

# Acts of the Apostles-Outline Studies in Primitive Christianity

The Acts of the Apostles

Outline Studies in Primitive Christianity

by W.H. Griffith Thomas

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## Introduction

The purpose of these studies in the Book of the Acts is to afford sufficient guidance to Christian workers to enable them to study carefully, and to master thoroughly, this important section of the Word of God. In view of this object, the writer's plan has been to suggest, and not to try to exhaust, the subject of each study, but to lead the student to do as much as possible for himself.

The plan, as will be seen, is to provide outlines of the material in the Acts, and it is suggested that each section be taken with the passages referred to, the various questions being answered and the considerations for study pondered. The main idea is to gain an acquaintance with Acts itself rather than with books about it. On page 9 it is proposed that the book be read through at once, and if this could be done two or three times in the early days of study, so much the better. Then each section should be carefully considered with the references. On pages 23 and 24, under Study 4, the second step is given, and then at the beginning of chapter 2, the third step is proposed. In each section four questions are propounded for inquiry about the particular lesson. These should have the closest possible consideration. And thus, from the book as a whole, it will be practicable to descend to its main divisions and smaller parts, and even to minute details. The supreme requirement is mastery.

A short Bibliography of some of the authorities on the Acts will be found at the end of the volume; but before using any of them, it is essential that the Book of the Acts itself should be mastered as to its purpose, plan, and contents. Nearly all the books quoted in the list have been more or less used in the preparation of these notes, but special acknowledgment must be made of some studies in The Old and New Testament Student, vols. xiv. and xv., which were of great service to the writer several years ago in the study of the Acts, and to which chapters II, III, and IV of this little book are much indebted for guidance and suggestion. **W. H. Griffith Thomas**

## Chapter I - Introduction

### Study 1. Preparatory

The first essential for a knowledge of this book, its substance and structure, is to read it through at one sitting, using, if possible, the Revised Version. This will probably take about an hour and fifteen minutes. The paragraphs of that version will be of great help in getting familiar with the line of thought and general aim of the author.

#### 1. The Title

Both Authorized and Revised Versions have "The Acts of the Apostles," and this is the heading of one of the most important of the Greek MSS., the Codex Vaticanus. The book is also cited in this way by such early writers as Irenæus in the second century, and Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria in the third. It is also quoted by Origen in the third century as "The Acts."

It is soon seen that the title "The Acts of the Apostles" is too comprehensive to be correct. Its substance shows that it is not a complete history, for it contains selections only. The twelve original Apostles are almost wholly ignored, except Peter, and, to some extent, John; and even the work of Paul is only recorded in part (see 2 Cor. 11:4-28).

#### 2. The Author

The writer speaks of himself in chapter 1:1, where he refers to a former work (cf. Luke 1:1-4) addressed to the same friend. Yet in both cases the works are not simply private, but, as the history of the centuries shows, were intended for the whole Church. He also

writes of himself in the first person in 16:10-17; 20:5-38; 21:1-18, and 27:1-28:16. It is evident, therefore, that the book comes from a companion of St. Paul. This companion has always been regarded as "Luke, the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philem. 1:24). The medical phraseology found throughout the book is an additional testimony in the same direction (Acts 3:7; 12:23; 13:11, 28:8).

The book covers a period of about thirty years, A.D. 33-63, the first thirty years of the existence of the Christian Church, and it is concerned with the progress of Christianity from Jerusalem to Rome.

### 3. The Place of the Book in the New Testament

The Acts forms the bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles. The New Testament can be divided into four parts:—

- (1) The Gospels: manifesting the Person of Christ (Biographical).
- (2) The Acts: recording the Preaching of Christ (Historical).
- (3) The Epistles: instructing the People of Christ (Practical).
- (4) Revelation: displaying the Providence of Christ (Prophetical).

We can readily see from this the position and importance of the Book of the Acts. We may note also that it is closely connected with the third Gospel as its sequel; though it is really the sequel to, and continuation of, all four Gospels. A comparison of the last chapter of each Gospel will show that the last recorded fact concerning our Lord in St. Matthew is the Resurrection; in St. Mark the Ascension; in St. Luke the promise of the Holy Spirit; and in St. John the promise of the Second Coming. In Acts 1, all these four facts are referred to and summed up. Again, all four Gospels give prominence to the great Missionary Commission, and Acts 1 confirms it by again recording our Lord's command on this subject.

### 4. The Importance of the Acts

We can well understand the importance of this book in trying to imagine what we should do without it. "The preciousness of a book may sometimes best be estimated if we consider the loss which we should experience if we did not possess it. If so, we can hardly value the Acts of the Apostles too much. If it had not come down to us there would have been a blank in our knowledge which scarcely anything else could have filled up." (Farrar, *The Messages of the Books*.)

"If the Book of Acts were gone, there would be nothing to replace it; and we may go further, that the Christian Scriptures would then lie before us in two disjointed fragments, the complete arch would not be built." (Howson, *The Evidential Value of the Acts of the Apostles*, p. 13.)

(a) Doctrinal importance. Its record of facts is full of illustrations and examples of Christian doctrine. We see what the Christian teaching meant by the way the Christians lived. It is a book of teaching by example, and its facts are full of ideas and principles. We have here the germs of Christian doctrine afterwards elaborated in the Epistles of the great Apostles Paul, Peter, and John, and the special value is that we have the doctrine exemplified in life.

(b) Practical importance. The record shows what the Church can do in the face of opposition when it honours its Lord and is full of the Holy Spirit. It has been said that there are five powers governing society:—Eloquence, Learning, Wealth, Rank, the Army. The Christian Church had none of these; on the contrary, all five were arrayed against it. Yet the Church conquered. In this book, moreover, we have (1) the first chapter of Church history; (2) the Divine principles of spiritual revival and missionary work; (3) the Divine pattern of Church government and life; (4) the Divine methods of Church work and extension.

### 5. The Authenticity of the Book

This is believed on two grounds:—

(a) External evidence. From the earliest days this book was received by the whole Church as the work of Luke, a companion of St. Paul. It was included in the Canon of the New Testament Scriptures, and is consequently found in all the early MSS. and Versions.

(b) Internal evidence. Notwithstanding the severe criticism to which the book has been subjected during the last fifty years, scholars like Sir William Ramsay have shown conclusively that it is worthy of the highest credit as a first-century history. There is an atmosphere of actuality about it; no other New Testament book connects its material with the general history of the world like this work. (The great authority on all questions concerning the credibility of the Acts is Professor Ramsay, especially in his *The Church in the Roman Empire; St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen; and An Historical Commentary on the Galatians*.)

## Study 2. The Purpose

It is already evident that the book does not purport to be a complete record even of the thirty years it covers. We must therefore inquire more particularly as to the precise purpose of the author in giving us selections from the history of these years. We can best do this by a careful study of chapter 1:1, 2, noticing the implied contrast between "the former treatise" and the one now before us. The third Gospel was written for the purpose of showing what Jesus "began both to do and to teach until the day in which He was taken up"; the book of the Acts is concerned with what Jesus continued to do and teach after He was taken up. So that the book might with great accuracy be called "The Acts of the Exalted Lord."

Consider the following three elements included in this purpose of the writer:—

#### 1. The Activity of a Divine Worker

(a) The real Agent throughout the book is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostles are only instruments. The selections from the first

years of the Church's history are given in order to prove that the activity of our Lord's earthly ministry is not changed in effect but only in method, and that He is still active and energetic in guiding, blessing and controlling His Church. It is He to whom the Apostles pray (1:24); it is He who sheds forth the Spirit (2:33); it is He who heals the lame man (3:16). This thought should be traced through the entire book to obtain the full impression of its full prominence and power (cf. 7:55; 9:3-6; 10:13-16; 11:7-10). The entire book is thus seen to be the Book of the Acts of the Ascended Lord. As a necessary consequence of this we observe that,

(b) The true Power throughout the book is found to be the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ who received the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:33), works by means of Him, and from first to last the Holy Spirit is very prominently brought before us. The keynote is struck as early as 1:2, "through the Holy Ghost"; and it is continued to the end. The references to the Spirit of God number at least seventy. These should be rapidly traced and collected in order to obtain a true idea of the purpose of the book. So marked is this feature that the book has with great truth been called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." No New Testament writer more clearly emphasises the Divine Personality and continuous power of the Spirit of God. Thus in the two-fold emphasis on the Exalted Lord and the Divine Spirit we have the most marked feature of the book, namely, the predominance of the Divine element over the human in Church life and work. Well had it been for individual Christians, and for the Church as a whole, if this predominance had been maintained through the centuries. The Christian is not the agent but the instrument; not the workman but the tool; it is not "I and Christ," nor even "Christ and I," but "Christ through me"; as St. Paul says, "according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20).

The second part of the writer's purpose is to give—

## 2. The Description of a Great Work

As the "former treatise" was concerned with the way Jesus "began both to do and teach" before His Ascension, so this book is concerned with the continuation of His doing and teaching after His Ascension. Notice the two words "do" and "teach"; they sum up the activity of this book and indeed of the early Church. Among other things they help to correct the erroneous idea of an earthly, national kingdom, by showing that the Kingdom of God is spiritual.

(a) "Doing." What is Christ doing according to this book? There seems to be a three-fold work running through the record from beginning to end:

- (i) Equipping His workers (1:8), "Ye shall receive power."
- (ii) Extending His Kingdom (1:8), "Witnesses unto the uttermost part of the earth."
- (iii) Establishing His Church (2:47), "The Lord added to the Church daily."

These three ideas should be studied in each chapter, and the aspects of the work carefully noted. They represent the permanent work of the Lord. There is no other than these being done by Him in His Church to-day. He still endues His workers with power, and by means of disciples thus equipped He evangelizes the world and builds up the Church. Thus the work goes on as in the past, and so it will continue until the Lord shall come.

(b) "Teaching." What is Christ teaching according to this book? We read in 8:5 that Philip "preached Christ," and it is evident in all the discourses recorded in this book that the Person of our Lord was the substance and centre of the message. Out of this preaching of a personal Saviour and Lord come three great elements which practically sum up the Gospel, as recorded in the Acts:

(i) The Resurrection of Christ. Great prominence is given to the resurrection of our Lord in all Apostolic teaching (e.g. 2:24, 3:15; 4:10). This should be traced through the book. The reason of it is obvious. The resurrection involved the Divine position and authority of Jesus of Nazareth, and this was the real cause of the anger of the Jewish authorities (4:2) because the preachers associated the resurrection with Jesus.

(ii) The Kingdom of God. This second element of Apostolic teaching follows naturally as a consequence of the resurrection; for, since Jesus is God, He must be Lord and King. They therefore proclaimed the Kingdom of God with all that it implied and involved of submission, surrender, loyalty, and obedience. This can be traced chapter by chapter through the entire book.

