**The Foolishness of Preaching  
*Edwin L. Crozier***

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**Text:** Acts

**Introduction:**

1. 1 Corinthians 1:21
   1. “For since through the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach (τοῦ κηρύγματος) to save those who believe.”**[[1]](#footnote-2)**
   2. From the day of Pentecost until now, it is only by the message of the Gospel, proclaimed by those who love God and His truth that salvation has been passed from one generation to the next.
2. Romans 10:14
   1. “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? (κηρύσσοντος)”
   2. If no one preaches, no one will be saved.
3. Acts 11:13-14
   1. “And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.”
   2. From the beginning of the New Covenant, God chose to bring salvation through those who preached the message He ordained.
   3. God could have saved Cornelius, Saul (see Acts 9:6), and all mankind however He wanted, but He chose preaching. Specifically, He chose a message to be preached that saves.
4. Romans 1:16-17
   1. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteous of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”
   2. No doubt, the Gospel is that saving message. And we must not be ashamed of it.
5. How should we who proclaim the Gospel steward the message with which we have been entrusted?
   1. We can read the Gospels to see how Jesus taught His first preachers. We can read the epistles to gain great insight into the application of the message we preach.
   2. We can read The Acts of the Apostles to see how the first heralds of God’s proclamation stewarded the message they had been given. What better place to start to learn a model for our own stewardship and preaching?

**Body:**

1. **On Heralds And Preachers (A Comparison And Contrast)**
   1. Preacher: κῆρυξ—”*a herald*, *a messenger* vested with public authority, who conveyed the official messages of kings, magistrates, princes, military commanders, or who gave a public summons or demand, and performed other various duties.” (Thayer)
      1. Used three times in the New Testament
         1. I Timothy 2:7: “For this I was appointed a preacher [κῆρυξ] and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.”
         2. II Timothy 1:11: “For which I was appointed a preacher [κῆρυξ] and apostle and teacher.”
         3. II Peter 2:5: “If he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald [κήρυκα] of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.”
   2. The herald’s greatest responsibility: accurately present the message of the one who commissioned him.
      1. “It is demanded, then, that they deliver their message as it is given to them. The essential point about the report which they give is that it does not originate with them. Behind it stands a higher power. The herald does not express his own views. He is the spokesman of his master...Heralds adopt the mind of those who commission them, and act with the plenipotentiary authority of their masters. It is with this authority that the κῆρυξ like the πρέσβυς, conducts diplomatic business. Hence κῆρυξ and πρέσβυς are often used synonymously. Yet there is a distinction between the herald and the envoy. In general one may say that the latter acts more independently and that he is furnished with greater authority. It is unusual for a herald to act on his own initiative and without explicit instructions. In the main the herald simply gives short messages, puts questions, and brings answers. Sometimes he may simply hand over a letter (Diod. S., XIB, 47, 1). He is bound by the precise instructions of the one who commissions him (Eur. Suppl., 385). The good herald does not become involved in lengthy negotiations but returns at once when he has delivered his message (ibid., 459, cf. 388). In rare cases he may be empowered to decide on his own. But in general he is simply an executive instrument. Being only the mouth of his master, he must not falsify the message entrusted to him by additions of his own. He must deliver it exactly as given to him (Plat. Leg., XII, 941a).” (Friedrich, *TDNT*, p. 687-688)
      2. Notes to highlight from the above quote that we should parallel as heralds commissioned by God.
         1. Deliver the message as given to us.
         2. The message must not originate with us, expressing our own views.
            1. Recognizing, of course, unlike apostles and prophets, we are not inspired. We are expressing “our own views” of what the text says. But we must strive to let our views be determined by God’s Word, and our views must change when demonstrated they do not measure up to His Word.
         3. We must adopt the mind of the One who has commissioned us, God.
         4. As heralds, we are not envoys who can act on our own initiative, but only according to the instruction of our King.
         5. We are only the mouths of our Master; we must not falsify the message by making additions of our own.
      3. Jesus set the example as the ultimate herald of the Father (cf. Hebrews 1:2).
         1. “For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak” (John 12:49).
      4. The apostles demonstrate this same attitude as Jesus’s heralds in Acts.
         1. “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:19b-20)
   3. Heralds as messengers from deity
      1. Among the ancient Greeks, some heralds were special messengers from the gods.
         1. “Every herald is strictly κῆρυξ τῶν θεῶν [*a herald of the gods*]; he stands under their protection and enjoys their special favour [sic]. But the gods have also their own special heralds to whom they entrust specific messages in the same way as earthly kings…Hermes is a divine herald in the specific sense. He has the same task at the assembly of the gods as do heralds in popular assemblies. The gods send him to men when they have something to impart....Furthermore, when the gods wish to communicate with men, they use not only Hermes…but also selected men who are commissioned to deliver the message to their fellowmen.” (Freidrich, *TDNT*, p. 693)
         2. The ancients expected the gods to send messengers to them. No wonder the Lystrans mistook Barnabas and Paul for Zeus and Hermes respectively (Acts 14:8-18). Paul was considered Hermes because he was the chief speaker, the role of the herald.
         3. Thus, the ancients would not be surprised to learn the One True God sent out heralds to proclaim His message.
         4. “Preacher” then is a blessed title that should not be taken up lightly by those who would carry the message of the one true God. If all Christians should speak only as the oracles of God (I Peter 4:11), how much more those who desire to wear the title “preacher.”
         5. Yet, preachers must not be filled with a sense of self-importance because of their blessed role.
            1. Friedrich notes that considering the status of heralds in the ancient world and how common they were, it is surprising that the term is only used three times in the New Testament. (Friedrich, *TDNT*, p. 696)
            2. Recognizing this, we are reminded that what is truly important is not the Christian herald but what is heralded. The Gospel that is proclaimed is the power to save and not the proclaimer of the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17).
            3. Cornelius was saved by the message Peter preached, not by Peter himself (Acts 11:14).
   4. Divine protection for heralds.
      1. “Among the Greeks religion and politics cannot be separated. They are too closely linked. It is natural, then, that religious significance should attach to the political herald. When a κῆρυξ goes to a foreign land, he is not only under the protection of the country which he represents should anything befall him. He is also under the special protection of the deity…They are holy and inviolable. An offense against them is ἀσέβεια [impiety/ungodliness] and brings down the wrath of the gods. To them one may not apply the ancient principle: as the message, so the reward. One may be angry at those who send them, but they themselves are not to be punished. They are inviolable because they are under divine protection. Even if their news is unwelcome, they must be hospitably received.” (Friedrich, TDNT, p. 688)
         1. This is the great contrast between the preacher and the herald. The divine sanction for the herald was recognized and respected (usually). That is not the case for the preacher, God’s herald.
            1. Witness the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7:58.
            2. Plots to kill Paul in Acts 9:23-25; 23:12; 25:3
            3. James’s martyrdom in Acts 12:1.
            4. Peter’s imprisonment in Acts 12:3ff.
            5. Paul’s stoning in Acts 14:19.
         2. However, it has always been this way for God’s heralds as demonstrated by the prophets between Moses and Jesus.
            1. “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets” (Luke 6:22-23).
            2. “Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,’ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary.” (Luke 11:49-51a).
            3. “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it” (Acts 7:51-53).
         3. However, God’s heralds actually are under divine protection and action taken against them will be punished by God.
            1. “Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation” (Luke 11:51b, completing the statement in I. D. 1. b. 2. above) fulfilled in A.D. 70.
            2. “This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you” (II Thessalonians 1:5-6). If God would do this for all Christians, how much more His heralds?
         4. Though, of course, we long for our persecutors’ repentance and salvation even though they mistreat us, persecute us, and kill us.
            1. Stephen sets an example for us following in the footsteps of Jesus. “And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’” (Acts 7:60).
            2. This is what Peter was intimating in his letter: “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (I Peter 2:12). Again, if this is true of Christians in general, how much more the heralds of Christ?
2. **How Do Preaching And Teaching Relate?**
   1. Many claim preaching and teaching are utterly distinct
      1. Most of us probably claim preaching and teaching are distinct. Preaching is what we do from the pulpit during an assembly (sermonizing), and teaching is what we do in a Bible class or around the kitchen table (facilitated discussing). While many whom I read often maintain a distinction between preaching and teaching, their distinction is different than the one we highlight.
      2. The influence of C.H. Dodd.
         1. In 1935, C.H. Dodd presented a series of three lectures at the University of London, at King’s College entitled *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*. These lectures have had far reaching impact on the thinking about preaching and preachers. While others may have said what he did earlier, in almost every document I read, Dodd’s name gets mentioned as championing this position and his assertions are all but accepted with very little question.
         2. “The New Testament writers draw a clear distinction between preaching and teaching. The distinction is preserved alike in Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypse, and must be considered characteristics of early Christian usage in general. Teaching (*didaskein*) is in a large majority of cases ethical instruction. Occasionally it seems to include what we should call apologetic, that is, the reasoned commendation of Christianity to persons interested but not yet convinced. Sometimes, especially in the Johannine writings, it includes the exposition of theological doctrine. Preaching on the other hand, is the public proclamation of Christianity to the non-Christian world. The verb *keryssein* properly means ‘to proclaim.’ A *keryx* may be a town crier, an auctioneer, a herald, or anyone who lifts up his voice and claims public attention to some definite thing he has to announce. Much of our preaching at the present day would not have been recognized by the early Christians as *kerygma*. It is teaching, or exhortation (*paraklesis*), or it is what they called *homilia*, that is the more or less informal discussion of various aspects of Christian life and thought, addressed to a congregation already established in the faith.” (Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*, pp. 7-8)
         3. “For the early church, then, to preach the Gospel was by no means the same thing as to deliver moral instruction or exhortation. While the Church was concerned to hand on the teaching of the Lord, it was not by this that it made converts. It was by *kerygma*, says Paul, not by *didache*, that it pleased God to save men.” (Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments*, p. 8)
      3. I don’t know how much direct impact Dodd had on Michel Philibert, but the same sentiment is expressed in his work, *Christ’s Preaching—and Ours*.
         1. “As practised [sic] by Jesus, preaching is addressed to the people and differs in this respect from teaching, which is given to the disciples. During the early period of his ministry Jesus travels about in Galilee teaching in synagogues and preaching the good news of the Kingdom (Mt. 4:23). Preaching and teaching are carried on side by side and sometimes intermingle (cf. Mt. 5:1 and 7:28; the Sermon the Mount is addressed both to the crowd and to the disciples). The longer the ministry continues, however, the more marked becomes the distinction between preaching, which is addressed to all, and teaching, which is reserved for the few who have been chosen and set apart by Jesus himself. Instead of being given in public the teaching is kept private, instead of being merely unobtrusive it becomes secret. Jesus’ announcement of his coming death and resurrection is not divulged by the disciples; and when at length they grasp the mystery of his person and mission, he insists on their keeping it to themselves.” (Philibert, *Christ’s Preaching—And Ours*, p. 7)
         2. Philibert goes on to suggest that this distinction should make preaching and preachers itinerant, always moving on.
            1. “The preacher does not tarry. He demands an immediate decision. Teaching takes time, involves repetition and perseverance. Preaching is itinerant not only in the sense that it moves towards the people, but also in the sense that it never halts but is always moving on, outwards, elsewhere. This continued movement is essential to preaching.” (Ibid., p. 11)
            2. According to Philibert, this itinerancy is essential to the nature of preaching: “The preacher’s movement away from his present audience is not just for the sake of tomorrow’s audience. It is decisive for the present hearers’ salvation and essential to the authority of the preaching. What such preaching conveys is God’s announcement (the Kingdom is at hand) and summons (repent!). It is not reinforced with proofs. It is not told to engage in discussion. It demands a decision, which is in fact the venture of faith—a decision which is also concrete, immediate, and if not total, yet at least serious.  
                “The preacher’s departure presses the hearer to make the decision demanded by the message. Anyone wanting to know more before making a final decision must make a prior decision, namely, the decision to make some kind of move.” (Ibid.)
            3. As such Philibert claims that what we commonly do in our church assemblies is not actually preaching:   
                “The Sunday sermon is not addressed to the crowd, to the people, but to those we call the ‘faithful’, whom it might be more accurate sometimes to call the ‘*habitués’* or sermon-tasters. Most of our contemporaries forgather and meet in places other than our churches. What is said in church, therefore, whatever other interest it may have, does not reach them. The Sunday sermon, which we call ‘preaching’, is in fact restricted to a few.  
                “Not only does the Sunday sermon lack the unrestricted openness of preaching, it also lacks—and the two things are related—the itinerant character of preaching. The ‘preacher’ does not move on. He reiterates instead of itinerating. The same sermon-maker, in the same place, replenishes the same hearers week after week, year in year out…  
                “The Sunday sermon is an illusory substitute for preaching. The Church which tolerates this situation might be compared with a farmer who stayed at home and sowed his seed in the drawing room rather than venture out into the fields, which he abandons to proliferate with every kind of noxious weed. The sermon-maker and his *habitués* while imagining that they are giving and receiving the Church’s preaching, are guilty in fact of spiritual onanism, and of withholding their seed from those to whom they owe it.” (ibid., pp. 38-40)
      4. Alexander Campbell and early restoration preachers
         1. “We do not go very far with the fathers [Restoration Movement preachers of the 1800s] in the pursuit of biblical models until we are forced to make a distinction between ‘preaching’ and ‘teaching.’ Modern usage identifies preaching with the sermon in the Christian congregation. To get the perspective of Campbell and the others we have to set this modern view aside. Studying the New Testament models, they came to the conclusion that ‘preaching’ was always directed to outsiders for the purpose of converting them; such ‘preaching’ was never directed to insiders, who, as believing Christians, were rather in the need of ‘teaching.’” (Stevenson, *Disciple Preaching in the First Generation*, p. 92)
         2. “There was *teaching*, there was singing, there was praying, there was *exhortation* in the Christian church; but *preaching in the church*, or *to the church, is not once named in the Christian Scriptures!* “Paul once, in his 1st letter to the church in Corinth, said he would *declare* to the Corinthians that *gospel* which he had *preached* to them; which also they had *received*, and in which they *stood*.  
             “We *preach*, or report, or proclaim news. But who *teaches* news!! Who exhorts news!!  
             “We *preach* the gospel to unbelievers, to aliens, but never to Christians, or those who have received it. Paul *taught* the Christians; he admonished, exhorted, commended, and reproved Christians, and on some occasions *declared* the glad tidings to them who had received them, but who seemed to have forgotten them, as he wrote to the Corinthians.” (Campbell, “Preaching in the Public Worship,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 1862, p. 154)
         3. “There is not one exhortation in the Christian Scriptures to church officers—Bishops, Deacons, and Elders—to preach the word. They were to *teach* and *exhort*, and preside over the church.—We appeal to the Epistles addressed to the churches by any of the Apostles. To Evangelists only, after the Apostles, was the commandment given, ‘Preach the word.’  
             “Preaching was and is the special duty of Evangelists. The four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles develop and exemplify this.” (Ibid.)
         4. “Preaching the gospel and teaching the converts, [sic] are as distinct and distinguishable employments as enlisting an army and training it, or as creating a school and teaching it. Unhappily for the church and for the world, this distinction, if at all conceded as legitimate, is obliterated or annulled in almost all Protestant Christendom. The public heralds of Christianity, acting as missionaries or evangelists, and the elders or pastors of Christian churches, are indiscriminately denominated *preachers*, or ministers; and whether addressing the church of the world, they are alike *preaching*, or ministering something which they call the *gospel*.” (Campbell, “Church Edification,” *Millennial Harbinger*, 1853, p. 46)
         5. What would Campbell say about the modern norm among preachers? “Not a few of our own preachers, having been educated and trained in their [Baptist] method of sermonizing and addressing public assemblies, and being initiated into that system of Bible development, are, ever and anon, *preaching* the gospel to churches, as if their communities were still to be taught the rudimental elements of the Christian faith.” (Ibid.)
   2. However, the distinction seems to me to be overstated.
      1. Robert Worley points out two significant overlaps between preaching and teaching.
         1. In Mark 3:14, Jesus appointed the twelve and sent them out to preach (κηρύσσειν). However, after being sent out, when they reported back to him in Mark 6:30, they reported on all they had done and taught (ἐδίδαξαν). (Worley, *Preaching and Teaching in the Earliest Church*, p. 145)
         2. In Matthew 4:23, Jesus was “teaching (διδάσκων) in their synagogues” and proclaiming (κηρύσσων) the gospel of the kingdom.” However, in Mark 1:39, Jesus was merely “preaching (κηρύσσων) in their synagogues.” Also in Luke 4:44, He was simply “preaching (κηρύσσων) in the synagogues of Judea.” (Ibid.)
         3. Worley concludes from the above that “The teaching-preaching of the church today is a continuation of the teaching-preaching of the early church. Our goal—to interpret the meaning of the One who has come from the Father for us—is the same.” (Ibid.)
      2. A survey of uses of the related terms in Acts simply doesn’t uphold this distinction.
         1. Κηρύσσω (I preach, I proclaim)
            1. “For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim (κηρύσσω) him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues” (Acts 15:21).

This is not some kind of itinerant proclamation to seek conversion to the Law, but ongoing teaching that was to Jews and perhaps to Gentiles, usually god-fearers and proselytes, who attended the synagogues.

* + - * 1. “And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming (κηρύσσω) the kingdom will see my face again” (Acts 20:25).

This is not a reference to some itinerant proclamation he once made, but to the ongoing work he has done with the Ephesian elders. This is especially the case when connected to the declaration of the whole counsel of God described in Acts 20:27.

* + - 1. Διδάσκω (I teach)
         1. “And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching (διδάσκω) the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:1-2).

This is describing Peter’s evangelistic sermon in Solomon’s porch from Acts 3.

* + - * 1. “And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching (διδάσκω) and preaching (εὐαγγελίζω) that the Christ is Jesus” (Acts 5:42).

This teaching that the Christ is Jesus is equivalent with what those who claim a distinction would call preaching.

* + - 1. Teaching and preaching were interconnected and even used in interchangeable ways in the book of Acts.
    1. Friedrich points out that the New Testament uses 32 words in addition to κηρύσσειν to refer to the various ways men presented God’s Word.
       1. For those who read Greek, here they are: λέγειν, λαλεῖν, ἀποφθέγγεσθαι, ὁμιλεῖν, διηγεῖσθαι, ἐκδιηγεῖσθαι, ἐξηγεῖσθαι, διαλέγεσθαι, διερμενεύειν, γνωρίζειν, ἀγγέλλειν, ἀναγγέλλειν, ἀπαγγέλλειν, διαγγέλλειν, ἐξαγγέλλειν, καταγγέλλειν, εὐαγγελίζεσθαι, παρρεσιάζεσθαι, μαρτυρεῖν, ἐπιμαρτυεῖν, δαμαρτύρεσθαι, πείθειν, ὁμολογεῖν, κράζειν, προφητεύειν, διδάσκειν, παραδιδόναι, νουθετεῖν, τὸν λόγον ὀρθοτομεῖν, παρακαλεῖν, ἐλέγχειν, ἐπιτιμᾶν. (Friedrich, *TDNT*, p. 703)
       2. “When we to-day speak of proclaiming God’s Word by men, we almost necessarily think of preaching...The NT is more dynamic and varied in its modes of expression than we are to-day…naturally there are differences between these verbs [the 32 mentioned above]. But our almost exclusive use of ‘preach’ for all of them is a sign, not merely of poverty of vocabulary, but of the loss of something which was a living reality in primitive Christianity.” (Ibid.)
          1. In context, it seems that Friedrich meant by this that in primitive Christianity there was a living reality that made a distinction between preaching and all these things that we miss by using preaching for all of them.
          2. However, it seems to me that the use of all these terms demonstrates that while some terms may have had a nuanced meaning that adds color commentary to what was going on, the New Testament writers were not as concerned with labeling a particular kind of presentation in a particular kind of way. They were simply concerned with passing on the Word of God to unsaved and saved alike. What you called it didn’t matter as much to them.
          3. Making these huge distinctions to the point of accusing people of error over the use of these terms seems extreme considering this abundance of terms. We aren’t looking for 33 different ways of passing on the Word that should be held in distinction and done by different roles in the church. Why feel the necessity to pick two of them to make this attack?
  1. My Conclusions
     1. Teaching and preaching are not as distinct as many want to suggest.
     2. At best, we might claim along with Dee Bowman that there is a nuanced difference between preaching and teaching.
        1. “What is preaching? Technically it is a special kind of communication called persuasive rhetoric. It differs from teaching in some ways, although there are some techniques common to both. All preaching is teaching, but not all teaching is preaching. Both involve the presentation of information, but preaching is a specialized form of the process that includes a motivated reaction to the information offered.” (Bowman, *Common Sense Preaching*, p. 2)
        2. I believe it was Bowman who I once heard make the distinction that preaching storms the will, while teaching informs the mind.
        3. However, even this seems to me to be more than the Bible presents. It seems to be a modern distinction without a biblical difference. That is, the way we experience some approaches to instruction may feel this way, but I struggle to find instances in Scripture where teaching was merely meant to convey information without intending to motivate a reaction or persuade “the hearers to adopt a higher manner of life.” (Ibid., p. 6)
     3. In Acts, teachers preach and preachers teach. They preached Jesus to believers and unbelievers alike; they taught Jesus to unbelievers and believers alike.
     4. Therefore, whether we are preaching in the public square and then moving on to a different audience or teaching in a regularly scheduled Sunday assembly of the church, either term applies. Additionally, those we refer to as preachers today are equally authorized to participate in both venues.
     5. Having said all of this, however, one point needs to be carefully noted.
        1. While we may apply the terms “teach” and “preach” in synonymous ways, working through this study should challenge us.
        2. Philibert’s words above may be extreme, but if our preaching and teaching is limited to the private sphere of our congregations, then we are not preaching like our counterparts in Acts who looked for and prompted opportunities to publicly proclaim the gospel to unbelieving crowds.
        3. If we are not careful, we may be guilty of the crude figure of speech, “spiritual onanism,” with which he accuses us, withholding the seed from those who need it most. All the while we are salving our consciences by protecting those inside our flocks through exposing the error “out there” but never exposing that error to those who are actually in it.
        4. As some have sarcastically stated, if we don’t take care we may cease to be fishers of men and merely become keepers of the aquarium. And, it seems to me, when we make this shift, we kill many of the fish and ruin many of the aquariums in the process.

1. **Whose Sermons Are These?**
   1. Though Luke wrote by inspiration, he claims he did not write by revelation.
      1. Inspiration means God breathed, that is, God is ultimately the source of the information contained in the text (cf. II Timothy 3:16-17). Further, it means God got what He wants in the text.
      2. Revelation is a particular means of inspiration, but not the only means. It is the miraculous revealing of information from God directly to man. This is illustrated by the means Paul claims for learning the gospel. He did not receive it from men, but “through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:11-12).
      3. We must not equate inspiration with revelation, but rather see the latter is merely one means of accomplishing the former.
         1. E.g. Did Matthew learn the contents of Matthew 9:9-13 by revelation? Or did he learn those events because he was involved? Was it any less inspired than what was miraculously revealed to Matthew?
         2. E.g. Did Paul learn the contents of Galatians 2 by revelation? Or did he learn those events because he was involved? Was it any less inspired than what was miraculously revealed to Paul?
      4. In the preface of Luke’s gospel account (Luke 1:1-4), Luke claims he compiled his narrative based on eye-witness testimony and having followed these things for a long time. Luke wrote based on historical research, not based on revelation. His preface to Acts (Acts 1:1-3) links the two narratives together demonstrating the same basis for writing each.
   2. Ancient limitations on recording speeches.
      1. If Luke wrote based on historical research and not based on miraculous revelation, we must note some limitations regarding the record of speeches.
         1. In the case of some very important orators, some scribes may have recorded the speeches. However, even in those cases getting a verbatim record would surely be almost impossible.
         2. In most cases, no scribe recorded ancient speeches or sermons.
         3. Considering the nature of the early church and its preaching, we are hard pressed to imagine anyone recording the sermons presented in the book of Acts.
            1. Regarding the recorded sermons, few of them were planned.

In Acts 2, the apostles were waiting but did not know what was going to happen or when. They certainly didn’t have someone on the sidelines prepared to record their speeches.

In Acts 3, the apostles simply took advantage of the opportunity provided by the healing of the lame beggar. Again, no one would have been following them around waiting to record their sermon.

In Acts 7, Stephen’s defense was a spontaneous reaction to his detractors. It’s not likely Saul and his minions had their quills and parchments ready to record his lengthy speech.

There are some exceptions.

The meeting in Acts 15 may well have had someone present who was recording what was said. After all, they did have someone who wrote a letter based on the events and decisions in that debate.

The speeches of Paul’s defenses before the Sanhedrin, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa may well have been recorded in court proceedings.

* + - * 1. Certainly, the enemies of Christ’s church and the apostles would not have thought the words of these upstarts worthy of record.
      1. How would Luke know what was said?
         1. No doubt, Luke heard some of Paul’s sermons (considering Luke’s use of “we” in parts of Acts, e.g. Acts 16:10-16, we can be sure he directly heard some of Paul’s preaching). Perhaps he recorded some of Paul’s sermons as best he could. But again, without recording devices, we see some limitation on getting a verbatim copy of any of Paul’s sermons.
         2. At best, with Peter, Luke could interview Peter and get his memories of what he said on those occasions. However, if someone asked you what you preached last Sunday, would it be a verbatim representation?
         3. At best, with Stephen, Luke could interview folks who heard the sermon. Paul was likely the subject of such an interview. Apart from a miraculous gift of memory, can we expect Paul’s memory of that sermon to be verbatim?
      2. Therefore, it is hard to imagine that any of the speeches or sermons presented in Acts are truly verbatim records of what was preached.
    1. These considerations have produced the debate regarding whose sermons we are reading in Acts. Are we reading the sermons of Peter, Paul, Stephen, and James? Or are we reading the sermons of Luke placed in the mouths of Peter, Paul, Stephen, and James?
  1. Various positions taken.
     1. Marion L. Soards in *The Speeches in Acts* gives a summary of the various positions and statements about the authenticity of the sermons in Acts. I include some of these quotes below. For the original sources, you will need to find the citations in Soards’ book listed in my bibliography. (Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, pp. 2-11)
        1. “The speeches themselves, even though they have been placed in the mouths of different persons, follow one and the same type, are of the same character, make use of one form of proof, and thus have so much in common that they present themselves thus as speeches of one and the same author.” (Ibid., p. 2, quoting J.G. Eichhorn)
        2. “De Wette argued that there was evidence of written sources behind Acts, although these were freely reworked as their information was included in Acts. In turn, de Wette concluded: ‘If Luke used written sources, it is thus probably that he did not freely compose the letters and the speeches of the apostle and the others.’” (Ibid., included quote is from W.M.L. de Wette)
        3. “Several things speak against the consistent, literal faithfulness of the speeches of the apostles and other persons: (a) the improbability that they were written down by their original hearers either during or immediately after their delivery; (b) some inappropriate elements in the content…; (c) thoughts and expressions which recur in the speeches of different persons…; (d) the linguistic peculiarities of the author which are found in all the speeches. … However, since not only individual thoughts (20:33ff) but also in part the general thrust and approach (7:2ff., 17:22ff.) are peculiar and appropriate to the persons and conditions, and the high degree of historic art which would have inhered in the free composition of such speeches cannot be ascribed to the simple narrator, then he must have at least used written materials.” (Ibid., p. 3, quoting W.M.L. de Wette)
        4. “By contrast, E. Zeller scrutinized the details of Acts and concluded that Acts was wholly unreliable, although some bare historical facts and legends may lie behind Luke’s creatively composed account. The speeches, or sermons, were all Luke’s creations. They were placed in the narrative sometimes in relation to vaguely remembered events and sometimes in relation to occasions Luke invented…Zeller understood that the speeches were defenses of Christianity against the religious charges of Judaism and the political charges of Rome” (Ibid., p. 4)
        5. “Every reader who knows Thucydides and Livy will have to regard the many speeches which ‘Lc’ places in the mouths of his heroes, Peter, Paul in a great variety of situations, and most extensively Stephen in 7:2-55, as free inventions of the author. The fact that these speeches…are the creation of the author is shown clearly in the first speech, 1:16-22, where Peter tells the story of Judas in detail to the Jerusalem brethren, a story which all of them would have long since known, but which the author had to relate to his readers…the historian in a rhetorical work of art will want his chief characters to portray themselves and their time.” (Ibid., p. 5, quoting A. Jülicher)
        6. “The speeches in the earlier part may represent not untrustworthily the primitive Jewish-Christian preaching of the period. …This is due, not to any verbatim reports or Hellenistic versions being available, but to the excellent historical sense of the author, who, while following the ordinary methods of ancient historiography in the composition of such speeches, was careful to avoid moulding [sic] and shaping his materials with a freedom which should obliterate the special cast of their aim and temper. These materials were probably furnished in the main by oral tradition. …A skillful writer, having access to circles where such Jewish Christian ideas had been cherished and still lingered…would find little difficulty in composing discourses such as these, which would harmonise [sic] satisfactorily with the period he was engaged in depicting.” (Ibid., p. 6, quoting J. Moffatt)
        7. “In this line G. Schneider writes, ‘The speeches of Acts are not directed to the hearers in the presupposed situation but from Luke to the readers of his book.’ The speeches are ‘thus for the readers of the book.’” (Ibid. p. 10, quoting G. Schneider)
     2. From the quotes in the preceding section, you can see that scholars take just about every position imaginable. From Luke completely made up the speeches to suit his own purposes to Luke had access to written traditions to Luke was faithfully representing the preaching of the men in his account. So much for scholarship to help us determine this. And I freely admit that the ability to scour these scholars and assess their individual argumentation is above my paygrade.
     3. I especially appreciate the careful and cautious comments made by Witherington in his Acts commentary.
        1. “First, we noted that, as various ancient historians and classics scholars have pointed out, there was no *convention* of creating speeches in antiquity, though certainly various writers did this, in lieu of evidence of what was actually said or because they were not following the more Greek and Hellenistic approach to historiography which involved research and consultation of eyewitnesses. Luke claims in Luke 1:1-4 to be following the Greek tradition. Secondly, we noted that what can be gathered from Thucydides and Polybius and those who followed their lead is that unless there was documentary evidence, writers could seldom produce *verbatim* a speech which had been heard. Rather, they offered up summaries which conveyed various of the major points of what was spoken, not just *the* gist or main point. Thirdly, as careful study of the relevant material shows, it was the custom of Thucydides and his kind to render speeches in their own words and style, a custom Luke clearly follows. Thus, while it can*not* be assumed that Luke created the speeches in Acts, the evidence suggests that he has made his source material his own, such that the ferreting out of his sources for this material is difficult if not impossible.  
            “If Luke was, as I think, a careful historian in the mold of Thucydides and Polybius, we may expect from him adequate and accurate (so far as his sources allowed) summaries of what was said on one or another occasion, especially because he had opportunity to consult with various of the ear-witnesses who heard these speeches, or in some cases with early Christians and ministers of the word to whom the first listeners had conveyed a brief summary of what was said. In all probability, with the possible exception of some of the longer speeches (Peter in Acts 2? Stephen?) and some of the court proceedings (Acts 24-26), we must not *assume* that we have *more* than just summaries of speeches. This is especially the case because some of these summaries take only a minute or two to recite out loud, which surely cannot be the entirety of what was said.” (Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 117-118)
  2. Thucydides
     1. Regarding historiographical convention during the time, many turn to Thucydides as a standard for what was allowed and expected regarding writing history and including speeches.
     2. Thucydides records his own approach to including speeches in history: “With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one’s memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said. And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but it rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible. My conclusions have cost me some labour from the want of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eye-witnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other. The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest; but if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content. In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time.” (Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, I.I.23)
     3. Witherington references J. Wilson’s “What Does Thucydides Claim for His Speeches” on this matter: “J. Wilson concludes (after evaluating Thucydides’ claims in light of what we can know of his actual practice, his limits or rules of literary license in dealing with speeches) that he offered: (1) reportage in his own style, not that of the speaker; (2) a selection from a number of speeches actually made; (3) a selection, but not all, of the ideas or thoughts (γνωμη) expressed in the speech; (4) a reporting which contains nothing that does not count as γνωμη; (5) the adding of words to make the γνωμη clearer; (6) an abbreviating or expanding so long as the γνωμη is clear; (7) a casting of the γνωμη in terms which might serve his particular purposes…In other words, Thucydides does not handle speeches in a radically different fashion than he handles the reporting of events. Both are subject to close scrutiny, analysis, and then a presentation in Thucydides’ own style and way, with some concern for literary and rhetorical considerations.” (Witherington, *Acts*, pp. 47-48)
     4. Luke’s preface to his gospel account (Luke 1:1-4) fits within the context of this kind of historiography. Luke, was claiming that, like Thucydides, he researched and investigated, “the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible.”
     5. Points to note from the above.
        1. In an oral/aural culture, written verbatim records of speeches were impossible and not to be expected.
        2. The historian investigated more than one source to determine the nature of the speech.
        3. The historian attempts to stay close to what was originally said.
        4. The historian, not having the ability to give a verbatim record, may “fill in the gaps,” as it were, by supplying what was demanded of the original speaker on the various occasions.
  3. My conclusions
     1. Recognizing that Luke wrote based on research and not revelation, I find it hard to believe we have verbatim records of the sermons.
     2. Believing that Luke wanted to do exactly what he claimed in Luke 1:4, give “certainty concerning the things you have been taught,” I find it equally hard to believe Luke freely made up the sermons he presents. It is hard to have certainty of what was taught by others if what Luke presents as being taught was a complete fabrication.
     3. Noting that on multiple occasions, Luke admits or implies more was said than he has recorded (see Acts 2:40; 10:44; 16:31-32), I am comfortable seeing these sermons as representative summaries of what Peter, Stephen, James, and Paul preached.
     4. Understanding that Luke was concerned not simply with what the hearers of the individual speeches learned, but what Theophilus and his other readers need to learn while reading his book, I’m also comfortable claiming Luke shaped his summaries in ways that progressed his purposes in Acts as a whole.
     5. Recognizing that certain themes wind their way through these sermons and certain progressions take place from sermon to sermon, I am also comfortable claiming Luke molded these presentations to fit the flow of his greater narrative.
     6. Accepting that this approach to historiography was accepted convention at that time, I am pleased to accept the sermons in Acts as reliable and trustworthy and no cause for alarm.
     7. Also accepting the oral/aural culture of the first century as different from our textual/visual modern culture (illustrated by Witherington’s comments about ancient historiography: “Ancient historical works were meant to be *heard* primarily and read only secondarily, and this meant that considerable attention had to be given to the aural impression a work would leave on the audience.”) and that the expectations and requirements of these two different cultures are exceedingly different, I believe that to criticize Luke for this approach to his speeches or to think this approach makes Acts less trustworthy is an anachronistic critique, expecting Luke to write according to modern expectations rather than the expectations of his own culture. (Witherington, *Acts*, p. 41)
     8. In summary, I conclude that Luke gave accurate summaries of the sermons presented in Acts, but certainly made them his own and molded them to fit within the framework of the whole message of Acts. In this sense, the sermons as written are not only Peter’s, Stephen’s, Paul’s, and James’s, but also Luke’s.
     9. At the conclusion of this discussion, I think a quote that Witherington included in his Acts commentary is appropriate: “Whatever these speeches may be, it cannot be disputed that they are wonderfully varied as to their character, and as a rule admirably suited to the occasion on which they were delivered. Luke seems to have been able to give us an extraordinarily accurate picture of the undeveloped theology of the earliest Christians, and enables us to determine the character of the most primitive presentation of the Gospel. However produced, the speeches in Acts are masterpieces, and deserve the most careful attention.” (Ibid., p. 120, quoting F.J. Foakes-Jackson)
  4. A word about inspiration and the ultimate author of these sermons.
     1. Having said the above. There is a part of me that thinks the above discussion is unnecessary. It makes good fodder for academics and critics. It is probably necessary for those who need to defend Acts to academics and critics. But for the common Christian and preacher, it seems superfluous.
     2. II Timothy 3:16-17 claims all Scripture comes from God and is profitable to make the man of God complete for every good work.
     3. In I Timothy 5:18, Luke 10:7 is quoted as Scripture. The Paul who claimed all Scripture is God-breathed quoted from Luke as Scripture. It seems natural to believe he would accept the sequel by the same author as Scripture as well.
     4. If Acts is Scripture, then it is inspired. Whether the means of inspiration was through revelation, participation, or investigation, it is still God-breathed. Whatever we may say about the human authors of the various sermons in Acts, the ultimate author is the Holy Spirit. God got in the record of the sermons in Acts what He wanted in them. Surely then, we men of God can be equipped for good preaching and teaching by what we read there.

