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Acts Overview (Part 1)



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

In this overview given by Steve Gregg, the book of Acts is presented as a valuable account of the early spread of the gospel, particularly beyond Israel, and serves as a link between the gospels and the epistles. The community life of the early church is highlighted, with a focus on their preaching outside of formal meetings and the strong sense of community and mutual concern among members. The book of Acts is credited with providing evidence for the resurrection of Christ and the continuation of his miraculous ministry through the body of Christ, the church, making it a valuable resource for understanding the story of Jesus.

Transcript

We are going to have an introduction and an overview of the book of Acts. Now there are some notes on the chairs there. As usual, I do not promise to follow the notes closely.

These notes I've made long ago. I print them up for you and for me just because they contain a lot of good information, some of which I cover and some of which I might not. Actually, to adequately cover everything in the notes would take much longer than I think I want to impose upon you.

So we'll just, I'll take what I think is most important and what I feel led to share. But the book of Acts is a wonderful, wonderful book, I have to say. When I began to study the Bible, the book of Acts really impacted me.

Frankly, when I began in the ministry and began to teach the Bible, I have to say every book impacted me. I mean, people often ask me, having taught through every book of the Bible many times, what's your favorite book? And the literal answer is, whichever one I'm teaching at the moment, whichever one I'm reading at the moment. It's a little bit like I have five children, which one do I love the most? Or the one I'm thinking about at any given moment is my favorite.

But then if I think about another one, they're my favorite. They're all favorites. And the same thing with the Bible, whatever one you're focusing on is, in my case, the favorite.

But Acts is different than all the other books of the Bible. It resembles in some ways some of the Old Testament books, because there's quite a few books of the Old Testament. They're just historical narrative, which is what Acts is.

Some people have compared Acts and the Book of Judges. I have not very often. I don't think the comparison is as strong as some people do.

But but Judges, of course, are I'm sorry, not Judges, but Joshua, excuse me. Some people think it's like the Book of Joshua, where Joshua records the conquest of the land of Canaan by the Israelites under Joshua after Moses was dead. And sort of a follow up to Moses of ministry and the conquest of the land.

Well, in a sense, Acts is the follow up to Jesus personal ministry. And it does speak of the conquest of the conquest made by the gospel in many lands, first in Jerusalem and Judea, then in Samaria and then to the ends of the earth, which is what Jesus said in Acts chapter one verse eight. He said, You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth.

And that is actually the way that the story unfolds. It starts out with mystery in Jerusalem and Judea, and then in chapter eight, it moves on to Samaria and then from chapter nine on it was up to the ends of the earth through especially Paul. So the Book of Acts, in a sense, is the record of the conquest.

Early conquests made by the gospel over paganism and Judaism in a way, and is in that respect a little bit like Joshua. But it is the only book in the New Testament that is strictly speaking a history book without being also a gospel. Obviously, the first four books in the New Testament are also historical narratives, but they are all of them referred to as gospels, which means that they are written in order to proclaim the good news.

Mark's gospel, which is thought by many to be the first of them written, begins with the words of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I was just says this is this book I'm writing is the gospel. Matthew and Luke are often thought I'm not so sure I agree, but many people think that Luke and Matthew use Mark as one of their sources.

And John writing much later also wrote his version of a gospel. But in the church history, and you'll still find this in churches like the Catholic Church, they consider the New Testament to be divided into two main portions, the gospel and the apostle. They thought if you've got a Catholic background, the gospel usually is a reading from one of the four gospels and what they call the apostle or the epistle.

No, possibly that's usually from the epistles. The book of Acts is neither gospel nor epistle. It's like the link between the two, and it's a very important link of that.

The gospels anticipate the church when Jesus ascends into heaven at the end of the

gospels. He anticipates the church. He says, wait in Jerusalem until you receive powerful and high, and then he talks about how you do my witnesses and and then when you come to the epistles, the first of which obviously is Romans.

Then you've got the other epistles of Paul and others. You don't anticipate the church. Are you the church is taken for granted.

The church is assumed to be present. The letters are written to churches. So from the gospels which anticipate the church to the epistles, which are written after the church is in full swing.

We have nothing to connect them except the book of Acts, and there are a number of important things that we would wonder without if we didn't have the book of Acts. One is how did the teaching of Jesus, such as we have in the Sermon on the Mount, develop into the kind of teaching we find in Romans or Galatians or Ephesians. The contents of Paul's epistles often go considerably beyond the range of the teaching of Jesus.

Now, I want to say right off that there are some people who mistakenly say that Paul preached another gospel for a different dispensation than Jesus. They say Jesus preached for Jewish dispensation and since the Jews rejected him, Paul was sent to another dispensation of preach a gospel primarily for the Gentiles and a different gospel. They say Jesus' gospel is called the gospel of the kingdom and Paul was called the gospel of grace.

This entire scenario that I just outlined for you is entirely fabricated. There's nothing in the Bible that suggests that Paul preached a different gospel than Jesus. There's really nothing in the teachings of Jesus that Paul did not preach or teach in his writings or his recorded messages in the book of Acts.

Paul preached the same thing as Jesus did. It's clear that Paul did go beyond because Paul had things to say to the Gentile world that Jesus never addressed. He never went to the Gentile world.

Jesus ministered to Jews only or almost entirely and Paul almost entirely to Gentiles. So, Paul had to add things. He said Jesus never spoke about, for example, the idea of a Christian person married to a non-Christian.

What about that, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7 verses 12 through 15. He said I have to go beyond what Jesus said on this because Jesus never spoke about such a situation. In Jesus' teaching, his audience were all Jewish people married to Jewish people.

