

## CREED, CULTURE, AND CONTINUITY

### The cradle of Christianity in the book of Acts

Christianity is under constant threat – always been that way from the Romans to the Roman Catholic Church (including the Inquisition) to Anglicans oppressing the Puritans through imprisonment, torture, and killing, to modernists, to continuing onslaught of Islam, to modern day secularists – today we face a new compilation of opposition:

1) New a\_\_\_\_\_ – Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, Stephen Hawking – angry and outspoken – but with no new thoughts except all religion must be done away with – Sam Harris said, “Some propositions are so dangerous that it may even be ethical to kill people for believing them.”<sup>1</sup> – having killed God the atheist presents no coherent argument for our existence, no meaning for life, and no basis for any kind of morality – Richard Dawkins – “In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music.”<sup>2</sup>

2) Radical s\_\_\_\_\_ revolution – Obergefell – transgender – despite every baby in history being born with either an XX or an XY chromosome – church must model **clarity and compassion** – **BUT** – we must be aware that Obergefell empowered LGBTQ+ activists – they are not content with winning the right to marry – they want to bury anyone who opposes their agenda and refuses to celebrate their identity

One group facing the enormous pressure of the current climate are Christian colleges. In a recent article in *The Federalist*, King's College professor David Talcott reflects the pressure of Christian colleges.

Christian higher education, like many other parts of Christian culture and church life, follows broader cultural trends. Unless institutions take extremely strong steps to maintain fidelity to core intellectual and religious commitments, they will eventually follow the trends. Just as students come from the culture of their home churches, so also the faculty and staff come through years (often many years) of higher education. In very left-leaning environments, people will drift leftwards unless they position themselves as a resistant minority.<sup>3</sup>

This is more than merely “agreeing to disagree” among friends. It is impossible to take even a cursory glance at the Bible's teaching on homosexuality and twist it to fit the definitions offered by “gay Christians.” 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 Paul is clear, “*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived;*

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<sup>1</sup> Sam Harris, *The End of Faith*, London, Free Press, 2006, pp. 52-53.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Dawkins, *Out of Eden* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 133.

<sup>3</sup> Colin J. Smothers, CBMW Newsletter 2020

*neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God."*

Colin Smothers notes that J. Gresham Machen made this argument years ago in his book *Christianity & Liberalism*. Smothers notes that Machen argued,

the difference between conservative Christianity and liberal Christianity is not the difference between two varieties of Christianity. It is the difference between two religions. And this is only becoming more obvious with respect to the two approaches to marriage, gender, and sexuality.

At base, the difference between Christianity and liberalism, as Machen frames the comparison, boils down to a difference over revelation and authority. Christianity takes as its final authority God and his self-revelation in the Scriptures, which aid interpretation of his self-revelation in nature. Liberalism, however, has for its authority "individual experience." Thus "truth" in liberalism, as Machen puts it, "can only be that which 'helps' the individual man." Machen's conclusion about such Christianity and liberalism is as forthright as it is right: "Christianity is founded upon the Bible. It bases upon the Bible both its thinking and its life. Liberalism on the other hand is founded upon the shifting emotions of sinful men."<sup>4</sup>

This is an apt description of the muddled thinking of many today. David P. Gushee has been the Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics and Director of the Center for Faith and Public Life at Mercer University since 2007. He claims the credentials of an "evangelical." Yet his 2014 book, *Changing Our Mind* delineated his move from a conservative, biblical approach to homosexuality as sin, to embracing the movement. What prompted the change?

A column he wrote in the *Washington Post* in 2014 provides his reasoning. The title of the article was "I'm an evangelical minister. I now support the LGBT community — and the church should, too." The subtitle gave a glimpse into his reasoning: "Too many Christians stayed silent during the Holocaust and civil rights movement." He explains, "It has dawned on me with shocking force that homosexuality is not primarily an issue of Christian sexual ethics. It's primarily an issue of human suffering. With that realization, I have now made the radical decision to stand in solidarity with the LGBT community."<sup>5</sup>

This type of thinking is neither biblical nor logical. Indeed, Christians are called to stand against racism and anti-Semitism because the Bible gives clear instructions to do so. But

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<sup>4</sup> Colin J. Smothers, CBMW Newsletter 2020

<sup>5</sup> David Gushee, "I'm an evangelical minister. I now support the LGBT community — and the church should, too.," [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com), accessed January 5, 2020.

to use this logic to stand with a group of people clearly identified biblically by their sin is dangerously illogical. Nevertheless, with callous and shallow hubris Gushee dismisses the Bible. He stated,

I now believe that the traditional interpretation of the most cited passages is questionable and that all that parsing of Greek verbs has distracted attention from the primary moral obligation taught by Jesus — to love our neighbors as ourselves, especially our most vulnerable neighbors. . . . Put simply, it finally became clear to me that I must side with those who were being treated with contempt, just as I hope I would have sided with Jews in the Nazi era and with African Americans during the civil rights years.<sup>6</sup>

3) E\_\_\_\_\_ – it is absolutely true that there was no absolute truth – today radical theories of critical race theory, social justice, and intersectionality have gone beyond that to assert their absolute truths – everyone is part of a class – the offense of one class can intersect with another class so I can be experience your offense even if I was never personally offended – example – The California Legislature has mandated a “Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum” for HS – “The field critically grapples with the various power structures and forms of oppression, including but not limited to white supremacy, race and racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, Islamophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia that continue to impact the social, emotional, cultural, economic, and political experiences of native peoples and people of color.” – so profound it invented a whole new 22 page glossary – positionalities, hybridities, nepantlas, and misogynoir – “history” becomes H-X-R-S-T-O-R-Y – “The X is used to disrupt the often rigid gender binarist approach to telling history.” – Kings and Queens – men and women – who else??! – don’t get it? – because of your bias to “a system of power that is based on the dominance of cisheterosexual men.” – ie – men who think of themselves as men – it’s open for public comment – until Aug. 15 – missed it!<sup>7</sup>

4) P\_\_\_\_\_ – the agenda of the Democratic party isn’t merely political – it is evil at the core – my interest – highlight the violent attack on biblical Christianity – the agenda of current Democratic candidates for President are immoral at their core – advocate killing babies at full term – even after birth – articulate goals of outright socialism which would destroy the financial and social engines that have fueled our nation – example – reintroduction of *The Equality Act* – first introduced in 2015 and ready to be re-introduced by David Cicilline D-NJ – it “amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity among the prohibited categories of discrimination or segregation in places of public accommodation.

The bill defines:

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> “Comment on the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum,”  
[www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/esmcpubliccomment.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/esmcpubliccomment.asp) - accessed on 8/10/19.

- "sex" to include a sex stereotype, sexual orientation or gender identity, and pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition;
- "sexual orientation" as homosexuality, heterosexuality, or bisexuality; and
- "gender identity" as gender-related identity, appearance, mannerisms, or characteristics, regardless of the individual's designated sex at birth.

The bill expands the categories of public accommodations to include places or establishments that provide:

- exhibitions, recreation, exercise, amusement, gatherings, or displays;
- goods, services, or programs, including a store, a shopping center, an online retailer or service provider, a salon, a bank, a gas station, a food bank, a service or care center, a shelter, a travel agency, a funeral parlor, or a health care, accounting, or legal service; or
- transportation services.<sup>8</sup>

5) The problem of e\_\_\_\_\_ – mass shootings in Gilroy, El Paso, and Dayton – mayor of El Paso – “This is evil. And I don’t know of any book that can tell us how to handle this – unless it’s the Bible.”

The book of Acts tells the story of the birth of Christianity – the coming of Jesus changed everything about the world system – before the angel appeared to Mary there was nothing to hint that the world was about to change – but the coming of Jesus changed that in profound ways – 3 main forces seen in Acts

\*Creed – everything that followed depended on the truths surrounding the person and work of Christ – these truths were not mere adjustments of OT theology – they were bombshells because they were now centered on a person

\*Culture – this creed changed human relationships – no longer confined to social, ethnic, and economic groups

\*Continuity – the creed also asserted it’s own continuity by claiming to be timeless and worthy of passing on to all cultures of all time – only religion to say that you “*must be born again*” to enter heaven

Where did it all begin? – Acts is history – not doctrine – contains history of first 3 decades of the church – many call this the “Acts of the Apostles” – could be “Acts of the HS” – book of transition – Jesus to disciples – OT to NT – Israel to the church age – single culture to multi-cultural – local to world-wide – Jews to Gentiles – explains our position in the church age

Written by Luke – only mentioned 3 times in NT – all come from Paul when he is in prison and mention Luke’s presence – he was a close friend and traveling companion of Paul – careful writer (Luke 1:1) – wrote “2 Acts” to “*most excellent Theophilus*” – important Roman official who had become a Christian

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<sup>8</sup> www.congress.gov, Summary: H.R.2282 — 115th Congress (2017-2018), accessed on January 2, 2020.

Date – persecution under Nero or the destruction of Jerusalem never mentioned – along with the abrupt end of Acts points to 60-62 as date of writing – before the end of Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> imprisonment waiting trial before Caesar

I. C \_\_\_\_\_

A creed is a statement of belief – it informs the beliefs and governs the actions of all who adhere to the creed – everyone has a creed – written creeds have helped form the doctrinal framework of the church – a number of them have been written in the past 2000 years – much of our own American history and context is based on the doctrinal formation of Calvin – he explained his desire to see French society based on the reliable creeds of Scripture in the opening of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* written in 1536 to King Francis I, King of France. He wrote,

**Sire,—When I first engaged in this work, nothing was farther from my thoughts than to write what should afterwards be presented to your Majesty. My intention was only to furnish a kind of rudiments, by which those who feel some interest in religion might be trained to true godliness. And I toiled at the task chiefly for the sake of my countrymen the French, multitudes of whom I perceived to be hungering and thirsting after Christ, while very few seemed to have been duly imbued with even a slender knowledge of him. That this was the object which I had in view is apparent from the work itself, which is written in a simple and elementary form adapted for instruction.**

**But when I perceived that the fury of certain bad men had risen to such a height in your realm, that there was no place in it for sound doctrine, I thought it might be of service if I were in the same work both to give instruction to my countrymen, and also lay before your Majesty a Confession, from which you may learn what the doctrine is that so inflames the rage of those madmen who are this day, with fire and sword, troubling your kingdom. For I fear not to declare, that what I have here given may be regarded as a summary of the very doctrine which, they vociferate, ought to be punished with confiscation, exile, imprisonment, and flames, as well as exterminated by land and sea. I am aware, indeed, how, in order to render our cause as hateful to your Majesty as possible, they have filled your ears and mind with atrocious insinuations; but you will be pleased, of your clemency, to reflect, that neither in word nor deed could there be any innocence, were it sufficient merely to accuse. When any one, with the view of exciting prejudice, observes that this doctrine, of which I am endeavouring to give your Majesty an account, has been condemned by the suffrages of all the estates, and was long ago stabbed again and again by partial sentences of courts of law, he undoubtedly says nothing more than that it has sometimes been violently oppressed by the power and faction of adversaries, and sometimes fraudulently and insidiously**

overwhelmed by lies, cavils, and calumny. While a cause is unheard, it is violence to pass sanguinary sentences against it; it is fraud to charge it, contrary to its deserts, with sedition and mischief.

That no one may suppose we are unjust in thus complaining, you yourself, most illustrious Sovereign, can bear us witness with what lying calumnies it is daily traduced in your presence, as aiming at nothing else than to wrest the sceptres of kings out of their hands, to overturn all tribunals and seats of justice, to subvert all order and government, to disturb the peace and quiet of society, to abolish all laws, destroy the distinctions of rank and property, and, in short, turn all things upside down. And yet, that which you hear is but the smallest portion of what is said; for among the common people are disseminated certain horrible insinuations—insinuations which, if well founded, would justify the whole world in condemning the doctrine with its authors to a thousand fires and gibbets. Who can wonder that the popular hatred is inflamed against it, when credit is given to those most iniquitous accusations? See, why all ranks unite with one accord in condemning our persons and our doctrine. . . .

Let it not be imagined that I am here framing my own private defence, with the view of obtaining a safe return to my native land. Though I cherish towards it the feelings which become me as a man, still, as matters now are, I can be absent from it without regret. The cause which I plead is the common cause of all the godly, and therefore the very cause of Christ—a cause which, throughout your realm, now lies, as it were, in despair, torn and trampled upon in all kinds of ways, and that more through the tyranny of certain Pharisees than any sanction from yourself. But it matters not to inquire how the thing is done; the fact that it is done cannot be denied. For so far have the wicked prevailed, that the truth of Christ, if not utterly routed and dispersed, lurks as if it were ignobly buried; while the poor Church, either wasted by cruel slaughter or driven into exile, or intimidated and terror-struck, scarcely ventures to breathe. Still her enemies press on with their wonted rage and fury over the ruins which they have made, strenuously assaulting the wall, which is already giving way. Meanwhile, no man comes forth to offer his protection against such furies. Any who would be thought most favourable to the truth, merely talk of pardoning the error and imprudence of ignorant men. For so those modest personages speak; giving the name of *error and imprudence* to that which they know to be the infallible truth of God, and of *ignorant men* to those whose intellect they see that Christ has not despised, seeing he has deigned to intrust them with the mysteries of his heavenly wisdom. Thus all are ashamed of the Gospel.

Your duty, most serene Prince, is, not to shut either your ears or mind against a cause involving such mighty interests as these: how the glory of God is to be

**maintained on the earth inviolate, how the truth of God is to preserve its dignity, how the kingdom of Christ is to continue amongst us compact and secure. The cause is worthy of your ear, worthy of your investigation, worthy of your throne.**

**The characteristic of a true sovereign is, to acknowledge that, in the administration of his kingdom, he is a minister of God. He who does not make his reign subservient to the divine glory, acts the part not of a king, but a robber. He, moreover, deceives himself who anticipates long prosperity to any kingdom which is not ruled by the sceptre of God, that is, by his divine word. For the heavenly oracle is infallible which has declared, that “where there is no vision the people perish” (Prov. 29:18).<sup>9</sup>**

What is he saying? – all government is subject to God – if not you eventually have anarchy – King Francis rejected this – profound effect on Calvin’s disciples – faced a murderous response from Catholic Church:

\*St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre began on August 23, 1572 – estimates of 5,000 to 60,000 French Huguenots (Protestants) were murdered by government decree

\*This brought about a whole new way of thinking in regard to the role of government and the response of the people. In short, it set the ground rules for our civic duties – how we live. Junius Brutus, a Calvin disciple wrote *Vindiciae contra Tyranos* (“Vindication against Tyrants”) in 1579. It held that people have the right to military revolt to defend God’s law against kings who give orders contrary to it. The author also indicted that fundamental law comes from God, so man is responsible to obey God, not the state.

\*This theme was passed on through a long list of Calvin disciples including Pienne Viret, John Ponet, Christopher Goodman, John Knox, Theodore Beza, Hubert Languet and Philippe du Plessis Mornay, Lambert Daneau, Johannes Althusius, and Samuel Rutherford, the author of the monumental work *Lex Rex*. Eventually the theme was passed to John Adams and others who reflected Calvin’s view of how people should be governed.<sup>10</sup>

Calvin’s thoughts are pivotal – sin is always with us, both rulers and the ruled are ruled by sinners, thus limited government by elected representatives in a republican form of governance is best. When kings or leaders act like dictators then lesser magistrates have a right to respond when an appropriate tipping point is reached. Calvin further

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<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (repr. 1536, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2008), xx-xxii.

<sup>10</sup> John Piper & David Mathis, eds., *With Calvin in the Theater of God*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2010), 101-102.

counseled that if the intervening magistrates did not succeed against a despotic king, then it's possible that the people were being judged by God's providence.<sup>11</sup>

Without going into detail, these principles continued into our modern times. A century after Calvin, Samuel Rutherford used this same Mosaic pattern in his 1644 *Lex Rex* to argue for a republican form of civil polity – when Reformers such as Calvin, Beza, Bucer, Knox, Buchanan, Ponet, Althusius, etc., they wrote extensively on the OT pattern of government seen in 1 Samuel 8 and the prophetic books – showed the folly of rule by Kings – early American writers drew heavily on their writing.

Calvin's legacy may be summarized as follows:

1. The absolute sovereignty of God entailed that universal human rights (or Beza's "fundamental law") should be protected and must not be surrendered to the whim of tyranny.
2. These fundamental laws, which were always compatible with God's law, are the basis of whatever public liberties we enjoy.
3. Mutual covenants, a taught by Beza, Hotman, and the *Vindiciae*, between rulers and God and between rulers and subjects were binding and necessary.
4. As Ponet, Knox, and Goodman taught, the sovereignty of the people flows logically from the mutual obligations of the covenants above.
5. The representatives of the people, not the people themselves, are the first line of defense against tyranny.<sup>12</sup>

Covenants and creeds hold people together. The Mayflower Compact (1620), the Charter of New England (1620), the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut (1639), and the Massachusetts Body of Liberties (1641), many other charters from 1635 to 1700 exhibit clear evidence of Reformation political thought and very little pluralism. The forward of the Pilgrim code adopted by the Plymouth Colony in 1536 shows the great dependence on God affirmed by our forefathers: 1636 foreword of the Pilgrim code adopted by Plymouth Colony stated:

It was the great privilege of Israel of old and soe was acknowledged by them, *Nehemiah the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>*, that God gave them right judgments and true Lawes. They are for the mayne [main] so exemplary, being grounded on principles of moral equite, as that *all Christians* especially ought to have an eye thereunto in the framing of their political constitutions.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> David W. Hall, *Calvin in the Public Square* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2009), 86.

<sup>12</sup> David W. Hall, *The Legacy of John Calvin: His Influence on the Modern World* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing Company, 2008), 38.

<sup>13</sup> David W. Hall, *Calvin in the Public Square* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2009), 240-241.



John Whitehead points out that the codification of beliefs among a group of people is absolutely critical to civil existence. He points out,

The Declaration of Independence, therefore, is structured upon a Judeo-Christian base in two fundamental ways. First, it professes faith in a "Creator" who works in and governs the affairs of men in establishing absolute standards to which men are held accountable. Second-and even more fundamentally, since all Western nations of that era professed a belief in the Creator-there is the idea that man is a fallen creature and, hence, cannot be his own lawgiver and judge. In the end it is God to whom the appeal must be made. In this sense, the law cannot be simply what a judge or a fuhrer says it is. It is what God says it is.<sup>14</sup>

This agreement about the governed is not an attempt to turn politicians into theologians. But it is a plea to adhere to a covenant or creed that originates from a source outside of man that understands the basic nature of man. The tenets of early Puritan political philosophy is a good template for any civilization to follow – summary:

1. Man as a sinner was unable, even with good intellectual abilities, to discover or create perfect structures for the state.
2. Thus, a source of information was needed: divine revelation from a superior mind.
3. God, not man, was the ultimate sovereign, and all governments were accountable and subordinate to him.
4. As an expression of both law and grace, God revealed certain patterns and principles for governments, whether the governmental spheres were family, church, or civil. Puritans believed Scriptures defined the charter as well as the limitations of civil governments.
5. Civil rulers, thus, were to conform to God's plans for government; they were not autonomous or at liberty to ignore his moral strictures. Their powers were neither absolute nor based solely on popular will.
6. Because of human depravity, citizens needed restraint, and utopian solutions were impossible.<sup>15</sup>

**A. The creed is C\_\_\_\_\_centered**

**1. The v\_\_\_\_\_birth**

Acts 1:1 – *“The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach . . .”* – *“first account”* refers to gospel of Luke – same person – both written to Theophilus – man known as “lover of God” – must have had prime position to elicit Luke’s investigation – possibly commissioned Luke – Luke 1:1-4 – *“Inasmuch as many*

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<sup>14</sup> John W. Whitehead, *The Second America Revolution* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1982), 32.

<sup>15</sup> Hall, *Calvin in the Public Square*, 215-216.

*have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught."*

**a. A virgin will be with c \_\_\_\_\_**

Isaiah 7:14 – *"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."*

Begin in 2 Kings 16 – story of Ahaz (735-715 BC) – wicked king – Filled Jerusalem with idols – Reinstated worship of Molech – Sacrificed his own son on altar to Molech – He did *"according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel."* – not a good man!

\*Two kings threatened him – Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Samaria – wanted to destroy Ahaz and replace him with their own man, thus destroying the line of David.

Enter Isaiah – prophet to Judah (southern kingdom) who prophesied for 40 yrs. to a people who wouldn't listen – had already seen Israel fall in 722 BC – now they were teetering on the edge of oblivion themselves – Isa. 7:3 God tells Isaiah to go to Ahaz:

\*Warned him in v. 9 – *"If you will not believe, you will not last."* – Ahaz's choice – follow God or lose you life and kingdom.

\*Instead of turning to God – 2 Kings 16:7 says he ripped off the gold from the Temple and made a present to Tiglath-Pileser, evil king of Assyria, for help.

\*Isaiah 7:11 – God told Ahaz – *"Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven."*

\*Ahaz refuses – v. 12 – *"I will not ask, nor will I tempt the Lord."* – false humility – God had told him to ask – real issue – he didn't believe God – wouldn't trust His provision – same message for us today – except we know the fulfillment of the sign.

\*Message broadened to the people of Israel – v. 13 – *"Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?"* – the focus was on the future of the whole nation – key to understanding the broader focus of the sign given in v. 14

\*Then 7:14 - *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.* God Himself will be with us and protect us!

Prophecies often have an immediate fulfillment and a future fulfillment – the immediate fulfillment was the birth of his own son – 7:15,16 – *"before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken."* – 8:3

fulfilled that – Isaiah’s wife bore their 2<sup>nd</sup> son – and before he could talk the kings of Damascus and Samaria (Rezin and Pekah) were conquered by Assyria.

But v. 14 wasn’t totally fulfilled by his wife:

\*His wife was not a virgin – she was married and already had a son – Shear-jashub in 7:3

\*A married woman having a baby isn’t much of a sign

\*His son’s name was not *Immanuel* – “God with us”

Isaiah 7:14 fulfilled: (in a deeper way)

1)The “*sign*” promised a supernatural event – LXX translates as *seimeion* – used in NT as “signs and wonder” speaking of supernatural works of God – this is what the people could expect – specific sign – like “Ygnacio Valley Rd.” – not “Offramp”

2) Jesus came as “God with us” (*Immanuel*) to bring salvation – Matt. 1:21 – “*She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.*” – Mary saw the eschatological significance of Jesus’ birth – Luke 1:54 – “*He has given help to Israel His servant in remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendents forever.*” – Zacharias understood the same thing – Luke 1:68 – “*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant . . .*”

3)The word for “virgin” indicated a supernatural event – *almah* means “a young woman” – from a word which means “to lie hid” – referred to practice of parents keeping the daughters in their custody until married – some point out that Hebrew has another word *bethulah* which means exclusively means “virgin” – but it is used twice of a married woman (Deut. 22:19; Job 1:8).

Does *almah* really refer to a virgin? – YES

\*It is used 8 times in OT (Ex. 2:8; Pr. 30:19; SS 1:3; 6:8) – it never describes a married woman – ie – in Gen. 24:43 – it is used to describe the search for a maiden to marry Isaac – he wouldn’t have been looking for someone who wasn’t a virgin

\*A non-virgin bearing a child would not be much of a sign

\*Matt. 1:23 quotes this vs. and labels Mary a virgin (*parthenos* – used in 1 Cor. 7 as “*virgin daughter*”)

\*“*Emmanuel*” refers to a supernatural event – “God with us”

It is clear Isa. 7:14 prophesies the virgin birth – Matt. 1:22 tells us Matthew regarded it that way – preceding his quote of Isa. 7:14 he says, “*Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet . . .*”

What signs are you looking for? Ahaz depended on the false gods of modern Assyria for help instead of looking at the sign of Isaiah – he believed the wrong sign – John 20:31 – “*These things have been written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name.*”

**b. A s \_\_\_\_\_ will be born**

Isaiah 9:6 – *“For a child will be born to us . . .”* – stresses His humanity – hunger, pain, disappointment, joy, temptation – Heb. 4:15 – *“He was tempted in all ways that we are, yet without sin”* – and *“a son will be given to us . . .”* – stresses His divine nature

Does “given” mean Jesus is less than God? – NO!

\*The *“Holy Child will be called the Son of God”* – Luke 1:35 – Luke 1:32 – *“He will be called great and He will be called the son of the Most High”* – Greek term for “most high” is *hupsistos* – translated in LXX as “The Most High God” – v. 35 – *“the Holy Child will be called the Son of God.”* – since a son bears the qualities of his father, calling a person a “son” was a way of signifying equality – Gabriel was telling Mary that her son would be equal to God!

\*His names – Isaiah 9:6 – His role and the names of the son given – *“And the government will rest on His shoulders, and his name will be Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace”*

\*These are attributes of God alone – no one else has these – Jews deny that this passage refers to Jesus by saying that Jesus is a mighty God, but not *this* Mighty God – but that makes 2 Mighty Gods! – Ex. 3:6 – God told Moses, *“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”*

\*There is only one “Mighty God” and here we see that He is the child who will be born – the son who will be given to us.