(iii) The Forgiveness of Sins. This third feature of Apostolic teaching is again a consequence of the two foregoing elements. Man is a rebel, and as such cannot be a subject of the Kingdom until he is prepared to lay down his arms, surrender to the King, and receive that forgiveness of sins which alone can qualify him for entrance into the Kingdom and for a life of loyalty to his sovereign Lord and God. Hence the preaching of redemption was ever to the front according to the Master's "marching orders" (Luke 24:47). If this is traced through the Acts, forgiveness will ever be found to be one of the main elements and keynote of the Apostles' message (2:38; 10:43; 13:38).

We now see what was the work of "doing" and "teaching" that Jesus continued after He was taken up. The order of the words "doing" and "teaching" is noteworthy. Deeds first; then words. The same order is found in Luke 24:19 (contrast Acts 7:22). The "doing" comes first, for Christianity is primarily life. The teaching follows afterwards, for "the life is the light of men."

There is one more word in these verses (Acts 1:1, 2) which must be considered in relation to the purpose of the book. It gives—

## 3. The Suggestion of a Particular Aspect

We have already seen the contrast implied in this word "began," when referring to the difference between our Lord before and after His Ascension. But there is another thought associated with it which needs careful attention. Just as St. Luke's Gospel gives only the beginning of our Lord's ministry, that is, only a few specimens of the work of those wonderful three years, so this Book of the

Acts is only a record of the beginning of the Christian Church in different places; a beginning and no more; not a detailed history, only a record of the start of things.

(a) We see the beginning of the Church in relation to certain places. Notice how the narrative hurries on from place to place. Just the "beginning" at Jerusalem; then on to Judæa and Samaria (chap. 8); then on to Syria (Acts 11); and then on with a continuous movement through St. Paul's journeys until Rome is reached (Acts 28). The years were far fuller than any anything here recorded, and so, out of the mass of material, we have selections for the purpose of showing the beginnings of the Church, the beginning of what Jesus did and taught by His Spirit through His people in the first thirty years of the Church's history.

(b) Further, we may see the beginning of the Church in relation to certain typical methods. We have in this book the first specimens of several main features of Church life which have become very familiar since those days. We have the first Christian sermon; the first prayer meeting; the first Church organization; the first Church difficulty; and many more similar "beginnings" to which fuller attention will be called later.

The whole book should be looked at and carefully read in the light of the three main features of its purpose, showing our Lord as the Divine Worker, the character of His work, and the particular aspect of the work dwelt upon.

### Study 3. The Plan

The next question is as to how this purpose is carried out. What does the book reveal of its plan for the accomplishment of its object? How is the activity of the Divine Worker realised, and how is His great work accomplished? A study of Acts 1:8 gives the answer, and from this verse we can gain a clear idea of the plan of the book, and at the same time a definite indication of the plan and method of the propagation of Christianity during the early years of its history. Let us therefore give special attention to it: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." We can see three elements in this plan:—

1. The purpose is to be accomplished through a Special Class of People. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me."

(a) These men were already disciples, their true place had for some time been that of scholars, learners in the school of their Teacher and Master.

(b) They were now to be witnesses, and their definite work was to bear testimony to their Master; they were not to be theologians, or philosophers, or leaders, but witnesses. Whatever else they might become, everything was to be subordinate to the idea of personal testimony. It was to call attention to what they knew of Him and to deliver His message to mankind. This special class of people, namely, disciples who are also witnesses, is therefore very prominent in this book. Page after page is occupied by their testimony, and the key to this feature is found in the words of Peter: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (4:20).

2. The purpose is to be accomplished through a Special Pathway of Progress, "In Jerusalem ... Samaria ... the uttermost part of the earth."

These words indicate both the substance of the book and also the progress of extension of early Christianity.

(a) The historical aspect is to be considered. In chapters 1-7 we have the Church in Jerusalem; in chapters 8 and 9 the Church in Judæa and Samaria; in chapters 10-28 the Church of the Gentile world leading up to Rome, which to a Jew would be "the uttermost part of the earth." The book is thus built up of historical material, giving the pathway of progress from the capital of the Jewish to the capital of the Gentile world.

(b) The spiritual aspect is also noteworthy. It is not fanciful to give attention to the spiritual suggestions of these three different regions:—

(i) Witnessing to the Jews meant witnessing to those who held a true religion, but held it for the most part falsely and unreally.

(ii) Witnessing in Samaria meant witnessing to those who had a mixed religion, partly true, and partly false, Jewish and Heathen.

(iii) Witnessing to the uttermost part of the earth meant witnessing to those who had no real and vital religion at all.

Note: We can see the modern counterpart of these three in the present day:—(1) Home Missions; (2) Missions to those religious systems which have an admixture of truth and error; (3) Missions to the Heathen.

3. The purpose is to be fulfilled through a Special Bestowment of Power:—"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

As we have already seen, this book emphasises the Divine side of Christianity and makes it prominent and predominant. The witnesses consequently need, and are promised, a supernatural power for the performance of their work. The Holy Spirit thus promised and received equips them with power ( $\delta$   $\nu\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma$ ) for service. As the book is carefully studied, this feature will be seen in all its prominence and glory. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zech 4:6).

Thus the book should be studied with these three lines of the plan clearly in view:—

(a) The place and power of the disciples as witnesses.

(b) The order and method of progress in the work.

(c) The prominence given to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.

These three aspects, the personal, the historical, the spiritual, can be seen at every stage of the work, showing how God's purpose of Redemption was to be and was actually realised.

## Study 4. The Analysis

With the purpose and plan clearly in mind, we now proceed to analyse the book and see how the general aim is worked out in detail. It will be well to read through the book and make our own analysis first. The simpler divisions of the subject will be easily discovered. When, and only when, we have thus made our own general analysis, we may find it useful to look at the outlines in this study and compare it with our own, and correct it by them and them by it.

The three analyses now given deal respectively with:—(a) Facts; (b) Principles; (c) Persons. It is useful to view the work from these different standpoints by giving attention first to the contents and substance of the book, then to the great principles and truths underlying the facts, and then to the men through whom the history was made, and the truths taught. We shall thereby be enabled to master the book and make its meaning clear.

### 1. The Growth of the Church According to Historical Extension

- (a) The Church of Jerusalem (Acts 1:1-8:4). Time, five years.
- (b) The Church of Palestine and Syria (Acts 8:5-12:25). Time, fifteen years.
- (c) The Church of the Gentiles (Acts 13:1-28:31). Time, ten years.

Under these main divisions the historical material can best be studied in detail.

### 2. The Growth of the Church According to Spiritual Expansion

- (a) Its definite commencement (Acts 1:1-8:4). The Church of the earliest days in Jerusalem.
- (b) Its growing experiences (Acts 8:5-12:25). The preparation for extension to the Gentiles.
- (c) Its great progress (Acts 13:1-21:16). The missionary work of the Apostle Paul.
- (d) Its apparent check (Acts 21:17-28:31). The imprisonment of St. Paul and its wonderful results.

Each of these sections, as we shall see, yields abundant material for the study of the spiritual life, power, and progress of the Church

### 3. The Growth of the Church According to Spiritual, Effort

It is evident to every reader that the Book of the Acts is mainly a record of two Apostles and their companions, and the book may be studied very profitably from this point of view. We may note the following points:—

- (a) The Apostle Peter (Acts 1-12). There are five main sections, ending with his imprisonment at Jerusalem (12).
- (b) The Apostle Paul (Acts 13-28). There are five main sections ending with his imprisonment at Rome (28).

The writer seems to have selected particular instances of work in the lives of the two Apostles which are parallel to each other.

## PETER <> PAUL

First sermon (Acts 2) <> First sermon (Acts 13)

Simon Magus (Acts 8) <> Elymas (Acts 13)

Influence of His shadow (Acts 5) <> Influence of his handkerchiefs (Acts 19)

Lame man healed (Acts 3) <> Lame man healed (Acts 14)

Tabitha raised (Acts 9) <> Eutychus raised (Acts 20)

Peter worshipped (Acts 10) <> Paul worshipped (Acts 14)

Laying on of hands (Acts 8) <> Laying on of hands (Acts 19)

To conclude: the following three great ideas sum up the contents of the book, and each of them should be noticed at every stage of the history,

(i) The predominance of the Divine element in the Christian Church This is seen in the prominence given to the living Lord and the Holy Spirit. A new dispensation is thus being experienced.

(ii) The universality of the Gospel. The keynote is struck in Acts 1:8, and then gradually prepared for and realised until Rome is reached. A world-wide commission is being fulfilled.

(iii) The hostility of Judaism. This is seen very early (Acts 3), and is observed throughout until the consummation is reached (Acts 28). A great revolution is being carried out. The Jewish religion is being fulfilled and thereby abrogated, while Gentile idolatry is being opposed and destroyed. The result is deadly enmity on different grounds from Jews and Gentiles.

Note these three great principles as essentials of Christian work to-day and as summing up Christianity when truly understood and fully proclaimed.

We shall now take up the book, using the three outlines given above as our guide to the mastery of the entire contents and meaning of this important part of the New Testament Scriptures.

## Chapter II The Historical Extension of the Church (I)

The Church of Jerusalem (Acts 1:1-8:4)

With the purpose (Acts 1:2) and the plan (Acts 1:8) kept clearly and constantly in view, we now proceed to study the contents of the book according to the three-fold analysis already given. The book is so full and so important, that it is necessary and very valuable to consider it from various standpoints.

Our first step must be the thorough study and complete mastery of the contents of each section. Everything should be studied in the fullest possible detail; persons, places, discourses and developments should all be clearly seen.

In each section the following points should be carefully dealt with:—

- (a) What it contains; or, its materials.
- (b) What it means; or, its interpretation.
- (c) What it suggests; or, its topics.
- (d) What it teaches; or, its lessons.

In the first study we will take up each of these four points by way of suggestion and guidance; but for the rest of the book we shall confine our-selves mainly to (a), (c), and (d), leaving (b) to be gathered from commentaries. Both the exigencies of space and the real purpose of this manual prevent a full treatment of this large section of the New Testament. Besides, there are many very valuable commentaries on this book which can, and should be, consulted (see Bibliography at the end of this volume). Other points of suggestion and personal application will be elicited by each student as the direct result of his own study and meditation.

### Study 1. The Preparation (Acts 1)

#### The Contents

Consider and, where necessary, correct the following analysis:—

1. The great Forty Days (Acts 1:1-8).
2. The Ascension (Acts 1:9-11).
3. The days of Waiting (Acts 1:12-14).
4. The Apostolate completed (Acts 1:15-26).

#### The Meaning

Acts 1:1, 2. The relation of the Book to the "former treatise."

Acts 1: 6. The Kingdom. Consider the erroneous ideas.

Acts 1:12. A Sabbath-day's journey; what was this?

Acts 1:13. Compare this list with those in the Gospels.

Acts 1:18. Compare also Matthew 27:3-10; how reconciled?

Acts 1:20. Study the quotation and note its primary and secondary meaning.

Acts 1:26. "The lot"; study the various Old Testament references to it.