1. **The *Kerygma*: What Did They Preach?**
   1. *Kerygma* (κήρυγμα): “in Grk. writ. esp. Attic, *that which is promulgated by a herald* or *public crier, a proclamation by herald*; in the N.T. *the message* or *proclamation by the heralds of God or Christ*.” (Thayer)
      1. What was the message the apostles in Acts preached? Can we see consistent themes and approaches? Was there a set message or was there variety?
   2. Dodd’s summary of Peter’s sermons in Acts 2-4.
      1. Dodd suggests we find the “Jerusalem *kerygma*” in these sermons. That is, we find the basic message preached by the apostles. It would set forth a model for our preaching.
      2. He summarizes six main points that made up this *kerygma*.
         1. “First, the age of fulfillment has dawned. ‘This is that which was spoken by the prophet’ (Acts ii.16). ‘The things which God foreshewed by the mouth of all the prophets, He thus fulfilled’ (iii.18).” (Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 21)
         2. “Secondly, this has taken place through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, of which a brief account is given, with proof from the Scriptures that all took place through ‘the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.’” (Ibid.)
         3. “Thirdly, by virtue of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted at the right hand of God, as Messianic head of the new Israel.” (Ibid., p. 22).
         4. “Fourthly, the Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ’s present power and glory.” (Ibid.)
         5. “Fifthly, the Messianic Age will shortly reach its consummation in the return of Christ.” (Ibid., p. 23)
         6. “Finally, the *kerygma* always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of ‘salvation,’ that is, of ‘the life of the Age to Come,’ to those who enter the community.” (Ibid.)
         7. Referring to the above six points, Dodd goes on to say: “We may take it that this is what the author of Acts meant by ‘preaching the Kingdom of God.’ It is very significant that it follows the lines of the summary of the preaching of Jesus as given in Mark i. 14-15: ‘Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has drawn near: repent and believe the Gospel.”‘ This summary provides the framework within which the Jerusalem *kerygma* is set.” (Ibid., p. 24)
         8. He relates Mark 1:14-15 to his six-part *kerygma* in the following way: “The first clause, ‘The time is fulfilled,’ is expanded in the reference to prophecy and its fulfilment. The second clause, ‘The Kingdom of God has drawn near,’ is expanded in the account of the ministry and death of Jesus, His resurrection and exaltation, all conceived as an eschatological process. The third clause, ‘Repent and believe the Gospel,’ reappears in the appeal for repentance and the offer of forgiveness with which the apostolic *kerygma* closes. Whether we say that the apostolic preaching was modelled on that of Jesus, or that the evangelist formulated his summary of the preaching of Jesus on the model of that of the primitive Church, at any rate the two are identical in purport. The Kingdom of God is conceived as coming in the events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and to proclaim these facts, in their proper setting, is to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.” (Ibid.)
         9. That Dodd has equally influenced modern scholarship with this framework as he has with claiming there is a distinction between preaching and teaching can be seen in the references to this framework in many works on preaching.
            1. I even found it in a book that is not about preaching per se but about finding the Old Testament in the New: “The apostolic preaching included six major statements: First, the prophecies of the O.T. have been fulfilled in the new age. Second, the life of Jesus was in all its aspects in accord with the purpose of God. Third, Jesus Christ now reigns as the exalted Lord. Fourth, the Holy Spirit, possessed by all Christians, is the proof of Christ’s presence and power. Fifth, Jesus Christ will return in triumph in the last time. Sixth, in order to receive the benefits of Christ’s work it is necessary to repent.” (Shires, *Finding the Old Testament in the New*, p. 99)
      3. Objections to this *kerygma*.
         1. Notice it only comes from Peter’s speeches in Acts 2-4.
            1. While parallels to this framework can be made with Paul’s sermon to those in Antioch in Pisidia in Acts 13, it is not in Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7. Nor is it in Peter’s sermon to Cornelius’s household in Acts 10. Nor is it in Paul’s sermon to the Lystrans in Acts 14. Nor is it in Paul’s sermon before the Areopagites in Acts 17.
            2. It is not found in the preaching to believers in Acts 1 (selection of Judas’s replacement), 8 (rebuke against Simon the Sorcerer), 15 (Jerusalem Council), or 20 (Paul’s farewell to the Ephesian Elders).
            3. Thus, the basis for calling this the *kerygma* is back to seeing a major distinction between preaching and teaching. It becomes a circular argument. “When they preached, this is what they said. They said this, therefore it is preaching.”
            4. This, of course, is why Dodd calls it the “Jerusalem *kerygma*” and distinguishes it from Paul’s *kerygma*, having to explain how the preaching developed from one to the other.
         2. Though Dodd seems to assert that the presence of miraculous power from the Holy Spirit is the sign of the presence of Christ’s power and glory as a main part of the *kerygma*, it seems to me that it is only a main part of the initial evidence regarding why the Jews should listen to the apostles on Pentecost. It is not mentioned in any of the other sermons he cites.
         3. Though Dodd suggests part of the *kerygma* is that Jesus will shortly return, he also admits that this is only mentioned in Acts 3:21. But the passage does not give a time frame for this return and does not speak of it as shortly. This is important to note because later in his book, Dodd will explain that the preaching of the apostles had to develop as they came to realize that the Second Advent was not immediate like they had originally preached. I suggest the apostles never preached it was immediate. (Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching*, pp. 32-35)
      4. Why present this if I object to it?
         1. First, because Dodd seems to be pervasively referenced in books on preaching from Acts. We need to be aware of it and its shortcomings lest we be overly influenced by it.
         2. Because for all my objections, I do appreciate the parts of the framework that are present in Acts and the connection to Mark 1:14-15.
            1. The time/scriptures are fulfilled.
            2. The Kingdom is at hand/ the King has come.
            3. Repent.
            4. I appreciate that the preaching of the apostles was not something new but was modelled after what they had heard from the Master Teacher.
         3. Because the process of working through this supposed framework that initially intrigued me highlights something. The framework presented by Dodd that really does fit with the Acts paradigms is not so much the “Jerusalem *kerygma*” as it is the *kerygma* to the Jews. That is, this is the model that was used when preaching to the Jews (most of the time). But it is not what was used when preaching to the Gentiles. This reminds us that we need to consider our audience when preaching.
   3. Preaching Jesus and His kingdom
      1. In one sense, the Acts *kerygma* is simple. It can be summed up by Acts 8:35: “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.”
      2. Campbell said it this way: “The christian [sic] preacher, whatever be his topic, has uniformly but one great object in view. To induce sinners to give themselves up to Jesus as the divine author of an eternal salvation, is the Alpha and Omega of all his efforts. Whether his text be selected from Jewish or Pagan antiquity—whether from the animal, vegetable, or mineral kingdoms of nature—whether from the law, the prophets, or the psalms—his only lawful and his only successful theme is, that ‘*Jesus the Nazarene is Messiah, the Son of God*.’ To illustrate, prove, and apply this proposition, is his grand aim; and to persuade men to receive Jesus in this character, is the only appropriate burthen of all his exhortations.” (Campbell, “The Christian Preacher—No. III,” *Millennial Harbinger*, pp. 230-231)
      3. In fact, if we look at summary statements in texts where sermons aren’t revealed, we see this kind of statement multiple times.
         1. “And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus” (Acts 5:42).
         2. “Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ” (Acts 8:5).
         3. “And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God’…But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ” (Acts 9:20, 22).
         4. “But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus” (Acts 11:20).
         5. “Others said, ‘He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities’—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18).
         6. “When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus” (Acts 18:5).
         7. “The following night the Lord stood by him and said, ‘Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome” (Acts 23:11).
      4. But not only preaching Jesus, preaching His kingdom.
         1. “But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ…” (Acts 8:12).
         2. “And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8).
         3. “And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again” (Acts 20:25).
         4. “When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets” (Acts 28:23).
         5. “He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts 28:30-31).
   4. As we step back, we do see some repeated themes in the preaching of Acts (especially in the missionary sermons).
      1. The Jews killed Jesus, the Messiah
         1. “This Jesus…you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men” (Acts 2:23).
         2. “But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you” (Acts 3:14).
         3. “…by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified…” (Acts 4:10).
         4. “The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree” (Acts 5:30).
         5. “And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered…” (Acts 7:52).
         6. “And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree” (Acts 10:39). Notice when speaking to Gentiles, it is “they,” the Jews who put Jesus to death.
         7. “And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed” (Acts 13:28). Interestingly, Paul makes it more specific that the Jews in Jerusalem killed Jesus and does not point the finger at these Jews in Pisidian Antioch.
         8. “I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women…And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’” (Acts 22:4, 7). While it seems Paul wasn’t involved directly in the persecution and death of Jesus, his story pictures his persecution against the Christians as against Christ. He persecuted “this Way” to death, tying it to Jesus who is “the Way” (cf. John 14:6). Jesus also explicitly accuses Paul of “persecuting me.”
         9. “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth…but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them… ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’” (Acts 26:9, 10 14). Again, Paul’s story pictures his persecution of Christians and voting for their deaths as being against Jesus Himself.
      2. Jesus died and was resurrected in order to fulfill the Scripture.
         1. As this is fully discussed in a later section of this outline (Section VI), we will simply note that it is so. Turn to that section to see how pervasive and central the resurrection is.
      3. Jesus is Lord, Messiah, Righteous One, King, and Judge.
         1. As this is connected to the resurrection and is fully explained in a later section of this outline (Section VII), we will simply note that it is so. Turn to that section to see how the resurrection proves these things about Jesus.
      4. Forgiveness and salvation are in Jesus and only in Jesus.
         1. “And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21; Joel 2:32a).
         2. “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38).
         3. “…that your sins may be blotted out…” (Acts 3:19).
         4. “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).
         5. “…to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31).
         6. “To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43).
         7. “Of this man’s offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised” (Acts 13:23).
         8. “Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you…” (Acts 13:38).
         9. “Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16).
         10. “…delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26:17-18). I can’t help but notice that Paul seems to be an object lesson to Jews. He had put “this Way” to death (see IV. 1. A. 8 and 9), parallel to the Jews in Acts 2, 3, and 7. But he will be delivered from the Gentiles and the Jews because he turned to Jesus.
      5. We must believe in Jesus, repent, turn to, surrender to, and follow Jesus to be saved (and, of course, this includes being baptized).
         1. “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).
         2. “Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out…God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness” (Acts 3:19, 26).
         3. “God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him” (Acts 4:31-32).
         4. “Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you” (Acts 8:22).
         5. “And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?’ And Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he replied, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God’” (Acts 8:36-37; including footnote in the ESV).
         6. “To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43).
         7. “‘If God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?’ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life’” (Acts 11:17-18).
         8. “Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39).
         9. “We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God…” (Acts 14:15).
         10. “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:7-9).
         11. “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31).
         12. “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent…” (Acts 17:30).
         13. “…testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ…” (Acts 20:21).
         14. “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16).
         15. “…to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God…” (Acts 26:18).
         16. “Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance” (Acts 26:19-20).
      6. There are similarities in all of this to Mark 1:14-15 as Dodd suggested. Additionally, keeping closer to our author, it is even more similar to Luke 24:45-47.
         1. “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:45-47).
         2. Again, it is important to note that the apostles’ preaching is based on the Lord’s preaching.
      7. Surely these themes should be a backbone to our preaching. They should be the heart of our *kerygma*, if you will. They are the springboard that leads to every other topic and theme that will be included in our preaching that should lead to teaching others to observe all that the Lord has commanded (cf. Matthew 28:20).
      8. If we boil it down, the *kerygma* is that the resurrection proves Jesus is Lord, Savior, and King, repent and obey Him so you can be saved from the coming judgment and that is good news.
   5. However, is the *kerygma* the important thing?
      1. “If we compare these figures [the number of times κηρύσσειν, ‘to preach’ is used in the NT] with those for κῆρυξ [herald] and κήρυγμα [the message preached], we are led already to some conclusion as to the theological significance of the terms. Emphasis does not attach to the κήρυγμα, as though Christianity contained something decisively new in content—a new doctrine, or a new view of God, or a new cultus. The decisive thing is the action, the proclamation itself. For it accomplishes that which was expected by the OT prophets. The divine intervention takes place through the proclamation. Hence the proclamation itself is the new thing. Through it the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ [the kingdom of God] comes.” (Friedrich, *TDNT*, p. 704)
      2. If Luke had simply wanted to present a message that we are supposed to preach, he could have done that. But instead, he filled Acts with preaching.
         1. He showed us preaching to the lost and preaching to the saved.
         2. He showed us preaching to the Jews and preaching to the Gentiles.
         3. He showed us preaching to crowds, preaching to small groups, and preaching to individuals.
         4. He showed us textual preaching, narrative preaching, and personal testimony preaching.
         5. He did not just outline a message, he showed us preaching.
         6. According to Witherington, Acts gives us eight speeches by Peter (Acts 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 10; 11; 13), two by James (Acts 15; 21), one by Stephen (Acts 7), nine by Paul (Acts 13; 14; 17; 20; 22; 23; 24;26;28). (Witherington, *Acts*, p. 118)
            1. I doubt we would count all of these as sermons, but it still highlights the pervasiveness of preaching, teaching, and actual speech.
         7. Though his figures include speeches and statements from non-Christians, Soards says, “Scholars routinely refer to twenty-four speeches comprising 295 verses of the approximately one thousand verses in Acts; but, in fact, there are twenty-seven or twenty-eight speeches, seven or more ‘partial speeches,’ and at least three ‘dialogues’—which together amount to over 365 verses.” That means more than one-third of Acts is comprised of speeches. (Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*, p. 1)
         8. “Something needs to be said at this juncture about why Luke has proportionally so much *more* speech material in his history than Herodotus, Tacitus, Josephus, Polybius, or Thucydides, for example. This is because Luke is chronicling a historical movement that was carried forward in the main by evangelistic preaching.” (Witherington, *Acts*, p. 118)
      3. Don’t misunderstand; the message we preach must be the message God wants preached. Our topics and themes must come from our King, otherwise we are not being heralds (see section I). However, perhaps what makes it preaching is not finding a formula for topics and themes. Perhaps the point is it is not the particular topic we are preaching that matters but that we are preaching (so long as our topic comes from our King).
2. **A Consistent Method Of Preaching**
   1. While there were some main themes found in much of the preaching in Acts, the place where we find real consistency is the method. Whether they were talking to Jews or Gentiles, saved or unsaved, about how to become saved or how to live as saved, a method was consistent and it is highlighted by Philibert.
      1. “Preaching begins with the known so as to lead the hearer to the unknown.” (Philibert, *Christ’s Preaching—And Ours*, p. 34)
      2. Consider Philibert’s explanation:  
          “The example of Jesus and the apostles shows that the point of departure for preaching is sought sometimes in the traditional culture (whether of the Old Testament or some other) and sometimes in recent events or daily life.  
          “In other words, the preaching of the good news is not limited to sermons starting from some biblical text.  
          “According to Luke 4:16-21, Jesus at times made a sermon on a biblical text. Elsewhere, however, he introduced his message without reference to a text, often making use of some event, or some question put to him, as an opportunity for preaching. Similarly Peter begins with a text from the Old Testament in Acts 2:14-26, while on another occasion he uses as his opportunity popular excitement over the healing of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful (Acts 3:12-26).  
          “Paul at Lystra (Acts 14:8-18) starts (as in Romans 1:20) from God’s revelation in creation and providence (v. 17). At Athens he takes his theme from the religious life and literature of the people there (Acts 17:16-23).  
          “Thus, when the hearer is Jewish, familiar with the Law and the Prophets, preaching starts from this knowledge and uses a biblical text. When the hearer is a Gentile, unfamiliar with the biblical tradition, preaching seeks another point of departure, in things with which the hearer is concerned.” (Ibid.)
   2. This really can be seen throughout the preaching and teaching of Acts.
      1. Acts 1:16-22: Started with what was known concerning Judas’s betrayal of Jesus and the texts of Psalm 69:25 and 109:8, led to the unknown that Judas was to be replaced by another witness.
      2. Acts 2: Started with what was known about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the text of Joel 2:28-32 and led to the unknown that Jesus is the Lord and Christ and forgiveness of sins comes from believing in Him, repenting, and being baptized.
      3. Acts 3, 4: Started with the known of the lame man being healed and led to the unknown that Jesus is the cornerstone in Whom alone is salvation.
      4. Acts 5:29-32: Started with the known of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (reminder of Acts 2 and the healing of the lame man) and led to the unknown that God has exalted Jesus to His right hand as Leader and Savior.
      5. Acts 7: Started with the known of the history of Israel, the repeated jealousies and rebellions of God’s people against His anointed, the various locations God met with people and led to the unknown of “you have betrayed and murdered the Righteous One.” I assume had Stephen been given time, he would have talked to them about the unknown of repenting and submitting to the Righteous One to have forgiveness of sins.
      6. Acts 8: In Samaria, Philip started with the known demonstration of the power greater than Simon’s and clearly led them to the unknown of Jesus being the Christ. When preaching to the Ethiopian Eunuch, Philip started with the known of the text of Isaiah 53 and led to the unknown of Jesus being the Suffering Servant.
      7. Acts 10: Peter started with what “you yourselves know” about Jews not associating with non-Jews and about Jesus and His demonstration of power and goodness and led to the unknown that His resurrection demonstrated He is judge of both the living and the dead and forgiveness comes by believing in Him.
      8. Acts 11: Peter started with the known of the word of the Lord about being baptized with the Holy Spirit and led to the unknown that Gentiles could be baptized with water.
      9. Acts 13: Paul started with the known of the history of God’s people and the promises to David and led to the unknown of Jesus being David’s descendent who was raised from the dead allowing them to be forgiven and set free from all that the Law of Moses could not free them.
      10. Acts 14:15-17: Paul started with the known of the rains and fruitful seasons and led to the unknown of the living God whose nature is different from man’s.
      11. Acts 15: Peter started with the known of his preaching to Cornelius. Paul and Barnabas started with the known of the testifying of God to the work he and Barnabas had been doing. James started with the known of Amos 9:11-12. They all led to the unknown that Gentiles did not have to be circumcised or become Jews to be Christians.
      12. Acts 16:25-34: Paul started with the known of he and Silas praising the Lord while in prison, then the earthquake yet everyone being alive and remaining in the prison, and led to the unknown of how the jailer could be saved.
      13. Acts 17:2-3: Paul started in the synagogue with the known Scriptures and led to the unknown of Jesus being the Christ.
      14. Acts 17:22-34: Paul started with the known “unknown God” and the Gentiles’ own poets and led to the unknown God that he knew, leading to the message of judgment and the Judge who had been raised from the dead.
      15. Acts 19:1-7: Paul started with the known of the kind of baptism they had and the absence of the Holy Spirit in their lives and led to the unknown of the belief in and baptism into Jesus to which John the Baptist had pointed.
      16. Acts 20: Paul started with the known about his life and preaching among the Ephesians and led to the unknown of the wolves that would not spare the flock and entreated them to follow his example of watchfulness.
      17. Acts 22, 26: Paul started with the known of his own life’s conduct how he had gone from persecutor of the Christians to proclaimer of the Christ and led to the unknown of the vision that changed him and his message of repentance and forgiveness.
   3. What do we learn from this method?
      1. There is no one size fits all approach. We can’t start at the same place with every audience. Cookie cutter sermons are more about our convenience than preaching the gospel.
      2. If we are going to preach like the apostles in Acts, we have to learn what our audience knows. We have to figure out the common ground starting place.
         1. Do they already have faith in God, in the Bible as Scripture? Do they already know and believe Jesus was raised from the dead?
         2. Have they been following false Gods? What is their worldview?
         3. Are they already faithful Christians? Or have they been at one point?
         4. Is there some event or cultural happening that ties your audience together with you that can be a springboard to the message they need to hear?
      3. We have to figure out how to lead our audience from what it knows to what it needs to know.
         1. That may be by stringing together a series of passages that makes the point such as done in Peter’s Pentecost sermon.
         2. That may be by telling a common story as done in Stephen’s Acts 7 sermon.
         3. That may be by finding common ground, sometimes even potentially tenuous common ground, such as declaring that the “unknown god” is really the God we know as done in Paul’s Areopagus sermon.
         4. That may be by telling a story of your personal experience and walk with the Lord as done in Paul’s defense before the crowd and before Agrippa.
      4. Isn’t this the same kind of approach Jesus took with the woman at the well, starting with water and thirst, discussions about which mountain to worship upon, and looking at her marital past and then leading to spiritual thirst and real worship?
3. **The Centrality Of The Resurrection**
   1. A shocking fact about the atoning sacrifice and Luke-Acts
      1. If you were to go into a new land that had never heard the gospel, what would be the first thing you think you should let the people know? Someone died for them, right?
      2. Not if the preaching of Acts is our model.
      3. The preaching in Acts, of course, presents that Jesus suffered and died.
         1. “This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men” (Acts 2:23).
         2. “And you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead…But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled” (Acts 3:15, 18).
         3. “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered” (Acts 7:52).
         4. “And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree…” (Acts 10:39).
         5. “And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb” (Acts 13:29).
         6. “…so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer…” (Acts 26:22-23).
      4. But the preaching in Acts does not mention Jesus’s death as an atoning sacrifice.
         1. Certainly, we can assume that Philip’s sermon in Acts 8:35 included it. But Luke does not explicitly record it.
         2. If we consider that Luke was recording summaries and not word-for-word manuscripts, the apostles surely taught about the atonement. But Luke does not record that in his work.
            1. For example, consider the connections between Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and Peter’s sermon in Acts 3:12-26.

Both speak of the Righteous One (Acts 3:14; Isaiah 53:11).

Both speak of the Servant who suffers (Acts 3:14-15; Isaiah 52:14; 53:3, 7-9).

Both speak of the exaltation or glorification (Acts 3:13; Isaiah 52:13).

If Acts 3 is a summary and not the entirety of this sermon, we can easily imagine that part of it included the atoning death and sacrifice aspects of Isaiah 53.

* + - 1. Surely the Jews would think of it as they heard about Jesus’s death and then the forgiveness of sins, but again, Luke did not spell it out.
         1. Consider again Peter’s sermon in Acts 3 and its connections to Isaiah 53.
         2. It is hard to imagine that even if this was a verbatim record of Peter’s sermon that the Jews who heard it did not make connection to the atoning death and sacrifice expressed in Isaiah 53.
         3. However, Luke leaves it to implicit recognition and does not spell out the atoning death in his record.
      2. So stark is the absence, Dodd recognizes it and feels the need to explain how the atonement made its way into Paul’s *kerygma*: “The Jerusalem *kerygma* does not assert that Christ died *for our sins*. The result of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ is the forgiveness of sins, but this forgiveness is not specifically connected with His death. Since, however, Paul includes this statement in that which he ‘received,’ we may hesitate to ascribe to him the origin of the idea. Since the Jerusalem *kerygma* applies to Christ the Isaianic title of ‘Servant,’ the way was at least open to interpret His death on the lines of Isaiah liii. Acts viii. 32-35 may suggest the possibility that this step was taken explicitly by the school of Stephen and Philip, with which Paul appears to have been in touch.” (Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching*, p. 25)
         1. Of course, the above quote further explains my frustration with Dodd and his influence. After all, Paul’s specific claim about receiving the gospel in Galatians 1:12 shows that the gospel he received in I Corinthians 15:3 didn’t come from the school of Stephen or Philip but from Jesus Christ Himself.
    1. Additionally, not only the preaching, but all of Luke-Acts is devoid of it.
       1. No doubt I might have overlooked something. But I can only find two direct references in Luke-Acts to the atonement through Jesus’s death.
          1. In the establishment of the Lord’s Supper: “And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’” (Luke 22:19-20).

By contrast, notice Matthew’s account: “And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:27-28).

* + - * 1. When Paul spoke with the Ephesian elders he said, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).
        2. Do not misunderstand. I have no doubt Luke understood the atonement of Christ’s death. This was not a later development in apostolic teaching. As expressed above there are subtle expressions of the atonement. However, in the rest of the New Testament, the atonement is not left to subtlety but is expressly stated. Not in Luke-Acts.
    1. In Luke-Acts, the death of Jesus happened for two reasons.
       1. To fulfill scripture.
          1. Luke

“And taking the twelve, he said to them, ‘See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him…’” (Luke 18:31-33a).

“For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’ For what is written about me has its fulfillment” (Luke 22:37).

“‘Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:26-27).

* + - * 1. Acts

“But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled” (Acts 3:18).

“For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb” (Acts 13:27-29).

* + - 1. But more importantly, Jesus died to show why the blood of all the prophets could be charged against and required of that generation of Jews.
         1. Luke

“Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,’ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation” (Luke 11:49-51).

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’” (Luke 13:34-35)

Note the ending of the parable of the minas, found only in Luke: “I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me” (Luke 19:26-27).

“Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation” (Luke 19:42-44).

Notice who Judas worked with to betray Jesus: “He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them…Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him…” (Luke 22:4, 52).

Luke is the only author who mentions the officers of the temple conspiring with Judas, setting up in Luke’s account antagonism between Jesus and the temple, which of course would be resolved in A.D. 70.

“But turning to them Jesus said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, “Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!” Then they will begin to say to the mountains, “Fall on us,” and to the hills, “Cover us.” For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?’” (Luke 23:31).

* + - * 1. Acts

Peter’s sermon in Acts 2, Joel 2:28-32, and the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

No doubt, Peter’s sermon says all “we” have often said about it regarding eternal salvation for Gentiles and modern folks who respond to Peter’s message. But when we consider the context of Joel 2:28-32, we should see another message for the Jews who heard it first.

Joel used a locust plague (Joel 1:4) as an opportunity to promise an even greater disaster upon Judah, the destruction of their nation by a foreign army (Joel 2:1-11).

Joel’s main plea is for repentance (Joel 1:13-14). “‘Yet even now,’ declares the LORD, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.’ Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster” (Joel 2:12-13).

Apparently, between Joel 2:17 and Joel 2:18, the people repented and God talks about the blessing He will send on the penitent. In the original context, this seems to refer to the repentance that occurred once Judah was already in captivity (cf. Joel 3:2).

Joel 2:28-32, in the original context, is part of the blessing on the penitent. It says everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Notice the part of the passage seemingly left out of Peter’s quote: “For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape.” Escape what? The judgment God will bring on Zion.

At first glance, it seems that this part of the prophecy is left out of Peter’s sermon. However, notice the end of Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:39: “For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

This statement brings in the end of Joel 2:32. And serves as an *inclusio* with Peter’s initial quote.

What are the Jews to hear from this? They killed the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ. What hope do they have? They are walking in the shoes of their forbears who did not listen to Joel and they will be judged.

The answer was, of course, to repent. Which Peter calls them to. Behind our modern message of eternal salvation was a message to the Jews that judgment was coming on Jerusalem and Zion by the hands of a foreign army, and the only escape was to call on the name of the Lord.

Why was this judgment coming? Because they killed the Messiah.

Peter’s sermon in Acts 3 and the prophesied prophet of Deuteronomy 18.

“Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people’” (Acts 3:22-23).

This ending is different from our Old Testament and Septuagint. Old Testament: “I will require it of him.” Septuagint: “I will take vengeance on him.”

What is Peter pointing these Jews to? They murdered the prophesied prophet. They were going to be destroyed from the people, unless they repented and turned from their wickedness.

Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7, the prayer in Nehemiah, and the result of being stiff-necked and ignoring the Holy Spirit.

There is a connection between Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7 and the prayer in Nehemiah 9:1-37.

Since both recount the history of Israel, we are not surprised to find overlap.

Acts 7:1↔Nehemiah 9:7

Acts 7:5↔Nehemiah 9:8

Acts 7:35↔Nehemiah 9:11-15

Acts 7:39↔Nehemiah 9:16-21

Acts 7:45↔Nehemiah 9:22-25

Especially note Acts 7:1 and Nehemiah 9:7. Acts 7:1 is not based on the Genesis account. Genesis does not reveal that God called Abraham before Haran while in Ur. But Nehemiah 9:7 does.

Note Stephen’s conclusion in Acts 7:51: “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit.”

Twice the prayer in Nehemiah explains that God gave His Spirit to instruct Israel (Nehemiah 9:20, 30).

Three times the prayer in Nehemiah describes the stiffened necks of the ancient Israelites (Nehemiah 9:16-17, 29).

In Nehemiah, stiff-necked resistance of the Holy Spirit resulted in judgment on Israel and Judah and being given over to the Gentiles.

“Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies. Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer” (Nehemiah 9:26-27).

Note the killing of prophets as part of this reason for judgment. Remember that Stephen also brings up the prophesied prophet of Deuteronomy 18:19.

He also explains that the Jews killed that prophet in Acts 7:52.

“But after they had rest they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them” (Nehemiah 9:28).

“Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands” (Nehemiah 9:30).

What enraged the Jews so much they wanted to kill Stephen? The accusation of being stiff-necked and resisting the Holy Spirit which meant judgment was coming. They certainly knew Stephen was saying they were going to be delivered into the hand of their enemies because they had killed God’s prophets and His ultimate prophet, Jesus Christ.

With all that, Nehemiah 9 was a prayer of repentance and a renewal of their covenant with God. The same message was there for the Jews. If they repented and entered covenant with God, they would be spared the judgment.

Key comparisons of Stephen’s martyrdom.

Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit. These Jews continued in their resistance of the Holy Spirit as Stephen had just described in Acts 7:51.

Stephen’s martyrdom is set up to parallel Jesus’s.

Stephen’s words “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” are similar to Jesus’s in Luke 23:46: “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!”

Stephen’s words “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” are similar to Jesus’s in Luke 23:34: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

In Stephen’s martyrdom, Luke is continuing the point that the Jews are showing themselves worthy to be charged with the martyrdom of all the prophets from Abel to Zechariah.

Paul’s sermon in Acts 13, God’s beloved Son, and Habakkuk’s prophecy.

The quote from Psalm 2 about God’s beloved Son.

Take note of what follows the portion of the Psalm Paul quotes: “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod or iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him” (Psalm 2:8-12).

These Jews needed to “kiss the Son” lest God’s wrath be kindled at them quickly.

The quote from Habakkuk 1:5.

Habakkuk 1:5 is God’s response to Habakkuk who was distraught at all the injustice and disobedience he saw around him.

No doubt, justice was perverted in the death of Jesus.

God’s response is that Habakkuk need merely wait. God is preparing judgment on Judah and Jerusalem. He will send a foreign army to destroy Jerusalem and judge the Jews.

Paul directly warns the Jews in Pisidian Antioch that if the Jews do not kiss the Son, the same thing will happen to them. They will be judged by a foreign army.

The conclusion of Acts

In Rome, Paul met with the Jews who disagreed with him and with one another about what he was teaching.

Paul gives one final word, a quote from Isaiah 6:9-10 about hearing but not hearing, seeing but not seeing.

In Isaiah 6, Isaiah asked how long he should keep preaching this message to the Jews who weren’t listening.

God answered: “Until cities lie waste, without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land” (Isaiah 6:11-12).

Is there any doubt that the conclusion of Acts points to the coming destruction of Jerusalem because the Jews had rejected Jesus Christ and were continuing to reject the preaching of Jesus?

* + - * 1. This has been a long look at some of the aspects of Acts and you may have forgotten what started us down this path. But Luke-Acts does not present the death as atonement for sins, but as the reason the Jews will be judged, pointing toward the events of AD 70.
  1. The absence of the atoning death highlights the sheer magnitude of the centrality of the resurrection in the preaching of the apostles in Acts.
     1. Preaching the resurrection in Acts
        1. The purpose of apostleship was to be “a witness to his resurrection” (Acts 1:22).
        2. In Acts 2, Peter doesn’t teach that Jesus died for the Jews, but that He arose from the dead.
           1. “God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it” (Acts 2:24).
           2. “…he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:31-32).
        3. In Acts 3, Peter doesn’t teach that Jesus died for their sins, but that God raised Him from the dead.
           1. “…and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses” (Acts 3:15).
           2. “Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet…’…God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness “ (Acts 3:22, 26).
        4. In Acts 5, Peter responds to the council that they must preach because Jesus was raised from the dead: “We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree” (Acts 5:29-30).
        5. In Acts 10, Peter doesn’t tell Cornelius that Jesus died for him, but does tell him that Jesus was raised from the dead: “They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead” (Acts 10:39-41).
        6. In Acts 13, Paul doesn’t preach that Jesus’s death atones for them, but that Jesus was raised from the dead.
           1. “But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people” (Acts 13:30-31).
           2. “And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessing of David’” (Acts 13:34).
           3. “…but he whom God raised up did not see corruption” (Acts 13:37).
        7. In Acts 17, Paul doesn’t tell the Areopagites that Jesus died for them, but he does tell them He was raised from the dead: “…because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).
           1. It was this point that caused the Gentiles to mock and many to reject Paul.
        8. In Acts 26, in his defense before Agrippa, Paul makes the resurrection the central issue.
           1. “Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?” (Acts 26:8).
           2. “To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22-23).
     2. What the resurrection means in Acts.
        1. To the Jews the resurrection means that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, therefore the Jews should repent and follow Him in order to have salvation.
           1. “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36).
           2. “…that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus…” (Acts 3:20).
           3. “…let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:10-12).
           4. “God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31).
           5. “Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39).
           6. “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ” (Acts 17:3).
        2. To the Gentiles the resurrection demonstrates Jesus is the judge of all men, therefore they should believe, repent, and follow Him in order to have forgiveness of sins.
           1. “And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:42-43).
           2. “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).
           3. “That the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:23).
  2. Some conclusions for our preaching.
     1. “But the proclamation of Jesus is more than historical instruction concerning the words and acts of Jesus. Stories about Jesus, however edifying, are of themselves empty, 1 C. 15:14. If they are not understood in the light of faith in the risen Lord, they are simply stories of things that happened in the past and are more or less valueless for the present. The reality of the resurrection constitutes the fullness of the early Christian kerygma. This is a fact which cannot be apprehended like other historical events. It has to be continually proclaimed afresh. It is not a human dogma which we are to teach others. It is salvation history which must be preached, and the preaching of salvation history is itself an event of salvation.” (Friedrich, *TDNT*, p. 710)
     2. No doubt, we should preach the atoning death of Jesus Christ. After all, Acts is not the only source of authority for our work and preaching. Passages such as Romans 5:6-11; I Corinthians 15:3; I Peter 1:17-20 and many others show Jesus’s death as the atonement sacrifice for our sins.
     3. However, without the resurrection, we simply cannot prove Jesus’s death was anything more than a normal death. Jesus’s death means something because He was resurrected. It means something to Jews, Gentiles, and all people because Jesus was resurrected.
     4. Christianity is not based on theology or philosophy. It is not the logical conclusion of debating the nature of God or the cosmos. Christianity is based on a real-time event in real history. It is based on the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. If He was resurrected, Christianity means something. If He was not, it falls apart like a house of cards (see also I Corinthians 15:12-19).
     5. Therefore, we as preachers must develop our defense of the resurrection. If we cannot give some reason for believing in the resurrection, then all of our preaching crumbles. All manner of evidences is important and helpful. We need to defend God as Creator. We need to defend the Bible as God’s reliable Word. But fundamentally, we need to defend the resurrection. That is the point on which the rest of it hangs.
     6. We need to teach what the resurrection means about Jesus and about how to follow Him. He is king. He is judge. He is Messiah. He must be believed. We must repent and follow Him. Salvation is only in Him. He and only He has the power to forgive sins. All of this comes from His resurrection.
     7. If the resurrection is not just as central to our preaching and teaching as the atoning death, then we simply aren’t preaching like the apostles in Acts.
     8. When I consider all of this, I think of another statement made by Friedrich about preachers and preaching.
        1. “Even if we disregard the other terms, and restrict ourselves to ‘preach’ in translation of κηρύσσειν, the word is not a strict equivalent of what the NT means by κηρύσσειν. Κηρύσσειν does not mean the delivery of a learned and edifying or hortatory discourse in well-chosen words and a pleasant voice. It is the declaration of an event. Its true sense is ‘to proclaim’.” (Friedrich, *TDNT*, p. 703)
        2. While I can sense this statement leans toward the preaching/teaching distinction that I don’t think is supported in Scripture, I do think it properly highlights why what we are doing in preaching or teaching is a proclamation. It is not because we are proclaiming various topics in any given lesson. It is because behind every lesson is the event we proclaim.
        3. No matter our topic, if what we are preaching is truly Biblical, the reason we are allowed to preach it is because of the resurrection. In fact, the reason we must preach it is because of the resurrection.

1. **Should We Preach Sermons To The Congregation?**
   1. Is the sermon biblical? Obviously, we should proclaim the gospel. Certainly there is to be teaching. But is the sermon, an extended monologue presented to an already saved listening audience, biblical? Some suggest not.
      1. “In short, the contemporary sermon delivered for Christian consumption is foreign to both Old and New Testaments. There is nothing in Scripture to indicate its existence in the early Christian gatherings.” (Frank Viola, *Pagan Christianity*, p. 88)
      2. “Following the same pattern, the apostolic preaching recorded in Acts possessed the following features: It was sporadic. It was delivered on special occasions in order to deal with specific problems. It was extemporaneous and without rhetorical structure. It was most often dialogical (meaning it included feedback and interruptions from the audience) rather than monological (a one-way discourse).” (Ibid.)
      3. Actually, the above make claims that fly in the face of Acts and wild conjectures that simply aren’t revealed there.
         1. Was the apostolic preaching really sporadic and only on special occasions and dealing with special problems? In Acts 2:42, 46, the first Christians were devoting themselves daily to the apostles’ teaching. Daily doesn’t seem sporadic.
         2. While 12 men may be more than the 1 or 2 men most modern congregations have teaching and preaching on a regular basis, in a congregation that started with about 3000 members, this can hardly count as an example of mutual ministry, giving everyone the chance to teach whatever the Spirit laid on their hearts.
         3. Extemporaneous?
            1. Jesus told the apostles: “…do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit” (Mark 13:11)
            2. But that is about what to do when facing persecution and under trial, not Jesus’s direction regarding how to conduct the teaching of Christ’s church.
            3. But even if Jesus’s words apply to every sermon we read in the book of Acts, we must not confuse extemporaneous with inspired.

The sermon in Acts 2 may well have been the Holy Spirit’s and not Peter’s, but it was by no means extemporaneous.

The sermon in Acts 7 may well have been the Holy Spirit’s and not Stephen’s, but it was by no means extemporaneous.

Etc.

* + - 1. Without rhetorical structure?
         1. In a footnote, Viola claims, “The spontaneous and non-rhetorical character of the apostolic messages delivered in Acts is evident upon close inspection.” (Ibid.)
         2. In fact, it can only be seen as non-rhetorical without close inspection.
         3. Closely inspect Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 as an illustration.

Acts 2:14: “But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them…”

Witherington comments: “It is also noteworthy that Peter is said to stand and lift up his voice in *v. 14*, which is the typical stance of the orator in antiquity, in particular the Greek orator or rhetor.” (Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 138)

The first aspect of Greco-Roman rhetoric was *ethos*. It concerned credibility and character, providing reason for the audience to listen and making persuasive connection with the audience.

Peter’s first statement is one of ethos. It is one that defends the character of the apostles and explains why they should be heard.

“For these people are not drunk…” (Acts 2:15).

“But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel…” (Acts 2:16).

Further, note the progression of address Peter uses:

“Men of Judea, and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words” (Acts 2:14).

“Men of Israel, hear these words” (Acts 2:22).

“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence…” (Acts 2:29).

Witherington explains: “Concerns of ethos or character are of major import if a speech is to persuade an audience, and Luke makes clear in subtle ways that Peter has established the necessary rapport with his audience to convince many. For instance, notice the progression in the way Peter addresses his audience. Both ‘men Jews (or Judeans)’ (vs. 14) and ‘men Israelites’ (v. 22) are formal, but in v. 29 we have ‘men brothers,’ to which the audience responds in kind with the same intimate address in v. 37.” (Ibid. pp. 138-139)

The second aspect was *logos* or logic, making an argument.

Again, Witherington shows: “At the same time, in order to persuade his Gentile audience, Luke follows, with some flexibility, some of the forms of Greco-Roman rhetorical oratory in various elements of these speeches. Thus, for example, we have here an example of forensic rhetoric, the rhetoric of defense and attack using Jewish subject matter: (1) vv. 14-21 refute the charge of drunkenness; (2) vv. 22-36 turn to the attack, indicting certain Jews for Killing Jesus. … (3) This in turn prompts what amounts to a *second* brief speech by Peter that is an example of deliberative rhetoric telling the audience the proper course of action to take in the near future (vv. 41-42).” (Ibid., p. 138)

Further, while the logic may have been a little more Jewish in nature than Greco-Roman, it is there nonetheless. Simply consider the selection of passages to drive home Peter’s main points.

Joel 2:32: “And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Psalm 16:8: “I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand…”

Psalm 110:1: “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand…’”

Then Peter’s conclusion from this string of passages: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36).

What is the logical argument? Call on the Lord to be saved. But who is this Lord? The Lord for whom the Lord was on the right hand. This Lord was raised up and did not see corruption. That Lord is Jesus who the apostles witnessed raised from the dead.

The third aspect of Greco-Roman rhetoric was *pathos* or passion. A plea that struck the emotions and persuaded in the heart.

Acts 2:39: “For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Using emotionally charged words like “promise” to the children of Abraham and his promises is certainly a form of pathos.

Tying the promises to their children was a form of pathos.

Of Acts 2:40, Witherington says: “Luke…proceeds directly to the *peroration*, the final exhortation and emotional appeal involving *pathos*—’save yourselves from this wicked generation.’” (Ibid. p. 139)

Regarding a note on rhetorical structure. Often overlooked is that Peter uses a form of *inclusio* or bookending this presentation. It begins with the prophecy from Joel that actually ends two-thirds of a verse short of the entire passage found there, ending with “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” But then he references the last third of Joel 2:32 at the very end of his sermon when he says the promise is to his hearers, their children, and those afar off, “everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

* + - * 1. I leave it to you to decide if Viola is correct in asserting a close inspection of the sermons in Acts reveals a non-rhetorical character.
  1. Should our congregational teaching be strictly dialogue and never monologue?
     1. Viola concluded his description of apostolic preaching, saying: “It was most often dialogical (meaning it included feedback and interruptions from the audience) rather than monological (a one-way discourse).” (Viola, *Pagan Christianity*, p. 88)
        1. His basis for this is found in a footnote on the same page: “The Greek word often used to describe first-century preaching and teaching is *dialegomai* (Acts 17:2, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8-9; 20:7, 9; 24:25). This word means a two-way form of communication. Our English word *dialogue* is derived from it. In short, apostolic ministry was more dialogue than it was monological sermonics.” (Ibid.)
     2. We might respond that there are sermons all through Acts.
        1. However, they are largely to non-Christians. Acts 1:16-22; 8:20-23; 11:3-17; 20:18-35 being the exceptions.
           1. Regarding the exceptions, few of us would actually consider any of them as even sermons.
        2. Further, by our modern customary standards, when you consider the length of the sermons in Acts (with Stephen’s in Acts 7 being the one possible exception), some of our brethren would likely give them all the pejorative title of sermonettes. Hardly qualifying as examples of sermonizing to saved people.
     3. We will likely turn to Acts 20:7, in which Paul preached until midnight. Isn’t this an example of a sermon given for Christian consumption in the assembly of the saints?
        1. That is the heart of this discussion. If you note in Viola’s footnote above, the word he keys in on is used to describe what Paul did in both vs. 7 and vs. 9.
        2. Acts 20:7, 9: “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked (διελέγετο) with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight…And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked (διαλεγομένου) still longer.”
        3. What if we translated that word, “Paul dialogued with them, intending to depart on the next day”? Viola’s contention is that would be the proper translation. If it were translated that way, would it change your understanding of what is happening there?
        4. This is the one potential example of an extended monological speech or sermon presented to Christians in the book of Acts (since of course we don’t know exactly how the apostles preached and taught in their daily teaching described in Acts 2, even though by the very nature of the church’s setting at that time, it is most logical to think the apostles were doing all the talking as they were the ones inspired by God).
        5. Was this an example of dialogue until midnight or monologue? Is Viola right? Should we translate Acts 20:7, 9 as Paul dialoguing with the Christians in Troas?
     4. Let’s consider διαλέγομαι (dialegomai) in Acts 20:7, 9.
        1. New Testament usage (apart from Acts 20).
           1. Mark 9:34: “But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued (διελέχθησαν) with one another about who was the greatest.”
           2. Acts 17:2: “And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned (διελέξατο) with them from the Scriptures.”
           3. Acts 17:17: “So he reasoned (διελέγετο) in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.”
           4. Acts 18:4: “And he reasoned (διελέγετο) in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.”
           5. Acts 18:19: “And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned (διελέξατο) with the Jews.”
           6. Acts 19:8, 9: “And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning (διαλεγόμενος) and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning (διαλεγόμενος) daily in the hall of Tyrannus.”
           7. Acts 24:25: “And he reasoned (διαλεγόμενον) about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, ‘Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.’”
           8. Hebrews 12:5: “And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses (διαλέγεται) you as sons?”
           9. Jude 9: “But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing (διελέγετο) about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment…”
           10. In two of the uses outside of Acts, the concept of dialogue is clearly present as both cases refer to arguing with others (Mark 9:34; Jude 9). However, Hebrews 12:5 is clearly not a dialogue, but an address.
           11. The natural “feel” about the uses in Acts aside from Acts 20:7, 9 is certainly one of back and forth dialogue. The first thought in our mind when we hear that Paul reasoned in the synagogues is arguing back and forth with the Jews trying to persuade them.

However, in Acts 13:16-41, we find an example of Paul teaching in the synagogues, perhaps reasoning. There we find a brief, uninterrupted, monological sermon. Certainly, on the next Sabbath, due to jealousy, it appears he was interrupted with much contradiction from the Jews, but that is because of their anger, not because that was necessarily the standard for Paul’s time in the synagogues.

On the other hand, in Acts 17:17, the reasoning Paul did in the synagogue, he also did in the Athenian marketplace. It is hard to imagine that reasoning in the Athenian marketplace, the birthplace of Socratic dialogue, was confined to monologues.

* + - 1. Septuagint Usage (not necessarily an exhaustive list)
         1. Exodus 6:27: The term is used to describe Moses and Aaron as those who spoke (διαλεγόμενοι) to Pharaoh.
         2. Judges 8:1: The term is used to describe the men of Ephraim as they accused (διελέξαντο) Gideon vehemently.

It is only used in the Codex Vaticanus. In the Codex Alexandria, ἐκρίνοντο was used, which speaks of judging him.

* + - * 1. Esther 5:2: In the Septuagintal/Apocryphal additions to Esther, Esther 5:2 says that while Esther was speaking (διαλέγεσθαι) to Ahasuerus, she fell and fainted.
        2. Sirach 14:20: Speaks of the man who in insight reasons (διαλεχθήσεται).

Interestingly, this and the next few verses are all speaking about the man who does this within himself as he pursues wisdom.

* + - * 1. II Maccabees 11:20: Lysias sent envoys to the Jews to commune or confer (διαλεχθῆναι) with them regarding being able to keep their own laws instead of having to follow the Greek’s.
        2. The Septuagint seems to focus more on the individual nature of this term rather than the one another nature. Esther fainted while she was speaking, not while in conversation with Ahasuerus. While Moses and Aaron certainly had conversations with Pharaoh, it seems to focus on them doing the speaking in the text mentioned above. The men of Ephraim were not arguing with Gideon, but accusing and condemning him.
        3. Sirach takes this term out of the realm of speaking and conversing entirely, placing it fully inside the head of the man who is reasoning within himself, pursuing wisdom.
        4. Only in Maccabees is there what seems to be the clear idea of dialogue. And yet, even there, one is left wondering how much true conferring was going on since the letter itself concedes what the Jews wanted. It seems Lysias’s representatives were merely passing on the same message that was in his letter.
      1. Three uses in Ancient Greek literature (representative list, not exhaustive)
         1. Clearly dialogue

In Plato’s *Theaetetus* (158 c), Socrates is challenging Theaetetus to prove whether they are speaking to one another in a dream or a waking conversation.

In Plato’s *Statesman* (272 c) he is clearly using it to refer to a conversation. A stranger is speaking to Socrates and uses this as a reference to the children of Cronus speaking to one another.

In Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (2.10.1), he is referring to a conversation between Archemedes and Diodorus.

Also in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (4.5.12), he is absolutely referring to dialogue. Xenophon defines the term as having come from men gathering together to have common deliberation, discussing, sorting things after a kind.

In Plato’s *Republic* (5.454a), Socrates uses this term to distinguish between dialogue and mere contentious argument and how easy it is to slip from the first to the second.

* + - * 1. Clearly monologue

Isocrates in, *Panathenaicus* (12.5), uses this term to describe what he intends to “discuss” in the particular section of the book from which this reference comes.

Isocrates in, *Evagoras* (9.34), speaks of his “discussion.” However, once again it is a reference to his own writing of that particular part of the book from which this reference comes.

Demosthenes, in *On the Crown* (18.232), is referring to the words of an orator giving a speech.

Demosthenes, in *Against Macartatus* (43.59), is referring to statements made to particular people, specifically the statements made by the law to Macartatus.

* + - * 1. Internal meditation and consideration

Isocrates, in *Nicocles or the Cyprians* (3.8), says those who are able to speak in front of a crowd are eloquent, but those who reason and debate in their own minds are sage. The latter uses our term to describe the persuasion process in the internal mind.

* + - * 1. Obviously, the term could mean either dialogue, monologue, or internal reasoning. We can’t make an argument based on the grammar or gloss of the word. We have to rely on context.
      1. *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
         1. Schrenk is entirely opposed to seeing any use of διαλέγομαι in the New Testament as referring to the classical use for dialogue.
         2. According to Schrenk, the classical philosophical use was a discussion between multiple people trying to figure out some word, idea, truth. There is no room for that when dealing with God’s revelation.
         3. “In the New Testament there is no instance of the classical use of διαλέγομαι in the philosophical sense. In the sphere of revelation there is no question of reaching the idea through dialectic. What is at issue is the obedient and percipient acceptance of the Word spoken by God, which is not an idea, but the comprehensive declaration of the divine will which sets all life in the light of divine truth.” (Schrenk, *TDNT*, p. 94)
         4. However, Schrenk’s argument seems to me to be getting his theological cart before his textual horse. Having determined an idea about God and His will, he has read it into the text rather than letting the text develop his ideas about what is going on and how that relates to God and His will.
         5. Certainly, Paul is not dialoguing with others to discover truth (cf. Galatians 1:12: “For I did not receive it from any man, now was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”) However, that doesn’t remove the use of dialogue to convince and persuade others with the truth God had revealed to Paul.
         6. So, while I would happily jump on the Schrenk bandwagon, I simply can’t dismiss “dialogue” because of his assessment.
      2. Where does this leave us?
         1. I’m tempted to say nowhere. Through all of this study, we’ve discovered that we cannot, based on the word alone, know if we are dealing with dialogue or monologue. It is like our modern words “talk” or “discuss.” We have to hear them in a context to know whether they refer to dialogue or monologue.
         2. However, that is not actually leaving us nowhere. What it does mean is we cannot with a wave of the hand and a pronouncement of the word’s definition or etymology simply claim that all the teaching of Christians in the New Testament was a full participation dialogue between teacher and audience as Viola is wont to do.
         3. It means we have to look at the context.
      3. The context of Acts 20:7, 9.
         1. There is one enlightening aspect of the context of Acts 20:7, 9 that seems to be often overlooked in this discussion by those who would dismiss sermons. That is, διαλέγομαι is not the only term used in these verses to describe what Paul is doing.
         2. In vs. 7, we are not only told “Paul talked (διαλέγομαι) with them,” but also that he “prolonged his speech (τὸν λόγον) until midnight.”

Λόγος is a multi-faceted word and used in many ways throughout the New Testament. A full study of the uses of the term is far beyond the scope of this lecture.

Having said that, feel free to search for the uses of λόγος in the New Testament. You will discover that when λόγος is used to describe human speech in the New Testament it never refers to conversation. Rather, it always refers to a word, statement, or address by one person, with two potential exceptions.

The first is in Luke 10:39 when Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to His teaching (τὸν λόγον). If we assume all of Jesus’s teaching was dialogical, as Viola and his ilk do, then this is an example of λόγος used to refer to conversation. However, since Mary was merely listening and not participating, I don’t think that is a safe assumption. In fact, this seems to me to be another passage that flies in the face of Viola’s assumptions and teaching.

The second is Luke 24:17: “And he said to them, ‘What is this conversation (οἱ λόγοι) that you are holding with each other as you walk?”

On the surface, this seems like the word λόγος is also used for conversation. However, that is merely because of English translators trying to smooth over some of the transition from Greek to English.

Consider other translations.

“And He said to them, ‘What are these words (οἱ λόγοι) that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?’” (NASB).

“…and he said unto them, ‘What are these words (οἱ λόγοι) that ye exchange with one another, walking…’” (Young’s Literal Translation).

In fact, in the original, οἱ λόγοι does not refer to the conversation as a whole, but to the words or statements they are exchanging or tossing back and forth with one another.

Thus, this is no exception to the rule either.

Since διαλέγομαι is a word we must define based on context regarding the issue of dialogue or monologue, we must allow the context to define it for us. And the context does define it. Paul was reasoning (διελέγετο/ διαλεγομένου) in Acts 20:7, 9, but he wasn’t doing so through conversation or dialogue. He was doing so through a speech, message (τὸν λόγον).

* + - 1. Conclusion of this matter of διαλέγομαι in Acts 20:7, 9.
         1. While use of διαλέγομαι in Acts 20:7, 9 does not mandate dialogue or full participation from Paul’s audience, we must not miss the use of this term and its implications for what is happening in Paul’s address.

While the term does not of necessity mean dialogue, it always has a connotation of some kind of back and forth even when referring to a speech or internal thinking.

Though Paul was giving a speech or a sermon, Luke was conscious of the dialogical nature of what Paul was doing. Not that there was verbal back-and-forth dialogue, but that even though Paul was giving a monologue there is interaction between Paul and his audience.

Paul is aware that his hearers are thinking about and interacting with his presentation in their own minds. They are not merely receiving information, but considering, weighing, perhaps even mentally objecting. He must craft his presentation to take all of that into account.

Though there is no verbal interaction, this is a sermon that kept in mind the unspoken dialogue between presenter and audience. It kept in mind the internal dialogue going on within the hearers.

This is the difference between simply passing on information and attempting to persuade through reason.

* + - * 1. Thus, the uninterrupted sermon presented to faithful Christians is fully authorized in the book of Acts. We may practice it, keeping in mind the above internal dialogue.

We may, however, want to consider an opportunity in our congregations such as we are allowed in this conference to question the speaker, to allow the internal and unspoken dialogue to come to the surface.

That very likely is what happened when Paul “conversed” with the brethren following Eutychus’s mishap.

1. **The Apostles’ Use Of The Old Testament Scripture**
   1. Preaching from the Old Testament
      1. “An analytical count of the instances of the use of the OT in Acts is impossible because of the variety of types of usage and the difficulty of assigning uses to specific categories. However, we can gain some idea of the scale of the usage in Acts by observing that Steyn (1995:26-31) lists twenty-five explicit quotations identified by the use of introductory formulas (actually twenty seven, since two of these instances each cite two OT passages) and nine uses of direct phrases not introduced by formulas (cf. Longenecker 1999:69-71). Alongside these there are a large number of uses of scriptural language, allusions, and uses of scriptural motifs.  
          “Nevertheless, the relative distribution of the scripture material in Acts is somewhat surprising. Formal citations are spread rather unevenly through the book, mainly in the first half. The texts that can be clearly identified as formal citations occur in chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 13, 15, 23, 28; there are none in chapters 5, 6, 9-12, 14, 16-22, 24-27. The so-called speeches are naturally the main location for scriptural material in Acts, and all the quotations introduced by formulas occur in speeches addressed to Jewish (or Jewish-Christian) audiences (Steyn 1995: 230); contrast the lack of direct citation in the speeches in Lystra and Athens. Allusions are found much more widely (but are still sparse in the second half of Acts), and they are not confined to the speeches; the narrator can also use Scripture and is influenced by its wording (e.g., the Elijah/Elisha reminiscences of 1:1-11). The scriptural references are thus concentrated in the first half of the book in preaching and defensive speeches to Jews and proselytes, but they are surprisingly absent from Paul’s defense speeches in the second half of Acts, even when these are directed to a predominantly Jewish audience.” (Marshall, “Acts,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old*, p. 513)
      2. “Certain books are used more than others, particularly so far as the citations are concerned: Psalms (10x) and to a much lesser extent Exodus (5x), Isaiah (3x), and the Minor Prophets (4x). There are no citations from the Historical books, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Writings (other than the Psalms; hence the limitation in Luke 24:44 to ‘the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms’ [not the Writings] is strictly correct).” (Ibid., p. 517)
      3. The following refers to the Old Testament use in the entire New Testament, but serves to make the point: “According to one count, there are 239 acknowledged quotations of the OT, introduced by some kind of formula; there are 198 quotations not introduced by any formula; there are 1,167 instances of OT passages reworded or directly mentioned. This makes a total of 1,604 NT citations of 1,276 different OT passages. There are many more allusions to the OT and borrowing of its phrases. Most of these passages represent a straightforward, literary use of the OT. The NT uses the Old in many ways: for vocabulary and phraseology to express its own ideas, for illustration, for proof of its statements, for moral instruction, for predictions of the new situation. Each of these and other uses could be discussed, but suffice it to say that problems in the NT use of the Old should not obscure the tremendous indebtedness of the later canon to the older, nor should they make that entire usage more problematic than it is.” (Ferguson, “Christian Use of the Old Testament in the New,” *The World and Literature of the Old Testament*, p. 373)
      4. The idea that New Testament Christianity is accomplished merely by preaching from the New Testament is false. If for no other reason than we can’t follow the pattern of New Testament Christians without teaching and preaching from the Old Testament.
         1. “It is impossible to overstate the importance of understanding the use of the Old Testament for New Testament research. Every strata of the early church—every tradition, every author in the New Testament—was immersed in the Old Testament and its theology is based on it.” (Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, p. 343)
         2. To which I add, so was every preacher in Acts.
         3. When the dear old sister lets us know that she likes our preaching because we only preach from the New Testament, no matter how she means it, it is not a compliment to us.
         4. If every author of the New Testament was immersed in the Old, we need to be as well.
      5. Someone might object that the preachers in Acts only used the Old Testament while teaching Jews. If we are teaching Jews, then we’ll use the Old Testament.
         1. In Acts 17, when Paul preached in the Areopagus, he didn’t directly quote Scripture at all because he was preaching to an audience who didn’t know Scripture at all. Would we use this as an argument that preaching without referencing the Bible at all can be a general rule for our preaching?
         2. What Acts 17 does demonstrate is our preaching needs to be adjusted based on our audience. If we are preaching to complete pagans who don’t know or even believe the Bible, anchoring our preaching there will accomplish little. When we are preaching to Jews it certainly should be anchored in the Old Testament.
         3. When we are preaching to non-Christians, we need to consider their background and adjust our approach accordingly.
         4. However, when we are preaching to Christians, regardless of their background, we are to teach the whole counsel of God (cf. Acts 20:27). Considering the integral use of the Old Testament in the New, we cannot possibly claim to be teaching the whole counsel of God without teaching the Old Covenant.
         5. If nothing else, perhaps Tasker’s assessment for the need to preach the Old Testament will convince us or demonstrate why many don’t want to preach from the Old Testament:
            1. “If we leave the historical and legal books of the Old Testament out of account, we are bound to lose the vital sense of the living God who acts in history and who is known primarily by His acts; and to emphasize those elements in Christianity which are congenial to our modern philosophies, to the virtual exclusion of all that is distinctive in the Divine self-disclosure. We shall speak much of God’s love, but keep silent about His justice, His wrath, His jealousy, and His uncompromising demands. It is remarkable to how large a degree the doctrine of the transcendent, sovereign God has disappeared from modern Christian pulpits; and how anxious the preacher seems to be to show that there is nothing in his religion likely to give offence to the social aims and aspirations of the modern man. ‘The Church to-day,’ writes G. Ernest Wright, ‘has tended to succumb to man’s hope for integration, happiness and security in the world as it is. It has preached the Gospel as a new kind of paganism, the value of which is strictly utilitarian. Religion is good for us; it gives us comfort and peace of mind; it is the only hope for democracy; it alone can support the status quo and make us happy within it. Yet biblical hope and pagan comfort are not the same thing.’” (Tasker, *The Old Testament in the New Testament*, pp. 11-12)
   2. How the Apostles Used the Old Testament
      1. Anyone who starts seriously studying the Old Testament and the references to it in the New Testament will quickly discover that the New Testament authors often use the Old Testament in ways that seem odd and out of context.
         1. Certainly, some references are perfectly straightforward and natural causing no problem at all. But others are quite jarring.
            1. In the very first chapter of Acts, Peter quotes Psalm 69:25 and 109:8 as support for electing a replacement for Judas. However, a quick read of the two psalms makes it quite clear that the psalmist was not talking about Judas, at least not directly and initially. How on earth can Peter use these passages to make this leap about Judas? This is merely one example in the New Testament.
         2. Conservatives struggle with it, trying to make it all fit in nice neat little boxes; liberal critics rejoice in it, claiming it is all a house of cards that crashes with the slightest puff of investigation.
         3. Sadly, many skeptically minded seekers get stuck in their tracks by it and because few Christians have seriously considered how to explain what is going on to them, they don’t stick with the Bible long enough to see how it fits together.
         4. The approaches to the problem are myriad.
            1. Some struggle to make every quote in the New Testament fit snuggly into the original grammatical-historical context of the Old Testament context, claiming the New Testament writer only meant what the Old Testament author also meant.
            2. Some suggest it is mainly typology.
            3. Some suggest it is mainly *sensus plenior*. There was a meaning to the Old Testament writer but the New Testament writer pulls out a fuller, deeper meaning.
            4. Some suggest that the New Testament writers redefine the Old Testament meanings, fitting them to their own New Testament purposes.

