

Guidelines for the Exercise of the Lord's Day Prophesying

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

I. Overview:

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. The word of God is still growing and being multiplied for the increase of Christ; actually, the multiplication of the disciples depends on the growth of the word. 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. Micah 5:2 prophesies concerning the incarnation of Christ in Bethlehem, and that that "His goings forth are from ancient times,/From the days of eternity". His going forth has not ceased but is continuing today. These Old Testament prophecies culminate in the greatest prophecy in Matthew 16:18, "I will build My church"; even today this prophecy still remains unfulfilled. This prophecy may also be seen as the preparation of Christ's bride to bring Him back. The apostle Paul, as a pattern to all the believers, the continuation of Christ. Paul was a disciple of Christ, a chosen vessel of Christ, and he depended on the Body, exercised himself to always have a good and pure conscience.

II. Truth and Enlightenment:

Day 1 —

A. Expound the book of Acts without an ending.

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.

B. Explain that after Acts 28 God's work has been going on.

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. God's testimony can never be finished. Although the written record no longer continued after chapter 28, God's work has been going on.

Day 2 —

A. Explain that today God is after a corporate vessel.

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.

B. Expound that what God is after is the church as a shining vessel.

The lampstands will 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."

Day 3 —

A. Expound the words in Micah 5:2

His goings forth are from ancient times, from the days of eternity, though Christ is born in Bethlehem. At the time of His incarnation He began to come forth, He continued to go forth through His human living, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His outpouring of the consummated Spirit. Christ's going forth will consummate when He comes back with the overcomers to defeat Antichrist and cast him into the lake of fire.

B. Explain the word in Isaiah 53:10b-11 and what the significance was.

Isaiah 53:10b-11 refers to Christ in His resurrection. 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, to produce a seed for the building up of His Body as His continuation for Jehovah's pleasure and for Christ's satisfaction.

Day 4 —

A. Expound a great prophecy in Matthew 16:18 having been unfulfilled.

Lord Jesus told Peter, "I will build My church, ..." This was a great prophecy concerning the church, and it still is a great prophecy. This is because nearly twenty centuries have passed since the Lord spoke this word, yet we still cannot see that the church is fully built up. The fulfillment of this prophecy in Matthew 16:18 has not been fully realized, so even today this prophecy still remains unfulfilled.

B. Explain Ephesians 4:13-16, and there is a prophecy in it.

By reading Ephesians 4:13-16, we can realize that there is a prophecy in it. Paul says, "Until we all arrive" at something. This means that at that time and even now, all the saints, including Paul, were going on and pressing on until they would all arrive. We have to consider whether or not any Christians have arrived at these three things. We have to say no.

Day 5 —

A. Explain the life Paul has lived.

If we read this portion carefully, we will see that here Paul was living the very life that he aspired to live in Philippians 3. In that chapter Paul says that he pursued Christ in order to be found in Him. When I read Acts 27 and 28, I find Paul in Christ. Throughout a rough and difficult voyage, Paul lived a life of ascendancy and dignity and full of wisdom.

B. Expound the Spirit of Jesus in Acts 16:7, In the Greek text of Jesus is after the word Spirit.

The Spirit of Jesus is a special term. Its meaning differs from that of the Spirit of God. Since Jesus was a man and is still a man, "the Spirit of Jesus" is the Spirit of the man Jesus. Jesus was a man who continually suffered intense persecution while He was on earth. Therefore, "the Spirit of Jesus" is the Spirit of a man with abundant strength for suffering.

Day 6 —

A. Expound how Paul lived a life throughout the voyage.

Throughout the voyage and now on the island of Malta, Paul certainly was walking in the Spirit. Paul's living was actually the expression of the life-giving Spirit. He preached the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ as the life-giving Spirit, and on the island of Malta he lived such a Christ as the all-inclusive Spirit.

B. Expound how Paul was living Christ and magnifying Him on the sea in the storm.

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, a life that resembled the one that the Lord Himself had lived on the earth years before.

III. Conclusion:

The church must have overcomers who can stand out and bear witness, but the testimony of the overcomers is also for the sake of the entire body, not for the benefit of an individual. The overcomers are those who stand in the position of the church and bring it to perfection, who stand in the position of the body and represent it at that level. God desires vessels that are collective, so we must learn to live out the life of the body. The Acts of the Apostles is the extension of Christ and the extension of God's kingdom, as the kingdom of God is the extension of Christ. The gospel preached throughout the Acts of the Apostles is the gospel of Christ and the gospel of God's kingdom. This gospel continues to be preached until the whole earth has become the kingdom of Christ, and its ultimate result is the coming of a new Jerusalem in eternity, where God's perfect and eternal glory will be manifested. This should be the practical reality and the ultimate goal of all gospel preaching today.