective on it. So you want to remember that.

Then we have Acts 20:36, and this is the key point. This is your last paragraph mark in your Bible. Most people do not even know why the paragraph marks are in the Bible. They think that is just part of English punctuation. Nice try. A lot more to it than that. But it is the last time you find a paragraph mark in your Bible, and it signifies that the end of your Bible has come.

Acts 20:36

And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

I know we still have all of Paul's books after this, but they are written during this time, and it has all the things, you have the book of Revelation and all that. But all that prophecy as far as the Bible is concerned and as far as the time element constraint here is concerned, your New Testament ends right here in chapter 20, verse 36. Because there are no more missionary trips after this.

VIII. Section Three: Acts 21-28

From this point on, and we enter the third section, Paul is in custody. He is never a free man again. Though God does use him, and you have some tremendous studies there, for all practical purposes, church history starts in Acts chapter 21. Paul is out of the mainstream. We are going to look at that in a second. This is where church history proper starts, and you do not need any more paragraph marks in your Bible, divine context, they are divine chapters, headings, and are defined the text that you know what context you are reading in. Now by the time you get here, you do not need any more. You have at this point, everything. If you laid out your Bible and you know your Bible, you studied your Bible, by the time you get to Acts chapter 20, you have got everything you need to follow it on.

You are now going to enter into a period of time that runs about 2,000 years called the history of the church, where there is not one book written by God that tells you anything to follow, anything to look at, anything to go by. You are now basically, as it looks like, on your own, as it would seem, not true. God put everything up to this point is Bible you need to get through the next 2,000 years. The book of Acts has defined everything up to this point you need. That is why there are no more paragraphs in your Bible after Acts chapter 20, verse 36. That might be a little tougher for some of you to grasp at this point, but you will get it in time.

Now we enter the third section. Chapter 21 starts the last division in your Bible, the last section in the book of Acts, and it runs from chapter 21 to chapter 28. Basically, the Acts of the apostles have ended because Paul gets a number of warnings from God not to go down in Jerusalem, but he goes down anyhow. When he does, he ends his ministry by disobeying God, and he winds up in jail for the next three years, and then finally killed by Rome.

This is a great study. This is one of those great sideline studies because you would be hard-pressed to find a better man that loved God than Paul. But Paul teaches us, or God teaches us, through the life of Paul, one of the great mistakes that many of us make in dealing with people. Do you know what Paul's problem was? Paul is a good man. There is probably nobody that had the fire and the zeal and understood his ministry and direction more than Paul did and what God wanted to do. But Paul is human just like the rest of us. One of the great lessons that God does is God takes the great men of God in the Bible and not only shows you the great things they do, but they show you the holes in their armor. God lets you see both sides of them. Do you know why? That is because you do not get so high-minded that you think that you are better than anybody else. We all have our holes in our armor. The average pastor today or the average Christian today,

if Paul lived in their society, they would not even have him in their pulpit. Do you know why? He is a jailbird. Paul says to Timothy many, many times, "I am glad you are not ashamed of the fact that I am in the jail." It is one of those things where God puts men in the Bible like that. God puts people in the Bible, lets you see how strongly on one side and lets you see how frailly on the other side, because everybody in this room and every Christian on the face of this planet has your best day and your bad day. Sometimes we like to focus on our best day and point other people's bad days out. That is a dangerous place to go.

So when you start to see this, you learn a great lesson. Do you know what Paul's problem was? Paul's problem is a familiar problem that many of God's people get into. He has such a desire for the Jews. I do not know how many times he said, "If I could go to hell to save my people Israel, I would do it." He wanted those Jews saved so desperately that he was willing to die and go to hell for them. That is quite an incredible statement. But here is Paul's problem. It is a problem that many times we all make. In making that mistake, we become vulnerable. Do not ever want something that is right so desperately that you violate the biblical principles to make it happen. But that is exactly what he did.

