

ONE ACCORD
AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message One
**The Continuation of the Book of Acts—
the Corporate Continuation of Christ**

Scripture Reading: John 5:17; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:13-16; 5:25-27;
Rev. 19:7-9; Acts 9:4-5, 15; 28:31

I. The continuation of the book of Acts is the continuation of Christ with the corporate living of the perfected God-men as the reality of the Body of Christ—28:31:

- A. The Lord said, “My Father is working until now, and I also am working” (John 5:17); this shows that since the rebellion of Satan and the fall of man, God has been working until now, and the Lord also is working.
- B. The book of Acts is a record of the work of God; after Acts 28 many of God’s vessels are still carrying on with His work; His work is continuing and has not stopped.
- C. His work will go on until the kingdom and even until the new heaven and new earth; God is always advancing; He never stops; if we know this and believe in this, we will praise the Lord; even as the New Jerusalem, His slaves will serve Him as priests—Rev. 22:3; cf. Acts 13:36a.
- D. The work of the Holy Spirit in preaching Christ for His propagation, multiplication, and spread through the believers of Christ was not yet completed and needed to be continued for a long period of time.
- E. The word of God is still growing and being multiplied for the increase of Christ— 6:7; 12:24; 19:20:
 - 1. *Grew* in Acts 6:7 refers to the growth in life, indicating that the word of God is a matter of life that grows as a seed sown into man’s heart for the increase of Christ, the growth of God, within us—Mark 4:14; Col. 2:19.
 - 2. *Multiplied* in Acts 12:24 refers to the increase of Christ in numbers; actually, the multiplication of the disciples depends on the growth of the word.
 - 3. New disciples are “added to the Lord” to become the parts of Christ, the members of Christ—5:14; 11:24; Rom. 15:16.
- F. Such an evangelistic work for Christ’s propagation, multiplication, and spread is according to God’s New Testament economy for the producing of many sons for God (8:29) that they might be the members of Christ to constitute His Body (12:5) for the carrying out of God’s eternal plan and the fulfillment of His eternal will; this is revealed in detail in the twenty-one Epistles and the book of Revelation, which follow the book of Acts.
- G. Since God is after a corporate, shining vessel, a vessel of testimony, His children must be brought to the awareness of the Body of Christ and learn to live the Body life; otherwise, they are useless in His hand and can never fulfill His goal—Rom. 12:1-3; 1 Cor. 12:12; Rev. 1:10-12.

II. The continuation of Christ in the book of Acts is prophesied in the Bible:

- A. Isaiah 42:4 says that Christ will come again when He finishes the establishing of God’s justice in the earth, which means to establish God’s salvation as the issue of God’s

- righteous judgment on Christ—see footnote 3.
- B. Isaiah 53:10 prophesies about the continuation of Christ in His resurrection— “He will see a seed, He will extend His days,/And the pleasure of Jehovah will prosper in His hand”:
1. The seed here, a corporate seed, is the church as the Body of Christ, comprising all the believers produced as the many grains by the death of Christ as the one grain and by His reproductive resurrection (John 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:3); Christ as the Servant of Jehovah is the resurrected Life-giver, the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:6, 17), to produce a seed for the building up of His Body as His continuation for Jehovah’s pleasure and for Christ’s satisfaction.
 2. For Christ to “extend His days” means that today Christ is extending His days by living in His believers (Gal. 2:20; see footnote 1 on Acts 28:9); His believers as His Body are His extension.
 3. The pleasure of God (Eph. 1:5, 9; Phil. 2:13) is to see many sons born of Him to become the members of Christ, who constitute the church as the Body of Christ, the corporate expression of Christ.
- C. Isaiah 53:11 says that Christ “will see the fruit of the travail of His soul,/And He will be satisfied”; the fruit of the travail of Christ’s soul implies all the items produced in and through Christ’s resurrection as His continuation:
1. As the processed One, the last Adam, Christ became the life-giving Spirit as the reality of the pneumatic Christ for His propagation through life-imparting—1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17.
 2. As the preeminent One, the One who has the first place in all things, Christ became the Firstborn from the dead for the germinating of God’s new creation and for Christ to be the Head of the Body—Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5a.
 3. As the God-man, Christ was begotten of God in His humanity (Acts 13:33) to be the firstborn Son of God in both the divine and human natures, to be a model for conforming many sons to His image (Rom. 8:29b).
 4. As the resurrection life (John 11:25), Christ regenerated all His believers (1 Pet. 1:3), making them His brothers and the many sons of God (Heb. 2:10-12; Rom. 8:29b; John 20:17), who are the members of God’s household to be God’s kingdom (Eph. 2:19; Gal. 6:10) and God’s precious inheritance (Eph. 1:11).
 5. As the one grain of wheat, Christ became the many grains (John 12:24), who are His increase (3:30) and the components of His Body, that is, the one bread, the church (1 Cor. 10:17; Eph. 1:22-23).
 6. Through His life-releasing death and with His life-imparting resurrection, Christ produced a corporate seed as the issue of the travail of His soul, which seed He saw in His resurrection and was satisfied (Isa. 53:10-11; cf. Gal. 3:29).
 7. As the life of the believers, the resurrected Christ is all the members and in all the members of the new man—Col. 3:10-11.
- D. Micah 5:2 prophesies concerning the incarnation of Christ in Bethlehem, and that “His goings forth are from ancient times,/From the days of eternity”:
1. Christ’s going forth, His appearing, is a continuous matter; at the time of His incarnation He began to come forth; after His incarnation, He continued to go forth through His human living, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His outpouring of the consummated Spirit (who is the reality of Christ Himself), and His spreading through the preaching of the gospel to the whole inhabited earth; all of these are great steps in Christ’s going forth.
 2. His going forth has not ceased but is continuing today; Christ’s going forth, His manifestation, will consummate when He comes back with the overcomers as the

