



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Record of the Beginning of Jesus' Reign

Chapter Fourteen

INTRODUCTION

NOTE: Division is a precursor of true unity, for true unity is impossible until we first separate from the elements which prevent unity. It is a refinement process – as with small gold nuggets that must be extracted out of the common ore to be united with other nuggets.

TWO things we'll see in this chapter are: 1. *Truth evokes hatred from the ungodly*, and, 2. *Unity is not always an option*. The fact is, the Gospel of the Kingship causes conflict and division – even among family members and people you thought were of like mind!

34. *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword.*
35. *For I CAME TO DIVIDE man against his father, and daughter against her mother, and wife against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies will be in his own household.*

Mtt. 10:34-35

18. *If the world hates you, know that it hated Me before it hated you.*
20. *... If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.*

Jn. 15:18 & 20

2. *... the hour is coming that whoever kills you will think he is doing a service for God.*

Jn. 16:2

The lesson to learn from this is that unity is not the prime motive. Truth is. And truth divides people! For when truth divides it facilitates a higher unity. Everyone seeking truth will go through a refinement process where the chaff is separated from the wheat.

In our study we have been following Paul and Barnabas as they journeyed together from Antioch, Syria across the Mediterranean to the island of Cyprus, and then to Asia Minor. In each city and village they were “calling out” those who had “ears to hear” the call. “The call,” or “the calling,” are terms used to describe the effect the gospel had upon those who chose to follow Jesus. It doesn't mean Paul was calling their names, or calling them to another location. It means they were being separated to a different mind set, and those who had “ears to hear” accepted “the call.” This call was part of the good news of Christ's reign and the redemption of Israel. The apostles carried the good news expressly to the locations where they knew the Israelites had settled after centuries of dispersion.

During these travels Paul and company experienced some interesting reactions to the message. The people were somewhat unpredictable. One man might receive the word gladly while another was confused by it. Some were just indifferent to the message, and some took offense. Some even tried to kill them because of it.

On one occasion, in Lystra, when a healing occurred through Paul, the people tried to worship them. This is a vital point. Men tend to worship men. This kind of idolatry can hit close to home for Americans today. People commonly follow leaders

based on how they feel, rather than on their record of leadership. The ability of a leader to attract large crowds is not due to accuracy and truth but due to their ability to project certain feelings. Church groups, for example, grow in number if the preacher makes the people feel secure. Group followings are almost never based upon truth or accuracy. Even with Jesus the crowds came for miracles and healings ... not to learn truth.

Unfortunately, many people love this form of idol worship. Otherwise, preachers and politicians wouldn't be so popular and well funded.

So while reactions from the people were unpredictable, reactions from the synagogues and governments (church-and-state) were always predictable. The established governments considered Paul a seditionist and a rabble-rouser. They hated Paul's message because he taught: "... *there is another King: Jesus*" (Acts 17:7). And the synagogues considered Paul's message a threat because he proclaimed a different Messiah and a different salvation from that of their Babylonian myths.

The governments and synagogues in Asia Minor regarded Paul's message as political insurgence; an attempt to weaken the established powers. They labeled Paul and company "enemies of the state." And, of course, that label was perfectly true. They WERE enemies of the church/state! And so should be ALL Christians.

Once Christians acknowledge that Christ is at enmity with the Beast, they must choose some level at which to enter the struggle. But whatever level they choose, they MUST choose ... and take a stand. We don't criticize them as long as they do something ... anything.

But to deny the enmity ... that is treason. Anyone who thinks a Christian can be a friend of the Babylonian state neither understands the Gospel of Christ's Reign nor the law of God.

The fact is, "the State" ("The Establishment," "Central Government") has always been at war with the Kingship of God! The "State," so-called, has always feared Jesus and tried to cover-up the fact that He is King. To this day the State is the avowed adversary to the Reign of Christ and to anyone who aligns himself with the Reign of Christ. Professing Christians should take this very seriously.

Now, as we pick up with chapter 14, Paul and company are about to experience another rejection similar to the one they'd experienced earlier in Pisidia.

QUESTION: Are you claiming that we are worshipping celebrities or idols if we support a certain church or minister? Does that mean we are idolators if we support your ministry? Doesn't God expect us to support his work?