\*“Given” is merely God’s way of telling us that He is giving us a manifestation of Himself – it shows that Jehovah Himself planned to appear in human form

**c. She who is in labor will bear a c \_\_\_\_\_**

Micah 5:2-3 – *“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity. Therefore He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel.”*

This passage pinpoints the place of the Messiah’s birth 730 years before He was born – and reveals His nature and work:

\*He is a historical figure – *“From you . . . Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah . . .”* – out of Bethlehem – narrows the possibilities – wasn’t even named among the towns of Judah in OT – small town where David was born – name meant “house of bread” as a grain producing area – had to be distinguished from Bethlehem of Galilee area – for the task described here the possibilities were very limited

\*He fulfills God’s will – *“One will go forth for Me . . .”* – to fulfill all the Father’s will from eternity past – John 4:34 – Jesus said, *“My food is to do the work of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.”*

\*He is the perfect ruler – *“to be ruler in Israel”* – reminds us of Isa. 9:6 – also Isa. 11:1 – *“Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse (a ruler will arise from David’s line), and a branch from his root will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. . . And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth . . .”*

\*He is eternal – *“His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity”* –

#### **His work spans all time:**

\*Gen. 3:15 – Vague reference to the redeemer as One who would *“bruise you on your head”* fatal blow to Satan

\*Gen. 12:3 – more specific – He will come from the seed of Abraham, the Jews – Gen. 49:10 – from the tribe of Judah – then the family of David (2 Sam. 7:12-13)

\*The town of His birth – Micah 5:2

\*The lineage of his parents (Matt. 1:1–17; Lu 1:26–35)

\*His perfect life, death and resurrection in the Gospels

\*Continuing influence beyond His earthly life – no other person has influenced all of history like Jesus – Luke 21:24 refers to *“the time of the Gentiles”* – the church age instituted by Jesus will take His gospel to the Gentiles for a time – but that time will end with the return of Christ – Luke 21:24

\*His final return – the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ – Rev. 19, 20

\*No other religious leader covers the span of time like that – and the work of the Father focuses on Jesus (Heb 1:1, 2).

\*He is in control – *“Therefore (because of His settled plan) He will give them up”* – the people of Israel – *“until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child.”* – why is the birth of a child thrown into this? – because the child is the One who will bring the redeemed of all time together – for now, we live in the church age – the “mystery” of Eph. 2 – the Gospel revealed first to the Jews now made known to Gentiles – Rom. 11 explains we have been grafted into Israel because, *“a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, ‘The deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’”* – Zech. 12:10 – *“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”*

#### **d. NT f \_\_\_\_\_**

Scripture clearly affirms Jesus was conceived in the womb of His mother through the intervening, supernatural work of the Holy Spirit without the aid of a human father.

Matt. 1:18-25 provides a number of key details on the birth of Christ:

\*v. 18 – His mother Mary was “*found to be with child by the Holy Spirit*” before Joseph and Mary “*came together*” in sexual union.

\*v. 20 – Jesus was “*conceived by the Holy Spirit*”

\*v. 22-23 – both the unique nature of His birth through a virgin and His name were prophesied by the prophet Isaiah

\*v. 24-25 – Joseph “*took Mary as his wife*” though he did not have sexual relations with her until after Jesus was born

This is also affirmed in Luke 1:34,35 – “*Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ The angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.’”*

Side note – the perpetual virginity of Mary asserted by the Catholic Church is denied by the fact that Jesus had at least 6 siblings – Mark 6:3 – “*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?’ And they took offense at Him.”*

## 2. The d\_\_\_\_\_ of Christ

### a. The h\_\_\_\_\_ union

The hypostatic union may be defined as “the second person, the pre-incarnate Christ came and took to Himself a human nature and remains forever undiminished Deity and true humanity united in one person forever.”<sup>16</sup> - ie – Jesus was 100% divine and 100% human at the same time.

Luke 2:40 – “*The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.*” – Luke 2:52 – “*And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*”

### 1'. His h\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus’ humanity is clear:

\* This human nature was real – Heb. 2:17 – “*Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things . . .*” – He became tired (John 4:6 – “*Jesus, being wearied from His journey*”), thirsty (John 19:28 – “*I thirst*”), and hungry (Matt. 4:2 – after fasting 40 days in the wilderness “*He was hungry*”), He had a human mind (Luke 2:52 – “*He kept increasing in wisdom and stature*” – He had to learn how to walk, talk, eat, think just like other kids) – He prayed with human emotion (Hebrews 5:7 – “*In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears . . .*”) – He felt

<sup>16</sup>Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1989), 227.

sorrow at the death of His friend Lazarus (John 11:35 – “*Jesus wept*”) – He “*learned obedience through the things that He suffered*” (Heb. 5:8) – He grew weak after carrying His cross (Luke 23:26), and His physical body was susceptible to death (Luke 23:46).

\*Jesus took on a human nature in its fallen and weakened condition from the results of sin – Isaiah 53:2 – He came as a “*root out of parched ground*”

\*His human nature was *like* humans (Rom. 8:3 – God “*sent His own son in the likeness of human flesh*” – Phil. 2:7 – He “*emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, being found in the likeness of a man.*”), yet it was not human only.

His nature differed in two ways:

1) It was joined with the divine nature – John 1:1,14 – “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*”

2) It was not sinful (no sin nature) – Heb. 4:15 – “*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*” – Heb. 7:26-27 – it is “*fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.*”

2'. His a \_\_\_\_\_

Phil. 2:7 – “. . . *but emptied Himself, taking the form (morphe) of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness (homoios) of men. 8 And being found in appearance (schema) as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*”

\*“form” – *morphe* again – the very essence of a bondservant – *doulos* – an owned piece of property with no inherent personal rights

\*“likeness” – “similar, resembling”

\*“appearance” – *schema* – the external, outward appearance

In *morphe* I am a human male – that never changes – my *likeness* is similar to other human males – in *schema* I get gray hair, gain weight, etc. God’s *essence* will never change – but He *looked like* a man because His *outward appearance* was indeed, that of a man.

3'. The p \_\_\_\_\_

But what does “*The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom” mean? The problem? – If Jesus was God, how could He grow, and become strong, and increase in wisdom?*

The problem is in the co-existence of man and God in the same body – it was addressed at the Council of Chalcedon (near Constantinople) in 451 AD – the statement said, in part, Jesus was

consubstantial with the Father as to his Godhead, and consubstantial also with us as to his manhood; like unto us in all things, yet without sin; as to his Godhead begotten of the Father before all worlds, but as to his manhood, in these last days born, for us men and for our salvation, of the Virgin Mary, the mother of God; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, known *in (of) two natures, without confusion, without conversion, without severance, and without division*; the distinction of the natures being in no wise abolished by their union, but the peculiarity of each nature being maintained, and both concurring in one person and hypostasis. We confess not a Son divided and sundered into two persons, but one and the same Son, and Only-begotten, and God-Logos, our Lord Jesus Christ . . .<sup>17</sup>

When it speaks of the two natures of Christ “in one Person and one *Subsistence*,” the Greek word is *hypostasis* or “being” – sometimes referred to as the “hypostatic union” – simply means the union of Christ’s human and divine natures in one being.

Walvoord explains,

The two natures are united without loss of any essential attributes and that the two natures maintain their separate identity . . .infinity cannot be transferred to finity; mind cannot be transferred to matter; God cannot be transferred to man, or vice versa. To rob the divine nature of God of a single attribute would destroy His deity, and to rob man of a single human attribute would result in destruction of a true humanity. It is for this reason that the two natures of Christ cannot lose or transfer a single attribute.<sup>18</sup>

There is no mixture in His two natures – we see this in a variety of ways in Scripture:

\*In His human nature, He ascended into heaven and is no longer on the earth (Acts 1:9-11) – in His divine nature He said, “*I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*” (Matt. 28:20)

\*In His human nature, He was 30 when He began His ministry (Luke 3:23 – in His divine nature He is eternal, existing as God before the incarnation (John 1:1,14)

\* In his human nature, Jesus was hungry, weak, tired (Matt. 4:2; 8:24; Mark 15:21; John 4:6) – but in his divine nature he was omnipotent (Matt. 8:26–27; Col. 1:17;

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<sup>17</sup> Philip Schaff and David Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* 3 vol. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1910), 2:304.

<sup>18</sup> John Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1969), 114.



Heb. 1:3) – best example – storm on the Sea of Galilee – Jesus is asleep (He was tired) – when storm arises He woke up and calmed the storm by His word (Matt. 8:26-27).

\*In His human nature, Jesus died (Luke 23:46; 1 Cor. 15:3) – but in His divine nature He did not die, but was able to raise himself from the dead (John 2:19; 10:17–18; Heb. 7:16).

#### 4'. The *m*\_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus

The key to understanding how the two natures of Christ are bound together can be seen in Jesus as the *morphe* of God as seen in Philippians 2:5-8 – *“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”*

\*v. 6 – Jesus *“existed in the form of God”* – present active participle – always continuing to exist as God

\*v. 6 – *form* is *morphe* – refers to essence, the essential nature of a person or thing – not the same as *schema* in v. 8 which refers to *“shape”* – Vincent records:

We must here dismiss from our minds the idea of shape. The word is used in its philosophic sense, to denote that expression of being which carries in itself the distinctive nature and character of the being to whom it pertains, and is thus permanently identified with that nature and character. Thus it is distinguished from *schema* (fashion), comprising that which appeals to the senses and which is changeable. *Morphe* (form), is identified with the essence of a person or thing.<sup>19</sup>

Rom. 8:29 – *“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed (summorphous) to the image (eikonos - icon) of His Son, that He might be the first born among many brethren. . .”* An inner change takes place. A person's nature is renewed.

II Cor. 3:18 – *“But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed (metamorphosis) into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”* An abiding change of the inner nature takes place.

#### 5'. The *k*\_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus (emptying)

v. 7 – *“emptied”* – *kenosis* – *“to make empty, deprive of content or possession”* – the word points to that which has been made ineffective – *“What is meant is that the heavenly Christ did not selfishly exploit His divine form and mode of being, but by His*

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<sup>19</sup>M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1886, reprint, Mac Dill AFB, FL: Mac Donald Publishing Company, n.d.), 878.

own decision emptied Himself of it or laid it by, taking the form of a servant by becoming man.”<sup>20</sup>

Notice also – He “*emptied Himself*” – no one did this for Him – and He was able to do it Himself – this is the voluntary suspension of His own position and power

What did Jesus give up?

1) The privilege of existing in the form of God only – though He never ceased *being* God. The words before v. 7 state – “*although He existed in the form of God*” – “*existed*” is not the normal verb “to be” – different word – *huparchein* – refers to the very essence or core of one that cannot be changed – Jesus was, and is, unchangeably and unalterably God – that was His essence – also note – it is a present active participle – He not only *existed* in past time – He *continues to exist*

2) He emptied Himself of the privilege of acting as God *only* – looking at the words following “emptied Himself” – He was “*taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*”

\*He emptied Himself by addition, by “taking” a different form – “taking” is an aorist active participle – 1 time past, singular action – taking on the “*form of a bondservant being made in the likeness of men*” voided His prerogative of acting like God *only* – He willingly confined Himself to the limitations of a physical body.

\*Jesus did not cease being God – nor did He exchange His Godly essence for that of a man – He simply suspended His privileges – He ceased using His Father’s credit card. Why? – Because of His vision for those who would receive His gift – not just to make them a better person – but to gain eternal life.

3) His favorable relationship to divine law - i.e. He became sin for us - II Cor. 5:21 – “*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*”

4) His heavenly riches - II Cor. 8:9 – “*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*” On earth He owned nothing – constantly borrowing – house to sleep in, boat to preach from, animal to ride on, place to eat, etc.

6'. The r\_\_\_\_\_

Both natures are necessary for salvation – the human nature assures us of His understanding and entering into our situation – the divine nature saves – without the combination salvation could not have occurred. Jesus grew and learned and “*increased in wisdom*” in His human nature that perfectly existed with His divine nature in one

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<sup>20</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976), 3:661.

body – and why? – Heb. 2:17-18 – *“Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, he is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”* – both natures are necessary for salvation.

**b. Jesus' self-expressions of d\_\_\_\_\_**

- 1'. Forgive sin - Mark 2:5-12
- 2'. Claimed *“I AM”* – Jews recognized His claim - John 8:58
- 3'. Spoke of the angels (Luke 12:8,9) and the kingdom of God (Matt. 12:28) as being His own.
- 4'. Accepted the appellation of deity at His inquisition before the high priest, thus sealing His fate - Matt. 26:63-65.
- 5'. Claimed oneness of identity and purpose with God the Father - note the Jews reaction to both claims

John 5:18 – *“For this cause therefore the Jews were seeing all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.”*

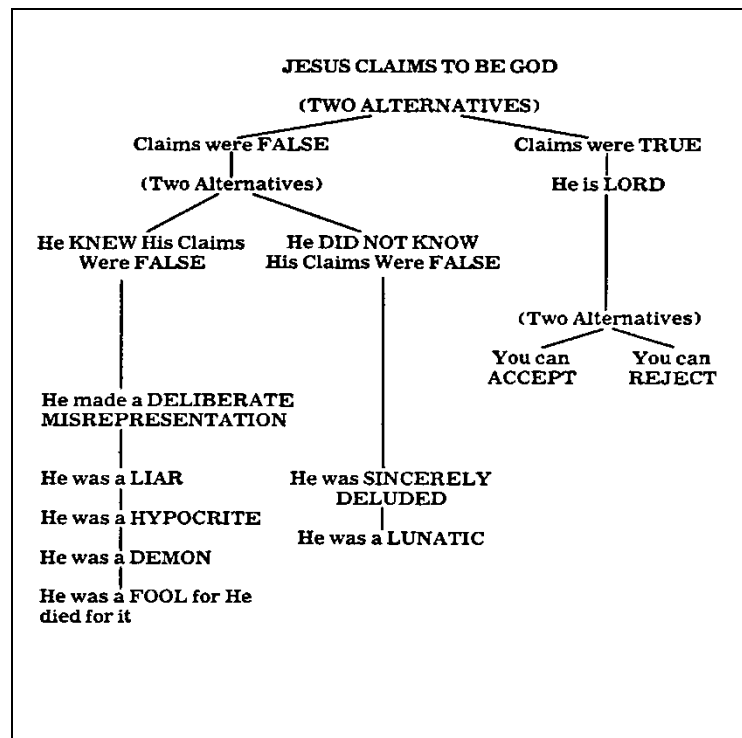
John 10:30,33 – *“I and the Father are one.’ The Jews answered Him, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.’”*

**c. The t\_\_\_\_\_ - liar, lunatic, or Lord?**

Three and only three possibilities exist for evaluating the claims that Jesus made about Himself. C.S. Lewis states the issue clearly.

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the son of God: or else a madman or something worse. . . You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us

not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.<sup>21</sup>



1'. He was a |\_\_\_\_\_

If Jesus made the claims above, and He knew that He was not God, He was a liar. And, if He was a liar, then:

- \*He was a first class hypocrite because he told others to tell the truth while He lived a colossal lie.
- \*He was evil because He told others to trust Him for their eternal destiny.
- \*He was a fool, for He died for His lie.
- \*He was **not** a great moral teacher, because He knowingly misled people at the most important part of His teaching - His identity.

Speaking of Jesus' statements, Philip Schaff, the Christian historian states, Self-deception in a matter so momentous, and with an intellect in all respects so clear and so sound, is equally out of the question. How could He be an enthusiast or a madman who never lost the even balance of His mind, who sailed serenely over all the troubles and persecutions, as the sun above the clouds, who always returned the wisest answer to tempting questions, who calmly and

<sup>21</sup>C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1960), 40-41, quoted in McDowell, *A Ready Defense*, 241-242.

deliberately predicted His death on the cross, His resurrection on the third day, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the founding of His Church, the destruction of Jerusalem - predictions which have been literally fulfilled? A character so original, so complete, so uniformly consistent, so perfect, so human and yet so high above all human greatness, can be neither a fraud nor a fiction. The poet, as has been well said, would in this case be greater than the hero. It would take more than a Jesus to invent a Jesus.<sup>22</sup>

2'. He was a l\_\_\_\_\_

If Jesus said the things He did, and He was not lying, then He was a deluded lunatic. He was sincere, but wrong.

McDowell quotes Channing, a Unitarian writer, speaking on the lunatic theory, The charge of an extravagant, self-deluding enthusiasm is the last to be fastened on Jesus. Where can we find the traces of it in His history? Do we detect them in the calm authority of His precepts? in the mild, practical and beneficent spirit of His religion; in the unlabored simplicity of the language with which He unfolds His high powers and the sublime truths of religion; or in the good sense, the knowledge of human nature, which He always discovers in His estimate and treatment of the different classes of men with whom He acted? Do we discover this enthusiasm in the singular fact, that whilst He claimed power in the future world, and always turned men's minds to heaven, He never indulged His own imagination, or stimulated that of His disciples, by giving vivid pictures or any minute description of that unseen state? The truth is, that, remarkable as was the character of Jesus, it was distinguished by nothing more than by calmness and self-possession.<sup>23</sup>

If someone today claims to be God, or Jesus, or even someone else whom they obviously are not, they are locked up for their own safety and the safety of others, and are completely discounted as a teacher, commentator on life, or example to follow. The same would have been expected of Jesus if His claims were not backed up.

3'. He is L\_\_\_\_\_

The only option left is to accept Him for who He said He was in the claims that He made. If this is true, then the implications are enormous. If Jesus is really God, then His message becomes something that cannot be ignored.

**d. Pre-i\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus**

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<sup>22</sup>Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* 8 vols. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1910, reprint 1962), 109, quoted in McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 105-106.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 106-107.

Jesus existed *“in the form of God”* before the incarnation. We know this because of the manifestation of God in a number of places in a physical sense. These appearances are called *Theophanies*. This was a privileged visit by God in physical form, usually reserved for people of high spiritual maturity. It may be deduced that these appearances are Jesus Christ because:

\*The *“angel of the Lord”* is always recognized as deity in the passage

\*The Father and the Spirit are never recognized in physical form (John 1:18)

\*The *“angel of the Lord”* no longer appears after the birth of Christ – there is no mention of Him in the NT

*Theophanies* include His appearance to:

\*Abraham – Genesis 18 – v. 1 – *“Now the Lord appeared”* – v. 2 – but when he looked *“three men were standing opposite Him”* – v. 9 – the three addressed him – v. 16 – the men leave and Abraham is left talking with the Lord – v. 30 – by this time Abraham recognizes He is talking with the Lord Himself

\*Moses – Exodus 3 – v. 2 – *“the angel of the Lord”* appeared in the burning bush – v. 4 – *“God called to him from the midst of the bush”* – v. 6 – *“I am the God of your Father Abraham”* – v. 14 – God gives His name – *“I AM WHO I AM”* – became the unspeakable name of God – YAHWEH – Jews said *Adonai* whenever they read this name – taken by Jesus in John 8:58 – *“before Abraham was, I am.’ Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him . . .”*

\*Gideon – Judges 6 – v. 1 – *“Then the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites.”* – v. 14 – *“The Lord looked at him . . .”* – v. 15 – he recognized the angel as the Lord – *“O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel?”*

#### e. Jesus as the “S\_\_\_\_\_ of God”

The key to understanding the phrase “Son of God” is to understand that Jesus existed before the incarnation (as in the theophanies above). If this is true, then the word “Son”, as applied to Jesus, cannot refer to chronology. “Son” is the incarnational title for Christ that stresses His relationship with the Father, not His chronology. Before the incarnation (as seen in theophanies) Jesus existed in the very form of God. He did not take on His Sonship role until He was begotten (born) in time. The term is an anthropomorphism, helping us to understand the relationship between Father and Son.<sup>24</sup> Jesus is the “Son” only in the sense that the limitation of His humanity was in complete submission to the ultimate will and full expression of His deity as seen in the term “Father”.

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<sup>24</sup> Walter Elwell, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 1982.

Besides the Old Testament presentation of theophanies, the New Testament also comments on the pre-incarnation existence of Jesus. In short, the word “Son” cannot mean chronology or creation because:

- \*The Son is called the creator of all there is – Col. 1:15-17.
- \*The Father calls the Son “God” – Heb. 1:8.
- \*He was - in the beginning, not created – John 1:1,14.
- \*Jesus had glory with God before the foundation of the world – John 17:5.
- \*Jesus was loved by God before the foundation of the world – John 17:24.
- \*He claimed to exist (“I AM”) non created, before even Abraham – John 8:58.
- \*Before the incarnation, He existed in the “*form of God*” – Phil. 2:6.

In this sense, if one understands the overwhelming evidence for the pre-incarnate existence of Christ, then the application of the term “Son” at the time of the incarnation makes sense. Jesus was not called the “Son of God” until after the incarnation.

*Matt. 1:20,23 – “But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.’”*

*Luke 1:35 – “And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.’”*

In fact, it is legitimate to suggest that the word “Son” meant “God incarnate” or “God in the flesh”. When tied with His Messianism, it is clear that He accepted the title of being God in the flesh.

*Matt. 16:16 – “And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”*

*Mark 14:61,62 – “But He kept silent, and made no answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, ‘Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?’”*

#### **f. Jesus as the “Son of M\_\_\_\_\_”**

The term “Son of Man” is used by Jesus 80 times of Himself. The origin of the term is Daniel 7:13 and 14 where One (who could only be Christ) is presented as having complete dominion over all creation. This “Son of Man” is the “Lord” of Psa. 110:1 who is seated at the right hand of God waiting for all the enemies of God to be brought under subjection to His divine rule.<sup>25</sup> Unger says this is His “racial name” by which He is seen as the “Representative Man”, or “second Adam”, through whom the offer of

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<sup>25</sup>Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 87.

salvation is extended beyond the Jewish people to the entire human race.<sup>26</sup> The basic theme is to see this term as referring to His mission whereby He points to His heavenly origin and His lowliness and sufferings for mankind at the same time.<sup>27</sup>

John 3:13,14 – *“And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man.”*

John 5:26,27 (note equality with “Son of God” in v. 25) – *“For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.”*

Mark 9:31 – *“For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, ‘The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.’”*

Mark 10:45 – *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

1 Cor. 15:45, 47 – *“So also it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”*

To misconstrue the names applied to Jesus to mean that He is not God but merely a man, is making the same mistake as saying that God is only known by one name.

#### **g. The t\_\_\_\_\_ of Biblical writers**

The language of Scripture is clear:

\*Matt. 1:23 – *“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name ‘Immanuel’, which translated means, ‘God with us.’”* – this comes at the conclusion of Matthew’s genealogy – he wanted to emphasize the connection between the Jewish understanding of God and birth of the baby Jesus

\*John 1:1,14 – *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . .”* – v. 14 – *“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.* – tied the Greek concept of the highest concept of divine force with the person of Jesus – that force *“dwelt among us”* = *skene* – “tent, tabernacle”

\*Col. 2:9 – *“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form. . . .”* – Hendriksen notes that the adverb *bodily* means that which is “in a concentrated, as it were visible and tangible, form.” The entire essence of who God is, is embodied, or

<sup>26</sup>Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957, rev. 1966), 1038.

<sup>27</sup>Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 138.



given concrete expression, in Jesus.<sup>28</sup>

\*Col. 1:15-16 – *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.”* – “firstborn” is tied to the invisible God, not the chronology of a son born to parents – v. 16 – *“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.”* – Jesus is the creator – not the created

\*Heb. 1:3,8 – *“And He (Jesus) is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His (God's) nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.”* – MacArthur notes:

The term translated “express image” is used only here in the NT. In extrabiblical literature, it was employed for an engraving on wood, an etching in metal, a brand on animal hide, an impression in clay, and a stamped image on coins. “Person” is a word expressing nature, being, or essence. The Son is the perfect imprint, the exact representation of the nature and essence of God in time and space.<sup>29</sup>

#### h. The “if. . .then” p\_\_\_\_\_

If Jesus was God, *then* you would expect certain things about Him to be true<sup>30</sup> He would:

1. Have an unusual entrance into life. The virgin birth of Christ is submitted as evidence of this assumption. It was prophesied in the Old Testament. Isa. 7:14 – *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name ‘Immanuel.’”*

It was carried out in the New Testament

\*He was conceived by the Holy Spirit - Matt. 1:18,20; Luke 1:5.

\*Mary was a virgin - Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:27,34.

\*He was called Jesus - Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31.

\*Joseph knew beforehand of Mary's condition and its cause - (Matt. 1:18-20; Luke 2:5).

\*The birth of Christ was accompanied by angelic visits and manifestations - Matt. 1:20,24,25; Luke 2:8-14.

2. He would be without sin

We see this in various ways:

\*Jesus' witness concerning Himself – John 8:46 – *“Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?”*

<sup>28</sup>William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Philipians, Colossians, and Philemon*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 112.

<sup>29</sup>John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1897.

<sup>30</sup>McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 115-138.

\*Paul's witness of Jesus – 2 Cor. 5:21 – “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

\*The witness of friends – there is no blemish that comes on Jesus' name through any of his friends - unusual, even in the Bible.

\*The witness of his enemies – Luke 23:41 - one of the robbers crucified with him – “this man has done nothing wrong.” – Luke 23:22 - Pilate – “What evil has this man done?”

\*The witness of skeptics – Rousseau – “When Plato describes his imaginary righteous man, loaded with all the punishments of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he describes exactly the character of Jesus Christ. . .” – Ralph Waldo Emerson – “Jesus is the most perfect of all men that have yet appeared.” – John Stuart Mill – “But who among his disciples or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the saying ascribed to Jesus, or imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels?”

