



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Record of the Beginning of Jesus' Reign

Chapter Thirteen

INTRODUCTION

NOTE: Our exodus out of Babylon is no cake walk. There are distractions and old habits to contend with.

It is easy for us, due to past training in the churches, to revert back to being churchy and religious. If we find ourselves getting tempted by superstition and fables, or that “old time religion” with its pseudo-holiness mentality, we must shake ourselves awake and get away from the hypnotic state.

Churches, temples, and religion are NOT the way. As in the book of Acts, Christ's Reign is **life**, not religion.

TWO of the most profound discoveries so far in this Book of Acts are:

1. These recorded “ACTS” were not religious in nature. They were societal. They heralded a new system; a new social structure. They announced a new King and the body of people that followed Him. In fact, the Book of Acts recorded the conflict between two kingships (two systems) meeting head to head: the system of man's reign (Beast System) versus the system of Christ's Reign through his Ecclesia.

2. This struggle is the conflict of the ages ... the one that always confronts men of God. It confronts us still today. It repeats over and over. The Beast wages continual war against the people. This conflict, and the Beast, will not go away until men wake up to the fact that God's government is the **ONLY** one that doesn't enslave, degrade, and destroy us.

Some things never change. When a man of God finds himself at odds with the Beast System, when they put in in jail, stone him, or chase him out of town, it isn't because he is religious. It isn't because he wants to start a church. Rather, it is because he is teaching freedom and exposing corruption. Doing this undermines the credibility of rulers (judges, politicians, etc.). This gets men in trouble with governments. For instance, we see Paul exposing a corrupt government, or Jesus condemning the political and religious rulers of Jerusalem. They weren't trying to convert them to Christianity. They were exposing them. It was political dissension.

It was not a question of religion. Religion was a separate issue. Religions were everywhere then, just like today. Religions were compatible with government back then, just as they are today. Government has no problem with religion. Religion has no problem with government. They work hand-in-glove. Religion isn't persecuted by government. It never has been – whether in Babylon, or in Jerusalem, or in America. In fact, government protects religion, and in America religion is given a favored, tax-exempt status ... as long as it doesn't meddle in government.

But government didn't protect or get along with Jesus, nor was He tax-exempt. He was taxed and tortured! He was hated and murdered by the Jerusalem government and its lackeys... not because He was a Hebrew, and not because He was religious ... but because He represented a societal alternative to the Beast System! He taught that men should look to God, not to the state. This conflicted with the established rule of men. Those in power looked upon Him as “public enemy number one.” Thus, they labeled Him a political fanatic – not a religious fanatic. If He had been a religionist (a church person) He would not have been an enemy of the state.

Jerusalem and Rome had religions galore: Judaism, Helenism, Romanism, Mithraism, Zoroastrianism, Sorcery, Witchcraft, and God knows what else. Religions (including churches) are authorized by governments. Do you think it would have upset the rulers if one more church or religion showed up? Of course not! It was not a problem then, nor is it now.

Why, then, did Christ upset things and cause such a stir? The answer is simple. Because Christ was NOT announcing a religion. He was announcing a kingship. He represented a kingdom that opposed the established system of man's government.

In comparing that situation to our day, we see things are still the same. In America there are thousands of different church denominations. Many appeared within the last decade, and even within the last year. They're popping up by the hundreds every year. Do you think the Beast is concerned if one more church among the thousands comes into existence? Would one more make any difference whatsoever?

The Beast System loves churches! Churches help train "good citizens" for them.

But ... what do rulers think when a **OPPOSING FORM OF GOVERNMENT** springs up? Now this is something man's government does take note of. They especially take note if the new system ignores the established political parties (Republicans and Democrats), and promotes a different way of life! That gets their attention! SWAT teams, the National Guard, the ATF and the FBI and CIA and NSA snap to attention – not to mention Wall Street and the bankers!

In fact, to prove this point one only has to refer back to last century when such a conflict caused war between the northern states and the southern states. It was caused by the southern states' wanting a different culture.

The system especially takes note when people begin looking to the **HOLY SCRIPTURES** for their law. If a new movement looks to God rather than to the state, and seems to be succeeding in what it is doing, that really threatens them. You can bet that the Democrats, the Republicans and the other party leaders would take notice of this today. You see, that is exactly what was happening in the book of Acts. It was "war in heaven": conflict between two systems: two kingdoms ... man's -vs- God's.

So you can see the inaccuracy of describing the events (the "acts") of which we read in the Book of Acts as merely "church history" or "religion."

The Reign of Christ is not a system of churches! It is not a religion. If Christ had represented a religion – a church group coming together to pray, sing, register with government, exist on borrowed bank money and pledge their allegiance to the Jewish flag – do you think He would have incurred the Beast's wrath? No way! He would have been "legal." He wouldn't even have been newsworthy ... nothing would have happened. He could have continued and had a thriving "ministry." None of the apostles would have been martyred or thrown in jail. Their descendants

would have probably stayed right there in Jerusalem, prospering, and being religious, and they would still be there today! This book of the Bible would have been called "The Church of the Apostles" instead of "The Acts of the Apostles."