ACTS 14:1-6 THE GOOD NEWS CAUSES DIVISION

And again it occurred in Iconium, that they entered into the synagogue of the Judaists and began to speak. Thus, a multitude of the Judaists and the Greeks began to believe.

But the unbelieving Judaists roused up and disturbed the souls of the nationals against the brethren.

Therefore they spent much time speaking boldly about the Lord, bearing witness to the communication of his grace as He gave signs and portents which occurred through their hands.

But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Judaists, and part with the apostles.

And the nationals, together with the Judaists and their rulers, rushed to assault them and to stone them.

But having perceived it, they fled down into Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and the country round about.

AFTER leaving Antioch in Pisidia, Paul and company turned back eastward to Iconium. The Judaists soon began stirring up the local people by lying and conspiring against the disciples. But despite the persecution, Paul and Barnabas spent a long time boldly teaching the word of God. In the process, God granted signs and portents through their hands as a witness to their message.

The word of God polarizes people. The situation grew interesting as the town divided into two sides. When people are in a rut, God's word separates the repentant from the rebellous. It divides the wheat from the chaff. It's impossible to remain neutral when God's word comes into play.

Has anyone ever tried to make you feel guilty for not supporting the established status quo? Preachers and politicians do that to people. But status quo usually sacrifices truth and progress. Conformatists, conservatives and the status quo have never achieved much. We shouldn't place unity as our main goal. Truth should be

our goal. Unity should come automatically among those who seek truth in the spirit of Christ. But Jesus did not say that “unity” would set us free! He said TRUTH would set us free! For unity to be genuine it must be in the spirit of Christ ... not for the sake of status quo, conformity, fraternity, or political advantage.

Fear of division can prevent you from teaching the Word of God altogether. God’s word divides people. There is, admittedly, a form of strength in sheer numbers. But strength in numbers does not serve Christ. And political strength in numbers is called “a beast.” Only when strength is built on truth and Christ’s Reign can it bless us.

The word of God polarizes people and separates them for Christ. It is God’s judgment at work. Those who accept the message of Christ’s Reign are blessed, and those who fight the message are judged. Thus, it causes separation. God’s word brings judgment. Compare that to “church policy,” which seeks to unify for the sake of numbers which translates to

money. As negative as it may sound to some, the positive effect of scripture is that it polarizes and causes division.

Conversely, seeking unity by mincing our words and sacrificing truth creates a kind of unity that is a curse. Paul and Barnabas didn’t mince their words. Verse four says that their words caused the city to be divided. Some held with the Judaists and some with the apostles. Paul and Barnabas obviously were not striving for unity here!

In verse five things start getting nasty. Not only is the town divided, but now a mob of both Judaists and nationals came together against Paul, the disciples, and the locals who were accepting the gospel.

Thus, the mission was a success. Paul and company had gone into Iconium, surgically divided and separated the gold from the common ore. All those who could hear and accept the truth (i.e., “the sheep who could hear the Shepherd’s voice”) had been called out. Now they departed for Lystra & Derbe.

QUESTION: Are you saying that pastors should not try to create harmony and unity among people? It is hard to believe Jesus wants us divided. How can constant bickering over “petty differences” in doctrine among pastors and factions actually be a good thing? Nothing gets accomplished!

ACTS 14:7-10 HEALING IS NOT THE MEASURE OF FAITH

And there they were declaring the good news.

And a certain man in Lystra sat disabled in his feet, lame from his mother’s womb, having never walked:

THIS man of Lystra was born paralyzed. Paul’s words resonated with him and he believed the good news of Christ’s Reign. Jesus was saving Israel, and the lame man believed it. His trust (i.e., “faith”) came as a result of salvation working upon his heart. “*We love because He first loved us*” (I Jn. 4:19).

The KJV Bible mistranslates this to say “*he had the faith to be healed.*” It is important that we don’t gloss over this unfortunate wording. Faith healers sometimes try to use

this KJV rendition to suggest that insufficient faith is the reason some folks don’t get healed. The KJV rendition seems to back that conclusion, but the correct translation does not.

