

## THE TRANSITIONAL NATURE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

As part of a review of our *Acts* studies, I want to emphasize the transitional nature of the book. Without a clear understanding of this issue, a Christian or a church or even a denomination (witness the Charismatics) is apt to establish doctrine from its pages without comparing and contrasting what Paul delineates in his doctrinal epistles.

At the beginning of our study, we went over similar material (Handout #3); perhaps this will be more meaningful to you now that we have completed the book.

1. Acts clearly demonstrates the transition between the kingdom message (emphasis of the Gospels) and the church message (emphasis of the Pauline Epistles).

### Three Shifts Are Involved in This:

- a. From a \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ emphasis to a \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ emphasis.
- b. From a Jewish-believer \_\_\_\_\_ (synagogue-type-fellowship) to a Jew-Gentile-believer-as-one \_\_\_\_\_ (church-type-fellowship).
- c. From O.T. Law emphasis (with \_\_\_\_\_ grace) to N.T. truth emphasis (with \_\_\_\_\_ grace).

**Point:** *Acts* therefore covers an extraordinary transitional time in the history of God's dealings with mankind. This transitional period will never be repeated. Like Israel at Sinai receiving the Law, it was a one time experience/transition never again to be repeated.

2. *Acts* is \_\_\_\_\_ (historically), not \_\_\_\_\_ (didactically). It tells what they did, not necessarily what we are to do.

### Two Illustrations:

- a. *Acts* 4:32-37, they practiced communal living, should we?
- b. Four different means of the giving of the Holy Spirit are recorded in *Acts*; which is normative?

(OVER)

**Point:** The various descriptions of the giving of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts well illustrates the transitory nature of the Book. Many of the experiences in *Acts* were unique to its time. They are not to be sought by other believers in the Church Age. Here is where the emphasis and doctrine of the charismatic movement completely breaks down. Example: the only passages charismatics can use to support their Doctrine of Subsequence (the teaching that the baptism or fulness of the Holy Spirit is an experience that is subsequent to one's salvation and is to be earnestly sought) are found in *Acts*.

Note on our overlay that the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (ch. 2) and to the Samaritan believers (ch. 8) was subsequent to salvation; but it was not earnestly sought in either case. MOREOVER, THE RECORD OF THE EXPERIENCE OF CORNELIUS AND HIS HOUSE (ch. 10) COMPLETELY DISPROVES THE DOCTRINE OF SUBSEQUENCE! THE MOMENT THEY BELIEVED, THEY WERE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT AND SPOKE IN TONGUES WITHOUT ANY SEEKING ON THEIR PART!

*Acts* is transitory in nature. One should not seek to build doctrine from its pages unless the doctrine is clearly expressed elsewhere. The only teachings in *Acts* that are normative for the church are those that are explicitly taught in other New Testament epistles.

3. *Acts* is the historical sequel to the Gospels; as such it completes the historical narrative of the New Testament and provides the background for other New Testament books.

4. Were *Acts* omitted from the New Testament, it would lose its historical continuity.

5. *Acts* records the first 30 years of church history. That is its intent; it is not doctrinal in nature.