The Book of Acts tells of the confrontation of two kingships! It was not about a conspiracy to oppress a religion. It was about a conspiracy to stop a King and his followers. The question is ... why are the majority of Americans blind to this?

The answer can be found by applying these things from the book of Acts to our day, as we see the same things still happening. Look around you and see people going to churches every week, where they learn to pray, and sing, and pay their taxes, and pledge allegiance to the flag of the Beast System. And just as it was in the first century, churches are never troubled by the officials; never attacked by the anti-Christ news media. Churches fit into the system ... because they are created by that system. They support the system. By teaching the Bible wrongly, they inoculate people against the real truths of God. While America continues to slide downhill the churches condemn any member who may offend the ruling government or speak against it.

The point is this: true Christianity is not a church or a religion. It is a living system of truth. A Kingship. When it is reduced to a religion it becomes meaningless and powerless. And we can see this is true by observing the many different churches in America today. What a mess of meaningless, powerless religion – like salt that's lost its savor and is ready to be tossed out and trampled underfoot.

QUESTION: Shouldn't Christianity be considered a religion and not politics since politics can get so dirty? Surely Christ's Kingship shouldn't be dragged through the mud of dirty politics.

ACTS 13:1-12 PAUL & BARNABAS MEET A SORCERER

Now in the ecclesia at Antioch were prophets and teachers, and Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

As they were publicly doing their work to the Lord, and fasting, the holy spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

Then having fasted and prayed, and having laid their hands on them, they let them go.

So they, having been sent out by the holy spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Judeans: and they also had John as a helper.

And having gone through the whole island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Judean whose name was bar-Jesus:

Who was together with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. Calling Barnabas and Saul to him, he sought to hear the word of God.

But Elymas the magician (for thus his name is translated) opposed them, seeking to turn away the proconsul from the faith.

Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) being filled with holy spirit, gazed into him,

And said, O full of all fraud and every mischief, son of the devil, enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the right ways of the Lord?

And now, behold, the Lord's hand is upon you, and you will be blind, not seeing the sun for a time. And immediately a thick mist and a darkness fell upon him; and he went about seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

Then, having seen what occurred, the proconsul believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

BEFORE we go on, let us recount the events that led up to this, and how Paul and Barnabas found themselves on this island.

Going back in time, we remember that the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem had driven most of them out of the land. Peter was arrested and thrown in jail in Jerusalem. As he awaited to appear before Herod, he was freed from jail by what appeared to be a supernatural act of God. Peter then went north across the border, out of Herod's jurisdiction, into Syria. The story reads like a journal of a modern day fugitive. He was thrown into jail, then he broke out and escaped across a border. Not long after Peter's escape, Herod died from a wound that he received while giving a public speech (Acts 12:23).

Across the border in Syria, at Antioch, there was an ecclesia. Prophets and teachers had begun to gather there, and it became the hub or coordinating center where the apostles and other active Christians coordinated their fellowship.

Chapter thirteen marks the beginning of what's usually referred to as the "missionary journeys of Paul." Here he begins to take the good news of Christ's Reign to Israel scattered through Asia Minor and Europe.

Saul (Paul) and Barnabas were commissioned to take the good news of the Reign of Christ to points north and west ... toward Europe. Paul was an educated man with the ability to speak several tongues. He was a logical choice to go and talk to the dispersed brethren in different lands with different tongues.

Cyprus was the first stop for these two messengers (angels) after they departed Antioch. The island, Cyprus, was out in the Mediterranean, between Palestine and Asia Minor. If you look on a modern map, Asia Minor was the area they now call Turkey. Their first encounter was with a sorcerer by the name of "barJesus."

Now, the word "barJesus" means "son of Jesus." "Bar" means "son." "Son of Jesus" was a strange name for a sorcerer. He, of course, was not the son of Jesus the Christ. As you know, the name "Jesus" is not uncommon. He was son of another man named Jesus.

Verse 8 also calls this sorcerer by the name "Elymas." It says, "... for thus his name is translated." "Elymus" is not a translation of the word "barJesus." Rather, "Elymas" is the Syrian equivalent of the Greek "magos" ("magician"). Both words mean "wise man." So barJesus had the title "wise man."

Elymas disliked Paul and Barnabas, and tried to pit the local Roman proconsul against them.

After verse nine, Saul's name changes to "Paul." Paul glared at Elymas the sorcerer and announced that temporary blindness would fall upon him for his wickedness. He was immediately blinded, and through this witness the proconsul's faith was actually strengthened and he came to believe Paul's testimony.

QUESTION: With all the strange religions and confusion is it possible that the greatest deception to Christians would come from those claiming to be Christian, who appear to be wise, very religious and church leaders?

ACTS 13:13-17 PAUL'S IMPROMPTU SERMON TO SOME CHURCHGOERS

Then Paul and his company left Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia. But John withdrew from them and returned to Jerusalem.

But they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And having come into the synagogue on the day of the sabbaths, they sat down.

And after the reading of the law and the prophets the chiefs of the synagogue sent to them, saying, Men, brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.

Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and you that fear God, listen.

The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm he brought them out of it.