Many people think that miracles can be evoked by a certain quality or quantity of faith. But miracles occur where and when God wills them ... for reasons that are his own. Faith alone cannot produce a miracle. In reality faithful people by the millions go un-healed every day! Neither the quantity nor the quality of faith

This man was hearing Paul as he spoke: who having observed him and having noticed that he was believing he would be saved,

Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on your feet. And he stood up and walked.

determine where and when miracles occur. Miracles are the result of other criteria.

Miracles, then, were never the main point. Miracles are tools of God to show mercy, or to get people’s attention for a particular purpose.

Think of the documented cases of miracles. Did they occur among the faithful ... or the unfaithful? Didn’t they usually happen in sight of the unfaithful to get their attention? The primary commission of the apostles was to carry a message, not to perform miracles. Jesus was not sent

to perform miracles for people, but to reach Israel and turn her back to God.

Healing, and miracles, were NEVER the goals and purposes of Christ's Reign. The apostles weren't commissioned to teach techniques of how to perform miracles. They preached repentance, truth, and life.

But given a choice, people will opt for miracles instead of the message of life. Next we'll see the not-so-surprising way these people reacted to the miracle that occurred there at Lystra.

ACTS 14:11-18 THE PAGAN DOCTRINE OF INCARNATION

And the crowds having seen that which Paul did, lifted up their voices, in the Lycaonian tongue, saying "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men."

And they were calling Barnabas "Zeus," and Paul "Hermes" because he was the leader of the communication.

And the priest of Zeus, which was before their city, brought bulls and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice.

But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they tore their clothes, and ran out into the crowd, crying out,

And saying, Men, why are you doing these things? We are men also, with weaknesses like you, and we are declaring good news to you to turn you from these vanities to the living God who made the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and all things in them:

Who in past generations permitted all the nations to go their own ways.

Although He didn't leave Himself without witness, working good, giving you rains from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

And with these sayings they scarcely restrained the crowds from sacrificing to them.

HERE is the perennial problem with superstitious man. He wants miracles. Given a miracle, he misinterprets it and tries to invent ways to worship the creature instead of the Creator.

22. Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said: Men of Athens, I

perceive that in all things you are given to fear of demons.

Acts 17:22

Either knowingly or unknowingly men begin acting like sorcerers instead of Christians after witnessing a miracle. Sorcery is the pursuit of miracles through so-called secret

knowledge or special powers. Idolatry follows religion like night follows day.

The gimmick of inventing gods who come down from the sky to take the form of men is basic to the major religions of the world. From Nimrod to Zeus, from Astarte to Helen, the "gods" of the Egyptians, Sumerians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans have been supposedly visiting Earth and taking human form since the earliest recorded history. The "Judeo-Christian" (unbiblical) myth of "spirit beings" who "possess" the physical bodies of men is a continuation of the same gimmick. There is nothing new under the Sun. Idolatry is carried through religious history. In chapter twelve, for instance, you may recall how the people spontaneously proclaimed Herod a god during one of his public orations. Just moments afterward a surprising event proved him mortal. During his speech the audience shouted, in effect, "*He must be a god. His words are not those of a mortal.*" Then, suddenly, a messenger of God stepped out of the crowd and struck him a mortal wound and he died like a mortal man. The people learned that Herod wasn't a god after all.

It is a common theme. The men of Lystra were religiously programmed so that when signs and miracles occurred through Paul and Barnabas they responded in typical form. They proclaimed, "*These are gods who have come down from heaven and changed into men!*"

History shows that man's religion incorporates sorcery and mythology, and from time immemorial it has repeated the same errors. And "immortals" taking the form of mortals is a popular religious gimmick. It is a time-proven pattern.

ACM's publication titled, "*Is Jesus God?*" shows that this gimmick is still a common theme in the churches. Today, a large faction of what can only be called "pseudo-Christianity" is still being programmed to accept the gimmick that gods descend and take the form of men. Or, more to the point, that the Creator (Yahweh) descended and

took the form of a mortal man calling himself Jesus. The churches would have us think that Jesus was a god-man (Yahweh incognito), not a mortal man. If this is true, it would have made Him incapable of being a true example for mortal man.

Yahweh is different from man. Man is mortal and finite. Yahweh is immortal and infinite. **THEY ARE OPPOSITES! IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BE BOTH THINGS AT ONCE!** The difference between man and Yahweh is clear, even in the case of Jesus.