In dealing with people, I tell people that dealing with people in counseling with me or discipleship all the time, because you get people and you work with them and you love people and you want them to make it. It is disheartening when people quit and do not come back to church. Sure it is. You feel obviously if you are any kind of good person, you feel you have done something wrong. In most cases, you have not. You are going to find it in every battle and every war you take casualties, and this church will take their share of casualties just like anybody else. I am sorry it happens. I do not want it to happen, but I know that is the way it is. Some of you people a year from now will not be here. Do you know why? You will get a better deal. That is all. I like to say that, you know, you were preaching on the street corner and somebody shot you between the eyes. That could raise a lot of money doing that, but it will not happen that way. It will be simply you got a better deal than coming here. Or you got yourself in such a bind financially that you could not come anymore. Or you had to do this or you had to take another job or you had to work Sundays or you had to work Thursday night. Something will take the place of God in your life, and before you know it, you will be out the door, gone, and it will hit you just like that. I am telling you, people go by the wayside.

What happens is you and I have to come to the point where I want you to do what is right. I want everybody in this room to do what is right. I would do anything for you to help you do what is right. But you know what I will not do? I will not want you to do right more than you do. That is Paul's mistake. He wanted the Jew to get it more than they wanted it. So he disobeyed God thinking that he would make the difference when God knew that he would not. When he violated that principle, he lost his ministry and spent the next three years in jail. Not that God did not use him, it just goes to show you that God uses us even when we fail Him. I am telling you, you better learn that because when you start to work with people and deal with people, the moment you start to cut somebody slack when it comes to what the Bible says, you are vulnerable, and they are going to wind up using that against you. You and God are going to come out on the short end of the stick. You are much better to be loving and kind and hold the line. That rhymes.

Loving and kind and hold the line. Because if you do not, you will get shot in the head. That will really hurt. I am telling you, learn that lesson. That lesson will keep you going when nothing else will because in the ministry and dealing with people, you will get blasted. You might as well just write it up right now. If you are combat and you are in a war and there is no discharge in that war and you are a soldier and we are in a battle, we are going to take casualties. It is stupid. It does not have to be, but it is. It will be a lot easier, like I said, if somebody literally got shot, but it is tough when they just get a better deal.

There is one thing about everyone sitting in this room. I do not care if you are saved and you are lost. There is one thing about everybody in this room, and I do not care how pious you think you are or how pious I think I am. I am telling you about something about everybody in this room, given the chance and the right circumstances, we will all give God a short stick in the eye. Mark it down and put my name at the top of the list. We are all the same. That is why you have to work at it. That is why you have to understand these great lessons. That is why God lets these men that are great men fail. That is why He shows you their failures because He wants you to understand that you are no better than they are. I am no better than they are. That is why He lets you learn by those mistakes that we might not make the same mistakes. Even when we make the same mistakes, then God shows us that He always wants to take us where we are at. It is an incredible study, but that is what happens.

Chapter 23 through chapter 28 starts the process of Paul going from Jerusalem. He goes down to Jerusalem. He goes down there into the temple when he preaches, and they go bananas on him. They take him and throw him right in jail. He never gets out again. Now starts from Acts 22 to 28, the process that transfers him from Jerusalem to Rome. Yes, he is a great witness for Christ. There are some great things to study in his life about him witnessing before Felix and Festus and King Agrippa. Great studies, great studies showing you and I how to witness before the world.

- Chapter 22 through 23, he is brought before the council. Bad again.
- Chapter 24, he is brought before Felix.
- Chapter 25, he is brought before Festus.
- Chapter 26, he is brought before King Agrippa.
- Chapter 27, he is taken to Rome.

After a year of being kicked around in Jerusalem, he is taken down to Rome, and he spends the last two years of his life in Rome and then finally killed sometime after that.

IX. Conclusion: The Importance of Knowing Church History

That brings up our third city. I want to show you how the Bible works now. We are almost finished. I want to show you how the Bible works now. I told you earlier that Rome was the greatest enemy of Bible Christianity. When you are a Bible believer, you believe the Bible. You take what the Bible says, you learn from it, and you use that. I will tell you, for me, it is such an academic thing. It is so black and white. I have a tough time seeing why people cannot see it.

