

COOPERATING WITH THE HEAVENLY MINISTRY OF THE ASCENDED CHRIST

(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Four

Propagating the Resurrected Christ under the Heavenly Ministry of the Ascended Christ

MR *Hymns* 132, 26

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32-36; 3:15; 5:30-32; 8:4, 12; 13:1-4

- Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
- Acts 1:22 Beginning from the baptism of John until the day on which He was taken up from us, one of these should become a witness of His resurrection with us.
- Acts 2:32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses.
- Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.
- Acts 2:34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand
- Acts 2:35 Until I set Your enemies as a footstool for Your feet."
- Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.
- Acts 3:15 And the Author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.
- Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers has raised Jesus, whom you slew by hanging Him on a tree.
- Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
- Acts 5:32 And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.
- Acts 8:4 Those therefore who were scattered went throughout the land announcing the word as the gospel.
- Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip, who announced the gospel of the kingdom of God and of the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.
- Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
- Acts 13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.
- Acts 13:3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.
- Acts 13:4 They then, having been sent out by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed away to Cyprus.

I. The book of Acts reveals a resurrected and ascended Christ who is in the heavens—1:3, 9-11, 22; 2:32-36:

- Acts 1:3 To whom also He presented Himself alive after His suffering by many irrefutable proofs, appearing to them through a period of forty days and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God.
- Acts 1:9 And when He had said these things, while they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him away from their sight.
- Acts 1:10 And while they were looking intently into heaven as He went, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them,
- Acts 1:11 Who also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you beheld Him going into heaven.
- Acts 1:22 Beginning from the baptism of John until the day on which He was taken up from us, one of these should become a witness of His resurrection with us.
- Acts 2:32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses.
- Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of

- the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.
- Acts 2:34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand
- Acts 2:35 Until I set Your enemies as a footstool for Your feet."
- Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.
- A. The Lord's living and ministry in the heavens are the content of the book of Acts.
- B. The Lord's ascension was His initiation into His living and ministry in the heavens—5:31:
- Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
1. This initiation brought Him into a new realm, that is, into the heavens where He now has His living and His ministry.
 2. The book of Acts reveals that the resurrected and ascended Christ is now living in the heavens and ministering there.
- C. Christ's ascension was God's exaltation of Him—2:33-36; 5:31:
- Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.
- Acts 2:34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand
- Acts 2:35 Until I set Your enemies as a footstool for Your feet."
- Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.
- Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
1. The Lord was made Lord, the Lord of all to possess all, and He was made Christ, God's Anointed, to carry out God's commission—2:36; 10:36; Heb. 1:9:

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.

Acts 10:36 The word which He sent to the sons of Israel in announcing the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ (this One is Lord of all)

Heb 1:9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of exultant joy above Your partners";

 - a. As God, the Lord was the Lord all the time (Luke 1:43), but as man, He was made the Lord in His ascension after He brought His humanity into God in His resurrection.

Luke 1:43 And how has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
 - b. As God's sent and anointed One, He was Christ from the time that He was born (2:11; Matt. 1:16; 16:16; John 1:41), but as such a One, He was also officially made the Christ of God in His ascension.

Luke 2:11 Because today a Savior has been born to you in David's city, who is Christ the Lord.

Matt 1:16 And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

Matt 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

John 1:41 He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, We have found the Messiah (which translated means Christ).
 2. God exalted Christ "to His right hand as Leader and Savior"—Acts 5:31:

Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

 - a. The ascended Christ is the Leader, the Originator, the Author, and the Inaugurator—3:15; Heb. 2:10; 12:2:

Acts 3:15 And the Author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead, of

- which we are witnesses.
- Heb 2:10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.
- Heb 12:2 Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.
- 1) His being the Leader is a matter related to His authority—Matt. 28:18.
 Matt 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
 - 2) He rules sovereignly over the earth with His authority so that the environment may be fit for God’s chosen people to receive His salvation—Acts 17:26-27; John 17:2.
 Acts 17:26 And He made from one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, determining beforehand their appointed seasons and the boundaries of their dwelling,
 Acts 17:27 That they might seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, even though He is not far from each one of us;
 John 17:2 Even as You have given Him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him.
- b. The One God has exalted to His right hand is also the Savior—Acts 5:31:
 Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
- 1) Jesus’ incarnation made Him a man, His human living qualified Him to be man’s Savior, His crucifixion accomplished full redemption for man, His resurrection vindicated His redemptive work, and His exaltation inaugurated Him to be the ruling Leader so that He might be the Savior.
 - 2) We were saved by the Christ on the throne, by the One in glory—3:13; Luke 24:26; Heb. 2:9; Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-11:
 Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.
 Luke 24:26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into His glory?
 Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little inferior to the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of everything.
 Eph 1:20 Which He caused to operate in Christ in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies,
 Eph 1:21 Far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come;
 Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
 Phil 2:9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
 Phil 2:10 That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
 Phil 2:11 And every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.
- a) When we were saved, we were seated with Him in the heavenlies—Eph. 2:6.
 Eph 2:6 And raised us up together with Him and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus,
 - b) Christ saved us from the throne and to the throne; this is the ascended Christ as our Savior.