There was not interfaith marriage in his audience or among his disciples. But when Paul preached to Gentiles, sometimes one married partner would be converted and the other would not. They were already married as pagans, but then one became a Christian.

Now you have an unequal situation and Paul had to address that. He said Jesus never said anything about this, so I'll have to do that. So, Paul sometimes addressed situations that Jesus didn't and applied the principles of Jesus.

He never talked in contrary to what Jesus taught. And we see that, but Paul's emphasis in his epistles is often geared toward a non-Jewish readership and addressing things that frankly you never find Jesus discussing idolatry. Why? Because after the Babylonian exile, the Jews never practiced overt idolatry.

They may have had idols in their hearts, like God said to Ezekiel, but they didn't build statues and worship them after the Babylonian exile. And therefore, in Jesus' time, there was no idolatry of that kind in Israel. But when Paul went up to the nations, they all worshipped idols.

So, Paul has whole sections of his epistles talking about idolatry and how it is so important to not compromise with it. Likewise, fornication. Very few forms of fornication were tolerated in Jewish society and Jesus didn't say very many things about it.

He did mention it in passing, but Jesus did not focus on it in his teaching, but Paul did. Almost all of his epistles warned against fornication because in the Gentile lands, if you weren't a Christian, there was absolutely no stigma upon fornication. In fact, they committed fornication as part of their rituals of worship of their deities, their demonic gods.

A lot of the priestesses were prostitutes in the pagan temple. So, the converts out of those religions that Paul made were always struggling to be persuaded that fornication really was such a bad thing. So, Paul had to very often say that it was and repeat it.

So, you find Paul's teachings having different features in some cases, not contrary, but just additional features that which Jesus preached and we find in the book of Acts. Why? Because we read of Paul's missionary journeys and his converts among the heathen and so forth. Therefore, the book of Acts will sort of explain how the teaching of Jesus, which was primarily the Jewish people, was adapted by Paul into what we have in his epistles.

Another thing is that Acts introduces Paul. If you didn't have the book of Acts, you'd have the Gospels in which Jesus picked twelve men to be his apostles and he sent them out to preach the gospel. But Paul was not one of them.

Paul was not even in the picture in the Gospels at all. And yet, when you come to the epistles, Paul's writing most of them. And he's expecting people to take him seriously like he is an apostle.

He even introduces himself as an apostle. If you didn't have the book of Acts, you'd think, what? Where'd this guy come from? Why should we take him seriously? What's he about? How'd he get in here? You know, and we, the book of Acts tells us that God chose

Paul, Saul of Tarsus initially, who became Paul, that he chose him to be especially an apostle to the Gentiles. And the and that the other twelve whom Jesus had chosen also respected Paul and recognized him as an apostle like themselves.

But without actually would know that you just read about the apostles without Paul. Then you'd read thirteen epistles written by Paul. Of course, you would find Peter in second Peter chapter three, commending Paul in second Peter three fifteen.

Peter says that Paul's writings are scripture. But we wonder why? Who is he? How did he get into this story? Well, the book of Acts definitely tells us because the book of Acts is obviously written by a traveler who traveled with Paul. And in the second half of the book of Acts, it's all about Paul and his travels and that kind of thing.

You'd also wonder how the gospel, which was confined to Palestine or Israel in the time of Jesus when he ascended. How did he get to places like Rome, to which Paul wrote an epistle to the saints in Rome or Corinth, which is in Greece or Thessalonica, also in Greece or Asia Minor, places like Ephesus and Colossians and and such. These are all places very far away from Israel.

And without the book of Acts, we wonder how or when did the gospel reach these places? Why are there letters being written to Christians there? How did there get to be Christians there? The book of Acts fills in those important details. Now, the book of Acts is sometimes seen as having tremendous apologetic value. And I agree.

Apologetic means evidence present presentation of evidence in support of a case proving something to be true. The book of Acts, in many ways, serves as a Christian apologetic, showing Christianity true to anyone who reads and takes it seriously. Obviously, people who read it and maybe don't take it seriously.

It wouldn't prove anything to them. You can't prove the gospel be true to anybody who doesn't want to believe it. People will believe what they want to believe and they won't believe what they don't want to.

But if somebody is really curious and they recognize all the evidences that scholars do recognize in the book of Acts of historical accuracy. The book of Acts provides a tremendous apologetic for Christianity. First of all, it provides the eyewitness testimony of the apostles to the resurrection of Christ.

And the continuation of the miraculous ministry of Christ through his body in the church. Now, the gospels record that Jesus died and rose again. And one of the gospels actually mentions his ascension into heaven.

And so does the book of Acts. But it's mostly after that, that we see that the resurrection of Christ was attested to or preached by people who saw him in the early chapters of Acts with Peter, especially and John and the twelve in general, attesting to the

resurrection of Christ. It says bearing witness to in fact.

When they decide in chapter one that they have to replace Judas, who is defected from the body of Christ with another, they actually choose a man, they say, who has been with them from the time of John the Baptist. So the time that Jesus would take up who can with the other eleven bear witness of Christ's resurrection. So this is the main function of the twelve apostles to bear witness of Christ's resurrection.

We have many of their sermons recorded that bear witness to this. And we have them proving it. You know, at the end of the gospel of Mark in chapter sixteen, verse twenty, it says they went everywhere preaching the gospel.