19. God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent:

Num. 23:19

5. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6. Who, subsisting (existing lower) in the image of God, thought not to grasp for equality with God.

Phil 2:5-6

The myth of gods becoming men was not new with the council of Nicea in 325 A.D. It's as old as paganism. And in verse 11, some people were proclaiming that Paul and Barnabas were gods who had come down and taken on flesh right there in downtown Lystra.

In verse 12, we read that they gave Barnabas the name "Zeus," and Paul was labeled "Hermes." In Greek/Roman mythology, Zeus was considered the father god. Hermes was his son. Hermes was "the logos" ("The Communication") because he delivered Zeus' words to mortals as implied in verse 12. Therefore, they called Paul "Hermes" because he was, in Greek vernacular, "*the chief of the logos*" – i.e., the head of communications.

Rome was pagan. The theology of pagan Rome was carried over into the Holy Roman Empire (the Church of Rome). The Roman Church called itself "Christian" and its pagan theology, under the guise of being Bible theology, was implanted in churches everywhere. They turned their god into a man ... just like their ancestors did with earlier gods. Thus,

it was to be expected that they would transfer the attributes of Hermes (Zeus' son) to Jesus (Yahweh's Son).

This counterfeit theology was passed along to churches ever since. The "Jesus" of the churches is a strange god like Hermes of the Romans. He is not the Jesus of Scripture. (*TAC, May-June 1992: "Incarnation – The Great Imposture"*)

If you still believe that Jesus was a supernatural god who visited Earth and took on a flesh-and-blood body, like the Hermes myth, shouldn't you be wondering right now about the strange similarity between Roman Paganism and your own beliefs? Is it possible that the churches adopted a pagan concept! And if the churches' version of Jesus is a Roman myth, who then was the real Jesus? John tells us Jesus was "flesh," and that anyone who says otherwise has the spirit of antechrist.

2. "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ came in flesh (i.e., was mortal) is from God,

3. But every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God: and this is the spirit of antechrist ..."

1 Jn 4:2-3

The pagan concept of incarnation evoked a serious reaction from Barnabas and Paul – especially when it was applied to them personally. When Barnabas and Paul heard that the townspeople were assembling to sacrifice to THEM, they reacted quickly and loudly! This was not just a small misunderstanding! The superstitious locals intended to deify (make into gods) Paul and Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas were so incensed by the idolatry that they tore their clothes and ran shouting into the crowd. They shouted, "*Why do you try to make us gods? We are mere men, having the same weaknesses as you.*"

The ancient custom of tearing one's clothes demonstrated great revulsion or shame.

Jesus, before He died, was a man with the same infirmities (weaknesses) as other men.

15. "For our High Priest is not unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, having been tempted in all points like ourselves"

Heb. 4:15

17. "Wherefore He was obliged to be made like his brethren in all points, that He might be a faithful High Priest toward God and in making reconciliation for the sins of the people.

18. For, in that He himself has suffered, having been tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted."

Heb. 2:17-18

To say that Jesus was actually an Immortal in disguise is to deny the very purpose of His life and His death. This is called "vanities," lies, nonsense! To call God Almighty a man is a lie. And to say that Jesus was not a man is a lie.

Jesus could relate to man's weaknesses and temptations because He too was a man sharing those traits. Yahweh, on the other hand, is not weak nor can He be tempted.

13. "... God cannot be tempted ..."

Jms. 1:13

Men saw the flesh-and-blood Jesus for over 30 years, yet no man ever saw Yahweh.

12. "No man has seen God at any time."

1 Jn. 4:12

MAN WORSHIPPING MAN

Man has a natural propensity for worshipping man. Men have always created their gods in their own images. Therefore, it is only natural that men would try to re-create Yahweh in their own image. Think about this for a moment. What would actually happen and what would be implied if the supernatural, immortal, infinite Yahweh somehow changed into a natural, mortal, finite man? If you never took the time to follow this idea to its logical conclusion, please do so.

If Yahweh had determined to make himself mortal, and to die, that

would not have been our salvation! To the contrary, it would have been our END! When the source of all life dies ... ALL THINGS DIE! When the One who orders and sustains the Universe loses his power, all things disintegrate. Creation as we know it ceases to exist! If Yahweh had done this – as the churches and ignorant preachers claim – it would have been the end of mankind, not its salvation!