THE city called "Antioch" in verse 14 was a different city from Antioch, Syria. This one was "Antioch in Pisidia." It was in the north part of Pisidia, very near the border to Phrygia.

There they went into a synagogue and sat down. The officiating elders saw new faces and asked if they had anything interesting to tell them. And Paul, of course, being a messenger who was "*instant in season and*

out," gave them a message. He started with a quick summary of the history of Israel – a story familiar to at least some of the locals that day in the synagogue.

Paul's sermon – the next twenty-six verses – was a call to his brethren to come out of Babylon (i.e., out of the establishment church/synagogue and government system).

Now think about this. Paul delivered this sermon in a church/

synagogue. It would have been like someone today going into a typical church in this land, and admonishing the people to leave that church.

It is enlightening to notice WHO Paul was addressing in this church/synagogue. His message was not aimed at "heathen" or people of other races. Paul's express purpose was to address his own people.

This was occurring in Asia Minor, about five-hundred miles from Jerusalem – a very long distance in those days. But in verse 16 Paul identifies his audience as "*Men of Israel.*" These were Israelites outside of Judea. And remember that in Jerusalem, as well as in other lands, the church/synagogue system was not Israelite in origin. It came from Babylon. And while many Israelites gravitated to the church/synagogue system, it's members were certainly not exclusively Israelite in race. For example, the leaders of the church/synagogue system, as well as the government, in Jerusalem were mostly Edomite. This was often the case in other lands as well.

But, Paul was speaking to "*men of Israel.*" Obviously, there were some "*men of Israel*" in Asia Minor.

Paul's commission led him, among other places, into the church/synagogue system – because there were "*men of Israel*" lost in there. His message was directed first and foremost to Israelites. These were the sheep of God's pasture who had been scattered, and Paul was one of the apostles sent to round them up.

Paul had something to say to them – something important. He began his message with, "*The God of this people chose OUR FATHERS,...*"

As he addressed the "*men of Israel,*" he was verifying that he and they had the same God and the same fathers. Later on, in verse 38, he refers to these same people as "his brethren" and tells them that his and their fathers — their ancestors – were one and the same people. Paul was clearly directing his message, the good news of Christ's reign, to Israelites.

QUESTION: You say that Paul was preaching to Israelites ... but I thought Paul took the gospel to the Gentiles. Doesn't the Bible say that Israel rejected Christ and so salvation went to the Gentiles?

QUESTION: Should we try to convert the pastors and people in the churches? Isn't this what Paul was doing?

ACTS 13:18-24 LAW MAKING: THE IDOLATRY OF ISRAEL

And for about forty years he endured their ways in the wilderness,

Having overthrown seven nations in the land of Canaan, and allotted their land as an inheritance:

Which was about four hundred and fifty years.

And after these things he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. But, then they demanded a king: and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, forty years.

And after removing him, he moved David to be king to them; to whom also He bore witness and said, I found David the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who will do all my will.

Of this man's seed, according to promise, God has raised to Israel a Savior, Jesus:

John having preached in advance, before his (Jesus') coming, a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

AS YOU can see, Paul's review of history began with Moses. He spoke of the fathers, their salvation from Egypt's slavery, and their subsequent apostasy during Samuel's time as they turned away from Yahweh and from the freedom He had given them.

Now, Yahweh was intervening again, reaching out to them through Christ. Paul's story culminates with his own commission which sent him to Asia Minor carrying the good news of Christ's Reign. The gospel of the Kingship is the story of Christ – an Israelite – and the salvation that He brought. That salvation was directed to the people of Israel first. This was why Paul was there in Asia Minor looking for "*men of Israel.*"

The good news resonated with the people most familiar with Israel's history – i.e., Israelites.

Verse 18 tells of God's long suffering with the Israelites' "manners" (acquired customs) learned while living in cultures like Babylon, Assyria, Greece, Rome, etc.

Paul explained how Yahweh saved the Children of Israel out of Egypt, kept them forty years in the wilderness, removed seven nations before them in the land of Canaan, and then divided that land to Israel as a possession and an inheritance.

In Canaan the Israelites experienced freedom in a nation and culture that was theirs. God allotted them land, gave them judges, and showed them how to govern

themselves with his laws. It lasted about one millennium. During that time, Israel was free; free from the Egyptians, and free from the devouring system of men's government identified in the books of prophecy as "beast" and "serpent."

But in Samuel's day Israel again rejected God as their King, putting themselves back under man's rule. After about 1000 years of freedom, they invited the Beast System back into Israel. This time her freedom would be lost for many generations.

Verse 21 reminds us also of what happened here in America. In the 18th century, American pioneers experienced freedom from the Beast System whose head was at London at that time. But, following the pattern

of history they again succumbed to the same old idolatry. They opted for man's system again – this time it was one of their own making ... in the form of a centralized group of rulers – a congress. They believed they could create a beneficent slave master to rule them kindly. They called it a “republican form of government” (i.e., a “republic”).

They didn't look to Jesus. If they had, they would have been blessed with a Shepherd instead of rulers; freedom instead of slavery. But, they opted for rulers instead of freedom. As in the days of Samuel, they wanted “a king like the other nations.” Sadly, they helped give birth to the greatest and most destructive phase of the Great Beast System. The beginning of The United States Government, in 1787, was in essence a repeat of what Israel

did in Canaan at the time of Samuel.