And he says the Lord working with them, confirming their word with signs following. Now, that's a summary statement of the book of Acts, actually, in Mark sixteen, twenty. They went everywhere, they preach the gospel and God confirmed their words with signs following, just like he did with Jesus.

In fact, Peter indicated in his preaching that this was Jesus still. Jesus now existed on Earth in the body of his followers, and he was still operating the same way as he had previously. In fact, in Acts chapter one, verses one through two.

The author says the former account I made of the off the list of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach until the day in which he was taken up after he, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandment to the disciples whom he chose. Now, in my first account, referring to the book of Luke, the same author wrote Luke and Acts, and we'll talk about the proof of that here. But he said my first book, which was the third gospel book of Luke.

He said, I recorded all that Jesus began to do and teach. That's a strange thing to say. He says that right up until the time that he was taken up until he was gone.

So that's that's the lifetime of Jesus until he is in heaven. Luke says that's just the beginning. That was what Jesus began to do and teach.

My first book covers the beginning of Jesus doings and teachings by implication, strongly suggesting this book will tell what Jesus continued to do and teach through the same Holy Spirit. That operated through him when he was here as recorded in the Gospels. That is, the church, which is the body of Christ.

Is. Christ. Agent.

It is Christ's presence in the world. We are his flesh and bones. Where his hands and feet were his organs.

We are literally. Well, I need to be careful saying literally because it is something of a

metaphor, but there is a literalness about it that we are the body of Christ. I'm not.

None of us is literally a hand or foot. Those are metaphors, but we are the entity in which Christ is embodied since Pentecost. Whereas Jesus, the man from Nazareth, was the entity in which Christ was embodied before Pentecost.

Jesus was the Christ himself entirely as one man until he was caught up. And when he sent his spirit, that one man became the head of a corporate entity, which is his flesh and his bones. Now he lives in us by his spirit, just like he did in the man Jesus.

So he does in us. So Paul actually speaks about the church as if it is Christ. We don't maybe very often hear it spoken that way, but Paul does in Ephesians one.

And verses 22 and 23. Paul says that God put all things under Christ's feet and gave him Christ to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all the church is body and the church is the fullness of him. The church fills him out.

The church is the extension of him. He is the head and as the body below the neck is the extension and fullness of your head. So the church is the fullness extension of Christ because the head and the body obviously make up one organism.

And Paul takes this extremely seriously. You'll see in First Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 12, First Corinthians 12, 12. Paul says for as the body, meaning in this case, he means a generic human body.

He's using a human body as an analogy to Christ and the church. So he says, for as the body and by this means any given body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body being many are one body. So also is Christ.

Now we almost expect him to a soul who is the body of Christ. It is like a body. Anybody.

It's one body that has many members. The members being many are still one body. That's also what Christ is Christ.

He's a body to many members. We are them. We are his embodiment corporately.

That's what the church is. And so the operation of the church in the book of Acts is treated as if that's just Jesus continue to work through his new body, his bigger body, his corporate body. And so the book of Acts begins.

You know, my first book talked about all that Jesus began to do and teach until he's taken up. He doesn't say it's over by clear implication. And now my second book is going to tell the things Jesus continue to do and teach through his body, the church and the miracles that are wrought in the book of Acts are evidence.

These are apologetic. There's the testimony to the resurrection of Christ, and they were able to put their money where their mouth is by doing the same miracles he did in his name. They gave him the credit for it, but he was still operating through them.

And this book therefore gives that tremendous evidence of the resurrection of Christ that he continued to operate through his people, though he had died and had risen again. Another way in which acts serves as sort of an apologetic for Christianity is it records numerous times when people have Christians have confrontations with the occult, the sorcerers, magicians, false prophets and such. Many times this happens.

And in every case, the confrontation ends up very similarly to the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh's magicians or Elijah and the prophets of Baal. The false prophets worship demons. The magicians operate under demonic power.

But when the true power of God in a true prophet of God or in this case, in the case of apostles of Christ confronts those people, it always ends up an embarrassment for the ones on the side of the demons. And that's what we see again and again in the book of Acts. Simon, the sorcerer is converted and rebuked because he doesn't have the power the apostles have, and he wants to buy it, but they won't let him.

Paul meets a false prophet and a magician in Cyprus. Maybe elements and he strikes him blind because the man is opposing him. People who are demon possessed are confronted in places like like a Philippi and driven out by Paul.

The confrontation between the powers of darkness and the apostles is one of the repeated features of the book of Acts and where the spirit of God in the apostles or in the body of Christ is confront the power of darkness. It always bodes ill for the power of darkness, just as it did when Jesus was here. But again, it shows that in a world full of spiritual activity and spiritual reality, there are two spiritual kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness.

And when they are in conflict, the kingdom of God is always superior and part of the kingdom of the devil, which is something that obviously people who get involved in the occult and magic and sorcery and things like that. I always wonder why would they want to do that? I mean, obviously, they're doing it, hoping to find power in it, but the power that is so inferior. It's everywhere.

It's shown to be in the Old Testament, especially in the New Testament and in subsequent church history for the past 2000 years. Measures going to foreign lands are completely given over to demonism, and they cast demons out of people right and left. You never find a demon casting Jesus out of a Christian.

A demon can't do that, but Christians can have demons out of people and do on a regular basis and have throughout history that's seen in the book of Acts to the spiritual

conflict between the dark powers of the kingdom of God. That illustrates again and again, the superiority of the Holy Spirit power in the church. Also, the book of Acts shows evidence of God's sovereign in Christ's sovereignty over earthly government, because not only do the apostles run into conflict between themselves and occultist and magicians and sorcerers, but also between themselves and political authorities.

