

“The Offense of the Gospel”

Acts 5:12-42

Introduction and Context: When the church is cleansed through judgment the blessings of God usually return (vv. 16). Most Christians do not realize the impact their sin has on the church or the blessings on the church from their obedience. As Boice notes, Luke seems to be fluctuating between the outside persecution and the inner workings of personal church life as he goes through these first few chapters. We see that God richly blesses the church with miracles, signs, and wonders, and then closely following that is usually persecution. Be careful what you pray for. **Verses 12-42** are no exception to this observation. Chapter 5 is outlined by Wiersbe like this:

1. Pretending- 1-11
2. Obeying- 12-16
3. Opposition- 17-32
4. Hesitating- 33-42

I have outlined it very similarly:

1. Jealousy and Judgment- 1-11 (**Last few week's messages: Joy, Jealousy, Judgement**)
2. Cleansing and Blessings- 12-16
3. Opposition and Persecution- 17-32
4. Neutrality and Denial- 33-42

1. Jealousy and Judgment: In Acts 3 Peter heals a crippled beggar – Peter spends lots of time explaining to the Jewish rulers what happened. The Christ that was killed by the Jews and their leaders is now working through his followers. We saw an encounter with a needy beggar and an encounter with a needy nation; both these events led to opposition and persecution.

Acts 4:1-5 The Priests and Captain of the Temple guards and the Sadducees are “greatly disturbed” because the Apostles are

teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus name the resurrection of the dead. Peter and the Apostles spend the night in jail. The next day the Elders and Teachers of the law asked, “By what power have you done this?” Peter again shares the Gospel. Peter is the appointed leader and preacher of the first NT church.

In 5:12 – Which is an answered prayer from 4:30 – we see only great things that are done for the people of Israel. The church grew, people were healed, evil was cast out. Now who in the world would dislike this? The same people that dislike it today.

What we see in the first NT church is that same problems pastors see in the NT church today. The church can do so well that we enjoy all the spiritual blessings that God is giving us and neglect the Word.

Then the world can creep into the church because the sheep live too closely to the world. We get comfy and apathetic. Add some persecution and hypocrisy and you have a struggling church.

The early church lived through all of these problems in spades. *Acts 5:12 brings us back to God’s blessings on the church after the disastrous effects of Ananias and Sapphira’s sin.* I can’t imagine the fear and effects that the church must have gone through after these two deaths. They needed God’s blessings again. They needed to know if they were in favor.

2. Cleansing and blessings, 12-16: We have looked at the first 11 verses with Jealousy and judgement. We will look at 12-16 and the results of cleansing.

Verse 12: We saw that in v.11 the fear of God had come upon the people. We also learned that the word **church** appears for the first time in Acts 2:47, but many think this is the first use of **ekklesia** in reference to new believers. Many people call the

church the called-out-ones. I agree that the word church came to be used in that manner but we need to be cautious because the word **ecclesia** is also used to describe a gathering of people for any cause, e.g., a riot.

I would love to have been there hanging out at Solomon's Porch. John Phillips (Exploring Acts) says that, "the ungrieved Holy Spirit gave further evidence of His grace." I can imagine how awesome it must have been to hang out with other Christians during these days and see the mighty works of God being done. What a description Phillips uses... "**the ungrieved Holy Spirit.**" I like that (s. Eph. 4:30).

Preachers today try and pretend that their churches are so holy, and that they are so holy, that God is working miracles and doing signs and wonders in it. I have not seen any NT church, in my day, that is so holy that God could work that way in them like He did in the first church. I am pretty sure the NT church today grieves the Holy Spirit plenty. If we would repent and cleanse the church properly, be obedient, and put the essentials of the NT church into practice, we might see some healings, signs, and wonders.

Verse 13: Because of the judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira, many were afraid to join the church. I have to say that this type of fear for God could do us some good. The idle curiosity among the "so called believers" and the pagans would diminish and the folks with "*back problems*" would go away. You know the *backsliders*. I bet attendance would also go up and proper giving would return to the church. The spiritual vital signs of the church would get back on track. We would not have to beg people to serve in the nursery.