But, in 1787, Israel's idolatry was on a grander scale. This was the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Great Beast System of Revelation 13 – the beast that disguised itself as a lamb but spoke as a dragon. It was unfortunate, but apparently inevitable, that the colonists preferred to put their trust in man's system instead of God. Like their forefathers, they chose the state as their king.

As Paul continued his history lesson he recounted how King Saul was succeeded by King David. God chose David as the beginning of a remnant of men that would carry the memory of an abandoned God among an apostate people. As Israel's rebellion against God continued, freedom waned, and the quality of life worsened.

Israel's period of king rulers was

an offense to God. And, while David's kingship was of an ungodly system, God used David to fulfill a special purpose for His people Israel.

Jesus was eventually born to the family lineage of David.

QUESTION: With central government we can actually see and hear our rulers. With Yahweh's government we cannot hear or see our King. We have to do a lot of guessing about what He really wants us to do. Wouldn't this lead to chaos and conflict?

ACTS 13:25-37 THE TRUE SHEPHERD KING-PRIEST OF ISRAEL

And as John was fulfilling his course, he was saying, “I am not what you are supposing me to be. But, behold, one is coming after me, of whom I am not worthy to loosen the shoes of his feet.”

Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those of you who fear God, to us the word of this salvation was sent out.

Those dwelling at Jerusalem, and their rulers, did not know Him. In condemning Him they fulfilled the voices of the prophets which were read every sabbath day.

And having found not one cause of death in Him, they demanded of Pilate that He be taken up (executed).

And as they fulfilled all the things that had been written of Him, they took him down from the wooden post, and put Him in a tomb. But God raised him up from the dead:

And He was seen more days by them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people.

And we declare good news to you concerning the promise that was given to the fathers,

That God has fulfilled this to our children, having raised up Jesus; as it is also written in the second psalm, “You are my Son. Today I have begotten you” [i.e., “Today I became your Father”].

And in that He raised Him up from the dead, no more to return to corruption, thus He was saying to us, “I will give to you the kind and faithful things of David.”

And through a different psalm He also said, “You (God) will not give your loyal One to see corruption.”

And indeed David, having served the counsel of

God in his own generation, fell sleep and was added to his fathers, and saw corruption:

But whom God raised up (Jesus), He saw not corruption.

JOHN fulfilled his “course” or his mission from God. Some mistakenly thought that John might be the expected messiah. But, he assured them he was not.

In verse 26, Paul again identifies his audience by calling them “*sons of the family of Abraham*.” And he refers to something he called “*this salvation*.”

What was “*this salvation*”? Was it that Jesus was raised from death, and to the Throne and immortality as witnessed by the apostles? Well, that was certainly part of it. But, Israel also was saved!

In saving his Son, raising Him to immortality, Yahweh was saving Israel as well. Through Christ’s new life Israel received a new life too. Their new King was not subject to sin, death or greed like mortal kings. In Jesus they also had a High Priest – one that could not be corrupted. Jesus became Priest and King to Israel.

Paul goes on to touch upon some of the defining details. He emphasizes that Yahweh raised Jesus from death! It was important they understand that Jesus truly did die.

He didn’t just metamorphize into an alternative life-form and escape into outer space (“heaven”). The politicians and priests, working through the power of the state, murdered Him. He lay dead in a tomb for several hours. His physical and mental self – his life – ceased during that time. Then, Yahweh raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him immortal life and a status above all men.

In verse 33, Paul refers back many years to the promises that were given to Abraham and to Moses and to the people of the covenant. Peter declared that the promise made to the fathers was fulfilled in Christ. All of the promises, all of the prophecies of the salvation of Israel – after their apostasies and captivities under heathen systems – were fulfilled in Jesus. This culminated in Yahweh raising Him and giving Him the Throne over Israel (Acts 2:29-36).

Then, starting in verse 34, Paul relates some of the promises that Yahweh gave to David. We get a chance to see, by this description, the uniqueness of Jesus. David, for

example, died and decomposed (corrupted) as do all men. But Jesus – who was born “a man” – as Paul called him in verse 38 – died, but was raised before his body had time to decompose. Jesus lay dead in the tomb only a short time until Yahweh changed Him and gave Him immortal life. And, when He was raised up to immortal life, He was changed to an Immortal wherein neither death nor corruption (decomposition) was possible!

QUESTION: Why would Yahweh quit being the King over Israel and create a new King. Isn’t this saying that Yahweh was a failure? Was Jesus actually Yahweh in disguise?

ACTS 13:38-41 SCORNERS ARE BLIND

Let it be known to you therefore, men and brethren, that through this is being proclaimed to you forgiveness of sins:

And from all that you were unable to be justified in the law of Moses, all who are believing are being justified.

Beware therefore, that the thing spoken of in the prophets should not come upon you;

Behold, you scorners, and wonder, and perish, for I am working a work in your days: a work which you will not believe even though someone declares it to you.

PAUL'S message to these men of Asia Minor was this: Jesus was raised up from death to reign over New Jerusalem, and grace is granted to those who hear and believe in Him.