Certainly, you know, the Sanhedrin, although it was a religious body, they were the political by the Supreme Court of Israel. And, you know, they put Peter and John in prison and an angel springs them from prison and they're out preaching. They've just been told, don't preach anymore in the name of Jesus.

And when they want to bring them out of prison, the next day to bring him to trial, they're not there. And sometimes there's other in the courtyard preaching the gospel like they were before. The Sanhedrin can't defeat them.

The same thing is true of other authorities. And we find them confronted by political opposition, especially as they move out of Jerusalem into the pagan world. And we find that God protects them.

Peter and is put into prison by Herod and an angel springs him out. Paul and Silas are put into prison in Philippi and an earthquake shakes their chains off of them and opens the doors. And the leaders of the nation or of the of the province, they have to come to him.

To Paul and Silas the next day and beg them to leave. And Paul says, I'm not going to leave until you go out and apologize publicly for what you arrested us for. And we see the apostles so vindicated by God in the face of the authorities that we see that Jesus really is the king over the kings and the Lord of the Lords.

God really does have power over the political as well as the demonic. Powers, the Book of Acts also shows that the progress of the gospel is simply unstoppable. The power of the Holy Spirit through the apostles and through non-apostles through nondescript people whose names are given who, for example, when the Sanhedrin persecutes the church in Jerusalem and they flee places like Antioch, which is in Syria or other places further out in Greece and other places that they convert people.

They are converted and the gospel spreads in lands which have been historically officially controlled by religions that were contrary to the religion of the true God. So and we the Book of Acts continually is showing this how this happens now. One of the values of studying the Book of Acts is, as I say in the notes, taking our own spiritual temperature.

It's the easiest thing in the world to look at the church around us and say, I guess I'm doing about average, maybe a little better than average. I think I study my Bible a little more than the average person in our church does. I might even go to church more often

than the average Christian does.

So I guess I'm about okay. But you see, the standard we're measuring ourselves by is a contemporary standard, which itself may be far too low to be a faithful test. When we read the Book of Acts, we read about a church run by the apostles, the ones that Jesus appointed officially to represent him and speak for him, whom he inspired and whom he empowered by the Holy Spirit.

We read about the church of the apostles operating in a time of revival through the Holy Spirit, and it gives us something to aim at something to compare ourselves against. And frankly, I think in many cases, we have to compare ourselves unfavorably against it and not just ourselves, but the whole modern church. Now, we might say, well, things change.

It's been 2000 years. You can't expect things to stay the same. Nothing stays the same.

No nation has stayed the same. No language has failed to evolve. Everything changes.

So, you know, we need to see the church in its present time as a church that has matured over the past 2000 years. And this is what I've argued from people who are especially wedded to institutional Christianity. I mean, sometimes Roman Catholic, sometimes Protestants have said, well, we don't do things exactly the way they were done in the Book of Acts, because that was an infant church.

That was the church in its infancy. In 2000 years, the church has matured. It's grown.

It's developed. The problem is the development and the change that has taken place in the church so that it is in the conditions today is not what Paul would have recognized as maturing, but rather degenerating. I mean, in the first century, Paul was ready to tear his hair out because the Corinthians were starting to divide up into denominations.

Some are saying, I'm a Paul, and others are saying, I'm of Apollos or I'm a Peter. And Paul says, what? Jesus isn't divided, is he? Did Paul die for your sins? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? The answer is, of course, no, you were not. How dare you divide the body of Christ into groups loyal to one teacher or another teacher? Well, that would have been totally not tolerated in the first century.

It's not only tolerated, it's considered normal. Modern times, even the best of Christians in modern churches will sometimes say, you know, I don't think I like this church. Let's go find another one.

Or let's maybe even start another one. We can improve on the one we came out. And in many cases, they can.

In many cases, the church, they leave is one that can be improved upon. Although the

problem with that whole enterprise is that it leads to denomination after denomination, movement after movement that do not see themselves as joined organically or spiritually with the others. Now, if you press them, I mean, if you press any, let's just say any assembly of God pastor and say, do you think you're part of the same body of Christ that the Methodists are or that the Baptists are the Presbyterians are.

I believe almost any pastor of any denomination. We are, of course, we're all you know, there's only one body of Christ. We're all part of the body.

But then the next question is, so why don't we fellowship? Then they have to come up with something. Well, we don't agree on certain doctrines or we have different procedures. We have different bylaws in this organization than they have.

We govern it differently. And so our form of worship is different. All those things may be true.

But are those excuses or are they confessions of faults that need to be excused? The truth is, the church today is very, very different for one thing. The institutional forms of church have many things about them that the early church did not have. They have professional clergy.

They have buildings that occupy a lot of their budget to maintain or build. They well, there's a whole lot of differences. If someone wants me to catalog them, you can go to my series, *Some Assembly Required*, going to that detail.

The point I want to make here is simply that as we look at the Book of Acts, we have something to gauge by and say, oh, they didn't do that. Then they didn't think this way. Then they didn't tolerate such things then, as we can serve a normal today.

That's a great value in the Book of Acts, because the church in those days, we might say it was an infant church and that the church has grown since then. But it's grown like a cancerous tumor in some ways. It's not grown in a healthy way.

It's grown in directions that it was starting to move in some cases in the first century. And the apostles did what they could to stop it and to nip it in the bud. But once they were gone, there's nothing to stop it.

And so if anyone's concerned, we might say, well, why don't we do things the way the apostles taught? Why? And the way the church did it when the apostles were leading it. Maybe maybe they knew something we don't about what the church is supposed to be. It's supposed to be like.