Some work hard to defend why this was permissible and is still inspired.

Some flippantly claim this shows they weren’t inspired, were ignorantly proof-texting, and didn’t really know what they were talking about.

* + - * 1. Some suggest the New Testament writers were proof-texters looking for any easy quote or sound bite to fit their purposes, showing that they didn’t really believe the original intent or context mattered at all.
        2. Many observe the “Passover,” assuming there must be a reasonable answer out there and, believing that the apostles were inspired, are certain that whatever they said is right, and that’s all we need to say about it.
    1. A comforting point
       1. There is no way we can answer all the potential questions that can come out of dealing with this issue in this one lecture. And considering the back and forth among scholars, my answers may not satisfy. However, one point provides me some comfort as we debate this issue.
       2. Despite the modern claims that the use of the Old Testament quotes simply makes no sense, Christianity was successful. The writers of the New Testament used the Old Testament in ways that seem unique and questionable to us, and yet when they were using them that way, Jesus Christ was accepted by multitudes.
       3. In Acts 1, when Peter used Psalms 69 and 109, no one questioned his assessment; they all went along with the election of Matthias.
       4. In Acts 2, when Peter used Psalms 16 and 110 to defend the resurrection, about 3000 responded thinking his argument was sound.
       5. While some may argue that Luke could be fabricating the successful use of these hermeneutics, the victory of Christianity over the western world simply can’t be denied. Something was said and done that convinced multitudes Jesus was indeed the Messiah.
          1. For all the Dan Brownish critical blubbering about multiple Christianities and a Constaninian/Nicene conspiracy to erase the evidence of these Christianities, the only evidence we have for what was said is found in the Bible.
          2. It is not at all academically sound to suggest that something we have no evidence for was the really convincing factor and overlook the evidence we do have.
          3. What evidence do we have? The apostles and prophets of the New Covenant performed mighty signs and made arguments from the Old Testament that convinced people, so their evangelistic pushes were successful.
       6. This convinces me that there is a legitimate answer to this question about how the apostles used the Old Testament.
          1. Theirs was an approach to the Old Testament that convinced multitudes in a time and culture that was different from ours.
          2. It is the height of arrogance to believe they were successful because those multitudes were not smart enough to see mistaken uses of Scripture. It must be that they saw the scriptural arguments as legitimate.
          3. It is, therefore, our job to figure out why.
    2. Common Mistakes to Avoid
       1. Oversimplifying
          1. Trying to find a one size fits all explanation of how the New Testament authors used Old Testament Scripture in their writings won’t work.
          2. Like us, when they referenced or quoted, they used their allusions in different ways.
          3. In a 2015 lecture at Florida College, Dr. David McClister listed at least 10 different ways in which the New Testament authors made use of the Old Testament. The following are about the Old Testament use throughout the entire New Testament and not just Acts, but the points apply in Acts as well.

“#1: sometimes a quotation points to a general pattern of characteristic activity”  
“#2: sometimes a quotation summarizes the main point of a larger passage. I.e., it paraphrases a larger OT text”  
“#3: sometimes a ‘quotation’ summarizes a theme found in several texts of the OT”  
“#4: sometimes a quotation provides the interpretive key or explanation for something in the new covenant that seems strange, unusual, or controversial”  
#5: sometimes the OT is used for the framework of, or elements for, an author’s presentation”  
“#6: sometimes a quotation is meant to make us recall a larger story (with its implications from the OT”  
“#7: sometimes two or more OT passages are quoted together because they share common terms or a common theme; it ‘connects the dots’ to see the big picture”  
“#8: sometimes a quotation is produced as proof of what an author asserts”  
“#9: sometimes a quotation establishes a generic truth (especially for Gentile readers)”  
“#10: sometimes a passage is quoted for its implication(s)” (McClister, *Reading the Old Testament with the New Testament Authors*)

* + - 1. Appealing to Rabbinic Judaism
         1. An easy castoff response is to simply claim that Rabbinic Judaism deals with the Old Testament Scriptures in similar ways.
         2. However, our evidence for how Rabbinic Judaism interprets Scripture comes from three or four hundred years after the New Testament. Knowing that these approaches didn’t spring fully formed like Athena from the heads of fifth century Jews, these approaches to the Old Testament may give us some ideas as to how Scripture was treated four centuries earlier. However, we simply can’t bank too much on that to give us a completely accurate picture.
         3. Further, considering the significantly different conclusions Rabbinic Judaism draws from its approach to the Old Testament, it makes little sense for Christians to claim our forbearers used the Scripture in the same ways as the Rabbis as our main explanation.
      2. The apostles could use Scripture this way because the Jews of the 1st century did
         1. As our last point indicated, we are not entirely certain how the Jews of the 1st century used Scripture. Though what evidence there is does show similarity.

“The simple truth is that when we analyze the intertestamental literature, the Qumran scrolls, the targums, and the rabbinic corpus, we find the same phenomenon of exegesis that we observe in the NT: the tendency to read OT statements in something other than their grammatical-historical sense.” (Pickup, “New Testament Interpretation of the Old,” *JETS*, p. 357)

* + - * 1. While this point and the last are helpful to the degree that they demonstrate Jesus and His apostles and prophets were not cutting an entirely new cloth of Scriptural interpretation, it is not entirely satisfactory to me.
        2. Neither we nor the apostles appeal to the Jews as the source of authority for any practice, let alone how to interpret Scripture.
      1. The apostles were just using midrashic techniques
         1. This point is similar to the previous two. It simply sounds more educated. However, there are significant problems with simply declaring the apostles were practicing midrash.
         2. What does it even mean to practice midrash? Are we sure?

The supposedly original seven rules of midrash, often attributed to Hillel, are given as:

*“Qal wahomer*: what applies in a less important case will certainly apply in a more important case.

*“Gezerah shawah*: verbal analogy from one verse to another; where the same words are applied to two separate cases, it follows that the same considerations apply to both.

*“Binyan ‘ab mkathub ‘ehad*: building up a family from a single text; when the same phrase is found in a number of passages, then a consideration found in one of them applies to all of them.

*“Binyan ‘ab mishene kethubim*: building up a family from two texts; when a principle is established by relating two texts together, the principle can then be applied to other passages.

*“Kelal upherat*: the general and the particular; a general principle may be restricted by a particularization of it in another verse; or conversely, a particular rule may be extended into a general principle.

*“Kayoze’ bo bemaqom ‘aher*: as is found in another place; a difficulty in one text may be solved by comparing it with another that has points of general (though not necessarily verbal) similarity.

*“Dabar halamed me-’inyano*: a meaning established by its context.” (Ibid. loc., 612-620)

Moyise says of these rules: “It is unclear if such ‘rules’ were intended to govern exegesis or are a later rationalization of what was actually taking place. They are often cited by their Hebrew names, which gives the impression of precision and technicality but they are actually quite general and can be paralleled in Hellenistic writings. Taken together, it can be seen that a vast array of possibilities opens up for how a text can legitimately be interpreted.” (Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New*, p. 18)

When we claim the apostles were practicing midrash, do we mean the 7 rules of Hillel? The 13 rules of Rabbi Akiba? Or the 32 rules of Rabbi Eliezer ben Jose ha-Galili? Or are we just referring to a couple of the rules that make sense to us? (Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, loc., 621)

* + - * 1. Neusner explains why simply tossing out the word midrash is not always helpful.

“Even at this early stage in the argument, you must have wondered at my effort to use as little as possible a word commonly used in discourse on biblical exegesis, the word midrash. Let me define the word and explain why I shall use it only seldom. To avoid that word, I pay the price of using somewhat awkward circumlocutions, in particular, ‘collections of exegeses of Scripture,’ and the like, ‘Midrash’ stands for at least three specific things, as well as a great many things in general.  
 “It refers, first to a particular kind of book, a compilation of biblical exegesis, amplifications, and compositions, as in Midrash Rabbah—a vast collection of compilations of biblical exegesis, covering the Pentateuch, the five scrolls. Genesis Rabbah is midrash.  
 “It speaks, second, to an activity of explaining or applying the meaning of a biblical verse (or group of verses), as in ‘the midrash of this verse is...’ In this sense, the Gospel of Matthew is not a midrash, but it contains much midrash. A word so rich in ambiguities is best avoided; other words, each of them standing for some one thing, will prove more useful.  
 “That is still clearer when we realize that the word midrash may stand for yet a third thing: hermeneutics of a particular kind. As a mode of interpretation, people use the word midrash to mean the reading of one thing in terms of some other. This usage is so general as to defy concrete application, as in the statement, ‘Life itself is a midrash on the Torah.’ That is to say, things that happen constitute amplifications and applications of statements made in Scripture.  
 “The range of definitions of the word midrash, of the modes of exegesis encompassed within that word (as well as those excluded by it if there are any), of the sorts of books that constitute midrash (and those that do not)—these are so vast as to make the word, by itself, more of a hindrance than a help in saying what we mean.” (Neusner, *Midrash in Context*, pp. xvi-xvii)

* + - * 1. Stamps expresses the limitations of tossing out terms like midrash: “Second, the way scholars discuss specific Jewish interpretive practices suggest a lack of precision or clarity. In particular, terms like ‘pesher,’ ‘midrash,’ ‘typology,’ and ‘allegory’ are used as labels to identify NT use of the OT as if the very labeling finishes the task of locating the use in its Jewish context. Terms like ‘pesher’ and ‘midrash’ are not actually a specific form of interpretative practice, but generic terms that cover a variety of exegetical practice. Indeed, some NT scholars have used these terms in an iconoclastic manner, not to invoke a Jewish influence, but to describe a NT writer’s distinctive, even unique approach in using the OT.” (Stamps, “Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament,” *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament*, ed. Porter, p. 15).
        2. Longenecker references another author to demonstrate the door we are opening when we just throw out the term midrash: “Doeve is quite right in saying that ‘the liberty obtaining [sic] in haggadic exegesis is often so great and the method of going to work so dependent on the ingenuity of the exegetist, that it is out of the question to attempt to give a consistent system of norms for this exegesis.’” (Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Old Testament Period*, loc. 631)
        3. Marty Pickup uses the term in an article in the *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* quoted positively in this lecture, but only after expressing its inadequacies, going to great lengths to define precisely how he uses the term, and essentially suggesting that he uses it because it is the only word available to describe the non-grammatical-historical aspect of the methodology the term suggests. He was open to the implementation of another term if an adequate and clearer term could be found. (Pickup, “New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament,” *JETS*, p. 355)
        4. Some of the defense I will give of how the apostles used the Old Testament will definitely come from aspects that are often considered midrashic interpretation. But its broad definition and wild use in some cases makes this a dangerous response without providing significant caveat and definition.
      1. The apostles were inspired, so they could do that.
         1. It is certainly true that the Scriptures the apostles and prophets of the New Testament recorded are inspired by God (II Timothy 3:16). And as a strong believer in the inspiration of the Bible, I am tempted to accept this as a definitive response and move on to another topic.
         2. However, this argument begs the question. How can we claim to believe the New Testament texts are inspired based on the logical argumentation within them defending the resurrection of Jesus, but then let our only defense of their logic be the claim that they are inspired?
         3. At the same time, a strong belief in inspiration does play its role in helping answer this question.

First, I admit that because of my belief in the inspiration of both the Old and the New Testaments, I have been willing to study long and hard to come up with a satisfying solution rather than dismissing the Bible out of hand.

Second, we will see that it is the belief in inspiration that does provide one of the keys to grasping the apostles’ use of the Old Testament.

* + 1. What did the apostles quote?
       1. I am no scholar, so I cannot definitively answer this question or even make an extremely educated statement about it.
       2. However, in this study, I have discovered that throwing out simplistic answers like, “The New Testament authors just quoted the Septuagint,” to explain some of the differences between our Old Testaments and the quotes attributed to them is, perhaps, overly simplistic.
       3. “Allowing for the fact that sometimes the ancient authors (New Testament and Qumran) changed the wording of their texts, the evidence still points to the fact that the biblical text was available in a number of versions in the first century. This is true both for the Hebrew text and its Greek translation. Too often, scholars have spoken of ‘agreeing with the LXX’ or ‘going against the Hebrew’, when what is actually meant is that the quoted text differs from our Masoretic Text and Rahlfs’ reconstruction of the Greek text (1935), based on the great fourth- and fifth-century manuscripts known as Alexandrinus (A), Vaticanus (B), and Sinaiticus (a). Indeed, there is a debate as to whether there ever was a single LXX text, from which all other versions derive. Certainly the various books of the Hebrew Bible were translated at different times and by different authors.” (Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New*, p. 16)
       4. “Indeed, given the physical difficulty of finding a particular passage in a long scroll, it is unlikely that any of the authors quoted texts in the modern sense of physically locating the actual passage and copying it. Thus when we come to analyse [sic] the New Testament quotations, we will have to bear in mind that they might be quoting from one or more of the following:  
          “1) A Hebrew text similar to the Masoretic Text of the tenth century CE  
          “2) A different type of Hebrew text  
          “3) A Greek text similar to that found in Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, and Sinaiticus  
          “4) A different or revised form of Greek text  
          “5) An Aramaic translation/paraphrase of a Hebrew text  
          “6) A Christian collection or translation.” (Ibid. p. 17-18)
       5. This should, perhaps, prompt some humility whenever we preachers are arguing with people about the various translations they use and the supposed superiority of our individual favorites.
    2. How did the apostles quote the Old Testament?
       1. One of the aspects of our struggle with the Old Testament usage is that the quotes and references don’t always line up exactly with what we have in our Old Testaments or even what is in our modern representation of the Septuagint.
          1. In Acts 1:20, Peter quotes Psalm 69:25 saying, “May his camp become desolate.” However, both our Old Testaments and the Septuagint say “their” instead of “his.”
          2. Examples of this cause modern skeptics to say Peter and Luke not only didn’t care about the original context, but didn’t even care about what it literally said. They not only changed the meaning, but changed the wording to support their meaning.
       2. Refer back to VIII. B. 4. D. to recognize that what they were quoting from is not as simplistic as we may sometimes think.
       3. However, more to the point here, we must not place modern standards of quotation on ancient writers. We are a visual/textual culture that places great importance on sourcing our quotes exactly. We use quotation marks, footnotes, bibliographies. They were an oral/aural culture that simply did not have the same standard of quoting we do.
          1. For lack of better terms, in an oral/aural culture, the point of a quote is to get the gist of the message correct, not the exact wording. (This, by the way, also explains some of the differences between wording and order in the Synoptics.)
       4. Few people had unrestricted access to the written materials. They were often “quoting” from memory. It is not likely that Luke was carrying with him the scrolls of Psalms, Isaiah, the Twelve. It is certainly unlikely that Peter pulled out the scrolls of the Twelve and the Psalms when preaching on Pentecost.
       5. Keep in mind then that what may well have happened is the apostles heard the Scriptures in Hebrew on the Sabbaths, had them translated to them in Aramaic by the Rabbis, they spoke from memory in Aramaic themselves, and then Luke is putting it in Greek. That alone will explain some differences.
       6. Additionally, some of this concern about differences is a bit overblown. For instance, consider again the example of Acts 1:20 given earlier. Yes, the original says “their” and the quote says “his.” But is that really a shocking change?
          1. Do we not do similar things without question?
          2. Consider Nehemiah 8:10: “And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Yet we sing: “The joy of the Lord is my strength.”

Is there any doubt the song is referring back to Nehemiah 8:10? Of course not.

Does anyone think it is a mistaken reference? Does anyone think the author of the song didn’t care about the original context or even the wording of the original context? Of course not.

We recognize the application in our lives of a passage often warrants adjustment as we explain the application.

* + 1. Did the Old Testament authors understand their writings the way the New Testament authors did?
       1. Often, they did.
          1. In Acts 28:26-27, Luke records Paul quoting Isaiah 6:9-10.

Though Paul applies the text to a new situation, he means by this text the same thing Isaiah did. These Israelites have heard the truth, but they refuse to understand it.

As mentioned earlier in this lecture, that should have awakened some of them, because what comes next in the Isaiah text is a promise of judgment and destruction. I’m very certain Paul meant that just as Isaiah did.

* + - 1. However, not all of the time.
         1. I am hard pressed to claim David had even the remotest idea that Psalm 69:25 and 109:8 meant the Messiah’s betrayer should be replaced as an apostle. But that is Peter’s assessment of those passages (see Acts 1:16-22).
         2. The New Testament writers would sometimes find what seems to be new and creative lessons from Old Testament texts. At least it seems that way if we limit our exegesis of the texts to simply consider the grammatical-historical approach. At times they presented meanings that the original author surely did not grasp.
         3. But this need not upset us.

John 11:49-53

Caiaphas, the high priest said, “You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.”

Caiaphas was responding to the concern that if they allowed Jesus to go on, the Romans would take away their place and their nation.

John records that while Caiaphas didn’t know it, because he was the high priest, this was actually a prophecy from God.

Jesus wouldn’t die to save the nation of Israel from Rome, but from the wrath of God. But even more than that, it wasn’t for the nation of political Israel, but to gather into one “nation” the children of God who are scattered abroad. This is a prophecy of the spiritual nation.

Acts 2:39

Peter preached: “For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

When Peter preached this, having no idea that Gentiles could become Christians without becoming Jews, he must have understood this statement to refer to the Jews who were present and the ones in the Dispersion who had not come to the feast.

At most, it could not have meant more to him than the promise applied also to proselytes, Gentiles who had become Jews.

However, in Acts 10-11, 15, everyone learned that this statement actually refers to the Gentiles as well.

In fact, that is exactly how Paul uses this “far off” concept in Ephesians 2:17.

* + 1. Why did the apostles use the Old Testament in the ways they did?
       1. The apostles used the Old Testament the ways they did because Jesus did.
          1. As stated above, neither Jesus nor the apostles were cutting an entirely new cloth of hermeneutics or scriptural interpretation. If they had been, they likely would have been completely unsuccessful.
          2. That being said, we need to know that the apostles were not simply adopting bogus ways of interpreting Scripture that would appeal to their audiences to simply manipulate them into submission.
          3. Jesus interpreted Scripture the way He did because He is God. He is the author of Scripture and knows what is intended by it.

In Luke 6:1-5, when the Pharisees questioned Jesus regarding the disciples plucking grain on the Sabbath, His final defense is “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

As Lord, He is lord of the Sabbath. He understands the Sabbath. He knows how to apply the Sabbath. He originated the laws of the Sabbath.

In John 6:66-69, when Jesus asked if the twelve wanted to abandon Him as the crowds had done, Peter responded, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life…”

If Jesus has the words of eternal life, His approach to the Word is eternal life.

The apostles treated the Old Testament as they did not because many aspects of it corresponded with the way their contemporaries treated Scripture, but because the Holy One treated Scripture that way.

* + - * 1. Consider the way Jesus used the Old Testament Scriptures.

Notice some general statements regarding how Jesus viewed the Old Testament Scriptures.

“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27).

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life” (John 5:39-40).

Consider some specific examples of Jesus’s use of the Old Testament.

In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus reads Isaiah 61:1-2. In Luke 4:21, He says, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

In the original context, the passage seems to be a continuation of the promise of Israel’s restoration following captivity.

Further, the “me” would seem in the immediate context to refer to Isaiah, the prophet who was writing it. But Jesus says it was about Him.

In John 15:25, Jesus quotes a statement that is repeated in Psalm 35:19 and 69:14. “They hated me without cause.” He says it is fulfilled in His enemies hating Him and His emissaries. Both passages raise some serious questions when applied to Jesus.

In Psalm 35, we struggle with vss. 22-26 as we compare them with Jesus’s actual prayer on the cross that those around Him be forgiven. Further, the psalm itself seems pretty clearly to be about David.

Psalm 69 gives us real pause in applying it to Jesus because vs. 5 says, “O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.” And again, the original context seems to be clearly about David.

But Jesus says these verses are fulfilled in Him. He looks back to the Old Testament and sees Himself even when the original context doesn’t seem to be about Him directly.

By the way, Psalm 69:25 is the passage Peter quotes in Acts 1:20, applying it to Judas. And why not? If Jesus can apply vs. 14 to Himself, why can’t Peter apply vs. 25 to Jesus’s greatest enemy and betrayer?

In Luke 13:35, Jesus adopts the statement from Psalm 118:26: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

This is interesting because Psalm 118:17 says the author of that psalm will not die, but Jesus did die. (Of course, vs. 18 goes on to say, “he has not given me over to death.” And Jesus was not given over to death but was victorious over death.) Again, this psalm seems to have an original context that doesn’t include Jesus. But Jesus adopts it for Himself.

In Luke 20:17, Jesus co-opts another verse from Psalm 118. Psalm 118:22 is applied to Jesus. “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

Interestingly, this is more than a quote from Psalm 118. It is part of a small stream of passages that apply to Messiah as indicated by referencing this one verse. Consider also Isaiah 28:16 and Zechariah 10:4.

In Matthew 27:46, while on the cross, Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1.

While I’m well aware that for us it seems simply obvious Psalm 22 is a prophecy of Jesus, if Jesus hadn’t quoted it on the cross, I doubt we would think so. We would have seen it as a psalm about David’s struggles. Yet, Jesus makes it about Himself.

In Luke 23:46, Jesus applies another psalm to Himself. He quotes Psalm 31:5: “Into your hand I commit my spirit…”

Some seem leery of accepting this as an actual quote. For instance, the ESV Bible I use, which is generally very thorough in pointing out Old Testament quotations and allusions, doesn’t connect Jesus’s statement with the Psalm it is most like.

Of course, it is possible Jesus is just using similar language and had no intention of quoting the psalm. Yet, I wonder if the reason some want to claim this isn’t a quote from Psalm 31 is because Psalm 31:10 says his strength fails because of his iniquity. That can surely be said of David, but not of Jesus.

The point to see is there was clearly an Old Testament context other than a prediction of Jesus, yet Jesus adopts the statement and applies it to Himself.

* + - 1. The apostles used the Old Testament the ways they did because they believed the Scriptures were inspired by God.
         1. Understanding the grammatical-historical hermeneutic and its limitations.

“If one reads the Old Testament from a grammatical-historical point of view, he will interpret the words of a given passage according to their plain, grammatical sense within the context of the particular biblical book where they are found. Such a reader seeks to answer this question: what was the Old Testament author of the passage trying to say to his original audience? When looking at a particular psalm of David, for example, one would ask what meaning was in David’s mind when he wrote the words of the psalm? Or, to take matters a bit further, what idea did the psalm convey to the Israelites of that day as they sang it in their worship? Such is the grammatical-historical approach, and it is used today by all readers of the Bible, both conservatives and liberals alike.” (Pickup, “The New Testament’s Exegesis of Old Testament Passages,” *Studies in the Psalms*, pp. 249-250; see also *JETS*, pp. 358-359)

Certainly, this is a legitimate approach to Scripture. It is the approach we most commonly apply today. It makes so much sense to us, it needs practically no defense.

We should read Scripture this way. What are the simple meanings of the words and phrases used? What did Moses, David, Isaiah, Luke, and Paul intend when they wrote? What was the situation of their audiences, and how would that have impacted their understanding? What was the original singular context of each writing? These are natural questions.

However, if we believe this is the only way to approach the individual Scriptures that make up the collection of God’s Word, we are missing a significantly important aspect of the Bible as a whole.

Pickup explains the limitations.

“It should be noted, however, that the grammatical-historical approach does not require a belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture, for it is the same hermeneutic one would use to interpret any human document.” (Pickup, “New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament,” *JETS*, p. 359; see also *Studies in the Psalms*, p. 350)

The strictly grammatical-historical hermeneutic thinks only of the human author and original audience. It doesn’t deny the divine author and eternal audience, it simply doesn’t take it into account.

Additionally, the strictly grammatical-historical hermeneutic in the main only considers the individual pieces of the collection and not the collection as a whole.

The above may be an oversimplification. One part of the historical-grammatical hermeneutic is recognizing the chronological order in which the human authors wrote their parts of the collection. This allows us to recognize that later writings build on former writings.

But for the most part, this approach focuses on the pieces of the collection and not the collection as a whole.

Considering 2] and 3] together, the strictly grammatical-historical hermeneutic ignores that there is actually a singular Author over every piece of the collection and behind the entire collection, an Author who can declare the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10).

Thus, the strictly grammatical-historical hermeneutic, while recognizing that writings which occurred in human history at an earlier period may impact later writings, ignores that in the eternal mind of the ultimate Author all aspects of the Scripture were known when any aspect was recorded.

In other words, while David could in his human understanding build off of Moses, Moses could not build off of David. However, knowing that the eternal, omniscient God is the ultimate author of both David and Moses means we can find significant interplay between the two authors building off of each other.

* + - * 1. A recognition of inspiration allows for more than a merely grammatical-historical understanding of each individual passage.

“This is exactly how the Jews approached their Scriptures. They read the Old Testament not merely as a collection of different books written by different human authors on different occasions, but as if it were all one book. This one book was the product of the mind of one Author who had declared to Israel in historical time the fundamental components of His eternal purpose.” (Pickup, “The New Testament’s Exegesis of Old Testament Passages,” *Studies in the Psalms*, p. 251; see also *Jets*, p. 360)

“But what if one regards the Old Testament books as the ancient Jews did—as the verbally inspired word of almighty God? How might this affect the way one reads an Old Testament verse? If every word of the Old Testament was actually the utterance of God, then a given statement in one Old Testament book would need to be considered not only within its own documentary context, but also in light of the broader contexts of the canon as a whole. The reason is because the Old Testament canon is recognized as more than just an anthology of documents. The Old Testament is understood to be the work of one Author—God himself—who foreordained in eternity a plan for the world that he revealed in piecemeal fashion over time, using human spokesmen throughout Israel’s history. With such a presumption, a diligent reader of an Old Testament passage would need to take note of any potential verbal and thematic parallels, analogies, or other correspondences with other statements in the rest of the Old Testament corpus wherever they might be found and whenever they might be written. The presence of such interconnections would have to be viewed as the deliberate intention of God, the omniscient Author of the Old Testament.” (Ibid. pp. 250-251; see also *JETS*, p. 359)

“Midrashic**[[2]](#footnote-3)** exegesis was not some peculiar hermeneutic that was practiced by an obscure group of Jewish sectarians. It was the method of interpreting the Scriptures that virtually all Jews used because it was the only method that comported with the unique nature of the documents that God had given Israel. It should not surprise us to see Jesus and the New Testament writers using this same method of reading Scripture, for how else could one properly study a corpus of documents that, down to the last jot and tittle, was an unfolding to Israel, in the temporal realm, of the atemporal, unified plan of the eternal Author?” (Ibid., p. 267)

“Theologically speaking, the latter hermeneutic [grammatical-historical] seeks to understand what was in the mind of the human author of an OT text, whereas the former [midrashic] seeks to understand something much more significant: what was in the mind of God. A midrashic reading of the OT is concerned not so much with what a human writer was thinking, but with what he, as God’s mouthpiece, was prophesying. What he prophesied were words expressing the thought of the Being who designed all of the interconnections running throughout Scripture—and this conception of God and his revelation is what prompted the act of recontextualizing the words of Scripture so as to bring out the full aspects of God’s thought.” (Pickup, “New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament,” pp. 362-363)

One specific aspect of this approach to Scripture is taking texts atomistically. As atoms make up larger substances, looking atomistically means looking for significance in the smaller parts and not just the whole.

This recognition says that “a mere sentence or phrase within a psalm, prophetic oracle, strophe, pericope, or other section of OT material could find relevance and new meaning when read in a related new context; it was not necessary for the entire section of material to yield the midrashic reading.” (Pickup, “New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament,” *JETS*, p. 362)

When viewed negatively, this is seen merely as proof-texting. However, when seen in the light of inspiration as described above, we are seeing the echoes of God’s plan and the fingerprints of His authorship and intention throughout the entire text.