Justification through faith was, and is, a crucial part of the message. Israel needed to be reminded about grace and pardon. While law is the basis for all truth, and awareness of law is essential ... law can only define truth. Law can only specify sins and designate the punishment for them. Law can condemn sin, but it cannot pardon it. It can only define sin and teach us to know right from wrong, and the punishments for (results of) sin.

If a person commits a sin that can be expiated (remedied at law) the law can show him how to do that. He can satisfy the judgment of the law by accepting the punishment and/or satisfying (paying) the debt. But, paying a debt is not the same as being released from that debt. Law, by itself, cannot pardon. Law, by itself, has no remedy for a sinner who is unable to pay his debt. That's where grace enters. Pardon, or grace, is not law. It is mercy. It is the only remedy for people whose sins cannot be justified (expiated) within the law. Grace releases people from unpayable debts (sins).

Paul gave this history lesson about Israel and Christ's Reign, and then ended the lesson by calling his audience to repentance. He knew that only a repentant person could appreciate grace and opt to serve Christ. But, Paul detected that some in his audience were unrepentant scorners. So, he ended his speech by quoting a scriptural warning from Habakkuk.

2. *How long, Yahweh, shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? I cry out to you, "Violence," but you do not save!*

3. *Why do you show me evil, and look upon strife? For ruin and violence are before me: and there is strife, and contention rises up.*

4. *Therefore the law has become helpless [paralyzed], and justice does not*

go forth: for the wicked entrap the righteous; therefore justice goes forth perverted.

5. *Look, among the nations! Behold, and be astonished! Be amazed! For a work is occurring in your days, which you will not believe, though it be told to you.*

Habakkuk 1:2-5

Habakkuk had described a situation that seems as familiar to us today as it must have been to those of Paul's day. Corrupt society is nothing new. Habakkuk saw corrupt government and society much the way it is today. We see many of the same things in our society, such as: destructive morals and entertainment, power-mad and abusive government, a wicked court system and police, and growing religious insanity. We see the blatant assault upon our people by these institutions. It is before us daily, and *"the people love to have it so"* (Jer. 5:31). They even pay their abusers to continue abusing them.

We see this sickening situation around us, and realize this punishment must be from God. Surely man is incapable of orchestrating this on his own. How long will God let this continue? The answer is: as long as we prefer the Beast System instead of Christ.

Meanwhile, the scoffers are blind to the danger. Wickedness occurs right under their noses and they can't see or understand it – even though men try to explain it to them! In other words, scoffers lack spiritual eyes. Being blind they cannot discern between good and evil; clean and unclean.

This describes the scoffers that were hearing Paul's message. Jesus was working a work among them and the scoffers would not accept or believe, even after Paul explained it to them. Paul knew that most of them were scoffers.

That is still true today. The majority of people seem to be scoffers; despisers of the gospel. They not only don't accept the gospel of Christ, they don't even hear it.

No matter how much effort and expense is invested in them, no

matter how much love is shown them, they will not see. They are scoffers. The Bible says they WILL NOT believe! In other words, we WILL NOT be able to show them the truth no matter what we do.

You have probably experienced the frustration of attempting to explain, to people you love, the simple truths of the history of Israel, the migrations of the so-called "lost" tribes, the laws of God, the fallacy of Futurism, the confusion of the Trinity doctrine, the myth of a supernatural devil, the idolatry of man's government, etc. You come away frustrated and disgusted because those who are important to you can't or won't see the obvious.

These, too, are often scoffers who despise the Reign of Christ. They will not understand the work even though we declare it to them. It is sad to say, but they are going to be this way until Jesus himself intervenes in their lives as He did in Paul's. We can't do it.

But for those who have a heart to love the gospel, there is pardon, grace, and a new life in this age of Christ's Reign. Therefore, our work is for those who have ears to hear. We don't withhold it from others who don't have ears. They simply don't hear it. They don't want it. Our efforts are not for them. Our efforts are concentrated on people with ears to hear (*"... and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice."* Jn. 10:1-5)

Judgment had come upon Israel. She had abandoned God and had died. She needed to be raised from the dead.

QUESTION: You are saying that Christ's Reign is in effect at the present time. But, how can it exist when most people are unaware of it? In Christ's Reign wouldn't all people know the truth?

ACTS 13:42-46 ADVERSITY FROM THE RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT

Now as they were going out, they were asking that these sayings might be spoken to them the following sabbath.

And when the synagogue had dismissed, many of the Judaists and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

And the next sabbath almost all the city came together to hear the word of God.

But when the Judaists saw the crowds, they were filled with envy, and blasphemed and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul.

Then Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly, and said, "It was necessary that the word of God first be spoken to you: but since you push it away, and judge yourselves unworthy of eonian life, lo, we are turning to the nations."

IN THE King James Version there are some words that were, for reasons of deceit, added to the text in verse 42. The King James Version says:

42. And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

The Greek text does not say that. You can see that the words, "Jews," "synagogue" and "Gentiles" were added into the verse by the King James translators.