At least we can say the fruit they had seems better than the general fruit of the modern churches. So maybe that alone would give us reason. If not, the very fact that they may have in principle seen their function as a church differently than in principle we see ours.

For example, the early church was comprised only of Christians. It was the body of Christ. They did not assume that everyone's going to bring all their unsaved neighbors to the church meeting.

Because the things will go on in the church, meaning that unbelievers wouldn't be able to relate to. Unbelievers might come. Paul said that in first Corinthians 14, an unbeliever, unlearned person might come in.

But and if they do, you don't want to be doing things so crazy that they think you're all nuts. But he did say they shouldn't feel very much at home. If you're all prophesying, he said, they're going to fall on their faces and say, whoa, God is truly among you.

When's the last time you were in church and that happened? An unbeliever came in and said, wow, God is really here and falls on their face and repents. That might happen sometimes, mostly in revivals. I haven't seen it happen in a modern church lately.

But the thing is, the early church, an unbeliever coming in was a rarity because the church was considered to be the body of Christ. Christians gathering together to be mutually edified by each gift being shared as gifts and being taught how to obey what Jesus said and being disciplined. This is a assembly of the family.

Modern ideas are churches really for bringing all your unsaved friends and maybe Christian kind of growing. Maybe it'll kind of rub in and they might pick it up by osmosis. They might even hear the sermon preacher good for the pastor, preach a good sermon and decide to go forward and alter call.

But the whole idea of the church as an evangelistic enterprise, as the church meeting as the evangelist enterprise is totally contrary to what Paul assumed the church made for the body of Christ. The church is not does not consist of its meetings. In fact, in the book of Acts, we're reading early church history, but most of what we read doesn't take place in church meetings.

We read about the community life of the believers and we and we can we read about them preaching outside the church in public places. We don't really see much in the way of church meetings. They are referred to.

There are references to church meetings, but the real descriptions of the book of Acts are of church life and church is a community. Church is a family church is made up of people who are connected to each other, devoted to each other, sacrifice for each other, do not consider anything they own is their own. But as they know, of any needs of another person, the body, those who have extra provide for that's what was going on.

It was a family of mutual concern. It was the kingdom of God living in a in a world of hostile to the kingdom of God, and yet they were devoted to each other. Typically meeting daily, it would appear in some cases and and yet their meetings are not what

are described.

It's it's the place of a priest outside of church. That's what usually happened. Preaching happened not in the church because the church is where the Christians were preaching was to the unbelievers.

You preach the gospel to the unbelievers. They're not in the church. They're out there somewhere else.

You go where they are. You get them saved. Then they come into the church once they're baptized.

I'm baptized. People were not considered to be part of the church, as we should say. So we find differences in the whole idea of church.

We can kind of use the episode church that would back this something of a benchmark for taking our own temperature. Are we lukewarm? There's also besides the whole idea of the church, the whole idea of discipleship. What did the average Christian? What was the mentality they had about being a Christian? Well, Jesus had said that the apostle should go out and make disciples baptizing them, which brought them into the church and teaching them to observe everything Jesus commanded.

So these people sat daily under the apostles teaching to learn what Jesus said they should do. They saw themselves as having started a new life about which they knew very little and in which they needed to be instructed. And they were eager to learn this.

We see in revival times, too. I know in the Jesus movement, it just seemed normal. You as soon as we started going to Calvary Chapel and found that they had Bible studies every night, new converts would go pretty much every night.

You didn't have to. There's no no one was keeping track of who's attending. Chuck Smith, who is preaching some of those nights and other pastors, preachers, they didn't take us a roll call.

No one knew who was there and who wasn't. But I knew most of my friends and I were going every night because we're learning stuff, learning stuff we didn't learn at other churches. We were learning stuff we didn't know and we wanted to know.

We wanted to follow Christ. That's what disciples do. They want to learn.

How to follow Christ, and that's what we see happening in the early church in Acts. And of course, as we read the book of Acts, another thing that can take our own spiritual temperature is when you read of the activities of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts, do they seem real to us or do they seem surreal? I put it that way because I grew up in a church that didn't make much of the Holy Spirit. We believed in the Holy Spirit in the

sense that we believe in the Trinity and the Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity, and that's about as much as we knew.

And he inspired the scriptures. We knew that, but because the Holy Spirit inspired the scriptures and he was part of the Trinity, I don't remember hearing or any focus or teaching on the Holy Spirit in the church I grew up in. But once I myself was filled with the Holy Spirit, I noticed a huge difference when I read the book of Acts, because before it was it was reading a story that I knew was true, but didn't seem very real in terms of anything.

In my experience, I didn't see miracles. I didn't hear people giving prophecies. I certainly never saw three thousand people converted in one to one sermon.

These were not things going on in my church or in my life, nor did it seem like they should, because I didn't know of any church where those things were going on. It just seemed like when I read about these things, the book of Acts, that was this is like kind of surreal. It's wonderful.

It's true, I guess, but it's not like any reality I can expect to see. And after I was filled with the spirit, I read the book of Acts. Yeah, that seems about right.

I mean, really, the Holy Spirit's the awareness of the Holy Spirit that I received was of the spirit made everything about seem like, yeah, of course, of course, the Holy Spirit's real. Of course, he does things like that. It's not like I really was seeing miracles every day.

I'd hear about them from time to time. I certainly heard about more of them than I ever saw. I'm not going to claim to have seen a lot of miracles, but there were there was a reality about it.