II. In order to cooperate with the heavenly ministry of the ascended Christ for the propagation of the resurrected Christ, we need to know the intrinsic significance of the book of Acts:

- A. The book of Acts is a record of a group of people who are resurrected and ascended with Christ, having Christ within them as their life and Christ upon them as their power and authority; they live by the Triune God within them as their life, and they act by the Triune God upon them as their strength, power, and authority—John 20:22; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8.
- John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.
- Luke 24:49 And behold, I send forth the promise of My Father upon you; but as for you, stay in the city until you put on power from on high.
- Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
- B. Acts is a record of a group of people who act and work in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body—v. 14; 13:1-4:
- Acts 1:14 These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.
- Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
- Acts 13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.
- Acts 13:3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.
- Acts 13:4 They then, having been sent out by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed away to Cyprus.
1. Acts reveals the move and activity of the Body, not of individual actions unrelated to the Body—8:1-17.
- Acts 8:1 And Saul approved of his killing. And there occurred in that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and all were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.
- Acts 8:2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him.
- Acts 8:3 But Saul was devastating the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he delivered them to prison.
- Acts 8:4 Those therefore who were scattered went throughout the land announcing the word as the gospel.
- Acts 8:5 And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ to them.
- Acts 8:6 And the crowds gave heed with one accord to the things said by Philip as they heard and saw the signs which he did.
- Acts 8:7 For with many of those who had unclean spirits, the spirits came out crying with a loud voice; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.
- Acts 8:8 And there was much joy in that city.
- Acts 8:9 And a certain man named Simon had previously been practicing magic in the city and had been amazing the people of Samaria, saying that he was someone great.
- Acts 8:10 To him they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the power of God which is called Great.
- Acts 8:11 And they gave heed to him because for a considerable time he had amazed them with his magic.
- Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip, who announced the gospel of the kingdom of God and of the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.
- Acts 8:13 And even Simon himself believed, and once he had been baptized, he continued steadfastly with Philip. And as he beheld the signs and great works of power taking place, he was amazed.

- Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John,
- Acts 8:15 Who went down and prayed for them so that they might receive the Holy Spirit;
- Acts 8:16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them, but they had only been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.
- Acts 8:17 Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
2. Acts contains a beautiful picture of the one accord in the activities and work of the believers who move in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body—2:44-47; 4:24, 32; 13:1-4; 16:1-5.
- Acts 2:44 And all those who believed were together and had all things common;
- Acts 2:45 And they sold their properties and possessions and divided them to all, as anyone had need.
- Acts 2:46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and simplicity of heart,
- Acts 2:47 Praising God and having grace with all the people. And the Lord added together day by day those who were being saved.
- Acts 4:24 And when they heard this, they lifted up their voice with one accord to God and said, Sovereign Master, You are the One who has made heaven and earth and the sea and all things in them,
- Acts 4:32 And the heart and soul of the multitude of those who had believed was one; and not even one said that any of his possessions was his own, but all things were common to them.
- Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
- Acts 13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.
- Acts 13:3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.
- Acts 13:4 They then, having been sent out by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed away to Cyprus.
- Acts 16:1 And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple named Timothy was there, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but of a Greek father;
- Acts 16:2 He was well attested to by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium.
- Acts 16:3 Paul wanted this one to go forth with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.
- Acts 16:4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.
- Acts 16:5 And so the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily.
- C. The book of Acts shows us the divine stream, the unique flow; there is only one stream, one current, of the flow—Gen. 2:8-12; Rev. 22:1-2; Acts 2:33.
- Gen 2:8 And Jehovah God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there He put the man whom He had formed.
- Gen 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- Gen 2:10 And a river went forth from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divided and became four branches.
- Gen 2:11 The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that goes around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.
- Gen 2:12 And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there.
- Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.
- Rev 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.