To this some may respond, “Well, Yahweh didn’t die spiritually – only physically.” You may have heard this argument. Aside from the fact that it has no meaning, it is just a quick attempt to answer an unanswerable error in doctrine.

But, for the sake of argument consider: if Yahweh had disguised Himself as a man but retained his immortality, his godship, his power – in any amount or degree – then technically He would not have truly been a MAN and could not have truly lived or died as a man. Men are mortal. If Yahweh had totally divested himself of all his god-

powers to become a mere man He certainly could not have raised himself from the dead! Neither could He have performed miracles and maintained the order of the Universe during that 33-year period known as the mortal life of Jesus.

Alright, then, let’s further examine the argument. Let’s say Yahweh somehow did actually give up EVERY last bit of his immortality. That means He would have become a 100% mortal MAN with no supernatural abilities. It also means no God would have been left to grant miracles, visions of prophecy, or to raise people from the dead, etc. If God had divested himself of all his power it should be obvious that mortal man cannot accomplish the supernatural miracle of raising himself up from death. Do you know any man who can raise himself from the dead? No? Well, if Jesus had been Yahweh in disguise, and if He raised himself up from death, then He would have still had His god-powers. He would have still

been immortal and could not have truly died. In that case his “death” would have really been only a trick staged to impress mortals. If this were true He could have never truly “suffered.” His death could not have been compared to a man’s death. The tears of blood, anguish, burial, and raising would have been only a well-acted performance.

So, if you maintain that Jesus was in anyway immortal and supernatural, then you are not only saying that Yahweh lied, but that He tricked us ... that there wasn’t a real death on the cross, and thus no sacrifice for sin! It was just another pagan incarnation gimmick.

However, if we admit that Jesus was not Yahweh, but rather His Son, born mortal with no supernatural powers of his own (His powers were coming from his Father, not Him), that puts Jesus and His Father in perfect harmony with Scripture and does away with all supposed contradictions.

ACTS 14:19-22 CITIZENS OF CHRIST’S REIGN = OUTCASTS FROM THE WORLD SYSTEM

But certain Judaists from Antioch and Iconium came and persuaded the crowds, and having stoned Paul they dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

But, as the disciples stood round about him he stood up and went into the city: and the next day, together with Barnabas, he departed to Derbe.

And when they had declared the good news to that city, and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch.

Anchoring the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that it is necessary to enter into the Kingship of God through many tribulations.

AS YOU recall, there were two Antiochs. One was Antioch, Syria where Paul and company began their journey. The other was Antioch, Pisidia that was eastward in Asia Minor. The Judaists that came to attack Paul and Barnabas at Lystra were from Antioch and Iconium in Asia Minor. Paul and company had visited those cities earlier. These Judaists were no doubt some of that same mob that had attacked in those cities the first time they were there.

The Judaists in Iconium raised a mob and intended to stone Paul and Barnabas, forcing them to flee to Lystra. This was a typical response to the news of Christ’s Kingdom. Paul and Barnabas learned they couldn’t expect an honest response or rebuttal to their message. The same is still true today when you try to present truth to most people. They have no honest response, and they often resort to slander, lies, and even violence.

Derbe, then, was the furthest extent of Paul’s first journey to Asia Minor. At that point he turned around and retraced his steps back through the towns that he had visited on his way there.

Back in Lystra, once again, the Judaists attempted to kill Paul by stoning. Apparently they thought they had

succeeded. The disciples were concerned that he might be dead. But he survived and continued on.

This was one of the persecutions to which Paul refers later in 2 Corinthians:

24. From the Judaists, five times I received forty stripes less one.

25. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26. In journeys often, in perils from rivers, in perils from plunderers, in perils from my own race, in perils from the nationals, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27. In labor and toil, in sleepless nights often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

2 Corinthians 11:24-27

Paul saw some tough days! He endured shipwreck and starvation. Stoning and whipping were his rewards for risking life and limb to bring this good news to his brethren in the nations.

Paul recovered from the stoning, rose up and departed for another town. Amazingly, the harrowing experiences were like water off a duck's back to him. He had been commissioned with a message that meant more to him than his very life. If any city rejected the message, he was to shake the dust off his feet and go on to the next city. That's what he did. After they stoned him there was little doubt that his message was rejected. It was time to move on.