Note: These are only a few of the points which arise out of the verses, and which need careful personal study first, and then afterwards the use of commentaries.

#### The Subjects

Among other topics, the following may be suggested:—

1. The character and importance of our Lord's post-Resurrection instruction.
2. The fact and meaning of the Ascension, in the light of general New Testament teaching (e.g. Rom. 8 and Heb. 1 and Heb 9).
3. The nucleus of the Church, and its relation to our Lord's earthly ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 15:6).
4. The qualifications and uniqueness of an Apostle (Acts 1:21, 22).
5. The appointment of Matthias; was it necessary? was it according to the Divine will?

#### The Lessons

- (a) The ascended Christ as our peace.
  - (i) Perfect—all barriers removed.
  - (ii) Perpetual—Because He ever liveth.
- (b) The living Christ as our power.
  - (i) For character—joy, strength, holiness, (ii) For conduct—witness, work, warfare.
- (c) The coming Christ as our prospect.
  - (i) Personal re-union.
  - (ii) Perfect satisfaction.

Note: The rest of the studies will now be confined, as already stated, to sections 1, 3, and 4, but it is important that all four points should have special attention.

## Study 2. The Church Constituted (Acts 2)

### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4).
2. The effects of the coming (Acts 2:5-13).
3. The sermon of St. Peter (Acts 2:14-36).
4. The effects of the sermon (Acts 2:37-42).
5. The early Church (Acts 2:43-47).

### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The gift of the Holy Spirit in relation to preceding manifestations (cf. Old Testament and John 7:39, John 14-16).
2. The Gift of Tongues (cf. Acts 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor. 12-14).
3. The first Christian sermon:—
  - (a) Introduction—Personal explanation (Acts 2:14-21).
  - (b) Theme—Jesus is the Messiah, as shown by the Resurrection
    - (1) The Resurrection declared (Acts 2:23, 24);
    - (2) The Resurrection predicted (Acts 2:25-31);
    - (3) The Resurrection attested (Acts 2:32);
    - (4) The Resurrection proved (Acts 2:33-35).
  - (c) Conclusion—Personal application (Acts 2:36).
4. Church membership (Acts 2:41ff.).
  - (a) How made; (b) How maintained; (c) How manifested.
5. Elements of early Church life (Acts 2:42-47).

### Points to Be Pondered

1. The meaning of Pentecost.
  - (i) The Spirit on them.
  - (ii) The Spirit in them.
  - (iii) The Spirit through them.
2. The message of Pentecost.
  - (i) Distinct from conversion.
  - (ii) Intended for service.
  - (iii) Proved by results.
3. The secret of Pentecost.
  - (i) Singleness of aim ("one accord") (Acts 2:1).
  - (ii) Preparedness of spirit ("continuing in prayer") (Acts 1:14; 2:1).
  - (iii) Willingness of life ("began to speak") (Acts 2:4).
4. The preaching of Pentecost.
  - (i) Its matter—a personal Christ.
  - (ii) Its manner—clearly, completely, convincingly.
5. The Church of Pentecost.
  - (i) Its life expressed—in truth, power, love, (ii) Its life explained—Christ for them, a Saviour accepted; Christ in them, a Friend experienced; Christ through them, a Master manifested.

## Study 3. Progress and Persecution (Acts 3:1-4:31)

### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The lame man healed (Acts 3:1-11).
2. Peter's discourse in explanation (vv. 12-26).
3. Arrest of Peter and John (Acts 4:1-4).
4. Their trial by Council (vv. 5-12).
5. Their release (vv. 13-22).
6. Their reception by the Christians (vv. 23-31).

### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The first Apostolic Miracle: (i) its circumstances; (ii) its characteristics; (iii) its consequences.

2. St. Peter's second Sermon: (i) its occasion (v. 12); (ii) its theme (vv. 13-16); (iii) its appeal (vv. 17-26).
3. The first persecution of Christians.
4. The attitude of Peter: (i) contrast his past; (ii) consider his present; (iii) explain the difference.
5. The first recorded Christian Prayer Meeting (Acts 4:24-31): (i) why they prayed; (ii) what they asked; (iii) what they obtained.

#### Points to Be Pondered

1. A picture of the Church (Acts 3:1-16).
  - (i) In relation to the sinner: (a) the sinner's need; (b) the Church's provision.
  - (ii) In relation to the world: (a) testimony of the life in the man healed; (b) testimony of the lips in Peter's words.
  - (iii) In relation to the Master: (a) the Church's life; worship, fellowship, faithfulness, blessing; (b) the Church's power—Christ preeminent (v. 13); the truth realised (v. 14); faith exercised (v. 16).
2. Christianity and opposition (Acts 4:1-22).
  - (i) Our attitude: (a) testimony to Christ (Acts 4:10-12); (b) power through Christ (Acts 4:13); (c) work for Christ (Acts 4:14).
  - (ii) Our ability: (a) for testimony—the Holy Spirit, (Acts 4:8); (b) for power—"with Jesus" (Acts 4:13); (c) for work—"His name" (Acts 4:17, 18).
3. Church fellowship Acts 4:23-31.
  - (i) A picture: (a) repression of self; (b) expression of Christ; (c) impression of power.
  - (ii) A possibility: (a) power sought; (b) power received; (c) power manifested.

#### Study 4. Fuller Progress (Acts 4:32-5:16)

#### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The Christian Fellowship (Acts 4:32-35).
2. The story of Barnabas (Acts 4:36, 37).
3. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).
4. The striking results (Acts 4:12-16).

#### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The Community of goods: (i) its cause, (ii) its expression, (iii) its continuation.
2. The character and work of Barnabas (cf. Acts 9:27; 13:2; 15:35).
3. The spiritual results of Divine discipline (Acts 4:11-14).
4. The Apostolic miracles (Acts 5:15); compare other instances in Acts.

#### Points to Be Pondered

1. The sin (life in self).
  - (i) On the surface, it was avarice.
  - (ii) Somewhat deeper, it was hypocrisy.
  - (iii) Deepest of all, it was unfaithfulness (cf. Acts 5:3, Satan).
2. The safeguard (life in the Spirit).
  - (i) Avarice met by the Spirit of love.
  - (ii) Hypocrisy met by the Spirit of truth.
  - (iii) Unfaithfulness met by the Spirit of power.

#### Study 5. Second Persecution (Acts 5:17-42)

#### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The arrest of the Apostles (Acts 5:17, 18).
2. Their release and its outcome (Acts 5:19-25).
3. Their fresh arrest and trial (Acts 5:26-33).
4. The counsel of Gamaliel (Acts 5:34-39).
5. Their punishment and dismissal (Acts 5:40-42).

#### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The Divine intervention; compare others in this book.
2. The attitude of the Jewish authorities to Christianity.
3. The defence of Peter: (i) its justification, (ii) its message, (iii) its testimony. Notice how he always manages to preach Christ.
4. The counsel of Gamaliel: (i) its plausibility; (ii) its falsity; (iii) its cowardice.

#### Points to Be Pondered

1. The three forces: (i) spirit of error (High Priest); (ii) spirit of compromise (Gamaliel); (iii) spirit of Truth (Peter).



2. The only safety: (i) resoluteness; (ii) faithfulness; (iii) persistence.
3. The only strength: (i) God realised, Acts 5:29; (ii) Christ precious, Acts 5:30, 31; (iii) the Spirit powerful, Acts 5:32.

#### Study 6. Continued Progress (Acts 6:1-8:4)

##### Materials to Be Mastered

1. Developing in means (Acts 6:1-6).
2. Growth of the Church (Acts 6:7)
3. Character and work of Stephen (Acts 6:8-10).
4. Arrest and trial of Stephen (Acts 6:11-7:1).
5. Stephen's defence (Acts 7:2-53).
6. Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7:54-60).
7. Persecution and dispersion of Christians (Acts 8:1-4).

##### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The first Church difficulty: (i) its nature; (ii) its unavoidableness; (iii) its removal; (iv) its outcome.
2. The new Ministerial Office (cf. 1 Tim. 3).
3. The characteristics of the Seven: (i) their secular work; (ii) their spiritual qualifications.
4. The significance and importance of Stephen.
5. Stephen's line of defence. Consider his defence of two points in the light of Jewish history: (i) God's universality; not limiting Himself to Palestine and the Temple in His revelations to man; (ii) Israel's perversity; ever resisting God, and even destroying God's messengers.
6. The effects of persecution: (i) dispersion of Christians (where?); (ii) Apostles remaining at Jerusalem (why?).

##### Points to Be Pondered

1. Church difficulties.
  - (a) Church difficulties: (i) inevitable; (ii) not invincible.
  - (b) Church difficulties overcome: (i) by trust (consulting the whole Church); (ii) by frankness (re-arrangement recognized as necessary); (iii) by willingness (the people agreed); (iv) by love (all seeking the highest good).
  - (c) Church difficulties overruled: (i) the increase of numbers, v. 7; (ii) the development of gifts, v. 8.
2. Stephen.
  - (a) His life: (i) dauntless courage; (ii) deep conviction; (iii) devoted character, before God, Acts 6:15, before man, Acts 7:60.
  - (b) His secret: (i) faith in God; (ii) fellowship with Christ; (iii) fulness of the Spirit.

Note: The close of this first section of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles gives an opportunity for the important work of reconsideration and review. The chapters should be read over, their main divisions and most important facts memorised, and the leading topics of the history and any special aspects of the life of the Church should be recorded and noted.

### Chapter III The Historical Extension of the Church (II)

#### The Church in Palestine and Syria (Acts 8:5-12:25)

The importance of this section lies in the fact that it is the record of the transitional period between Jerusalem and Jewish Christianity on the one hand, and Gentile Christianity proper on the other, which will be fully considered in our next study. All the facts and stages of development should be fully known.

#### Study 1. The Church in Samaria (Acts 8:5-40)

##### Materials to Be Mastered

1. Philip in Samaria (Acts 8:5-8).
2. Philip and Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-13).
3. The Apostles in Samaria (Acts 8:14-17).
4. The Apostles and Simon Magus (Acts 8:18-25).
5. Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40).

##### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The office and work of an Evangelist; cf. Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11.
2. The work in Samaria: (i) its success, (ii) its possible explanation (John 4:39-42), (iii) its relation to the expansion of Christianity.
3. Simon Magus: (i) was he a hypocrite? or (ii) a backslider? (see Acts 8:13 and Acts 8:23, Greek; is Acts 8:4 the language of a hypocrite?).
4. The uniqueness of the Apostles (Acts 8:16-18).

5. The first example of individual dealing with a soul (Acts 8:30ff.).

#### Points to Be Pondered

1. Qualifications for Evangelists, Acts 8:5-8.
  - (a) Full heart: spontaneous and hearty preaching.
  - (b) Clear head: Bible knowledge and information.
  - (c) Clean hands: Consistent life and genuine sympathy.
2. Essentials for individual dealing with souls, Acts 8:26-40.
  - (a) Fellowship with the Spirit: receptive and responsive.
  - (b) Faithfulness to the Spirit: trusting and obedient.
  - (c) Fearlessness in the Spirit: aggressive and tactful.
  - (d) Forcefulness through ... Spirit: Scriptural and practical.

