

Exegesis of Acts One

What have you gathered from Acts concerning missions and the work of the Holy Spirit? Reflect on that because I know some of you have been engaged in proclaiming the Gospel, in giving testimony for the hope that is within you. As we reflect on Acts in that respect, I want you to be aware of your own experience, your own past of searching for answers concerning that great manifestation that we have here in Acts. However, before we get to the question of the outpouring of the Spirit of God and the enablement for missions, we will look for a little while at the beginning of Acts. From the last lecture you may remember that we began with reflecting on the purpose and characteristics of Acts—the general theological characteristics. As you keep in mind that purpose of Acts, showing internal and external growth with external opposition and internal tension, we will begin with Acts 1:8 and then work through the entire chapter to understand how Acts is unfolding the message of that expansion.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus instructs His disciples in this way: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Many interpreters of Acts believe that this is a very important signpost and signal for the entire book of Acts. We will trace that throughout this semester as we look at Acts, and also at the life of Paul, who is a very significant witness in this concentric expansion of witness.

We will move toward Acts 1:8 as we look through chapter one, but keep in mind that this is an important statement that leads the disciples to anticipate what God, in His sovereignty and kindness, is about to unfold in their midst. Let us begin with the beginning of Acts and then work our way to verse 8 and a little beyond. Acts begins as a second volume. I have already made brief reference to that; you see that Luke is writing the second volume to his Gospel. I emphasized in a previous lecture that the Gospel is not finished with Luke 24; it is finished with Acts 28. This connection between Luke's Gospel and Acts is a literary connection initially, but it leads beyond that because he says that “Luke reported what Jesus began to do and teach.” This phrase, “began to do and teach,” can be interpreted in two ways. The Greek text could be interpreted as “what Jesus did.” So “began” can be interpreted in a very flat way; “I have reported to you in the Gospel what Jesus did,” and now one could interpret, “I will tell you what the Holy Spirit is doing.” However, I believe it is a better reading of the Greek text to say, “I have written to you in the Gospel what Jesus began to do and teach, and now I will tell you what He continues to do and to teach by means of the Holy Spirit.” That is a Christo-centric understanding of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in Acts. It is also a Trinitarian understanding so that the means by which the unfolding work of salvation is accomplished, the Holy Spirit, is emphasized, but not to the exclusion of the ministry of Jesus or the eternal will of the Father. Thus, there is not an abrupt change from Luke talking about Jesus in the Gospel of Luke and then suddenly talking only about the Holy Spirit in Acts.

It is really the Triune God working out salvation, bringing the Covenant people, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, to Himself. That is the dramatic unfolding that we see being worked out here. And so grammatically, and then theologically, I believe it is more apt to say, “I am telling you now in Acts, Theophilus, what Jesus continued to teach and do.” Then in brackets we can add, “by means of the Spirit of God.” This is the invocation of verse one as we briefly look through the initial verses of this chapter.

Moving on, we see that there is a repetition here of Jesus instructing His disciples and it is instructive that the theme of the kingdom of God, the rule of God, is being continued here. When Jesus speaks about the kingdom of God in Luke and the other Gospels, He speaks primarily about the rule of God and not the realm of God. When He says, “The kingdom of God is at hand,” He means, “The hand of God to rule in your midst, in your personal hearts and also corporately, is near.” There is a sense of indictment in this phrase, indicating that the people have fallen away. The people have separated themselves from

the direct authority of God and now the announcement of the kingdom is an announcement of the rule of God. All of what happens to Jesus, His death and resurrection and now His instruction, is subsumed under the understanding of God re-inaugurating, recalling, and commencing once more His rule among His people. It is the eternal purpose of God that He be their God and that they be His people; that is a red thread, a continuum throughout the Old and New Testaments, and it is certainly being carried through here. Thus it is not surprising that Jesus would continue to speak to the disciples about the rule of God and how the rule of God is unfolding now.