mighty ones (Joel 3:11) to defeat Antichrist and cast him into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:19-20), when Satan is cast into the abyss (20:2-3), and when Christ sets up His throne to reign as King (Matt. 25:31, 34, 40); at that time His appearing will be complete.

- E. These Old Testament prophecies culminate in the greatest prophecy in the Bible concerning the continuation of Christ; in Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said, “I will build My church”; even today this prophecy still remains unfulfilled:
 - 1. The prophecy on the building up of the church started by the Lord in Matthew 16 is continued by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:13-16, a prophecy concerning the building up of the church in a specific way that remains unfulfilled today.
 - 2. This prophecy may also be seen as the preparation of Christ’s bride, which is still unfulfilled today (Rev. 19:7-9; Eph. 5:25-27); the fulfillment of the Lord’s prophecy concerning the building up of the church and the preparation of His bride will bring Him back; now is the time for the Lord to fulfill His prophecy.

III. The apostle Paul, as a pattern to all the believers, the members of the Body of Christ, lived Christ for His magnification as His continuation—Phil. 1:19-21a; Acts 9:4-5, 15; 26:18-19; 1 Tim. 1:16:

- A. Paul was a disciple of Christ—seeing Christ, hearing Christ, and learning Christ as the reality is in Jesus—Acts 9:1-19, 25-27; 22:14-15; Eph. 4:20-21.
- B. Paul was a chosen vessel of Christ to contain Him, be filled with Him, and overflow with Him for His fullness—Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 4:7; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19.
- C. Paul was a man of prayer—Acts 9:11; 13:1-3; 14:23; 16:13, 25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17; 28:8; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2.
- D. Paul depended on the Body, doing everything in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body—Acts 9:11, 17-18, 25-27; 1 Cor. 1:1; 12:14-27.
- E. Paul practiced calling on the name of the Lord—Acts 9:14, 21; 22:16; 2 Tim. 2:22; Rom. 10:12-13; Phil. 2:9-11.
- F. Paul lived by the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus (the Spirit of a man with abundant strength for suffering) for his preaching ministry, a ministry of suffering carried out among human beings and for human beings in the human life for the building up of the Body of Christ—John 7:37-39; Acts 9:16; 16:7, 22-34; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 6:4; 11:23; Heb. 6:19-20; 13:13.
- G. Paul lived in his mingled spirit (the divine Spirit mingled with his human spirit as one spirit)—Acts 17:16; 19:21; Rom. 8:4, 6, 16; 1 Cor. 6:17.
- H. Paul was filled with the Spirit of joy, essentially for his existence, and with the Spirit of power, economically for his function—Acts 13:9, 52; Eph. 5:18.
- I. Paul exercised himself to always have a good and pure conscience—Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9.
- J. Paul lived a life of always rejoicing in the Lord, praying unceasingly, and thanking Him in everything—Acts 16:25; 27:35; Phil. 4:4; Col. 3:16; 1 Thes. 5:16-18.
- K. Paul was allied with God and assisted by God to speak the gospel boldly in the name of Jesus to spread the testimony of Jesus unto the uttermost part of the earth—Acts 9:20, 27; 26:22-29; 28:31; 1:8; 1 Thes. 2:2; cf. Rom. 15:24, 28.
- L. Paul cherished the saints in the humanity of Jesus and nourished them in the divinity of Christ with all the truths of God’s eternal economy, displaying in his living the word of the Lord Jesus that it is better to give than to receive—Acts 20:18-38; 1 Thes. 2:1-12.
- M. Paul’s fourth ministry journey (Acts 27—28) shows in a particular way his life of living Christ, magnifying Christ, doing all things in Christ, and pursuing Christ in order to be

found in Christ (Phil. 1:19-21a; 3:8-9, 14; 4:13):