#### Study 2. Saul's Conversion and Early Labours (Acts 9:1-31)

##### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The immediate cause (Acts 9:1, 2).
2. The Divine revelation (Acts 9:3-9).
3. The new discipline (Acts 9:10-19a).
4. The bold witness (Acts 9:19b-22).
5. The Jewish opposition (Acts 9:23-25).
6. Christian hesitation (Acts 9:26-30).
7. Summary as to the state of the Church (Acts 9:31).

Note: With Acts 9:1-19 compare Acts 22:4-16 and Acts 26:9-18. The three accounts should be studied together as well as separately.

##### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The persecutor (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1, 2).
2. The Divine manifestation: (i) its character; (ii) its circumstances.
3. The ministry of Ananias; an ordinary Christian layman conferring the Holy Ghost (v. 17).
4. Saul's early testimony for Christ. Where does Galatians 1:15-18 come in? Is it between Acts 9:22-23?
5. Saul's first visit to Jerusalem: (i) the Church's fear; (ii) the intervention of Barnabas; (iii) Saul's bold testimony.
6. The condition of the Church at that time: (i) how described; (ii) how explained?

##### Points to Be Pondered

1. Elements of Conversion, Acts 9:1-20.
  - (a) The sinner needing Christ (Saul).
    - (i) Convicted; (ii) deciding; (iii) seeking; (iv) receiving.
  - (b) The servant leading to Christ (Ananias).
    - (i) A believer; (ii) a good man (Acts 22:12); (iii) in touch with Christ; (iv) obedient.
  - (c) The Divine blessing of Christ (the Lord).
    - (i) His personal interest.
    - (ii) His definite action.
    - (iii) His wise method.
    - (iv) His marvelous grace.
2. The young convert, Acts 9:19-30.
  - (a) Testimony, Acts 9:19-21.
  - (b) Opposition Acts 9:22-25.
  - (c) Suspicion, Acts 9:26.
  - (d) Fellowship, Acts 9:27-30.

#### Study 3. The Church of Judæa (Acts 9:32-43)

##### Materials to Be Mastered

1. Peter at Lydda (Acts 9:32-35).
2. Peter at Joppa (Acts 9:36-43).

##### Subjects to Be Studied

1. Indications of the growth of Christianity (Acts 9:32, 39).

2. The Apostolic position and work (Acts 9:32).
3. Apostolic miracles (cf. Mark 5:38-42).
4. Peter's preparation for new revelations (Acts 9:43).

#### Points to Be Pondered

1. A picture of the visible Church
  - (a) Power over sickness and death.
  - (b) Holiness (Acts 9:32), "Saints."
  - (c) Character (Acts 9:39), Sympathy.
  - (d) Usefulness (Acts 9:36), Deeds.
  - (e) Progress (Acts 9:42).
2. A picture of the invisible Christ.
  - (a) In the home of Æneas (Acts 9:34).
  - (b) In the heart of Dorcas (Acts 9:36).
  - (c) In the hope of the disciples (Acts 9:38).
  - (d) In the hand of Peter (Acts 9:40).
  - (e) In the harvest of converts (Acts 9:42).

#### Study 4. The Extension to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48)

##### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The revelation to Cornelius (Acts 10:1-8).
2. The revelation to Peter (Acts 10:9-16).
3. The messengers of Cornelius (Acts 10:17-23a).
4. The response of Peter (Acts 10:23b-33).
5. The message to Cornelius (Acts 10:34-43).
6. The conversion of the Gentiles (Acts 10: 44-48).

##### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The spiritual attitude and position of Cornelius.
2. The preparation of Peter (cf. Mark 7:15, R. V.).
3. The universality of the Gospel (cf. Acts 1:8).
4. Peter's address: (i) the universality of Christianity; (ii) the preaching of Christ; (iii) the offer of salvation.
5. The Gentile Pentecost (cf. Acts 2, the Jewish).

#### Points to Be Pondered

1. Cornelius the man. His personal experience. Illustrating:—
  - (a) The religious man. Note his piety, reverence, influence, liberality, prayer, receptivity, obedience. He was fully living up to his light, yet all these admirable elements were not enough. Religion and Christianity are not synonymous.
  - (b) The Christian man.
    - (i) Hearing the Truth of Christ. The specific message of Christianity.
    - (ii) Experiencing the Salvation of Christ. His personal contact with Christ.
    - (iii) Receiving the Spirit of Christ. The fount of holiness and satisfaction
2. Cornelius the Gentile. His representative character. Illustrating:—
  - (a) The Gospel needed by all.
  - (b) The Gospel sufficient for all.
  - (c) The Gospel accessible to all.
  - (d) The Gospel received by all.

#### Study 5. Peter's Justification (Acts 11:1-18)

##### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The reception of the news at Jerusalem (Acts 11:1).
2. Objections made (Acts 11:2, 3).
3. Explanation offered (Acts 11:4-17).
4. Acknowledgment rendered (Acts 11:18).

##### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The attitude of Jewish Christians (cf. Acts 15:1).
2. The substance and tone of Peter's defence: (i) the Apostle called to account; (ii) his statement of facts; (iii) his throwing the

responsibility upon his hearers.

#### Points to Be Pondered

1. A lesson in God's providence.
  - (a) The purpose of God (how striking).
    - (i) Breaking down temporary barriers.
    - (ii) Bringing in eternal blessings.
  - (b) The plan of God (how simple).
    - (i) Gradual (Samaria—Eunuch—Tanner's house).
    - (ii) Natural (Preparation of Cornelius and preparation of Peter simultaneous).
  - (c) The power of God (how sufficient).
    - (i) Arrangement of circumstances.
    - (ii) Accomplishment of results.
2. A lesson in Christian faithfulness.
  - (a) Peter's soul in touch with God.
  - (b) Peter's mind open to God.
  - (c) Peter's will obedient to God.

#### Study 6. The Church in Syria (Acts 11:19-30)

##### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The foundation (Acts 11:19-21).
2. The progress (Acts 11:22-26).
3. The power (Acts 11:27-30).

##### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The Church at Antioch:—
  - (a) Its simple commencement (Acts 11:20).
  - (b) Its striking characteristics (Acts 11:21, 23, 24).
  - (c) Its great importance.
2. The term "Christian" (cf Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16).
  - (a) Was it a term of reproach? or—
  - (b) A natural and Divine designation? (cf. Greek word for "called," Acts 11:26).

(Note the three elements in the name.

- (i) It contains Jewish thought, as the equivalent of Messiah, the Anointed.
- (ii) It shows the Greek language in the substantive—"Christ."

(iii) It also includes the Latin language in the adjectival ending "ians" (Latin, iani). This universality is a reminder of the language of the title on the Cross.)

3. The relation of Jerusalem to new Churches (cf. Acts 8:14-17; 11:1, 22).
4. The prophet of the New Testament (cf. prophets in the O.T. and also other N. T. references).

#### Points to Be Pondered

##### The characteristics of a model Church - Acts

- (a) Begun through simple testimony (Acts 11:19).
- (b) Its varied elements—Jew and Gentile.
- (c) Its spiritual power (Acts 11:20).
- (d) Its progress (Acts 11:21).
- (e) Its remarkable influence (Acts 11:21).
- (f) Its liberal giving (Acts 11:22, 24, 26).
- (g) Its missionary spirit (Acts 13:1-3).

#### Study 7. Another Persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 12:1-25)

##### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The Martyrdom of the Apostle James (Acts 12:1, 2).
2. Imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12:3-5).
3. Deliverance of Peter (Acts 12:6-10).
4. Return of Peter (Acts 12:11-17).
5. Action of Herod (Acts 12:18, 19).

6. Death of Herod (Acts 12:20-23).
7. The condition of the Church (Acts 12:24, 25).

#### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The Martyrdom of James (cf. Matt. 20:20-23).
  - (a) Its summary record.
  - (b) The contrast with... details of Stephen's martyrdom.
  - (c) The explanation of the difference.
2. Peter in Prison—a study of the possibilities of Divine Grace.
3. The Herods of the New Testament: (i) their history; (ii) their character.
4. The marks of Church progress thus far (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 4:32; 5:14; 6:7; 8:4, 25; 9:31, 32; 11:24).

#### Points to Be Pondered

1. The Apostle James.
  - (a) Discipleship (John 1:41).
  - (b) Ministry (Matt. 4:21).
  - (c) Apostleship (Matt. 10:2).
  - (d) Training (Mark 5:37; Matt. 17:1; Luke 9:54; Mark 10:35; 13:3; 14:33).
  - (e) Equipment (Acts 1:13; 2:4; 1 Cor. 15:7).
  - (f) Martyrdom (Acts 12:2).
2. Three great powers.
  - (a) The power of Satan: mighty (vv. 1-4); limited (vv. 7-10); doomed (vv. 21-24).
  - (b) The power of God: in human extremity; in apparent impossibility; in complete victory.
  - (c) The power of prayer: enjoying God; overcoming Satan; blessing men.

Note: Another opportunity for review occurs here, especially with reference to the progress and development of the Church. The various facts and forces should all be considered, and special attention given to the five lines of preparation for the extension of the Church to the Gentiles:—

- (1) The work in Samaria (Acts 8:2).
- (2) The conversion of the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-39).
- (3) The conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10).
- (4) The work in Antioch (Acts 11).
- (5) The conversion of Saul (Acts 9).

The first four lines prepared the way; the fifth provided the man.

### **Chapter IV The Historical Extension of the Church (III)**

The Church of the Gentiles (Acts 13:1-28:31)

With the history recorded in Acts 1-12 clearly before us, we now follow the development of the Church into Gentile lands by means of the Apostolic work of St. Paul.

The comparative fulness with which this second section of Acts is given shows the importance of the man and of his work in relation to the development of Christianity. It is, of course, impossible, in view of the special purpose of this little volume, to discuss fully all the details, and it must therefore suffice to give briefly an outline of the subject with a few suggestions for further study. The material should be sub-divided and taken up in detail, according to individual opportunity.

St. Paul's Missionary Journeys should be carefully traced on the map, and the details of his work at each point thoroughly mastered. A good plan is to sketch an outline map for one's self by placing some tracing paper over any good map, using one piece of tracing paper for each Missionary Journey, in order to have the precise route in each case brought clearly before us. Geography and history are of the utmost importance in connection with this study if the great spiritual facts and principles are to be understood and appreciated.

Study 1. The First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1-14:28)

#### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The call at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3).
2. The work in Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12).
3. The journey to Asia Minor (Acts 13: 13).
4. The arrival at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:14, 15).
5. Paul's discourse in the Synagogue (Acts 13:16-41).
6. The work at Antioch (Acts 13:42-52).