God was not trying to scare people away from the church, but what a statement Luke makes about the curious and apathetic folks just would not come round for fear of God. So many people

today play games with God and blaspheme Him. If God began to judge and halt the day of grace for a few weeks, I believe people would get right. Nothing like a good plague to get Hollywood to clean up a bit.

Verse 14: This is the goal of WBC. One thing that I want to stress is the fact that the people that were added to the Lord first. Church is for **believers**. Getting added to church does you no good until you are in Christ. The word is **pisteuo**, which means to entrust, commit, or to put one's spiritual well-being into Christ. The church is for believers only. People often visit and tell me that they are checking us out as a church home. And in reply, I say, "we are checking you out as well."

The phrase "**were added**" is the word **prostithemi**, which means annex, to place additionally, repeat, give more, add. This word is an imperfect passive indicative. This means that God was continually adding people to the church. The action of the verb is incomplete. In other words, it was continual. The passive refers to an outside source that was doing the adding (God). Every church needs the people that God wants to add. Both men and women were coming to Jesus in great numbers. The word **multitude** is the word **plethos** from which we get our English word **plethora**.

Verse 15-16: There is no doubt that God works miracles today. I believe that God does, on occasion, step in and He changes the course of nature, physical wellbeing, and circumstances. My God is sovereign and all powerful, but the truth is that this era is not the same era as the apostolic period. The gifts and powers that were given to the apostles were for the purpose of introducing the NT church to the world and showing God's approval and choice of apostles. There are many more reasons but that is enough to suffice for now.

Notice the end of verse 16. The text actually says this...

οιτινες εθεραπευοντο 'απαντες, they were all healed. **Every one of them.** Now, if you can, tell me anytime when a person healed every sick person that was present. Let me even say that it is nowhere recorded that even Jesus did such a thing. He could have, if it were the will of the Father, but it's not in the Word. The faith healers we have today are just liars. They use the promise of healing to steal money from good and decent people.

Notice also the fulfilled prophecy of Jesus. There were many people that came from the towns and surrounding areas of Jerusalem. Folks, that's Judea. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the world.... (Acts 1:8), Remember? The gospel is spreading as Jesus foretold it.

The apostles were healing people of vexing or harassing spirits. They were healing sicknesses, and healing people of unclean spirits. This was a great movement of God. However, not normative for life. I know that rubs certain people the wrong way but it's simply reality... not everybody gets healed.

“Believe in miracles but trust in Jesus” (A. Rogers). If we never see a miracle, we have seen the miracle of the resurrection in our hearts; that's enough. Salvation and eternal life after death are the two greatest miracles. Don't be a miracle monger. God heals every sickness and disease only through salvation and eternal life. Actually, for the believer, death is the ultimate healing. Sustained faith in God during sickness and death is a greater display of love and faith in our father. Not all our blessing are in cash, Cadillacs, and comfort. I was healed when the Holy Spirit came in!

3. Opposition and Persecution- 17-32

If you have been a believer for any length of time you know that Satan hates it when the church is being blessed.

Again... jealousy and opposition raises her ugly head. When God blesses, the evil one hates it. He attacks at that time.

Verse 17: “The Religious Crowds”

The world and the religious crowd hate it when God does a great work. **For many reasons, the Gospel is offensive.** When tragedy and crisis come and the church rises up, she never get credit for it. Samaritans Purse and Southern Baptist Missions never get mentioned on the news in a national crisis. Christian rescuers are there serving meals, clearing downed trees, and searching for bodies, but the news outlets only recognize secular organizations. Why is this? They hate God and the gospel.

1 Corinthians 1:18

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

In this chapter, we will see that the name of **Jesus**, the **resurrection**, and **jealousy** brought much persecution to the early church, and mainly to the apostles.