After the meeting was over, some of the people came to Paul and Barnabas and asked to hear more of their words. Notice that the Judaists got upset by the large turnout the next sabbath. They were upset ... not because they thought Paul and Barnabas were teaching lies; not because they thought the word of God was being distorted. They were upset by the sight of so many of their people showing interest in the news of Christ's Reign. They became envious and feared a loss of political status and control.

The Judaists (Jews) concocted their own story. In verse 45, they were "contradicting and blaspheming." We have people today who share the Jewish mentality. They contradict and blaspheme when they're envious of something. And, if they don't like someone they resort to character assassination and ad hominem attacks to avoid the real issues. Through insult and insinuation they attempt to divert attention by making unfounded and meaningless accusations. They focus on implied/impuned motives to avoid an opponent's questions. Character assassination is a low-class argument. Unfortunately, many people are impressed by it. It works in today's politics the same as it worked in Paul's day. The religious and political leaders attacked the character of Paul and his friends to avoid the real issues.

The word in verse 46 is not "everlasting" as the KJV has it. This is one of those deceptive words inserted in a strategic place to confuse people. The

correct word is "eonian." As we showed in lesson 5, page 5, this Greek word actually means "of the age." This phrase ("eonian life") refers to "life of this age" ... of Christ's reign. Please take a little time to look up and review this so that it is clear in your mind. It is important!

Paul was talking about life available to them in the present age (eon). Eonian life was from Christ. Paul declared that it had been made available to them, but since they were judging themselves unworthy of it, he would turn and take the good news of that life to other nations. They were already outside Judea. He was speaking to Israelites in Asia Minor.

As Paul delivered his speech, he apparently saw that the audience's mood was becoming nasty and trouble was brewing. So he cast this judgment upon them, saying in essence, "If you refuse to hear, then so be it. We were commissioned to come and talk to you about Christ's Reign. But if you reject our message, we'll take it to people who will listen."

Paul wanted them to know that there WERE more Israelites elsewhere, in other nations, who would listen and believe.

QUESTION: Where do you draw the line on what is "character assassination" as opposed to viable argument and exposé? If the person you are opposing is a sodomite, a pornographer, an abortionist, etc., are you saying it would be wrong to attack his character?

ACTS 13:47-49 TAKING THE LIGHT TO ISRAEL IN THE NATIONS

For thus has the Lord directed us, saying, I have set you as a light of the nations, to be salvation to the ends of the earth.

And when those in the nations heard this, they rejoiced, and glorified the word of God: and all who were disposed toward eonian life believed.

And the word of the Lord was being carried throughout all the region.

GOD had set Paul and his company to be lights to the nations. The religious establishment couldn't discourage them, although it tried.

Paul was announcing the gift of eonian life. He chose to use Isaiah's words ... recorded in Isaiah 49.

1. Listen to me, O coasts! And hear, you people from far; Yahweh called me from the womb; from the belly of my mother he made mention of my name

2. And he made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hands he hid me, and made me a polished arrow. In his quiver he hid me;

3. And He said to me, You are my servant, Israel. In you I will be glorified.

4. Then I said, I have laboured for nothing, I have spent my strength for nothing, and in vain. Yet surely my judgment is with Yahweh, and my work with my God.

5. And now Yahweh speaks, that formed me from the womb to be his servant to bring back Jacob again to him; and though Israel is not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of Yahweh, and my God shall be my strength.

6. He (Yahweh) said, It is a light thing that you (Isaiah) should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give you for a light to the nations, to be my salvation to the ends of the earth.

Isaiah 49:1-6

God formed Isaiah and called him to revive Israel and turn them back to God. Isaiah then says, in essence, "I was commissioned to turn Israel back to God. I can see that I'm not going to accomplish that in my lifetime. Yet, eventually my work will bear fruit and I will yet be glorified in God's eyes."

Isaiah was given the same general commission as the apostles centuries later. He was to take light to Israel who was scattered and lost. Centuries later, this same

commission was reworded and re-applied to the apostles. Their commission was to take God's light to Israel scattered in the nations, and tell them about Jesus and "eonian life." The light they carried to the Israelites in the nations was the message of "life"; "life of this age" (eonian life). The New Covenant was the beginning of this age – this era of new Kingship and new life.

Notice the different wording the KJV translators put in verse 48. They rendered the last part of that verse: "... as many as were ordained to eternal life" The Greek does not say "ordained." The word is actually "disposed" – those who were disposed toward eonian life. Those who sought life were drawn to Paul's message.

And again, the KJV word "eternal" is wrong. The right word is "eonian" ... which means "of the age."

QUESTION: The way it is written in the Bible there seems to be an official proclamation that Isaiah, the apostles, and Paul were commissioned to do their work. Today there are so many pastors, ministers, and evangelists. Have they all been commissioned by God? Who is commissioned today? When and how is the official announcement made?

QUESTION: If the light that was sent to the nations was not the hope of a future Kingdom, then what IS the "salvation" that is talked about in the Bible?

ACTS 13:50-52 “SHAKE OFF THE DUST FROM YOUR FEET”

But the Judaists stirred up the religious women of reputation, and the high-ranking men of the city, and raised a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and they threw them out from their borders.

But they shook off the dust of their feet upon them, and went to Iconium.