7. The work at Iconium (Acts 14:1-6).
8. The work at Lystra (Acts 14:7-20).
9. The Churches re-visited (Acts 14:20-25).
10. The return to Antioch (Acts 14:26-28).

#### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The Church of Antioch in Syria: (i) its ministry, (ii) its life, (iii) its order.
2. The home Church and Foreign Missions: (i) hearing the call of God, (ii) giving their best to God.
3. The work in Cyprus: (i) the gradual leadership of Paul (cf. vv. 1, 7, 9, 13). Note the spirituality of Barnabas implied in this. (ii) the opposition, (iii) the spiritual results.
4. The return of Mark: (i) who he was (cf. Acts 12:25; Col. 4:10, R. V.), (ii) why he had come (Acts 13:5), (iii) why he returned (Acts 15:37-39), (iv) the sequel (2 Tim. 4:11).
5. Apostolic methods of work: (i) to the Jew first, (ii) then to the Gentile, (iii) the application of these methods to-day.
6. The discourse at Antioch:—
  - (i) Its review leading up to David (vv. 16-22).
  - (ii) Jesus is of David's seed (vv. 23-25).
  - (iii) The Gospel message based on the Resurrection (26-37).
  - (iv) The offer of the Gospel and warning (vv. 38-41).
7. Jewish hostility: (i) its features, here and elsewhere, (ii) its causes, (iii) its results.
8. The address at Lystra: (i) the audience, (ii) the substance, (iii) the appropriateness.
9. The organization of the Gentile Church (14:22, 23).
10. Missionary Meeting at Antioch (14:26-28).

#### Points to Be Pondered

Some aspects of missionary work are clearly-seen in these chapters.

1. Demands.
  - (i) The best talent of the home Church (Acts 13:1).
  - (ii) Divine call Acts 13:2).
  - (iii) Full consecration (Acts 13:3).
  - (iv) Church sympathy (Acts 13:3).
  - (v) Real life (Acts 13:5).
  - (vi) Divine power (Acts 13:4).
2. Difficulties.
  - (i) Home ties.
  - (ii) Genuine perils.
  - (iii) Satan's influence (Acts 13:6).
  - (iv) Strong opposition (Acts 13:8).
  - (v) Fickle friendship (Acts 13:13).
3. Delights.
  - (i) Divine leading (Acts 13:2, 4).
  - (ii) Great opportunities (Acts 13:5).
  - (iii) Real interest (Acts 13:7).
  - (iv) Definite power (Acts 13:9).
  - (v) Divine blessings (Acts 13:12).
  - (vi) Full compensation (Acts 13:13).

#### Study 2. The Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35)

##### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The great dissension (Acts 15:1, 2a).
2. The deputation to Jerusalem (Acts 15:2b-4).
3. The Conference (Acts 15:5, 6).
4. The address of Peter (Acts 15:7-11).
5. The testimony of Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:12).
6. The address of James (Acts 15:13-21).
7. The decision (Acts 15:22-29).
8. The effect at Antioch (Acts 15:30-35).

#### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The great problem: (i) what it was, (ii) how it was raised, (iii) why it was important (cf. Gal. 2:4, 5).
2. The first Church Conference: (i) its constitution, (ii) its action, (iii) its outcome.
3. The attitude of Peter; where does Galatians 2:11-14 come in? Is it prior or subsequent to this Council at Jerusalem? (See Ramsay, Historical Commentary on Galatians, and Bartlet, Apostolic Age.)

#### Points to Be Pondered

Church difficulties are always a real test of the vital religion of the membership. We see here how they should be dealt with. They are:—

1. To be faced frankly.
2. To be discussed fully.
3. To be decided amicably, and the decisions are
4. To be accepted heartily.

#### Study 3. St. Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)

#### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The dissension of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-40).
2. The Churches re-visited (Acts 15:41-16:5).
3. The call to Macedonia (Acts 15:6-11).
4. The work in Philippi (Acts 15:12-40).
5. The experiences in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9).
6. The work in Berea (Acts 17:10-15).
7. Paul at Athens Acts 17:16-34).
8. Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:1-17).
9. Return to Antioch (Acts 18:18-22).

Note: As the materials are given above in the barest outline only, the details should be analysed into sub-sections, and the entire subject-matter mastered. The map of the second journey should be carefully made, and the itinerary closely followed.

#### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The separation of Christian friends: (i) the causes; (ii) the results; (iii) the lessons.
2. The Second Journey:
  - (i) its primary idea, Acts 15:36;
  - (ii) its initial stage, Acts 15:41-16:5;
  - (iii) its striking developments, Acts 16:6ff.
3. Divine Providence in Christian work (Acts 16:6-10). Consult other instances in this book.
4. The entrance of the Gospel into Europe: (i) the simple commencement; (ii) the characteristic features; (iii) the far-reaching results.
5. The persecution of Christianity: (i) Roman (chap. 16); (ii) Jewish (chaps. 17 and 18).
6. The work at Thessalonica: compare allusions in 1 Thessalonians and form impressions of (i) time occupied; (ii) work done; (iii) Church founded.
7. Paul at Athens: (i) Contrast his attitude to cultured and uncultured Gentiles (see Acts 14, address at Lystra); (ii) Analyse his address at Athens (Acts 17); (a) God's Person unknown (Acts 17:22, 23); (b) God's truth declared (Acts 17:24-28); (c) God's message proclaimed (Acts 17:29-31).
8. The Church of Corinth: compare references in 1 Corinthians and (as at Thessalonica) consider (i) length of stay; (ii) character and size of Church; (iii) methods of work.

#### Points to Be Pondered

1. New work (Acts 16:6-13).
  - (a) God's call to work.
    - (i) Human need (Acts 16:9).
    - (ii) Personal readiness (Acts 16:5-7).
    - (iii) Favourable circumstances (Acts 16:11).
    - (iv) Spiritual power, the Holy Spirit.
  - (b) God's care in work.
    - (i) Guiding.
    - (ii) Preserving.

- (iii) Using.
  - (iv) Blessing.
2. Christianity in Europe.
    - (a) The first preacher.
    - (b) The first hearers.
    - (c) The first convert.
    - (d) The far-reaching influence.
  3. Paul at Corinth.
    - (a) His work (Acts 18:1).
    - (b) His friends (Acts 18:2-5).
    - (c) His enemies (Acts 18:6).
    - (d) His God (Acts 18:9).
  4. An epitome of a believer's life.
    - (a) Home life (Acts 18:3).
    - (b) Daily toil (Acts 18:3).
    - (c) Sabbath worship (Acts 18:4).
    - (d) Gospel testimony (Acts 18:5).
    - (e) Striking faithfulness (Acts 18:6).
    - (f) Loving compassion (Acts 18:7, 8).
    - (g) Divine communion (Acts 18:9).

Note: These are a few of the many subjects arising out of this important missionary journey. and even these are only dealt with in summary form. Other topics should be noted for study and meditation in this almost inexhaustible feast of fat things.

#### Study 4. The Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23-21:17)

##### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The departure from Antioch and results (Acts 18:23).
2. Apollos at Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28).
3. Paul's arrival at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7).
4. Stay of two years at Ephesus (Acts 19:8-20).
5. The close of the work at Ephesus (Acts 19:21, 22).
6. The riot at Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41).
7. Visit to Greece (Acts 20:1-6).
8. Stay at Troas (Acts 20:7-12).
9. Journey towards Jerusalem (Acts 20:13-16).
10. Address at Miletus (Acts 20:17-38).
11. Journey to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-16).

##### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The Third Journey:
  - (i) the preliminary work (Acts 18:23);
  - (ii) the great features: work at Ephesus—note the fulness of the narrative;
  - (iii) the Apostle's companions, Acts 18:26; 19:22, 29; and Acts 20:4;
  - (iv) the Epistles written at this time:—Galatians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Romans.
2. Apollos: (i) his antecedents; (ii) his ability; (iii) his diligence; (iv) his zeal; (v) his influence.
3. The two baptisms: (i) John's baptism; (ii) the Christian baptism.
4. Ephesus: (i) the city; (ii) Paul's work among Jews and its outcome; (iii) his work among Gentiles and its outcome.
5. The riot at Ephesus: (i) why reported so fully? (ii) the underlying spirit against Christianity; (iii) what results accrued?
6. The Lord's Day in the New Testament—Acts 20:7-12; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10; Rom. 14:5; Gal. 4:9ff; Col. 2:16ff.
7. The Address at Miletus: (i) personal review of ministry (19:18-21); (ii) personal anticipations (22-25); (iii) pastoral counsels and warnings (26-31); (iv) practical applications (32-35). Consider it as (a) revelation of Paul's character, and his view of his work; (b) a revelation of the present and future of the Church of Ephesus (cf. Rev. 2:1-7).

##### Points to Be Pondered

1. From spiritual dawn to noon-day (Acts 19:1-12).
  - (a) The imperfect Christianity shown by these men.



- (b) The possibility of fuller blessing shown by the Apostle.
- (c) The secret of blessing in the possession of the Holy Spirit.
- (d) The condition of obtaining it by full surrender to Christ.

2. Victorious Christianity (Acts 19:8-20).

- (a) Proved by preaching (Acts 19:8).
- (b) Proved by perversity (Acts 19:9, 10).
- (c) Proved by persistence (Acts 19:10).
- (d) Proved by power (Acts 19:11, 12).
- (e) Proved by pretence (Acts 19:13-16).
- (f) Proved by progress (Acts 19:17-20).

3. A revelation of Paul (Acts 21).

- (a) His influence on others; their thought of him, their love for him, their prayer for him, their sorrow for themselves.
- (b) His personal character: tenderness, strength, courage, trustfulness.
- (c) His blessed secret: Christ was all and in all.

Note: There is again a wealth and fulness of material in this record of the Apostle's work, and space prevents our touching on it all. Each section of the contents should be further analysed and other topics carefully studied.

Study 5. Stay and Imprisonment at Jerusalem (Acts 21:18-23:30)

Materials to Be Mastered

1. Paul and the Judaistic Christians (Acts 21:18-26).
2. Paul and the non-Christian Jews (Acts 21:27-30).
3. Paul and the Roman authorities (Acts 21:3,1-39).
4. Paul's defence (Acts 21:40-22:21).
5. Attitude of the Jews (Acts 21:22, 23).
6. Attitude of the authorities (Acts 21:24-30).
7. Paul before the Jewish Council (Acts 23:1-10).
8. Paul encouraged by the Lord (Acts 23:11).
9. The conspiracy of the Jews and its disclosure (Acts 23:12-22).
10. His removal to Cæsarea (Acts 23:23-30).