In verse 22 Paul observed that our entrance into the Kingship of God is usually accompanied by tribulations. This seems to be as true today as it was in his day. Tribulation seems to be part of the transition process ... perhaps because it requires something very powerful to shake people loose from their religious moorings.

So, even in the face of opposition, Paul began his return trip back through these same towns ... still holding out hope for anyone who had

ears to hear. By his witness, and the way he handled persecution, he strengthened the new disciples. The persecutions and the trials they encountered did not deter them. The early disciples learned they could survive and become better men for the hardship.

This was an important point, because it addressed man's tendency to seek comfort; his aversion to admitting error; his fear of being unpopular or a misfit. We have a natural "need" to avoid criticism and

to be accepted by our contemporaries, no matter how ungodly they are. We run with the herd. But to follow Christ we must let go of our need to "fit in." To be free of the need for acceptance with the herd is one of the greatest freedoms our people can experience.

The Apostle Paul faced that need. After being stoned, whipped, and shipwrecked his preference of "friends" decidedly had changed. His peers were clearly a new set of people.

QUESTION: You talk as if you are already in Christ's Reign and that you and a few others are the only ones who can "see" it. Isn't this an elitist view that makes you "holier" than us folks out here waiting for Christ's return to set up his VISIBLE kingdom we can all see?

QUESTION: What about the God-fearing people who attend church. They don't have the time to study the Bible as much as the pastor because they are busy working at their job to make ends meet. Does this mean they are worshipping idols because they support their church?

ACTS 14:23-28 ELDERS: LEADERS IN CHRIST'S KINGSHIP

And recognizing the elders of the ecclesias, having prayed and fasted, they commended them to the Lord, in whom they believed.

And passing through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

And having spoken the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:

And from there they sailed off to Antioch, from where they had been entrusted to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

And when they had arrived, and had gathered the ecclesia together, they recounted the many things that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the nations.

And they spent a long time together with the disciples.

THE word “elders” in verse 23 does not refer to a church office. They weren’t appointing “church elders” in the local Baptist church. The word “elders” correctly means “olders.” It meant men of age and wisdom. These were men who had earned the respect of the people; men with understanding and experience, capable of leading. They were not “elders” by virtue of appointment, but by virtue of age, reputation, experience, and honor. So, don’t misdefine this word by accepting the church definition. These were NOT church officers selected spontaneously by Paul.

Paul and Barnabas were recognizing and acknowledging older men who held the respect of the people. They acknowledged them because they were the natural patriarchs capable of leading an ecclesia. If anyone had a problem or a dispute, it could be handled by these wise men. This is the way an ecclesia works. An elder is a leader; a father figure. He is not a ruler or lawmaker as is the case in man’s central governments. An elder is respected because he has established a track record for using good judgment. If he doesn’t have this innate ability, the people’s trust will naturally be placed elsewhere. In Christ’s ecclesia there is no tyranny. No one is elected to power. The majority does not rule in Christ’s ecclesia. No man RULES. But everyone is held responsible before God for his actions.

Winding their way back through Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga and

Attalia, Paul and company returned to Antioch, Syria, where the long journey began. They reported to the Antioch ecclesia all of the things that the Lord had done by their hands in Asia Minor. As we have seen, some of those long lost brethren of the dispersion would not hear. Not everyone was happy to hear the good news. Yet, some were happy, and the good news of the Kingship continued to spread and to evoke different responses from different people.

QUESTION: Since I was raised with the habit of attending church, it is hard for me to swallow the idea that a church is not an ecclesia. It seems impossible that all those sincere people down through the centuries who have attended churches could have been wrong in doing so? There had to be some good people in churches in history! Were their lives totally wasted because they didn’t understand the meaning of the word “ecclesia”? If you are right in your assertions, why didn’t God alert more people sooner?

CONCLUSION

This Book of Acts is an outstanding adventure. Imagine what it would have been like to experience it first hand. If we can start to understand some of the things these early ecclesians saw and experienced, it will give us a better handle on how to conduct our lives and how to overcome the battles before us.