And the disciples were being filled with joy, and holy spirit.

IN VERSE 50, the King James rendition talks about the “honorable” women. Here again they used the wrong word. These were women of reputation, not honor. They were not righteous as the word “honorable” implies. The Judaists (Jews) were stirring up the elite, the rich, the women of influence and reputation.

These elite kicked Paul and Barnabas out of their town. So, Paul and Barnabas “shook off the dust from their feet,” as it was called. It’s a Christian tradition; a symbolic gesture. In Luke 9, Jesus told his disciples to do this:

2. *And He sent them to preach the Kingship of God, and to heal.*

3. *And He said to them, Carry nothing on the way, neither staff, nor pouch, nor bread, nor silver; nor shall you have two garments.*

4. *And whatever house you enter, stay there, and go and come from there.*

5. *And as many as will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the dust from your feet for a witness against them.*

Luke 9:2-5

So, as they left Antioch of Pisidia in Asia Minor, and as they were chased out of one town after another, they shook the dust off their feet and moved on. This tradition was given also to the seventy elders who were sent to the cities that Jesus Himself would visit.

1. *After these things the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them by twos before him into every city and place where He himself was about to come.*

2. *And He said to them, Truly the harvest is great, but the workers are few: pray therefore to the Lord of the harvest, that He will send workers into his harvest.*

3. *Thus you go. And behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.*

4. *Carry neither purse, nor pouch, nor shoes: and greet no one along the way.*

5. *But into whatever house you enter, first say, Peace be to this house.*

6. *And if a son of peace may be there, your peace shall rest upon him: if not, it shall turn back to you.*

7. *But remain in this house, eating and drinking the things with them: for the worker is worthy of his hire. Do not keep going from house to house.*

Luke 10:1-7

The messengers of God were not to beg, but they were to accept hospitality where it was offered. They weren’t to go from house to house like beggars. If a household helped them they were to accept the help because they were worthy of their hire.

8. *And into whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat the things as are set before you:*

9. *And heal the sick therein, and say to them, The Kingship of God has come near to you.*

10. *But into whatever city you enter, and they receive you not, go out into its broad ways, and say,*

11. *The dust from your city, which stuck to our feet, we wipe off because of you. Furthermore, know that the Kingship of God came near to you.*

12. *And I say to you, that it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.*

Luke 10:8-12

A sentence (judgment) was issued against those cities and individuals who loved darkness more than light so as to turn against a good man with a good message and a good work.

So, by shaking off the dust from their feet, Paul and Barnabas were practicing a Christian tradition that had been taught by Jesus himself. They shook off the dust of that place from their shoes and moved on to Iconium.

Today, as then, we must not be afraid to shake off the dust from our shoes, and walk away from impossible situations where truth and light are scorned and nothing is accomplished.

In our next lesson we’ll continue with the journeys of Paul as he takes this good news of a just and righteous King, with just and righteous laws, to the dispersed Israelites.

QUESTION: What about people who attend church, read their Bible, and have families, but don’t accept the kingdom message? Do we “shake their dust off our shoes” too. What about members of our own families who reject it?

END OF CHAPTER THIRTEEN

FOR ANSWERS AND NOTES, SEE ENCLOSED "ANSWER SECTION."

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. Religion and church membership often pass for righteousness. But religion and church membership can be wrong. Real righteousness is living and doing right.
2. Religion gives people an excuse to feel righteous, but does not cause them to be righteous. Religion puts feelings above truth and reality.
3. The book of Acts (The Acts of The Apostles) is not about religion and feelings. It is about real life and ACTS (actions) that occurred when the world system was confronted by the Reign of Jesus.
4. In the book of Acts we see the apostles actually living out the scenario portrayed in Revelation 12, called WAR IN HEAVEN. In Bible symbolism, "heaven" signifies a high position – a position of power or superiority. It often symbolizes God's Throne.

By the same token, "heaven" often symbolizes a position of man's power: thus it is man's government.

God's "heaven" is nearly always at odds with man's "heavens." There is constant struggle to see which "heaven" men will follow. This results in "war in heaven"... as John called it. Perhaps it could have been called "war between heavens."

This depicts the age-old struggle of man from Adam til now. Man must choose which "heaven" he will honor.
5. By misusing and misconstruing scripture, churches and religions have effectively inoculated their members against the truths of the Bible. Scriptures that are basically uncomplicated soon are turned into confusing fantasies. Like anti-truth serum, the counterfeit interpretations are injected into the brains of people, making them blind to simple reality.
6. The King James translators had Paul going to the "Gentiles." By inserting this wrong word they gave the impression that the gospel was being taken away from Israel and

given to another race of people. But, the right word is not "Gentiles." It is "nations" – from the Greek word "ethnos."

Actually, Paul was taking the gospel to other Israelites in other nations; to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mtt. 15:24).

7. Paul clearly identified the people to whom his message was directed. He called them "brethren," and said they had the same forefathers who worshipped the same God.

8. When Paul was confronted by scorers on his mission, he told them that he was carrying the good news to the nations, and they could choose to accept it or reject it. If they rejected the good news, Paul and his troop shook the dust of that place off their shoes and went on to the next place.