D. In Acts there is a group of people who know the meaning of resurrection and ascension, who live by Christ as their life, who act by Christ as their power and authority, and who realize that they are the Body and act in the Body and for the Body in the one divine stream; this is the intrinsic significance of the book of Acts—John 20:22; Acts 1:8-11, 14; 2:1-4, 24, 32-33; 4:33.

John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 1:9 And when He had said these things, while they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him away from their sight.

Acts 1:10 And while they were looking intently into heaven as He went, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them,

Acts 1:11 Who also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you beheld Him going into heaven.

Acts 1:14 These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Acts 2:1 And as the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled, they were all together in the same place.

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there was a sound out of heaven, as of a rushing violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which were distributed; and it sat on each one of them;

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, even as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth.

Acts 2:24 Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, since it was not possible for Him to be held by it.

Acts 2:32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses.

Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.

Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles gave testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

III. To carry out His heavenly ministry for the propagating of Himself so that the kingdom of God might be established for the building up of the churches as His fullness, the ascended Christ uses not a group of preachers trained by man's teaching to do a preaching work but a body of His witnesses, who bear a living testimony of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ—1:8:

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

A. In His ascension the Lord carries out His ministry in the heavens through these witnesses, in His resurrection life and with His ascension power and authority, as recorded in Acts, to spread Himself as the development of the kingdom of God from Jerusalem unto the uttermost part of the earth—1:8:

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

1. Testifying requires experiences of seeing and enjoyment concerning the Lord or spiritual things; it is different from merely teaching—2:40.
 Acts 2:40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved from this crooked generation.
 2. Paul was appointed as a minister and a witness—26:16:
 Acts 26:16 But rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you;
 - a. A minister is for the ministry; a witness, for the testimony.
 - b. The ministry is related mainly to the work, to what a minister does; a testimony is related to the person, to what a witness is.
- B. The Lord's resurrection was the focus of the apostles' testimony—1:22; 2:32; 3:13, 15, 26; 10:39-40; 13:33; 17:3, 18:
- Acts 1:22 Beginning from the baptism of John until the day on which He was taken up from us, one of these should become a witness of His resurrection with us.
- Acts 2:32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses.
- Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.
- Acts 3:15 And the Author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.
- Acts 3:26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant, has sent Him to bless you in turning each of you away from your wicked deeds.
- Acts 10:39 And we are witnesses of all the things which He did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom also they did away with by hanging Him on a tree.
- Acts 10:40 This One, God raised on the third day; and He has made Him manifest,
- Acts 13:33 That God has fully fulfilled this promise to us their children in raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, "You are My Son; today I have begotten You."
- Acts 17:3 Opening and setting before them that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, and saying, This is the Christ, the Jesus whom I announce to you.
- Acts 17:18 And some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also confronted him. And some said, What would this babbler wish to say? And others, He seems to be an announcer of foreign deities-because he was announcing Jesus and the resurrection as the gospel.
1. God glorified His Servant Jesus through His resurrection and in His ascension—Luke 24:46; Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-11; Acts 3:13, 15, 26; 4:10, 33; 5:30-31.

Luke 24:46 And He said to them, Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise up from the dead on the third day,

Eph 1:20 Which He caused to operate in Christ in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies,

Eph 1:21 Far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come;

Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

Phil 2:9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

Phil 2:10 That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

Phil 2:11 And every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.

Acts 3:15 And the Author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

Acts 3:26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant, has sent Him to bless you in turning each of you away from your wicked deeds.