Two key words here in verse 17 are **anistemi** (to rise up) and **zelos** (envy, jealousy, malice, indignation). Lost people, and even religious people, have so much hate, indignation and jealousy that gets exacerbated when these three things are present. Liberals will defend abortion, homosexuality, and immorality with such hatred and pride that they would rather go to hell than admit they are wrong. Murder, protests, and violence are all avenues of the God-haters.

However, the Lord says, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

Illustration: Lost men have pondered, and searched, and studied God intellectually for years, but never devotionally or experientially – that’s why they are lost.

Verse 17 of Chapter 5 says the opposition was **jealous**. This group of well-educated, not so well meaning, and mistaken religious people, were just lost and hateful.

The Jews were afraid Rome would come and take away their authority. The Sadducees were in a much greater place of vulnerability. Both groups were being exposed for killing the Messiah. Both groups were being exposed for poor doctrine and theology. The Sadducees didn’t believe in miracles or the resurrection. All their failures were being exposed right out in the open.

The rulers had issues with:

- **Jealousy**, v. 17 (More cruel than the grave).

Song 8:6

6 Place me like a seal over your heart,
like a seal on your arm;
for love is as strong as death,
its jealousy **unyielding (Cruel)** as the grave.
It burns like blazing fire,
like a mighty flame.
NIV

- The Name of Jesus, v. 28
- The Resurrection, v. 30
- The Obvious Miracles Being Done, vv.12-16, 19
- The Teaching and the Preaching, v. 25, 28
- The Murder of the Messiah, v. 28

Why Do People Hate the Gospel?

- It calls for selfless living instead of selfish living.
- The cross was for criminals, deserters & conquered enemies – Cursed is every man that hangs on a tree.
- Submission is the way of salvation. People hate submission. Sinners are rebellious.
- Christianity calls for sanctification after salvation. Holy living is always rejected.
- Satan has blinded their minds.
- Misunderstandings about what the gospel really is.
- Moral failure within the church. Confusion about Jesus and an organization.
- Issues about heaven and hell.
- Validity of Scripture.
- Deity of Christ and Virgin Birth prove Christianity right.
- Several reasons for the hatred by the Jewish leaders is obvious. If Jesus was really raised from the dead, their theology was wrong and their lack of scriptural knowledge was being exposed. They were supposed to be spiritual leaders. The Sadducees had no belief in the resurrection and were not believers of miracles. This put them in a bad spot. If this apostle's teachings were correct, the leaders would have to be followers of Jesus. Then they would have to adopt this new "religion" and admit to killing the Messiah.

Verse 18: The disciples were arrested, hence, fulfilling the words of Christ (s. Matt 10). The jail was a common or public jail. This was the **demosios**: Open, public, or common.

John 16:1-4

"All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. 2 They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. 3

They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. 4 I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.

NIV

Verse 19: Divine conjunction! **BUT** the angel of the Lord!

Verse 20: We, as the body of Christ, will support and obey the government that God sets up until we are told to disobey the Word of God. Then we will have to be civilly disobedient.

The verb, **“and speak,”** is an *imperative* in the original. We must obey God. I love the phrase, **“about this life.”** What a unique way of describing the Christian way. This phrase kind of jolts us out of our normal church jargon. **Zoe** is the word for source of **life**.

The apostles were let free by the messenger of God in the middle of the night so that they could go stand in the middle of the temple courts and preach the resurrection. **“Go tell”** is the mission statement of the Christian.

Verse 21: The first job of the apostles in the new NT church-obedience. They did exactly what they were told to do.

Verse 22-24: Here is the grand convention of the high and mighty “muckiddy mucks.” All the lost sheep of Israel in one room was to scare the apostles to the core. Make a note who the apostles had to contend with- ***the religious crowd***.