When I come through my Bible, I find that in the early New Testament in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Rome persecutes. Rome is in power. She persecutes Israel. It was Rome that killed

John the Baptist. It was Rome that tried to kill Christ at His birth. It was Rome that hated the teachings of Christ. It was Rome that was in league with the scribes and the Pharisees for political. It was Rome that had Him arrested. It was Rome that had Him beat. It was a Roman scourge that ripped His flesh off His back. When He was crucified, that is a Roman form of crucifixion. It was a Roman soldier that put a spear in His side. It was Roman men that put nails in His hands and His feet. It was Roman soldiers that cast lots for His garment. It was Rome that killed Christians all through the book of Acts. It was Rome that cut off James' head with a sword. It was Rome that beat Paul and put him in prison. It was Rome that killed Paul and 60 million Bible-believing Christians down through church history. Why would anybody on God's planet think that God would ever bring you a Bible from Rome? I do not understand that.

When you come down in every turn of it, you realize that in the history of this world, there have been revivals that God has brought in every country, and there has never in the history of the world been a revival in Rome. When somebody says, "I got you a brand new Bible," where does it come from? It comes from Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, Rome and manuscripts. After what I just gave you, why would it take a ton of bricks to fall on your head that Rome was the greatest enemy, killed everybody, butchered everybody, murdered everybody, but God would suddenly pick that country to give you your Bible? I do not understand that. But that is what the book of Acts does. It defines.

By the time you get to Acts chapter 28, it is all over. With the death of Paul, one of the great lessons we do say, "God stands by him, God never leave you nor forsake you," even when you do not do what is right. We now start what the Bible calls, what we call in church history proper, our beginning to study of all the areas. Two landmarks in your Bible to stay on track through history: Israel in the Old Testament, body of Christ in the New Testament. The key what happens in Bible Christianity in the book of Acts is that.

Let me tell you something. Christianity is confused today. God's people who are saved and on their way to heaven are confused today. I remember as a young man looking at all this stuff out here, and I remember asking myself the question, "What in the world happened to my generation? What in the world happened that people were so unbelievably blockheaded about what is going on? Why do God's people not know where they have come from? Why do they not know why they believe what they believe?" I found some of the most pious people, Baptist people who believed all kinds of good stuff. But if you sat down with them and threw an open Bible in front of them and asked them why they believed it, they would not have a clue where to go to show you why they believed it. I am not impressed with that.

I remember as a young man looking at this thing, and I said to myself, in the only terms I knew, "What really happened in Acts chapter 28 when Acts shut down, and in my world when Sears, Kmart, and Walmart opened up?" What happened? What happened between that time and my time that we are so absolutely befuddled and confused about what is going on today? The answer was, church history. Because now at the end of the book of Acts, the next 2,000 years, we find everything laid out right online, running back from Acts chapter 11, where they are first called Christians, right up to the time for the next 2,000 years, bringing us right up to where we are at right now.

Most of God's people today, bless their hearts, most of God's people are floundering in the fields of the Fatherless. If you are a Baptist this morning, and I give you this time, if you have been saved five years or less, I am not even talking to you. Most of God's people that claim to be Baptist this morning do not even know why they are, and if you try to pin them down, and if, when you finally get to the rapture of the church, if the entrance into heaven was, "Tell me why you are a Baptist," there would be a lot of Baptists turn around and taking the exit out. We get on to Catholics all the time for being such traditionists. Let me tell you something, there are no more traditional people in all the world than Baptists. Do you know why? Because that kind of tradition stuff feeds our old sin nature. We do not like the fact that it takes study and time. We like to talk about how God and we are. We like to talk about how we are involved in ministry and how we do all this and I will do that. I meet young men and young ladies all the time, and they talk about, "I am saved and I want to do this and I am going to do that." They have absolutely no clue. It is like, "I am going to serve God without the Bible, and I will show you I can do it." You are going to fall flat on your face. I am just trying to help you.