- Acts 4:10 Let it be known to you all and to all the people of Israel that in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified and whom God has raised from the dead, in this name this man stands before you in good health.
- Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles gave testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.
- Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers has raised Jesus, whom you slew by hanging Him on a tree.
- Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
2. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus points back to His incarnation, humanity, human living on the earth, and God-ordained death; and His resurrection points forward to His ascension, ministry and administration in heaven, and coming back—2:23; 1:9-11.
- Acts 2:23 This man, delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you, through the hand of lawless men, nailed to a cross and killed;
- Acts 1:9 And when He had said these things, while they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him away from their sight.
- Acts 1:10 And while they were looking intently into heaven as He went, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them,
- Acts 1:11 Who also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you beheld Him going into heaven.
3. The Lord is both God and resurrection, possessing the indestructible life—John 1:1; 11:25; Heb. 7:16; Acts 2:24:
- John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;
- Heb 7:16 Who has been appointed not according to the law of a fleshy commandment but according to the power of an indestructible life.
- Acts 2:24 Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, since it was not possible for Him to be held by it.
- a. Since He is such an ever-living One, death is not able to hold Him.
- b. He delivered Himself to death, but death had no way to detain Him; rather, death was defeated by Him, and He rose up from it—Rev. 1:18.
- Rev 1:18 And the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever; and I have the keys of death and of Hades.
4. The apostles were witnesses of the resurrected Christ, not only in word but also by their life and action, especially bearing witness of His resurrection; bearing witness of Christ's resurrection is the crucial point, the focus, in carrying out God's New Testament economy—Acts 2:32; 4:33; 10:39-40; 17:3.
- Acts 2:32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses.
- Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles gave testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.
- Acts 10:39 And we are witnesses of all the things which He did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom also they did away with by hanging Him on a tree.
- Acts 10:40 This One, God raised on the third day; and He has made Him manifest,
- Acts 17:3 Opening and setting before them that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, and saying, This is the Christ, the Jesus whom I announce to you.

IV. Our cooperation with the ascended Christ for the propagation of the resurrected Christ is a move in life for the spread of the gospel—8:26-29; 9:10-11; 10:1-3, 9-22:

- Acts 8:26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, Rise up and go south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is the desert route.

- Acts 8:27 And he rose up and went. And behold, an Ethiopian man, a eunuch, a man in power under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, had come to Jerusalem to worship.
- Acts 8:28 And he was returning and was sitting in his chariot and reading the prophet Isaiah.
- Acts 8:29 And the Spirit said to Philip, Approach and join this chariot.
- Acts 9:10 And there was a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.
- Acts 9:11 And the Lord said to him, Rise up and go to the lane called Straight, and seek in the house of Judas a man from Tarsus named Saul; for behold, he is praying;
- Acts 10:1 Now there was in Caesarea a certain man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort,
- Acts 10:2 Devout and one who feared God with all his household, giving many alms to the people and beseeching God continually.
- Acts 10:3 He saw clearly in a vision around the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him and saying to him, Cornelius.
- Acts 10:9 And on the next day as they were journeying and drawing near to the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray around the sixth hour.
- Acts 10:10 And he became very hungry and wanted to eat. And while they were preparing, a trance came upon him;
- Acts 10:11 And he beheld heaven opened, and a certain vessel like a great sheet descending, being let down by four corners onto the earth,
- Acts 10:12 In which were all the four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth and birds of heaven.
- Acts 10:13 And a voice came to him: Rise up, Peter; slay and eat!
- Acts 10:14 But Peter said, By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything common and unclean.
- Acts 10:15 And a voice came to him again a second time: The things that God has cleansed, do not make common.
- Acts 10:16 And this occurred three times; and immediately the vessel was taken up into heaven.
- Acts 10:17 Now as Peter was utterly perplexed in himself as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made diligent inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate.
- Acts 10:18 And they called out and inquired whether Simon, who is surnamed Peter, was lodging there.
- Acts 10:19 And while Peter was pondering over the vision, the Spirit said to him, Behold, there are three men seeking you.
- Acts 10:20 But rise up, go down and go with them, doubting nothing, because I have sent them.
- Acts 10:21 And Peter went down to the men and said, Behold, I am he whom you seek; what is the cause for which you have come?
- Acts 10:22 And they said, Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous man and one who fears God and is well attested to by the whole nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear words from you.
- A. This move in life corresponds to the Lord's heavenly ministry in His ascension.
- B. In Acts 8, 9, and 10 the Lord moved His disciples outwardly for the preaching of the gospel; He was ministering in the heavens to move some of His disciples:
Acts 8, 9, 10 be omitted.
1. In response to the Lord's heavenly ministry, Philip left Jerusalem for Gaza (8:26); this was the corresponding on Philip's side to move in life for the preaching of the gospel.
Acts 8:26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, Rise up and go south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is the desert route.
 2. In Acts 9 there was a marvelous triangle of Christ ministering in the heavens, with Ananias and Saul corresponding to it on earth.
Acts 9 be omitted.
 3. In Acts 10 Peter cooperated with the Lord to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.
Acts 10 be omitted.
- C. This is the proper gospel preaching as a move in life under the heavenly ministry of Christ—5:42; 8:4, 12; 10:36; 11:20; 13:32:
Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ.