1. All during the apostle's long and unfortunate imprisonment-voyage, the Lord kept the apostle in His ascendancy and enabled him to live a life far beyond the realm of anxiety; this life was fully dignified, with the highest standard of human virtues expressing the most excellent divine attributes—Acts 28:5-9.
2. This was Jesus living again on the earth in His divinely enriched humanity! This was the wonderful, excellent, and mysterious God-man, who lived in the Gospels, continuing to live in the Acts through one of His many members! This was a living witness of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and God-exalted Christ!

IV. The ultimate issue of the church will be the New Jerusalem in eternity future as God's full and eternal expression; this should be the reality and goal of all our gospel preaching today as we follow the pattern of the apostle Paul—"proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered"—28:31.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE CONTINUATION OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

Scripture Reading: Acts 28:30-31; Rev. 1:11-12, 20

There are sixty-six books in the Bible. When we come to the end of many of these books, we can say that the book is finished. There are fifty chapters in Genesis, and when we come to the end, we sense that we have come to the end. The Gospel of Matthew has twenty-eight chapters. When we come to chapter 28, we feel that we have come to the end. When we come to the Romans 16, we also feel that this is the end. When we read Revelation 22, we also feel that this is the end.

But there is one book in the Bible that does not have an end. All the other sixty-five books have an end. But one book does not have an end. This book is the Acts of the Apostles. Why does Acts 28 end the way it does? When you read Acts 28, you feel as if the book has not yet concluded. This book does not have an ending. The Acts of the Apostles is a book without an ending because this book is still being continued. Perhaps the acts of the first-century apostles have ended, but the book of Acts as a whole has not yet ended. Until now we still have the Acts of the Apostles with us. This book has not yet ended.

The Lord said, "My Father is working until now, and I also am working" (John 5:17). This shows that since the rebellion of Satan and the fall of man, God has been working until now, and the Lord is also working. What is the book of Acts? The book of Acts is not a record of the work of Paul or a record of the work of Peter or John. The book of Acts is a record of the work of God. Who can say that God has done no work after Acts 28? Who can say that God's work stopped after Acts 28?

The book of Acts does not have an ending. After chapter 28, many of God's vessels are still carrying on with His work. His work is continuing and has not stopped. Everything was not over after Paul worked in Rome for two years. Paul lived in Rome and was later martyred. None of these things are recorded in the book of Acts. Peter, Paul, and John are three important persons, yet none of their endings were recorded. How can we say that the book of Acts has ended? God's testimony can never be finished. We could say the same thing even if there was a twenty-ninth chapter, or a thirtieth chapter, or even a hundredth chapter. If one wanted to write more, new things could always be added. This is why Acts stops at chapter 28. Although the written record no longer continued after chapter 28, God's work has been going on. The work in the first century was not the peak. For four thousand years God has been working. If we say that Acts 28 was the peak, we must be at the bottom of the hill; we must have come down from the peak. This is not true, because the Lord said, "My Father is working until now, and I also am working" (John 5:17). We should not assume that God's work reached its

peak at the time of Paul, and we should not consider that God's work reached its peak at the time of Martin Luther either. No, the first century was not the end of God's work, nor was the sixteenth century the end of His work. Even the last century was not the end of God's work. His work will go on until the kingdom and even until the new heaven and the new earth. God is always advancing; He never stops. If we know this and believe in this, we will praise our Lord.

Man always has a misconception that his age is the worst age of the church. At the time of Martin Luther some thought this way. At the time of John Wesley some thought this way. We consider Martin Luther's time a marvelous age and John Wesley's time a marvelous age also. While we consider their ages marvelous, some who come fifty years after us will say that we were at a marvelous age. We are afraid that man will stop. But God never stops. Every year, He knows what He is doing, and He knows how much He will work. Every year, He does what He wants to do. He is a God who goes on day by day; He is always advancing. Hallelujah! God is a God who keeps on advancing!