In verse four Jesus instructs his disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the gift promised by the Father: “Which you have heard me speak about.” The gift is clearly identified in the next verse as the gift of baptism in the Holy Spirit, the gift of receiving the Holy Spirit. Perhaps you read quickly over the fact that it is in Jerusalem that this is to occur: not in Alexandria, not in Antioch, not in Ephesus, certainly not in Rome, but in Jerusalem. Why Jerusalem? We could take a long time to reflect on that, but Jerusalem is the place from which God has chosen to reveal Himself. It is the place where His glory dwelled in the temple and it is from that place that His presence, His Spirit—who is indiscriminate between Jew and Gentile, between simple and wise, and between servant and master—is being poured out. It is the place from which God chooses to reveal Himself. Jerusalem as the place of God's self revelation is very significant.

The question of the disciples in verse six is very telling, is it not? The disciples ask, “Lord, are you at this time [when the Spirit of God is going to be poured out in Jerusalem] going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” Throughout Jesus' ministry they have been taught that the purposes of God will go beyond the confines of the people of Israel, especially toward the end of Jesus' ministry. The instruction of Luke 24 is clear that the purpose of the ministry of Jesus is to the house of Israel, but it goes beyond that. According to Isaiah 42 and 49, He is to be a light to the Gentiles, and you see that anticipated already in the beginning of Luke. Jesus is broadening the perspective on the eternal will of God by using the people of Israel as a symbol, a demonstration, of God's faithfulness and unmerited grace and mercy. But His final thrust is much broader. His purposes include a people that is made of Jews and Gentiles alike, and yet the disciples still insist that there should be a restoration for Israel at this point. It is instructive to note that Jesus does not reject this hope. As you read in verses seven and eight, and particularly seven, “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.” There is a sense in which Jesus does not deny that some of the purposes of God are to be fulfilled with the people of Israel.

I have read Acts carefully with this question in mind. What happens to Israel? Obviously it is a divisive issue. Christians are of different convictions on this question as the Gospel is now poured out. I liken it to a two-wave event. Yes, God is showing His faithfulness to the people of Israel, which Jesus does not deny, but behind that promise is a major tidal wave that has accumulated other prophecies and predictions of God's purpose to include Gentiles in this wonderful salvation process. Paul calls it “The mystery of the Gospel” that Christ would be among Gentiles. That is the mystery of the Gospel and so this tidal wave is washing over the anticipation of God's faithfulness to Israel.

I will not be very specific. Acts is not very specific on this point, except that this restoration theme in Acts 1:6 is being echoed and picked up in chapter three; we will turn to that briefly. In chapter three, in Peter's second sermon in Jerusalem, he says this concerning the restoration and the risen Christ (3:21): “Christ must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore [this is the same word, in a verbal form rather than in a noun form, as in Acts 1:6] everything as He promised long ago through His holy prophets.” I would liken this verse to a larger wave that comes right behind the smaller wave of anticipation of restoration for Israel in Acts 1:6. Here Peter says there is more to God's purposes and these purposes are going to wash over. I do not know exactly how God deals with Israel in particular,

but I know one thing: there is this tidal wave of God bringing Jews and Gentiles into His covenant people, bringing that message to completion in a broad way and thereby fulfilling and restoring everything that has been promised in the Old Testament—which includes that there is to be a light to the Gentiles from Jerusalem and that the messiah of God is to be that light.