- Acts 8:4 Those therefore who were scattered went throughout the land announcing the word as the gospel.
- Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip, who announced the gospel of the kingdom of God and of the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.
- Acts 10:36 The word which He sent to the sons of Israel in announcing the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ (this One is Lord of all)
- Acts 11:20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and spoke also to the Greeks, announcing the Lord Jesus as the gospel.
- Acts 13:32 And we announce to you the gospel of the promise made to the fathers,
1. Christ as the Head exercised His headship to move His disciples here and there, and they were on the alert, responding to His ministry from the heavens—11:1-18.
 - Acts 11:1 And the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.
 - Acts 11:2 And when Peter went up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision disputed with him,
 - Acts 11:3 Saying, You went in to men who are uncircumcised and ate with them.
 - Acts 11:4 And Peter began, and he explained to them in sequence, saying,
 - Acts 11:5 I was in the city of Joppa praying, and I saw in a trance a vision, a certain vessel like a great sheet descending, being let down by four corners out of heaven; and it came unto me.
 - Acts 11:6 Looking intently into it, I examined it and saw the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the reptiles and the birds of heaven.
 - Acts 11:7 And I also heard a voice saying to me, Rise up, Peter; slay and eat!
 - Acts 11:8 But I said, By no means, Lord, for no common or unclean thing has ever entered into my mouth.
 - Acts 11:9 And a voice answered a second time out of heaven, The things that God has cleansed, do not make common.
 - Acts 11:10 And this occurred three times, and everything was drawn up again into heaven.
 - Acts 11:11 And behold, at that moment three men stood at the house in which we were, having been sent from Caesarea to me.
 - Acts 11:12 And the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. And these six brothers went with me also; and we entered into the man's house.
 - Acts 11:13 And he reported to us how he saw the angel standing in his house and saying, Send men to Joppa and send for Simon, who is surnamed Peter,
 - Acts 11:14 Who will speak words to you by which you shall be saved, you and all your house.
 - Acts 11:15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as also on us in the beginning.
 - Acts 11:16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, John baptized in water, but you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit.
 - Acts 11:17 If therefore God has given to them the equal gift as also to us who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could have forbidden God?
 - Acts 11:18 And when they heard these things, they became silent and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also God has given repentance unto life.
 2. The preaching of the gospel in the Lord's recovery should be like this: a prevailing move in life, corresponding to Christ's heavenly ministry under His headship—1:8; 2:32-36; 5:30-32; 13:1-4; Eph. 1:22-23.
 - Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
 - Acts 2:32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses.
 - Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.
 - Acts 2:34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand
 - Acts 2:35 Until I set Your enemies as a footstool for Your feet."
 - Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.

- Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers has raised Jesus, whom you slew by hanging Him on a tree.
- Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
- Acts 5:32 And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.
- Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
- Acts 13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.
- Acts 13:3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.
- Acts 13:4 They then, having been sent out by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed away to Cyprus.
- Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
- Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE POSITION OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Gospels present a completed Redeemer and His accomplished redemption. In Acts we have the propagation of the completed Redeemer and His accomplished redemption for the producing of the churches. Then in the Epistles we have the edifying of the believers and the building up of the churches.

THE PROPAGATION OF THE RESURRECTED CHRIST

Having seen the position of the book of Acts, let us now go on to see the subject of this book. The subject of Acts is the propagation of the resurrected Christ in His ascension, by the Spirit, through the disciples, for the producing of the churches—the kingdom of God. Acts is concerned with the propagation of the resurrected Christ. Christ is carrying out this propagation in His ascension, by the Spirit, and through the disciples. The purpose of Christ's propagation is the producing of the churches—the kingdom of God.

In Acts there is not a single verse that can be taken as a summary of the entire book. The best way to present a summary, or extract, of Acts is to describe its subject. Therefore, once again I would point out that the subject of the book of Acts concerns the propagation of the resurrected Christ. It is of great value for us to have such a phrase as *the propagation of the resurrected Christ*. I do not know of any book on Acts that uses the word *propagation*. Nevertheless, the subject of Acts is the propagation of the resurrected Christ in His ascension, by the Spirit, through the disciples, for the producing of the churches—the kingdom of God.