### 3. He would manifest the supernatural in the form of miracles

Seen in physical healing - leper, paralytic, fever, withered hand, deafness and dumbness, blindness, Malchus' ear, hemorrhage, dropsy – life over death in Jairus' daughter, widow's son, Lazarus, Himself – miracles of nature - water to wine, stilling the storm, supernatural catch of fish, food multiplied, walked on water, money from a fish, fig tree dried up.

Miracles are often viewed as impossible by our modern scientific community. Indeed, they are impossible according to the standards of observable science. But that is precisely what makes them miracles. Philosophically, miracles are entirely consistent with the idea of God. How can one even conceive of the idea of God without miracles. If He were bound by our physical constrictions then He would be nothing more than we are – entirely human. Miracles attest that He was much more.

Griffith Thomas notes:

It is noteworthy that one of the words very frequently used of these miracles in the Gospels is the ordinary term, works (*erga*). They were the natural and necessary outcome of His life, the expression in act of what He Himself was . . . The inquiry resolves itself simply into this: granted such a supernatural Person, were supernatural deeds congruous with His life? The character of the works attributed to Him, their beneficence, the restraint under which they were worked, the comparatively insignificant place they occupied in His ministry, and the constant stress laid by Him on spiritual kinship as primary—these are all entirely congruous with the manifestation and working of so miraculous and superhuman a Person as Jesus is seen to be”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Christianity Is Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965. 50.

C.S. Lewis points out the unique nature of the miracles tied to *the person* of Christ. This is not seen in any other religion of the world – “All the essentials of Hinduism would, I think, remain unimpaired if you subtracted the miraculous, and the same is almost true of Muhammadism, but you cannot do that with Christianity. It is precisely the story of a great Miracle. A naturalistic Christianity leaves out all that is specifically Christian.”<sup>32</sup>

Philip Schaff – “All His miracles are but natural manifestations of His person, and hence they were performed with the same ease with which we perform our ordinary daily works . . . His miracles were, without exception, prompted by the purest motives and aimed at the glory of God and the benefit of men; they are miracles of love and mercy, full of instruction and significance and in harmony with his character and mission.”<sup>33</sup>

#### 4. Have an acute sense of difference.

Josh McDowell quotes the comments of non-Christian religious leaders:

\*In the Koran Jesus is referred to as “the greatest above all in this world and in the world to come.”

\*Goethe - not a believer, or even partial to Christianity, said – “if ever the Divine appeared on earth, it was in the Person of Christ. . .the human mind, no matter how far it may advance in every other department, will never transcend the height and moral culture of Christianity as it shines and glows in the Gospels.”

\*Ernest Renan – “Whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed.”<sup>34</sup>

#### 5. Speak the greatest words ever spoken

Luke 21:33 – “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.*” – John 7:46 - from the officers of the guard – “*Never did a man speak the way this man speaks.*”

Sholem Ash – “Jesus Christ is the outstanding personality of all time. . . .No other teacher - Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Mohammedan - is still a teacher whose teaching is such a guidepost for the world we live in. Other teachers may have something basic for a Oriental, an Arab, or an Occidental; but every act and word of Jesus has value for all of us. He became the Light of the World. Why shouldn't I, a Jew, be proud of that?”<sup>35</sup>

Joseph Parker – “After reading the doctrines of Plato, Socrates or Aristotle, we feel the

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<sup>32</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 83.

<sup>33</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Person of Christ* (New York: American Tract Society, 1913), 76-77, 91.

<sup>34</sup> Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 318.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.

specific difference between their words and Christ's is the difference between an inquiry and a revelation."<sup>36</sup>

6. Have a lasting and universal influence.

Philip Schaff notes the influence Jesus Christ:

This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, He shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, He spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, He set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise, than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times.<sup>37</sup>

7'. Satisfy the spiritual hunger in man.

Man needs to be in touch with something greater than himself.

Mark Twain – “From his cradle to his grave a man never does a single thing which has any first and foremost objective save one – to secure peace of mind – spiritual comfort for himself.”<sup>38</sup>

Paul H. Johnson, in *Master Plan* – “God has shaped a peculiar vacuum inside us - a vacuum shaped like God. Nothing satisfies that vacuum except God Himself. You can put money, homes, wealth, power, fame, or anything you want into the vacuum, but it doesn't fit. Only God fills it, fits it and satisfies it.”<sup>39</sup>

Matt. 11:28 – “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

John 7:37 – “If any man is thirsty, let Him come to Me and drink.”

8. Exercise power over death.

W.C. Robinson, in *Who Say Ye That I Am?* – “For no mere man in all history has ever had the power to dismiss his spirit of his own volition as did our Lord Jesus (Luke 23:46). .

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>37</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Person of Christ* (New York: The American Tract Society, 1913, quoted in McDowell, *A Ready Defense*, 186.

<sup>38</sup> McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 325.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 326.

.Luke and John use verbs which can only be interpreted as meaning that Jesus miraculously handed over His spirit to God when He had paid the full price for sin. There was a miracle on Calvary on Friday as well as a miracle in the garden on Easter morning. . .”<sup>40</sup>

B.F. Wescott in *Gospel of the Resurrection* – “It is not too much to say that there is no historic incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ. Nothing but the antecedent assumption that it must be false could have suggested the idea of deficiency in the proof of it.”<sup>41</sup> (No one would even bother to say it was false if it had never happened).

**i. The M\_\_\_\_\_ prophecies.**

**a. God's Word is never b\_\_\_\_\_**

Numbers 23:19 – “*God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?*”

**b. All things are subject to God's w\_\_\_\_\_**

Isa. 46:9,10 – “*Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, My purpose will be established and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.*”

**c. Messiah known by fulfilled p\_\_\_\_\_**

Isa. 48:3,5 – “*I declared the former things long ago and they went forth from My mouth, and I proclaimed them. Suddenly I acted, and they came to pass. . . Therefore I declared them to you long ago, before they took place I proclaimed them to you, lest you should say, ‘My idol has done the, and my graven image and my molten image have commanded them.’”*

**d. J\_\_\_\_\_ referred to fulfilled prophecy**

Luke 24:44 – “*Now He said to the, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’”*

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

e. Other NT w \_\_\_\_\_ referred to them

*Acts 3:18 – “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled.”*

The Old Testament contains over 300 references to the Messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Peter Stoner in *Science Speaks*, says that the mathematical probability of eight of these prophecies coming true in one man over 400 years after they were given is 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000! This is equivalent to taking this many silver dollars, laying them face down across the whole state of Texas, and asking someone to pick one of them.<sup>42</sup>

Some of the prophecies are listed on the following three pages, taken from *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*, by H. Wayne House.

**Old Testament Prophecies Concerning Christ and Christianity**

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<sup>42</sup> Peter W. Stoner, *Science Speaks* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963), 100-107.

OT REFERENCE	NT CITATION	SUBJECT MATTER OF FULFILLED PROPHECY
Ps. 2:7	Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5	The divine sonship of Christ
Ps. 40:6-8	Heb. 10:5-9	The incarnation
1. Ps. 110:1 2. 2 Sam. 7:12 (Ps. 89:3-4) <sup>1</sup> ; Mic. 5:2	1. <u>Matt. 22:43-44</u> ; <u>Mark 12:36</u> ; <u>Luke 20:42-43</u> <sup>2</sup> 2. John 7:42	The Davidic descent of Christ
Isa. 7:14 (8:8, 10—LXX)	Matt. 1:21-23	The virgin conception of Christ
Mic. 5:2 (2 Sam. 5:2; 1 Chron. 11:2)	Matt. 2:6; John 7:42	The birth of Christ in Bethlehem
Hos. 11:1	Matt. 2:15	The flight to Egypt
Jer. 31:15	Matt. 2:16-18	The killing of the innocent children by Herod
unknown	Matt. 2:23	The return to Nazareth
Isa. 40:3-5	Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23	The ministry of John the Baptist in the wilderness
Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3	Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27	John the Baptist as the forerunner of Yahweh
Mal. 4:5-6	<u>Matt. 11:14</u> ; <u>17:12</u> ; <u>Mark 9:12-13</u> ; Luke 1:17	John the Baptist as the prophesied Elijah
Ps. 69:9	John 2:17	The cleansing of the temple
Isa. 9:1-2	Matt. 4:14-16	The ministry of Christ in Capernaum
Deut. 18:15-16, 19	Acts 3:22-23; 7:37	The prophetic ministry of Christ
1. Isa. 61:1-2 2. Isa. 42:1-4	1. <u>Luke 4:18-21</u> 2. Matt. 12:17-21	Christ's ministry of compassion
Isa. 53:4	Matt. 8:17	Christ's ministry of healing
Ps. 110:4	Heb. 5:6; 7:17, 21	The eternal priesthood of Christ

<sup>1</sup> Verses in parentheses are not directly related to the topic.

<sup>2</sup> References that are underlined are statements by Christ.

OT REFERENCE	NT CITATION	SUBJECT MATTER OF FULFILLED PROPHECY
Ps. 78:2	Matt. 13:35	Christ's use of parables
1. Isa. 6:9-10 2. Isa. 53:1; 6:9-10	1. <u>Matt. 13:14-15;</u> <u>Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10</u> 2. John 12:37-41	The hardening of many who heard Christ
(Isa. 62:11) Zech. 9:9	Matt. 21:5; John 12:14-15	The triumphal entry of Christ on a young donkey
1. Ps. 118:22-23 2. Ps. 118:22 3. Ps. 118:22; Isa. 8:14	1. <u>Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17</u> 2. Acts 4:11 3. 1 Peter 2:7-8	The rejection of Christ by the Jews
Ps. 35:19; 69:4	<u>John 15:25</u>	The hatred of the Jews (?)
Ps. 22:1-18; Isa. 53:3ff.	<u>Mark 9:12; Luke 18:32; 24:25, 46a</u>	The suffering of Christ
Zech. 13:7	<u>Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27</u>	The cowardice of the disciples
Ps. 41:9 (109:4-5, 7-8?)	<u>John 13:18; 17:12</u>	The betrayal by Judas
Zech. 11:12-13	Matt. 27:9-10	The end of Judas
Zech. 13:7	<u>Matt. 26:54-56;</u> <u>Mark 14:48-49</u>	The arrest of Christ
Isa. 53:12	<u>Luke 22:37</u>	Christ accounted as a transgressor
unknown	<u>Luke 18:32</u>	The sufferings of Christ at the hands of the Gentiles
Ps. 2:1-2	Acts 4:25-27	The conspiracy against Christ
Ps. 22:18	John 19:24	The casting of lots over the clothes of Jesus
Ps. 22:15	John 19:28	Christ's thirst on cross
Ps. 34:20 (Exod. 12:46; Num. 9:12)	John 19:36	Christ's bones not being broken
Zech. 12:10	John 19:37	Christ's pierced side



OT REFERENCE	NT CITATION	SUBJECT MATTER OF FULFILLED PROPHECY
1. Isa. 53:7-8 (LXX); 53:8-9 2. Deut. 21:23	1. Luke 18:32; Acts 8:32-35; 1 Cor. 15:3 2. Gal. 3:13	The death of Christ
1. Ps. 16:8-11; 2 Sam. 22:6-7; Ps. 18:4-6; 116:3 (last three identical) 2. 2 Sam. 7:12-13; Ps. 132:11 3. Hos. 6:2(?)	1. Acts 2:25-28 2. Acts 2:30-31 3. <u>Luke 18:33; 24:46;</u> John 2:19-22; 1 Cor. 15:4	The resurrection of Christ
Ps. 110:1; 2:7; 68:18	Acts 2:34-35; 13:33-35; Eph. 4:8	The ascension of Christ
1. Ps. 110:1 2. Ps. 2:8-9	1. <u>Matt. 22:43-44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42-43;</u> Acts 2:34-35; Heb. 1:13 2. Rev. 2:27	The exaltation of Christ
Ps. 109:8; 69:25	Acts 1:20	The replacement of Judas
Joel 2:28-32 (3:1-5—LXX)	Acts 2:17-21	The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost
1. Isa. 49:6 2. Amos 9:11-12 3. Hos. 2:23; 1:10 4. Deut. 32:43; 2 Sam. 22:50; Ps. 18:49; 117:1; Isa. 11:10 5. Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18 6. Isa. 54:1	1. <u>Luke 24:47; Acts 13:47</u> 2. Acts 15:14-18 3. Rom. 9:25-26 4. Rom. 15:9-12 5. Gal. 3:8 6. Gal. 4:27	The universal expansion of the Gospel
1. Isa. 6:9-10 2. Deut. 29:4; Ps. 35:8; 69:22-23 (Isa. 29:10); Isa. 10:22-23 (Hos. 1:10)	1. Acts 28:26-27 2. Rom. 9:27, 33; 11:8-10	The hardening of the Jews against the Gospel
Ps. 44:22	Rom. 8:36	The persecution of Christians
1. Exod. 29:45; Lev. 26:12; Ezek. 37:27; (Isa. 52:11; Jer. 32:38; Ezek. 20:34) 2. Jer. 31:31-34 3. Jer. 31:33-34	1. 2 Cor. 6:16-18 2. Heb. 8:8-12 3. Heb. 10:16-17	The blessings of the new covenant
Ps. 22:22; Isa. 8:17-LXX; 8:18	Heb. 2:12-13	Christ's viewing of believers as His brothers

<sup>43</sup>Wayne House, *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 98-100.

### 3. The c\_\_\_\_\_ of Christ

Few people understand the implications of “the finished work of Christ on the cross” – something is either finished or it is not

\*Earthly events are finished – September 25, 2013 – Mariano Rivera retired as a pitcher for the NY Yankees – the most successful reliever of all time – finished his work – 19 seasons – 5 World Series – 13 All-Star games – most career saves (652) – most games finished (952) – most seasons with 20 saves and sub-2.00 ERA (11) – most consecutive seasons with 25 saves (15) – most saves for one pitcher (652) – Yankees were losing 4-0 to Tampa Bay Rays – he came in to finish the game – and his career, in the 8<sup>th</sup> inning – retired last 2 batters of 8<sup>th</sup> inning and 1<sup>st</sup> two of 9<sup>th</sup> inning – manager Joe Girardi stopped the game with 2 outs and sent long time friends Gary Jeter and Andy Pettite out to remove him – he had finished the game and his career – over – can’t add anything to it

John 19:30 – Jesus said, “*It is finished.*” – What did Jesus finish on the cross?

#### a. The events on the c\_\_\_\_\_

Luke 23:44 – “*It was now about the sixth hour . . .*” – first thing critics do is point out that this is inconsistent with John 19:14 that says Jesus as in front of Pilate at “*the sixth hour*” – easy – that was Roman time – calculated from midnight – Jesus was standing before Pilate at 6:00 AM – after the beating, mocking, walk to the cross, nailing Him to the cross, Mark 15:25 says Jesus was put on the cross at “*the third hour*” – 9:00 AM – Jews continued to mock – vicious attacks against His deity – gloating, self-satisfied – the crowd chimed in – regarded Him as a failed Messiah figure – soldiers joined in, mocking Him as “*KING OF THE JEWS*” –

But now it was the “*sixth hour*” – by Jewish time – started at sunup – this was now high noon – for 3 hours the scene had resembled an angry lynch mob – Jewish leaders self-righteously leading the way to the cross to kill this undocumented teacher who threatened their livelihood and hold on the people – the unruly crowd who had “*come together for this spectacle*” pushed and shoved to angrily denounce Jesus – the soldiers mechanically went about their duties – up until this time an objective observer might have thought that this was a pitiful expression of rage over a despicable criminal

#### 1'. The d\_\_\_\_\_

Dan. 9:24-27 lists 70 weeks of years that will encapsulate the end of time – 69 of these weeks will elapse between Artaxerxes’ decree to rebuild Jerusalem in 445 BC and the time of Messiah – that is 483 years which ends precisely on 9 Nisan, 30 AD – the day Jesus rode down the Mt. of Olives on a donkey in a prophetic picture of the Messiah – v. 26 – “*then . . . the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing.*” – that is what is happening here in Luke 23:46

## 2'. The t\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus died as the perfect Passover lamb – we know it happened at Passover – Luke 22 – Jesus observed the Passover with His disciples on Thursday – but John 18:28 – *“Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.”* – John 19:14 says, *“Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour.”* – the question is, *“Why does Scripture say Jesus ate Passover with the disciples on Thursday?”* – mistake in Scripture? – violation of Passover by Jesus? – no – Josephus, the Mishna, and other Jewish sources tell us that the Jews in the north started their days at sunrise – Jesus and the disciples were from Galilee so they started Passover on Thursday – but southern Jews, like the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem started their days at Sunset – so for them, Passover began on Thursday night at sunset and ended on Friday at Sunset – this allowed Jesus to celebrate Passover with His disciples on Thursday, and be hanging on the cross as the perfect sacrificial lamb on Friday afternoon at the precise time that thousands of sacrificial lambs were being offering in the Temple

## 3'. The d\_\_\_\_\_

v. 44 – *“ . . .darkness falls over the whole land until the ninth hour”* – high noon – sweltering middle-eastern sun – Luke 22:53 – *“While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours.”* – darkness is always a picture of spiritual blindness and coming judgment – Amos 4:13 – God is the one who makes *“dawn into darkness”* – Amos 5:20 – *“Will not the day of the Lord be darkness instead of light”* – *“day of the Lord”* commonly refers to coming time period of the Judgment of God – this began at the cross – Amos 8:9 – *“It will come about in that day,” declares the Lord God, that I will make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight.”* – that’s exactly what happened at the crucifixion – it’s almost as if the earth descended into greater spiritual darkness when Jesus was crucified – that’s the age we live in - Matt. 24:29 – at the end of the Tribulation the whole earth will be darkened as the battle of Armageddon approaches – *“But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”*

## 4'. The veil of the T\_\_\_\_\_

Luke 23:45 – *“and the veil of the temple was torn in two.”* – the grandest of the 13 curtains in the temple – 2 Chron. 3:14 says it was blue, white, red, and purple, with representations of cherubim woven into it – it was as thick as a man’s hand – its function was to block access into the Holy of Holies where the presence of God symbolically resided in the Ark of the Covenant – once a year the high priest would enter to make a sacrifice for the sins of the people – but now in the darkened temple

the curtain was ripped in two as if a sword had sliced through this – and it was ripped from top to bottom – removed all doubt about a man ripping it from the bottom up – this was a sign of spiritual access – access to the presence of God was thrown wide open – no more priests – 1 Peter 2:9 says we are all priests – any religion that has anything to do with priests is a false religion – Heb. 10:19-22 – *“Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”*

**b. The work of Christ on the c\_\_\_\_\_**

**1'. It is f\_\_\_\_\_**

Go right at the heart of this – Luke 23:46 – *“And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” Having said this, He breathed His last.”* – is that it? – no –

John 19 expands Luke’s account – in v. 30 Jesus says, *“It is finished.”* – but He knew that He had finished all that He needed to even before He said that – He used the same phrase in v. 28, saying, *“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, “I am thirsty.”* – some point out that this was incorrect since He said *“I am thirsty”* after He knew that *“all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture”* – the thirst is in reference to Psa. 69:21 – *“And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”* – but Jesus had already experienced the thirst before He said, “I am thirsty” – and then, to perfectly fulfill the prophetic word in Psa. 69, He waited – John 19:29 says, *“A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth.”* – this fulfilled Psa. 69:21 – v. 30 then says, *“Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”*

*“It is finished”* – all one word in Greek – *tetelestai* – “complete, finish, perfect” – receipts for taxes found in 1<sup>st</sup> century have written across them this single Greek word, which means “paid in full.” – perfect tense meaning, “It is done one time in the past and has continuing results.” – John 17:4 – *“I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”* –

**2'. His completed w\_\_\_\_\_**

Listen – most Christians don’t believe this that Jesus finished anything on the cross – amazing? – consider this – most Christians believe that a person is not saved until they “ask Jesus into their life” or say a prayer or raise their hand etc. – might happen – but that’s not what Scripture teaches

Go back to v. 44 – “It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour” – 3 hours – what was happening during that time? – Listen to these verses – note what Jesus did – and notice the tense of the verbs:

1 Peter 2:24 – “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.” – 2 Cor. 5:21 – “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” – Gal. 3:13 – “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us” – both Peter and Paul say the same 2 things – 1) Jesus experientially took our sins on the cross – 2) The result was that we could become righteous

We fail to see the enormity of what He did – “he bore our sins in His body” – God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin” – He “became a curse for us” –

\*Rom. 5:1 – “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,”

\*Col. 1:13 – “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” – v. 20 – Jesus “made peace through the blood of His cross” – v. 22 – “He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death” – all of these verbs are past tense

\*Titus 3:5 – “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,”

\*Rom. 5:10 – “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” – “reconciled” – *katalasso* = “to set free, to exchange” – the NIDNTT notes this,

“generally denotes in classical Gk. the restoration of the original understanding between people after hostility or displeasure”<sup>44</sup> – “Man was thus an enemy before the reconciliation took place. *A fortiori* the resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee of salvation. Human action, including even repentance and confession of sins, is not a work of man to bring about and initiate reconciliation, to which God reacts. Rather is it the reaction of man, and as such necessary and demanded.”<sup>45</sup>

## 2'. His penal substitutionary a \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>44</sup> H. Vorländer and C. Brown, “Καταλλάσσω,” ed. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther, and Hans Bietenhard, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 166.

<sup>45</sup> H. Vorländer and C. Brown, “Καταλλάσσω,” ed. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther, and Hans Bietenhard, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 167–168.

Theologians call this the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement – “penal” = penalty – “substitutionary” = took your place – “atonement” – covering – a substitute paid the penalty for you, thus covering your sin - DEFINE

\*2 Cor. 5:18 is clear – *“all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,”* – man doesn’t do anything to get himself saved – even “make a decision for Christ”

\*Heb. 9:12 – *“but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”*

Joni – “But these pains are a mere warm-up to his other and growing dread. He begins to feel a foreign sensation. Somewhere during this day an unearthly foul odor began to waft, not around his nose, but his heart. He *feels* dirty. Human wickedness starts to crawl upon his spotless being--the living excrement from our souls. The apple of his Father's eye turns brown with rot.

His Father! He must face his Father like this! From heaven the Father now rouses himself like a lion disturbed, shakes his mane, and roars against the shriveling remnant of a man hanging on a cross. *Never* has the Son seen the Father look at him so, never felt even the least of his hot breath. But the roar shakes the unseen world and darkens the visible sky. The Son does not recognize these eyes.

"Son of Man! Why have you behaved so? You have cheated, lusted, stolen, gossiped--murdered, envied, hated, lied. You have cursed, robbed, overspent, overeaten--fornicated, disobeyed, embezzled, and blasphemed. Oh, the duties you have shirked, the children you have abandoned! Who has ever so ignored the poor, so played the coward, so belittled my name? Have you *ever* held your razor tongue? What a self-righteous, pitiful drunk--*you*, who molest young boys, peddle killer drugs, travel in cliques, and mock your parents. Who gave you the boldness to rig elections, foment revolutions, torture animals, and worship demons? Does the list never end! Splitting families, raping virgins, acting smugly, playing the pimp--buying politicians, practicing extortion, filming pornography, accepting bribes. You have burned down buildings, perfected terrorist tactics, founded false religions, traded in slaves--relishing each morsel and bragging about it all. I hate, I *loathe* these things in you! Disgust for everything about you consumes me! Can you not feel my wrath?"

The Father watches as his heart's treasure, the mirror-image of himself, sinks drowning into raw, liquid sin. Jehovah's stored rage against humankind from every century explodes in a single direction. "Father! Father! Why have you forsaken me?!" But heaven stops its ears. The Son stares up at the One who cannot, who will not, reach down or reply. Two eternal hearts tear--their intimate friendship shaken to the depths.

The Trinity had planned it. The Son endured it. The Spirit enabled him. The Father rejected the Son whom he loved. Jesus, the God-man from Nazareth, perished. The Father accepted his sacrifice for sin and was satisfied. The Rescue was accomplished.<sup>46</sup>

#### 4'. Why is this important?

Because if we had anything to do with our salvation then what Jesus did on the cross is incomplete – ie – if we make the final decision, then Jesus didn't finish anything on the cross, right? – what did He finish if He has to wait for our decision – that means that He did something, but He didn't "finish" anything – He only began to do something – then He sits back and waits for us to make up our mind – is that how it works? – nothing in Scripture indicates this

This is why we refer to this as the “completed work of Christ on the cross” – it is finished – past tense – over – you can't add anything to it – here's the key – Jesus did not die “to make man savable or make him able to be saved!” – Jesus did not do all that He did just so the salvation of man could be held captive to the will of man – nothing in Scripture indicates that

Jesus came to “*seek and save that which was lost*” – He was on a mission to do something – did He do it? – did He do what was necessary to save the lost? – or did He just make man *savable*? – Scripture tells us Jesus did everything necessary to save us when He was on the cross – nothing more is needed – when He said, “*It is finished*” He meant it – think of the implications – either He finished His work – either He reconciled us, rescued us, purchased us – or He did not!