There is something greater happening here. I see this dynamic in Acts; it does not deny God's faithfulness to Israel, but it affirms a greater work of God that is anticipated here. I would recommend to you in your reading of Acts not to get stuck with 1:6, but to read on. There is not much on restoration in Acts. This passage in 3:21 is among the only verses that we find on this theme. But as we see Acts unfold, it is plain that God is not denying the call to Israel. I disagree with those interpreters who say that Paul goes a certain way in preaching to the Jews and when they do not receive him, he turns away to the Gentiles. You can find proof texts that say, "And when they did not receive his message, he turned away and preached to the Gentiles," which the Gentiles were very happy about. But read a few chapters further down and he is again back preaching the Gospel to the Jews. I find that this is a continuous theme in Acts and is actually borne out in the Pauline Epistles: to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles also. There is a priority of preaching. There is a priority of presentation, first calling the people of Israel back to the covenant that God has made and including the Gentiles. Thus I differ with those who say that at some point in Acts Paul turns his back against the Jews, never to return. I do not see that anywhere in the book of Acts. Whatever else we would say about the outreach to the Jewish people, including discussions on Romans 9 to 11, I find that "First to the Jews and then to the Gentiles as well" is borne out. Jesus lives that, Paul lives that, Acts testifies to that, and I do not see an end to that. There is one way of salvation, not two ways: "Only by calling on the name of the Lord," Acts 2:21, and, "Only he who calls on the name of Jesus Christ will be saved," Acts four. There is one way for Jew and Gentile alike, but there is still a particular love that God has for His people. It is not wiped out, but it is taken over by a greater agenda. Perhaps that helps a little bit in understanding this development of anticipating a restoration to Israel.

Then comes verse eight, the very significant verse that speaks about the fact that the power is being poured out. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." Now this word, "power," is a wonderful term. It means strength, the ability to create; it can refer to the Spirit (as in Micah 3:8). It has all kinds of dimensions here, but one thing is clear: this is something that is being received. In fact, the entire section in the beginning of Acts is a section of waiting upon God and God's taking charge in His unfolding of His plan and the way He orchestrates that unfolding. Acts 1:8 is strongly participating in that, "For you will receive the power." Perhaps the best way to define power here in this passage is "a divine enabling." I am wrestling with the issue of how much that also means to receive the Spirit of God fundamentally. This is an issue because we see, for instance, that Cornelius receives the Spirit of God later on. There are also others who received the Spirit of God (we will probably get into that subject later when we reflect on the people of Israel already having the Spirit of God), and yet there is this outpouring here. We need to reflect on that a little more.

It is significant that 1:8, "To receive the Spirit of God.," probably explains 1:5, "John the Baptist baptized with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Note how that correlates to what I have said, that it is Jesus who takes charge by means of the Spirit to lead His people into the outpouring of the Spirit and then beyond. What is significant is not only the enabling, but also the purpose statement here: "You shall be my witnesses." In the Greek text the "my" is emphatic. When we in English say, "You shall be my witnesses," that is a normal grammatical construction. If I said, "You shall be witnesses of mine," perhaps you would notice this possessive aspect a little more. "You will not be just some witness, just somebody who says something, but you will be my possession. And after that you

will testify; you will witness.” In the Greek text, “My witnesses” is a little more emphatic so that the message is clear: “You will not go out and give a nice talk about the Gospel. You will not go out to become rich. You will not go out to impress people. You will not go out to be rhetorically refined and eloquent. You will simply go out and say, ‘I testify to the truth that this man who has died in our midst, who has been crucified, is alive. I have seen it.’” It is a non-eloquent but profound statement: “You will be my witnesses. You will just go out and speak to testify to that truth. You will teach an appalling message to the Jews and a stone of stumbling and foolishness to the Greeks. You already know that it will not be received with open arms wherever you go, and you are supposed to go everywhere.” Thus, that “My witnesses” is very significant. It signifies that they will be protected by God—associated with Him. They will not go out on their own terms but on God’s terms.