I bet this was the surprise of their lives when they sent to get the apostles and they were not in the jail. They looked into the jail but the disciples were back preaching the gospel in the temple. The temple police went to get them and they found the doors locked, and the guards at their post... but no prisoners. The lost just don't

get it, and they surely don't understand what God is doing when He works. Most people don't even see the hand of God working. My favorite word here is baffled. **Diaporeo** refers to doubting, being confused, puzzled, or perplexed. This word can be translated *"to be trapped and not know which way to go."*

Verse 25: An unknown person came and reported that the apostles and disciples were standing in the temple and teaching the people. The apostles are obeying God.

Verse 26: The commander sent the temple police to get the disciples and they used kid gloves for fear of being stoned.

Verse 27: Two powerful groups thought they could bully the apostles into being quiet. They could not intimidate the followers of Jesus. These men were now full of the Holy Spirit and ready to do business for Jesus.

Verse 28: A lot of answers are given in this verse. We learn several bits of information that help us diagnose the Jewish leader's problems. The **name** of Jesus and the **resurrection**, and **Jealousy** were at the top of the list. These are the religious leaders of the day, and they had no spiritual or religious worldview.

Verse 29-32: These verses are the second rendering of the gospel with great conviction to the religious rulers.

"Without a biblical worldview, all the great teaching goes in one ear and out the other. There are no intellectual pegs... in the mind of the individual to hang these truths on. So they just pass through. They don't stick. They don't make a difference."

George Barna

The very people that were supposed to be carrying the mantle of Truth and Christianity were lost in legalism and religion.

Peter does what we should be doing today. Focus on the truth and don't back down. Peter proclaims the disciple's obedience to God over obedience to man.

I have already preached the content of Peter's message several times from the book of Acts. This is the **Kerugma**. What was so important to Peter? Pay close attention to Peter's short discourse. The sermon is fraught with theology.

The Kerugma: The Christian kerygma refers to the core proclamation or message of faith that is proclaimed and believed within Christianity. At its heart, this proclamation announces: God's creation of the universe, humanity's fall into sin, the incarnation of the Son of God, His sacrificial death and resurrection, and the promise of eternal life through faith in Him. This central message-based on the authority of Scripture-reveals both mankind's condition and God's redemptive plan.

The Essentials of the Kerygma What must we Preach? By Nate Wilson, January 2001.

- Before we go much further, let us define what is meant by **κηρυγμα**. **Kerygma** is a Greek noun meaning a "message" or a "proclamation." Attic Greek used the word especially in relation to "a herald or public crier" and that it implies a carrier of the message – the Apostles in the case of the New Testament[1].

Comparison of Evangelistic messages in the book of Acts The book of Acts was written to contain not only commentary on the travels and results of preaching but also to contain transcriptions of the messages preached. In fact, one quarter of the book is pure sermon transcriptions! Part of God's purpose in this is to leave practical examples for His people on how to preach evangelistic messages ourselves. Following is a list of every verbatim evangelistic presentation in the book of Acts. See Appendix 5 for a summary of each of these presentations.

- Peter's Pentecost sermon (2:14-41):
- Peter in the temple (3:12-4:4)
- Peter in his first court trial (4:8-12)
- Peter and apostles' Council trial (5:27-32)
- Stephen (7:1-60)
- Peter and Simon the Magician (8:18-24)
- Peter's healing of Aneas (9:33-42)
- Peter and Cornelius (10:34-48)

- Paul at Synagogue in Perga (13:17-41)
- Paul in Lystra (14:15-17)
- Paul and the Philippian Jailer (16:30-34)
- Paul at the Areopagus (17:22-34)
- Paul and Johannine disciples in Ephesus (19:1-6)
- Paul and temple mob in Jerusalem (22:1-21)
- Paul's trial before the Sanhedrin (23:6)
- Paul before Governor Felix (24:10-21)
- Paul testifies to King Agrippa (26:1-29)
- Paul with Roman Jews (28:17-29)