As the powers of church-and-state always pervert and confuse the meaning of the Reign of Christ, they always view the Bible as a “Radical Book of Hate and Prejudice.” True Christians are always misfits under the government of man – especially under the U.S. Constitution! Things have not changed that much since Paul’s day.

In chapter 15, we’ll get into the doctrinal question of the application of certain laws of Moses.

END OF LESSON FOURTEEN

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

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. Sometimes, a shared experience or some similar eccentricities may be mistaken for “unity.” But true unity comes only from sharing a common spirit. Spiritual unity is the only “unity” that works and endures.

2. In the Bible “unity” is referred to as being “one in spirit.” People who are “one in spirit,” even without specific instructions, will react in similar ways in given situations. Individual members of a family can be one in spirit regarding the family unit. That unity of spirit, when called upon, will evoke similar reactions from the various members. Families function because the members are one in spirit. Sports teams and military units may temporarily share a common need to support and protect one another ... but this is expedience, not true unity.

3. Unity in Christ is manifest when individuals find themselves spiritually invested into a common cause: a Kingship. In Christ we can be individuals with differences, but our common love and devotion to Christ and his Kingship unifies us in HIM.

4. “Unity” that is forced upon people is not unity at all. It is military and political conquest and slavery.

5. Christ desires unity in spirit, and He achieves true unity by first offering his people the opportunity to separate from the destructive ruts and “friends” they’ve fallen in with.

6. Healings and miracles are not measures of a man’s faith. Rather, they are displays of the power and compassion of God.

7. The majority of the doctrines which define church denominations are patently pagan in origin: like *speaking in tongues, the Trinity, heaven & hell, the institution of “church” itself, the immortal soul, a supernatural “Satan,” etc.* The pagan doctrine of incarnation is especially basic to the central premise of church theology.

8. “Elders” are NOT created by appointment or ordination as taught by the churches. “Elder” means “older.” Ordaining a man does not make him older. Paul and Barnabas did not create elders. Rather, they recognized and acknowledged them. They were the older, wiser, proven leaders. They received due recognition. True elders are produced organically, not by arbitrary appointment.

The church practice of “ordaining elders” (the errant KJV rendering of the phrase) is not a Biblical doctrine.

ANSWERS:

pg.2

The field of religion is, and has always been, a hot bed of con men. Con men (false prophets) have followers who support them. Thus, followings do not validate a man. Yes, God expects people to support his work, but judging what to support is a serious decision. When a man supports a work he’d better know what he is supporting. It is not enough that it has the trappings of religion. Irresponsible support not only squanders resources, it empowers con men as leaders and role models.

For instance, some people support political leaders thinking they can help. But, every politician is owned by the Beast system.

Some well-meaning people support preachers whom they know to be liars and con men. They justify it by claiming the preacher has a large audience and he publicly complains about some of the right things. Supporting him allows people to “vent their spleen by proxy.” Nothing is accomplished except a petty feeling of vindication. And the false prophets continue causing confusion and diverting truth seekers.

It is our duty to NOT support frauds. We are commanded to “test the spirits” (motives) of these men, and support the work of Christ – not religious con men!

1. *“Beloved ones, do not believe every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone forth into the world.”*

I Jn. 4:1

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This is not about “pastors” or their churches. What they do, or don’t do, is irrelevant. The Book of Acts is about the work of Christ. Jesus separates people by calling them out. He extracts them like gold out of rubble. “Pastors” today unite people and remove the gold from their members’ pockets.

Christ’s goal is not to divide brethren, but to SEPARATE us from unbelievers. Among brethren petty differences are meaningless and should not cause division. “Constant bickering” is a sign of small minds.

The issues of the gospel are not “petty.” They can and do cause division... as the remnant is separated from the masses.

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a. Those who see Christ’s Kingship are not “elite.” They are blessed!

b. The “fear of God” is only “the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). Pastors count on you not having time to study. Learning more about Jesus will alleviate the lust for mythology and idolatry. If church is the problem, more church is not a cure.

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In condemning the concept of “church” we are not condemning the people who are victimized by the churches. But people must choose between building churches or accepting the Reign of Christ. Those with ears to hear will be aware of it.

2. *I know your works ... you have tested those who said they were apostles and were not, and you found them to be liars.*

Rev. 2:2