Popular American Arminianism says He did not! – they deny that Jesus finished anything – why? – because they want to preserve man's choice in his own salvation

Tied up in this idea is the question of “Who did Christ die for?” – did He die and pay the price for the sins of every person on earth? – or did He die and pay the price only for the elect? – if you say He died for the sins of every person on earth you are left with some disturbing choices:

- 1) You are a universalist – every person is saved – almost all reject this
- 2) Everything we read before is not true! – if salvation waits on the decision of man, then Jesus didn't finish anything – Jesus did not reconcile anyone – He did not save anyone – He did not rescue anyone – indeed, His work is *not finished* –

Spurgeon – “The Arminian holds that Christ, when He died, did not die with an intent to

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<sup>46</sup> Joni Eareckson Tada, Steven Estes, *When God Weeps* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 53-54.

save any particular person. And they teach that Christ's death does not in itself secure beyond doubt the salvation of any one man living. They believe that Christ died to make the salvation of all men possible; and that by the doing of something else, any man who pleases may attain unto eternal life. Consequently, they are obliged to hold that if man's will would not give way and voluntarily surrender to grace, then Christ's atonement would be unavailing."<sup>47</sup> – ie – 1) Jesus did not die for any particular person on the cross – 2) If man's will did not enter into it, then Christ's death would accomplish nothing! – if Christ died for everyone, then He died for no one in particular – if He died for no one in particular then He did not reconcile, save, rescue, justify, or redeem anyone!

Robert Reymond in his *Systematic Theology* – “This necessarily follows from his recognition that if all that God did looking to the salvation of men he did for all men alike, and if Christ substitutionally atoned for all men's sins (the doctrine of unlimited or indefinite atonement), then all men would be saved. Since, however, he recognizes that all men are in fact not saved, and since in his thinking no one must receive any benefit from Christ's work that all others do not also receive (and those who are finally lost obviously do not receive salvation), he construes the cross work of Christ so that in itself it does not possess, nor was it intended to possess, the intrinsic efficacy actually to save anyone. Accordingly, where there is still talk within the ranks of evangelical universalism of a substitutionary atonement in the sense that Christ's death paid the penalty for sin, it is—as Arminian theologian J. Kenneth Grider acknowledges in his article on “Arminianism” in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*—a “spillover from Calvinism”:

A spillover from Calvinism into Arminianism has occurred in recent decades. Thus many Arminians whose theology is not very precise say that Christ paid the penalty for our sins. Yet such a view is foreign to Arminianism.... Arminians teach that what Christ did he did for every person; therefore, what he did could not have been to pay the penalty for sin, since no one would then ever go into eternal perdition. Arminianism teaches that Christ suffered for everyone so that the Father could forgive the ones who repent and believe; his death is such that all will see that forgiveness is costly and will strive to cease from anarchy in the world God governs.<sup>48</sup> – is this what happened on the cross? – did He die just so we would “see that forgiveness is costly and then strive to cease from anarchy in the world God governs??!!”

People love an underdog – America's Cup – many think they can “attract” people to Christ by showing how successful they are – but people are not drawn to Jesus by observing how successful He was in earthly terms – they are drawn to Him as the suffering servant – when they see their sin – and they see that Jesus took their sins on Himself in the horror of the cross they are drawn to Him like a magnet

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<sup>47</sup> Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit*, Vol. IV, 130.

<sup>48</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998), 474.



A. W. Tozer said,

The Cross is central to the gospel precisely because of its graphic message, including the awfulness of sin, the profundity of God's wrath against sin, and the efficacy of Jesus' work in crucifying the old man (Romans 6:6). A. W. Tozer wrote, "The cross is the most revolutionary thing ever to appear among men." [A. W. Tozer, *The Root of the Righteous* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1955), 34. See also pp. 63-65.] The cross of Roman times knew no compromise; it never made concessions. It won all of its arguments by killing its opponent and silencing him for good. It spared not Christ, but slew Him the same as the rest. He was alive when they hung Him on that cross and completely dead when they took Him down six hours later. That was the cross the first time it appeared in Christian history. The cross always has its way. It wins by defeating its opponent and imposing its will upon him. It always dominates. It never compromises, never dickers nor confers, never surrenders a point for the sake of peace. It cares not for peace; it cares only to end its opposition as fast as possible.<sup>49</sup>

#### 4. The r\_\_\_\_\_ of Christ

Second major doctrine of Acts – the resurrection – Acts 1:3 – *“To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.”*

##### a. The b\_\_\_\_\_

Wilbur Smith comments on the historical record of the burial of Jesus Christ,

We know more about the burial of the Lord Jesus than we know of the burial of any single character in all of ancient history. We know infinitely more about His burial than we do the burial of any Old Testament character, of any king of Babylon, Pharaoh of Egypt, any philosopher of Greece, or triumphant Caesar. We know who took His body from the cross; we know something of the wrapping of the body in spices, and burial clothes; we know the very tomb in which this body was placed, the name of the man who owned it, Joseph, of a town known as Arimathaea. We know even where this tomb was located, in a garden nigh to the place where He was crucified, outside the city walls. We have four records of this burial of our Lord, all of them in amazing agreement, the record of Matthew, a disciple of Christ who was there when Jesus was crucified; the record of Mark, which some say was written within ten years of our Lord's ascension; the record of Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul, and a

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<sup>49</sup> John MacArthur, *Evangelism: How to Share the Gospel Faithfully* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 160.

great historian; and the record of John, who was the last to leave the cross, and, with Peter, the first of the Twelve on Easter to behold the empty tomb.<sup>50</sup>

1'. The tomb was cut out of rock with a stone "couch" in the middle.

2'. The stone sealing the entrance was a heavy (1 ton) disc which could roll along a groove to seal the entrance.

3'. The seal was a cord stretched across the stone and sealed at each end as in Dan. 6:17.

4'. The guard (Matt. 27:62-66) was probably Roman and consisted of at least four disciplined soldiers.

The guard (*koustodia*) = Roman soldiers – not mere Jewish temple police – probably part of a larger contingent of at least 60 soldiers.

**b. The s\_\_\_\_\_ of the resurrection.**

James Boice speaks of the significance of the resurrection.

The resurrection proved that Jesus Christ is who he claimed to be and that he accomplished what he claimed to have come to earth to accomplish. Evangelist Reuben A. Torrey called the resurrection of Jesus Christ 'the Gibraltar of Christian evidences, the Waterloo of infidelity.' The resurrection is the historical base upon which all other Christian doctrines are built and before which all honest doubt must falter.

If it can be shown that Jesus of Nazareth actually rose from the dead, as the early Christians believed and as the Scriptures claim, then the Christian faith rests upon an impregnable foundation. If it stands, the other doctrines stand. On the other hand, if the resurrection falls, the other truths fall also.<sup>51</sup>

**c. Jesus' p\_\_\_\_\_ concerning the resurrection.**

Matt. 16:21 – *"From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day."*

Matt. 17:9 – *"And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.'"*

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<sup>50</sup>Wilbur Smith, *Therefore Stand: Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), 370-371, quoted in McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, 204-205.

<sup>51</sup>Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, 341.

Matt. 17:22,23 – *“And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day.’ And they were deeply grieved.”*

Matt. 20:18,19 – *“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up.”*

Matt. 26:32 – *“But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”*

Mark 9:10 – *“And they seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead might mean.”*

Luke 9:22-24 – *“... saying, ‘The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.’ And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.’”*

John 2:18-22 – *“The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ The Jews therefore said, ‘It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.”*

**d. P\_\_\_\_\_ of the resurrection**

**1'. He was d\_\_\_\_\_**

Some have speculated that Jesus was not really dead, but that He only fainted. If that were true, not only does it fly in the face of the Biblical information, but it would mean that a man who was severely beaten and physically traumatized, wrapped up with 100 pounds of spices, laid in a secluded tomb for three days with no nourishment, medicine, or care, would have to revive himself, pull a Houdini like escape from the wrappings, bowl over the 1 ton stone, overcome the Roman guard, sneak past the Jewish observers, and vanish into the night.

Mark 15:15-20 – *“And wishing to satisfy the multitude, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him to be crucified. And the soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the*

*whole Roman cohort. And they dressed Him up in purple, and after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; and they began to acclaim Him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting at Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. And after they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, and put His garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him."*

*Mark 15:21,22a – "And they pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (The father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place. . ."*

*Mark 15:37 – "And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last."*

*Mark 15:39 – "And when the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!'"*

*Mark 15:44,45 – "And Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body of Joseph."*

*John 19:34,35 – ". . .But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he known that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe."*

*John 19:39-42 – "And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there."*

*Matt. 27:62-65 – "Now on the next day, which is the one after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, and said, 'Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again'. 'Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, lest the disciples come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first.' Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how.'"*

## **2'. The empty t\_\_\_\_\_**

This is:

\*Historical fact

\*Evidenced by early converts who could witness otherwise.

\*Caused the “Jerusalem-gate” cover-up attempt - Matt. 28:11-15.

Possibilities:

\*Roman guard came to chief priests - for fear of Roman captain who would kill them.

\*Guard was paid off

\*Guard concocted a lie which wouldn't fly

Problems with the latter 2 -

1. They wouldn't have been asleep
2. They had no alliance with the Jews
3. The disciples then died for a lie!
4. They never produced the body!
5. There has never been any homage or veneration paid to the tomb -

because of the greater impact of seeing the resurrected Christ.

### 3'. The g\_\_\_\_\_ clothes

Evidence surrounding the grave clothes:

\*The “chrysalis” effect of the clothes “lying” (emphatic position) - John 20:6 – *“Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there. . .”*

\*The head cloth “rolled up” by itself, undisturbed - John 20:7 – *“. . .and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.”*

\*The cause of belief for John - John 20:8 – *“So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also, and he saw and believed.”*

### 4'. The post-resurrection a\_\_\_\_\_

There were a number of these appearances:

\*To the women (*“Mary Magdalene and the other Mary”*) returning from the tomb - Matt. 28:9,10

\*To Peter later in the day - Luke 24:34

\*To the disciples on the Emmaus road - Luke 24:13-33

\*To the apostles, Thomas absent - Luke 24:36-43

\*To the apostles again, Thomas present - John 20:26-29

\*To the seven by the Lake of Tiberias at Peter's restoration - John 21:1-23

\*To the multitude of 500 - 1 Cor. 15:6

\*To James - 1 Cor. 15:7

\*To the eleven - Matt. 28:16-20

\*At the ascension - Acts 1:3-12

\*To Paul on the road to Damascus - Acts 9:3-6

\*To Stephen - Acts 7:55

\*To Paul in the temple - Acts 22:17-21

\*To John on Patmos - Rev. 1:10-19

### 5'. No refutation from c\_\_\_\_\_

Unexpectedly, those who had the most to gain from disproving the resurrection were completely silent after the fact.<sup>52</sup>

Acts 2:37 – *“Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’”*

Acts 25:19,20 – *“...but they simply had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a certain dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive. ‘And being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there stand trial on these matters.’”*

Acts 26:22-26 – *“And so, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.’ And while Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, ‘Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.’ But Paul said, ‘I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner.’”*

### 6'. The changed lives of the a\_\_\_\_\_

We see a number of dramatic changes:

\*James - John 7:3-5 – *“Even His brothers were not believing in Him;”* – went on to become one of the leaders of the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17)

\*1 Cor. 15:7 – *“Appeared to James;”* – Jesus’ brother – James 1:1 – *“A bond servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Thomas – in the Upper Room a week after Jesus’ 1<sup>st</sup> appearance – John 20:25 – *“Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails...I will not believe;”* – v. 28 – after seeing Jesus’ hands – v. 28 – John 20:28 – *“My Lord and my God!”*

Peter - Matt. 26:75 – *“Before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times; and he went out and wept bitterly”* – later in a post resurrection scene on the Sea of Galilee – John 21:7 – *“Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord.’ So when*

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<sup>52</sup>McDowell, *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, 225-226.

*Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea.” – Peter became the 1<sup>st</sup> evangelist of NT era – boldly proclaimed – Acts 2:22,23 – “You nailed to the cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”*

**7’. Eleven m\_\_\_\_\_**

Ten of the original disciples were martyred for their faith - eleven if you include Paul.

**8’. The establishment of the c\_\_\_\_\_**

The establishment of the church changed the social structure of Judaism and the Roman world in significant ways:

- \*Sunday worship – by Jews!
- \*The sacraments – abolished the need for OT sacrifices
- \*The abolishment of OT priesthood and sacrificial system

**5. The c\_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit**

**a. The p\_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit**

Jesus promised the coming of the HS – John 14:16 – *“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”* – HS is not merely an influence – 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity – complements the work of the Father and the Son – same essence – *“another”* – *“allos”* – *“another of the same kind”* – not *“heteros”* – *“another of a different kind”*

**b. The p\_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit**

**1’. A p\_\_\_\_\_**

To non-believers the HS may seem like Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy, the Easter Bunny, Father Time, Mother Nature, etc. – all false people – made up to fulfill our fantasies – but the Holy Spirit is real – fulfills more than our fantasies.

God’s bridge – there is a Grand Canyon between the flesh and the Spirit – Romans 2:2 speaks of the *“law of the Spirit of life in Christ. . .”* – Holy Spirit only mentioned 4 times in Romans 1-7 – but He is mentioned 17 times in chp. 8 alone – The Holy Spirit:

- \*Frees us from sin and death – v. 2
- \*Frees us from the requirements of the law – v. 4
- \*Brings life and peace – v. 6
- \*Affirms in our heart that we belong to God – v. 9

\*Indwells us to give life to our mortal bodies – v. 11 – ie – He changes our nature and grants us strength for victory over our unredeemed flesh and ultimately overcomes the death sentence of our physical bodies (vv. 5–13)

\*Affirms our adoption as God’s children (vv. 14–16)

\*Guarantees our ultimate glory (vv. 17–30).

The Holy Spirit is not merely an influence or impersonal power – He is a person, the third member of the Trinity equal in every way to the Father and the Son – 1 Peter 1:2 – we have been saved *“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood . . .”*

## **2’. He is called G \_\_\_\_\_**

He is called God – Acts 5:3,4 – *“But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God.’”* – also called Lord (2 Cor. 3:18), the Spirit of God (Gen. 1:2; 1 Sam. 10:10; Job 33:4; Matt. 3:16), the Spirit of the Lord (Judges 6:34; 14:19; 1 Sam. 16:13; Isa. 61:1; Acts 5:9; 8:39; 2 Cor. 3:17), the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding (Isa. 11:2), the Spirit of counsel and of power (Isa. 11:2), the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (Isa. 11:2), and the Spirit of grace and supplication (Zech. 12:10).

## **3’. He manifests the a \_\_\_\_\_ of God**

Psalms 139:7 – *“Where can I go from your Spirit?”* – He is omnipresent – 1 Corinthians 2:11 – *“Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.”* – He is omniscient – Titus 3:5 – He saved us through the *“washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.”* – He is omnipotent

## **4’. E \_\_\_\_\_ with the Father and Son**

Matt. 3:16,17 – *“After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.’”* – Matt. 28:19,20 – the Great Commission is given to make disciples through teaching and baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## **5’. He empowers the life of the believer**

Rom. 8:11-27

\*v. 11 – *“The Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you”* – in the same way He *“gives life to our mortal bodies”*

\*v. 13 – by the Spirit we are *“putting to death the deeds of the mortal body”*



\*v. 15 – the Sons of God are led by the Spirit of God

\*v. 23 – we have *“the first fruits of the Spirit . . . waiting eagerly for the adoption of our body”*

\*v. 26 – The Spirit *“helps our weakness . . . intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words”*

\*v. 27 – the Father *“knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”*

**c. The a\_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit**

**1'. His i\_\_\_\_\_**

Romans 8:16 – *“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God . . .”* – Romans 8:26 – *“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words . . .”*

**2'. His w\_\_\_\_\_**

Acts 16:7 – Paul and Timothy are redirected in their ministry by the Holy Spirit – *“and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them . . .”* – 1 Corinthians 12:11 – *“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.”*

**3'. His a\_\_\_\_\_**

Isaiah 63:10 – Isaiah says the children of Israel *“rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit.”* – same in NT – Ephesians 4:30 – *“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”* – the context indicates this is by unwholesome words (v. 29), by bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice (v. 31).

In addition, the Holy Spirit can be quenched (1 Thess. 5:19 – *“Do not quench the Holy Spirit.”*), lied to (Acts 5:3 – *“Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit . . .”*), tested (Acts 5:9 – *“Why is it that have you agreed together to put the Holy Spirit of the Lord to the test?”*), resisted (Stephen’s defense in Acts 7:51 – *“You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.”*), and blasphemed (Luke 12:10 – *“but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him.”* – speaking of a deliberate, willful, accusation of collusion with Satan against Jesus – cf. Matt. 12:31,32).

**d. The r\_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit**

*“The great King, immortal, invisible, the divine person called the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit: it is he that quickens the soul, or else it would lie dead forever; it is he that makes*

it tender, or else it would never feel; it is he that imparts efficacy to the Word preached, or else it could never reach farther than the ear; it is he who breaks the heart; it is he who makes it whole.”<sup>53</sup> – Charles Haddon Spurgeon

His role is to function as God’s presence in the lives of believers and to do God’s bidding on this earth:

**1) He was active in creating the world** – Gen. 1:2 – *“The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.”*

**2) He was involved in Jesus’ conception** – Matt. 1:18 – Mary was *“found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.”* – Luke 1:35 – *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the Most High will overshadow you . . .”* - not a concept or human inspiration – this was a godly force bringing about human life.

**3) Tied to Jesus’ life** – also involved in Jesus’ baptism, temptation (Matt. 4:1 – *“Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.”* – and His teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection.

**4) He wrote Scripture** – 1 Cor. 2:12,13 – *“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”*

**5) He accomplishes Gods works** – Acts 13:2 – *“While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”*

**6) He regenerates** – John 3:5,6 – *“Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”*

**7) He baptizes us into the body of Christ** – 1 Cor. 12:13 – *“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”* – only place “baptize” is used in connection with HS – and it is in connection with salvation – not a second blessing.

Clarify “baptize”:

\*The words “baptism”, “baptize”, or “baptizes” are used 32 times in the New Testament in 27 different verses

\*Only 4 use one of these words in the connection with the Holy Spirit

\*All the other usages refer to water baptism.

\*Of the 4 passages that connect baptism with the Holy Spirit, 3 of them (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16) report John the Baptist saying that the One who comes after him would *“baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”*

\*The other passage contains Jesus’ statement that He is the one who *“baptizes in the Holy Spirit”* (John 1:33).

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<sup>53</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, “The Power of the Holy Spirit,” sermon preached by C. H. Spurgeon on June 17, 1855, [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org), accessed on 1/22/20.

\*Taken with the passages that indicate Jesus' promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26) and His imparting of the Holy Spirit to His disciples after the resurrection (John 20:22), we see a divine transition from the earthly, physical ministry of Jesus the Son, to the indwelling, spiritual ministry of the Holy Spirit.

\*But there is no Scriptural evidence that justifies the usage of the word "baptize" with a "second blessing" of the Holy Spirit some time after salvation.

\*Paul explicitly teaches that possession of the Holy Spirit not only occurs at the time of salvation (1 Corinthians 12:13), but that possession of the Holy Spirit is a fact for all believers (Romans 8:9, 16).

**8) He seals us for heaven** – Eph. 1:13 – *"you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."* – He is our "down payment" – the full payment is in the mail! – Rom. 8:11 – *"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."*

**9) He indwells us** – 1 Cor. 6:19 – *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you . . ."* – James 4:5 – *"He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us."*

\*Implies ownership. Before a person becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit does not indwell them (John 14:17).

\*But, upon receiving Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in them (Romans 8:9), and gives evidence of being a child of God (Romans 8:16).

\*The body of the Christian is the temple of the living God and the Holy Spirit dwells in this temple (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16).

\*This indwelling is sure for every believer, implying ownership by God (1 Corinthians 12:13; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

\*This indwelling baptizes us into the death of Christ (Romans 6:3), builds us into a spiritual building along with other believers (1 Peter 2:5), and empowers us to live a life totally dedicated to God (James 4:4).

\*The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is also the means by which we guard our salvation, knowing that, it is through this same Spirit that our own physical bodies will be raised in eternal life (Romans 8:11; 2 Timothy 2:14).

**10) He fills us** – Eph. 5:18 – *"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit . . ."* – first note – this is an imperative, a command – for every Christian – "God commands us to be filled with the Spirit, and if we are not filled, it is because we are living beneath our privileges." – D.L. Moody

\*Imperative mood – a command

\*Present tense – continuous action

\*Passive voice – we allow it to happen, we don't cause it

\*Plural in number – all Christians

\*Dative case – we are filled BY the Holy Spirit – not WITH Him – i.e. with His gifts as seen in the following verses.

And how does this happen? – not some emotional, mystical experience – Eph. 5:19-6:4:

\*Through worship – natural part of being filled is worship through music

\*Give thanks

\*Submissive spirit – not rebellious – not “getting to the top” but “getting to the bottom to serve

\*Godly family living – Eph. 5:22-6:4

A. W. Tozer said it this way:

Do you want to be filled with a Spirit who, though he is like Jesus in his gentleness and love, will nevertheless demand to be Lord of your life? Are you willing to let your personality be taken over by another, even if that other be the Spirit of God himself? If the Spirit takes charge of your life he will expect unquestioning obedience in everything. He will not tolerate in you the self-sins even though they are permitted and excused by most Christians.... You will find the Spirit to be in sharp opposition to the easy ways of the world and of the mixed multitude within the precincts of religion. He will be jealous over you for good. He will not allow you to boast or swagger or show off. He will take the direction of your life away from you. He will reserve the right to test you, to discipline you, to chasten you for your soul's sake. He may strip you of many of those borderline pleasures which other Christians enjoy but which are to you a source of refined evil. Through it all he will enfold you in a love so vast, so mighty, so all-embracing, so wondrous that your very losses will seem like gains and your small pains like pleasure.<sup>54</sup>

**11) He guides us** – John 16:13 - *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth . . .”*

**12) He dispenses spiritual gifts** – 1 Cor. 12:7 – *“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”* – “manifestation” = “revelation or appearance” – can also mean “to light up, shine, become visible”

**13) He helps and comforts** – John 14:26 – *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things . . .”* – does this by teaching us all things – comforter – 2 Cor. 1:4 – same word *paraclete* used – God *“comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”*

**14) He teaches us** – John 14:26 – *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”* – The HS energized the hearts and minds of the Apostles so that they recalled the things Jesus taught them and delivered accurate teaching of history and doctrine to us through Scripture. – John 16:13-15 – *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on*

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<sup>54</sup> A. W. Tozer, “The Alliance Tozer Devotional,” [www.cmalliance.org](http://www.cmalliance.org), accessed on 1/20/20.

*His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.” – Luke 12:11,12 – “When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” – the continuing teaching role of the HS will also be evident in times of severe persecution.*

**15) He Brings conviction to the world** – John 16:8 – *“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;”*

**16) He directs evangelistic encounters** – Acts 8:27-29 – *“So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go up and join this chariot.’”*

**17) He directs ministry opportunities and personnel** – Acts 13:2 – *“While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”*

**18) He reveals the thoughts of God** – 1 Cor. 2:10-14 – *“For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.” – the HS revealed God’s mind to those who wrote Scripture through revelation (v. 10-11) and inspiration (v. 12-13). He reveals revelation to believers who read Scripture through illumination (v.14).*

**19) He intercedes for us** – Rom. 8:26 – *“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. – for the student struggling with homework – for the graduate looking for a job – for the young person crushed over lost love – for the wife looking for respite – for the sinner who knows the sting of moral failure – for the one suffering with pain and disease – for the one who has lost their spouse – in the quietness of our bedroom with our thoughts – on a contemplative walk – in the hospital room – in the morgue – He intercedes for us!*

d. The p \_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit

Acts 1:4-5 – *“Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*

### 1'. Possessed by e\_\_\_\_\_ Christian

All Christians possess all of the Holy Spirit – He is not given in doses – there are no “second class” Christian citizens who have not experienced some kind of “second blessing”

Rom. 8:9 – *“However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.”* – Jv. 16 – *“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God”* – John 3:6 – *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.”* – The flesh can only produce more flesh – it cannot produce that which is spiritual – and the things of the Spirit can only be produced by the Spirit – not the flesh –

Affirmed in v. 16 and 17 – *“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”*

1 Cor. 12:13 – *“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”*

Acts 11 – Peter returns to Jerusalem after seeing Cornelius and his household receive Christ and the impartation of the HS just like at Pentecost – confronted by Jewish legalists who said that he should not go to the Gentiles – v. 17 - *“Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?”*

James 4:5 – *“He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us.”* – this implies ownership of all who have received the HS

### 2'. Possession is p\_\_\_\_\_

John 14:16 – *“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”* – The HS is not temporary – He never moves – He doesn’t pack up and leave when we fail – He is with us forever!

Sinning Christians possess the Holy Spirit – 1 Cor. 6:19 – addressing the Christian who commits immorality – probably the new Christian who continued the pagan practice of

engaging a prostitute in a pagan temple – *“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you . . .”* – in chp. 5 Paul spoke of the sinning Christian who had sex with his father’s wife (stepmother?) – yet he made no mention of him losing the HS – only that his sin had consequences – and he should be removed from the fellowship.