9. The opposition that Paul continually had to deal with was from two sources: religious rulers and political rulers.

ANSWERS:

pg.2

Christianity (true Christianity) is neither religion nor politics. It is a way of life based in the principles of God's law, his grace and his love. Both religion and politics are the tools of deceit, avarice and hunger for power.

Churches (often confused with Christianity) were created by the Roman Emperor Constantine for the purpose of pacifying people to be subjects and citizens. Religion and churches are just as dirty as politics. Once thrown in the black hole of religion the truths of Christ get twisted and lose their meaning.

Like politics, religion (church) works against Christ. Not for Him.

pg. 4

Yes! The worst deceivers always operate from within.

Here are two witnesses:

1. In Gen. 3, a false "wise man" appearing as a friend beguiled Eve.
2. 2 Cor. 11:13-15 "*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for your adversary transforms himself into a messenger of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also are transforming themselves as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*"

pg. 5

a) The gospel was rejected by a culture, not a race of people. Most Judeans (Edomites and others of the Judean religion and culture called Judaism) rejected Christ. But some residents were Israelites, and many of them accepted Christ. So Israel in general didn't "reject" the gospel. Many accepted it.

As Paul carried the gospel to the nations, he ran into the same thing. The Judean religion and culture (Judaism) generally rejected Christ. But, many Israelites in the nations heard the call of their Shepherd.

Churches have taught that the "gentiles" were non-Israelites. However, the word "gentile" is not in the Bible. The correct word is "nation." Thus, Paul took the gospel to the nations because that was where Israel had been scattered. Thus, the gospel went to Israel in the nations (i.e., the "gentiles").

b) No. Paul was not trying to convert wolves into sheep. He was calling the sheep who had "ears to hear" to come out from among the wolves. Sheep repent and follow. Wolves don't.

pg. 6

Rulers are no good whether they are seen and heard ... or not. Seeing and hearing serpents (politicians) does not help ... because they can never be trusted.

Yahweh's law and government, on the other hand, is constant and true. It is easy to see and hear, and you never have to guess about it. You can always trust it.

With spiritual eyes and ears we see and hear Christ's commands. *"Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear."* (Matt. 13:16). *"For we walk by faith, not by sight"* (2 Cor. 5:7)

There is no need to resort to guessing what is right. Scripture is not confusing or vague. The confusion comes from many generations of religion (church) and politics that have twisted and perverted the gospel, making it impossible to understand. Babylon breeds chaos. Without chaos, Babylon cannot survive.

pg. 7

Yahweh didn't stop being King. Israel chose to stop honoring Him as King (1 Sam. 8). Yahweh didn't fail; Israel failed.

Israel destroyed herself and died spiritually. Jesus was sent to give new life to those who repent and believe, and to receive them all as his new bride – New Jerusalem.

pg. 8

In Christ's Reign, truth is available to all. They can seek truth, or ignore it; accept it, or reject it; succeed, or fail. Christ's Reign is NOT the absence of all wrong – rather, it is the ability to rise above it. It is "life and peace" in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rm. 8:6)

Opposition exists during Jesus' Reign as proven by 1 Cor. 15:25: *"For He must reign till He has put all enemies under his feet."*

pg. 9

Character assassination (also called "ad hominem") is the act of attacking an opponent's character rather than answering his argument. This is a poor ploy and usually is not even relevant to the issue. This form of argument is used by politicians to avoid dealing with the real issues at hand. They divert public attention to unrelated and false accusations against their opponent, and the real issues are never addressed.

The issue at hand should be the point of an argument or exposé.

Exposing crime and criminals should be done by addressing the crime directly – without resorting to ad hominem attacks. False accusation, according to Bible law, carries a severe penalty.

pg. 10

a) When God commissions a man, God may be the only one (other than the man) who knows it. It is not a public announcement. The exception to this rule was when God announced openly that Jesus was his Son (Mtt. 3:17).

Most of the prophets and apostles were not publicly commissioned. There were no official announcements made for them to assure their acceptance with their audiences. They were rejected and hated by most who heard them.

Announcements and ordinations can be false. From the hearer's vantage, the messages, and messengers, always must be critically discerned and judged by comparing them to Scripture, and by testing them with common sense and the spirit of God.

b) God's salvation is usually present, not future. It saves men from their current condition of confusion, from deception, from fear, from ignorance, from failure, and from idolatry. Salvation is when a man is lifted from darkness to light; from spiritual death

to life.

Churches teach that salvation saves you from "hell" and gets you to "heaven." But the Bible does not teach that. It teaches that salvation restores sound minds and hearts to men who have gotten themselves lost and confused.

pg. 11

Those who knowingly oppose Christ and the gospel put themselves in a status of rebellion. This applies to people who knowingly rebel, not to those who merely misunderstand or are ignorant. As long as a man is seeking truth his shortcomings are covered by grace.

However, going to church and reading the Bible is no reliable proof of good intent. The act of reading the Bible can be lost, and even turned bad, by wrong motives or the influence of pagan churches and churchgoers.

See the case of Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8:9-23. Simon was baptized and followed the disciples of Christ. He proclaimed to be a Christian, but was proven to be a fraud.