A comparison of these accounts is very much in line with what we already discovered in the word studies earlier; the authority comes from God, the preacher in every case but Stephen is an apostle, the person or work of Jesus is in every presentation, the audience is non-Christians, the response is faith, and the salvation that results is received, not achieved. Parallels are consistently drawn with the prophets, but the contrasts to Judaism and paganism are not drawn so starkly because the point of these messages was to win non-Christians, whereas the point of most of the passages we used earlier for the word studies was to warn those who were already Christians against religious pitfalls. Although the apostles drew clear distinctions between false religions and Christianity in their evangelistic presentations, they did not rail against those religions while trying to woo them to Christ; they reserved their harsh criticism of Judaism and paganism until after their audience had already become believers. 8 A general five-point outline can be developed from the pattern of the evangelistic presentation of the book of Acts:

A general five-point outline can be developed from the pattern of the evangelistic presentations of the book of Acts:

1. Bridge from context In every case, the apostles started with the context of the audience, whether it was an event they had just seen (such as the healing of the lame man in the Temple in Acts 3) or a cultural understanding (such as Paul's preamble about being a Jew brought up under Gamaliel when he addressed the temple mob in Acts 22, or in the case of Gentiles, Paul's preamble about the altar to the unknown god in Athens). The only place this kind of introduction is fully missing is when Paul addresses the synagogue in Perga (Acts 13), but perhaps this is because discourse on the Scriptures was expected in that context, so there was no need for an introduction.

2. Jesus In every presentation of the Gospel, Jesus is mentioned. Sometimes the person of Jesus is referred to, using His name (only 66% mention the name Jesus) or a title ("Christ," "Savior," "Righteous One," "Lord," "Son of Man," "Hope of Israel"), and sometimes Jesus is referred to by His work – His death and resurrection (His death and/or resurrection is only referred to in 60% of these 18 occasions). In many cases, the use of titles for Jesus was the method of preaching the Gospel. In the Jewish context, it was a bold statement filled with mind-boggling ramifications simply to combine the name of Jesus with one of these titles. The simple phrase "Jesus Christ" preached the Gospel in a kernel because it meant that the man Jesus was the Christ – the anointed one, the Messiah who must be followed and who would save His people[10]. In Gentile contexts, however, such Jewish titles meant nothing, so the apostles did not use them; instead they

used titles, such as “God,” “living God,” “Lord of heaven and earth,” “the man,” and “judge.”

3. The Prophets: In almost every instance, the words of the prophets are brought in as corroborating evidence to the Gospel. Two prophets who were mentioned multiple times were Moses (“God will raise up a prophet like me from among you” Deut. 18:15) and David (“You will not allow Your Holy One to see decay” Psalm 16:10). Fully two-thirds the 18 incidences specifically mention the prophets, and of the six instances that don’t (#6,7,10,11,14,15), one of them (#15) may not really be an evangelistic presentation (more on this later), and three others (#6,7,11) show from the context that we don’t have the entire presentation recorded, so the prophets may have been mentioned “off the record,” as it were. Even when preaching to Gentiles, such as Cornelius, Felix, and Agrippa, the apostles used the prophets to back up the Gospel message. However, in some cases, the prophets are not mentioned, but other people are brought in as witnesses: In #4, Peter says “we are witnesses ... so is the Holy Spirit,” and in #10, Paul calls in the very elements of nature as witnesses to what he is saying about God. In one case, Paul even brought in quotes from pagan prophets as corroborating evidence (Acts 17:28)! Why are the prophets so important? People with name-recognition in a culture can lend credibility to a message, so that may be part of it, but the reasons go deeper. Quoting prophets shows both epistemological and historical continuity: Epistemological in that the audience is taken back to the Scriptures as the basis for truth rather than some other source, such as feelings or experiences. Quoting the prophets shows that the truth of the Gospel is firmly rooted in God’s revelation and teaches the hearers to keep going back to that revelation of Scripture as the basis for truth. Historical continuity is also demonstrated when the prophets are quoted. It shows that the message we preach is rooted in a historical context; it is real and tangible – not made-up, and is consistent with what God has been doing throughout time.[11]