Eph. 4:30 – *“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God”* – by bitterness (lingering resentments), wrath (rage), anger (deep, hidden hostility), clamor, slander, and malice – 1 Thess. 5:19 – *“Do not quench the Spirit.”* – hindering in yourself or others the working of the HS – Christians may do these things, but that doesn’t mean they don’t possess the HS.

### 3'. Absence reveals an u\_\_\_\_\_ condition

Rom. 8:9 continues, *“But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”* – possession of the Holy Spirit is a test of saving faith – it is not a sign of a “second blessing” – The signs of the possession of the Holy Spirit – often confused – many look for “sign” gifts – tongues, interpretation, healing, and miracles – but these are never given as the symbols of possession of the HS

### e. The coming of the Holy Spirit in A\_\_\_\_\_

Many look to Acts 2 – see signs of supernatural “second blessing” – is this warranted? – must notice – the charismatic doctrine of “subsequence” (a gap between salvation and receiving the HS) does not hold up – in Acts 2 the disciples receive the promised coming of the Spirit that Jesus had promised would occur – but only *after* His departure – there is no “subsequence” in Acts 10 and 19

### 1'. What h\_\_\_\_\_?

#### a'. Acts 2 – Day of P\_\_\_\_\_

Acts 2:4 – *“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.”*

“Pentecost” means “fiftieth” and refers to the Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:22, 23) – celebrated 50 days after Passover in May/June (Lev. 23:15–22) – one of three annual feasts for which the nation was to come to Jerusalem – at Pentecost, an offering of first-fruits was made (Lev. 23:20) – the HS came on this day as the first-fruits of the believer’s inheritance (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:11, 14). Those gathered into the church then were also the first-fruits of the full harvest of all believers to come after.

To show the disciples the significance of what was happening – God gave two visible signs – wind and fire – “wind” – *pnoe* – lit. “rapidly moving air” – we get *pneuma* – “pneumonia”, or “pneumatic” – wind is used as a sign of HS in Scripture – both are invisible, immaterial, and powerful – John 3:8 - *“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

“Fire” – *pur* – also used of the presence of God – Ex. 3:2 – God appeared to Moses from a burning bush – God also led the children of Israel by a pillar of fire by night – Luke 3:16 – John foretold one who would come after him *“who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”*

v. 4 – *“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.”*

\*They were “filled” – all believers are to be filled (Eph. 5:18) – not “baptism” – “baptism” is only used seven times in NT re the HS – in 6 places, the reference is to the coming baptism of the Holy Spirit – the Apostles had to wait for Pentecost – but I Cor. 12:13 tells us *“We were all baptized into one body . . . and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”*

\*Tongues – always plural – except for 1 Cor. 14:2 where it is singular – probably because Paul is not speaking of a language but the copy-cat nature of those who spoke in ecstatic utterances – *“For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.”*

\*Tongues were distinct languages – heard by 16 language groups mentioned

#### **b'. Acts 10 – C \_\_\_\_\_**

Cornelius – Acts 10:44-46 – God prepared Peter by a dream that destroyed all of Peter’s Jewish inhibitions – sheet from heaven showed him the law was no longer necessary – also told him to go and find an Italian cop whom God had prepared – Cornelius, the “God fearer” and his family were prepared to hear the Gospel – *“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God.”*

#### **c'. Acts 19 – John’s d \_\_\_\_\_**

Disciples of John – Acts 19 – Paul came to Ephesus and found some “disciples” – He asked them, *“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”* – why would he ask them that? – because he knew that receiving the HS at the time of salvation was the normal pattern for the church – he was not pressing them for a “deeper” spiritual experience or a “second blessing” – and when they replied, *“No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”*, he immediately told them about Jesus Christ – not



the Holy Spirit – v. 6 – *“And when Paul had laid hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.”*

## 2'. To w\_\_\_\_\_ did it happen?

Note – the recipients were passive in each of these passages – they weren't seeking, praying for, hoping for, or trying to be possessed by the HS or receive any experience or gifts from Him – the only indication of any human activity is Paul laying his hands on the disciples of John – but this wasn't a sign of seeking the HS – laying on of hands was a sign of solidarity and affirmation – used in Acts 6:6 where the Apostles laid their hands on the first deacons and commended them for service – in Acts 13:3 when Barnabas and Saul were sent out on their first missionary journey – in 1 Tim. 4:17 and 5:22 the practice of laying hands on one commended for ministry is referred to – but nowhere is the laying on of hands associated with receiving the HS or a “slaying in the Spirit”

Second – the recipients represented a broad group:

\*Acts 2 – original disciples – 500 had seen the risen Lord – but the world had not – now at Pentecost God brought representatives from much of the known world to Jerusalem to witness the supernatural explanation of the Gospel

\*Acts 8 – no tongues, but they received the HS – hated Samaritans – God chose to use Philip bring the Gospel to the hated Samaritans – half-breeds hated by the Jews – to authenticate the coming of the Holy Spirit – they too received the Holy Spirit

\*Acts 10 – Roman centurion – God had to give Peter a special dream to even get him to go – but God had prepared the heart of Cornelius and his family to receive Peter's message – and they received the Holy Spirit the same way the disciples had – what an impact on Peter!

\*Acts 19 – OT saints – following the teaching of John the Baptist 20 years after he had died – believing by faith in the coming One but not knowing He had come – when Paul met them, he instructed them to believe in Jesus, not on how to receive tongues.

\*The diversity of these groups indicates the broad nature of the new church made up of believing Jews, half-breed Samaritans, a Gentile army official and his family, and those who still faithfully followed OT teaching as far as it went through John the Baptist. The miraculous gifts of tongues confirmed the presence of the HS to each of these groups and affirmed the message and ministry of the apostles, including Paul.

## 3'. W\_\_\_\_\_ did these things happen?

### a'. Demonstration of God's p\_\_\_\_\_

Acts 2:16-21 – *“but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all <sup>1</sup>mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams . . . And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of*

*the Lord will be saved.*” – “*in the last days*” indicates the millennial kingdom – the events here in Acts 2 are a precursor of the power of God to be seen in the later millennial kingdom.

**b'. To provoke the Jews to j\_\_\_\_\_**

1 Cor. 14:21,22 – “*In the Law it is written, “By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,” says the Lord. So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe.*” – what is the sign? – the tongues (foreign languages) of Acts 2 were a warning of impending judgment to unbelieving Jews – the same had occurred in the passage quoted by Paul (Isaiah 28:11,12) where the Jews were warned of impending judgment at the hands of the Assyrians (Later in Jer. 15:5 the same language is used to warn of impending judgment by the Babylonians)

The connection with tongues seems obvious:

\*The “*men of strange tongues*” Paul is referring to where the tongues spoken in Acts 2

\*Unbelieving Jews should have recognized this phenomenon and been provoked to turn to God (as revealed in Christ) for salvation

\*Rom. 10:16 indicates Israel did not believe the report of the gospel contained in her own Scriptures (Paul quotes from Isaiah 53:1 where Isaiah gives a prophetic view of the coming Christ)

\*In Rom. 10:19 Paul indicates God would “*make you jealous by that which is not a nation*” (the Gentile nations at Pentecost).

\*Rom. 11 Paul argues that Israel is not discarded simply because of her unbelief – in v. 11 he once again states that “*salvation has come to the Gentiles to make them jealous.*”

\*Although Gentiles were saved in the OT, and Jesus certainly saved Gentiles (the Syro-Phoenecian woman and the Roman centurion), the gospel was not overtly offered to them until the rejection of Israel resulted in the crucifixion of their Messiah.

\*Thus – Pentecost, with the proclamation of the gospel through tongues was intended to stir them to jealousy.

\*Tongues were given so that discerning Jews would understand their need to repent and be saved and stave off the impending judgment of the Roman army which occurred in 70 AD.

**c'. Authenticate God's m\_\_\_\_\_**

Acts 2:22 (not 16:22) - “*Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of*

*godless men and put Him to death.*” – Christ’s mission was authenticated through miracles – now continued through the miracle of tongues – tongues had a special place to the unbeliever to attest the message that was being preached:

- \*Acts 2 – to 16 language groups
- \*Acts 8 – to Samaritans – tongues not mentioned but in v. 16 when Peter and John came to check out the growing ministry in Samaria the *“received the Holy Spirit”*
- \*Acts 10 – to Roman centurion – a Gentile – worse conflict than Israelis and Palestinians today
- \*Acts 19 – to Old Testament disciples

God brought the miracle of the sign of unknown languages to unify the church and show all of them that He was not limited to the Jewish people.

**f. Tongues in 1 C \_\_\_\_\_**

**1’. Tongues are not to be p\_\_\_\_\_**

v. 1 – *“Pursue love . . .”* – imperative, the goal of chapter 13 – the work of the Christian life is to be done in love – *“. . .yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts”* – also imperative – the church cannot be built with the operation of spiritual gifts – God doesn’t build his church based on human abilities to market the church or seduce people into being religious without recognizing their own sin.

**2’. Pursue p\_\_\_\_\_**

v. 1 – *“Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”* – many people think that this is tongues, but it isn’t – Prophecy is the public proclamation of God’s Word that brings conviction for the non-believer and encouragement for the believer – it is proclamational in nature, thus is seen mostly in preaching, not in individual conversations or applications:

- \*Builds up, encourages, and comforts believers – 1 Cor. 14:3 – *“But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.”* – not new revelation – it builds people up, encourages them and comforts them
- \*Is greater than tongues because it edifies the church – 1 Cor. 14:4 – *“One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.”*
- \*It operates within the doctrinal confines of the Christian faith – Rom. 12:6
- \*It is not new revelation – 1 Cor. 14:37, 38
- \*Brings conviction to non-believers – 1 Cor. 14:25

**3’. Tongues are not un-intelligible u\_\_\_\_\_**

v. 2 – *“For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.”* Paul is contrasting the genuine use of tongue seen in Acts with the counterfeit tongues that had cropped up by this time –

much like Simon the magician in Acts 8 saw the demonstration and wanted that power for himself – v. 13 says he “believed” but this could not have been genuine since it was only to gain what he thought to be a new magical power for himself – v. 20 – Peter denounced his experience as false because it was motivated by desire for money and power.

v. 2 – Paul is not merely reporting the practice of un-intelligible utterances as if it were legitimate – he is critiquing it because it had departed from the God-given use of tongues – he is pointing out the futility of speaking without an interpreter – one *“does not speak to men but to God”*

\*Nowhere in Scripture do we find anyone speaking to God in anything other than intelligible language – or telling us that we should.

\*Spiritual gifts were not given for the benefit of the individual – but the edification of the church – 1 Peter 4:10

\*Tongues in Acts were never used for the edification, or deeper “prayer language” of the believer

\*The absence of a definite article better renders the verse – *“does not speak to men but to a god”* – indicating Paul doesn’t even consider this as something received by the true God

\*The word *“unknown”* is added by KJV but is in italics – indicating it is not in the original language

#### 4'. Unintelligible utterances are d\_\_\_\_\_

Whatever Paul was referring to in v. 2 – it comes under Paul’s criticism:

\*They are self-centered – v. 4 – *“One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself”* – contrasted with one who prophesies who edifies the church

\*They have no value – v. 14 – *“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.”* – the HS cannot be praying through someone while bypassing their mind – Rom. 8:26 says *“He intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words”* but that doesn’t mean it transcends our minds.

\*They emphasize experience over instruction – v. 6 – *“if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?”*

\*They don’t bring clarity – v. 7-9 – like a flute, harp, or bugle that do not produce distinct sounds – useless – your tongues are like speaking into the air

\*They cause confusion in the church – v. 16 – you have no point of contact with the barbarian or the *“ungifted”* i.e. unsaved who come into your church – the goal (v. 12) is to bring edification to the church – *“since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church”* – not your edification – not a “deeper spiritual life” for the Christian

\*Bottom line – clarity over confusion – v. 19 - *“I would rather speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.”* –

the only reason to cling to tongues as a personal devotional language is simply a person's own feelings – not validated here at all

**g. The purpose of t\_\_\_\_\_**

Paul begins this section with an appeal for maturity – v. 20 – *“Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.”*

**1'. A sign for u\_\_\_\_\_**

The purpose is stated clearly in v. 21-22 – *“In the Law it is written, ‘By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,’ says the Lord. So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers . . .”* – *“tongues are for a sign”* – to whom? – *“to unbelievers”* – any specific unbelievers? – yes – the ones of v. 21 – *“this people”* – the Jews – those who *“will not listen to Me”* – Paul states that tongues are for a sign to unbelieving Jews – quotes from Isa. 28 where Isaiah told the Jews of coming destruction at the hand of the Assyrians.

**2'. A sign to J\_\_\_\_\_**

About 800 years before Isaiah, God had warned Israel that *“The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand”* (Deut. 28:49) – foreign language was a sign of impending judgment – 100 years after Isaiah, the Lord warned through Jeremiah, *“Behold, I am bringing a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel, ... a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say”* (Jer. 5:15) – again, a foreign language was a sign of impending judgment.

The presence of Jews is clear in every passage where tongues is introduced:

\*Acts 2:5 – *“Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven.”* – Hebrew males who had made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to observe Pentecost – v. 10 says there were *“Jews and proselytes”* from the 15 nations mentioned – they should have known of the impending judgment – just as Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 bc – so it was in ad 70

\*Acts 10:45 – some got it – the circumcised believers along with Peter were amazed when they saw Cornelius speak in tongues

\*Acts 19 Paul took the 12 converted disciples of John who spoke in tongues into the synagogue and began teaching there for two years

**h. The p\_\_\_\_\_ for tongues – 1 Cor. 14:26-28**

First day of 20<sup>th</sup> century – Charles Parham, a 27-year-old preacher in Topeka, Kansas, laid his hands on student Agnes Ozman – *“halo seemed to surround her head and face”*

and she began to speak Chinese – did so for three days, couldn't write English, only Chinese – spread to others who spoke in 21 languages they didn't know – one moved to India thinking he could speak Indian, but ended when he found he couldn't – Pentecostal historian Vinson Synan says it was all a fiasco – fanciful tales, but not true – carried on with William Seymour, the "Apostle of Azusa Street"<sup>55</sup>

**1'. They must e\_\_\_\_\_**

v. 26 – *"What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification."* – v. 40 – all things are to be done *"properly and in an orderly manner."*

**2'. Used o\_\_\_\_\_ at a time**

v. 27 – *"If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn . . ."* – 99% of modern tongues movement would be removed if this instruction were followed – one person at a time – no more than three per service – followed by interpretation.

**3'. There must be an l\_\_\_\_\_**

v. 27 – *" . . .and one must interpret"* – fits with known languages – no need for interpretation with ecstatic utterances

**4'. The message is e\_\_\_\_\_**

v. 28 – *"if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God."* – if there wasn't a discernable message that could be understood they had to keep silent – why? – there is no place in the church for a prideful display of a gift or an undiscernable message.

**i. Tongues and p\_\_\_\_\_**

v. 29 moves to discussion on prophecy – contrasted with tongues – *"Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment."* – what is this? – context is clear – prophecy is known words that build up and encourage believers and bring conviction to non-believers – furthermore, it must be evaluated by other NT prophets – and if it doesn't agree with what Paul spoke in Scripture then it was to be ignored – v. 37-38 – *"If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized."*

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<sup>55</sup> Hanagraaff, *Counterfeit Revival*, 142.

Some today claim otherwise – Sam Storms – “We have found that it is better to introduce prophetic utterances with statements such as:

“I have a strong inner impression that I believe is from the Lord.”

“I have a picture in my mind that I think may be for someone here.”

“I had a sense from the Holy Spirit about what he wants to accomplish tonight.”

“I had a dream which involved several of you, and I would like to share it.”<sup>56</sup>

### 1'. Prophecy s\_\_\_\_\_ for God

Prophecy is the public proclamation of God's Word that brings conviction for the non-believer and encouragement for the believer – It operates within the doctrinal confines of the Christian faith (Rom. 12:6) – it brings conviction to non-believers (1 Cor. 14:25) – it builds up, encourages, and comforts believers (1 Cor. 14:3), it is not new revelation (1 Cor. 14:37, 38)

Prophets were one of the early offices of the church that disappeared as their function set down doctrine:

\*They are mentioned as critical to the early church in sending out Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1), at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:32)

\*They are not mentioned at all in the pastoral epistles – elders and deacons assume the role of leadership there

\*Prophecy was a spiritual gift given to the early church (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28) – the early church was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20)

\*Prophets here were in a leadership role – no mention of pastors, elders, etc.

\*Sometimes they spoke new revelation (Acts 11:21– same as OT prophets – sometimes they re-spoke the words of the Apostles

### 2'. T\_\_\_\_\_ at the most

v. 29 – “*Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.*” – why? – because you don't want to have competing messages

### 3'. It is judged by o\_\_\_\_\_ prophets

v. 29 – “. . .*and let the others pass judgment.*” – through their knowledge of OT Scripture – through spiritual and mature discernment – through the evaluation of other prophets

### 4'. L\_\_\_\_\_ prophecy is preferred

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<sup>56</sup> Sam Storms, *Practicing The Power*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017), 129.

v. 30 – “*But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent.*” – to get the fresh revelation from the Lord – not necessary today since God’s revelation is completed – Eph. 3:20 – the church was built on “*the foundation of the apostles and prophets*” – indicating that their revelation and teaching became the bedrock on which everything else was built.

**5’. It does not bypass the m\_\_\_\_\_**

v. 31-32 – “*For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted . . .*” – the issue is learning, not the ego of man – that’s why “*the spirits of the prophets are subject to prophets. . .*” – the prophet is responsible for his message and his spirit – this is not the “out of spirit” or “out of body” revelations of modern prophets

**6’. It is confined to m\_\_\_\_\_**

vss. 34-36 – “*The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.*” – the context is God speaking to the church through prophecy – **the confirms prophecy as tied to preaching** – 1 Tim. 2:12 – “*But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.*” – this is in the context of the church – this also confirms that prophecy is not an individual preference – it is the proclamation of God as revealed in Scripture given in the context of the church

In keeping with OT law, Paul is saying that this leadership role belongs to men:

\*In the OT there were no female Kings or priests

\*None of the authors of the OT books were women.

\*Only five women called prophetesses – one of them, Noadiah (Neh. 6:14) was a false prophetess – one of them, Isaiah’s wife, never uttered a word of prophecy, but was called a prophetess because she had a child whose name had a prophetic meaning (Isa. 8:3). The remaining three – Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), and Huldah (2Kings 22:14) only gave one recorded prophecy apiece and never had an ongoing role or call as a prophetess.

**7’. It agrees with S\_\_\_\_\_**

vss. 37-38 – “*If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.*” – the “*things which I write to you*” refers to Scripture – a fitting conclusion – anyone who thinks he is a prophet or is spiritual, must recognize revealed Scripture – or he is not to be recognized.

**j. Have b\_\_\_\_\_ tongues ceased?**

**1’. Their p\_\_\_\_\_ was fulfilled**



If tongues were given as a sign to unbelieving Israel, then what happened when Israel did not believe? I believe that the genuine gift of tongues ceased – primarily because the reason for their existence – the warning for the nation of Israel – ceased to be an issue when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD – over 1 million Jews were killed – thousands were crucified or fled the country – Herod’s marvelous Temple was torn down in fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy that *“not one stone here will be left will be left upon another which will not be torn down.”* (Matt. 24:2) – like driving to LA – signs say 296 miles – 245 miles, etc. until you get to LA – then there is no more need for signs.

## 2’. Paul said they would c\_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 13:8 – *“Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.”* – Prophecy and knowledge will be *“done away”* – future passive indicative of *katargeo* – indicates something will happen in the future that will cause prophecy and knowledge to stop operating – probably when the *“perfect comes”* – v. 10 – probably the eternal state when none of it will be necessary.

But tongues *“will cease”* – future middle indicative of *pauo* – *“to cease permanently”* – most of the time it is used in the middle voice, denoting a willing cessation as opposed to the passive voice which indicates a forced cessation

## 3’. H\_\_\_\_\_ indicates they ceased

The miraculous gifts are mentioned only in 1 Cor. – written in ad 55, only 23 years after the crucifixion:

- \*Romans and Ephesians were written in 56 and 60 respectively and no mention is made of miraculous gifts there

- \*In fact – Paul wrote 12 epistles **after** 1 Cor. and never mentioned tongues again!

- \*Peter, James, and John never mentioned tongues – once the church was established, tongues were not mentioned – gone – also never *“alluded to, hinted at or even found in the Apostolic Fathers.”* (Cleon Rogers in Bib Sac)

- \*Chrysostom stated categorically that tongues had ceased by his time (4<sup>th</sup> century)

- \*Augustine wrote of tongues as belonging to the Apostolic Age

- \*In first 500 years of the church only mention of tongues was from followers of Montanus, who was branded a heretic – in 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Cevennol prophets in France (known for military force against Rome), the Jansenists (opposers of Reformation doctrine), and Shakers (founded by Mother Ann Lee who regarded herself as female Jesus Christ), all claimed to speak in tongues – but they were all considered extremists and heretics.

#### 4'. No more need for r \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 24:44 – *“These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”* – Eph. 2:20 – the church is *“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets”* – 1 Cor. 12:28 – *“And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.”* – these gifts were given to authenticate the apostles and prophets who recorded God’s message – Heb. 2:2-4 – *“how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”* – 1 Cor. 14:37,38 – *“If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.”* – there is no continuing need for a further word from God – it is all packed in these pages.

#### k. Are tongues n \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Big question – Is this normative? – should we expect same kind of phenomenon? – greatest problem in the church today – Promise Keepers – prayed for wind and fire – kicking old lady in the stomach to receive HS – slaying in the Spirit – laughing revival

No – why? – 8 reasons:

**1) Tongues were languages** – Acts 2:6 – everyone listening to the disciples were hearing *“in his own language”* – not ecstatic utterance – no biblical basis for unrecognizable speech uttered in devotion to God – 1 Cor. 14:6 – *“if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?”* – language! – v. 9 – *“unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.”* – v. 11 – *“If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.”* – v. 12 – so we are to *“seek to abound for the edification of the church.”*

**2) Confirmed the words of the Apostles** – This was for a particular time and a particular reason – 2 Cor. 12:12 – *“The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance by signs and wonders and miracles.”* – the phenomenon of tongues and gifts that occurred in Jerusalem on and around the day of Pentecost was to affirm the spoken word of the Apostles – 1 Cor. 12:28-30 gives the order and practice of “sign” gifts – v. 28 – *“And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do*

they?" – "sign" gifts were confined to the apostles to authenticate their ministry – v. 31 – *"But earnestly desire the greater gifts."*

**3) Sign of judgment to unbelieving Israel** – 1 Cor. 14:21 – Paul quotes Isa. 28:11-12 – *"By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me," says the Lord.*" – Rom. 11:11-14 indicates the disbelief of the Jews opened the way for salvation for Gentiles to make Israel jealous – tongues was the first institutional sign that the gospel was for Gentiles too – Acts 2:9-11 – *"Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."* – these were all Gentile nations

**4) Not a second experience after salvation** – Rom. 7 – all believers have all of the HS all the time – if you don't have the HS you are not a Christian – we are to seek the *"filling of the Spirit"* but this is not tongues or an emotional experience – *"filling"* refers to boldness in proclamation – Acts 2:4 – the disciples were already believers – *"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance."* – same thing in Luke 1:15 – most unique case – angel Gabriel tells Zacharias that the baby in his wife's womb *"will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God."* – v. 41 – *"When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit."* – then she *"cried out with a loud voice"* in a song of praise – v. 67 – Zacharias *"was filled with the Holy Spirit"* and began to preach – every place where the *"filling of the Holy Spirit"* is used in the NT it is accompanied by bold proclamation of God's Word – it is never seen as a personal emotional experience

**5) Further expressions in Acts was to authenticate the gospel** – Acts 10 – Cornelius received HS and spoke in tongues – first Gentile – Acts 19:1-7 – 12 disciples of John received HS and spoke in tongues when Paul explained who Jesus was to them

**6) No further commands** – Paul wrote 13 gospels – Galatians (49 AD) – 1 and 2 Cor. (55 or 56 AD) – the other 10 epistles were all written after 1 and 2 Cor. – if tongues were so important, why weren't they mentioned in any of his later epistles? – even the pastoral epistles (1 and 2 Tim. and Titus in 62-64 AD), which laid out specific instructions for the order of the church, contained no mention of "sign" gifts

**7) Tongues ceased on their own** – 1 Cor. 13:8 – *"; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease"* – middle indicative – on their own!

**8) No further expression of sign gifts for 1900 years until the abusive use of Azusa Street in 1906**

## B. The creed is c\_\_\_\_\_

The creed of Acts is comprehensive – presents an all-encompassing worldview. A comprehensive worldview must be coherent and livable. Must show:

- \*Who is God? – one? – many? – knowable? – man’s invention?
- \*Who is man? – protoplasm? – reincarnation? – dignity? – purpose?
- \*How does man relate to God? – many religions? – distant God? – pantheism?
- \*How does man relate to man? – survival of the fittest? – “furniture” of the universe?