Though Tasker’s understanding is not exactly what Pickup presents above, one comment he makes applies to this understanding: “We must also remember that the literal meaning of a particular passage does not always exhaust its significance; but that, as St. Paul clearly assumed, there is often further sense to be discovered in the light of what is revealed at a later stage.” (Tasker, *The Old Testament in the New Testament*, p. 13)

Additionally, Poythress makes a comment that adds here when talking about the difficulty of New Testament authors finding “new meaning” in Old texts: “A popular solution to this difficulty is to invoke E.D. Hirsch’s distinction between ‘meaning’ and ‘significance.’ ‘Meaning,’ in Hirsch’s view, is what the human author expressed, including what is expressed tacitly, allusively, or indirectly. It includes what can legitimately be inferred. ‘Significance’ is a relation that we as readers draw between what is said and our own (or others’) situation. Interpretation of a biblical passage, narrowly speaking, determines the meaning of the human author. Application involves the exploration of the significance *for us* of that one meaning, and action in accordance with it.” (Poythress, “Divine Meaning of Scripture,” *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts*, ed. G.K. Beale, p. 85)

However, I would modify Hirsch, whom Poythress was referring to, by saying that in the context of the apostles’ application of the Old Testament, “significance” was not merely a relation they drew, it is the relation God was including in the texts.

* + - * 1. Consider a brief explanation of Matthew’s use of Hosea 11:1 by Pickup to illustrate how this works.

In Matthew 2:15, Matthew claims Jesus’s infancy in Egypt and subsequent return fulfills “what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I called my son.’”

Since Hosea was not foretelling an event but looking back to Israel’s escape from Egypt, this passage has been mercilessly attacked by liberal critics and skeptics as proof-texting.

On the other hand, some conservative scholars have performed some serious mental gymnastics that really test credulity to make it all fit. But what if we accept that Matthew’s exegesis is not from a grammatical-historical hermeneutic and that because he believes God is the author of this text like so many others that mention “Son,” he can recontextualize the verse to find the significance that God intended by this “Son” theme?

Consider Pickup’s argumentation.

Regarding reading atomistically: “We should notice that, in true midrashic fashion, Matthew interprets the text of Hosea atomistically. Though the evangelist quotes the second line of Hos 11:1 and reads it in terms of Jesus, he omits from his citation the first line, ‘When Israel was a child, I loved him.’ The designation ‘Israel’ was simply not a word that could be reread with reference to the Messiah as readily as the phrase ‘my son.’ Nor does Matthew include in his quotation the subsequent verses of Hosea 11 (vv. 2-4) or in any way try to connect them with Jesus—even though they continue the sonship imagery of verse 1 and complete the prophet’s homiletic thought. I suggest that the reason is that these subsequent verses drop the masculine singular nouns and pronouns of verse 1 and begin using plural terms to express the sonship idea. Only the singular terminology of verse 1 could be reread so as to refer to Jesus. Moreover, verses 2-4 speak of the Israelites’ continued rebellion against their father Yahweh—a behavior that found no parallel with Jesus.” (Pickup, “New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament,” *JETS*, pp. 374-375)

In a footnote, Pickup adds: “One can imagine how Matthew might routinely have highlighted this midrashic interpretation of Hos 11:1 for a Jewish-Christian audience by asking the question…, ‘Why does this verse use the singular number while the subsequent verses use the plural?’ The answer: ‘Because this verse speaks not only about what God did with our nation, but also about what God did with our Messiah.’” (Ibid., p. 375)

Regarding recontextualizing: “Let me now delve a bit further into the reasons behind Matthew’s midrashic reading of Hos 11:1, looking especially at what may have prompted him to reread the words of this verse in a messianic context. The language of Hos 11:1, ‘Out of Egypt I called my son,’ is reminiscent of several earlier OT texts. Hosea’s language of sonship is based, of course, upon Exod 4:22, where God commanded Moses to say to Pharaoh, ‘Israel is my son, my firstborn.’ The concept is drawn from the royal motifs of the ancient world where an earthly king was declared to be the son of the nation’s chief deity, ruler over the deity’s kingdom, and beneficiary of his love. As Yahweh’s son, the nation of Israel possessed this kind of royal status, and Scripture later applies the same sonship imagery to David’s entire royal seed, including the Davidic Messiah (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 89:26-27; Ps 2:7). For ancient Jews, therefore, the correlation between Israel as God’s firstborn son and the Messiah as God’s firstborn son was quite evident, and this correlation alone would have made Matthew’s rereading of the sonship language of Hos 11:1 in terms of Jesus an easy and natural midrashic maneuver.” (Ibid.)

Pickup adds further thematic material to deepen this hermeneutic of atomistic inspiration regarding this passage, but I believe this gives a good illustration of the approach the apostles were taking at times to find deeper significance in the Old Testament.

* + - 1. The apostles used the Old Testament the ways they did because the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the singularly central event of God breaking into human history that ultimately defines everything before and after it.
         1. One thing is for certain. The Old Testament is looking forward to something. It is looking forward to a Prophet in the line of Moses, a King in the line of David. It is looking forward to a covenant unlike the one it presents. It is looking forward to something.
         2. Does it not stand to reason when whatever the Old Testament is looking forward to actually comes to be, it will open up keys to understanding at least parts of the Old Testament, if not the entire thing, in unforeseen ways. Does it not stand to reason when the actual substance it was shadowing breaks on the human scene that previously blurred images, confusing passages, and troubling concepts will become clearer?
         3. What Jesus and the apostles both asserted is exactly the case. And the singular event that accomplishes all of this is the resurrection of Jesus Christ—the God empowered self-resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus’s resurrection was not accomplished by a prophet stretching out on His body or His body touching the bones of a dead prophet. He was resurrected by His own volition and God-ordained power.

Consider Shires’s statements in this light, though he encompasses all of Jesus’s life and ministry and not just the resurrection.

“For the early Christians, Christ was seen as the goal of all Jewish history, and thus the O.T. as the primary record of that history is viewed in the light of Christian belief. The first Christians were all Jews who had been trained in Jewish traditions. They could understand the newness of Christianity only over against the background of their inherited faith. The significance of the coming of Jesus could be portrayed at first only in direct relationship to the Scriptures. There was no other framework in which he could be placed. Yet at the same time Jesus could not be fully comprehended by the O.T. because in his appearance a new element had been introduced. His Messiahship both fulfilled and transcended Scriptural prophecies and popular hopes.” (Shires, *Finding the Old Testament in the New*, p. 39)

“Secondly, we are forced to admit that the manner in which the O.T. is used grows out of the conviction that it is in itself incomplete just because it is preparatory to something higher and is predictive of its own fulfillment in Christ. Wherever the O.T. is utilized, it is made to fit into the Christian perspective. Thus, entirely fresh meanings are given to Scriptural texts that Jewish tradition had understood in other ways. In a very real sense it can be said that the O.T. has become a Christian book and that its Jewish origins and nature are often forgotten. It sometimes appears that it has become subservient to Christian goals.” (Ibid. p. 181)

* + - * 1. Once the resurrection was demonstrated to the witnesses, the meaning of Scripture was opened up to them. The veil was lifted (II Corinthians 3:14-16).
        2. Therefore, twice following the resurrection, Luke presents Jesus as opening the hearts and minds of His disciples to all of the Old Testament and how it related to Him, His suffering, and His resurrection.

On the road to Emmaus: “And he said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

To the 11: “Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead…’” (Luke 24:44-46).

Sanders says of this: “...then we immediately find that Luke thinks of all the Scripture as something to be fulfilled--that is, as prophetic. Thus the risen Jesus explains to his strolling companions on the Emmaus Road that ‘it is necessary for everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms to be fulfilled’ (Luke 24:44); and he then seeks to help them to understand ‘the Scriptures’ (vs. 45). Since Luke quotes no text here--nor earlier in v 27, where the same point is made, nor in Acts 17:2-3 and 18:28, where there are similar statements--we are readily able to conclude that Luke was of the firm conviction that Jesus’ Messiahship and his death and resurrection were foretold in ‘the Scriptures,’ probably in ‘all the Scriptures’ as a unit, whether any particular text is cited or not. That is to say that it would appear that Luke would have that conviction even if he were unable to quote a single verse of Scripture.” (Sanders, “The Prophetic use of Scriptures in Luke-Acts,” *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis*, p. 192)

* + - * 1. Consider an object lesson from John 2:18-22.

Jesus had cleansed the temple and the Jews asked, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” What authority do You have to do this? Show us a sign that says You can do this.

Jesus’s response was, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

John records: “But he was speaking of the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.”

When did the disciples figure out Jesus was talking about the temple of His own body? Not until after the resurrection.

That means when Jesus said it, the apostles were just as confused as the Jews. They did not see this statement as a prophecy of Jesus’s resurrection until after the resurrection took place. When the resurrection happened, then and only then did they grasp what the real meaning of Jesus’s statement was.

* + - * 1. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26-40.

After reading Isaiah 53:7-8, the eunuch asked, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?”

The eunuch did not see this as clearly a prophecy about the Messiah like we do today.

This represents the Jewish dilemma about this text. Who was this Suffering Servant? Was it Isaiah? Was it a metaphor for Israel? Was it the coming Messiah? Was it someone else? They didn’t know.

We don’t get a record of Philip’s exact response, but what we are told is enlightening.

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.”

What do we see in this account?

Even the eunuch could tell this Old Testament passage was pointing to something.

However, he didn’t know what.

But once the account of Jesus’s life, death, burial, and resurrection was shared and overlaid across this and other texts from the Old Testament, it became clear. This is what they were talking about. They were talking about Jesus.

The eunuch was convinced. And I remind you that it is hard to imagine that a treasurer in the court of a queen who can read, has his own copy of the scroll, is reading the text, and is so devoted as to go to Jerusalem to worship is a dummy who was duped by proof-texting and bad exegesis.

* + - * 1. “…the actions of God in bringing his plan to fruition tend to be paradigmatic in nature. That is, God works throughout history according to certain patterns; divine actions are reiterated throughout time and find their ultimate realization in the last days…The presence of such interconnections would have to be viewed as the deliberate intention of the omniscient author of the OT.” (Pickup, “New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament,” *JETS*, p. 360)

Once the resurrection of Jesus was seen by the apostles as the central and defining event of all history, the rest of history was opened up to them, especially as recorded in God’s Scriptures, the Old Testament.

The story of Jesus can now be seen in the sacrifice of Isaac, Joseph going into the pit and being lifted up over his brothers, meeting women at wells, Abraham going into Egypt and coming out, Israel going into Egypt and coming out, Jacob going into servitude and coming out, Israel and Judah going into bondage and coming out, David suffering to the brink of death and being delivered. On and on the list goes.

* + 1. The Old Testament in the Pentecost Sermon of Acts 2: A Case Study
       1. How can Peter say Psalm 16:10 is a prophecy of Jesus’s resurrection?
          1. In the context of the Psalms, it doesn’t even necessarily promise resurrection. Rather, vs. 10 demonstrates David’s faith that his request in vs. 1 would be granted.

Consider other passages that talk about rescue from Sheol in the Psalms.

“The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me” (Psalm 18:4-5).

“O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored my life from among those who go down to the pit” (Psalm 30:3).

“Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd, and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell. But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me” (Psalm 49:13-15).

“For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol” (Psalm 86:13).

“The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish” (Psalm 116:3).

The language of rescue from Sheol was a common description of the great deliverance of God in time of trouble, especially when enemies or sickness would have killed a person.

Someone will object, “But Peter says that since David was a prophet he ‘foresaw and spoke about the resurrection” (Acts 2:31).

This is reminiscent of Caiaphas in John 11:51-52.

Caiaphas was able to foresee a truth he didn’t even fully understand because he was High Priest. Because he filled this role, God used him to teach a truth.

In this sense, Caiaphas foresaw and spoke of the atoning death of Jesus. But Caiaphas had no understanding what he was actually foreseeing and speaking about.

In like manner, because David was a prophet, God used him to foresee and speak of something he may not have fully understood.

Additionally, we need to rethink what Peter meant by calling David a prophet.

Too often we think of prophets as foretellers. Thus, we tacitly and subconsciously interpret Peter’s statement as a claim that since David was a foreteller of future events, he foresaw this future event.

But that is not what a prophet is. A prophet is the mouthpiece of God. This is Peter’s claim that David was more than a psalmist. He was writing more than poems. He was writing the inspired words of God.

Therefore, neither we nor Peter’s audience should be surprised at the claim that David wasn’t just talking about himself, not because David knew he wasn’t talking about himself, but because God wasn’t just talking about David.

I want to be careful here. I obviously can’t say for sure what David knew and didn’t know about this psalm.

God may have given David some insight that it was about more than just him.

My point is regardless of what David knew, the psalm was initially about David. And there is no need to strip the personal application to David away from the psalm and therefore remove the ability to apply this psalm to our own lives today.

* + - 1. Peter can use Psalm 16:10 to apply to Jesus’s resurrection for two reasons.
         1. Peter can use Psalm 16:10 to apply to Jesus’s resurrection because the resurrection is the singularly central event of God breaking into history that defines everything before it and after it.

The resurrection changed things. The resurrection explained what was not clear before.

Can’t we imagine early/post-David readers scratching their heads a bit at this psalm?

Certainly, God had delivered David from whatever threat he was facing at the time. The psalm was true in that sense.

But ultimately, David died. Ultimately, David was buried. Not only that, they could go to his tomb and find his remains. So the psalm wasn’t ultimately true.

But now a descendant of David has been raised from the dead. Surely that has to mean something.

Be aware. Peter is not trying to prove that Jesus was risen from the dead by quoting Psalm 16 and 110.

Marshall explains by quoting Dupont’s *The Salvation of the Gentiles*: “It is often asserted that Peter desires to prove that Jesus has really risen from the dead, but that is obviously inaccurate, for Peter presupposes the resurrection as a datum of faith. What Peter wishes to establish is rather the fact that Jesus, having really risen from the dead, is truly the Messiah of which the psalm speaks. ... The resurrection owes its value as a sign precisely to the oracle of the psalm which announced that the Christ would rise.” (Marshall, “Acts,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, p. 539)

Peter doesn’t try to prove that Jesus did rise from the dead by quoting these psalms. Rather, Peter proves Jesus is risen from the dead by asserting what he and the apostles witnessed and what the crowd had witnessed and was presently witnessing.

Peter and the apostles witnessed the resurrection (Acts 2:32).

The crowd had witnessed the wonders and signs Jesus had performed (Acts 2:22).

The crowd was presently witnessing this outpouring of signs and wonders on the apostles who were testifying to the resurrection (Acts 2:33).

Peter quotes the psalms to demonstrate that Jesus’s death and resurrection is consistent with what should happen to God’s Messiah. He was anticipating and responding to the objection that the Messiah shouldn’t die.

If Jesus has now been raised from the dead, that resolves the head-scratching issue of David being delivered at one time, but ultimately dying.

If David’s metaphorical deliverance from Sheol meant something about his relationship with God, how much more does Jesus’s literal deliverance from Sheol and bodily corruption tell us who Jesus is?

It tells us Jesus is the Lord.

Pickup demonstrates that this is consistent with how Jews in the first century viewed the psalms: “All ancient Jews recognized that God intended the psalms to have application throughout the history of Israel, and that this history would culminate with the advent of the Messiah in the last days. (Not surprisingly, therefore, we see Psalm 16 being interpreted eschatologically in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Rabbinic Literature; see 4Q177, *Genesis Rabbah* 88:5, and *Midrash on Psalms* 16.4). On many occasions God had rescued David or a royal successor from the brink of death and, in that sense, had not abandoned the king to Hades. But eventually, of course, David and the kings that followed him did die and their bodies decayed in Hades—so one could apply the language of Psalm 16 to David and his successors, just not in an absolute sense. But a Jew understood it was different when a psalm like this was viewed midrashically and set in an eschatological context, for the promised Messiah would reign forever; the final king of Israel would never need a successor because he would never die. Most Jews, therefore, would probably have taken the words of Psalm 16 as a prophecy of the Messiah’s immortality…That is why the death of Jesus seemed to prove that he could not be the promised Messiah, because the Messiah—in an absolute sense—was never to be ‘abandoned to Hades’ and his flesh was never to ‘undergo decay.’  
 “But in Acts 2 Peter calls upon his Jewish audience to realize that the words of Psalm 16 could indeed refer to a slain Messiah if he were not *abandoned* to Hades; Jesus could still fulfill the messianic reading of the psalm as long as God raised him from the dead *before his corpse underwent decay*. And that, the apostle argues, is exactly what God did when He restored Jesus to life on the third day after his crucifixion. (In Jewish thinking, death was a process, and the third day after a person died was when the soul was said to completely depart from the body. This was because visible signs of decomposition set in after three days; see *m: Yebamot* 16.3 and *y:Moed Qatan* 82b).” (Pickup, “The New Testament’s Exegesis of Old Testament Passages,” *Studies in the Psalms*, p. 261-262)

* + - * 1. Peter can use Psalm 16:10 to apply to Jesus’s resurrection because Psalm 16, along with the rest of the texts in the Old Testament were inspired, ultimately from God and not merely the human authors.

That being the case, Peter is able to connect Psalm 16 back to Joel 2.

Both are talking about the Lord.

Psalm 16 is going to tell us something about the Lord on whom these Jews could call to obtain salvation.

He can also connect Psalm 16 to Psalm 110.

Both are talking about the Lord and both demonstrate the relationship between Jehovah and the Lord who is at the right hand.

Psalm 110 is certainly Messianic and was accepted by the Jews of Jesus’s and the apostles’ day as Messianic.

In Matthew 22:41-46, Mark 12:35-37, and Luke 20:41-44, Jesus quotes this psalm, applying it to the Christ/Messiah. And no one responds to His question by saying, “This psalm isn’t about the Messiah.”

As Peter demonstrates the connection between Psalm 16 and 110 regarding the right hand relationship between Jehovah and the Holy One of God, he is explaining that if Psalm 110 teaches us about the Messiah, so does Psalm 16, even if Psalm 16 had a historically appropriate meaning in the time of David.

Therefore, he can say that Psalm 16:10 teaches about the Messiah’s resurrection. And so can we.

* + 1. My conclusions
       1. Though perhaps based on different reasons, I do not think I can say it better than Craig Evans did: “There is therefore no need either (1) to criticize the NT writers for not always providing the kind of exegesis that we moderns value so much and think is valid, or (2) to foist unnatural interpretations upon the Scriptures in order to demonstrate that the NT writer has given the OT passage no other sense than what we moderns believe to have been the original. While liberal scholars are sometimes guilty of the first, conservative scholars are sometimes guilty of the second. In both cases modern principles of exegesis are set up as the standards by which the exegesis of the NT writers is to be measured. In the final analysis, the legitimacy of the NT writers’ employment of the OT is tied to the legitimacy of their faith in Jesus.” (Evans, “The Function of the Old Testament in the New,” *Introducing New Testament Interpretation*, p. 193)

1. **An Acts Miscellany On Preaching**
   1. Though I could list numerous points of simple lessons learned about preaching throughout the books of Acts, these few stand out, perhaps because they are the ones which either impact me the most or with which I struggle the most.
   2. Good Preaching Takes Time with Jesus
      1. “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).
         1. The preaching of Peter and John was bold and astonishing because they had been with Jesus. They were connected to the Master Teacher.
         2. They did not have to have years of teaching in the rabbinic schools of the Jews or in the oratory schools of the Greeks. They needed time with Jesus.
         3. Going to seminary, getting degrees, attending Florida College, will not make our preaching great. Spending time with Jesus will.
         4. “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life” (John 5:39-40). The anchor of great preaching is time with Jesus in His Word.
      2. Moderating the above by looking at Paul: “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day” (Acts 22:3).
         1. Sadly, some take the above statements about Peter and John and justify ignorance and recklessness, parading them as if they are what makes a good preacher. But Paul shows us otherwise.
         2. The point to see from Peter and John is not that educational ignorance makes good preaching, but that being with Jesus makes good preaching.
         3. Paul was from Tarsus, an educational center that rivaled Alexandria. He was raised in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel. Paul was at the opposite end of the educational spectrum from Peter and John.
         4. But what made Paul’s education beneficial to his preaching? Time with Jesus. Until that happened, his work was useless and against God, no matter how zealous he was for God.
      3. So, if we want to preach well, we must spend time with Jesus through the Scriptures themselves. We must do this not merely to write sermons, conduct arguments, and prepare for Bible classes. We must spend time with Jesus for personal devotion and discipleship separate and apart from the weekly demands of our work. Then our preaching can spring from the deep wells of connection to God and His oracles rather than the shallow grave of an internet search or a quick perusal of a brotherhood commentary or paper.
      4. If we are formally uneducated, this will keep us from merely displaying reckless and inbred ignorance. If we are formally educated, this will keep us from merely displaying academic and pedantic irrelevance.
   3. Good preaching takes strong praying.
      1. “And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness…” (Acts 4:29).
      2. If I might make use of Moses as presented in Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7.
         1. In Acts 7:25, Moses supposed that his Jewish brethren would understand God was giving salvation to the Jews by Moses’s hand. They didn’t recognize it and God didn’t grant it.
         2. In Acts 7:35, God sent Moses as both ruler and redeemer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush. The people were redeemed from Egypt.
         3. On his own, Moses accomplished nothing. By the hand of the Lord, Moses did great things.
      3. In Acts 7:21, the hand of the Lord was with those preaching the Lord Jesus and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.
      4. If we preachers are not careful, we may think our wisdom and talents make or break our preaching. Not so. The Lord does that. Without the Lord, the most eloquent and powerful speaker is unable to bring people to Jesus properly. By the Lord, the weakest voice and most pathetic stage presence can be mightily used to strengthen souls and convert hearts.
      5. As Ephesians 3:20 says, “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.”
      6. What does this mean? This means before we rise to the pulpit, we must fall to our knees. Our big danger is to rush each day to our work of study, visitation, and lesson preparation thinking we don’t have time for prayer.
      7. We must recognize our desperate and utter need for God’s strength and confidence. If we do not recognize we are standing on legs God has given us, we will fall by thinking we stand on our own.
      8. “In Acts prayer is crucial. When the Christians pray, the Spirit comes, prison doors open, the place of worship is shaken, they speak with boldness. The first Gentile mission was born in prayer, and we read of prayer in prison, prayer in the home, prayer on the beach, prayer in the temple. Prayer is the source of power. Luke is sure of it. I, too, believe it, but I do not pray like that: nor, I suspect, do you. Let us learn from Luke not simply to agree to its importance but to give it priority in our churches and in our lives.” (Green, *Thirty Years that Changed the World*, p. 32)
      9. Great preaching takes strong praying.
   4. Preachers Need Friends
      1. “When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God…” (Acts 4:23-24).
      2. The most stable and low maintenance of preachers need godly friends who will pray with them in the midst of Satan’s attacks. Imagine the temptation facing Peter and John and the apostles. Perhaps they all remembered how they were scattered when Jesus was taken from the garden and they felt their own lives were in danger. How would they handle this temptation? Not alone in their prayer closets, but with friends who would pray with them.
      3. Paul David Tripp has written *Dangerous Calling* because of this very issue. We are in a dangerous spot. The nature of our work leads us to isolate. Because we think…
         1. …we can’t lean on our family because we are certain we are to be their leaders.
         2. …we can’t lean on church members because if they knew what we struggled with, they might not listen to us.
         3. …we can’t lean on our shepherds because they might fire us.
         4. …we can’t lean on other preachers because they might stab us in the back.
         5. And so we try to make a go at it with just God and ourselves. And while that sounds super spiritual, in practicality it usually means we are making a go at it all by ourselves.
      4. As preachers, we must overcome our fears and find some who can be our friends that will pray with us. Whether the temptation is through outside attackers, internal congregational strife, personal struggles, family issues, personal temptations, pre-conversion baggage, whatever, we need friends who will pray with us.
      5. Find someone you know who is rooting for you and start sharing with them. Let them mentor, shepherd, disciple you. Hold yourself accountable to them.
      6. As Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says, two are better than one and a cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Is this why Paul always travelled with companions in Acts?
      7. How many preachers do we know who have fallen to egregious sin? When they do, it destroys their work, their influence, their future, their families, and often their congregations.
         1. Be assured. This rarely happens because they are evil, wicked hypocrites, but because they have a special target on their backs from Satan. He is working overtime to stop the work of preachers. How many souls has Satan won because he was able to overthrow a preacher, teacher, or shepherd?
         2. It happens because when Satan tosses out his temptation, preachers are often afraid to get help. Then while isolated, they stumble their first minor little stumble; and instead of going to someone and being strengthened to overcome, they stuff it down inside, ashamed to share their weakness. They think they have to overcome alone because they are the preacher. But it grows.
         3. No doubt, a preacher connected and confessing to others can also fall. However, these huge falls rarely happen to the preacher who is opening his heart to friends who are the kinds of friends who will pray with him.
      8. Who are your friends that you open up to and confess to? (cf. James 5:16).
   5. The Priority of Preaching in Our Work
      1. Imagine if someone in your congregation came to you and let you know that sister Johnson, a widow, was in dire need of regular visitation and help around the house. Then imagine yourself telling them, “I don’t have time for that. Pick out some other men of the congregation who will take care of that.” What would be the next thing you imagine? Looking for a new job? A church split?
      2. Yet, that is exactly what happened in Acts 6:1-7.
         1. As the church grew, the apostles were stretched thin. They had apparently been handling most of the ministering as well as teaching.
         2. The Hellenistic widows were being neglected.
         3. The apostles did not hang their heads in shame and promise to do better. They told the congregation to appoint other men who would take care of this need.
         4. They focused their priority on prayer and the ministry of the Word. They focused on preaching and teaching.
      3. I understand that folks don’t care how much we know until they know how much we care. I understand that if we want people to listen to us in the pulpits, we have to be there in their hospitals and nursing homes. But I wonder if that is because we have allowed a non-biblical culture to pervade our churches.
      4. The call of the preacher is to herald the message. No doubt, we, like every Christian, have responsibilities to care for and visit our brethren in their time of need. Perhaps because our time is more flexible we have more responsibility. But that is not the same as having weddings, funerals, hospital visitations, nursing home visitations, graduations, baby showers, and other benevolent works as part of our job description.
      5. I wonder if this is the reason the median size of “our” congregations is under 75. When we allow everything under the sun in the ministry and operation of the local congregation to distract us from preaching and teaching, we can only handle 75 people.
      6. No, don’t go home and start telling people you won’t visit them. But perhaps we need to start working on a cultural shift of sharing the ministry load and teaching our brothers and sisters to rely on each other more than they rely on the preacher. After all, our job is “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Ephesians 4:11-12).
      7. However we manage it, we need to remember that preaching the Word is our priority. Preaching the Word is our job description.
   6. Get Out of the Office
      1. “So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:17).
      2. A couple of years ago, I was ready to throw in the towel. My work in Texas had been marked by numerous studies with unbelievers and many baptisms every year. But in both Tennessee and Indiana the well had run dry.
      3. The real difference is the church in Texas had numerous guests all the time. But the churches in Tennessee and Indiana didn’t. I wasn’t sure what to do.
      4. Oh, I did sporadic door-knocking. We had different evangelistic pushes. But nothing seemed to bring up the prospect list.
      5. As I was whining to another preacher about my lack and wondering why he had so many studies, he told me that he simply didn’t do his study in his office. He studied at coffee shops.
      6. I took a stab and immediately the tides turned. I developed an ongoing study with a Baptist pastor (who, by the way, has at least admitted that my position on baptism isn’t as crazy as he had formerly been led to believe). I met with a couple of atheists. I studied with a Muslim. I studied with a pantheistic new ager. I made numerous contacts and prospects. In just one year of doing this in Indiana, I had more studies and opportunities than in the previous 10.
      7. The answer is not for every preacher in every location to study at coffee shops. In fact, I’m learning in Florida that what worked so well in Indiana is not producing the same results in my new home.
      8. But the answer is to get out of the office. Paul didn’t spend his days holed up in an office preparing sermons, writing articles, and putting together Bible class material. Neither did he spend his days locked away arguing on Facebook, tweeting on Twitter, or propagating His blog. He went out to the synagogues and marketplaces. He went to the places where he could discuss with others.
      9. Sadly, this is not quite as easy for us as it was for him. I don’t know denominational churches that will let us hang out in their studies and reason together. People don’t sit around and philosophize in our malls and marketplaces.
      10. However, we need to get out of our offices. If that means going to the coffee-shop or joining a local civic organization or getting on the PTA or doing consistent door-knocking or walking around downtown to meet the homeless, do something to get around the people you need to preach to.
      11. Don’t have all your preaching opportunities at the church building. Put together an event at a community center or nearby college or in the high school gym (if they’ll let you). I was able to conduct some classes at a nearby YMCA a few years ago.
      12. I know some will ask, “How many baptisms did you have out of all that?” And my response is that’s the wrong question. Our job is to plant and water, God’s job is to cause the growth (I Corinthians 3:6-7).
          1. I’m sure you can tell from my answer that the number is not what I would like it to be. There were far more people who will now stand without excuse on the day of judgment than will glorify God with us.
          2. However, here is what did happen. When I started this and started sharing with the congregation what opportunities I was having, there were great benefits.
             1. Members started inviting more people to our assemblies, giving opportunities to study with more people.
             2. Members started asking more people to study and asking me to conduct those studies.
             3. Members started asking me to help them learn how to study with others.
             4. Then we started getting baptisms (although I don’t ever keep count, I can assure you we had more baptisms in my final year at Brownsburg than in the first three combined).
      13. A passage that challenges me is Acts 18:5. In this passage, Paul was occupied with the Word. It didn’t mean he was busy studying, figuring out the ins and outs of what to teach, writing material, preparing to preach. It meant he was testifying that Jesus was the Christ. Of course we have to spend time in study. But as we noted earlier, our priority is preaching.
   7. On Persecution
      1. “Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth…But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him…And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles” (Acts 7:54, 57-58; 8:1).
      2. I certainly don’t think the goal of our preaching is to get persecuted. Further, I recognize that Christ’s church and the early preachers also experienced times of peace and favor (Acts 2:47; 9:31). However, I wonder if I have become a bit soft in our ecumenical culture. I want everyone to like me, and I struggle if someone accuses me of being mean or of hatred. I quake at the thought of being tortured, burned alive, or beheaded.
      3. This is as much a challenge to me as it is to anyone, and I don’t have much to say about it except to share the challenges with you that were presented to me in one of the resources I used. Philibert quoted Kierkagaard and E. Mathoit.
         1. Kierkagaard: “Of all the nonsense uttered in these miserable times, perhaps the most nonsensical is the sentence, written with a pretence [sic] to wisdom which I have often enough met with in the course of my reading and whose excellence I have also heard some people praise: ‘Nowadays no man can be a martyr any more, for ours is an age incapable of making a martyr of anyone.’ What a misconception! We are not to think it is the age which has the power to put a man to death or to make him a martyr. It is the martyr, the genuine martyr, who must give to the age the passion, the bitter passion to want to kill him…Real superiority always works in two ways: it produces the force which brings about its own fall. Thus when a disturber of consciences is to be put to death, it is not the age which in its own strength leads him to the gallows, but he himself who, by dealing his salutary blows, gives to the age the passionate desire to kill him. And, if the age is sunk in the worst kind of laxity, such a brave man has only to appear to disturb it to the core.” (Philibert, *Christ’s Preaching—And Ours*, p. 26)
         2. E. Mathiot: “I am still appalled by all the fine words I have uttered from the pulpit Sunday by Sunday for twenty-five years, any one of which lived out up to the hilt would have been enough to send me to prison. If Christianity is not persecuted in the West, it owes its relative security to its infidelity. God’s blessing is withdrawn and cannot be experienced in the midst of our verbal sonorities. It seeks a truly adventuring life…God gives to us only by halves because we trust him only by halves.” (Philibert, *Christ’s Preaching—And Ours*, pp. 26-27)
   8. Produce Other Preachers (not necessarily “fulltime” ones)
      1. “Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).
      2. Why did this happen? Because the apostles didn’t just spend time teaching the information and personal motivation of the gospel. They taught the propagation of it.
      3. As fulltime evangelists and preachers, our job is not merely to evangelize and preach. Our job is to equip others for the work of that ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). When people leave the congregations where we work, do they go preaching the Word?
      4. Have we trained up a generation of Christians who can only move to a location where a healthy, stable, sound congregation already exists because we haven’t trained any of them to go where there is no congregation and start preaching the gospel?
      5. Are the congregations where we work now stagnant because we haven’t trained the members to preach the gospel where they are now?
      6. I wonder if we have made preaching the gospel so complicated that our brothers and sisters think only the professionals with adequate training can do it. No doubt, the advent of intricate errors and false teachings are formidable foes. There are so many errors that Christians think they can’t know the answers to them all.
      7. But somehow, these folks in Acts 8:4 were able to share the gospel and defend Jesus as the Christ to Jews and Greeks alike. We need to recapture the teaching that provokes our brothers and sisters to herald the gospel whether they stay with us or are scattered to other areas.
   9. Astonishing Teaching
      1. “Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord” (Acts 13:12).
      2. Sergius Paulus wasn’t astonished at Paul. He wasn’t astonished at the miracle of striking Elymas blind. He was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.
      3. Perhaps this hits me the hardest. Too often I want people to be astonished at me. Even in putting together this lesson there was the siren’s lure of wanting to be the best lecture at this conference and get the Atta boys and send people home wishing they could preach like me. But what good is that?
      4. Paul preached in such a way that Sergius Paulus was astonished at the teaching of the Lord. The amazing thing about what we do is not we who do it. It is not the particular flare with which we do it. It is the material with which we do it.
      5. May we ever present it in a way that prompts people to be properly astonished with God and His teaching and not with us.
2. **The Preaching And Teaching In Acts: Overviews Of And Notes On The “Sermons” In Acts**
   1. Acts 1:16-22
      1. Speaker: Peter
      2. Audience: the 120 (including the apostles)
      3. Setting: In the interim between the ascending of Jesus and the descending of the Holy Spirit, the apostles, women who followed Jesus, and a small number of other disciples were waiting in Jerusalem, devoting themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14).
      4. Purpose: “Let another take his office” (Acts 1:20).
      5. Method:
         1. Peter addressed the audience as “Brothers,” establishing his connection with the disciples.
         2. He produced Scriptural evidence that finding this replacement was necessary.
            1. Psalm 69:25: “May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents.”