Every time God advances, He finds some vessels. In the book of Acts, God found some vessels. At the time of Martin Luther, God found a vessel, and at the time of John Wesley, He also found a vessel. Every time there is a spiritual revival, God finds some vessels. Where is God's vessel today? It is true that the Father is working until now. But who is continuing to work together with Him? Who can say, "I also am working"? This is the crucial question.

Brothers and sisters, if God grants us light and if we see God's truth, we will admit that God is after the same vessel today that He ordained at the beginning. This vessel is the church. In other words, God is not after an individual vessel today but a corporate one. Since God is after a corporate vessel, His children must be brought to the awareness of the Body of Christ and the Body life. Otherwise, they are useless in His hand and can never fulfill His goal.

Revelation 1 tells us that the churches are golden lampstands. God does not simply say that the churches are golden; He says that the churches are golden lampstands. If the churches are just golden, they cannot satisfy God. God says that the churches are golden lampstands because golden lampstands shine and enlighten. God desires the church to be a shining vessel, a vessel of testimony. From the beginning God has ordained that the church be a lampstand. The church, not individuals, is a lampstand before the Lord. It is not enough just to be golden, and it is not enough just to be of God. There must be the shining for God and the testimony for Him before the church can be considered the lampstand.

Hence, the church exists for God's testimony. Anything that is not golden is not the church, and anything that is not a lampstand is not the church. Anything that does not have life within is not the church, and anything that does not have the testimony within is also not the church. The church must realize what God is doing and what He is after in this age; it must realize what God's testimony on the earth today is. Only then can the church be considered the golden lampstand.

Simply put, God's work is always advancing. He is still seeking this vessel. His vessel today is the same vessel He intended to have at the beginning; the church is this vessel, not single individuals.

Some may ask, What does it mean that the overcomers come out of the church? It is true that there need to be overcomers who come out of the church. But even the testimony of the overcomers is maintained on behalf of the corporate whole; it is not for individuals alone. The overcomers are not men who consider themselves extraordinary, better than others, and who put everyone else aside. The overcomers work on behalf of the whole church. They do the work, while the whole church gains the benefit. The overcomers are not for themselves; they stand on the ground of the church, and they are there to bring the whole church to perfection. They stand on the ground of the church and maintain their stand on behalf of the church. Even the victories of the overcomers are corporate victories.

The vessel God is after is a corporate one. Therefore, we have to learn to live the Body life. In order to live the Body life, we have to deny the natural life and be judged and dealt with by God in a deep way. We must learn obedience, and we must also learn fellowship. In this way, we will have the chance of becoming God's vessel. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 37, pp. 121-124)

ACTS HAVING NO ENDING

[The book of Acts] was not actually ended; rather, it was left open that more may be added. The reason for this must have been that the work of the Holy Spirit in preaching Christ for His propagation, multiplication, and spread through the believers of Christ was not yet completed and needed to be continued for a long period of time. Such an evangelistic work for Christ's propagation, multiplication, and spread is according to God's New Testament economy for the producing of many sons for God (Rom. 8:29) that they might be the members of Christ to constitute His Body (Rom. 12:5) for the carrying out of God's eternal plan and the fulfillment of His eternal will. This is revealed in detail in the twenty-one Epistles and the book of Revelation, which follow this book. The church produced by Christ's propagation and multiplication is the sphere in which God is expressed and in which He reigns in Christ; hence, the church becomes the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, along with Christ's propagation and multiplication, grows out of and spreads from God's life. Acts is a record of the spreading of Christ; it is also a record of the kingdom of God, because the kingdom of God is the expansion of Christ. The gospel that is widely preached in this book is the very Christ as the gospel (5:42), the gospel of Christ, and it is also the kingdom of God as the gospel (8:12), the gospel of the kingdom of God. The preaching of such a gospel will continue and advance until the whole earth becomes the kingdom of Christ (Rev. 11:15).

In the four Gospels God was incarnated, passed through human living, died, and resurrected, thus completing Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God (Col. 2:9). In Acts this embodiment of God, as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), spreads Christ into His believers, i.e., works the processed Triune God into His chosen, redeemed, and transformed people to make them the constituents of the church, through which God may be expressed. The ultimate issue of the church will be the New Jerusalem in eternity future as God's full and eternal expression, which will also be God's eternal kingdom as the sphere in which He reigns in His divine life in eternity forever and ever. This should be the reality and goal of all gospel preaching today. (Acts 28:31, footnote 2)