4. Sin and judgment The one universal thing in every one of these eighteen presentations is the identification of a deficiency in the audience. Eleven of them specifically mention sin (or “wickedness,” “vanity,” or actions “contrary to the law”), and of the remaining seven, all imply sin and judgement: #3 “you crucified ... must be saved,” #7 “turned to the Lord,” #11 The Philippian jailer already knew he was doing wrong because the earthquake had alerted him to this, “What must I do to be saved?” #12 “ignorance... repent... judge the world in righteousness,” #13 baptism of John was for repentance of sins, #16 “just and unjust ... conscience void of offense,” #18 “because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain” implying that it was unjust for the Jerusalem Jews to reject the Gospel and therefore it would also be wrong for the Roman Jews to reject it). So whatever we do in our presentations of the Gospel, we must point out the fact that our audience has sinned and will be judged for it. It is interesting to note that the apostles are gentler with those more ignorant of sin and harsher with those who have more knowledge of God. In the two encounters with pagans who were utterly unexposed to the true God (Lystra and the Æropagus), God’s grace is emphasized: “In the past He let the nations go their own way” (Acts 14:16); “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance...” (Acts 17:30). However, when speaking to people who should have known better the apostles could be quite harsh: Peter yelled at Simon, a believer, “May your silver perish with you!” and Paul also had choice words for the High Priest, “God shall smite you, you whitewashed wall!” To whom much is given, much is required.

5. Call to respond: Every Gospel presentation finally calls for a response of faith[12]. The presentations given in the five court cases (#3, 4, 5, 15, & 16) are the only ones which do not seem to include a call to respond, although in most of them it is nevertheless implied. In some other accounts, the call is not in the transcript, but the presentation is given in such a way that a response of faith is recorded (viz. #18 “and some believed.”). The call to faith need not be explicit. The simple statement of the revolutionary truth of the Gospel and application of it to the human condition can be enough to motivate an audience to faith. We need not try to manipulate or browbeat an audience to make a decision, for, after all, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to create faith.[13] But it is through the preaching of the Gospel that faith takes root in a person’s heart.[14] In the explicit accounts, three steps of response are called for: repentance, faith, and baptism. Not only must one believe in Jesus, it is also necessary to stop rebelling against His lordship by 10 repenting[15]. Nowhere is this point better underscored than with Simon Magus, who believed, but needed to repent of his wickedness before he could be right with God. Baptism, however, was called for only when there was a local body of believers to whom they could immediately be joined (#1 & #14 in Jerusalem – 3,000 believers “added” at Pentecost, #8 Cornelius – a whole household of people, #11 jailer added to the church already started in Lydia’s house, #13 the Johannean synagogue). This does not mean that in the other thirteen cases where baptism was not called for, no baptisms occurred; most probably there just weren’t enough people responding in faith with enough grounding in the Scripture yet to baptize them and establish a new congregation in the immediate context of that gospel presentation. In those other thirteen cases, the believers were most probably baptized, but just not immediately after the sermon. Another aspect that comes out in the calls to respond is the inclusiveness of the call. Peter said that the gift is “for you and your children and for all who are far off” (Acts 2:39), and later that “everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness” (Acts 10:43). Paul says the same thing in Acts 13:39 that “everyone who believes is freed,” and that “all men everywhere should repent” (Acts 17:30). Notice that whole households were baptized in the case of Cornelius and the Philippian jailer (and Stephanus in I Cor.). The gospel is for everybody – everybody in your house and everybody in the world[16]! Finally, this aspect of the message is what is called the *vocatio verbalis*, or the external call of preaching as distinguished from the testimony of the natural world or the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the listener[17]. This *vocatio verbalis* may or may not be efficacious, for not all who heard the Gospel in the above accounts responded in repentance and faith. Jesus anticipated that when he taught His disciples to “preach the gospel ... he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieves shall be condemned” (Mk. 16:15,16) and “many are called, but few are chosen” (Mt. 22)[18]. Only when the external call is combined with the irresistible inner call of the Holy Spirit in the listener’s heart does it become efficacious. In the words of Calvin, “When calling is thus added to election, the Scripture plainly intimates that nothing is to be looked for in it but the free mercy of God. For if we ask whom it is he calls, and for what reason, he answers, it is those whom he had chosen. When we come to election, mercy alone everywhere appears; and, accordingly, in this the saying of Paul is truly realized, ‘So then, it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy; (Rom. 9:16)... Those therefore, whom he has created for dishonor during life and destruction at death, that they may be vessels of wrath and examples of severity, in bringing to their doom, [the Lord] at one time derives of the means of hearing his word, at another by the preaching of it blinds and stupefies them the more.” (Calvin, II, 241-251)