Without a coherent worldview people will end up making decisions based on family lore, tradition, emotion, assumptions, past experience, peer pressure, or mere chance. All of these elements may or may not have a basis in reality. Unless one chooses wisely, life becomes meaningless, incoherent, and tragic. Pollster George Barna sums up the vacuous nature of the worldview of many Americans by noting,

In short, the spirituality of Americans is Christian in name only. We desire experience more than knowledge. We prefer choices to absolutes. We embrace preferences rather than truths. We seek comfort rather than growth. Faith must come on our terms or we reject it. We have enthroned ourselves as the final arbiters of righteousness, the ultimate rulers of our own experience and destiny. We are the Pharisees of the new millennium.<sup>57</sup>

Ignoring the basic tenets of a worldview has disastrous consequences. For example, Peter Singer, professor of bioethics at Princeton believes that all species of animals (including humans) are equal. The logical consequence of his belief is that one could have sexual relations with any other person in his human family as well as his dog, a pig, or a horse. He also believes in euthanasia as a utilitarian choice for those facing end of life issues so their resources can be diverted to healthier specimens. But he kept his Alzheimer’s afflicted mother in a nursing home. Lucky her.<sup>58</sup>

Evidence of the comprehensive nature of a biblical creed in Acts:

### 1. Over t\_\_\_\_\_

*Acts 1:6-8 – “So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses*

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<sup>57</sup> George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 23.

<sup>58</sup> Charles Colson, Ellen Vaughn, *Being the Body* (Nashville, Tennessee: W Publishing Group, 2003), 214-215.

*both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

Startling statement – the “*times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority*” refers to the eschatological implications of the kingdom of God – massive implications that covers the span of time.

\*Jesus doesn’t reveal them here

\*The kingdom of God is seen through Scripture

We know several things about the kingdom of God:

\*It is inherent in the person of Jesus – Matt. 3:2 – *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

\*It is promised to the spiritually poor – Matt. 5:3 – *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

\*The unrighteous will not inherit it – Matt. 5:20 – *“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

\*It is earthly as well as heavenly – Matt. 6:10 – *“Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.”*

\*It lasts forever – 6:13

\*Seek it first – 6:33

\*Entered by those who do the will of the Father – 7:21

\*Tolerates no other kingdom – 12:25

\*Compared to man who sowed good seed in his field – 13:25

\*Compared to mustard seed (13:31), leaven (13:33), treasure (13:44), merchant selling pearls (13:45), a dragnet (13:47), entered with simplicity of children (18:3), impossible for rich man to enter (19:23), available to tax-gatherers and prostitutes (21:31), wedding feast (22:2), preached to the whole earth (24:14), anticipated (25:1), prepared before the foundation of the earth (25:34), enjoyed with Jesus in heaven (26:29)

\*It hasn’t been fully accomplished yet

\*Our actions will not bring it about

\*The unfulfilled promises to national Israel in the OT are best fulfilled in the thousand year premillennial kingdom of God spoken of in Rev. 20

After watching Jesus ascend back into heaven two angels appeared and said, *“They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”*

The creed of Christianity is the glue that holds all time together – related to David – Acts 2:29-33 – *“Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. **30** “And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his*

descendants on his throne, **31** he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. **32** “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. **33** “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.”

## 2. All encompassing p\_\_\_\_\_

Acts 1:8 – “and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” – the ultimate purpose of God is to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth!

Peter speaks to disciples in the upper room – recognizes God’s hand in the cross and resurrection – Acts 1:15-16 – “At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, “Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.”

Peter’s first sermon – Acts 2:22-24 – “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—**23** this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. **24** But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.”

Jesus’ unique fulfillment of OT prophecies re the Messiah – Acts 3:22-25:

\*v. 22 – claiming fulfillment of Moses’ prophecy – “Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you.’”

\*v. 23 – warning for lack of obedience – “‘And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’”

\*v. 24-25 – fulfillment of Abraham covenant – “And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”

## 3. Life-c\_\_\_\_\_

Acts 2:37-38 – after Peter’s first sermon – “Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” **38** Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus

*Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” – v. 47 – “And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”*

The diversity of people saved in Acts is mind-boggling:

- \*All 16 people groups in Acts 2
- \*Resistant Jews in Acts 2:38 (same ones who crucified Him!)
- \*Lame beggar (unclean) in Acts 3:1-9
- \*Italian cop – Acts 10
- \*Gentiles – Acts 11:18
- \*“All who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord” – Acts 19:10
- \*Rome – Acts 28:14

#### 4. S\_\_\_\_\_

We are not left alone – the biblical worldview is transcendent – we did not reach to God – God reached to us:

- \*Jesus ascends into heaven
- \*Divine purpose – uttermost parts of the world
- \*Divine preparation – 12 unremarkable men are poised to turn the world upside down in Acts – Jesus had carefully selected and trained them – changed the world more than any dictator or President the world has ever known – why? – they served the ultimate King.
- \*Divine intervention – Acts 2 – coming of HS
- \*Healing of lame beggar – Acts 3
- \*Ananias and Sapphira killed – Acts 5

#### C. The creed is c\_\_\_\_\_

Christianity is a confessional creed – not built on myth, traditions, or philosophy – creeds establish written documentation of theological truth – written down so we don’t have to play divine game of “telegraph”

Spurgeon:

This volume is the writing of the living God; each letter was penned with an Almighty finger; each word in it dropped from the everlasting lips; each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit. Albeit, that Moses was employed to write his histories with fiery pen, God guided that pen. It may be that David touched his harp, and let sweet Psalms of melody drop from his fingers; but God moved his hands over the living strings of his golden harp. It may be that Solomon sang canticles of love, or gave forth words of consummate wisdom, but God directed his lips, and made the preacher eloquent. If I follow the thundering Nahum, when his horses plough the waters, or Habakkuk, when he sees the tents of Cushan in affliction; if I read Malachi, when the earth is burning like an oven; if I

turn to the smooth page of John, who tells of love, or the rugged, fiery chapters of Peter, who speaks of fire devouring God’s enemies; if I turn to Jude, who launches forth anathemas upon the foes of God, everywhere I find God speaking; it is God’s voice, not man’s.<sup>59</sup>

Luther – “The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold on me. The Bible is not antique, or modern. It is eternal.”<sup>60</sup> - it’s God’s breath!

4:10-12 – unique call – *“let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. “He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”*

The creed is preached throughout the whole book of Acts

### Major Sermons in Acts

Sermon	Theme	Reference
Peter to crowds at Pentecost	Peter’s explanation of the meaning of Pentecost	Acts 2:14–40
Peter to crowds at the temple	The Jewish people should repent for crucifying the Messiah	Acts 3:12–26
Peter to the Sanhedrin	Testimony that a helpless man was healed by the power of Jesus	Acts 4:5–12
Stephen to the Sanhedrin	Stephen’s rehearsal of Jewish history, accusing the Jews of killing the Messiah	Acts 7:2–53
Peter to Gentiles	Gentiles can be saved in the same manner as Jews	Acts 10:28–47
Peter to church at Jerusalem	Peter’s testimony of his	Acts 11:4–18

<sup>59</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit, Vol. I* (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, 1981), 110.

<sup>60</sup> Martin Luther, “Christian History” Issue #34: Martin Luther, The Early Years, audiobook.



experiences at Joppa and a defense of his ministry to the Gentiles

Paul to synagogue at Antioch	Jesus was the Messiah in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies	Acts 13:16–41
Peter to Jerusalem Council	Salvation by grace available to all	Acts 15:7–11
James to Jerusalem Council	Gentile converts do not require circumcision	Acts 15:13–21
Paul to Ephesian elders	Remain faithful in spite of false teachers and persecution	Acts 20:17–35
Paul to crowd at Jerusalem	Paul’s statement of his conversion and his mission to the Gentiles	Acts 22:1–21
Paul to Sanhedrin	Paul’s defense, declaring himself a Pharisee and a Roman citizen	Acts 23:1–6
Paul to King Agrippa	Paul’s statement of his conversion and his zeal for the gospel	Acts 26:2–23
Paul to Jewish leaders at Rome	Paul’s statement about his Jewish heritage	Acts 28:17–20 <sup>61</sup>

**D. The creed is c\_\_\_\_\_**

**1. P\_\_\_\_\_ in Acts**

We have the mistaken idea today that we can live a Christian life that will always be a peace with the world – not possible – the church faced persecution from the beginning – this is in evidence throughout Acts:

*\*Acts 4:1-3 – “As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because*

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<sup>61</sup> John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1638.

*they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening."*

*\*4:18-20 – "And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." – 5:28-29 – "saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men." – v. 42 – "And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."*

*\*4:27-30 – predestined persecution – "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."*

*\*5:17-18 – "But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail." – v. 19 – released by an angel who told them "Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life." – they continued to preach – re-arrested – v. 29 – "We must obey God rather than men." – Gamaliel counsels patience – v. 40-41 – "They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name." – v. 42 – "kept right on teaching."*

*\*Acts 6 – false witnesses against Stephen*

*\*Acts 7 – Stephen's extensive sermon – v. 54 – "they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him." – stoned to death*

*\*Acts 8:1-3 – "Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison."*

*\*Acts 9 – Saul converted – v. 23-24 – "When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death"*

*\*Acts 11:19 – persecution spreads – "So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone."*

\*Acts 12:1-2 – James executed – *“Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.”* – Peter imprisoned – angels release him

\*Acts 13:8 – Paul opposed by Elymas the magician

\*Acts 13:45-46 – Paul opposed by Jews in Pisidian Antioch – turns to Gentiles – *“But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming. Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.”* – Paul and Barnabas driven out of the district

\*Acts 14:4 – escape threats and stoning at Iconium

\*Acts 14:19 – at Lystra – *“they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.”*

\*Acts 16 – Lydia is 1<sup>st</sup> convert in Europe – casts demon out of slave girl – v. 19-21 – *“But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, “These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.”* – beaten with rods, thrown in prison, put in stocks

\*Acts 17:5-6 – Thessalonica – *“But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also”*

\*Acts 18:12-13 – after teaching in Corinth for 1 ½ years – *“ But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, saying, “This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.”* – Paul was delivered and

\*Acts 19 – Paul teaches in Ephesus for 2 years – people give up idols – v. 23 – *“there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way”* – upsets economy – causes riot in amphitheater – threatened worship of the goddess Artemis – v. 28 – *“When they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia”*

\*Acts 20:29 – later gathers elders of Ephesus and warns them – *“I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.”*

\*Acts 21:31 – Paul preaches in Jerusalem – *“they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.”* – Paul arrested – preaches to Jews – imprisoned – moved – house arrest for next two years

\*Acts 25 – defense before Festus after being imprisoned for two years

\*Acts 26 – defense before Agrippa – v. 26 – *“this has not been done in a corner”* – v. 28 – *“Agrippa replied to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.”*

\*Acts 27 – shipwreck on the way to Rome to appear before Caesar

\*Acts 28 – Paul under house arrest in Rome – Jewish leaders visit and confront him – v. 25-27 – *“And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, “The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, saying, ‘Go to this people and say, “You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; And you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; For the heart of this people has become dull, And with their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes; Otherwise they might see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I would heal them.” ‘*

## 2. L\_\_\_\_\_ from persecution

We can learn certain lessons from persecution:

- \*We will never be at peace with the world
- \*The world will not love us
- \*We are called to be faithful – not to change the world
- \*Persecution always accomplishes God’s greater plan

## B. The I\_\_\_\_\_ of the creed

### 1. M\_\_\_\_\_ implications

David Gushee – Professor of Christian Ethics and Director of the Center for Faith and Public Life at Mercer University – formally the Graves Professor of Moral Philosophy and the Senior Fellow of the Carl F. H. Henry Center for Christian Leadership at Union University – recently wrote bombshell article for *Religion News Service* – quoted by Al Mohler in *The Briefing* – he said,

Middle ground is disappearing on the question of whether LGBT persons should be treated as full equals, without any discrimination in society — and on the related question of whether religious institutions should be allowed to continue discriminating due to their doctrinal beliefs. It turns out that you are either for full and unequivocal social and legal equality for LGBT people, or you are against it, and your answer will at some point be revealed. This is true both for individuals and for institutions. Neutrality is not an option. Neither is polite half-acceptance. Nor is avoiding the subject. Hide as you might, the issue will come and find you.” – went on to say, “get with it or lose the culture”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Al Mohler, *Daily Briefing*, August 31, 2016.

Mohler quoted him again in 2019:

Just this week, an important article making this argument emerged at Religion News Service by David P. Gushee, the headline in the article by *Religious News Service*, “Christian Higher Ed Can't Win The LGBTQ Debate Unless It Transforms.” Notice that in this part before the, “It won't be enough,” he talks about altering campus behavior codes to reduce, note this language, “the comparative stigma of straight versus gay sex.” Well, if you can overcome that stigma, you've got to overcome the Old and New Testaments, but that's really what's going on on so many of these campuses.

But then again, it won't be enough and Dr. Gushee makes that point when he writes, “This is all a start, but from the perspective of those committed to inclusion, it is not nearly enough. LGBTQ students eventually demand more than safety, dialogue, and a friendly campus life staff. They want their existence and selfhood de-stigmatized. They want to be fully accepted for who they are. Ultimately, most want Christian colleges and seminaries to abandon traditionalist Christian teaching that harms them deeply.”<sup>63</sup>

## 2. T\_\_\_\_\_ implications

Kent Dobson followed Rob Bell at Mars Hill Church in Grand Rapids Michigan— leaving – said the church was meant to have the same gospel but deliver the message in a more hip way – wanted a “cool church” with “cooler shoes” than the traditional church down the road – began to question the packaging of traditional “church,” but also the message – the gospel ,

I have always been and I’m still drawn to the very edges of religion and faith and God. I’ve said a few times that I don’t even know if we know what we mean by God anymore. That’s the edges of faith. That’s the thing that pulls me. I’m not really drawn to the center. I’m not drawn to the orthodox or the mainstream or the status quo... I’m always wandering out to the edge and beyond.<sup>64</sup>

Michael Horton summarizes the problem with the disappearing creed in the American Church:

Books and sermons that offer good advice rank higher on the relevance scale than those offering the Good News.... When pastors are expected to be coaches sending in the plays and their parishioners are expected to be all-stars to take

<sup>63</sup> Al Mohler, *The Briefing*, 12/6/19

<sup>64</sup> Matt Vande Bunte, “Rob Bell’s Successor at Mars Hill is Stepping Down,” [www.mlive.com](http://www.mlive.com), accessed on 12/11/15.

Jesus's team to victory in the culture wars, the focus must necessarily fall on what we do rather than on what God has done, on our stories, and strategies rather than God's. But this means that much of our ministry today is law without gospel, exhortation without news, instructions without an announcement, deeds without creeds, with the accent on "What Would Jesus Do?" rather than "What Has Jesus Done?" None of us is immune to this indictment that we are losing our focus upon, confidence in, and increasingly even our knowledge of the greatest story ever told.<sup>65</sup>

**Creed**  
**by**  
**Steve Turner**

We believe in Marxfreudanddarwin . We believe everything is OK as long as you don't hurt anyone to the best of your definition of hurt, and to the best of your knowledge.

We believe in sex before, during, and after marriage. We believe in the therapy of sin. We believe that adultery is fun. We believe that sodomy's OK. We believe that taboos are taboo. We believe that everything's getting better despite evidence to the contrary. The evidence must be investigated, And you can prove anything with evidence.

We believe there's something in horoscopes UFO's and bent spoons. Jesus was a good man just like Buddha, Mohammed, and ourselves. He was a good moral teacher though we think His good morals were bad.

We believe that all religions are basically the same- at least the one that we read was. They all believe in love and goodness. They only differ on matters of creation, sin, heaven, hell, God, and salvation.

We believe that after death comes the Nothing because when you ask the dead what happens they say nothing.

If death is not the end, if the dead have lied, then its compulsory heaven for all excepting perhaps Hitler, Stalin, and Genghis Kahn.

We believe in Masters and Johnson , What's selected is average. What's average is normal. What's normal is good.

We believe in total disarmament. We believe there are direct links between warfare and bloodshed. Americans should beat their guns into tractors. And the Russians would be sure to follow.

We believe that man is essentially good. It's only his behavior that lets him down. This is the fault of society. Society is the fault of conditions. Conditions are the fault of society.

We believe that each man must find the truth that is right for him. Reality will adapt

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<sup>65</sup> Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 106.

accordingly. The universe will readjust. History will alter.  
We believe that there is no absolute truth excepting the truth that there is no absolute truth.

We believe in the rejection of creeds, and the flowering of individual thought.  
If chance be the Father of all flesh, disaster is his rainbow in the sky and when you hear "State of Emergency! " "Sniper Kills Ten!" " Troops on Rampage! " "Whites go Looting!" " Bomb Blasts School!" it is but the sound of man worshipping his maker.<sup>66</sup>

## II. C \_\_\_\_\_

The cultural changes in the book of Acts are huge:

- \*The radical changes in the lives of skeptics like James and Paul
- \*The radical changes in social structures the Jews had observed for centuries – sacrificial system abandoned, worship in the Temple, worship moved from Saturday to Sunday, authority of Pharisees and Sadducees, introduction of baptism and Lord's Table
- \*Emergence of the church
- \*All the disciples (except John) were martyred for their faith

Albert Barnes commented,

Within the space of *thirty years* after the death of Christ, the gospel had been carried to all the parts of the civilized, and to no small portion, of the uncivilized world. Its progress and its triumphs were not concealed. Its great transactions were not "done in a corner". It had been preached in the most splendid, powerful, and enlightened cities; churches were already founded in Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and at Rome. The gospel had spread in Arabia, Asia Minor, Greece, Macedon, Italy, and Africa. It had assailed the most mighty existing institutions; it had made its way over the formidable barriers; it had encountered the most deadly and most malignant; it had traveled to the capital, and had secured such a hold even in the imperial city as to make it certain that it would finally overturn the established religion and seat itself on the ruins of paganism. Within thirty years it had settled the point that it would overturn every bloody altar, close every pagan temple, bring under its influence men of office, rank, and power and that 'the banners of the faith would soon stream from the palaces of the Caesars.'<sup>67</sup>

This all happened in a context of skepticism and persecution. Lawson notes,

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<sup>66</sup> Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God?* ((Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing Group, 1994), 42-44.

<sup>67</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes on the NT, Explanatory and Practical; Acts*, Robert Frew, Ed., (Grand Rapids: Michigan, Baker Book House, 1980), vii.

Why were the Christians so persecuted? There were several reasons. Many Christian meetings were held privately at night, which raised concerns about antigovernment subversion and revolution. Christians were also labeled atheists because they refused to worship the idols in the pantheon of Roman gods—Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Neptune, Mercury, Venus, and the like. Instead, they gave exclusive allegiance to an invisible deity. Worse yet, they were falsely accused of cannibalism because they claimed to eat the body of Christ and drink His blood. They were rumored to be incestuous because of their love for one another and the practice of the holy kiss. Most Christians were from the lower classes, so they already were objects of prejudice on the part of the Roman elite. The believers taught that all people were equally depraved, causing the aristocrats to fear a class upheaval. Finally, Christians were seen as a threat to many ancient trades, such as the prostitution businesses associated with idol worship.<sup>68</sup>

**A. The new culture – the c\_\_\_\_\_**

**1. The a\_\_\_\_\_ of the church – 1:9-26**

1:9 – Jesus ascends to heaven – disciples return to upper room – group of 120 made up of disciples, women who were devoted to Jesus – His mother and brothers and other followers of Jesus – select Matthias to succeed Judas – and wait! – God’s move

**2. The f\_\_\_\_\_ of the church – 2:1-47**

**a. The c\_\_\_\_\_ of the HS**

The coming of the HS introduced a whole new era:

\*Acts 2:14-41 – Peter preached first sermon of church age – 3,000 saved

\*Acts 4:4 – *“But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”*

\*Acts 2:42 – *“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”* – everything changed – didn’t become less Jewish – v. 46 – *“continuing with one mind in the temple”* – went there to praise God, teach, and tell others – they became whole new group – Christians – took over their lives – apostles did many *“wonders and signs”* – took meals together – ministered to physical needs

\*Acts 2:47 – they were *“praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”*

**b. The t\_\_\_\_\_ to the OT**

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<sup>68</sup> Steven J. Lawson, *Pillars of Grace: A Long Line of Godly Men Volume Two AD 100-1564* (Orlando, Florida: Reformation Trust, 2011), 61.



There is a strong tie to the OT – 3:22-26 – *“Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. 23 ‘And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ 24 “And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. 25 “It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ 26 “For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.”*

**c. How does God c\_\_\_\_\_ the church?**

Notice the methodology and makeup of the church:

\*16 people groups – Pentecost

\*Through the faithful witness of the community of believers – Acts 2:47

\*Through street preaching – Acts 3 – lame man healed – Peter preaches 2<sup>nd</sup> sermon – 4:3 – Peter and John jailed – v. 4 – *“But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”* – 4:13 – amazing because they were *“untrained and uneducated men”*

\*Acts 5 – Communal sharing – *“signs and wonders”* – death of Ananias and Sapphira – 5:13-14 – *“But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number”*

\*5:28 – strict orders not to preach – v. 29 – *“We must obey God rather than man.”* – v. 41 – flogged but kept on preaching

\*Jews and Greeks – 6:1 – *“the disciples were increasing in number”* – cultural conflict arose between Jews and Greek widows – Greek men put in charge – v. 7 – *“The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.”*

\*Acts 7 – Stephen, 1 of the 7 deacons in chp. 6 begins to preach – explains God’s story from Abraham to children of Israel in captivity to Moses to David to the prophets – v. 51 – *“You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.”* – became 1<sup>st</sup> martyr

\*Samaritans – Acts 8:4 – Philip preaches in Samaria – hated *“half-breeds”* – the new culture is extended to include them

\*Ethiopian – Acts 8:27 – Philip instructed to go a desert road from Gaza – encountered Ethiopian eunuch (literal – couldn’t enter Temple) – saved and baptized!

\*Acts 9 – Paul’s encounter on road to Damascus – vision of Jesus – Paul saved – v. 29 – began *“talking and arguing with Hellenistic Jews”* who wanted to kill him – Paul taken to Caesarea then home to Tarsus – v. 31 – *“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.”*

\*Italian cop – Acts 10 – vision of sheet to Peter – no more dietary laws – same vision to Cornelius, an Italian centurion – family received same vision – Peter comes – whole family comes to faith

\*Acts 11 – Jews in Jerusalem take issue with Peter – he patiently explains God’s dealing with Cornelius – v. 18 – *“When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.”*

\*Acts 11:19 – some scattered from persecution of Stephen went to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch to preach to Greeks north of Tyre in modern Turkey – v. 21 – *“And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.”*

\*Acts 11:26 – the new culture gains a name – v. 26 – *“and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”*

\*Acts 12 – James beheaded by Herod – Peter jailed then released by angel – Herod dies – v. 24 – *“ But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.”*

\*Acts 13 – missionary journeys of Paul begin

What can we learn from this:

\*You don’t become a Christian by birth, inheritance, buying it, or political persuasion

\*Calling is God’s business – not ours – many think it rests on them – it doesn’t

\*God calls us to salvation – not economic, psychological, or political reform

\*Calling is not corporate – He doesn’t call a group of people – His calling is individual

The summation of God’s call to salvation – from NCC Teaching Statement:

We teach that God chose the elect for salvation before the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9). This is the act of the Father giving repentant sinners *“out of the world”* to Jesus, resulting in belief, obedience, and eternal salvation (John 17:6-10). This is absolutely necessary, given the condition of man explained previously. Election is often paired with foreknowledge (Jeremiah 1:5; Romans 8:29), indicating God’s predetermined intimate knowledge of those He would save, not His knowledge of those who would respond to Him in the future (Matthew 7:23; Acts 2:23; Romans 8:29). This would make man the initiator of his own salvation and God responding to the faith of man. Instead, Scripture teaches that salvation is not the result of man’s will, but an act of God’s sovereign will alone (John 1:13; Romans 9:11-13; 2 Timothy 1:9). Only God can draw man to salvation, and His call to the elect is certain and effective (John 6:37, 39, 44, 65; Ephesians 2:5-6). God’s call becomes effective when man hears the gospel (Romans 10:14), and God lifts the veil of spiritual blindness (2 Corinthians 4:4), opens the heart of the sinner (Acts 16:14), gives the gift of faith (Acts 15:9; Galatians 3:22; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29), and leads the sinner to repent through His kindness

(Romans 2:4). God does not elect anyone for damnation (Romans 9:22; James 1:13; 2 Peter 3:9), nor does election negate man's responsibility to respond to God. Every unsaved person will someday stand before God and be judged (Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:12), not by whether or not he rejected the gospel, but because he suppressed the truth that God gave him (Romans 1:18-20, 26-32; 2:14-16), he loved the darkness of his unbelief and evil deeds (John 3:19), he hardened his heart (Hebrews 4:7), he chose to obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation (Romans 2:8), and thus deserves God's judgment because of his sin (Romans 6:23, Galatians 6:7-8). Man is saved by God's grace and damned by his own works. Ultimately, this is a mystery to him because he cannot understand how God seemingly ordains everything according to His will, which includes the ordaining of the voluntary choices of moral creatures.<sup>69</sup>

### C. Christianity is cross-c\_\_\_\_\_

Ravi Zacharias writes about the sinful sectarianism of religion:

At the center of the old city Jerusalem stands the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, reputedly on the sight of the original Calvary and the original Garden of the Resurrection. It stands, but only because ugly steel scaffolding permanently supports the walls inside and out. This church is one of the dirtiest, most depressing buildings in all Christendom. It should be torn down and rebuilt. This is not possible, however, because the Church of The Holy Sepulcher belongs jointly to the Abyssinians, Armenians, Copts, Greeks, Syrians and Roman Catholics, and their priests will hardly speak to one another, let alone cooperate in a joint enterprise of rebuilding. Each communion preserves its own separate chapel, and conducts its own ceremonies; and to make the situation ludicrous, the keys of the church have been entrusted to a family of Muslims who in order to answer the call of Allah five times daily, have turned the entrance into a Muslim Mosque. Nowhere in all the world can you find a more tragic symbol of the mutilation of Christ's body than the Church of The Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.<sup>70</sup>

This is not the way God intended it to be – Implications of true diversity in the early church:

#### 1. The g\_\_\_\_\_ is for all people – Acts 2:1-13

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<sup>69</sup> NorthCreek Church Teaching Statement, created 12/17/2010.