You know, you almost you almost felt like you'd seen miracles, even if you hadn't, just because everything was so genuinely like your reality that you're in. And I have to say that if I read the book of Acts, insofar as it seems to me like mythology, you know, or superhero comics or something like that, things that don't really happen, but there's people who do amazing things. That means my own spiritual life is winged.

You know, if it may not be my fault if there's no revival happening in my time, but if there isn't, I certainly should be praying for one, because these revivals are what are needed. That's what there was. That's when the church made all these conquests and and it's continued to do so during times of revival.

But, you know, if when I read about the activities of the Holy Spirit doesn't really seem like reality to me, that doesn't mean I don't believe it's true. I mean, I read of Samson killing a thousand people with the jawbone of an ass and breaking a lion's jaws open with his bare hands and pushing pillars down his head. I believe that's true, but it doesn't seem real to me.

I mean, I've never seen anything like that. And, you know, when you read about the Bible, you are often reading about unique things. And someone says, well, I can't believe the Bible because people don't rise from the dead.

Well, the Bible doesn't say people do rise from the dead very often. In the whole Bible, maybe we read of less than a dozen people rising from the dead over over 4000 years. The Bible doesn't teach that if it's true, you'll be seeing people rise from the dead.

It was a very rare thing, even in biblical times. If I don't happen to be living at one of those times. That doesn't mean it didn't happen at one of the times that it's going to happen when people saw it and said they saw it.

Lots of things have happened in the world that I haven't seen, but other people have. But you see, the working of the Holy Spirit, even if I don't see it happen before my eyes all the time, if you have a relationship with God that is through the Holy Spirit, it's so genuine that it really seems real. It means that it seems consistent with what your experience with God.

Could really see it happening. God, is that real to you? And the Book of Acts gives you a good way to take your temperature about that. Now, the name, the Book of Acts actually is called the Acts of the Apostles.

It's often been mentioned by commentators that it should probably not be called Acts of the Apostles, although the Apostles are certainly active in it. But we only really read about the acts of a couple of apostles. Now, Peter and John in the early parts and Paul later on.

Most of the apostles of Jesus, we don't read of their activities, except as a group. Great signs and wonders were done by the apostles. OK, well, that's a summary statement.

You don't read of anything specifically that Thaddeus did or James the last or Matthew or frankly, James, the son of Zebedee or Simon the Zealot. Or you just don't read any specifics about these guys. You read about a few of the apostles.

Most commentators have said this would be better called the Acts of the Holy Spirit acting through the church and especially through particular men, which includes the apostles. But not everyone who did wonderful things in the book were apostles. Philip, who converted the people in Samaria and did signs and wonders there, acted a lot like an apostle.

But he's never called an apostle. He was actually one of the seven chosen to distribute food in the early church. And he's later called Philip the Evangelist, which is different than an apostle.

Stephen, it's hard to give a name to what he was. We could call him Stephen the

Apologist, probably because he argued for the faith until the time that he is this is quite short by his martyrdom. We think of Stephen Moore as a martyr than anything else.

But all the apostles are mostly became martyrs as well, though not all of them are recorded in the book of Acts as becoming martyrs. But the book should probably be thought of as the acts, not of all the apostles of some of the apostles, the acts of the Holy Spirit working through some people, some of whom are apostles and some are not. Who wrote it? Well, we take it for granted that Luke wrote it.

It's obvious that the same person wrote the book of Luke as wrote the book of Acts and traditions told us that Luke wrote both of them. Now, the book of Luke doesn't mention the name of Luke as its author. We know it's called the book of Luke.

The gospel of Luke, because that's what the early church fathers who first received it from the author called it. They knew who wrote it. Obviously, it passed from the hands of its author into somebody else's hands who preserved it.

And the people who preserved it knew who was who had. But in the book, in a different part of the world than Jesus in the book of Acts, we also read the name of Luke, though whoever the author is includes himself in the story from time to time and what scholars call the weak sections of the book of Acts. Now, the weak sections are certain passages where the author stops talking about they and starts talking about we.

So we read about Paul and Silas starting off on the second missionary journey and they get to Troas and they try to go into Bithynia and the Holy Spirit. They try to go to the Holy Spirit. Then one of them has a dream of a man from Macedonia saying, come over and help us.

And they decided they should go to Macedonia. And so we failed to Macedonia. They think it's they, they, they until we and the author, obviously, without fanfare, simply inserts himself into the story as one of the people who was in it.

We can tell when he's with them and when he's not, because when he's with them, he says we and we thought with any of those day, which is reasonable enough. And these weak sections can tell us some things about the author's movement. So we can see that the author joined Paul and his team on the second mission, a journey when they left Troas and came to fill a pie.

Also, when the when Philippi was unwelcoming, we read that Paul and Silas and Timothy left Philippi. They left Philippi, but we didn't. So the author stayed in Philippi, probably stayed behind.

He was the more nondescript, the more the less obvious member of the team who could probably stay there, even though persecution against Paul and Silas, Paul and Silas had been thrown in jail. They were very conspicuous. The author, apparently much less

conspicuous person could safely stay behind and help shepherd the church a little while after the apostles were forced away.

But eventually he also joined them again and we sailed somewhere else. And so we find sometimes we and sometimes they are mentioned in the wee sections. We can deduce when and where the author was a part of the story.

And of course, from the other sections when he was not. I've listed the wee sections for you under number two there in your notes. It's on the back page of the first.

It's on the back of the first page. Now, one thing we see about the wee sections as the author was with Paul in Rome in his final imprisonment. When acts closes, it closes with Paul in prison in Rome.