The propagation in Acts is not the propagation of Jesus. In Acts we do not have the propagation merely of the One who lived in the home of a carpenter in Nazareth. Rather, in Acts we see the propagation of the resurrected One, the propagation of the resurrected Christ.

CHRIST'S ACTIVITY IN HIS ASCENSION

The propagation of the resurrected Christ is carried out by Christ in His ascension. The Lord Jesus lived on earth for thirty-three and a half years, but now He is in ascension. In His ascension the Lord is very active. We should never think that the ascended Christ is sitting passively on the throne, observing the pitiful situation on earth and feeling disappointed about it. No, in His ascension Christ is active in a very positive way. As the ascended One, He is now doing many things.

The case of the stoning of Stephen is an illustration of Christ's activity in His ascension.

Speaking of Stephen, Acts 7:55 and 56 say, “Being full of the Holy Spirit, he looked intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” As the Lord was looking at the situation on earth in His ascension, He stood up. Perhaps He was saying, “You persecutors may stone Stephen and put him to death. But I will gain one of you—Saul of Tarsus—and make him much stronger than Stephen. What can you do about this? You do your stoning, and I do My observing. Wait for a period of time, and you will be defeated.” Stephen’s case illustrates that the resurrected Christ is very active in His ascension.

The fact that Christ is now in ascension means not only that He is in the heavens; it also means that He has power and authority. In His ascension Christ has all the power and all the authority in the universe. According to Matthew 28:18, the resurrected Christ said to His disciples, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Therefore, with such authority and power in His ascension the Lord is very active. What is He doing? The Lord, as the ascended One, is carrying out His universal and eternal propagation.

Who can explain why the earth today is filled with Christians? Why are there so many believers in the world? Great men have tried to gain control of the earth, but they have failed. Hitler, for example, tried to do this, but eventually he lost everything. Napoleon, after he had been defeated, reportedly looked up to the heavens and confessed that Jesus had beaten him. Napoleon admitted that even though the Lord Jesus did not fight, He gained everything. The point here is that the whole earth is in the hands of the undefeatable One, and this One is carrying out His propagation.

As the ascended Christ is carrying out His propagation, His main work is not fighting. Instead of fighting, the ascended Lord’s work is mainly propagating Himself throughout the earth. In the Lord’s recovery we have people of different colors: black, white, brown, yellow, and red. We all are part of Christ’s propagation. We have been produced by the resurrected Christ in His ascension.

PRODUCING THE CHURCHES—THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Propagation is a matter of production. To propagate, therefore, is to produce. The propagation of the resurrected Christ in His ascension produces the churches. The churches are the produce of the resurrected Christ in His ascension. Hence, the churches are the produce of Christ’s propagation. The first mention of the word *church* in Acts is in 5:11. Thereafter, this book speaks of the church many times (8:1, 3; 9:31; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3, 4, 22, 41; 16:5; 18:22; 20:17, 28).

The churches produced by the resurrected Christ in His ascension are the kingdom of God. Concerning the kingdom, we should not follow the teachings of those who claim that the kingdom of God is not present today. According to such teachings, the kingdom has been suspended and will come after the church age. In the book of Acts we see that the churches and the kingdom of God go together. In fact, the churches actually are the kingdom of God. In Acts the kingdom of God is first mentioned in 1:3, and then in a number of other verses (8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

By now we should be impressed with the subject of the book of Acts, a book that stands as the backbone of the New Testament. Acts unveils Christ in His ascension propagating Himself to produce the churches, which are the kingdom of God on earth today. Following the book of Acts, we have the Epistles. The Epistles, as the continuation of Acts, edify the saints so that the churches may be fully built up as the Body of Christ. The consummation of this edifying and building up will be the New Jerusalem. If we see the place occupied by the book of Acts in the New Testament, we shall realize that this book, the backbone of the New Testament, stands in a crucial position.

A WORK IN ASCENSION

We have emphasized the fact that the subject of Acts is the propagation of the resurrected Christ in His ascension, by the Spirit, through the disciples, for the producing of the churches—the kingdom of God. We have seen something concerning the propagation of the resurrected Christ (2:24; 3:15;

5:30; 13:33). Now we need to see that this propagation is carried out by the Lord from the throne in the heavens. This means that His work of propagation is in ascension. However, much of today's so-called Christian work is not a work in ascension. We hope that the work in the Lord's recovery will be in His ascension. The ascension is the nature and the sphere of the Lord's work on earth. Therefore, the work of the Lord today should have a heavenly nature and should be in a heavenly sphere.