Psalm 69 is quoted in John 2:17 (vs. 9); 15:25 (vs. 4); Romans 11:9-10 (vss. 22-23); 15:3 (vs. 9) all to refer to the Messiah. And it is echoed in John 19:28-29 (vs. 21).

Obviously, the early Christians consistently believed Psalm 69 applied to Jesus and His suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension.

Yet, Psalm 69:5 says, “O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.” We have a hard time making this psalm directly about Jesus because we know He had no folly or sin. So we have a hard time making vs. 25 about Judas.

Psalm 69:4 is an expression of innocence. In vs. 5, the psalmist may be expressing innocence instead of guilt. That is, “What I did not steal must I now restore?” leads into, “You know me fully, if I had done something wrong you would know it, but you know I didn’t steal.”

However, if this were the case, one would think the psalmist would have said, “You know my innocence and my integrity is not hidden from you.”

It seems more fitting that the psalmist is really saying, “You know all that I’ve done wrong, and you know this thing my enemies are accusing me of isn’t one of them.”

In applying to Jesus, this may be a reference to our sins being laid on Him on the cross (cf. Isaiah 53:4-6).

However, in the psalm, these are the sins of the psalmist. They are not metaphorical. They are not soteriological. They are not theological. They are actual, real sins the psalmist himself committed.

What makes the most sense to me is the resurrection defined everything that went before it. The resurrection defined Jesus as the branch of David, the ultimate David, the ultimate King.

When David had enemies who betrayed him and this applied to Him, how much more would it apply to the ultimate David and His kingship? How much more would it apply to the Messiah, God’s Anointed?

Therefore, when this punishment applied to David’s betrayers, how much more to the Christ’s betrayer?

It seems that Luke breaks into Peter’s sermon/speech with an explanatory comment that shows further fulfillment of this passage in Judas. Those who dwelt in Jerusalem called Judas’s plot of land “Field of Blood.” Hard to imagine a subdivision being built in the Field of Blood. As the psalm said the enemies camp or homestead would be desolate, so it happened to Judas.

* + - * 1. Psalm 109:8: “May his days be few; may another take his office!”

Matthew 27:39-40 seems also to be, in part, a connection to Psalm 109:25 (“wag their heads”).

In fact, if we were of a mind, we might see Psalm 109 as related to the crucifixion in much the same way as Psalm 22.

Note especially Psalm 22:6-7, 14-18 with Psalm 109:22-25.

However, we struggle to make Psalm 109 about Jesus on the cross because the imprecations of Psalm 109:6-15 do not seem to fit with Jesus’s actual prayer on the cross in Luke 23:34: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

One wonders if Peter would really have allowed Judas’s wife and children to starve if it was in his power to help them? That is hard to imagine. It is equally hard to imagine Jesus would have wanted him to.

That being said, Peter’s application of the passage is not that the 120 should hunt down Judas’s wife and children to make sure they are destitute.

His application is that they should vote for someone to take Judas’s place. Peter seems to take the context of Psalm 109:8 to mean that the office of apostleship should not be inherited by a family member of Judas. He is completely cut off from apostleship and so are his descendants.

Additionally, in considering the contrast of Jesus’s prayer on the cross with the imprecations of Psalm 109 applied to Judas, we may be seeing a real life application of I John 5:16-17 — don’t pray for those who commit sins leading to death.

Judas’s rebellion led to his death. His own suicide was part and parcel of his sin against Jesus. His was a sin unto death.

With that in mind, Jesus’s prayer on the cross did not ultimately apply to Judas. Though I’m sure Jesus would have been happy for Judas to repent and receive that forgiveness, Judas showed himself unwilling to let that prayer apply to him.

Because of that, he showed himself worthy of the imprecations of Psalm 109.

* + 1. Note about apostolic succession.
       1. Some might suggest that this sermon proves apostolic succession. If Judas should be replaced, then all apostles would be replaced.
       2. However, what these psalms address is what should happen with the one who betrays Jesus. Judas was replaced, not because he died, but because he ceased to be a witness to who Jesus was.
       3. Psalm 69:28 says, “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.”
          1. While this no doubt tells us something about Judas’s salvation, it also demonstrates he is no longer enrolled among the apostles.
       4. It seems reasonable then that if another apostle had betrayed Jesus and ceased to be a witness to Jesus’ resurrection, God would have established a witness to replace him too. The apostles were not just witnesses in life, but even in death and on into eternity. Peter, James, John, Paul, etc. are still apostles and witnesses. They being dead yet speak.
          1. Interesting that the word “martyr” comes from the family of Greek words including “witness” (μάρτυς, martys) and “testimony” (μαρτυρία, martyria).
  1. Acts 2:14-40
     1. Speaker: Peter
     2. Audience: “Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5) who heard the sound of a mighty, rushing wind and gathered to find out what it was (Acts 2:2, 6).
        1. According to Exodus 23:14-17, Pentecost, the “Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor” was one of the three feasts at which the males were to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem (see also Leviticus 23:15-22; Numbers 28:26-31).
        2. Peter’s audience was made up of Jews who were following this command from numerous places.
           1. “Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians…” (Acts 2:9-11).
     3. Setting: Pentecost
        1. See B. 2. a. above
        2. 50 days after Jesus’s resurrection.
        3. The Holy Spirit has come upon the apostles and created a huge disturbance that is apparently heard throughout Jerusalem.
        4. Many Jews from everywhere come to investigate the noise and hear the apostles speaking in their own languages. This astonishes and confuses them, but attracts their attention even further.
        5. Some wonder what this sign means and others make an accusation of drunkenness (Acts 2:12-13).
        6. In this setting, Peter strikes the pose of a rhetor and addresses the crowd.
     4. Purpose: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36).
        1. Peter begins with defense of himself and his brethren against the charge of drunkenness, but proceeds to prove that the Jesus who died just over 50 days earlier during the Passover/Unleavened Bread (another feast in which the males were to appear before the Lord), being raised from the dead, is the Messiah.
        2. Of course, having demonstrated this, Peter secondarily offers forgiveness to those who murdered Jesus by teaching them about salvation, repentance, and baptism.
     5. Method:
        1. Peter’s sermon is textually based, anchored in Joel 2:28-32. Though I doubt we would call it expositional in the modern sense of that term.
           1. Notice the *inclusio*: Peter begins with Joel 2:28-32a (Acts 2:17-21) and ends with Joel 2:32c (Acts 2:39).
           2. There are other situational and textual connections to Joel’s complete prophecy.

Regarding situational connection: The Jews are gathered for the celebration of the grain harvest. Joel’s prophecy is centered on a destruction of the harvest by a locust plague that portends the destruction of the harvest by a devouring army of foreigners (Joel 1:4, 5-13).

God Himself demonstrated another situational connection. In Joel 2:27, God promises through Joel, “You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else.”

The sign of God’s presence from the days of the wilderness wandering was the pillar of fire and smoke (Exodus 13:21-22; 40:38).

In I Kings 18:20-40, the Lord demonstrated that He alone was God and there was no other by fire from heaven.

The tongues of fire on the apostles demonstrate God’s presence in the midst of Israel (Acts 2:3).

Joel’s direction to the people is to gather at the house of the Lord and cry out to Him in repentance (Joel 1:14). How convenient that Peter’s message of repentance and crying out to God takes place as these are gathered at the Temple for the Harvest Feast.

Peter capitalizes on the accusation of drunkenness, a real accusation given to the sinful of Judah in Joel 1:5. There is almost a flavor of Peter saying, “No, we are not fulfilling Joel 1:5; we are fulfilling Joel 2:28-32.”

Peter highlights the wonders and signs of Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:19) by talking of the wonders and signs Jesus did (Acts 2:22).

He banks on the “pouring out” of the Spirit of Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:17, 18) in his own preaching (Acts 2:33).

He expands on God’s Spirit from Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:17, 18) in his own preaching (Acts 2:33, 38).

Peter connects two other passages (Psalm 16:8-11; Psalm 110:1) to the Joel prophecy because of their use of the word “Lord” (Acts 2:20-21; Acts 2:25, 34). These two passages themselves are connected not only by the word “Lord” but also by the phrase “at my right hand” (Acts 2:25, 34).

Luke connects the people’s response to Joel. Joel’s instruction to Jerusalem and Judah was “return to me with all your heart…rend your hearts and not your garments” (Joel 2:12, 13) and Luke records that the audience was “cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37).

When Peter claims that the promise is “for you and for your children,” he hearkens back to Joel 1:3, when Joel said the Judeans should pass the message of this prophecy on to their children. It hearkens to Joel 2:16 when Joel said the children should also be gathered in repentance.

I admit this one may be a stretch, but it seems to me that Peter’s direction to “Repent and be baptized” even connects to Joel 2:12-14, 15-16.

Joel 2:12-14 commands a return to the Lord or repentance.

Joel 2:15-16 commands a consecration. A common part of being consecrated was washing (see. Exodus 19:1, 4; Leviticus 8:6, 10).

* + - 1. Peter’s argumentation
         1. This sign you are witnessing fulfills Joel’s promise of the outpoured Holy Spirit.
         2. Joel claimed that during the time of the outpoured Holy Spirit, anyone who called on the name of the Lord would be saved.

The rest of the sermon addresses the anticipated question, “Then who is the Lord?”

* + - * 1. David shows that the Lord is the one who has the Lord at his right hand (Psalm 16:8-11; confusing, I know, but there is a play on words between this and Psalm 110:1). Because the Lord is at His right hand, He was not abandoned to Hades and did not see corruption.
        2. Since Jesus was resurrected from the dead, to which the apostles who were demonstrating the amazing presence of God were witnesses, the passage shows that Jesus is the Lord.
        3. The Lord is also the one who is at the right hand of the Lord (Psalm 110:1).
        4. God has obviously made Jesus both Lord and Christ because He raised Him from the dead and “ascended” Him to heaven at His right hand.
        5. You can call on the Lord and be saved by repenting and being baptized for the remission of your sins. If you do this, you’ll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. You are allowed to do this because the promise is for you, your children, and all who far off.
      1. For notes on Peter’s use of the Psalms, refer back to VIII. B. 8.
      2. The gift of the Holy Spirit
         1. Of course the debate rages that apparently cannot be settled grammatically and even has trouble being settled contextually. Is the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 the Holy Spirit as a gift or a gift from the Holy Spirit, namely salvation?

I think perhaps the problem here is thinking these are two separate things. Is it possible that this is a distinction without an actual difference?

Because the presence of the Holy Spirit in the apostles in Acts 2 led to miraculous gifts, many of us fear “receiving the Holy Spirit” can only mean having miraculous gifts. But that is not necessarily the case.

First, in the New Testament, being given the Holy Spirit doesn’t always mean having miraculous gifts.

Acts 6:5 describes the seven men chosen to serve as full of the Holy Spirit. However, there is no indication they used any miraculous gifts until after the apostles laid their hand on them in Acts 6:6.

Interestingly, these men could not pass on the ability to use miraculous gifts. Philip was unable to do that in Samaria in Acts 8:14-17. The apostles had to be called to do that.

In Acts 5:32, Peter claims the Holy Spirit had been given to those who obey God. That seems to be a universal claim of the Spirit being given to all who obeyed God. But up to this point the only ones using miraculous gifts appear to be the apostles themselves (Acts 2:43; 5:12).

In the Old Testament, the presence of the Holy Spirit has a history.

In Exodus 31:2-3, Bezalel was filled with the Spirit of God. It did not produce miraculous gifts, but rather gave him skill to work in every craft.

We might be asked how this happened? Was it a miraculous development or a natural one that the Spirit providentially prepared?

Moses and the 70

In Number 11:17, God promised to take some of the Spirit that was on Moses and place it on the 70 so they might help bear his burden and judge Israel. That indicates an ongoing presence of the Spirit. It is the Spirit’s presence that helps them bear Moses’ burden.

In Number 11:25, this does lead them to prophesy. However, they don’t continue doing it.

Yet, they were still able to help the burden. So while there was this initial demonstration by a miraculous gift, having the Spirit didn’t mean always being able to manifest miraculous gifts.

Numbers 27:18 says Joshua was a man in whom was the Spirit. To my knowledge there is no indication of Joshua ever using miraculous gifts. Of course, if he penned the book with his name, he prophesied. Yet, nothing recorded shows him using miraculous gifts as part of the Spirit being with him.

Connect this with Deuteronomy 34:9-12, which says through the laying on of Moses’s hands Joshua was full of the “spirit of wisdom” (should that be capitalized?). But, despite being filled with that spirit, he did not prophesy like Moses or perform the signs Moses performed.

Judges

In Judges 3:10, the Spirit of the Lord was upon Othniel, so he was able to judge. But nothing is said of miraculous abilities.

In Judges 6:34, the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon. Again, no mention of miraculous gifts or abilities.

In Judges 11:29, the Spirit of the Lord was upon Jephthah. No miraculous abilities are listed. In fact, Jephthah makes his bone-headed vow immediately following this.

Samson

The Spirit of the Lord stirred Samson in Judges 13:25.

The Spirit of the Lord rushes on Samson in Judges 14:6, so he was able to kill a lion.

The Spirit of the Lord rushed on Samson in Judges 14:19, allowing him to kill 30 men.

The Spirit of the Lord rushed on Samson in Judges 15:14, allowing him to strike down 1000 men with the jawbone of a donkey.

Judges 16:20 says the Lord had left Samson. It doesn’t say the Spirit of the Lord, but surely this is in contrast to the Spirit of the Lord being with him in the earlier passages.

Though Samson’s strength is certainly miraculous, it carries on the notion of the Spirit of the Lord being the presence of God that prompted success.

The contrast of Saul and David

In I Samuel 10:6, 10, Samuel foretells and his prediction comes true that the Spirit of the Lord would rush on Saul and he would prophecy.

In I Samuel 11:6, like the judges before him, the Spirit rushed upon Saul and he called the army to him and they went forth to defeat Nahash the Ammonite.

In I Samuel 16:13-14, the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and rushed on David. However, nothing happens. No prophesying, no tongue speaking, nothing.

In I Samuel 17, David defeats Goliath while Saul remains scared in his tent. No doubt, the lesson of this chapter is that David is following in the footsteps of the judges before him who accomplished great feats because of the presence of the Spirit of the Lord. And Saul was unable to do so, because the presence of the Spirit of the Lord was gone from him.

In I Samuel 18:12, the Spirit of the Lord is not mentioned, but the presence of the Lord is. The Lord had departed from Saul and was with David, reminiscent of I Samuel 16:13-14.

In Zechariah 4:1-14, the vision of the lamps and the two olive trees is a vision that says, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.” Zerubbabel and Joshua would rebuild the temple, yet there is no indication that they had miraculous gifts.

Putting all this together, it seems to me that the Holy Spirit is the presence of the Lord with His chosen ones.

Thus, the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who repent and are baptized for the remission of sins is the promise that we are all like these chosen ones throughout history.

However, instead of there being only a few, this is for everyone in Jesus Christ. We are all giant killers.

As throughout history, this presence of the Lord via the Holy Spirit will be manifested in whatever way God wants to manifest it. Sometimes it can be through miraculous gifts and abilities. Other times it is merely through success.

This ties in well with Titus 3:4-6. God saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ.

Thus, the gift of salvation from the Spirit and the gift that is the Spirit are not distinct. They are the same.

Certainly, the manifestation of the Spirit is no longer through miraculous gifts and there is no new revelation or miraculous guiding by the Spirit. The discussion of that however is outside the scope of this lecture whose scope is already broad and lengthy enough.

* 1. Acts 3:12-26; 4:8-12, 19
     1. While we might consider this two separate sermons, as used in Luke’s narrative it seems like the second is a continuation of the first.
     2. Speaker: Peter
     3. Audience:
        1. The first portion of the sermon is spoken to those who saw the lame man walking and leaping and praising God.
        2. The second portion is to the rulers, elders, and scribes, along with Annas the high priest and his family.
     4. Setting:
        1. Peter had healed a forty-year-old man who was lame from birth who had been begging at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. When the man went walking and leaping and praising God, people noticed. These people rushed to Peter and John (reminiscent of the rushing to the apostles in Acts 2). Peter used this as an opportunity to speak. This was the first part of this sermon.
        2. The priests, captain of the temple, and the Sadducees arrested Peter and John. On the next day the rulers, elders, and priests met to interrogate Peter and John. Peter used that opportunity to conclude his sermon.
     5. Purpose: “Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out…God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning everyone of you from your wickedness” (Acts 3:19, 26).
     6. Method:
        1. Peter banks on the people’s astonishment at this sign and wonder. His main argument is that he and John didn’t perform this miracle, Jesus did.
           1. I can’t help but wonder how many of these had heard the Pentecost sermon but walked away unmoved.
           2. Peter’s point in his first paragraph is he would not be able to do this if he weren’t telling the truth about the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus must be raised which is why the apostles have the power to heal people like this lame man.
        2. Having accused his hearers of killing Jesus, he makes a connection with them by suggesting he knows they were ignorant. After all, isn’t that exactly what Jesus cried from the cross (Luke 23:34).
        3. He additionally points out that they need not be surprised that the Messiah would be killed because it was foretold in the Scriptures.
        4. Peter alludes to Deuteronomy18:15-19. While this passage refers to a lineage of prophets from Moses to Jesus, Peter banks on the use of the phrase “raise up,” used twice in the original statement (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18). If God would raise up prophets, doesn’t it stand to reason that the man He raised up from the grave is the ultimate Prophet who needed to be heard?
        5. He also brings up the promises to Abraham, in Abraham’s offspring all the families of the earth would be blessed. Peter explains that this promise is being fulfilled first in the family of Israel. Jesus was sent to them first to give them blessing by turning them from wickedness.
           1. Though certainly not understood at the time either by Peter or his audience, this should prepare us for the other families who will be given access to the blessing.
        6. When the Council questions Peter, he reiterates and summarizes the message. Peter could only heal this man if Jesus was raised from the dead. He has no power on his own, but in the name of Jesus the man was healed.
        7. Peter concludes that just as the man was healed (σῳζω) in the name of Jesus and only in the name of Jesus, the only way to be saved (σῳζω) is in the name of Jesus because even though these rulers had rejected Him, He is the cornerstone.
        8. Peter concludes by responding to the Council’s command to quit teaching, that he will obey God above them. He can’t help but speak what he has witnessed. And that, of course, is the resurrection.
     7. The stone that became the cornerstone.
        1. Peter brings together two passages (Psalm 118:22-23; Isaiah 28:16) in this statement and what an amazing statement he makes by doing so.
           1. Psalm 118:22-23

Peter’s defense had been that the resurrected Jesus was with him, that was why he was able to heal the lame man. The man had been healed in the name of Jesus.

Psalm 118:7 declared, “The Lord is on my side as my helper.”

Psalm 118:10-13, the psalmist declares that enemies had surrounded him, but in the name of the Lord they had been cut off and the Lord had been his help.

Peter’s declaration was that Jesus was the cornerstone and in him alone is salvation.

Psalm 118:14-16 says, “The Lord is my strength and my song he has become my salvation. Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous. The right hand of the Lord exalts valiantly, the right hand of the Lord exalts, the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.” (Should we also see a connection to the previous sermon and the right hand relationship with the Lord?)

Psalm 118:21 says, “I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.”

Peter’s point in this connection is how silly it is to see a man healed in such powerful fashion and not turn to the Lord for salvation through the teaching of the one who did the healing.

Psalm 118:28-29 ends the psalm saying, “You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God; I will extol you. Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!”

Nobody could do what Peter had done unless God was with him. The Council was foolish for rejecting.

Peter’s final words to the Council are “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge…”

Psalm 118:8-9 had said, “It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.”

* + - * 1. Isaiah 28:16

The cornerstone language also connects to the prophecy in Isaiah 28. Surely the rulers of the people to whom Peter was speaking were aware of this prophecy that was addressed to “you scoffers, who rule this people in Jerusalem” (Isaiah 28:14).

When Peter described Jesus as the cornerstone, he was warning these scoffing rulers of coming judgment.

In Isaiah 28:18-19, God promised the scoffing rulers that the scourge would pass through and it would take them.

There is also an interesting connection by contrast with Psalm 118:17-18.

In Isaiah 28:15, the scoffing rulers are described as being arrogant because they think they have a covenant with Sheol that will keep them from dying. When the scourge passes through, it won’t hurt them because they have this agreement with death.

In Isaiah 28:18, they are told that their covenant with Sheol has been annulled. That is why when the scourge passes through it will take them.

However, in Psalm 118:17-18 (the other cornerstone passage), the saved one praises God saying, “I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord. The Lord has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death.”

The scoffers’ covenant with Sheol will not hold and will not protect them from death.

However, those who turn to the cornerstone will live and not die even though they be disciplined by the Lord.

Peter is warning these rulers of the coming judgment. They will not survive unless they turn to the stone they had rejected and let Him become their cornerstone.

* 1. Acts 5:29-32
     1. Speaker: Peter and the apostles
        1. This is almost presented as if Peter and the apostles answered in unison.
        2. However, either this represents Peter speaking on behalf of the apostles or it is a summary of all that they said as a group.
     2. Audience: the Council of the Jews
     3. Setting: Having been arrested for continuing to preach the resurrection in the name of Jesus, the Council questions why they keep teaching even though they have been commanded not to.
     4. Purpose: “We must obey God rather than man.”
     5. Method:
        1. This sermon is a summary of what Peter has preached in the previous two sermons.
           1. You killed the Messiah.
           2. God raised Him from the dead and exalted Him as Leader and Savior.
           3. Repent and you can be forgiven.
           4. We are witnesses of these things and so is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 5:12-16).
        2. The unstated conclusion is, “You should be listening to us since we are able to perform all these wonders and signs instead of arresting us because we won’t stop.”
        3. There is also the unstated challenge: “If you were really obeying God, these same signs would be displayed among you as well.”
           1. The apostles’ concluding challenge is parallel to I Samuel 16:13-14.

The Council is in the place of Saul, the Holy Spirit having departed from it.

Christ’s church is in the place of David, the Holy Spirit having rushed upon it.

* 1. Acts 7:2-53
     1. Speaker: Stephen
     2. Audience: The Council and witnesses against Stephen from among the Jews.
     3. Setting:
        1. Stephen had been performing signs and wonders and disputing with Jews from various synagogues in Jerusalem. Unable to withstand Stephen’s wisdom, they instigated false witnesses to stir up the people, the elders, and the scribes, who arrested Stephen and brought him before the Council.
        2. Having been charged with speaking against the holy place and the law, claiming that Jesus would destroy the temple and change the customs Moses delivered, the high priest asks Stephen if the charges are true. Stephen uses that opportunity to preach a sermon.
     4. Purpose: “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you” (Acts 7:51).
     5. Method: Stephen uses a narrative style of preaching that makes three points simultaneously rather than in succession.
        1. Stephen’s First Point: Don’t focus on the man, focus on God who used the man.
           1. The Jews accused Stephen of speaking against the customs that Moses had delivered. The emphasis is on Moses as the deliverer rather than the customs themselves.
           2. Stephen’s response is that the Jews’ focus is in the wrong place (as it has always been). They were focused on Moses rather than God who used Moses.
           3. Stephen makes his argument by highlighting that God had used numerous men throughout Israel’s history, not just Moses. The important point was not the men themselves, but God who used them.

God used Abraham.

In fact, the fundamental tradition of the Jews, circumcision, was given to Abraham not to Moses.

Despite the importance of Abraham, the main point was God. After all, Abraham didn’t even actually receive the fulfillment of the promises. And it was God who would deliver and judge the nations in the Promised Land in His own time.

God used Joseph.

Joseph was a deliverer. He delivered the Israelites before they were even a nation. He was somebody the Jews could be proud of.

However, who was important in this part of the story? Joseph or the God who was with Joseph rescuing him out of his affliction and giving him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh?

God used Joshua.

Joshua led the people to victory over the nations of the Promised Land.

However, despite Joshua’s earthly role, it was God who drove out the nations from before them.

God used David.

David was their greatest king, a giant-killer, a man after God’s own heart. He asked to find a dwelling place for God.

But for all of David’s victories and great qualities, the important one was not David, but the God in whose sight David found favor.

God used Solomon.

Solomon built the temple for God’s dwelling place.

But for all Solomon’s architecture, the important one was the God who condescended to “pretend” that the temple was a place He could dwell.

* + - * 1. In the middle of the above litany, since Stephen is telling the story chronologically, he makes his strongest point by actually talking about how God used Moses. He makes three arguments about Moses himself.

Argument #1 from Moses: For all the greatness of Moses, the important thing was not Moses, but God who used him.

The ESV uses a wonderful play on words. While the wordplay is not in the original as far as I can tell, the thrust behind the ESV wordplay is.

In Acts 7:25, Stephen says Moses supposed his brethren would understand God was delivering them by his hand. But he was wrong. They didn’t suppose it and Moses was unable to deliver with his hand.

In Acts 7:35, the very same Moses was able to deliver the Israelites by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush.

The point? The important person in all of this was not Moses, but God who used Moses.

Argument #2 from Moses: Moses himself told the Israelites there was someone coming after him that they should look to instead of him.

In Acts 7:37, Stephen simply reminds the Council that the Moses they were placing so much stock in had himself said God was going to raise up another prophet from among their brothers. They should listen to that prophet.

In Acts 7:38, Stephen essentially accuses them of picking and choosing which “oracles” they should follow. In other words, Stephen is saying, “Don’t talk to me about speaking against the customs Moses gave us if you are going to ignore the one he gave us in Deuteronomy 18:15.”

Argument #3 from Moses: Look what happened the last time you put too much stock in Moses.

In Acts 7:39-43, Stephen reminds the Israelites about the fathers who refused to obey Moses and thrust him aside.

If all we knew was the Acts 7 version of events, it might sound like the Jews had discounted Moses and just tossed him out. But when we remember the story of what really happened, as surely the Council did, we see a different picture.

In Exodus 32:1, they had Aaron make the golden calf because Moses had not come back down from the mountain.

This action is not because they did not consider Moses important. It is because they put too much stock in Moses. Without Moses, they had no leader and didn’t know what to do.

In the context of Stephen’s sermon, he argues that Moses had told them God would raise up prophets after him. So what if Moses had died on the mountain? Instead of returning to their Egyptian ways, they should have waited for the God who raised up Moses to raise up another prophet as they had been taught.

However, instead of putting their faith in the God who raised up Moses and trusting his oracle that God would raise up another prophet, they ignored this teaching and went into idolatry.

In a shocking turn of events, because the people put too much stock in Moses, they actually ended up rejecting Moses.

Stephen’s audience is doing the same thing. By putting too much stock in Moses, they are actually rejecting his oracle that the ultimate prophet would be raised up for them to follow.

Remember, this Council had already heard Jesus was raised. Neither Stephen in his sermon, nor Luke in his record have to repeat that for the Council to know the connection the Christians made between Moses’s prophecy and the resurrected Jesus.

* + - 1. Stephen’s Second Point: Don’t focus on the place, focus on God who made the place holy.
         1. The Jews accused Stephen of speaking against the temple.
         2. Stephen’s response is that, as with the issue of Moses, the Jews’ focus is in the wrong place. Rather than focusing on the temple, they needed to focus on God who condescended to “dwell” in the temple.
         3. Stephen makes his point by telling the story of many places where God met with His people.

In Acts 7:6-7, Stephen makes a subtle point that would be lost on anyone who does not know the history of God’s people by cleverly conflating two accounts.

Stephen “quotes,” saying, “But I will judge the nation that they serve and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.”

Stephen refers to the account of Genesis 15:12ff, in which God tells Abraham of his descendants’ enslavement in another nation and says, “But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

He cleverly conflates it with a statement God made to Moses in Exodus 3:12: “He said, ‘But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt you shall serve God on this mountain.”

Stephen didn’t make a mistake by mixing the two accounts. He actually highlighted his main point.

Stephen is able to mix these two statements because they are about the same thing. The first is what God said to Abraham about the Exodus and the second is what He told Moses.

Because Stephen views both passages as ultimately authored by God (see section VIII), he can atomistically read these statements about the same event allowing each to recontextualize each other. They can blend because they are both by God about the same thing—the Exodus.

By bringing up both passages in one sentence, Stephen highlights that God told Abraham the people would return to the Promised Land when released. But by crashing it together with God’s statement to Moses about the sign that God is with him, Mt. Sinai, which is not in the Promised Land is brought out in strong relief.

It’s not the place that matters, but God who selects and makes the place holy.

In Acts 7:9-16, Stephen tells the story of Joseph who was sold into Egypt.

Who was with Joseph while in Egypt? God was. God isn’t limited to the temple in Jerusalem. God was in Egypt.

How shocking to consider that the place of refuge during this time was Egypt instead of God’s holy house on Mt. Zion.

This is especially the case since through so much of Israel’s history they are warned against turning to Egypt for refuge.

The point is that it is not the place that matters, but God who makes use of the place.

In Acts 7:30-34, God met Moses on Mt. Sinai in a burning bush.

Moses didn’t have to build a temple or go to Mt. Zion.

The fiery representation of God’s presence rested on a bush on Mt. Sinai.

To add insult to injury, God Himself said of Mt. Sinai, “Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”

In Acts 7:39-43, we see a truly fantastic feat of polemic dexterity of which I am truly envious.

When Stephen speaks of their fathers’ rebellion against Moses, he doesn’t support his argument by quoting from the Exodus account where the rebellion actually took place.

Instead, he quotes Amos 5:25-27, a prophecy in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah (Amos 1:1).

Consider the context of Amos 5:21. Where were those feasts that God despised taking place? At the holy place in Jerusalem.

Did being in the “holy place” in Jerusalem make everything they did holy? No.

In Acts 7:44, Stephen reminds them that the holy place had followed Israel around as they wandered in the wilderness. It wasn’t just on Mt. Zion.