This five-point outline seems to hold true for all the Gospel presentations in the book of Acts.[19] Not every presentation of the Gospel was the same, but the apostles started with what their audience knew (or didn't know) about Jesus and brought them to the point where they had to do something with Jesus. Each presentation was tailor-made to the knowledge of the audience. For instance: • Simon Magus had already heard the Gospel many times as he had followed Phillip around Samaria, and in fact had already believed in Jesus, therefore Peter's call to him was not to believe in Jesus (Jesus isn't even mentioned in the interchange), but rather to repent of thinking that the gift of God could be exchanged for money. 11 • Likewise, when Paul speaks to the mob at Jerusalem in ch.22, he does not mention the crucifixion because many of them had probably been there when Jesus was crucified. All he needed to say was that Jesus of Nazareth had appeared to him from heaven as the Righteous One, and they knew immediately what this meant. • Some Gentiles knew more than others about God and the Messiah, so the apostles tailored their presentation of Jesus according to what they already knew: The Greek philosophers at the Aeropagus were clueless, so Paul had to start with the very basics of who God was in the first place, but with Felix, who was "well-acquainted" with Christianity, Paul merely mentions that he is a follower of "the Way" (he doesn't even mention Jesus), and Felix knows exactly what Paul is talking about. • The pagans in Lystra had no trouble with Gods becoming men – they were worshipping Paul is talking about. • The pagans in Lystra had no trouble with Gods becoming men – they were worshipping Paul and Barnabbus as Hermes and Zeus! – so Paul didn't spend time on the doctrine of the incarnation with them, but for the Jews, the doctrine of the incarnation was so outside their thinking that Stephen had to spend a bit of time developing it. "The Most High does not dwell in houses... what kind of house will you build for me?" Hebrews develops a similar argument and answers it "A body thou hast prepared for me," a human body, in Jesus the Nazarene, God became Man! The apostles also made their preaching culturally relevant. Their presentations to Pagans were different from the presentations given to Jews. As Jesus once noted, the Jews of His day sought signs, so of the eleven presentations to Jewish audiences almost all of them refer to signs, whether miracles (#1), healings (#2,3, 7, 14), a prison escape (#3), a vision (#5), speaking in tongues (#13), or, of course, the resurrection (#9, 15). (#18, which doesn't mention a sign, says Paul "expounded" on Jesus and the kingdom, so doubtless the miracles of Jesus and His resurrection were expounded on outside the record.) Preaching aimed at Jews also generally mentioned the prophets and the Messiah-ship of Jesus. When the Gospel was preached to Gentiles, however, the nature of God and His works of creation and providence were more often brought up (#10 & 12), because the Gentiles didn't have the Old Testament background on the nature and work of God that the Jews had. Likewise, Jesus was more often described as an agent who saves from the judgement of God against sin (#6, 11) because gentiles would not identify with the meaning of "Christ/Messiah." In conclusion, although there are these five common elements, each presentation was unique because of the unique circumstances of each audience. Now, the question of whether all eighteen citations were actual instances of preaching the Gospel must be addressed. What is absolutely essential to preaching the Gospel? After a comprehensive study of the subject, we can safely say that a message is a Gospel message if its object is to call people to repent of their sins and believe on Jesus as their savior, as Bible says. Three of the sermon transcriptions in the book of Acts do not clearly do this. In the interchange with Simon Magus (#6), forgiveness for a sin appears to be the sole purpose. There is no mention of Jesus, faith, or of the Scriptures, so that is probably not kerygma. (In #13, however, you have the opposite situation, John's disciples had repented of their sins, but had not