The Greek word for “witness” is *martus*. That is where we derive our word, “martyr.” Originally a martyr was not somebody who died. It was somebody who witnessed, but in an adverse circumstance, in a world that resisted light and truth—a world that resisted God’s “foolish” acts, which are actually wisdom to those who believe. That testimony may lead to death for the witness, thus making him or her a martyr in the sense of how we use the term now. Originally, though, this witness was simply to stand up for the truth. Not much has changed since the time of the disciples and our time. The message has not become more intelligent. It has not become less offensive to those who seek an unquestionable demonstration of God’s Son, and it has not become wiser to those who seek wisdom. The paradox that Paul brings out in 1 Corinthians is still true: for those who believe, the way of the cross is a wonderful basis of God’s demonstration and wisdom. In fact, it is THE demonstration of God’s strength and THE demonstration of God’s wisdom. Two things are going on as you are a witness: you have the opposition, and you have the treasure in earthen vessels. This is the wonderful, profound wisdom of God—this message of His salvation. If you remember the introductory lecture that I gave last time, this comes back to the whole problem of human existence. The witness is simply and profoundly to give testimony to the fact that there is one who solved the problem of the great glory and the great misery of man. This Gospel points to the one who is actually able to restore man to his glory by restoring him to a relationship with God. He atones for the debt, the sin, and the separation, and enables that person to grow in godliness.

There is much bound up with the term *martus*, “witness,” and this theme of witness is very important in Acts. You may remember that when Judas has to be replaced, in Acts chapter one, an apostolic witness has to undergo rather severe scrutiny, making sure he is able to witness to Jesus’ public ministry beginning with John the Baptist and going all the way through to Jesus’ resurrection. Thus Acts also establishes an important fact—that there are apostolic witnesses and then there are other witnesses. The other witnesses are not inferior in the sense of worth before God, but the apostolic witnesses are unique. That is why Acts uses the word “apostle” only for the twelve. There is only one exception where it is applied to Paul and Barnabas, and there are some explanations for that. The trend is that apostles in Acts are not just missionaries and messengers in the secondary sense, but apostles in the primary sense of those whom Jesus worked with—those whom Jesus trained and called to be witnesses. They are particularly equipped to testify to the truth of the Gospel entrusted to them. So there is much bound up with the reference to being a witness.

The last part of this verse is that they will testify to the truth of the resurrection of Christ beginning in Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, and then to the ends of the world. Where was Jesus standing when He pronounced this statement? He was standing on the Mount of Olives. I have never been in Israel, but Jerusalem is the high point with regard to the rest of the country, and the Mount of Olives is even slightly more elevated. Put yourself on the Mount of Olives for Acts 1:8. Look toward Jerusalem, down to Jerusalem. You are facing west. The Mediterranean Sea is in front of you and the hinterland is behind you as you now hear Jesus speak of how the witness is going out from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and

the end of the earth: the known Roman empire, the northern strips of North Africa, Asia Minor, Italy, and maybe Spain. That was the world they knew, so when Jesus pronounced this outlook of witness, in a real way and at least in an in-visionary way, they looked over the territory to be covered. They saw what was to happen and it was overwhelming. They were a small group of people and they were to go out with this message that they knew would be opposed by Jew and Gentile alike. Yet some would be moved by the Spirit of God, both Jew and Gentile, to respond to this witness. It is a magnificent beginning, a mountain-top experience, before they go down and have to deal with Stephen losing his life, with the bickerings about the Hellenistic Jewish widows getting less than Palestinian Jewish widows, with being thrown out of Jerusalem for their witness. They would soon be dispersed across this whole area that they now looked on.

There is much to come after Acts 1:8. Sometimes we also need these vision statements. We need to be up on a mountain and look beyond. I have experienced in my own life that going up on a mountain and looking out can sometimes be therapeutic. Being in a plane is a similarly therapeutic experience. When I am up in a plane it is good to look down at the world beneath me and see just how small we really are. It helps me to put all the problems of human existence—all the marriage problems and family problems and strife among various churches—into perspective. All of these things become rather small; you can more easily put them into perspective when you see the glorious greatness of this world. This is one of those experiences of gaining a perspective, seeing things from a distance. We are sometimes so focused on our problems and challenges that we cannot see God's larger plan. We need the comfort that God is going to work things out and that He will accomplish His purposes. Somehow, we have a mechanism in our hearts that says, "Yes, God is in charge, God is the Lord of this world, but it all depends on me, and woe to the church if I do not completely fulfill my duty." Rather than that, we need to remind ourselves over and over again that God is in charge; God is doing His work.