In Acts 7:45-46, Stephen reminds the Jews that the holy place did not immediately become Jerusalem. That didn’t happen until David asked to find a dwelling place for God.

Don’t think of this as merely asking to build the temple. This is a reference to David bringing the actual dwelling place to Jerusalem.

* + - * 1. Stephen brings the hammer down on these Jews in Acts 7:48.

“Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands.”

Consider this in connection with Solomon’s words in II Chronicles 2:5-6, “The house that I am to build will be great, for our God is greater than all gods. But who is able to build him a house, since heaven, even the highest heaven, cannot contain him.”

Also II Chronicles 6:18: “But will God indeed dwell with man on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built!”

Stephen’s wording of this statement relates back to his statement of the Israelite idolatry in Acts 7:41: “And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.”

Stephen points out that the Jewish fixation on the temple was tantamount to the idolatry with the golden calf. Which, of course, connects it as tantamount to the idolatry perpetrated by Jeroboam with his golden calves at Bethel and Dan.

* + - * 1. Stephen makes his ultimate point in Acts 7:49-50, quoting Isaiah 66:1-2.

This again connects to Solomon’s own words found in II Chronicles 2:5-6; 6:18, also found in I Kings 8:27.

Specifically note the final part of Stephen’s quote: “Did not my hand make all these things?”

Solomon’s “hands” had built the original temple. Joshua and Zerubbabel’s “hands” had rebuilt the temple. Herod’s “hands” had beautified the temple.

But whose hands actually matter?

God’s hands matter and His hands have made every place.

Therefore, God doesn’t need the temple.

Since God’s hands have made every place, we can meet God in any place. It isn’t the place that matters, it is God who selects the place and makes it holy.

* + - 1. Stephen’s Third Point: Don’t follow in the footsteps of your fathers, listen to the Holy Spirit.
         1. Stephen’s conclusion demonstrates his main point that even the other two support. “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7:51).
         2. Stephen supports his argument by listing God’s chosen ones whose brethren responded to them with jealousy and rebellion.

Joseph

In Acts 7:9, the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egyptian slavery. They rejected him despite the message from God that he would be over them.

However, God was with him and made him the ruler despite his brother’s rejection.

Note that a Gentile, Pharaoh, accepted Joseph for who he was, the wisdom of God.

Moses

In Acts 7:36, Stephen places an interesting summary between the two stories that highlighted the Israelites rejection of Moses (The Jewish man who was wronging his neighbor and thrust Moses aside and the Israelites who thrust Moses aside and pursued the golden calf).

“This Moses, whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’—this man God sent as both ruler and redeemer…”

Notice once again that a Gentile, the daughter of Pharaoh, looked in favor on Moses.

David and Solomon

Stephen doesn’t delve into David and Solomon like he did Joseph and Moses. However, I can’t help but recognize two other men whose brethren discounted and rejected them.

David

When Samuel surreptitiously came to Jesse’s house to anoint the next king of Israel in I Samuel 16:6-13, David was so overlooked and disdained that he wasn’t even included by his father or brothers in the invitation to the sacrifice. He was left out with the sheep.

When David asked about Goliath, Eliab belittled David as a lazy thrill seeker who had left his few sheep in the wilderness (I Samuel 17:28).

Saul tried to kill David multiple times over many years.

When Saul had died, most of Israel continued to reject David and tried to make Ish-bosheth king instead.

And, of course, the rebellion of his son Absalom and all those who supported him should be remembered.

Yet, despite the jealousy and rejection of his brethren, God made him king.

Solomon

When Solomon was supposed to be made king, his brother Adonijah tried to steal the throne from him (I Kings 1).

Yet, despite his brother’s jealousy and attempted overthrow, God made him king.

* + - * 1. Stephen draws his conclusion by specifically telling the Jews that they always resist the Holy Spirit.

Remember this is the very same Council to whom Peter made his dig about the Holy Spirit in Acts 5:32. And surely many of them had heard of Peter’s connection between Jesus’s wonders and signs and the wonders and signs of the outpoured Holy Spirit in his sermon about Joel 2.

Further, Luke magnifies this point as he makes two connections between Stephen and this final statement.

Stephen concludes by saying the Jews “received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it” (Acts 7:53). Luke had started the whole sermon of Stephen off by saying the Council “saw that his face was like that of an angel.” (Acts 6:15).

Stephen concludes by saying the Jews always “resist the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7:53). Before they kill Stephen, Luke makes sure to remind us that Stephen is “full of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7:55; see also Acts 6:3, 5).

The Jews respond by rejecting Stephen’s plea. They kill the one with the countenance of an angel delivering this message to them and the one who is full of the Holy Spirit.

* + 1. For an intriguing note regarding the connections between Stephen’s sermon and the prayer of Nehemiah 9 and how it points to a coming judgment on the Jews, Jerusalem, and the temple see VI. A. 6. b. 2) c).
    2. On judgment and uncircumcised hearts and ears
       1. Stephen’s choice of words here is important. There is a theme about uncircumcised hearts throughout the Old Testament that he is highlighting.
       2. As Stephen had said in Acts 7:8, God gave the covenant of circumcision of the flesh to Abraham. And there is no doubt that everyone hearing Stephen’s defense that day had submitted to that “custom of Moses.” But, what God is more interested in is a circumcised heart and He will bring judgment on all who are uncircumcised in heart and ears.
          1. In Deuteronomy 10:16, God said to the physically circumcised that He required them to circumcise their hearts and not be stubborn against Him and His will.
          2. In Jeremiah 4:4, God had called Judah to repentance by commanding them to circumcise their hearts. Otherwise His wrath would go forth like fire.
          3. In Jeremiah 6:10, God wants to warn the Jews of the coming judgment, but He knows He cannot because their ears are uncircumcised, making them unwilling to listen.
          4. In Ezekiel 44:7, God rebukes Israel for allowing foreigners who were uncircumcised in heart and flesh to enter His temple. But here Stephen accuses the Jews of being no better than these foreigners as they make a big deal about their temple.
          5. In Jeremiah 9:25-26, God explains that He will bring judgment on the Jews as well as the Gentiles because none of them are circumcised in heart.
          6. Stephen’s accusation is most definitely a warning of coming judgment on the Jews. And not just an eternal judgment, but a corporeal judgment on the nation of Israel, its cities, its land, its temple.
       3. Sadly, the Council was not stayed by Gamaliel’s hand against Stephen as they had been when they wanted to kill the apostles in Acts 5. So, they didn’t get to hear what most surely would have been the next part of Stephen’s sermon.
          1. In Leviticus 26:41, God explained that even if Israel sinned so rebelliously as to be removed from the land, if they would humble their uncircumcised hearts and turn to Him in repentance, He would deliver and rescue them.
          2. In Deuteronomy 30:6, Moses explained that though Israel sin so egregiously that they are cast to the uttermost parts of heaven, if they return to the Lord and obey Him, He Himself would circumcise their hearts so that they would love God, they and their offspring. (Can we help but remember Peter’s earlier statement that the promise was for the Jews and their children?)
  1. Acts 8:20-23
     1. Speaker: Peter
     2. Audience: Simon the Sorcerer
     3. Setting: In Samaria, the gospel has been accepted, even by one who had formerly tried to be a religious leader among the Samaritans. However, he is still bound by some of his baggage and tries to buy apostleship. This speech is Peter’s rebuke.
     4. Purpose: “Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours…” (Acts 8:22).
     5. Method: straightforward and uncompromising rebuke.
        1. Peter exposes Simon’s bondage to sin and names it for what it is. He doesn’t sugarcoat it or soften it or mollify it. He explains very clearly the state Simon now finds himself.
        2. He calls Simon to repent and pray for forgiveness from God.
  2. Acts 10:28-29, 34-42, 47
     1. Speaker: Peter
     2. Audience: Cornelius, his household, some of his relatives and his close friends
     3. Setting: God had told Cornelius, a God-fearing Gentile, to send for Peter. God had given Peter a vision that nothing was unclean. The two have now met and Peter is giving a message that will save Cornelius.
     4. Purpose: “To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43).
     5. Method:
        1. Peter begins with the knowledge that it is an amazing thing that he, a faithful Jew, has traveled so far with no other object but to come to this Gentile’s house.
        2. After learning from Cornelius why he has been sent for, he continues his sermon by expounding on the reason he came without objection (vss. 34-35). This shows it is a continuation of what he started a few verses earlier.
        3. In vs. 37, Peter repeats “you yourselves know.” How he was certain that a Gentile centurion in Caesarea would know the reports of Jesus’ works is beyond me. But he believes Cornelius and his household were aware and Cornelius offers no objection.
        4. Note the parallel between Peter’s preaching here to the Gentiles and his preaching to the Jews in Acts 2:22. He anchors his preaching on the mighty works of Jesus they had already heard about and known.
        5. In Acts 10:39-41, Peter turns to what they didn’t know. There was one more great work that only a few had been privileged to witness, and he was one of those privileged few. They had witnessed the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
        6. In vs. 42, Peter ties what he is saying to Cornelius’s request in vs. 33. Cornelius wanted to hear what Peter had been commanded. And Peter explains that he has been commanded to preach that Jesus is the judge of the living and the dead by virtue of His resurrection.
        7. Though Peter does not quote the prophets as he did when preaching to Jews, he does refer to them. He explains that “everyone who believes” will receive forgiveness of sins.
           1. Though he had essentially taught this in Acts 2:39, I am certain he did not understand there as he is learning it here with Cornelius.
        8. The Holy Spirit intervenes in the sermon to drive home the point that Peter is making and demonstrates that indeed these Gentiles can repent and receive forgiveness.
        9. The conclusion of the sermon as recorded is that this baptism of the Holy Spirit means one thing and one thing only. They cannot withhold the baptism in Jesus’s name into water from the Gentiles. So he commands them to be baptized and they submit. (More on this under Peter’s defense to the Jews in the next section).
  3. Acts 11:5-17
     1. Speaker: Peter
     2. Audience: The circumcision party
     3. Setting: After Peter returned from preaching to Cornelius, Jewish Christians, who were certain Gentiles had to be circumcised before they were baptized, complained to Peter that he ate with Gentiles (notice they didn’t complain that he let Gentiles receive the Word, but that he ate with them — I’m unaware of any text in which the Law actually restricted being able to eat with Gentiles).
     4. Purpose: “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18).
        1. Understanding what a monumental shift it is for the gospel to turn to the Gentiles, Luke includes this second sermon in his narrative to drive home the point that folks like Theophilus can repent.
     5. Method:
        1. The sermon is pretty straightforward. No subtle messages opened up by knowing Israel’s history or the prophets. (At least not that I’ve uncovered yet.)
        2. Peter banks on the Jewish Christian’s knowledge that he has the Holy Spirit. He also banks on their knowledge that Jesus said, “John baptized you with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” He finally banks on their memory of what happened on the day of Pentecost for the Jews.
        3. Peter’s whole approach when accused of going to eat with Gentiles is that he didn’t do anything, The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit did it.
           1. God, that is the Father, gave the gift to the Gentiles as He had the Jews.
           2. The Lord, that is Jesus the Son, told him to “Rise, Peter, kill and eat” and had said that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit.
           3. The Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles, baptizing them.
           4. If the triune God was fully active in this, how could Peter not go to the Gentiles, eating with them and teaching them?
     6. The conclusion of the Jews
        1. The Jews of the circumcision party drew the proper conclusion. The Gentiles had been granted the repentance that leads to life.
        2. This ties back to Acts 3:26; 5:31.
           1. In Abraham’s offspring God had promised to be a blessing to all families. He first sent Jesus to bless Israel by turning them from wickedness.
           2. God exalted Jesus to His right hand in order to give repentance to Israel.
           3. Now He has given repentance to the Gentiles as well. It has finally become a blessing on all the families of the earth.
     7. Was Cornelius saved before he was baptized in water?
        1. It does not appear to me that he was.
           1. As Peter recounts what happened, he gives some time markers that were left out of the account in Acts 10.

In Acts 11:14, Cornelius explained he was told Peter would give him a message by which he would be saved.

However, in Acts 11:15, Peter explains the timing of the Holy Spirit falling on Cornelius. The Holy Spirit didn’t fall on Cornelius after he had heard the saving message, but at the beginning of his message.

Either the angel of the Lord was wrong and Cornelius didn’t actually need to hear the message to be saved, or for the sake of the narrative Luke compresses some of the timing to make his point.

I suggest it was a narrative issue because it wouldn’t have occurred to Luke to have to defend the necessity of water baptism to salvation.

* + - 1. But what if I’m wrong? What if Cornelius was saved at the point of receiving the Holy Spirit?
         1. I am not completely unwilling to entertain this possibility as I’ve already recognized that in many ways receiving the Holy Spirit and receiving salvation from the Holy Spirit are not as distinct as we might be tempted to suggest. See X. B. 5. D. of this outline for more on this.
         2. However, accepting the possibility that Cornelius and his household were saved at the point of receiving the Holy Spirit, in no way sets aside the normative teaching throughout the rest of Acts and the New Testament that baptism is an essential step in entering Christ and being saved.

It doesn’t change this normative practice any more than this account changes the teaching that the normative way the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were passed on to Christians was through the laying on of an apostle’s hands.

Though God had a normative way of giving the miraculous gifts, they are His gifts; if He wants to make an exception, He can.

In like manner, God has a normative order and practice by which people enter Christ and become saved. But if He wants to make an exception to that, He can.

* + - * 1. All through this account, the Spirit is involved in order to drive home one singularly important point. Gentiles are allowed to be saved. Is it really shocking that God might use exceptional means to make an exceptional point?
        2. Even if this reception of the Spirit meant they were already saved, Peter still felt it absolutely necessary not merely to allow the Gentiles to be baptized, but to command them to be baptized in water in the name of Jesus. This has already been established as a precursor to forgiveness and receiving the Holy Spirit and the ability to have miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:38; notice also Acts 19:1-7).
        3. So, if we concede that Cornelius was saved when the Holy Spirit fell on him, at most, that admits to an exceptional case. Like the thief on the cross, I suggest that if Jesus were Himself standing next to someone and declared them saved, then they are saved no matter what I think. If the Holy Spirit really does enter someone and they really do perform amazing miraculous feats, then they can claim salvation. But apart from that, we had better follow the commands in the non-exceptional places like Acts 2:38; 22:16.
  1. Acts 13:16-41, 46-47
     1. Speaker: Paul
     2. Audience: Those who had been attending the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, which included many Jews and devout converts to Judaism.
     3. Setting:
        1. Paul and Barnabas were on their first missionary journey. They came to Antioch in Pisidia. As devout Jews, on the Sabbath they attended the synagogue.
        2. Apparently Paul’s reputation preceded him. After the reading of the Law and the Prophets that would occur in the Sabbath assembly, the ruler of the synagogue asked Paul or Barnabas if they had a word of encouragement to share. Paul takes that opportunity to speak.
        3. Note that in Luke’s narrative, the “setting” shows Paul’s similarity to Peter. Paul’s sermon is similar to Peter’s initial missionary sermon on Pentecost. We are seeing a parallel theme. As Peter was an apostle to the Jews, Paul becomes an apostle to the Gentiles.
     4. Purpose: “Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about: ‘Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells you’” (Acts 13:40-41).
        1. That is, to turn these Jews to repentance so they will not be wiped out in the coming judgment at the hands of the Gentiles whom God will use to judge Jerusalem and the Jews.
        2. This seems to be Paul’s purpose for this sermon. However, Luke also seems to have a purpose for including it in his narrative that is slightly different.
           1. Acts 13:46 seems to be Luke’s purpose with this sermon: “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.”

Remember that this “thrusting” aside was the exact same thing the fathers of the Jews had done to Moses (Acts 7:27, 39), and by extension were doing to Jesus and His apostles and prophets.

* + 1. Method:
       1. I find it interesting that the ruler of the synagogue asked Paul and Barnabas if they had a “word of encouragement” or “word of consolation” to give. Paul preached to them about Jesus, Who is the Word (John 1:1) of Consolation to Israel (Luke 2:25).
       2. Unlike Peter in Acts 2, Paul is not defending against accusations of wickedness. Nor like Peter in Acts 3-4, is he facing astonished crowds or hostile Councils. Unlike Stephen in Acts 7, he is not facing an opposing Council. That, I’m sure, explains the difference in tone.
          1. Paul does not give any direct accusations as in those sermons. He does not accuse these Jews of killing Jesus.
          2. Even his accusations against the Jews who actually killed Jesus, though similar to Peter’s statements in earlier sermons, comes off in my reading as less accusatory.

There seems to be more emphasis on ignorance and lack of recognition.

Further, there is more emphasis on them simply doing what God had written would happen anyway.

* + - 1. Paul uses a similar ethos technique to Peter’s that was discussed in VII. A. 3. d. 3) b).
         1. He begins with the formal, “Men of Israel and you who fear God” but moves to “Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God.”
      2. Like Stephen, Paul recounts the history of Israel to make his point, though with much less detail and information. The progression Paul makes is that God gave them patriarchs, He gave them judges, He gave them prophets, then He gave them kings. Finally, from the line of the greatest king, He gave them a Savior.
      3. Paul ties his message to the request the ruler of the synagogue had made. The ruler of the synagogue had asked if they had a word of encouragement or consolation. Paul points out that he had been given and was passing on to them a word of salvation. (Acts 13:26).
      4. As Peter had to do in the Pentecost sermon, Paul must address the #1 objection the Jews would have had to Jesus’s Messiahship. The Messiah is to be immortal. He should not die. How can they claim Jesus is the Messiah when He died?
         1. In similar ways to Peter, Paul defends Jesus as Messiah by claiming that the Scripture explained Jesus would suffer, die, and be resurrected.

There are several connections between what Paul says and Isaiah 52:13-53:12, the Suffering Servant passage.

In Acts 13:27, they did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. In the Isaiah 52:14, the Suffering Servant is presented as unrecognizable. In Isaiah 53:2, He has no beauty or majesty that would attract recognition as the Messiah.

In Acts 13:27, they fulfilled the Scriptures in the very act of condemning Him. In Isaiah 53:4, we esteemed him smitten by God.

In Acts 13:28, they could find no grounds for the death penalty. In Isaiah 53:9 they could find no violence or deceit in Him.

In Acts 13:29, they laid him in a tomb. In Isaiah 53:9, they made his grave with the wicked.

Paul connects three passages together to defend that Jesus’s death, burial, and resurrection correspond with all that the prophets said of the Messiah.

He refers to Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 55:3 (more clear when seen in the Septuagint), and Psalm 16:10.

Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 55:3 are tied together directly as connected to the covenant made specifically with David as king of Israel.

In Psalm 2, the Gentiles are gathered against God’s begotten king, but their plans and counsel come to naught.

The apostles in Acts 4:25-28 had recognized how this psalm applied to Pilate executing Jesus. Paul is making the same connection for these Jews. Look back at Acts 13:28.

Though we have a hard time seeing Psalm 2 as anything but a prophecy of the Messiah, when the psalm was written it was no doubt seen as part of God’s covenant with David. And while Jews of the first century may have even seen Messianic overtones (whether or not they recognized it in Jesus), they would still have linked it to the Messiah via the covenant of David who was to be the Messiah’s father.

Isaiah 55:3 is referred to in this context not so much for what it says by itself, but for the Davidic covenant theme it represented.

Remember the atomistic approach to texts that means the entire context of Isaiah 55 doesn’t necessarily have to fit in this comparison.

However, there are a couple of things in the immediate context of Isaiah 55:3-5 to note.

a} In Isaiah 55:3, the prophet did make a statement about the soul of this one living because he listened to God.

b} But the main part of the context that applies is what follows. The Holy One of Israel shall be a leader and a commander and have nations run to him.

But more important are passages in the Old Covenant that describe the covenant with David and the sure mercies and blessings. Again, Isaiah 55:3 is not quoted so much for its own context as for the theme in the Old Testament that it represents.

This includes passages like II Samuel 7 and Psalm 89.

Consider II Samuel 7.

a} As tied to Psalm 2, God would “raise up” one of David’s descendants who would be to God a son.

b} This descendant would have an eternal throne and kingdom.

Consider Psalm 89.

a} This psalm ties together two interesting themes that go together with Paul’s defense and any defense of the Messiah’s death and resurrection.

b} Psalm 89 is first and foremost about the sure mercies of David, the eternal covenant. Read Psalm 89:1-37 to see that clearly.

c} But Psalm 89:38-48 sings a different tune. Though the psalmist completely believes in the steadfast and sure mercies of David and the eternal covenant, he also sings of a time when it looks like that covenant is being broken by God, a time when God’s wrath is poured out on the anointed, his crown is defiled in dust, he his scorned by his neighbors, his enemies rejoice, his days were cut short.

d} He even says, “What man can live and never see death?”

e} Yet, in Psalm 89:49-52, the psalmist expresses his faith that God will remember His covenant with David. He will remember the steadfast and sure mercies.

I recognize that neither II Samuel 7, nor Psalm 89 are quoted by Paul. However, we need to understand that both of them are “quoted” by Paul. When he brings up the holy and sure blessings of David from Isaiah 55:3, he is not simply quoting that sentence, he is quoting that theme which includes II Samuel 7 and Psalm 89.

When we see that theme as expressed in the passages that discuss it, can we help but see a Suffering Servant who has died and been resurrected?

Psalm 16:10 is laid over the top of these two passages about the Davidic covenant.

For a more in depth view of how the apostles can use this psalm to refer to Jesus see VIII. B. 8.

But Paul explains exactly what his point is. His point is that the Scriptures did not prophesy that the Messiah wouldn’t die (see comments on Psalm 89:48 above). Rather, the Scriptures prophesied that the Holy One would not see corruption.

David not only died, but he saw corruption.

Jesus on the other hand died, but was raised up before He saw corruption.

Remember the note I included earlier from Pickup: “Jesus could still fulfill the messianic reading of the psalm as long as God raised him from the dead before his corpse underwent decay. And that, the apostle argues, is exactly what God did when He restored Jesus to life on the third day after his crucifixion. (In Jewish thinking, death was a process, and the third day after a person died was when the soul was said to completely depart from the body. This was because visible signs of decomposition set in after three days; see *m: Yebamot* 16.3 and *y:Moed Qatan* 82b).” (Pickup, “The New Testament’s Exegesis of Old Testament Passages,” *Studies in the Psalms*, p. 262)

* + - 1. Having defended the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus from Scripture, Paul explains that if this man was really raised from the dead, they should listen to the message of forgiveness that can be found in Him.
      2. This message of forgiveness grants freedom from all that the Law of Moses could not grant freedom.
         1. This makes me ask from what could the Law of Moses free the Jews?
         2. This calls to mind the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25).

In the year of Jubilee, Jews could be set free from servitude.

In the year of Jubilee, the Jews who had so indebted themselves as to have to work as servants for other Jews would be set free from their debts and their bondage.

In the year of Jubilee, if land in a field of Israel had been sold, the original owner could return to it.

For that year, they were free from having to work the land.

* + - * 1. But each year, they still had to offer the atonement sacrifice. For all that the Law of Moses could set them free from, it did not set them free from sin.
      1. Paul concludes his initial sermon with a statement from Habakkuk 1:5.
         1. There is no subtle message here. Paul is pointing out that just as God judged the Jews by the Chaldeans for their injustice, God is going to send judgment on the Jews again for their injustice administered to Jesus.
         2. Paul is calling for these Jews to repent lest the Romans (we know it is the Romans) bring judgment on all of them.
      2. Though Acts 13:46-47 is actually preached by Paul on the following Sabbath, Luke uses it as a conclusion to the sermon already presented.
         1. Paul had called the Jews to repentance. However, unlike the sizeable number that had responded positively to Peter’s similar sermon in Acts 2, the majority of these Jews responded in jealousy, rejecting the message.
         2. Paul quotes the last half of Isaiah 49:6. God had always intended to let His Holy One be a light to the Gentiles as well. Sadly, it happens because the Jews have thrust aside the message of eternal life.

In Isaiah 49:6 it is a light thing to only be a light to the Jews. In Acts 13:46-47 we see that is because the Jews treat the message of salvation as a light thing.

Further, in Isaiah 49:7 we see that this promise of having kings prostrate themselves comes to one who is despised and abhorred by the nation as the Jews in Acts 13 have despised the message of King Jesus.

* 1. Acts 14:15-17
     1. Speaker: Paul
        1. Once again, the text almost treats this as if Barnabas and Saul cried this speech out in unison.
        2. Either Luke is representing this as Paul speaking on both of their behalves or we see another summary of what both of them said.
     2. Audience: Gentiles in Lystra
     3. Setting: When Paul heals a lame man, the Gentiles of Lystra begin to worship Paul and Barnabas as Hermes and Zeus respectively.
        1. Hermes was the herald and spokesman of the gods. Since Paul was speaking the most, they saw him as Hermes and Barnabas as Zeus.
        2. Regarding the “setting” in the narrative of Luke, notice the continuing parallel between Peter and Paul. Just as Peter’s second missionary sermon was prompted by the healing of a lame man, so is Paul’s.
        3. Also notice the further comparison and contrast with Peter in Acts 3-4.
           1. Peter’s audience is amazed but can’t seem to make a connection between what they are seeing and the God in whom they believe. But Paul’s audience makes an immediate connection between what is going on and the gods in whom they believe.
           2. Peter’s sermon and the people’s response causes the rulers of the Jews to arrest Peter and John. Paul’s preaching and the people’s response cause the Jews from other cities to stir up the people to stone Paul.
     4. Purpose: “…you should turn from these vain things to a living God…” (Acts 14:15).
     5. Method:
        1. We truly only get a summary of what Paul and Barnabas preached to these Gentiles.
        2. Like Peter in Acts 3:12, Paul repudiates that he has done this thing by his own power. He is a man just like those trying to worship him.
        3. Then he explains that he has good news of a living God who had given testimony to them of His existence by giving rain and fruitfulness. He appeals to their knowledge of the natural world and its order that a real God exists.
        4. That is all we hear of their preaching to these Gentiles, however we have hints of connection to the preaching that has been done already in Acts and surely made up the rest of the preaching they did here in Lystra.
           1. They were bringing good news, that is, the gospel.
           2. The Gentiles needed to turn back or repent.
           3. Paul’s was a message of a living God. While this no doubt referred to God the Father, in the context of Acts preaching, can we doubt that he is going to leap from this to the resurrected and living God, Jesus Christ?
           4. This God had left witnesses for the Gentiles. This hearkens to the witnesses of Jesus’s resurrection that Paul will be for them.
  2. Acts 15:7-11
     1. Speaker: Peter
     2. Audience: The apostles, elders of the church at Jerusalem and apparently the Jerusalem congregation (cf. Acts 15:22).
     3. Setting:
        1. Paul and Barnabas and some other brothers from the church in Syrian Antioch have traveled to Jerusalem to find out why men from that congregation are teaching that Gentiles must be circumcised before becoming Christians.
        2. As they give their report of the gospel’s spread through Gentile territory, some believers who were Pharisees claimed it was necessary to circumcise Gentiles and command them to keep Moses’s law. This sermon is Peter’s part in the ensuing discussion.
        3. Be aware, that the setting for this discussion is not for Paul and Barnabas to find out if circumcision is necessary. Paul knew the gospel and did not need to find out from men (Galatians 1:11-12). This is a trip to find out why the Jerusalem church seems to be teaching this error.
     4. Purpose: “But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will” (Acts 15:11).
     5. Method: Peter says four things.
        1. “You know” that Gentiles believed by the word of Peter years ago.
           1. This is ethos, establishing his credibility. Surely if anyone can speak to this subject, Peter, the man God used to introduce the gospel to the Gentiles can.
        2. God Himself made no distinction between the uncircumcised Gentiles and the circumcised Jews by giving the Gentiles the Holy Spirit just as He did the Jews.
           1. Saying that God knows their hearts is surely, in Acts, a reminder that circumcision of the flesh doesn’t matter nearly as much as circumcision of the heart (cf. Acts 7:51).
           2. God did not remove the distinction between Jew and Gentile by assigning circumcision to the Gentiles and giving them the Law. Rather, He removed the distinction by cleansing all of their hearts through faith.
        3. Since the Jews had accepted the salvation that came through Jesus, an admission that they couldn’t get salvation through the Law of Moses, why would they remotely demand that the Gentiles try to be saved through the Law of Moses?
        4. In an interesting turn of phrase, Peter points out, not that the Gentiles will be saved just like the Jews, but the other way around. The Jews will be saved just like the Gentiles.
  3. Acts 15:13-17
     1. Speaker: James (likely the brother of Jesus)
     2. Audience: See X. K. 2.
     3. Setting: See X. K. 3.
     4. Purpose: “Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God…”
     5. Method:
        1. James piggybacks off of Peter’s “sermon” by agreeing with him and then referencing a Scripture he claims agrees with Peter.
        2. James quotes from Amos 9:11-12 in the Septuagint.
           1. A friend of mine recently shared with me an objection to this claim. I don’t know any Hebrew and can’t address his objection, but share it with you for your further study.
           2. My friend finds it hard to believe that James, a Jew, would in a Jewish congregation, while probably speaking Aramaic actually use the Greek translation of the Scripture. (Though, of course, I remind you that Luke is writing in Greek and somewhat moderating these comments himself. He might well use the Greek translation in his report of the events.)
           3. My friend also explains that one of the things to keep in mind is that the Hebrew manuscripts our texts are based on are consonantal and do not have vowel points. Vowel points are added by students of the text. He claims if the vowel points were modified, the Hebrew would read closer to what we find in Acts 15.
           4. Of course, knowing this doesn’t change what it says in Acts 15. At best, it lets us know that a different rendering of the Hebrew would read much more like the record of the Septuagint record we have now.
        3. Amos 9:11-12 has a very interesting context as we consider this brief speech in the larger Luke narrative.
           1. First, in the context of the resurrection theme throughout Acts, the fallen tabernacle of David that God will “raise up” is likely the temple that is the body of Jesus and not a reference to the church. Though, since the church is the body of Jesus (Ephesians 1:22-23), the distinction between the two may not be all that great in Scripture.
           2. Amos 9 is a prophecy of destruction of the temple of God and judgment on the Jews.

Amos 9:1 is specifically a description of temple destruction.

Amos 9:2-4 takes the comforting message of God’s ever presence and protecting strength found in Psalm 139:7-12 and turns it on its head, making it a frightful explanation of the inability to escape the wrath and judgment of the ever present God.

Amos 9:7-10 explains that God will treat His nation just like He did the Egyptians when He delivered Israel from them. However, He will not utterly destroy them. There will be a remnant. But all the sinners of God’s people will die.

That is when Amos speaks of the raised up tabernacle/booth of David.

Amos 9:13-15 is a captivating picture of the blessing of being part of the remnant that seeks the Lord.

Thus, James’s message is not simply that the Gentiles are allowed to be part of the remnant, it also intimates that Jews who don’t come in line with this view and continue to bank on the Law instead of on Jesus Christ, the raised up tabernacle of David, will be judged along with the temple.