Subjects to Be Studied

1. Paul's reception at Jerusalem (Acts 21:16-20); (i) the heartiness of the Church as a body; (ii) the timidity of its leaders.
2. Paul's conciliation of Jewish Christians; compare 18:18; Num. 6:1-21; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; Rom. 14:1; Gal. 2:3-9.
3. The opposition of non-Christian Jews. Study this in the light of earlier experiences recorded in the Acts, and in connection with the Epistles. Dwell upon: (i) the causes; (ii) the characteristics; (iii) the consequences.
4. Paul's address to the Jewish crowd: (i) its spirit of conciliation; (ii) its narration of facts; (iii) its definite object; (iv) its immediate failure.
5. The trial before the Sanhedrim: (i) the circumstances; (ii) Paul's words to the High Priest; (iii) his action in dividing the Council.
6. The Divine intervention: (i) a characteristic of the early Church Collect and compare other instances; (ii) the precise encouragement in this instance.
7. The value of Paul's Roman citizenship: (i) in affording personal protection; (ii) in compelling the authorities to take action; (iii) in its relation to spiritual life and duties.

Points to Be Pondered

1. Paul as an evidence of Christianity.
  - (a) His enmity (persecution).
  - (b) His enmity overcome (conversion).
  - (c) His enmity transformed (Apostleship). Therefore;—
    - (i) If Paul's testimony was true, his conversion was a reality.
    - (ii) If his conversion was a reality, Christ rose from the dead, since Paul attributed everything to his meeting with the living Christ.
2. Paul's experience of difficulties.
  - (a) Difficulties do not necessarily imply unfaithfulness.
  - (b) Difficulties are all known to Christ.
  - (c) Difficulties are incentives to fresh effort.
  - (d) Difficulties lead to greater dependence on the presence and grace of God.

## Study 6. Imprisonment at Cæsarea (Acts 23:31-26:32)

### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The journey to Cæsarea (Acts 23:31-35).
2. Paul's trial before Felix (Acts 24:1-21).
3. Paul's interviews with Felix (Acts 24:22-26).
4. Paul's trial before Festus (Acts 24:27-25:12).
5. Festus and Agrippa (Acts 24:13-27).
6. Paul's defence (Acts 26:1-23).
7. The results (Acts 26:24-32).

### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The Jewish accusation against Paul (Acts 24:1-9): (i) the ability of the adversary; (ii) the nature of the three charges; (iii) the ulterior object.
2. Paul's defence: (i) note the spirit of his reply; (ii) consider his answer to the three charges; (iii) mark the way in which he seizes opportunities to witness.
3. Felix and Paul: (i) in public; (ii) in private; (iii) the outcome.
4. Festus: (i) the man; (ii) his attitude to the Jews; (iii) his attitude to Paul; (iv) his attitude to Christianity.
5. Paul's appeal to Rome: (i) why it was made; (ii) what it effected.
6. Paul before Agrippa:—
  - (i) Analyse the address carefully.
    - (a) Introduction (Acts 26:1-3).
    - (b) Early life (Acts 26:4-11).
    - (c) Conversion (Acts 26:12-18).
    - (d) Christian life (Acts 26:19-20).
    - (e) Explanation of present position (Acts 26:21-23).
  - (ii) Consider its personal characteristics: conciliatoriness, simplicity, frankness, fearlessness, evangelistic spirit, manliness.
  - (iii) Sum up its manifest impression: (a) on Festus; (b) on Agrippa.

Note: This magnificent Apologia warrants and will merit the fullest and most minute study.

7. Consider and compare carefully Paul's five successive defences of himself (Acts 26:21-26): (i) the appropriateness to the several occasions; (ii) the revelation of Paul's intellectual and spiritual versatility; (iii) their testimony to Christ and Christianity.

### Points to Be Pondered

1. The circumstances of St. Paul.
  - (a) His real temptation—activity impossible.
  - (b) His great trial—infant Churches needing his help.
  - (c) His severe test—pressure on his character.
  - (d) His splendid testimony before rulers.
  - (e) His simple trust—resting on God only.
2. The character of St. Paul.
  - (a) His courtesy (Acts 24:10).
  - (b) His candour (Acts 24:10, 11).
  - (c) His conviction (Acts 24:14).
  - (d) His conscientiousness (Acts 24:16).
  - (e) His courage (Acts 24:25).

## Study 7. The Journey to and Imprisonment at Rome (Acts 27:1-28:31)

### Materials to Be Mastered

1. The voyage commenced (Acts 27:1-8).
2. The earlier experiences (Acts 27:9-13).
3. The great storm (Acts 27:14-20).
4. The intervention of Paul (Acts 27:21-36).
5. The wreck and landing (Acts 27:37-44).
6. The stay at Melita (Acts 28:1-10).
7. Continued voyage and arrival at Rome (Acts 28:11-16).
8. Paul and the Jews (Acts 28:17-22).
9. The Jewish conference with Paul (Acts 28:23-29).

10. The two years' imprisonment (Acts 28:30, 31).

#### Subjects to Be Studied

1. The account of the voyage: (i) its fulness; (ii) its vividness; (iii) its accuracy; (iv) its purpose.
2. St. Paul on the ship:—
  - (i) His definite influence on the centurion.
  - (ii) His wise counsel.
  - (iii) His frank reminder.
  - (iv) His personal testimony.
  - (v) His remarkable influence.
  - (vi) His strong spirituality.
  - (vii) His Christian faith.
3. Paul at Melita: (i) the people; (ii) the superstition; (iii) the ruler; (iv) the results.
4. The Church in Rome (Acts 28:15); cf. Rom. 1:1-13; 15:22-33.
5. Paul and the Jews: (i) his immediate action; its purpose and spirit; (ii) his discussion; its objects and methods; (iii) his boldness; using the Old Testament against them and warning of transference to the Gentiles.

Note: Are the full details of this episode due to the fact that this constituted the final rejection of Christianity by the Jews?

6. The two years imprisonment.
  - (i) Its mystery: Paul hindered from ordinary missionary work.
  - (ii) Its circumstances (Acts 28:30, 31): constant opportunities of work.
  - (iii) Its conclusion: was he released? See Phil. 1:24-26; Philemon 1:22; 1 Timothy; Titus; 2 Timothy.

#### Points to Be Pondered

1. The explanation of St. Paul's power (Acts 27:23-25).
  - (i) Conscious Possession by God. "Whose I am."
  - (ii) Conscious Position with God. "Whom I serve."
  - (iii) Conscious Revelation from God. "Saying, Fear not."
  - (iv) Conscious Response to God. "Wherefore, I believe God."
2. God's Providence in Paul's imprisonment (Acts 28).
  - (i) He was safe from the Jews.
  - (ii) He became conspicuous to all (Phil. 1:12ff).
  - (iii) He must have witnessed to many soldiers who guarded him from time to time.
  - (iv) He was visited from friends of various Churches (Phil. 2:25; 4:10).
    - (v) He was enabled to recuperate spiritually after years of pressure, and then to write some of his choicest Epistles (Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon).
    - (vi) He was thus a striking illustration of Romans 8:28: (a) The Constant Movement of God's Providence; "work." (b) The All-embracing Movement of God's Providence; "all things work—" (c) The Harmonious Movement of God's Providence; ("all things are working together." (d) The Beneficent Purpose of God's Providence; "for good." (e) The Special Objects of God's Providence; "them that love God."

Note: The events are so crowded in this section that a careful review is more than ever essential. The entire division dealing with Gentile Christianity should also be reviewed. Read over the whole of chapters 13-28, and then classify the (i) places; (ii) peoples; (iii) incidents; (iv) speeches; (v) opponents; (vi) problems; (vii) spiritual results.

### Chapter V The Spiritual Expansion of the Church

Hitherto we have been largely occupied with the outward framework of the Church, and with the historical facts and progress as recorded in the Acts. Yet it has been impossible to avoid looking below the surface as we have proceeded. We have seen some of the great forces at work both in making and shaping the history. But the subject is so vast that it will bear renewed and more definite attention.

The beginnings of Church life and the earliest manifestations of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the company of Christian people are found here, and these have an interest not only because they record the commencement of the individual and organised spiritual life of Christianity, but also because they are all the germs and patterns of what Church life should be in all ages. It is by reversion to the primitive type that we shall best reproduce true Christianity to-day.

The following studies are only a very few out of others which might have been included, though it is hoped that most of the salient features of the first thirty years of the Church's life and progress are here dealt with.

#### Study 1. The Unmistakable Distinctiveness of the Church (Acts 2)

A careful study of the elements of Christian life as seen in chapter 2, will reveal Christianity as a new phenomenon in the world's history; it will also bring before us the pattern of what all Christian and Church life should be.

1. Distinctiveness of spiritual life: (i) its source; (ii) its reality; (iii) its expression.
2. Distinctiveness of spiritual fellowship: (i) its causes; (ii) its expression; (iii) its surprises.
3. Distinctiveness of spiritual influence: (i) influence of love; (ii) influence of example; (iii) influence of testimony.

#### Study 2. The External Dangers of the Church (Acts 3-5)

1. Their characteristics: (a) civil, (b) religious.
2. Their peril: (a) discouraging, (b) hindering.
3. Their value: (a) sifting, (b) strengthening.

#### Study 3. The Internal Difficulties of the Church (Acts 5 and 6)

1. The presence of sin and how it was dealt with—Discipline (Acts 5).
2. The peril of popularity and how it was met—Devotedness (Acts 5).
3. The problem of growth and how it was solved—Development (Acts 6).

#### Study 4. The Necessary Development of the Church (Acts 6-9)

1. The new ministry: chap. 6  
(a) its need; (b) its nature.
2. The extension to Samaria: chap. 8  
(a) its causes; (b) its consequences.
3. The conversion of Saul: chap. 9  
(a) the man; (b) the mission.

#### Study 5. The Providential Direction of the Church (Acts 8-12)

1. The conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10).
2. The work in Antioch (Acts 11).
3. The action of Herod (Acts 12).

Note: The above points should be carefully reviewed and the life of the Church from within constantly dwelt upon. Note how God was leading step by step, and how the Divine power guided, taught, overruled in a variety of ways.

The above five studies are also illustrative of life in the Church ever since Apostolic days. There is still (i) the same need of distinctiveness of spiritual life; (ii) the same need of care in the face of external dangers; (iii) the same need of special wisdom in view of internal difficulties; (iv) the same need of openness of mind in view of necessary developments; and (v) the same need of spiritual alertness to see the Divine hand guiding and directing us.

We now proceed to consider the spiritual expansion of the Church of the Gentiles by means of the work of the Apostle Paul in Acts 13-28.

#### Study 6. The Rapid Progress of the Church

1. Consider each Missionary Journey of St. Paul.
  - (a) Note the countries and places.
  - (b) Reckon the distances from Antioch
  - (c) Discover the time occupied.
  - (d) Mark the nations and races evangelised: Jews, Samaritans, Proselytes, Gentiles.
2. Collect results as to each place.
3. Form impressions of the work done.