Jesus takes the disciples up on that hill and says, "This is my agenda, you are my witnesses. I will give you power." It is on God's terms, on God's playing field and you just go out and obey. It will still be a struggle to be witnesses; it will still be a major challenge. There is this martyrdom tone, even as you look out from the mountain, but somehow you can have the confidence that God is going to come through. Not because of your great work, but because of His great faithfulness. This is why I see Israel, the covenant people of God, as such an important flag that is waved across the history of mankind: not because the people of Israel are great, not because they merit it, nor because they are numerous or gifted, but because of God's mercy, faithfulness, kindness, and loyalty to one people. As you look at Israel, you look at God's greatness and faithfulness. It is continuing here in a broader sense and it is including the Gentiles in this wonderful work. We have the same faithful covenant God, the one who shows His power and purpose. I think that is wonderful for us to remember as we are down in the valleys moving through the difficulties of our days, our ministries, and our challenges. It is so easy to lose track of that. I must testify that I get caught up in the five percent in my life that is going badly, where I need help and strength, and I ignore the 95 percent of my life where God's provision of good health, family, and other blessings, is so evident. I take these blessings for granted, but instead look at that five percent of my life where there are unresolved difficulties!

I think we need to step back and see God's overarching work. Acts 1:9 will help us to get a new glimpse of that agenda of God: "After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight." The cloud is often used as a description of moving from the visible to the invisible world. It is a point of transition as Jesus goes into the invisible world. The important point here is that the angels who addressed these disciples as men of Galilee say, "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven." This is one of the key statements in Acts on the second coming of Christ.

In Acts 3:20 we read, “And that He may send the Christ who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.” This is another reference to the return of Christ. In Acts 1:11 we have a clear reference to the fact that Jesus will return in that same way that He left. He will re-enter the visible world, but in a much different way than we would have expected. He comes in judgment. He comes bringing His life into glory; these sobering references are in the rest of Acts. After Jesus leaves them, the disciples return to Jerusalem from the hill called Mount of Olives, a Sabbath's day walk from the city, and then they congregate and choose a replacement for Judas. This is the first chapter of Acts, the first presentation of how the messianic church was brought into life.

Let me briefly reflect on the further effect of that throughout Acts. I have told you that we will look at certain parts of Acts and then ask, “What happens now?” How is Acts 1:8 being borne out in the rest of Acts? This is called “missiological approach.” That is a big word for, “how is this message of witness now being carried out?” I just want to enumerate a few elements; hopefully you will have a chance to further study mission strategy. I only want to trace a few lines from Acts itself. What do we find there? This is called the “excursive missiological approach.” There are various ways that this witness is being carried out in Acts and the first major category that we find is public speeches. The term “public speeches” is good because it is a neutral term. They may have been sermons, maybe speeches in a more specific sense, but we will call them public speeches. That is the first means through which this message is now carried out, and you can anticipate that there will be other categories. Among these public speeches are sermons that are adjusted for the particular audience to whom they are preached. The general rule is, if you are addressing Jews, you will be making references to Old Testament text, while if you are addressing Gentiles, particularly in Acts 17, you will be making references to creation and perhaps a history of your audience's interpretation concerning creation. That is what happens in Acts 17. In a wonderful way creation and the interpretation of creation, amongst stoics in particular, are referenced. That is the general rule, that there is an adjustment to the audience, even beyond them. So there are certain speeches that are being given.

