

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

Message Four
The Resurrected, Ascended, and All-inclusive Christ

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:8-11; 2:32-36; 3:13-15; 4:33;
5:30-32; 7:56; 20:28; 16:31

I. The Christ revealed in Acts is in resurrection—1:3; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33:

- A. Through death Christ entered into another realm, the realm of resurrection:
 - 1. Because Christ is the living One with an indestructible life, death is not able to hold Him—Heb. 7:16; Acts 2:24.
 - 2. He delivered Himself to death, but death had no way to retain Him; rather, death was defeated by Him, and He rose up from it.
- B. We need to know Christ in the power, sphere, and element of His resurrection—Phil. 3:10-11.
- C. Christ's resurrection was the focus of the apostles' testimony—Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:13, 15, 26; 4:33; 10:39-40; 13:33; 17:3, 18:
 - 1. God glorified His Servant Jesus through His resurrection and in His ascension—Luke 24:26; Acts 3:13, 15, 26; 4:10, 33; 5:30-31.
 - 2. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus points back to His incarnation, humanity, human living, and God-ordained death and points forward to His ascension, ministry and administration in heaven, and coming back—2:23; 1:9-11.

II. The Christ revealed in Acts is in ascension—1:9-11; 2:32-36; 5:31:

- A. Whereas resurrection is a matter of life, Christ's ascension is a matter of position, and position is a matter of authority.
- B. The Lord's ascension was His initiation into His living and ministry in the heavens; this initiation brought Him into a new realm, that is, into the heavens where He now has His living and is ministering there.
- C. The Lord's ascension brought Him into a new stage—the stage of a resurrected man living in the heavens as the center of God's administration—Rev. 5:6:
 - 1. This resurrected One is now sitting in the heavens to execute God's administration—Heb. 12:2.
 - 2. The resurrected Christ ascended to the heavens to be exalted by God and to be given the kingship, the lordship, and the headship over all things—Phil. 2:9-11; Eph. 1:22.
- D. The ascended Christ has also obtained the throne, the glory, and all the authority in the universe—Rev. 5:6; Heb. 1:3; 2:9; Matt. 28:18.
- E. The ascended Christ is the Lord of all to possess all—Acts 2:36:
 - 1. The lordship of Christ is one of the most important aspects of what He has obtained in His ascension—10:36.
 - 2. Since the lordship of Christ was fully established in His ascension, we—the members of His Body—need to realize this heavenly fact—Eph. 1:20-21.
- F. The ascended Christ is God's Anointed to carry out God's commission to work out the spreading of the gospel and the building up of the church—Acts 1:8.

III. The Christ revealed in Acts is the all-inclusive Christ—3:14-15, 25-26; 5:30-

32; 7:56; 10:36, 39-43; 16:31; 17:30-31; 20:28:

- A. Christ is the Author of life—3:14-15:
 - 1. As indicated by the Greek word rendered “Author,” Christ is the origin or Originator of life; He is the Author, the Chief Leader, in life—v. 15.
 - 2. In Acts 3 we see the imparting of life into others, which is to propagate Christ; for such a propagation, we need the Lord as the Author of life, the source of life.
 - 3. As the Author of life, Christ is the holy and righteous One—v. 14.
- B. Christ is God’s Servant—vv. 25-26:
 - 1. As the seed of Abraham and the Servant of God, Christ is the One in whom all the families of the earth—all the races, colors, and nationalities—will be blessed—vv. 25-26.
 - 2. God sent back the ascended Christ as a blessing by pouring out the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; hence, the Spirit whom God poured out was the Christ whom God raised and exalted to the heavens—2:33; 3:13-15, 25-26.
- C. Christ is the Leader and Savior—5:30-32:
 - 1. God exalted the man Jesus as the highest Leader, the Prince, the Ruler of the kings to rule over the world, and the Savior to save God’s chosen people — Rev. 1:5; 19:16; Acts 5:31.
 - 2. *Leader* is related to His authority, and *Savior* is related to His salvation; He rules sovereignly over the earth with His authority so that the environment might be fit for God’s chosen people to receive His salvation—cf. 17:26-27.
- D. Christ is the Son of Man—7:56:
 - 1. Acts 7:56 reveals that Christ is the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God to be the comfort, encouragement, and strength to the one martyred for Him.
 - 2. Stephen saw the ascended Christ as the Son of Man; this indicates that the Christ who is in the heavens still has His humanity; He still possesses His human nature.
- E. Christ is God—20:28:
 - 1. Christ as our God is the Purchaser of the church, having obtained the church with His own blood—v. 28.
 - 2. God secured, purchased, and redeemed the church with “His own blood” (v. 28), “the blood of Jesus His Son” (1 John 1:7).
 - 3. Christ died on the cross as the God-man, and the blood that He shed there for our redemption was not only the blood of the man Jesus but also the blood of the God-man.
 - 4. The blood through which God obtained the church is God’s own blood.
- F. Christ is the Lord of all—Acts 10:36:
 - 1. *All* in Acts 10:36 refers to all peoples—1 Tim. 2:4.
 - 2. The ascended Christ is the Lord of all the different races and peoples on earth; with Him, there is no respect of persons—Rev. 5:9.
- G. Christ is the Judge—Acts 10:39-43:
 - 1. Christ has been designated by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead— v. 42.
 - 2. Christ is a man to judge the world, designated by God in righteousness and proved by God’s raising Him from the dead—17:30-31.
- H. Christ is the Lord Jesus, the object of the believers’ faith—16:31:
 - 1. To believe in the gospel is mainly to believe in Jesus Christ—v. 31.
 - 2. To believe in the Lord Jesus is to stand on the person of Christ and all that He has accomplished, both of which constitute the belief, the faith, of God’s New Testament economy—1 Tim. 1:4.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

PREACHING CHRIST

Centered on Christ

We have seen that Paul's preaching and teaching were based on the Old Testament. The Old Testament, however, contains many things: history, the law, types, and prophecies. The Jews studied the Old Testament week by week, but they did not pay attention to Christ. They had some thought concerning the Messiah, but they did not have any understanding of Christ. When Paul went into the synagogues to preach and teach, he did not care for anything other than Christ.

When some hear that Paul preached Christ and Christ alone, they may say, "Did Paul not begin his preaching with an account of the history in the Old Testament? Did he not speak of God's bringing His people out of Egypt and about Saul and David?" Yes, Paul spoke about those things, but he did so in order to prepare the way to preach Christ. In Acts 13:22 Paul quoted the word about David being a man according to God's heart. Then in verse 23 he went on to say, "From this man's seed, God, according to promise, brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus." Here we see that after a short introduction he came to his crucial message, which was altogether centered on Christ. After beginning with the history until the time of David, Paul went on to point out that from David's seed God brought forth a Savior, Jesus Christ. With Him there is salvation.

In 13:24 and 25 Paul referred to John the Baptist: "After John had proclaimed, prior to His public entrance, a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. Now as John was completing his course, he said, What do you suppose that I am? I am not the Christ. But behold, One is coming after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie." Literally, the Greek words rendered "prior to His public entrance" mean "before the face of His entrance." Here Paul pointed out that prior to Christ's public entrance, John proclaimed a baptism of repentance. Repentance is to change one's mind, and baptism is to bury the repentant ones, terminating them, so that the Savior may germinate them by regeneration (John 3:3, 5-6).

As Paul went on to speak concerning "the word of this salvation" (Acts 13:26), he emphasized Christ's crucifixion. He pointed out that the people of Israel had Him put to death. In verse 27 he said, "Those dwelling in Jerusalem and their rulers, being ignorant of this One and of the words of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by judging Him." They judged the Lord Jesus by sentencing Him to death (Luke 24:20). "When they had accomplished all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb" (Acts 13:29).