#### Study 7. The Great Problems of the Church

1. The position of Gentile Christians:—
  - (a) What it was: were the Gentiles to become as Jews in order to become Christians? or, were Jews and Gentiles to be accepted on equal terms? That is, was there to be spiritual inferiority or spiritual equality?
  - (b) How it was solved (see chap. 15).
2. The prejudices of Jewish Christians (chap. 21); how they were met; (a) Conciliation (b) Opposition (Gal. 2).
3. The attitude of St. Paul:—
  - (a) His vows (chaps. 18 and 21). His attempts at conciliation and peace.
  - (b) His offerings from Gentile Churches. His efforts after unity and fellowship.

#### 4. The fusion of Jews and Gentiles in one Church:—

- (a) Its anticipation in (i) prophecy; (ii) the words of Christ; (iii) the gift of tongues at Pentecost; (iv) the extension to Samaria; (v) the vision of Peter (chap. 10).
- (b) Its attainment (cf. Epistle to the Ephesians).
- (c) Its value: for Gentiles—Fellowship; for Jews—Breadth; for both—Love; for the world—Blessing.

#### Study 8. The Profound Policy of St. Paul

1. His uniqueness among the Apostles: (a) by birth a Jew; (b) by citizenship a Roman; (c) by education a Greek; (d) by grace a Christian, Note how these various elements were used in his work.
2. His magnificent conception—he was the first Christian statesman.
  - (a) He worked along the line of the great Roman highways. Note the chain of mission stations from Antioch to Rome.
  - (b) He concentrated his strength on great centres rather than on itinerating work:—e.g., at Corinth, two years; at Ephesus, three years. Thus by influencing others the surrounding districts were in turn evangelised (cf. Col. 1:6, 7, and 2:1; 1 Thess. 1:6-8). Would it be true to say: "Take care of the towns, and the villages will take care of themselves"? Would it be true to say: "Evangelise London, and you evangelise the empire"? or, "Evangelise New York, and you evangelise the United States"? (See Ramsay, Christianity in the Roman Empire, and St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen.)

#### Study 9. The Ecclesiastical Polity of the Church

In this study we must consider everything recorded in the Acts which refers to Church Organization, Ministry, and Life.

1. The supreme authority of the Apostles (Acts 8:14; 9:26; 15).
2. The gradual development of the Ministry:—Deacons (6); Elders (Acts 11:30, first time; Acts 14:23; 15:4, 6, 22); Prophets (Acts 11:27; 13:1; 15:32); Overseers (Acts 20:28).
3. The Church as a whole (Acts 8:1; 9:31; 11:26; 14:23). Pay special attention to the occurrences of the word "Church," both in the singular and plural numbers.
4. The various aspects of Christian life. Note the five descriptions of Christians in Acts 9. "Disciples," (Acts 9:1); "Of this Way" (Acts 9:2); "Saints" (v. 13); "That call on Thy Name" (Acts 9:14); "Brethren" (Acts 9:30).
5. The Ordinances: Baptism (Acts 19); the Lord's Supper (Acts 20).
6. The form of Ordination and appointment (Acts 6:6; 14:23).
7. Worship and Service: Fasting and Prayer (Acts 13:1-3).

#### Study 10. The Divine Protection of the Church

Nothing is more striking than the way in which God guarded and guided the Church All the passages should be collected and studied in order to see the

1. Protection against external hostility; Acts 13, 14, etc.
2. Protection against internal difficulties, e.g., Acts 15 and 18.

#### Study 11. The Remarkable Providence in the Church

The predominance of the Divine element and the constant assertion of the Divine initiative clearly mark the early history of the Church

1. As seen in St. Paul's journeys. He is led along step by step in a way whereby a chain of missionary stations is founded.
2. As seen in his imprisonment. To human eyes it was a severe blow to Christianity in the cessation of his journeys and labours. In reality it was a great blessing and power:—
  - (a) The influence of free preaching with Rome as a centre. The soldiers on guard were continually changed, and would be going to different parts of the Empire. Friends, too, from different Churches would be coming and going.
  - (b) The influence of his writings. His Epistles have been the treasure house of the Church ever since. Might not this have been impossible under the strain and stress of constant journeyings and anxieties?

#### Study 12. The Spiritual Power of the Church

The keynote of the Book (the Divine presence and power) is seen throughout.

1. The presence of the Living Lord; e.g., Acts 18:9; 23:11; 27:23.
2. The power of the Holy Spirit; e.g., Acts 13:2; 16:6, 7.

Note: These studies, though not inclusive of all the elements of the spiritual expansion of the Church, will enable the student to survey the field, and prosecute the subject further as he ponders more and more deeply the remarkable facts and wonderful force of the Christian Church of those early years.

### Chapter VI The Personal Element in the Church

In the course of our studies we have been made fully aware of the importance, even though it be a subordinate importance, of the

men and women whose lives have come before us. They are only witnesses, it is true, but they are witnesses, and they bear testimony to the many-sided (lit. "variegated") grace of God (1 Pet. 4:10). A fuller consideration of the facts, power, and variety of the lives of those recorded in this book will enable us to see more clearly the working of Divine grace, and also the glory of God manifested in transformed lives and whole-hearted service. Each life reflects its own rays of the Master's glory, and is therefore deserving of the closest study and meditation. There is food for the mind, inspiration for the heart, and a model for the life in the contemplation of the men and women of the early Church. In the following studies an endeavour has been made to call attention to the more important of the people whose lives and work are recorded in the Acts. It is very profitable to collect all the references to one particular person, and then to classify them with the view of discovering all that is possible about the character and service.

#### Study 1. Peter the Apostle

As he is the most prominent person in the records of Acts 1-12, we commence by studying his life. Each passage in the Acts referring to Peter should be collected and classified. The following points may perhaps serve as guides:—

1. His actions and discourses.
  - (a) Collect and classify each passage in order to draw up an outline of his biography in the Acts.
  - (b) Study each discourse, noting its (i) substance; (ii) methods; (iii) aims; (iv) spirit.
2. His relations to other Apostles and to the Church
  - (a) His distinct leadership (Acts 3-5).
  - (b) Yet he was sent by the Church of Jerusalem (Acts 8:14).
  - (c) And he was called upon for an explanation (Acts 11:1-4).
3. His personal characteristics: (a) boldness; (b) wisdom; (c) large-heartedness; (d) trustfulness.

Note: Contrast the Peter of the Gospels in these and other respects, and account for the change.

#### Study 2. Stephen the Deacon

1. His character and its secrets (Acts 6).
2. His defence and its points:—
  - (a) The longest recorded. Consider this fact in the light of the purpose of the book. Is it due to the fact that Stephen's speech is the first defence of the wider extension of Christianity?
  - (b) What is its theme? Is it that the Jews had always resisted God?
  - (c) What is its plan?
    - (i) God's dealings always show constant movement and progress. Illustrated from Abraham, Moses, David.
    - (ii) The Temple was not exclusively the Holy Place. Illustrated from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Midian, the Tabernacle.
    - (iii) Israel rejected God's first offer of mercy, then suffered, and then accepted the offer. Illustrated from Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David.
  - (iv) He proves that they (not he) are breakers of the Law.

Note: See Stifler, Introduction to the Book of the Acts. Other authorities suggest somewhat different outlines (see Commentaries).

3. His martyrdom and results.
  - (a) General: the dispersion and wide preaching.
  - (b) Special; Saul's conversion. "If Stephen had not prayed, Paul had not preached." Consider the truth of this.

#### Study 3. Philip the Evangelist

1. His work: distinct from the Apostles and other forms of ministry. Trace the references to evangelists in the New Testament.
2. His limitations (Acts 8:14-17): he could not bestow the Holy Spirit.
3. His discipline (Acts 8:26): leaving a prosperous work for an unknown service.
4. His dealing with an individual soul: (a) tact, (b) teaching, (c) testimony.
5. His later life (Acts 21:8-9).

#### Study 4. Barnabas the Pastor

1. His personal circumstances (Acts 4).
2. His complete consecration (Acts 4).
3. His valuable work—helping young disciples (Acts 4:36; 9:27).
4. His spiritual sympathy (Acts 11:23).
5. His large-hearted interest (Acts 11:25).
6. His genuine unselfishness (Acts 13 and 14).

Note how he recedes in favour of Paul. In Acts 13:1, we have "Barnabas and Saul"; then in Acts 13:13, "Paul and his company"; and

then in 13:46, "Paul and Barnabas."

7. His possible weakness.
  - (a) Partiality for a relative (Acts 15:37).
  - (b) Amiability degenerating into weakness (Gal. 2:13).
8. His later life (Acts 15:39; 1 Cor. 9:6; Col. 4:10).
9. His beautiful character (Acts 11:24).
  - (a) Its description: "a good man."
  - (b) Its explanation: "full of the Holy Ghost."
  - (c) Its secret: "faith."

#### Study 5. Ananias the Layman

1. His obscure position.
2. His great commission.
3. His natural hesitation.
4. His prompt obedience.
5. His hearty sympathy.
6. His spiritual power.

#### Study 6. James the President

1. His position in the Church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18).
2. His relationship to our Lord (Gal. 1:19).
3. His character and writing (see Epistle of James).

#### Study 7. Companions of St. Paul

1. John Mark.
2. Timothy.
3. Silas.
4. Luke.
5. Aquila and Priscilla.
6. Apollos.
7. Others (Acts 19:29; 20:4).

Note: Collect all the passages referring to each person, and mark their characteristics so far as they are recorded (see Howson's suggestive book, *The Companions of St. Paul*).

#### Study 8. Paul the Apostle

Special attention should be given to this study because of the position and prominence of St. Paul in the Apostolic Church, and because of the fulness of the record in the Acts.

1. His antecedents.
2. His conversion.
3. His early discipleship (chap. 9).
4. His connection with Antioch (Acts 11 and Acts 13).
5. His first Missionary Journey.
6. His second Missionary Journey.
7. His third Missionary Journey.
8. His experiences at Jerusalem.
9. His imprisonment at Cæsarea.
10. His journey to Rome.
11. His imprisonment in Rome.
12. The nature of his work.
13. The elements of his preaching (study the discourses).
14. The nobility of his character:—
  - (a) intellectual, (b) moral, (c) social, (d) spiritual.
15. The greatness of his influence.
  - (a) In the early Church
  - (b) In succeeding ages through his Epistles.
16. The many-sidedness of his character.
  - (a) Missionary and Theologian.

- (b) Evangelist and Pastor.
- (c) Organizer and Leader.
- (d) Thinker and Statesman.
- (e) Saint and Man of Affairs.

17. The secrets of his power.

- (a) Consecration to God—devoted (αγιος).
- (b) Communion with God—devout (οσιος).

What is the one outstanding impression made by the study of the life and work of the Apostle of the Gentiles? Is it not this:—The marvelous possibilities of a wholly-surrendered and Divinely-filled life?

Note: Reviewing these and all other personal factors of the early Church, dwell on the three-fold secret of their lives, and the explanation of all the spiritual progress of the period:—

- (a) Christ was real and precious in their experience.
- (b) The Word was received and preached with boldness.
- (c) The Spirit was realised and powerful in daily living.