It is in His ascension that Christ is propagating Himself. We know that His ascension came after His death and resurrection. Christ's work in His ascension takes place in the nature of His resurrection. Therefore, this work is not natural; it does not have anything of the natural man. Rather, it is of the divine life in resurrection, and it is carried out in the atmosphere and condition of His ascension. Where are we working today? We all should be able to say that we are working in Christ's ascension.

BY THE SPIRIT

The propagation of the resurrected Christ in His ascension is by the Spirit. His propagation is not by any gimmick or human technique. But consider the situation among Christians today concerning the propagation of Christ. Where is the propagation by the Spirit? In many instances, there is very little of the Spirit but much use of human methods and techniques. For example, some even use rock music in their preaching of the gospel. We need to realize that the propagation of the resurrected Christ is by the Spirit, in particular, the economical Spirit. In the book of Acts we see the economical Spirit for the carrying out of Christ's propagation.

THROUGH THE DISCIPLES

Christ's propagation is through the disciples. Who are the disciples? As we shall see, the disciples are not merely preachers, and in Acts they are not called preachers. Rather, the disciples are witnesses. The Lord's disciples in Acts are witnesses of a wonderful Person, the One who was conceived of God the Spirit, who was born of a human virgin, who lived on earth and ministered, who entered into death and conquered it, and who came out of the tomb in resurrection, becoming the life-giving Spirit. This resurrected One has ascended into the heavens, where He is sitting on the throne. As He is sitting there, He is very active and aggressive in doing the work of propagation. The disciples are witnesses of such a One. This was the reason the Lord said concerning them, "You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (1:8).

FOR THE PRODUCING OF THE CHURCHES

Through His witnesses the resurrected Christ in His ascension propagates Himself for the producing of the churches. This indicates that the churches should not be raised up and established merely by human hands. Every local church should be produced by Christ's propagation. Every local church must be born of Christ, brought forth by Christ's propagation in His divine and resurrected life.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The churches produced by Christ's propagation are the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is a sphere of life produced by the propagation of Christ. Actually the kingdom is the expansion of this resurrected, propagating One. The resurrected Christ, who is propagating Himself in His ascension, by the Spirit, and through the disciples, is the reality of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is His expansion.

We may use the kingdom of man, the human kingdom, for an illustration of the kingdom of God as the expansion of Christ. In the beginning, there was just one man, Adam. Then Adam began to expand, to increase. The kingdom of man was a couple, and then this couple brought forth children. In this way the kingdom of man expanded from one man to a family. Now the entire human race is part of the kingdom of man. The kingdom of man is simply mankind as the expansion of the man, Adam.

From this we see that the kingdom of man is man's expansion.

What is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is the expansion of God, whose embodiment is Christ. This expansion of Christ is the churches. The churches are the expansion of Christ as the One who came to sow Himself as the seed of the kingdom of God. This is revealed in the four Gospels. In the Gospels Christ was the seed of the kingdom. In the book of Acts we have the propagation of this seed to produce the churches as the kingdom of God.

Can you say how many chapters are in the book of Acts? Perhaps you would say that Acts has twenty-eight chapters. This, of course, is correct. However, it is also true to say that the book of Acts is still being written because the propagation of the resurrected Christ is still taking place. By now Acts may have thousands of chapters. Even today a portion of a chapter may have been written. This writing is the propagation of the resurrected Christ, and this propagation is the expansion of Christ to be the kingdom of God. We in the churches are the propagation of Christ and the expansion of Christ, and we are enlarging the kingdom of God.

I hope that we all shall be able to say from memory the subject of the book of Acts: the propagation of the resurrected Christ in His ascension, by the Spirit, through the disciples, for the producing of the churches—the kingdom of God. Here three words are synonyms: propagation, churches, and kingdom. The kingdom is the churches, and the churches are the propagation of Christ.

The more we are impressed with the subject of Acts, the more we shall say, "Lord, we worship You as the resurrected One and the ascended One. We praise You for Your propagation. We thank You, Lord, that we are Your propagation today. We thank You that we are with You in the heavens and that the churches are the kingdom of God." Let us declare to the whole universe that the Lord Jesus is now in the heavens, and that as the exalted One He is now propagating Himself on earth through us as His witnesses. (*Life-study of Acts*, pp. 9-15)