<sup>70</sup> Ravi Zacharias, *Deliver Us From Evil: Restoring the Soul in a Disintegrating Culture* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), 50.

16 people groups mentioned at the day of Pentecost – this begins the radical culture that sets Christianity apart from any other culture in the history of the world – most cultures have roots in ethnicity, language, location – but not Christianity

*\*Matt. 28:19-20 – “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

*\*This will be accomplished at the end of the age – Rev. 5:9-10 – a new song in heaven will be sung – “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”*

## 2. The church is the new I \_\_\_\_\_ for Christians

The church can never be divided by ethnicity, language, economics, geography, nationality, or sex – Gal. 3:28 – *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* – the traditional boundaries of religion, sex, language, economics, culture, and ethnicity disappear at the cross of Christ

### Official Vows: Covenant of Church Membership

- *Do you believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and life?*
- *Do you believe in the one living and true God—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as revealed in the scriptures?*
- *Do you repent of your sin; confess your guilt and helplessness as a sinner against God; profess Jesus Christ, Son of God, as your Savior and Lord; and dedicate yourself to His service: Do you promise that you will endeavor to forsake all sin, and to conform your life to His teaching and example?*
- *Do you promise to submit in the Lord to the teaching and government of this church as being based upon the scriptures and described in substance in the Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America? Do you recognize your responsibility to work with others in the church and do you promise to support and encourage them in their service to the Lord? In case you should need correction in doctrine or life, do you promise to respect the authority and discipline of the church?*
- *To the end that you may grow in the Christian life, do you promise that you will diligently read the Bible, engage in private prayer, keep the Lord’s Day, regularly attend the worship services, observe the appointed sacraments, and give to the*

*Lord's work as He shall prosper you?*

- *Do you purpose to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness in all the relationships of life, faithfully to perform your whole duty as a true servant of Jesus Christ, and seek to win others to Him?*
- *Do you make this profession of faith and purpose in the presence of God, in humble reliance upon His grace, as you desire to give your account with joy at the Last Great Day?*<sup>71</sup>

### 3. The c\_\_\_\_\_ of Christian culture

#### a. It is s\_\_\_\_\_

Everything that happens in Acts must be seen as the supernatural plan of God moving the events of society along:

\*The coming of Christ – Gal. 4:4 – *“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,”*

\*His plan for His disciples – Acts 1:7-8 – *“He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*

\*The provision of the Holy Spirit – Acts 2:1-4

\*The death and resurrection of Jesus changed history – Acts 2:23-24 – *“this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24 But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.”*

\*Man's part – Acts 2:42 – *“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”* – God's part – Acts 2:47 – *“praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”*

\*The unlikely conversion of Paul – from the “foremost” of all sinners (1 Tim. 1:15) to the most profound writer of NT literature

\*Removal of OT restrictions – Acts 10 – God removes the dietary restrictions of the OT – 10:28 – *“And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.”* – effective change from OT to NT – God was letting Peter know that man's relationship to the law changed at the cross – 10:34-35 – *“Opening his mouth, Peter said: “I most certainly understand now that God is*

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<sup>71</sup> Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey Into Christian Faith*, (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012), 38-40.

*not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him."*

\*Expansion to the Gentiles – Acts 11 – the apostles and Christians “took issue” with Peter when they heard of Cornelius’ salvation – Peter explained – 11:18 – *“When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.”*

\*Formal expansion of the church – 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey – Acts 13:1 – *“Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”* – cf. 11:26 – 1<sup>st</sup> place in Acts where the new community in Antioch is called the “church” – *“Simeon who was called Niger”* – “black” – referred to color of his skin and descent (Niger is African country bordered by Libya, Nigeria, and Algeria) – *“Lucius of Cyrene”* – modern Libya in northern Africa (probably also black) – *“Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch”* – foster brother of Herod Antipas – *“and Paul”* – converted Jewish Pharisee – quite a mix! – this group formed the first “missionary committee” – v. 2 – *“While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”*

\*The partial hardening of Israel – Rom. 11:25-26 – *“For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,”*

\*The formal inclusion of Gentiles in the church – Acts 13:46-48 – *“Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. “For so the Lord has commanded us, ‘I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, That You may bring salvation to the end of the earth.’” When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”*

\*The theological framework of the church – Acts 15:1 – problem framed – *“Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”* – v. 10 – Peter relays his experience and asserts the NT truth of grace – *“Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? “But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.”* – v. 19 – James agrees – 1<sup>st</sup> theological treatise of NT drafted in 15:23-29 and delivered to church of Antioch

Christianity does not fit into a pluralistic, “whatever works for you” system. Christianity is not one of the many religions you can choose from to get to heaven. It is not just one of many books on the shelf. George Marsden quoted Walter Lippman in pointing out the problem with this type of religious pluralism:

One of the effects of pluralism was that morality had come to be thought of as an essentially subjective and private matter. “It became the rule that ideas and principles are private—with only subjective relevance and significance,” he wrote. Lippmann saw that same trend in philosophy. Referring to Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialism, Lippmann declared that “if what is good, what is right, what is true, is only what the individual ‘chooses’ to ‘invent,’ then we are outside the traditions of civility.” With no objective point of moral reference, with no philosopher to teach people that there was any order or meaning beyond the subjective self, there was nothing with which to counter the madness of the masses or to preempt their madness by educating them in the traditions of civility.<sup>72</sup>

**b. We are “c\_\_\_\_\_” into this culture**

The summation of God’s call to salvation – from NCC Teaching Statement:

We teach that God chose the elect for salvation before the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9). This is the act of the Father giving repentant sinners “*out of the world*” to Jesus, resulting in belief, obedience, and eternal salvation (John 17:6-10). This is absolutely necessary, given the condition of man explained previously. Election is often paired with foreknowledge (Jeremiah 1:5; Romans 8:29), indicating God’s predetermined intimate knowledge of those He would save, not His knowledge of those who would respond to Him in the future (Matthew 7:23; Acts 2:23; Romans 8:29). This would make man the initiator of his own salvation and God responding to the faith of man. Instead, Scripture teaches that salvation is not the result of man’s will, but an act of God’s sovereign will alone (John 1:13; Romans 9:11-13; 2 Timothy 1:9). Only God can draw man to salvation, and His call to the elect is certain and effective (John 6:37, 39, 44, 65; Ephesians 2:5-6). God’s call becomes effective when man hears the gospel (Romans 10:14), and God lifts the veil of spiritual blindness (2 Corinthians 4:4), opens the heart of the sinner (Acts 16:14), gives the gift of faith (Acts 15:9; Galatians 3:22; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29), and leads the sinner to repent through His kindness (Romans 2:4). God does not elect anyone for damnation (Romans 9:22; James 1:13; 2 Peter 3:9), nor does election negate man’s responsibility to respond to God. Every unsaved person will someday stand before God and be judged (Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:12), not by whether or not he rejected the gospel, but because he suppressed the truth that God gave him (Romans 1:18-20, 26-32; 2:14-16), he loved the darkness of his unbelief and evil deeds (John 3:19), he hardened his heart (Hebrews 4:7), he chose to obey unrighteousness, wrath and

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<sup>72</sup> George M. Marsden, *The Twilight of the American Enlightenment*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2014), 47.

indignation (Romans 2:8), and thus deserves God's judgment because of his sin (Romans 6:23, Galatians 6:7-8). Man is saved by God's grace and damned by his own works. Ultimately, this is a mystery to him because he cannot understand how God seemingly ordains everything according to His will, which includes the ordaining of the voluntary choices of moral creatures.<sup>73</sup>

**c. The m\_\_\_\_\_ of our calling is varied**

Notice the methodology and makeup of the church:

\*Pentecost – God uses OT rituals to draw 16 people groups to Jerusalem at the time of His crucifixion and resurrection – Acts 2:5 – *“devout men from every nation under heaven.”* – God empowered the cowardly disciples gathered in the upper room to go out into the potentially hostile crowd and preach – Acts 2:6-7 – *“And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered (confounded, confused) because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed (“astonishment, terror, trance”<sup>74</sup>) and astonished (“object of wonder, wonder, marvel, miracle;”<sup>75</sup>), saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?”*

\*Preaching – Peter's cowardice is turned to courage – preaches to same people who killed Jesus

\*Through the faithful witness of the community of believers – Acts 2:47

\*Through street preaching – Acts 3 – lame man healed – Peter preaches 2<sup>nd</sup> sermon – 4:3 – Peter and John jailed – v. 4 – *“But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”* – 4:13 – amazing because they were *“untrained and uneducated men”*

\*Acts 5 – Communal sharing – *“signs and wonders”* – death of Ananias and Sapphira – 5:13-14 – *“But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number”*

\*5:28 – strict orders not to preach – v. 29 – *“We must obey God rather than man.”* – v. 41 – flogged but kept on preaching

\*Jews and Greeks – 6:1 – *“the disciples were increasing in number”* – cultural conflict arose between Jews and Greek widows – Greek men put in charge – v. 7 – *“The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.”*

\*Acts 7 – Stephen, 1 of the 7 deacons in chp. 6 begins to preach – explains God's story from Abraham to children of Israel in captivity to Moses to David to the prophets –

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<sup>73</sup> NorthCreek Church Teaching Statement, created 12/17/2010.

<sup>74</sup> W. Mundle, “Ecstasy, Astonishment, Distraction, Horror, Madness,” ed. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther, and Hans Bietenhard, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 527.

<sup>75</sup> W. Mundle, “Miracle, Wonder, Sign,” ed. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther, and Hans Bietenhard, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 621.



v. 51 – *“You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.”* – became 1<sup>st</sup> martyr

\*Samaritans – Acts 8:4 – Philip preaches in Samaria – hated “half-breeds” – the new culture is extended to include them

\*Ethiopian – Acts 8:27 – Philip instructed to go a desert road from Gaza – encountered Ethiopian eunuch (literal – couldn’t enter Temple) – saved and baptized!

\*Acts 9 – Paul’s encounter on road to Damascus – vision of Jesus – Paul saved – v. 29 – began *“talking and arguing with Hellenistic Jews”* who wanted to kill him – Paul taken to Caesarea then home to Tarsus – v. 31 – *“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.”*

\*Italian cop – Acts 10 – vision of sheet to Peter – no more dietary laws – same vision to Cornelius, an Italian centurion – family received same vision – Peter comes – whole family comes to faith

\*Acts 11 – Jews in Jerusalem take issue with Peter – he patiently explains God’s dealing with Cornelius – v. 18 – *“When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.”*

\*Acts 11:19 – some scattered from persecution of Stephen went to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch to preach to Greeks north of Tyre in modern Turkey – v. 21 – *“And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.”*

\*Acts 11:26 – the new culture gains a name – v. 26 – *“and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”*

\*Acts 12 – James beheaded by Herod – Peter jailed then released by angel – Herod dies – v. 24 – *“ But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.”*

\*Acts 13 – missionary journeys of Paul begin

What can we learn from this:

\*You don’t become a Christian by birth, inheritance, buying it, or political persuasion

\*Calling is God’s business – not ours – many think it rests on them – it doesn’t

\*God calls us to salvation – not economic, psychological, or political reform

\*Calling is not corporate – He doesn’t call a group of people – His calling is individual

#### d. Christianity is c\_\_\_\_\_cultural

Christianity is different – crosses ethnic boundaries that would not have crossed by any other means

\*Eph. 2:11-16 – God is bringing together the *“circumcision”* and the *“uncircumcision”* – ie – Jews who live by the Law and Gentiles who have no use for Jewish law – neither group likes the other – they are different ethnically, socially, politically, economically – one group rules the other – both assume their positions of

superiority over the other – there is no reason or means for these two groups to become one

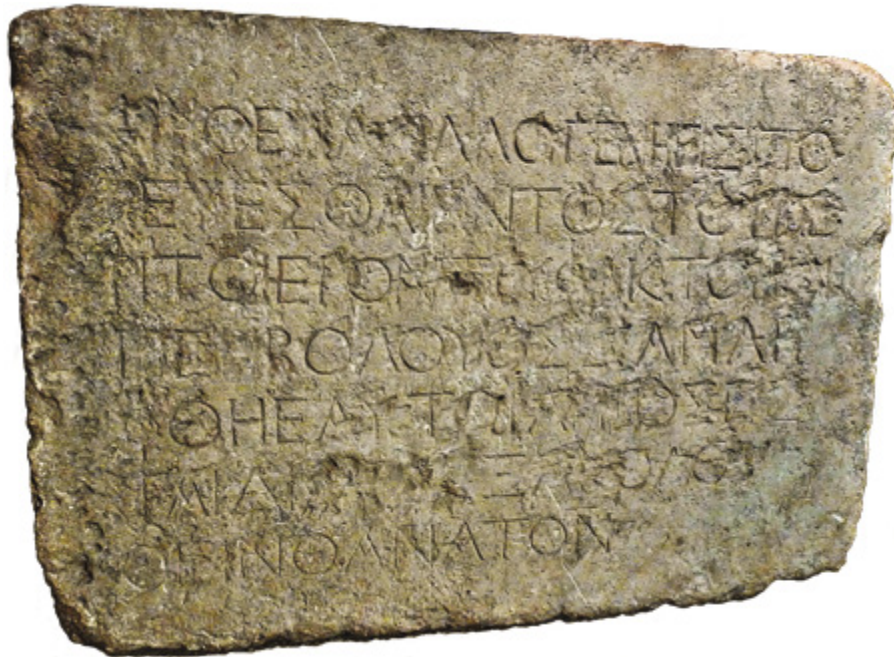
\*v. 12 – the problem for Gentiles wasn't that they weren't Jews – it was that they didn't know the God of the Jews – thus, they were alienated from God in 5 ways – 1) they were *“separate from Christ”* – had no awareness of the promised Savior and deliverer in whom *“all the families of the earth shall be blessed”* (Gen. 12:3) – 2) they were *“excluded from the commonwealth of Israel”* – they possessed none of the blessings promised to the people of Israel as God's chosen people – 3) they were *“strangers to the covenants of promise”* – they had no idea of the promised eternal destiny promised for God's people or how to possess it – 4) they had *“no hope”* because they had no relationship with the one true God – 5) they were *“without God in the world”* – turn out the lights, the party's over! – btw – Gentiles didn't perceive God because they didn't want Him! – Rom. 1:17-26

\*v. 13 – *“But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ”*. – Jesus death on the cross provided the path to God for all who were alienated and couldn't get there on their own

\*v. 14 – *“For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall”* – referred to a wall in the Temple that partitioned off the *Court of Gentiles* that physically separated Gentiles and Jews – symbolic of the many social, spiritual, and ceremonial barriers that separated them – Josephus wrote that no Gentile would ever think of entering the Temple courts of the Jews – there were numerous signs in Greek and Latin that warned Gentiles against going beyond the Court of the Gentiles – all would have been familiar with a posted inscription that said, *“No Gentile may enter within the railing around the sanctuary and within the enclosure. Whoever should be caught will render himself liable to the death penalty which will inevitably follow.”*<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 17, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 767.



According to Josephus a 5 foot 2 inch stone fence, called the *soreg*, surrounded the Court of the Gentiles and served as the main barriers that barred Gentiles and the ceremonially unclean from entering the inner courts of the Temple. The above stone was placed at the entrance of the Court to serve as a posted threat to any unauthorized entry.<sup>77</sup>

This physical barrier had a long history. Hendriksen expands on this division,

What the apostle was actually speaking of was something far more serious and dreadful, namely, *inveterate hostility* between the two groups. Humanly speaking, the wall of hatred and contempt that divided Jew and Gentile had been strengthened by centuries of mutual disparagement and mudslinging. A few more years and the pent-up hostility of generations would burst into an open flame, and one of the most cruel and bitter wars would be fought. It would result in the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. To the Jews the Gentiles were “dogs.” Many other vituperative expressions were used. Non-Jews were considered “unclean,” people with whom one must have almost none but unavoidable dealings. By many prominent Jews and rabbis even *proselytes* were despised. Close association with Gentiles meant “defilement” (John 18:28). To be sure, the temple had its “court of the Gentiles,” but even this space was at times filled with Jewish merchants and money-changers, with oxen, sheep, and doves, instead of being reserved for holy purposes. The result was that it failed to contribute its share in making the temple “a house of prayer” (Luke 19:46) “for

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<sup>77</sup> Randall Price, *Rose Guide to the Temple* (Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 2012).

*all peoples*" (Isa. 56:7). And, of course, the Gentiles treated the Jews similarly. By them the Jews were considered "enemies of the human race," a people "filled with a hostile disposition toward everybody." We can well imagine with what gesture of disdain and in what tone of contempt Pilate must have said, "I, surely, am not *a Jew*, am I?" (John 18:35). Across the centuries we can still hear the owners of the Philippian slave-girl denounce the Jewish trouble-makers (Paul and Silas!) in these words of contempt, "These men, *being Jews*, do exceedingly trouble our city" (Acts 16:20). Cf. Acts 18:2.<sup>78</sup>

\*v. 15-16 – but Christ destroyed these barriers – *"by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity."* – through His death Jesus abolished the demands of these laws because He perfectly kept them – His sacrifice fulfilled the demands of the ceremonial feasts, laws, and rituals that kept Jews and Gentiles separate – Jesus didn't abolish the law (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 2:15) but the *demands* of the law – perfection – holiness – justice – perfect love – all met at the cross – thus, He created *"one new man"* – *kainos* – "new" in the sense that it did not exist before – the church!

\*v. 17 – *"And He came and preached peace to you who were far away (Gentiles), and peace to those who were near (Jews)"*

\*v. 19-20 – *"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."* – the church!

There is no explanation for this outside of a changed heart – Col. 3:10-11 – *"and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all."*

This is not the spirit of sectarianism which divides – Ravi Zacharias writes about the sinful sectarianism of religion:

At the center of the old city Jerusalem stands the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, reputedly on the sight of the original Calvary and the original Garden of the Resurrection. It stands, but only because ugly steel scaffolding permanently supports the walls inside and out. This church is one of the dirtiest, most depressing buildings in all Christendom. It should be torn down and rebuilt. This

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<sup>78</sup> William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Ephesians*, vol. 7, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 133–134.

is not possible, however, because the Church of The Holy Sepulcher belongs jointly to the Abyssinians, Armenians, Copts, Greeks, Syrians and Roman Catholics, and their priests will hardly speak to one another, let alone cooperate in a joint enterprise of rebuilding. Each communion preserves its own separate chapel, and conducts its own ceremonies; and to make the situation ludicrous, the keys of the church have been entrusted to a family of Muslims who in order to answer the call of Allah five times daily, have turned the entrance into a Muslim Mosque. Nowhere in all the world can you find a more tragic symbol of the mutilation of Christ's body than the Church of The Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.<sup>79</sup>

**e. Christianity is c\_\_\_\_\_cultural**

Christians today seem to think that we should convince the culture that you can be cool and be a part of the worldly culture – but the NT church wasn't like that – biblical Christianity is not only cross-cultural – it is counter-culture – ie – it brings diverse groups together which forms a new spiritual entity that now confronts the dominant culture of the world.

**1'. R\_\_\_\_\_leaders**

First sign of problem for the new church – Acts 4 – after Peter's 2<sup>nd</sup> sermon when he again called on the Jews to repent and turn to Christ (3:11-26), Acts 4:1 – *“the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”* – they weren't concerned about the spiritual condition of the people – they were angry that someone dared to question their authority and teaching – Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection – they would rather argue a theological point than listen to the truth! – followed by their arrest, trial, defense, consultation, and finally acquittal

Ultimately, this kind of theological confrontation occurred throughout the book:

\*5:17 – *“the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy.”* – common thread of all who seek power and prestige – the disciples were jailed, beaten, ordered not to teach – v. 29 – *“We must obey God rather than men.”* – v. 33 – *“But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them.”*

\*8:1-3 – *“Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles . . . But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.”*

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<sup>79</sup> Ravi Zacharias, *Deliver Us From Evil: Restoring the Soul in a Disintegrating Culture* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), 50.

\*13:45 – *“But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.”*

\*18:12 – *“But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat,”* – Gallio turned the tables on them and they beat their own leader Sosthenes

\*23:12-13 – *“When it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. There were more than forty who formed this plot.”*

## 2'. C \_\_\_\_\_ icons

Acts 7:9– Stephen confronted by *“But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen.”* – “Freedmen” referred to descendants of Jewish prisoners of war captured by Pompey in 63 BC – eventually released and formed colony on the Tiber River in Rome and some moved to Jerusalem – *“Cyrenians and Alexandrians”* indicates they were Hellenistic Jews from northern Africa – *“Cilician and Asia”* indicates Hellenistic Jews from Asia Minor – different cultures but all saw themselves as protectors of broader Jewish culture –

v. 10 – *“they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking”* – found some false witnesses to accuse him – v. 12 – *“stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes . . . dragged him away and brought him before the Council.”* – Acts 7 – Stephen’s beautiful defense – v. 54 – *“they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him”* – stoned him

James Montgomery Boice notes,

To bring back truth, on a practical level, the church must encourage Christians to be not merely consumers of culture but *makers* of culture. The church needs to cultivate Christian artists, musicians, novelists, filmmakers, journalists, attorneys, teachers, scientists, business executives, and the like, teaching its laypeople the sense in which every secular vocation--including, above all, the callings of husband, wife, and parent--is a sphere of Christian ministry, a way of serving God and neighbor that is grounded in God's truth. Christian laypeople must be encouraged to be leaders in their fields, rather than eager-to-please followers,

working from the assumptions of their biblical worldview, not the vapid clichés of pop culture.<sup>80</sup>

### 3'. G\_\_\_\_\_ authority

In Romans 13 Paul lays out instruction for us to obey the governing authorities – v. 1-2 – *“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.”*

But there are times when Christians must disobey governmental authority when we are asked to do something against God’s laws and will:

\*Acts 4-5 – disciples were told repeatedly to stop preaching – 5:28-29 – *“saying, “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.”*

\*This might even end up in being martyred for the cause of Christ – Acts 12:1-3 – *“Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.”*

\*Acts 7:54-60 – same thing happened with Stephen – at least two martyrs among the leaders of the church in the first few years of existence

Christians cannot depend on the government to protect our rights – or our lives – even if our case is logical and legal! Lutzer notes,

Whether it’s Nazism, Marxism, or Secularism, the state is always in conflict with religious freedom. And the more power the state has, the more laws it will pass to diminish the role of the church. What makes this so difficult is that these changes are made under the rubric of freedom and “what is best for everyone.” Thus the true nature of a totalitarian state is always hidden and always couched in the language of morality, progress, and liberty. As in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, slavery is defined as freedom, and suppression is defined as “the quest for equality and fairness.”<sup>81</sup>

### 4'. The I\_\_\_\_\_ system

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<sup>80</sup> James Montgomery Boice, Benjamin E. Sasse, *Here We Stand! A Call From Confessing Evangelicals For a Modern Reformation* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 95.

<sup>81</sup> Erwin W. Lutzer, *When A Nation Forgets God*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2010), 11-12.

The last chapters of Acts reveal Paul's continued appeal to the legal system of Rome:

\*Acts 24:1 – *“After five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with an attorney named Tertullus, and they brought charges to the governor against Paul.”* – the lawyer brought false charges – v. 27 – *“But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.”*

\*Paul defended himself against the false charges before Felix, the governor of Judea – says he will send him to Caesar at his request

\*25:13 – regional King Agrippa arrives – wants to hear Paul along with Festus – 26:24 – *“While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, ‘Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad.’ Paul replied, ‘I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner.’”*

\*Their response – v. 31 – *“this man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment.”*

Paul made a strong, legal defense with the truth – this shows:

\*We need to be prepared to defend ourselves legally – Acts 16:37 – when Paul and Silas were released from jail in Philippi they appealed to their Roman citizenship and demanded proper treatment in their release

\*The gospel is logical but God must change the heart

\*We will not always win the legal battle

## 5'. False b\_\_\_\_\_ in the church

Seen in several types of situations:

\*False generosity – Acts 5 – Ananias and Sapphira killed for copying the generosity of believers in the church – Peter calls them out – the result – 11 – but *“great fear came over the whole church (first place “church” is used in Acts)”* – v. 12 – apostles were doing *“many signs and wonders . . . and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Portico. But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem.”*

\*False belief – Acts 8:9-21 – after hearing Philip preach in Samaria, Simon the magician *“himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip”* – but he wasn't saved – 8:18 – Simon thought he could obtain spiritual power by buying it – practice of *simony* – the purchase of an ecclesiastical office for money – the other side of people like this is the practice of charging people for spiritual services – ie – Catholic Church charges for baptisms, last rites, marriage – 8:20 – *“But Peter said to him, ‘May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! ‘You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.’”*

\*False teaching – Acts 20:29-30 – Paul's admonition to the elders of Ephesus – *“I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the*



*flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.*” – there is as much destruction that comes from inside the church as from outside the church!