Raised from the Dead

Beginning with verse 30, Paul went on to speak of Christ's resurrection: "But God raised Him from the dead." We have seen that Acts tells us both that God raised up Jesus (2:24, 32) and that He rose from the dead (10:40-41). Regarding the Lord as a man, the New Testament says that God raised Him from the dead (Rom. 8:11). But considering Him as God, it tells us that He Himself rose from the dead (14:9).

The Firstborn Son of God in Resurrection

After pointing out that the resurrected Christ "appeared to those who had come up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now His witnesses to the people" (Acts 13:31), Paul went on to say, "We announce to you the gospel of the promise made to the fathers, 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; this day have I begotten You'" (vv. 32-33). Resurrection was a birth to the man Jesus. He was begotten by God in His resurrection to be the firstborn Son of God among many brothers (Rom. 8:29). He was the only begotten Son of God from eternity (John 1:18; 3:16). After incarnation, through resurrection, He was begotten by God in His humanity to be God's firstborn Son.

If it were not for Paul, I do not think that we would be able to see that Psalm 2 speaks of the

resurrection of Christ. Paul was able to see the Lord's resurrection in the word, "You are My Son; / Today I have begotten You." Paul applied the word *today* to the day of the Lord's resurrection (cf. Acts 13:33). This means that Christ's resurrection was His birth as the firstborn Son of God. Jesus, the Son of Man, was born to be the Son of God through being raised up from the dead. Therefore, God's raising up of Jesus from the dead was His begetting of Him to be His firstborn Son. We need to realize that the Lord's resurrection was His birth. This is a crucial matter.

The Lord's Two Births

The Lord Jesus has had two births. First, He was born of Mary to be the Son of Man. Then thirty-three and a half years later, He was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. Through resurrection He had a second birth, for as a man, He was born in His resurrection to be the Son of God. Therefore, in His first birth He was born of Mary to be the Son of Man, and in His second birth He was born in resurrection to be the Son of God.

The Only Begotten Son and the Firstborn Son

When some hear that Christ was born to be the Son of God in resurrection, they may have a problem and say, "Was not our Lord the Son of God from eternity?" Yes, from eternity He was the Son of God. Before His first birth, that is, before He was born of Mary to be the Son of Man, He was already the Son of God. The Gospel of John emphasizes the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and He is the Son of God eternally. Since He was already the Son of God before His incarnation, why was it necessary for Him to be born the Son of God in His resurrection? If we would answer this question, we need to study the Bible carefully.

Romans 8:29 and Hebrews 1:6 both speak of Christ as the Firstborn. In His second birth the Lord Jesus was born to be the firstborn Son of God. According to the New Testament, He is the Son of God in two aspects. First, He was God's only begotten Son; second, He is now God's firstborn Son. The words *only begotten* indicate that God has only one Son. John 1:18 and 3:16 speak of the only begotten Son of God. Eternally speaking, Christ was the only begotten Son of God. This was His eternal status. But through resurrection He, as a man, was born to be the firstborn Son of God. The word *firstborn* indicates that God now has many sons (Heb. 2:10). We who believe in Christ are the many sons of God and the many brothers of the Lord, the many brothers of the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29).

The Embodiment of Life and the Propagation of Life

As the only begotten Son of God, the Lord is the embodiment of the divine life. The Gospel of John emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and as the Son of God, He is the very embodiment of the divine life (1:4). Through resurrection Christ became the firstborn Son of God as the life-dispenser for the propagation of life. First, He was the only begotten Son as the embodiment of life; now He is the firstborn Son for the propagation of life. Through His becoming the firstborn Son of God in resurrection, the divine life has been dispensed into all His believers to bring forth the propagation of the very life that is embodied in Him. We all need to see this.

Here in Acts 13 Paul was not preaching Christ as the only begotten Son of God, as the Gospel of John does. Rather, here Paul was preaching Christ as the firstborn Son of God for propagation. For this reason he preached the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as His second birth. Through His second birth, His birth in resurrection, Christ became the firstborn Son of God for the propagation of the divine life. (*Life-study of Acts*, pp. 310-314)