A second category, one that I think is often overlooked, is evangelism through dialogue or debate. That is a form that is not very common, but we certainly see it in Acts. At one point in Acts 19 we have the reference to the Greek word meaning, “to debate with somebody.” The most conspicuous example of this is when Paul goes to Ephesus and enters the debate house of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-ff). The lecture hall of Tyrannus was an institution; it was a place where you would go if you wanted to test your rhetorical skills or if you had a fancy new idea and you wanted to try it out on people. You would go to the lecture hall of Tyrannus and you would say, “I want to give a speech.” The most preferred time, some people assume, was at night between eleven and one. Most likely Paul was given a noon slot, which was a slow time because the people were recovering from their meal time and getting ready for the night debate. But there still must have been some people there who would have listened to his presentation. What we see here is that Paul uses a particular institution in this culture as a witness, for the sake of the Gospel, and he debates—he presents. Prior to that he was in the synagogue again; verse 19:8 says he was in the synagogue and then he went to the lecture hall because the Jews refused to believe. I believe that Paul used that means of debate frequently. When, in Acts 24:12 in his trial before Felix, Paul says, “My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple,” he is saying that it was not his main mode of operation to bring up quarrels. But his disposition was to engage. Debate can be a very wonderful form of presentation. The presentation of the Gospel and the witness does not only have to be through the means of preaching or an evangelistic sermon. It can very well be a debate, where people give a counter argument and you have to defend your position.

Another area of the witness in Acts is that of testimony—personal witness: “This is my testimony. This is what God has done in my life.” There are various examples in Acts where there are some testimonies given, perhaps in the context of a speech, such as in Acts 26. Paul includes a personal witness in one of his speeches. I do not think testimony or personal witness should be the foundation of Christian instruction, but it is very encouraging because every time we hear a testimony we have another piece of evidence of God's way of reaching a completely different person from oneself. The truth of Acts is mainly to break through all barriers and to reach all types of people. That is the miracle—it is wonderful and encouraging; it is a testimony to God's promise and unfailing faithfulness to reach those who seem unreachable. I think occasionally including testimony in our services is a wonderful form of passing on the witness: this is the public domain.

Now I'm coming to the next area: the household domain. It is interesting that, not only in the public arena do you find witness, but also in the household domain. It would take a long time to go into the sociology of the household. What we should not think when we say household is, Mama, Papa, and one daughter or one son. In the ancient world there would have also been relatives, friends, and the people that helped in the household. When something happens in the household in Acts, you need to envision 20 to 30 people: a little community of family—relatives such as grandparents, uncles, and aunts, but also employees, servants, and many times slaves. The household consisted of a group of people who had various functions. It was a microcosm of society, much more than the western family of today. You need to go more toward Asia, Russia, and other areas where families are still a broader unity. I still remember a colleague who was from the Philippines. I would be a good German, studying in my little cubicle; I had to be isolated, in the quiet and with nothing around, seriously concentrating on the task at hand. He could not stand that; the way he lived was so different. He studied at home with his children and wife—his desk in the middle of the living room, the children playing around, the telephone ringing, and his wife doing her work. That was how he felt that research should be done. That is a bit more of the household mentality of the New Testament rather than this austere German way. This is the household in which the Gospel is being presented and passed on. We have many references to that.

The house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, is a significant house in Acts. There are references, in the beginning of Acts, to houses being sold. In fact, you may get the impression that everybody sold everything. But that is not true because in Acts 12 Mary still has the title to her house in Jerusalem, and it is still very much a meeting place where Peter comes and where John Mark is, etc. (Acts 12:23). It is a place of congregating, of missionaries moving in and out, and of meetings. Jason's house in Acts 17 is another example, as is Titius Justus' house in Acts 18. Lydia's house, in Acts 16, is used for various purposes, such as passing on the Gospels. It is amazing when you look through Acts and ask, “What are the houses used for?” You find that they are used for prayer circles, and in many of the accounts that you have heard from countries where household churches are virtually the only form of the church, that is very significant. They are also used to promote fellowship among Christians through whole nights of prayer, worship and teaching (Acts 20:7); they are used for evangelistic meetings, some spontaneous, some planned; and they are used for instruction and teaching.