* + - * 1. Additionally, in the Acts narrative, can we not see a connection back to Acts 2:21, 39? All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved, as many as the Lord will call to Himself. And now we see the Gentiles saved who are called by His name or upon whom His name has been called.
      1. James concludes by pointing out in Acts 15:20-21 that though the Gentiles are not under the Law, that doesn’t mean they are allowed to ignore everything the Law says. There are some aspects of the Law that are universal.
         1. He quotes four requirements, surely not as an exhaustive list but as an example.
         2. These four requirements, things offered to idols, sexual immorality, things strangled, and blood seem to be a brief summary of Leviticus 17-18.
         3. For a deeper study of this connection, please see “Leviticus in the New Testament” by Jeff Smelser presented in the 2014 SITS conference. (<http://sitsstudy.com/resources/2014---Leviticus/Notebook/6-LeviticusintheNewTestament2-JSmelser.pdf>)
  1. Acts 17:22-31
     1. Speaker: Paul
     2. Audience: The Areopagus, a council of Athenians who judged new teachings and philosophies that came into Athens, and apparently other philosophers, and who had conversed with Paul in the marketplace.
     3. Setting:
        1. Continuing the parallel with Peter, Paul’s third recorded sermon is a defense before a Council. This holds whether we consider what I have presented as the second half of Peter’s speech in Acts 3-4 as Peter’s third or the speech in Acts 5 as his third.
        2. While Paul was awaiting his fellow workers in Athens, his spirit was provoked within him because of the numerous idols. The term translated “provoked” is used in the LXX “to refer to God’s extreme anger at the idolatry of the chosen people (cf. Deut. 9:18; Ps. 106:29; Isa. 65:3; Hos. 8:5).” (Witherington, *Acts*, p. 512).
        3. Because of this anger, he reasoned both with Jews in the synagogue and in the marketplace. He specifically debated with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.
        4. Two accusations were made against Paul.
           1. He was a babbler. According to Thayer, the term used here comes from the birds or crows picking at seeds or scraps left on the ground. It came to refer to men who would laze about the marketplace and live off the scraps the merchants dropped behind them. Thus, when applied to Paul as an empty-talker or babbler, it is an accusation of a man who certainly couldn’t make a living as a philosopher, but was merely picking up the scraps of others.

Understanding this, it seems that Luke’s comment in Acts 17:21 is not an explanation of why the Areopagus wanted to hear Paul’s defense, but Luke’s own response against the Athenian accusation of Paul. Paul was not the one who was a babbler and empty-talker sponging off of real philosophers. Instead, Luke claims that was how the Athenians and foreigners who lived there made their living and spent their days.

* + - * 1. Further, he was accused of preaching foreign deities

The word here is the one we think of as demons (used also in I Corinthians 10:20-22). In I Corinthians it is likely a play on words. To the Greeks the term referred to lesser deities, but to Christians it more closely resembles evil and unclean spirits. And in both covenants these demons are connected to idolatry (see I Corinthians 10:20-22; Deuteronomy 32:16-17).

But what is truly important about this charge is that it is the very charge for which Socrates was sentenced, tried, and executed in Athens according to Plato’s *Apology* (24 B-C). (Witherington, *Acts*, p. 515; Soards, *Speeches in Acts*, p. 96)

Luke explains the basis for this accusation saying, “—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18). Dying and resurrected gods were foreign to Greek thinking (see I Corinthians 1:23).

* + - * 1. Acts 17:19 says “they took him and brought him to the Areopagus…”

“They took him” (from ἐπιλαμβάνομαι): this can simply mean to take in a very basic and casual sense. However, it can also have an intensive sense that means to seize, even arrest.

In Acts 9:27; 23:19, it seems to have the more casual sense. Unless of course, Barnabas had to seize Paul and convince him to come with him into the apostles’ presence.

However, a string of uses surrounding Acts 17 has Paul and other’s being seized, grasped, even arrested.

“But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized (ἐπιλαβόμενοι) Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers” (Acts 16:19).

“And they all seized (ἐπιλαβόμενοι) Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal” (Acts 18:17).

“Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized (ἐπιλαβόμενοι) Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut” (Acts 21:30).

“Then the tribune came up and arrested (ἐπελάβετο) him and ordered him to be bound with two chains” (Acts 21:33).

Considering the accusations and the tenor of the accounts about people’s response to Paul’s work on these journeys suggests this taking of Paul is more than simply asking him to join them for a discussion. Paul has been seized and forcibly taken to the Areopagus.

While the Areopagus may well simply mean the hill that belonged to Mars and it may just refer to a central location for people to gather and listen to Paul, this is not likely, given the context. It is more likely Luke is referring to the Council that met and judged at this location.

Thayer says of the Areopagus: “(…*Mars’ Hill*; so called, because, as the story went, Mars, having slain Halirrhothius, son of Neptune, for the attempted violation of his daughter Alcippe, was tried for the murder here before the twelve gods as judges; Pausan. Attic. 1, 28, 5), the place where the judges convened who, by appointment of Solon, had jurisdiction of capital offences, (as wilful [sic] murder, arson, poisoning, malicious wounding, and breach of the established religious usages). The court itself was called *Areopagus* from the place where it sat…” (p. 72)

Thayer goes on to suggest Paul was brought here not to go before the Areopagus, but to be more conveniently heard by a larger number of people. However, that seems to go against the context already established.

More is going on here than simply trying to give Paul a larger audience. He is being attacked with serious charges and brought to a place of judgment. Though this may not be a trial, it is at the very least a precursor to one.

Witherington shares Winter’s assessment of Acts 17:20 that instead of simply asking for a further hearing that it could mean and should be read as “we have the power/authority to judge what this new teaching [is] being spoken by you.” (Witherington, *Acts* p. 517)

That Areopagus here refers to a council of people and not merely the hill, note in Acts 17:22 that Paul is standing in the midst of the Areopagus (a statement that often refers to being in the midst of people — Acts 1:15; 2:22; 4:7). But especially notice at the conclusion of the sermon in Acts 17:33 that Paul “went out from their midst.”

Paul is not in the middle of the hill, he is in the midst of a group of people. The Areopagus here refers to the Council so called because of where they met to pass judgment.

* + 1. Purpose: “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).
    2. Method:
       1. Paul’s opening statement is purposefully vague. The term translated “very religious” could, depending on context, be a positive statement of spirituality or a negative statement of mere superstition.
          1. You may want to note and research Witherington’s comment on this opening: “it is worth pointing out that this opening, which was capable of several interpretations, also probably allowed the speaker to avoid overtly doing what Lucian says one must not do when speaking to the Areopagus — offer complimentary exordia to secure the goodwill of this court (*De gymn.* 19).” (Ibid., p. 520)
       2. Paul defends why he does not have to measure up to any Athenian legal codes regarding introducing new “divinities” to Athens.
          1. Paul claims he is not actually introducing a new divinity. Rather, he is explaining one they already know about.

Of course, his explanation of this already known divinity is interesting and offers a backhanded critique. The Athenians only think it is a new divinity because they are actually ignorant about the deities they are already worshiping. They need Paul (the babbler) to introduce them to this deity.

* + - * 1. Paul demonstrates he does not need to build a shrine or temple to the God he is proclaiming, because this God does not dwell in temples made by the hands of men.

In fact, the God Paul declares is not even served by human hands as though He needs anything.

This is perhaps, another connection to Socrates who argued with Euthyphro whether it was possible to serve, be pious, or offer any real gifts to the gods (*Euthyphro*, 12-15). Socrates even asserts that every good thing comes from the gods.

In the context of Luke’s greater narrative, we should also note the connection to Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7:48.

* + - 1. Paul denies the pantheism of the Stoics by asserting that God is creator of every nation and their allotted boundaries. That is, God is distinct from creation and not of one substance with it.
      2. Paul makes another dig at the ignorance of the Athenians about this “unknown God” in Acts 17:27.
         1. The Athenians had been willing to simply throw up altars and shrines to “unknown gods” as if that was all that was necessary for this God they didn’t know.
         2. However, this God that they didn’t know (but Paul did) purposefully made every nation and gave them their allotted times and boundaries for the express purpose that they should seek Him.
         3. But Paul pictures the only kind of seeking the ignorant Athenians could do as blindly feeling their way to Him and groping in the dark for Him.

No doubt, Paul does not have the Hindu fable of the blind men feeling the elephant in mind. However, I can’t help but think of it here.

Only foolish polytheists are groping in the dark, trying to ascertain what the “unknown God” is like.

Paul knows this God because God has revealed Himself to Paul in Jesus Christ.

God is actually not far from each of us. The unstated directive is to quit groping in the dark and open up your eyes to see what God has revealed.

* + - 1. Paul then quotes potentially two different poets from among the Greeks.
         1. Many think “In him we live and move and have our being” comes from Epimenides of Crete. More certain is the assertion that “For we indeed are his offspring” is from Aratus’s “Phainomena.”
         2. We must not think Paul is placing his stamp of approval on all that either poet says about the divine. He is merely using statements his audience would know to assert his point. He apparently knows that to support his point with Hebrew texts would be pointless.
         3. All of this is to assert that the ignorant Athenians should have been able to determine that the true God could not really be served by men and could not really dwell in temples because He so surpasses us there is nothing we can give that will benefit Him.
         4. That is to say, all the objects of worship and the altars Paul described earlier in his speech are useless. Whatever Paul’s idea had been in Acts 17:22, he circles back now to demonstrate that the Athenians’ religion was useless.
      2. Paul claims that since man is the offspring of God, the Athenians should realize idols made of gold, silver, and stone, crafted from the imagination of man cannot possibly be God.
         1. Again, he makes a strong case against the religion he observed in Acts 17:22-23.
      3. Paul finally comes to the crux in Acts 17:30.
         1. While he was certainly beginning on some tenuous common ground in Acts 17:22-23, he ultimately demonstrates the common ground was not so common after all.
         2. They were ignorant of the truth of the “unknown God.” While God had overlooked their ignorance in the past, that would not last. He now commands all people everywhere to repent.
      4. Paul asserts, but offers no proof, that his statement about repentance is true because God has demonstrated He will judge the entire world by raising a man from the dead. The resurrection is by itself an indication that God will use that man to judge the world.
         1. Witherington says of this: “In forensic speeches there is a building toward the decision of the judges (see Quintilian, *Inst*. *Or.* 3.11.5-6), and Neyrey has pointed out that in the forensic speeches in the latter half of Acts it is always the resurrection that brings us to the ‘point of judgment.’ We are dealing, however, with deliberate irony here, for while this council is brought to decision by the raising of the issue of resurrection, Paul says that resurrection proves that his audience themselves will one day face judgment.” (Ibid., p. 530)
         2. We see here the basis for Paul’s statement in I Corinthians 4:3-4. Or perhaps in I Corinthians 4:3-4, we see the basis for why Paul can be so bold in the face of the Areopagus. If they judge him and execute him like Socrates, he’ll be resurrected.
    1. The end of Paul’s speech and reaction of his audience.
       1. The end of Paul’s speech seems abrupt.
          1. Either…

Paul was interrupted by the mocking mentioned in Acts 17:32. Or…

He purposefully stopped in order to force the hands of his judges and accusers. He refused to try to weasel his way out by placating them. He led right up to the point that got him seized and brought before this Council and then just stopped. Witherington seems to take this position and cites Kennedy’s *New Testament Interpretation* in support. (Ibid., pp. 530-531)

* + - * 1. If the first, Paul simply wasn’t given the opportunity to defend his statements.
        2. If the second, Paul was likely trying to prompt another hearing and push members of his audience to ask for more explanation.
      1. The audience’s reaction to Paul’s sermon is mixed.
         1. Paul does not receive the response Peter did on Pentecost. But neither does he receive the response Peter did when he preached to the Jewish Council.
         2. While the Council doesn’t bring him up on charges and he doesn’t have to appear before them again, he doesn’t seem to make much headway in getting them to repent.
         3. However, all is not lost. He does win at least one Areopagite or Council member, Dionysus, to the Lord, along with Damaris, obviously a woman of enough influence her name warranted mentioning. He also won the hearts and minds of some of the men and the others.
         4. It would have been enough to simply have the opportunity to share the gospel with the Council, but even more than that, the gospel message sank into some hearts and changed them.
  1. Acts 20:18-35
     1. Speaker: Paul
     2. Audience: The elders of the Ephesian church
     3. Setting: Paul was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost. However, convinced he would never see them again, Paul wanted to speak with the Ephesian elders. So, having passed Ephesus in his haste, he called the Ephesian elders to him in Miletus.
        1. I can’t help but consider the similarities between this situation and that of Jesus in Luke 13:31-35.
        2. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. Though it was Jesus’s enemies who tried to warn Him away from going to Jerusalem and for Paul it was friends, both were encouraged to abandon their journey to Jerusalem.
        3. Paul even spoke of finishing or fulfilling his course just as Jesus did.
        4. Jesus affirmed He must go to Jerusalem because He was walking resolutely toward death and a prophet could not die anywhere but Jerusalem.
        5. Paul did not know exactly what awaited him in Jerusalem. But he knew it would be imprisonment and affliction. We know, of course, that Paul did not die in Jerusalem. And yet, there is no doubt Luke is continuing the narrative theme that the Jews of that generation repeatedly demonstrate they are filling up the guilt of all the martyrs from Abel to Zechariah.
           1. They are not repenting and will likewise perish (Luke 13:3, 5).
           2. They are unwilling to be gathered to Jesus by His apostles and prophets, so their house will be left to them desolate (Luke 13:34-35). Can there be any doubt that this house makes reference to the temple that will be desolate?
     4. Purpose: “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).
     5. Method: Paul’s sermon is in two sections.
        1. Paul’s Example: Acts 20:18-25
           1. Despite tears and trials in Asia, Paul never shrank from declaring what was beneficial to his brethren.

This statement about “shrinking” is not based as we might often assert on some fear that the Christians would not accept what Paul had to say. Rather, it was based on the plots of the Jews against him. We must take care not to think we are walking in Paul’s footsteps here when we stomp the toes of our brethren. We are walking in Paul’s footsteps when we teach what is beneficial to our brethren though the world would hang us for it.

* + - * 1. Paul’s work was pervasive. He taught publicly and privately. He taught Jews and Greeks. He taught repentance and faith.
        2. The above is a defense of his present course of action.

He is going to Jerusalem despite the promise that imprisonment and affliction await him because that is how he has always lived and preached. He did not shrink back simply because Christ’s enemies might harm him.

* + - 1. Paul’s Exhortation: Acts 20:28-35
         1. Like the holy watchman of Ezekiel 3:16-21; 33:1-9, Paul is innocent because he has taught the whole counsel of God.

I have often heard that this is a statement about teaching all the nitty-gritty details of the pattern of Christ’s church, worship, and work in opposition to denominational doctrines. This may be involved. But in the context it seems more to be speaking in general terms that Paul has told these elders all they need to know to do their jobs.

The reason I say this is probably a more general term is because for most of us, we aren’t able to delve into all we consider the whole counsel of God in 20 years of preaching, but Paul was evidently able to do so in less than 3 (see Acts 19:8-10).

It is part of the exhortation section because it is the basis for the warning he now gives them. That is, as a faithful watchman who provides every warning, he is going to warn them of the dangers that lie ahead.

* + - * 1. Just as Paul is about to face hardship and struggle because of vicious wolves in his life, he warns these elders that after he is gone, they too will face dangers with fierce wolves.

Sadly, these dangers do not lie in outside attack, but will come from within. At least from within the church. Possibly from among those who are elders.

Paul encourages them to be alert as he did not cease to admonish them night and day when he lived among them.

Paul’s very action of admonishing night and day was a demonstration of watchfulness and vigilance.

* + - * 1. To this point, Paul had been the source of their edification and strength. But with his departure, he reminds them that what they really need is God and the word of His grace. That is enough to give them the inheritance among the sanctified.
        2. Acts 20:33-35 is not merely more defense of himself, but is the establishment of an example to follow.

It is interesting that Paul uses this as his example, since covetousness had been the personal sin he used as the illustration of his own Achilles’ heel in Romans 7:7-11.

But as a word of example to elders, we might remember that a qualification for elders is to be free from the love of money (I Timothy 3:3) and not greedy for gain (Titus 1:7).

Paul further speaks against those who teach for shameful gain what ought not be taught in Titus 1:11. Those who do should be soundly and sharply rebuked.

When Peter spoke to elders, in I Peter 5:2-3, he also explained that they should not do so for shameful gain.

No doubt, this warning must be so often given because elders who rule well are worthy of double honor, like the ox who should not be muzzled while treading the grain and the laborer who is worthy of his hire (I Timothy 5:17-18).

How easy it might be for someone to seek the role of elder to make it on the church’s dole.

At the same time, how easy it might be to overlook the sins of some as they bribe an elder in much the same way that judges in the Old Testament might be bribed.

Paul set a great example, following what he wrote to the Ephesians in Ephesians 4:28.

There he taught them not to steal but to labor and give to those in need.

In his farewell speech, he took it a step further saying that not only did he not steal, he didn’t even covet, but instead worked hard enough to not only support himself but even some of his companions.

Through this, his actions taught them louder than his writings, that it is better to give than to receive.

And what a wonderful turning-the-world-on-its-head example Paul set. In a society fraught with reciprocity rule, Paul dispensed with reciprocity and said that he gave for the blessing of the gift itself and not in order to receive back.

That is how elders shepherd, whether financially supported or not, for the blessing of giving and not in the mere attempt to receive.

* + 1. On preachers’ pay
       1. Preachers are laborers and as such are worthy of their wages, just as Paul was. Churches should not muzzle the ox who works among them.
       2. At the same time, preachers might forego their rights in order to teach by example the blessings of giving above receiving (see also I Corinthians 9).
       3. However, lest we get into some kind of argument about who is the better preacher, the one who is supported by the gospel so he can devote all of his working energy to the gospel or the one who supports himself with tent-making so he can set a good example, we must remember one thing.
          1. The worker is worthy of his wages. It does not say the person with a position of preacher is worthy of pay, but the worker is worthy of his wages. All joking aside, if the way you conduct your preaching work causes you to think that “tent-making” is having a real job and preaching is not, then you are doing your preaching work wrong, and you likely aren’t worthy of being paid to support your preaching anyway.
  1. Acts 22:1-21
     1. Speaker: Paul
     2. Audience: A Jewish mob that had sought to kill Paul for supposedly bringing Gentiles into the temple.
     3. Setting:
        1. Paul had traveled to Jerusalem.
        2. As had been foretold all along his trip, imprisonment and affliction were beginning.
        3. As Paul was being all things to all people, he participated in an offering for the vows of some Jewish Christians. Some Asian Jews saw Paul and assumed the Gentiles they had seen with him in the city were now with him in the temple.
        4. A mob was started. Paul was saved by the intervention of Roman soldiers.
        5. Securing permission from the Roman tribune to address the crowd, Paul presents this defense.
        6. I do not miss the irony that James’s plan to cause the believing Jews to accept Paul prompts the unbelieving Jews to attack Paul.
     4. Purpose: “Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you” (Acts 22:1).
        1. No doubt, this was all with a plan to win Jews (cf. I Corinthians 9:20).
        2. And while his goal of getting to explicitly explain the gospel may not have been realized because of the Jews’ interruption, he actually gets to preach a good bit of the gospel in his own story.
     5. Method:
        1. In Acts, we have seen textually based sermons, we have seen narrative sermons, we have seen sermons based on the experience in the moment. Here we see Paul preach based on his own conversion and experience with Jesus.
        2. Paul establishes ethos with this hostile crowd (at least enough to get them to quiet down). He does this…
           1. …by addressing them as “brothers and fathers.”
           2. …by addressing them in their own language.
           3. …by explaining his high pedigree as an educated Jew.
        3. Perhaps most amazing is the length to which Paul goes to identify with this audience who just sought to kill him. It is as if his speech begins by saying, “I was once just like you.”
           1. He is zealous for God. I use the present tense “is” because this is part of Paul’s statement beginning with “I am.” When giving the speech he is not saying he used to be zealous for God, but is presently zealous for God just like his audience.
           2. He had been so zealous as a Jew that he persecuted the Way, just as these Jews were doing on this very day.
           3. Not only had he been a persecutor, but he even persecuted this Way to death, binding and delivering men and women to prison. He had done exactly what the Jews were doing to him this very day. They had wanted to kill him, but he ended up being bound and taken to prison.
           4. Don’t take Paul’s word for it, check with the high priests and elders.
        4. But something changed Paul.
           1. If there is a secondary piece of evidence about the truth of the resurrection coming close to the empty tomb itself, it is the change of this man who went from persecutor to proclaimer.
           2. What changed Paul? The vision of the resurrected Savior, Jesus the Christ.
           3. This is something everyone in the modern world must deal with. Something happened on the road to Damascus. We cannot simply dismiss it. The change was too dramatic and too world altering. If Paul did not see the resurrected Savior on that trip, what changed him? That question must be answered by any who wish to deny Christianity and the Bible.
        5. The backdoor preaching of the gospel.
           1. Paul is not allowed to get around to explicitly proclaiming the gospel. Yet, as he tells his own story, he actually presents the gospel well.

Just as Peter had earlier accused the Jews of killing the Messiah, Paul sets himself up as a representative of the Jews who “persecuted the Way to death.” He may not have killed Jesus the Way, but he killed the body of Jesus, those who were worshipping according to the Way. He was guilty.

This also connects to Gamaliel’s warning in Acts 5:38-39. The Way was of God and Paul had found himself opposing God.

That is exactly what these Jews who were so zealous for God were also doing.

Just as he had often directly proclaimed that Jesus was resurrected, here he indirectly proclaims it by describing his vision of the Lord after the Lord had died. He is a witness and is giving testimony of what he saw — the resurrected Christ.

Just as Peter had told the Council that the apostles couldn’t help but testify to what they had seen and heard (Acts 4:20), Paul was now testifying to what he had seen and heard (Acts 22:15).

If Paul, who had persecuted the Way to death could be forgiven and have his sins washed away in baptism, couldn’t every Jew do the same? (cf. 1 Tim. 1:12-16).

Who knows how many people in this crowd heard Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 or if they did, could remember all that he said.

But we, reading Acts, and Theophilus, reading it, can remember. Notice how Paul’s statement ties in with Acts 2:21, 38.

* + - 1. Christianity is a religion for Jews.
         1. Before Paul tries to explain why he teaches Gentiles, he is very explicit that Christianity is a religion for Jews.

He describes his own strictness and commitment to Judaism.

He explains that the man who taught him the gospel, Ananias, was devout according to the Law and was well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there.

* + - 1. Paul’s defense for teaching Gentiles.
         1. Paul actually explains that he understands why these Jews don’t like him, why they won’t accept him or his testimony.
         2. Paul had not merely been a nominal Jew. He had been a big-namer. His conversion was not a minor thing. It was a huge betrayal to the Jews.
         3. Paul’s defense of going to the Gentiles is twofold.

Subtly, he had to go to the Gentiles because both he and God knew the Jews would rarely listen to him.

But more blatantly, the God of his fathers, for whom Paul was exceedingly zealous just like the Jews he was talking to, had told him to. It wasn’t his plan. It was God’s plan.

* + - 1. The interruption.
         1. No amount of ethos development or appeal to God would be heard by the Jews.
         2. If Paul was going to go to Gentiles, he deserved to die. They quit listening.
  1. Acts 24:10-21
     1. Speaker: Paul
     2. Audience: Governor Felix, Tertullus, some of the elders, and Ananias the high priest.
     3. Setting: Having been removed from Jerusalem and sent to Caesarea because of a plot on his life, Paul is brought before Felix the governor in order to defend himself against the Jews. After the spokesman for the Jews presents his case, Paul gets to make his defense.
        1. Tertullus had accused Paul of…
           1. …stirring up riots throughout the world.
           2. …being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.
           3. …profaning the temple.
     4. Method:
        1. Paul begins with the cordial address of respect and ethos toward Felix. He is cheerful to be in Felix’s court.
        2. Paul then denies most of the charges.
           1. He was not disputing with anyone.
           2. He was not stirring up a crowd.
           3. They cannot prove that he was profaning the temple.
        3. But he concedes one charge.
           1. He does worship according to the Way which his accusers call a sect.
        4. The gospel in microcosm.
           1. As with his defense before the crowd, Paul doesn’t get to make a formal declaration of the gospel, but he brings it in via the backdoor of his personal defense.

What he believes and practices is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.

There is a resurrection. (Though he doesn’t here mention the resurrection of Jesus, as part of the greater narrative of Acts, we can’t forget it).

So, he must live with a good conscience. The upshot of this is that anyone with a bad conscience will need to change, that is repent.

* + - 1. Paul returns to his defense.
         1. Paul was not profaning the temple, but was purified in the temple.
         2. Finally, this whole case should be thrown out because the ones who really had a problem with him and had really accused him were not even present — the Jews from Asia.
      2. Paul’s final statement.
         1. As if summing up the preaching in the book of Acts, Paul boils the whole thing down to the statement he cried out before the Council.
         2. “It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day” (Acts 24:21).

Paul is not the only one on trial. Resurrection is on trial.

He is on trial because the Sadducees literally don’t believe in resurrection.

He is on trial because the Pharisees practically don’t believe in the resurrection. For all their claim to believe, when it actually happens, they deny it tooth and toenail.

At the same time, the reason Paul is willing to stand trial is because he believes in the resurrection. That is, he is willing to put his life on the line for Jesus because he knows that death at the hands of these men will not end his life.

* 1. Acts 26:2-29
     1. Speaker: Paul
     2. Audience: The governor Festus, King Agrippa and his wife Berenice, military tribunes, and prominent men of the city.
     3. Setting:
        1. Felix had put off his decision regarding Paul for two years.
        2. When Festus replaced him, Paul was still imprisoned.
        3. The Jews made another run at trying to get Paul moved to Jerusalem so they could kill him. But Paul appealed to Caesar.
        4. Now Festus is between a rock and a hard place. He is obligated to send Paul to Caesar, but he has nothing of substance to say about why.
        5. He seeks Agrippa’s advice on the matter. Before Agrippa will give advice, he wants to hear Paul’s defense. Festus gives Paul his opportunity.
        6. Interestingly, Paul essentially ignores this setting.
        7. Of course, it is not a trial per se. But this whole interaction is set up with a trial in view. Festus wants something political to say to Caesar to justify this fool’s errand of sending a man who he knows has done nothing wrong to Caesar.
        8. Paul does not give him anything to sink his teeth into. He provides no political defense.
        9. He merely takes the opportunity to preach the gospel to King Agrippa.
     4. Purpose: “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains” (Acts 26:29).
     5. Method:
        1. Witherington says of the threefold telling of Paul’s conversion (Acts 9, 22, 26): “Attention must be given to the fact that these speeches occur in a literary work, and so their effect is intended to be cumulative. That is, Luke does not include all the details he wishes to convey in any one telling of the story, but adds fresh details in the accounts subsequent to Acts 9, not merely for the sake of stylistic variation but so that there is a cumulative effect on the hearer. The full picture is not gained until one has heard Acts 26.” (Witherington, *Acts*, pp. 665-666)
        2. Though this presentation of Paul’s story is longer and more detailed in some respects, there is really very little to be said that wasn’t explained while reviewing the sermon in Acts 22.
        3. Though differing in some details, telescoping and compressing so that, for instance, Ananias’s involvement is removed because that detail is not nearly as important while talking to an almost sympathetic Agrippa as it was to the hostile Jewish crowd, Paul’s defense of his actions are the same.
           1. He was a devout Jew who persecuted Christians.
           2. He had a heavenly vision of the resurrected Savior which commissioned him to preach to the Gentiles.
           3. He obeyed the commission.
        4. This sermon explains what all the preaching of Acts boils down to.
           1. “Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?” (Acts 26:8).

This is what it is all about. Jesus was raised from the dead. If folks really believed in an all-powerful God, why is it so hard to believe He exerted this power?

Interestingly, it seems to be this teaching of resurrection repeated in Acts 26:23 that prompted Festus’s outburst that Paul was losing his mind.

* + - * 1. “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets?”

Again and again, the statement is that the suffering, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus does not contradict the prophets but fulfills them.

The choice is before Agrippa, Theophilus, and all of us. Will we believe the prophets or won’t we?

The final reminder is in. And it should be even clearer for us than it was for Agrippa. The Law and the Prophets were pointing to something. Let’s consider our choices. They were either pointing to Jesus or to Rabbinic Judaism. Which is a greater fulfillment of the grand promises of covenant and life?

* + - * 1. “For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.”

And this statement has become increasingly true of Christianity.

The story of Jesus and the religion that sprang from Him is not that of a mystery cult shrouded in secret that flared and then faded into oblivion.

It is the story of a man who broke upon the scene with wonders and signs that could not be denied. It was followed by men who were changed in ways that could not be denied. And it changed the world in ways that cannot be denied.

We cannot sweep it under the rug, whether we are Agrippa or Festus. We cannot laugh it off. We cannot make silly statements like Jesus is a good man or the Bible is a nice book or the gospel message of both is a decent message.

The claims of Christianity must be dealt with and answers must be given for how all of these things developed if they did not develop the way the Gospel and Acts claim they did.

* + - * 1. “…that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.”

Paul set the example. He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

If we believe the prophets and believe the resurrection, we must recognize that Jesus is Lord, Christ, and Judge.

We must surrender to His lead, walking by the light He shines.

* + - * 1. “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except these chains.”

For men who have pursued this study to see a paradigm for our preaching, this is the message.

Do we long to see everyone just as we are—free in Christ?

* + 1. Paul as an example for the Jews
       1. In this final defense, we truly see Paul as an example for the Jews to follow.
       2. He persecuted and killed the Way.
       3. He deserved judgment from God. A judgment promised again and again throughout Acts. A judgment that was going to come at the hand of the Gentiles.
       4. He was given the opportunity to repent.
       5. He took it.
       6. God delivered Paul not only from his own people, but from the Gentiles and he stood before both small and great because of the help he received from God.
       7. This could be all the Jews if they would simply heed the message of faith and repentance that started in Acts 2 and has been repeated all the way through Acts. Paul is the perfect example of it working.
  1. Acts 28:25-28
     1. Speaker: Paul
     2. Audience: Local leaders of the Jews in Rome.
     3. Setting:
        1. Having finally arrived in Rome, Paul is under house arrest and free to visit with any who will come.
        2. He sends for the local leaders of the Jews there. They admit that they know nothing about Paul himself, but that they want to hear his take on this sect because they know it is spoken against everywhere.
        3. Paul’s main preaching is not recorded, but we know that as usual, it was met with mixed reviews. Some accepted and some rejected.
        4. This is Paul’s concluding statement to the Jews, the majority of whom, it must be conceded were rejecting the message. And it is essentially Luke’s concluding statement in the book of Acts.
     4. Purpose: “Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen” (Acts 28:28).
     5. Method:
        1. In the first missionary sermon in Acts, Peter pointed out that the promise of salvation was made to his audience who were the fathers and it also applied to their children. In this final sermon, Paul says the promise that was made to his audience’s fathers applied to these their true children.
        2. He simply quotes Scripture: Isaiah 6:9-10.
        3. On the surface, Paul is simply explaining that just like their fathers, these Jews were hearing a great message but refusing to understand. They were seeing great things, but they were refusing to grasp and perceive.
        4. Underneath the surface, Luke is concluding with the ultimate message of judgment on the Jews.
           1. In Isaiah 6:11, Isaiah asked how long he should go and say this to the people.
           2. In Isaiah 6:11-13, God’s answer was, “Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the Lord removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.”
           3. How long would Paul and his preaching brethren preach this message? Until Jerusalem lay waste and no people could visit the house in Jerusalem.
           4. Judgment is coming on the Jews. And we know that it came.
        5. But praise the Lord, men like Theophilus would hear and understand. They would see and perceive. The Gentiles will listen.
        6. And we are still listening.

**Conclusion:**

1. If nothing else, I hope the sheer size of this outline and presentation demonstrates that preaching is important to New Testament Christianity, even if preaching doesn’t simply equal sermonizing.
   1. Let’s return to an earlier quote from Witherington: “Something needs to be said at this juncture about why Luke has proportionally so much *more* speech material in his history than Herodotus, Tacitus, Josephus, Polybius, or Thucydides, for example. This is because Luke is chronicling a historical movement that was carried forward in the main by evangelistic preaching.” (Witherington, *Acts*, p. 118)
   2. We are part of a historical movement that is carried forward by preaching and carried in the direction of its preaching. If we want the movement to continue to be carried forward, we must continue preaching, and we must continue preaching in the right direction.

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1. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version, Text Edition 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Remember that Pickup uses the term “midrash” in a limited and well-defined sense of “an exegetical methodology characterized by non-grammatical-historical interpretations that often read OT words or phrases in new contexts drawn from other portions of divine revelation.” (*JETS*, p 355) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)