And we are there. That is, the author and Paul are both there. Now, by the process of elimination, one could try to figure out who the writer was by figure out who was with Paul, who traveled with Paul on these particular legs of the journey that we are on.

Who was with Paul in the last time of his prison time in Rome? Well, Timothy was. But Timothy can't be the author because Timothy is mentioned as one of the day. Timothy is mentioned by name as a character who is other than we.

In fact, we traveled with Timothy. Timothy and Paul and Silas and the author traveled together and Timothy was not the author. He was one of the day.

So we can eliminate Timothy from consideration. And there are quite a few others that may have been with Paul at various times in Rome that he mentions in his letters when he wrote from prison in Rome. He mentioned some of the people who were with him, but most of them can be eliminated because they are named in the book of Acts as among they.

They are not we. So almost all the people that Paul mentions in his letters that are with him when he's in Rome are also named as separate characters in the book of Acts, separate from the author. The one exception, the principal exception, at least, would be Luke in Colossians chapter four and verse 14.

Paul is writing from his Roman prison and he's sending greetings from a number of people who are with him. One of them, he says in verse 14, is Luke, the beloved physician and demons greet you. Now, demons later forsook him.

According to second Timothy, Demas abandoned Paul. So he's not the writer of these books of Luke and Acts. But Luke is a physician and may have traveled with Paul because Paul is thought to have had some medical issues.

Paul mentions having medical issues in Galatians and in second Corinthians. He

mentions having some infirmity and he may have had a physician along to help out or the physician might be Luke's former trade. And he has just become a part of the apostolic team as a non-physician, although Paul does refer to him as the beloved physician.

It might be that he was formerly a physician, but that's not important. One thing that's interesting, though, is that both Luke and Acts have been observed to have quite a few Greek terms in the original language that are known to exist in Greek medical texts. Some of them are medical terms and not a few.

I forget the exact number, but it seems to me like 200 or 400 terms in Luke or access many more than I would have thought that are said to be also found in ancient Greek medical texts, which a physician would know. And so the terminology in these two books, Luke and Acts are considered to be consistent, at least with the suggestion that Luke was a physician that Luke was writing those books. His vocabulary would perhaps encourage us to believe that we know that the third gospel has always been attributed to Luke.

There's never really been a time in early church history when anyone ever suggested a different author that in itself makes it a reasonable theory. I've also said on occasion here, and I'll say it again, that when it comes to naming the books of the of the gospel, three gospels, the four gospels, we have three synoptics and John. None of them have the author's name on them in the original Greek text.

All four of the gospels were written anonymously. The authors do not identify themselves. Now, in our Bible, it says the gospel according to Matthew, the gospel according to Mark and the gospel according to Luke and the gospel John.

Those are what the English translators have told us they are because the Greek manuscripts have come to have those titles. Those titles are not in the text themselves. None of the authors of the gospels tell us who they are, which is one thing that makes them more credible than the Gnostic gospel writers who tell us who they are, but they lie in the second and third centuries.

We got the gospel of Thomas, the gospel of Peter and the gospel of Mary and the gospel of Judas and the gospel of Philip, and they're all lying. They were written long after those people were dead. But in order to fake credibility, they falsely take the name of someone famous so that their book might be respectable.

These authors didn't bother to name themselves. They didn't have to. Their books were respectable in their own right.

The early church knew who wrote them. They didn't need to put their names on there. And now, if we would argue that maybe the church didn't put the right names on there.

We have to ask, well, then why, if these were anonymous books and not let's say no one knew who the real authors were and they decided to choose someone famous, put their name on. Why would they choose Luke or Mark? Both of them are extremely obscure. Remember, Luke is not even mentioned by name anywhere in the Bible, except in a couple of Paul's epistles, where he's one of the many people who are sending greetings along with Paul.

He's just like a name in a list. We think of Luke is very prominent because we see him as the author of the third gospel in the book of Acts. But that's begging the question.

Is he the author of those? That's what's trying to be decided. If he is not, then the early church would have no reason to think of Luke as anyone special at all, any more than Aristarchus or, you know, any number of the other people that travel with Paul, who we only know their names and nothing else about them. Luke himself was an extremely obscure person, never mentioning himself by name, but the author of Luke didn't have the author of Acts didn't mention himself by name.

But the fact that the church attributed to Luke, even though Luke was not a particularly noteworthy person, would be impossible to imagine unless he really was the author. Same thing with Mark. Mark is extremely obscure.

Now, neither of them were apostles. Both of them traveled with the apostles, but not in any way where they were, where they stood out as and would have been particularly famous unless they really wrote the gospels. They did.

The fact that their names are on these gospels from the earliest times is evidence that that's who really wrote them, because there's no other explanation for why anonymous documents would be falsely attributed to people who are not particularly important people. So that Luke wrote it is hardly needs to be doubted. Now, we know that this is written to the same person as the Book of Luke is, as we saw when we read the first two verses of Acts in verse one, it says the former account I made all the awfulness of the office.

Well, whoever is the Book of Luke was written to him to. In Luke, Chapter one and verse three. The writer said it seemed good to me also having had perfect understanding of all these things from the very first to write you an orderly account most excellent theophilus.

That you may know the certainty of those things which you in which are instructed. Now, the third gospel is written to someone most excellent theophilus and the Book of Acts is written to all the awfulness. Now, who is the office? We don't know.

There was an early church father in the office, but much too late to be this man. The awfulness is a name that means lover of God is from fail. Fail is the Greek word for God

and fill us from love.