Thus, as we look through Acts we find that the households served many different functions. There is even a reference to the celebration of the Lord's Supper in a household in Acts 2:46. You have to deal with that carefully. There are all kinds of ramifications that I do not want to get into here and that you need to be careful about when you look at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. For instance, you need to understand that in Acts, there was no public meeting place for the church, which should inform how you interpret that event. Also, the household, which was a semi-public place, was a place of personal evangelism, which is not often mentioned in Acts, interestingly enough.

Various forms of public presentation of the Gospel are presented in Acts, and there is some discussion of household evangelism, but not much personal evangelism. There are some references to individuals: in Acts 8, for instance. There is the explaining of Scripture, of the purposes of God, to an individual. Ananias in particular had a wonderful job of giving testimony to the most well-known opponent of the Christian faith. Think of the person who seems to be the most viciously opposed to the Gospel and envision yourself called by God to give testimony. That is a big challenge, especially if the person to whom you are testifying seemingly has the authority to execute you. That is the danger that Ananias faced in Acts 9:10-18. This must have required much courage.

We have seen public, semi-public, and personal forms of evangelism in Acts. One other form is the literary presentation of the Gospel. I know that this category is not a separate unit and I know that the writing was the writing of Scripture—the Gospels, the Epistles. But I do believe that there is something to be learned from the fact that there was a literary dimension to the presentation of the Gospel by letter. I know that there is a difference between the canon of Scripture and you writing an evangelistic letter, but we need to appreciate the literary dimension of what is going on as this measure is being carried out. As a little bit of a side issue, if you believe that the early church was taken up with an understanding of the eminent coming of Christ, that it would be just a few days and a few weeks before His return, why write, why document? I think it is a misconception of the early church to believe that it was so fixated on this euphoric expectation of the return of Christ. There was a sense of faithfulness, of continuity, and of the nearness of Christ—in the sense of His presence.

I will not say much on missionary strategy except to observe that the way Paul moves about in the ancient world is by using the infrastructure at hand. That is the basic observation that I have made. Paul does not sit in Antioch and say, “What exists I will definitely not use. I will make my own, new roads. I will go in different ways to places people are not. I will go into the hills, and if I meet somebody, then that is definitely God's will.” No, he moves with the traffic. He moves into the centers. He uses, for the sake of the Gospel, that which the Greco-Roman empires had established. More than that, he even uses the infrastructure that the Jewish people had established—synagogues built all over the Greco-Roman world. But it is not mechanical and automatic. There is some reference to the fact that Paul is hindered from going in one direction and called to go in another direction. There is a dependency upon God, but not in contradistinction to the structures that are established.

I know of a church planter in Hawaii, a former student of Covenant Seminary, named Andy Leap. He, perhaps more than anybody that I have met before, did a sociological study, an analysis of Hawaii's history and the composition of ethnic groups. He did an enormous amount of preparatory study so that when he arrived he perhaps knew the island better than most people living there. It was amazing. I think that is wonderful, and he is still trusting that God leads him and will help him to know how to orchestrate his ministry. Doing this sort of work is not at the expense of dependency, rather it is good. It is good to know where you are going. Paul certainly knew where he was going and what he was doing. The account of Luke in Acts is a wonderful testimony to an insightful understanding of the particular settings where the Gospel was preached. So, when you go somewhere, understand the people, what motivates them, and where they are. These patterns that I explained to you of forms of evangelism, they have to be translated and adjusted for each different people group. That is the job of missiology, to say, “How does household evangelism relate to the French people? Is that a way to go or should you not be in the house, but rather out in the marketplace where they play boules?” That is probably where you need to be. In Germany, do you need to be in the house or should you be somewhere where people get together, in clubs or restaurants? You need to look at the particular situation and then transfer and translate.

That is a little bit of the understanding of how that message from Acts 1:8 is being taken out throughout the rest of Acts. I was particularly focusing on Paul, but also some of the other messengers. Let us conclude here and take with us that wonderful mountain top view. Perspective is something that we need to regain. If you are very tired, you need to go up on the mountain. Prayerfully regain your vision when you are involved in a battle down in the valley.