believed on Christ. Although this is a special case, it should be counted as preaching the Gospel because faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins is the object.) Paul's two court cases in Israel (#15 and #16) are the other instances which do not constitute a Gospel presentation. In neither of them is Jesus expounded, and in neither of them does Paul intend to see his audience come to faith in Jesus. Before the Sanhedrin, Paul was primarily seeking a way to diffuse the united opposition against him on the part of the Jewish religious leaders, and before Felix, a man already well-acquainted with "the Way," Paul merely states the cold facts of his court case. By this same token, the preaching of John the Baptizer is not counted as preaching the Gospel.[20] Finally, the question of whether there is more than one Gospel must be addressed. Dispensationalists believe that one Gospel was preached during Christ's ministry, the Gospel of the Kingdom, and a different Gospel, the Gospel of Grace, is proclaimed in the time of the Apostles and through the age of the Church today.[21] The Bible certainly uses both of these nomenclatures, and it is true that the Gospel of the Kingdom is mentioned much more frequently during the ministry of Jesus than after. But is there a difference between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of grace? No! Jesus didn't fail in establishing His kingdom or change His mind in hopes of succeeding later at it; His kingdom began with His ministry on earth[22] and He is still King of the universe today (Col. 1). Forgiveness of sin in the Old Testament was no less an operation of the Gospel of Grace than it is today. The calls to "believe the Gospel" and to "repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand" are synonymous: "By announcing the kingdom of God, [John] called for faith, since by the kingdom of God which he declared to be at hand, he meant forgiveness of sins, salvation, life, and every other blessing which we obtain in Christ; wherefore we read in the other Evangelists, 'John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins' (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3) ... Thus too, Christ began his preaching, 'The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel' (Mark 1:5)." (Calvin, I, 525) Furthermore, if the Gospel of the Kingdom were not for the church age, why did the apostles preach the kingdom long after the resurrection (Acts 8:12, 19:18, 20:24, 28:23, 31)?[23] No, there are not two Gospels, only one.

James Montgomery Boice, In his commentary on Acts, refers to the contents of the *kerygma* in Chapter 12 of his book, p.108:

*"Peter had a chance to give a brief sermon in his defense before the Sanhedrin (though it may have been considerably longer than the account Luke has preserved for us). The sermon contains in what formal New Testament studies has come to be called the *kerygma*, the fixed structure to almost all New Testament presentations of the gospel message. C. H. Dodd distinguished *kerygma* from *didachē*, which means teaching. The latter word refers mostly to ethical instruction, the kind of thing we find*

in the Sermon on the Mount and large portions of the New Testament letters. **Kerygma**, by contrast, refers to the basic gospel facts. The facts include; **Christ death for sins, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension to heaven, and His appearance and His resurrected form to chosen witnesses**. We find perhaps the clearest example of this proclamation pattern in first Corinthians 15 (The theology of the resurrection). But it is also found elsewhere and is the basic structure for the four gospels. It is precisely what we find in Peter's short sermon to the Sanhedrin" (emphasis mine).

- **The crucifixion:** "whom you had killed by hanging Him on a tree" (v. 30).
- **The resurrection:** "God... raised Jesus from the dead" (v. 30).
- **The ascension:** "God exalted Him to His own right hand as Prince and Savior" (v. 31).
- **The witness:** "We are witnesses of these things" (v.32).

Boice goes on to say, "obviously, the reason the disciples began with the **kerygma** is that they knew, as we should also know, that a person must first come to Jesus Christ as Savior before he or she can take on the burden of his teachings.