They also means lover of God and some have suggested maybe the author is simply writing to the generic Christian reader who's a lover of God. Oh, you lover of God, whoever you may be. I'm writing to you.

That would be. I mean, that would be a reasonable thing for him to do. But the problem with that is that the office is actually a very common proper name.

Back then, and the idea that the author would use the word the office which many people had is their proper name and not actually referring to anyone's proper name is not very likely. It's also interesting that the awful is in in Luke, Chapter one is referred to as most excellent the office. This is the way that government officials were addressed.

Most excellent Felix, most excellent. This is the way that the political officials were addressed. It's also interesting that the most excellent philosopher, the awfulness in Luke is has simply become all the awfulness, which is much more affectionate and casual address.

It's been suggested that the awfulness was a government official and possibly not a Christian at the time that the third gospel is sent to him, that he became a Christian. And by the time the second book was written, Luke could let his hair down a little bit and be a little more casual. Say, oh, the awfulness brother.

Yeah, here's another book like the first one I sent you. But then who would fill out the awfulness? Nobody knows for sure. One suggestion has been that since the book, at least the book of Acts and very possibly the book of Luke were written while Paul was on in prison for two years at the end of the book of Acts, he's been Paul since two years under house arrest, waiting for his trial before Nero.

We do not read how the trial turned out. So the books must have been written before the trial occurred. But something that the office might be one of the functionaries under Nero, who was appointed to look into Paul's case, certainly in Nero, who is the emperor of the whole empire.

Every Roman citizen had the right to bring his case to him. But there would have to be a lot of research done that Nero would not have time to do himself. He would have had many lesser government officials who would be assigned to various cases to say, OK, research this and bring back your report.

Something the office might have been a government official that had been appointed by Nero to research Paul's case so that the book of Acts would be particularly of value. And if you're going to write the book of Acts, I will write the book of Luke, too, because the book of Acts doesn't make much sense if you don't know the story of Jesus. So some have felt that that is who the office is.

We have to really say we don't know. He is not known to us from church history. And this theory may not be true, may not be correct.

It could be. It's to my mind. It works reasonably well.

There may be other theories that could work well, too, but it's clear that he addressed this the office as if he were a government official in Luke and does not address him the same way when he writes Acts. When was this written? I mentioned it was written before Paul's trial. Not everyone would agree with this, but it's the only position that makes sense.

Those who would not agree with that are people who always want to late date everything in the Bible. They don't want to believe the books of the Bible written by the traditional authors are attributed to it. So far, but there's no reason to doubt the traditions.

They are very good and make a lot of sense. The book of Acts spends its latter half of its chapters following the activities of Paul right up until his arrest and imprisonment. Two years in Caesarea and then two years in Rome.

Now, he might have been more than two years in Rome. The book simply ends by telling us that at the time of writing, Paul has spent two years in Rome, still waiting for his trial. There might have been three or four years before it was done, but the book was later not to mention it.

It seems clear that two years was the longest time of Paul's imprisonment that the author could relate, because that's how much had transpired. It could have been less than two years. The transpirer, he couldn't say it was two years long.

How would he know how long it's going to be if it hadn't gone by yet? It has to have been written almost exactly two years after Paul came to Rome, which was sixty eight when he came to Rome. So this was around sixty two eighty. If Paul's imprisonment in Rome was only two years and then he had a trial and then he traveled some more or was executed.

There's no excuse for Luke not mentioning that certainly to to arouse our interest in Paul's welfare by telling a story about it for sixteen chapters and then leave us hanging with him waiting trial where he's going to be facing possibly capital charges and maybe executed and to just say, oh, well, I guess I'll stop now. I'm getting a little tired. Hope you enjoyed the story.

You know, well, that doesn't make any sense. He's not going to leave the reader hanging there. Wonder what happened if the trial had happened at the time it was written.

The only good reason for the author not to mention the trial is that it had not yet

occurred at the time of writing. Therefore, the only logical date for the writing of this book is sixty two eighty, which, by the way, since it is the second book means that the first book was written before that. Probably no later than sixty eighty, which means that the book of Luke, which is almost certainly not the first of the gospels written, was written not much later than sixty eighty.

When there'd be still it's only thirty years after crucifixion, there'd be so many people living who'd seen Jesus who could verify or deny the things Luke wrote in the book of Luke. The fact that no one ever did so and that he knew they wouldn't means that he was telling the truth. But he he wrote Luke early enough that many eyewitnesses to the mystery of Jesus would still be around to say he was wrong.

It was wrong. It's clear that he was not. He knew what he thought.

So the veracity of Luke in X is well attested. Now, Luke was not an apostle, but he traveled with one. He traveled Paul a great deal.

Mark was not an apostle. He traveled Peter great deal. Peter attest in First Peter, Chapter five.

He mentions Mark as if he was his own son in the faith, just like Paul referred to Timothy, his son of faith. Luke is not called this Paul's son, but his position probably. But he was certainly attending to Paul in the later years of Paul's life, right up to the last information we have about Paul and that information actually comes from the writer of X. So this is when it was written, apparently in the early sixties before sixty two or around sixty two and written by Luke is the very best theory, even if it were not the case that the early church is always said it was in order that we didn't have early church tradition telling us, though we could deduce that Luke would be on the very, very short list of possibilities of the author, just from the evidence within the scripture itself, especially Paul mentioned him in Colossians and Philemon will take a break for maybe five, ten minutes.

We will then take a survey through the book of Acts, which should be shouldn't take any longer than our first segment did.