### Chapter VII Special Topics

Our studies hitherto will have enabled us to grasp and master the substance of the book as it stands; and now, with a knowledge of the contents as a whole in the order of development, we proceed to the study of particular topics. Those suggested below are but a very few out of many more that will occur in the course of reading and study. This method is very fruitful in spiritual and practical results. The topics of a particular book or period always afford much valuable instruction and inspiration.

#### Study 1. The Ascended Lord

1. His supreme authority. Trace through every chapter.
2. His constant activity. Consider the variety of its expression at each stage.

#### Study 2. The Holy Spirit

1. The reality and blessedness of His presence. Collect every reference.
2. The supremacy and fulness of His power. Study every aspect.

#### Study 3. The Life of the Church

1. Spiritual!
  - (a) love (chap. 2); (b) holiness (chap. 4); (c) sincerity (chap. 5); (d) joy (chaps. 5 and 13); (e) testimony (Acts 5 and Acts 13).
2. Ecclesiastical: (a) the body; (b) the ministry; (c) the ordinances; (d) the worship; (e) the service.

#### Study 4. The Preaching

1. Its Message (see page 17). Consider the main elements:—
  - (a) Christ and His claims.
  - (b) Sin and its results.
  - (c) Salvation and its blessings.

Note: Under these three heads the subject of the preaching may be classified.

2. Its presentation. Consider the adaptability of the message to particular people and classes:—
  - (a) The Jews (Acts 2, 3, 7, 13, 28). Notice the full and frequent use of the Old Testament.
  - (b) To uneducated Gentiles (Acts 14:15-17). Notice the foundation of preaching in simple natural theology.
  - (c) To educated Gentiles (Acts 17:22-31). Notice the great principles of philosophy and theology here enunciated.

Note: There are ten sermons recorded in the Acts, nine to non-believers, and one to believers. Consider the proportion of present-day preaching to Christians and non-Christians, and see how it compares with the record of this book.

3. Its characteristics:—
  - (a) Its emphasis on salvation; this is the predominating idea.
  - (b) Its obligation on the preacher: "We cannot but speak."
  - (c) Its urgency on the hearers: "You must."
  - (d) Its hopefulness; the power of grace in spite of sin.
  - (e) Its emphasis on the Person of Christ.
4. Its methods. Note the different words and phrases used to describe the Apostolic Ministry:—
  - (a) proclaiming (13:5, 49); (b) reasoning (Acts 17:2, 3, 17); (c) testifying (Acts 18:5); (d) teaching (Acts 18:11); (e) exhorting (Acts 14:22); (f) persuading (Acts 13:43); (g) warning (Acts 18:6; 28:28).



### **Study 5. The Examples of Beginnings**

As we have already noticed, the Book of the Acts is particularly valuable as giving to us the earliest models of several ordinances and institutions which have since become part of the life of the Christian Church. These first occasions should be studied as types and models of what all subsequent occasions should be.

1. In Part I.: Acts 1-12.

The first descent of the Spirit (Acts 2); the first Christian preaching (chap. 2); the first Christian Church (chap. 2); the first opposition to Christianity (chap. 4); the first persecution (chap. 4); the first prayer meeting (chap. 4); the first sin in the Church (chap. 5); the first Church problem (chap. 6); the first martyr (chap. 7); the first Church extension (chap. 8); the first evangelist (chap. 8); the first personal dealing, (chap. 8); the first Gentile Church (chap. 11); the first Church Council (chap. 11).

2. In Part II.: Acts 13-28:—

The first missionary (chap. 13); the first missionary methods (chaps. 13, 14); the first missionary meeting (14:27, 28); the first Church contention (chap. 15); the first Church in Europe (chap. 16); the first address to Christian ministers (chap. 20).

### **Study 6. The Revelations of Character**

1. Inside the Church:—

- (a) Those given in detail. (See preceding chapter.)
- (b) Those given in brief (Cornelius, Lydia, and others).

2. Outside the Church:—

- (a) Opposers (Elymas, Demetrius, Tertullus).
- (b) Rulers (High Priest, Felix, Festus, Agrippa, Julius).

### **Study 7. Christian Doctrine**

Under the following heads collect and classify the Doctrinal teaching of this book:—

1. The doctrine of God.
2. The doctrine of Christ.
3. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit.
4. The doctrine of Sin.
5. The doctrine of Redemption.
6. The doctrine of the Christian life.
7. The doctrine of the Future State.

### **Study 8. The Expansion of Christianity From Judaism**

1. As the fulfilment of the old Dispensation.
2. As the abrogation of it.

### **Study 9. The Relation of the Gospel to the Jewish Nation**

1. The offer of the Gospel.
2. The opposition to the Gospel.
3. The outcome,

### **Study 10. The Relation of the Gospel to the Gentile World**

1. The official and ruling classes.
2. The ordinary people in various places.

Note: Several definite and different aspects emerge from a study of the various passages throughout this book.

### **Study 11. The Book of Acts As a Missionary Manual**

1. The men.
2. The message.
3. The might.
4. The methods.

### **Study 12. Some Important Facts and Phrases**

1. The conversions of the Book.
2. The miracles.
3. The visions.
4. The martyrdoms.
5. The discourses.
6. The discussions among Christians.

7. The disputations with non-Christians.

### **Study 13. Some Important Words and Phrases**

The following should be studied by the aid of a concordance, preferably Young's Analytical Concordance, which gives the Greek equivalents of the words of the Authorized Version.

1. Fulness—
  - (a) of the Spirit (Acts 2:4, etc.).
  - (b) of Sin (Acts 5:3).
  - (c) of Satisfaction (Acts 13:52).
  - (d) of Strength (Acts 6:8).
  - (e) of Wisdom (Acts 6:3).
  - (f) of Faith Acts (6:8).

(Other distinctions will be evident to students of Greek).

2. Belief.

Collect the various words and phrases associated with Faith and Trust.

3. The Word. Notice the following phrases:—

- The Word of God.
- The Word of the Lord.
- The Word of this Salvation.
- The Word of His Grace.
- The Words of this Life.

4. The Way. This is found as a definition and description of Christianity. (See R. V., cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23.)

5. The Titles of our Lord. These are various and important:—The Lord; Christ; The holy Child (or Servant) Jesus (4:27); His Son Jesus (3:26), and several more.

6. Names of Christians: Disciples, Brethren, Saints, etc.

(These are only a very few of an almost innumerable list of "Word Studies.")

### **Study 14. The Secret of All True Service**

It is very important to notice that there are three facts and factors in relation to service which stand out from all the rest in this book:

—

1. The Spirit of God.
2. The Word of God.
3. The Man of God.

The following figures are worthy of careful consideration. Taking the Book of the Acts in the English version, by chapters, we notice the following results:—

(a) In Acts 1 to 11 (11 chapters) the Spirit of God is referred to 38 times; the Word of God 15 times; the Man of God is the instrument throughout.

(b) In Acts 12-20 (9 chapters) the proportion is significantly varied, and the Spirit of God is mentioned 17 times; the Word of God 23 times; and again the Man of God is seen throughout.

(c) In Acts 21-28 (8 chapters) yet another proportion is seen. The Spirit of God is mentioned three times. The Word of God is not mentioned at all. The Man of God is most prominent of all. The Apostle Paul is seen in every chapter, with no less than three accounts of his conversion.

The union of these three elements is to be observed:—The Spirit of God as the Divine Might, or Power; the Word of God as the Divine Message; and the Man of God as the human instrument. Each of these calls for attention and meditation.

1. The Spirit of God in Christian Service.

(a) The bestowal of the Spirit. Notice six accounts of the gift of the Spirit as representative specimens of His universal work. He was bestowed on (i) the Jews (chap. 3); (ii) Christians for a special purpose (chap. 4); (iii) on the Samaritan believers (chap. 8); (iv) on Saul (chap. 9); (v) on Cornelius (chap. 10); (vi) on the Ephesian converts (chap. 19).

(b) The work of the Spirit. Notice and find references to the following phrases and teaching about the Spirit: The promise of the Spirit; the baptism of the Spirit; the gift of the Spirit; the fulness of the Spirit; the witness of the Spirit; the anointing of the Spirit, the Godhead of the Spirit.

(c) The effects of the Spirit. The results of the Holy Spirit can be seen in connection with the following words and aspects of work: Power, testimony, wisdom, faith, comfort, joy, serving tables. (Collect and study all passages.)

2. The Word of God in Christian Service. When we consider the Word of God as the Divine message, we can see (according to preceding studies) the varied power and fulness of the proclamation.

3. The Man of God in Christian Service. When we pass to the place and power of the Man of God, the last of the three factors in all service, we find that he is brought before us at once a Witness, a Warrior, and a Workman.

These three elements, the Spirit, the Word, and the Man, are thus all essential to service for God. The order and prominence of the three in the Book of the Acts is very significant: The Spirit comes first; the Word next; and the Man last of all. In human, secular life, the man would be made most prominent; but in spiritual work, the man is only the instrument and is subservient to his message, and subordinate to the Divine power that equips him and sends him forth. Thus one message is written large throughout the records of the early-Church "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Zech 4:6).

## **Bibliography**

The following, among other works, are suggested for the study of the Book of the Acts. They differ widely, of course, in value and views, in size and cost, in purpose and methods; but if studied with care and discrimination, they will often be found very suggestive, and in many respects exceedingly useful and valuable. Those marked \* involve a knowledge of Greek.

### Commentaries

- Bartlet, Acts (Century Bible Series).
- Baumgarten, Apostolic History.
- Blass, Acta Apostolorum.\*
- Knowling, Expositor's Greek Testament.\*
- Hackett, Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles.\*
- Lumby, The Acts (Cambridge Bible for Schools).
- McGarvey, New Commentary on Acts.
- Page, The Acts of the Apostles.\*
- Rendall, The Acts of the Apostles\*
- Walker, The Acts (Indian Church Commentary).

### Introductions

- Bartlet, The Apostolic Age.
- Howson, The Evidential Value of the Acts of the Apostles.
- Oldham, Bible Studies on the Book of the Acts.
- Ramsay, Pictures of the Apostolic Church
- Speer, Studies in the Acts.
- Stifler, An Introduction to the Book of the Acts.
- Votaw, Inductive Bible Studies on the Foundations of the Christian Church

### Biographies

- Bruce, St. Paul's Conception of Christianity.
- Conybeare and Howson, Life and Epistles of St. Paul.
- Farrar, Life and Work of St. Paul.
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- The Metaphors of St. Paul. Iverach, St. Paul: His Life and Times. Lock, St. Paul, the Master Builder.
- Matheson, The Spiritual Development of St. Paul.
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- Somerville, St. Paul's Conception of Christ.
- Speer, The Man Paul.
- Stalker, The Life of St. Paul.
- Ryley, Barnabas, or the Great Renunciation.

### Expositions

- Maclaren, Bible Class Expositions on the Acts.
- Parker, Apostolic Life.
- Pierson, The Acts of the Holy Spirit.
- Vaughan, The Church of the First Days.