Newest fad in Christianity – “Prophets” and “Apostles” movement – seen in Bill Johnson (Bethel Church), Mike Bickle (International House of Prayer), Cindy Jacobs (Generals International), Chuck Pierce (Glory of Zion International), and Che Ahn (HRock Church):

\*These are self-proclaimed “apostles” – first was Peter Wagner who called himself “super apostle” (before he died in 2016) – promise of direct access to God through signs and wonders

\*They’ve gone beyond health and wealth movement – believe God has put them on earth to basically transform the world – they are top of the mountain exercising power over the global church to bring in the kingdom of God

\*Not building churches – building following through conferences, media products, and concerts

\*Believe in the “7 Mountains” Theology – God is placing His servants in key positions in the “mountains” of business, government, media, arts and entertainment, education, the family, and religion – they will bring about the Kingdom of God on earth – in America – before Jesus returns<sup>82</sup>

\*Includes bizarre “ministries” – Todd Bentley, Canadian evangelist who rose to fame in 2008 with the infamous Lakeland Florida revival – questioned why God wasn’t moving in one healing event – “And the Holy Spirit spoke to me, the gift of faith came on me. He said ‘Kick her in the face – with your biker boot!’ I inched closer and I went like this. BAM! And just as my book made contact with her nose she fell under the power of God.”<sup>83</sup>

\*Also seen in *Hillsong Church* based in Australia – music generated “worship” has spread across the world selling over 16 million “worship” albums – article in the *New York Times* on October 26, 2017 describes their packed services in New York, “the room is dim, the smoke machines are going and music from the large house band swells like Coldplay with a heavy dose of resurrection.”<sup>84</sup> An earlier article in the *New York Times* noted, “For young Christians in cities where Hillsong has churches, it has become a magnet, combining the production values of a rock concert, the energy of a nightclub and the community of a megachurch.”<sup>85</sup>

## 6’. The appeal of f\_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>82</sup> Bob Smietana, “‘Prophets’ and ‘Apostles’ Leading the Quiet Revolution in American Religion,” *In Christianity Today*, August 3:2017.

<sup>83</sup> “Todd Bentley Kicking “People in the Face Revival” – [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiT=qta5WqWwyW4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kiT=qta5WqWwyW4), accessed on January 3, 2014.

<sup>84</sup> Elizabeth A. Harris, “Tattoos, Bieber, Black Lives Matter, and Jesus,” *New York Times*, October 26, 2017.

<sup>85</sup> Michael Paulson, “Megachurch With a Beat Lures a Young Flock,” *New York Times*, September 9, 2014.

Acts 14:8 – lame man healed – v. 11 – crowd was amazed – *“the gods have become like men and have come down to us. And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.”* – but Paul would have none of it! – v. 15 – *“and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.”* – result? – v. 19 – *“But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.”* – crowds can be fickle – we are not to look to them for approval

## 7'. I \_\_\_\_\_ leaders

Acts 17 – Paul in Athens – speaks on the Areopagus – v. 18 – he “conversed” with the Epicureans and Stoics – Epicureans believed there was no life after death – therefore enjoy every pleasure you can on earth and avoid all suffering and grief by pursuing satisfaction and happiness – Stoics believed the gods controlled all of life and we achieve happiness by accepting our lot in life – Paul preached the identity of their “unknown God” – v. 32 – *“Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, “We shall hear you again concerning this.”*

We cannot look to academic intellectuals for ultimate truth. They will inevitably fail, even those that are founded on the premise of propagating biblical truth. Harvard University is an example. It was founded in 1636 for the sole purpose of establishing a school to train Christian ministers. Their “Rules and Precepts,” adopted in 1646, stated their vision in the following manner (with original spelling and Scripture references retained) in rules 2 and 3:

“2. Let every Student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the maine end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and therefore to lay Christ in the bottome, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and Learning. And seeing the Lord only giveth wisdom, Let every one seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seeke it of him (Prov. 2:3).

3. Every one shall so exercise himselfe in reading the Scriptures twice a day, that he shall be ready to give such an account of his proficiency therein, both in Theoreticall observations of Language and Logick, and in practical and spiritual truths, as his Tutor shall require, according to his ability; seeing the entrance of the word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple (Psalm 119:130).”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> “Shield and Veritas History,” Harvard GSAS Christian Community, <http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/~gsascf/shield-and-veritas-history>, accessed on 3/1/20.

The motto for the school was “Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae,” which means “Truth for Christ and the Church.” The phrase was embedded on a shield and can be found on many buildings, including the Widener library, the Memorial Church, and various dorms on campus. The top two books on the shield are face up while the bottom book faces down. This symbolizes the limits of reason and the need for God’s revelation. Today the school has been completely secularized and the shield now only contains the word “Veritas” with three open books.<sup>87</sup>



#### 8'. F \_\_\_\_\_ interests

Acts 19 – at Ephesus Paul confronted the worship of Diana, the goddess of fertility – worshipped by the spread of silver images – the spread of the gospel impacted the financial trade of the city – v. 24-26 – *“For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, “Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. “You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all.” – 24,000 swarmed to the amphitheater shouting, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.” – Paul forced to leave town for his safety!*

#### 9'. The e \_\_\_\_\_ culture

Acts 21 – after returning to Jerusalem Paul was spotted in the temple – wrongfully accused him of bringing a Gentile (Trophimus) into the Temple – v. 29-30 – *“Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.”*

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid

Christians have always been in the minority – this eventually led the authorities to take hold of Paul for his protection – asked to make his defense before the Jews – chp. 23 – caused dissension among the Pharisees and Sadducees when Paul told them he was a Pharisee – 23:10 – *“And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.”* – Matt. 7:13-14 – *““Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. “For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*

Paul summarizes his conflicts and persecutions in 2 Cor. 11:23-29 – *“Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?”*

Michael Horton notes,

The early Christians suffered persecution—even martyrdom—for their witness to Christ. On one hand, they didn’t withdraw into monasteries but fulfilled their callings in the world alongside non-Christians. On the other hand, they didn’t have a social agenda for transforming the Roman Empire. And yet, transformed by the gospel, they became salt and light in their communities, and this brought common grace blessing to the wider culture.

For at least a century and a half, American Protestants have evidenced a marked preference for “deeds over creeds,” and yet, since Finney’s announcement that the church is a society of moral reformers, the church seems less genuinely evangelized and Western culture is dominated by secularist impulses.<sup>88</sup>

#### f. Christianity is r\_\_\_\_\_

We have already seen the practice of the early church in Acts:

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<sup>88</sup> Michael Horton, *The Gospel Commission: Recovering God’s Strategy for Making Disciples*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2011), 231.

\*Acts 2:42-47 – *“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” – v. 44 – “And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart”*

\*Acts 6 – astounding new relational community – Hellenistic deacons chosen to alleviate concerns of neglected Hellenistic widows – previously not even accepted among orthodox Jews – now they complained and the response was to choose people from their own group to help them

\*4:32 – continue development of relational ties – *“And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.”* – v. 34 – *“not a needy person among them”* – sold property – laid assets at the feet of the apostles

The pattern of human relationships is prevalent in the NT – the list of “one anothers” is pervasive – it is not merely a list of nice things to do – they are key to personal growth as well as the corporate growth of the body of Christ

- \* wash one another's feet (John 13:14)
- \* love one another (John 13:34)
- \* be devoted to one another in brotherly love (Romans 12:10)
- \* give preference to one another in honor (Romans 12:10)
- \* be of the same mind toward one another (Romans 12:16, Romans 15:5)
- \* stop judging one another (Romans 14:13)\* pursue the building up of one another (Romans 14:19)
- \* accept one another (Romans 15:7)\* admonish one another (Romans 15:14)
- \* greet one another (Romans 16:16)\* wait for one another (I Corinthians 11:33)
- \* care for one another (I Corinthians 12:25)\* serve one another through love (Galatians 5:13)
- \* bear one another through love (Galatians 6:2)
- \* show forbearance to one another (Ephesians 4:2)
- \* be kind to one another (Ephesians 4:2)\* forgive each other (Ephesians 4:32)
- \* speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19)
- \* be subject to one another (Ephesians 5:21)
- \* regard one another as more important (Philippians 2:3)
- \* not lie to one another (Colossians 3:9)\* teach one another (Colossians 3:16)
- \* comfort one another ( I Thessalonians 4:18)\* encourage one another ( I Thessalonians 4:18)
- \* be at peace with one another ( I Thessalonians 5:13)
- \* pursue good to one another ( I Thessalonians 5:15)
- \* considering one another (Hebrews 10:24)
- \* not speak against one another (James 4:11)

- \* not complain against one another (James 5:9)
- \* confess your sins to one another (James 5:16)
- \* pray for one another (James 5:16)\* be hospitable to one another (I Peter 4:9)
- \* clothe yourself with humility toward one another (I Peter 5:5)

**g. Christianity is housed in the c\_\_\_\_\_**

First time *church* is used – Acts 5:11 – “*And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.*” – after that *church* is used 16 times in Acts to describe this new community – every place it is used it signifies the group of people who embraced the Jewish Messiah as their Savior and Lord – this brought identification as well as certain persecution

**1'. O\_\_\_\_\_**

Two significant observations:

\**Church* = “called out ones” – originally used to designate as a synonym for “group” – but the unique nature of the calling out of true believers began to describe the unique nature that believers were called out of the world to serve God

\*As Acts progressed, *church* began to distinguish the true people of God from the Jews – Rom. 9:4-5 – Paul lists the advantages given to Jews – “*who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.*” – but he also points out in v. 6 that “*they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants*” – points out that God’s promises came to Israel through Isaac, not Ishmael – in the same manner the true spiritual descendants of Abraham are all who follow Christ in faith

Very quickly the gospel reached Gentiles. This became a major refocus of the developing culture of the NT. It reached crisis proportions with The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 where the leaders of the church went on record by stating that the gospel is for all people. The church can never be divided by ethnicity, language, economics, geography, nationality, or sex – Gal. 3:28 – “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” – the traditional boundaries of religion, sex, language, economics, culture, and ethnicity disappear at the cross of Christ –

It has become the norm for many “Christians” to ignore church membership – American individualism is prized over corporate responsibility – others say church membership is not found in Scripture

**2'. The r\_\_\_\_\_ in Acts**

It is clear throughout Acts that Christians had a clear sense of belonging to a specific group of believers. The doctrine of the *invisible* church holds that all who are true believers are members of the unseen universal church which will be united in heaven some day. But the pattern of the *visible* church is also clear in Acts:

\*Acts 2:41 – 3,000 souls added to the church after Peter’s first sermon – someone counted! – continued counting 5,000 more in 4:4 – 5:14 – *“multitudes of men and women were constantly added to their number.”* – women counted! – knew who were among *“their number”*

\*Acts 2:42 – they observed common activities of observing the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking bread together, and prayer

\*Acts 2:44 – they *“were together and had all things in common”* to the extent some sold their property to provide for the needs of others in the group

\*Acts 4:32 – *“And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.”*

\*Acts 6:1 – knew who the Hellenistic widows were – normally would have been excluded because they were Greek oriented, because they were women, and because they were widows (God was punishing them) – the *“congregation”* was called upon to resolve the problem – v. 5 – the *“whole congregation”* approved

\*Acts 8:1 – persecution *“against the church in Jerusalem”* – had to know who they were – people didn’t hide their association even under persecution – Saul went *“house to house”* to drag them out and put them in prison – how did he know which houses to raid?

\*Acts 11:26 – Barnabas sent from *“the church at Jerusalem”* to Antioch to verify what was happening – went to Tarsus to get Paul and brought him to Antioch *“for an entire year they met with the church . . . and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch”* – church in Jerusalem and Antioch were both known entities

\*Acts 12:1 – *“Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them.”* – they had an awareness of who *“belonged”*

\*Acts 12:12 – after Peter is arrested and released from jail by an angel, he immediately knows where to go to find people who were praying for him – v. 17 – told them to *“tell James”* – brother of Jesus who was head of the Jerusalem church by this time

\*Acts 14:23 – Paul and Barnabas *“appointed elders for them in every church”* – Paul’s common practice was to evangelize, instruct the new believers, form a church and appoint elders to lead them – these were identifiable groups of believers – 16:5 – *“the churches”* were *“strengthened and were increasing in number daily”* on Paul’s return visits

\*Acts 15:4 – the Council of Jerusalem – Paul and Barnabas *“received by the church and the apostles and elders”* – apostles were separate from leaders of the church – identifiable body with leadership and the authority to decide the weighty theological issue of including Gentiles into the new culture of the church – 15:22 – the *“whole church”* acted to send Paul and Barnabas to Antioch with the formal theological

statement of the Council of Jerusalem – 15:30 – “*the congregation*” in Antioch received it and was greatly encouraged

\*Acts 20 – in meeting with the elders of church of Ephesus – 20:28 – “*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, nor sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.*” – known church – known leadership – they had to know the flock to protect them from the wolves

Several things are apparent from these passages:

- \*The early NT disciples quickly formed Identifiable bodies of believers in Jesus who shared everything together
- \*God brought new disciples of both Jews and Gentiles to these churches through faithful preaching
- \*They kept track of the numbers in their group
- \*There was a mutual responsibility of worship and care for those in the group
- \*They grew in spite of persecution
- \*They eventually gained an identity as “Christians” who met as a “church”
- \*Elders were instituted in these churches who were charged with teaching the flock and caring for them
- \*These churches multiplied throughout Israel, Antioch, and into Asia Minor and Europe

### 3'. Modern a\_\_\_\_\_

The church is the most accurate and enduring manifestation of the new culture that unfolds in the book of Acts. As such, it deserves meaningful reflection. In his later writing to the church in Ephesus in Ephesians 5 Paul compared the church to marriage, with the love of the husband and wife seen as a picture of the love of Christ for the church. Both the church and marriage are presented as pictures of the gospel. The picture of the husband’s love and care for his wife is presented as a picture of Christ’s love for individuals in the church and the church as a whole. John uses the terminology of “bride” and “bridegroom” four times in Revelation 18 and 19 in reference to the church. How could anyone who loves the bridegroom not love His bride?

So the question remains – why would a true believer *not* want to formally identify with a local church? It’s possible they’ve been burned in the past by some kind of unpleasant experience in a church. Or it’s possible that their background has only been with a false church where they don’t even believe in the basics of the gospel.

There are a variety of reasons that people don’t identify with a local church – including a lack of biblical teaching and understanding – a maverick John Wayne “I can do it myself” mentality – bad experience in previous church – “false” liberal churches which exist in



name only but deny basic biblical doctrine – the lure of the “attractional” concert driven “feel-good” megachurches

In America we are losing the principle of association with a local church – the “attractional” programming of the megachurch movement is destroying the biblical doctrine of the church:

- \*Focus is in drawing huge crowds to multi-site venues – distorts gospel by removing sin and repentance from the message because that would “offend” their clientele

- \*Latest fad – concert style worship – the experience is everything

- \*Driven by professional tech orientation in communication, worship and promotion of multi-site venues

- \*Massive appeal to popular culture

- \*This makes it impossible to speak biblical truth to the crowd they are attempting to attract and emulate

But this doesn’t over-ride the biblical expectation and pattern of belonging to a local church – it’s hard to duplicate the experience of the NT church, but it seems clear that God created a new culture called “the church” during this time. Paul later called the church the “Bride of Christ,” alluding to the love and care that Christ has for the church. It is inconceivable that modern Christians would not identify with a local church through formal membership. Here are some reasons why.

**T**\_\_\_\_\_

At first glance some people would say that the Bible says nothing about membership in a local church. That is not entirely true. The Bible has much to say about Christians being “members” of the body of Christ. We believe this internal reality is best seen through external membership in the expression of God’s work in the local church. Biblical membership is much more than just “voting rights” at business meetings. It is the thrill of being a part of God’s great enterprise for making His presence known in this world. Membership is theologically guided by the following precepts.

- **S**\_\_\_\_\_ — We are all linked by our common salvation and are thus members of the same body in the family of God (1 Corinthians 12:12). The phrase “one another” used 107 times in the New Testament to describe our relationship to other people in the church. We are not just called to **be** together, Romans 12:5 says that we indeed **are** “members of one another,” linked by our common commitment to Jesus Christ. The admonitions to love, pray for, encourage, admonish, greet, serve, teach, accept, honor, and forgive one another are certainly signs that we are indeed “members of one another.” (Ephesians 4:25).
- **A**\_\_\_\_\_ — Being outside the membership of a church for a Christian is a unique American phenomenon, based more on the value of

American rugged individualism than on the Word of God. When Jesus spoke of binding and loosing (Matthew 16:19;18:18-20; John 20:23), He was giving authority on earth to a plurality of leaders in the church. Being outside the protective umbrella of biblical leaders, and not being submissive to them is foreign to Scripture (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12). In the same sense, elders are called to shepherd the flock of God, not individuals (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2).

- **C** \_\_\_\_\_ — Christians often say they are committed to the Lord, but don't realize they are to be just as committed to each other. In 2 Corinthians 8:5 Paul says the Macedonian Christians "*first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.*" (2 Corinthians 8:5), and Romans 12:10 tells us we are to "*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.*" Church membership is merely a sign of our spiritual commitment to each other. We are to be known as much for belonging as believing.
- **D** \_\_\_\_\_ — Scripture does not present the picture of a Christian who stands outside watching and not contributing to the needs of the body. The Bible teaches that every Christian is **created** for ministry (Ephesians 2:10), **saved** for ministry (2 Timothy 1:9), **called** to ministry (1 Peter 2:9-10), **gifted** for ministry (1 Corinthians 12:7), **authorized** for ministry (Matthew 28:18-20), **equipped** to minister (Ephesians 4:11-12), **needed** for ministry (1 Corinthians 12:15), **expected** to minister (1 Peter 4:10), and will be **rewarded** for his/her ministry (Colossians 3:23-24). Membership is a tangible commitment to fulfilling this duty.
- **D** \_\_\_\_\_ — Strange as it may seem to a child, he needs the discipline of the parent. In like manner, each of us needs the discipline found only in the church. Outside the family circle, people tend to hide and follow selfish and often destructive pursuits. But, like our nuclear families, inside the security of the church family there is mutual accountability, the encouragement of fellow travelers, and even the loving discipline that comes through biblical rebuke and confrontation (Matthew 18:15-18). Without a tangible identification with the body there is much less chance of "iron sharpening iron" because there is no permission granted to do so.
- **P** \_\_\_\_\_ — While our individual purpose in life as Christians is to bring glory to God in all that we do (1 Corinthians 10:31), there is no scriptural basis for doing this apart from the church. Like the Pharisees and lawyers who rejected God's purpose for their lives in Luke 7:30, we too can reject God's purpose for our lives And that purpose is always tied up in the expression and ministry of His body on this earth, the church. Ephesians 1 tells us that we have been "*...predestined according to His purpose...*" which was to put all things in subjection under His feet, and then to be given to the church (as a corporate whole, not individual parts) as the head over all things.

- **U** \_\_\_\_\_ — Probably nothing expresses our unity with the invisible church like membership in the visible church. We are told to preserve the bonds of unity that are seen in our common allegiance to one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God (Ephesians 4:3-6). In Ephesians 5 Paul presents the picture of Christ being the body, a unified whole, not a collection of renegade individual parts. He also declares the church to be the bride of Christ, stressing our relational union with the groom.

## **R** \_\_\_\_\_

In the modern era in which we live the increasing disintegration of the family has resulted in an increasing sense of detachment, where fractured relationships are more and more common. In addition, with the advent of modern travel, it is not uncommon for people to live many miles away from family and lifelong friends. In this context, the role of the church as a caring, healing community becomes increasingly important. As such, it is our desire that our church be a place of:

- **B** \_\_\_\_\_ — where each person is known, loved, and cared for. Studies have shown that if a person doesn't have at least three “friends” at church within one year, they will leave the church.
- **C** \_\_\_\_\_ — that allows each person to minister and be ministered to. We all have a desire to be needed and to respond to someone else’s needs. Without both, we are imbalanced, becoming either hardened or self-centered.
- **P** \_\_\_\_\_ — where the ultimate purpose of life is fleshed out in weekly involvements and fulfilling ministry. There is more to life than earning a paycheck and the church provides a place to be a part of something bigger than ourselves.

## **P** \_\_\_\_\_

The practical side of church membership is that it not only makes you feel a part of something — you really are more intimately connected in ways that are not available to the casual attendee or non-member.

- **O** \_\_\_\_\_ — People tend to invest more in that which they own. Our desire is to see each member have a pride and sense of ownership that yields in the investment of all his resources for the glory of God. Being a member of a local church provides the member with a feeling of ownership that results in a commitment to the Lord and His work. Lack of ownership means that a person will have more of a tendency to merely attend services

without a sense of belonging. And without the ownership and commitment of each member, the church becomes sort of a club with valued opinions and privileges only for the ones who have been around the longest.

- I \_\_\_\_\_ — The fact of the matter is that we can welcome you to become more involved with us, if you become a member. If you are a member, we know that you have made a commitment to Christ and that you share somewhat of the same spiritual paradigm. This allows us to welcome you to develop the full range of your gifts, to teach our children, to serve in our leadership, and to have a say in the business of the church.

## **B** \_\_\_\_\_

Joining a local church:

- Allows us to experience God's presence through worship that addresses the deepest longing of our heart and the greatest goal of life.
- Allows us to experience God's people in a place where we can both be ministered to and minister to others.
- Allows us to experience God's peace by applying the principles of God's Word to resolve spiritual conflicts
- Allows us to experience God's purpose in being equipped to fulfill our God-given purpose in this world.
- Allows us to experience God's power through being part of His plan in redeeming the world through the Church.

Rosaria Champagne Butterfield gives an example of the new identity of a Christian in the context of a commitment to a local church:

### **Official Vows: Covenant of Church Membership**

- *Do you believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and life?*
- *Do you believe in the one living and true God—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as revealed in the scriptures?*
- *Do you repent of your sin; confess your guilt and helplessness as a sinner against God; profess Jesus Christ, Son of God, as your Savior and Lord; and dedicate yourself to His service: Do you promise that you will endeavor to forsake all sin, and to conform your life to His teaching and example?*
- *Do you promise to submit in the Lord to the teaching and government of this church as being based upon the scriptures and described in substance in the Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America? Do you*

*recognize your responsibility to work with others in the church and do you promise to support and encourage them in their service to the Lord? In case you should need correction in doctrine or life, do you promise to respect the authority and discipline of the church?*

- *To the end that you may grow in the Christian life, do you promise that you will diligently read the Bible, engage in private prayer, keep the Lord's Day, regularly attend the worship services, observe the appointed sacraments, and give to the Lord's work as He shall prosper you?*
- *Do you purpose to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness in all the relationships of life, faithfully to perform your whole duty as a true servant of Jesus Christ, and seek to win others to Him?*
- *Do you make this profession of faith and purpose in the presence of God, in humble reliance upon His grace, as you desire to give your account with joy at the Last Great Day?<sup>89</sup>*

David Platt provides some context:

It is biblically, spiritually, and practically impossible to be a disciple of Christ (and much less *make* disciples of Christ) apart from total devotion to a family of Christians.

But so many people think it is possible—and they try to live like it's possible. It has even become a mark of spiritual maturity today for some professing Christians to *not* be active in a church. "I'm in love with Jesus," People will say, "but I just can't stand the church."

It's impossible to follow Jesus fully without loving his bride selflessly, and it's impossible to think that we can enjoy Christ apart from his body. Jesus goes so far as to identify the church with himself when he asks Saul on the road to Damascus, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Saul hadn't persecuted Christ himself, but he had persecuted Christians, so in essence Jesus was saying, "When you mess with them, you mess with me."<sup>90</sup>

Summary to this point – creed and culture were the first two signs of the NT church – without foundational doctrine that stressed the provision of the cross of Christ there would have been no re-ordering of culture – but the teachings of Christianity drove the re-making of society – Mohler writes:

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<sup>89</sup> Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey Into Christian Faith*, (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012), 38-40.

<sup>90</sup> David Platt, *Follow Me: A Call to Die. A Call to Live.*, (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House, 2013), 150-151.

The permissive posture of the church in this century has allowed the most heinous heresies to grow unchecked-and heretics to be celebrated. Francis Schaeffer was among the most eloquent modern prophets who decried this doctrinal cowardice. Schaeffer emphatically denied that a church could be a true Christian fellowship and allow false doctrine. As he stated, "One cannot explain the explosive dynamite, the *dunamis*, of the early church apart from the fact that they practiced two things simultaneously: orthodoxy of doctrine and orthodoxy of community in the midst of the visible church, a community which the world can see."<sup>91</sup>

### III. CONTINUITY

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<sup>91</sup> Albert R. Mohler, Jr., "Church Discipline: The Missing Mark" in *The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1998), 183.