

Manitoulin Youth Conference

2010

MINISTRATION

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RIGHTEOUSNESS
GIFT

BOUNTY

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"Thanks Be Unto God For His Unspeakable Gift"

The Story of the Jerusalem Poor Fund

Part I

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Introduction

Dearest Young Person,

Loving greetings in the Hope of Israel!

We are about to embark on a fascinating and lively journey with the Apostle Paul through the pages of God's Word as he delivers the Jerusalem Poor Fund to the poor saints at Jerusalem! The Apostles in Jerusalem initiated the Jerusalem Poor Fund when they asked the Apostle Paul to "remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10) on his travels. Little did they know that he would take this charge and treat it the same way as he treated all of his work in the Truth: with whole-hearted devotion, loving care, and bubbling zeal!

The evidence contained in Paul's letters and in the record of the Acts of the Apostles confirms that the Jerusalem Poor Fund deserves much more of our attention as we look at the life of this great Apostle to the Gentiles. It gives the believers of our day an up-close look at the motivation and zeal behind the Apostle Paul's effort to complete this particular work on behalf of the Truth. God willing, we'll see that this relief fund had more than simply a practical purpose. It was more than just a matter of money! It was Paul's heart's desire to bind Jewish and Gentile brethren together in the Hope of the Gospel through the work of the Jerusalem Poor Fund.

As we each focus on *giving* our lives to our God, this study provides us with great examples that we can use to motivate ourselves while we wait for the coming of our Lord. We'll look into the example of the Macedonians who, while experiencing deep poverty, begged earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints and first *gave* themselves to the Lord; the example of the children of Israel in the wilderness, who learned the benefits of sharing and working together; the example of the delegates of the fund, who emulated the same earnest care as the Apostle Paul; the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *gave* himself for our sins; and finally, the example of our Heavenly Father, who *gave* His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

God willing, by the end of this study, may we each be able to unite our hearts and minds together with praise and thanksgiving to God and to unite our voices together with the Apostle Paul to say, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" (2 Cor. 9:15)

May God add His blessing to your personal study so that we may each learn to grow and prepare for the coming of His Son. If you have any comments, questions, or concerns about the book, or just want to talk about what you have learned, please feel free to contact either one of us.

With much love,

Bro. Jordan Canady (jordancanady5@hotmail.com)

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Getting Started

Here are some tips to help you with your studies, and to get you started:

1. For each section be sure to read the passages that are marked under the “Reading” heading. It is important to read these thoroughly *at least* once before starting the section.
2. We will be looking at our subject from a broad basis, as opposed to a in-depth investigation of a few chapters/passages. However, in part II of the workbook, there will be some in-depth study of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 which are directly related to the fund.
3. Mark questions that you are having trouble with or (more likely!) questions that don’t make sense to you, and move on. Come back to them, and if you still are unable to make any progress, confer with a friend or ask someone for help! Feel free to contact Bro. Jordan or Bro. Glenn at our e-mail addresses provided on the first page.
4. Organize a Study group: Study groups are a good way to get motivated, share lessons, insights and discoveries. They also are a fun and rewarding fellowship opportunity. Having said that, it is important that we develop the habit and skill in personal Bible Study. Be sure you have some balance in this area of your Youth Conference preparations.
5. There are many, many nuggets left unexplored in this study! “Mine” them out by digging a little deeper on some of the questions.

3 Stages of Good Bible Study

1. Find the facts
2. Establish the principle
3. Apply the exhortation

Bible Study Tools

1. Your Bible. Questions and references are from the KJV, but a few different translations such as RSV or NASB or Rotherham’s would be helpful to have around to compare passages with.
2. Marginal References: If your Bible has marginal references, these are great resources.
3. Concordances: Strong’s, Young’s, and Englishman’s. Englishman’s is particularly useful when you have a Strong’s number (from Strong’s Concordance - this is the number that represents the Greek or Hebrew word) and you want to find all the places that number occurs and the actual English word translated in every case.
4. Computer tools: Bible software like Libronix or e-sword (www.e-sword.net). Or make use of one of the online Bible websites such as www.biblegateway.com or www.blueletterbible.org
5. Bible Dictionaries - for looking up the background of the various places.
6. Bible Atlas - for tracing Paul’s journeys, and seeing where the Ecclesias were.
7. Christadelphian Works: We have outlined at the end of some of the sections the resources that we found helpful.

Section 1 - "Ye Shall Be Witnesses Unto Me" (Acts 1:8)

Reading

Carefully read Acts 1-8.

Introduction

As Jesus hung on the cross, about to die, he prayed to Yahweh, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) This earnest and genuine prayer of our Lord was not merely directed towards those in attendance, but towards the people of God, the Jews - who were ignorant of the full enormity of their actions. (Isaiah 53:12)

The Acts of the Apostles records Yahweh's response to this "earnest prayer of a righteous man." (James 5:16) The Apostles were sent forth with a message, to "the Jews first" (Romans 1:16) as the Jews were given one final opportunity to acknowledge the "righteousness of God." The issue would come down to a key principle: can one intent on establishing one's own righteousness be able to acknowledge Yahweh's righteousness? (Romans 10:3) The answer would be a resounding no. And so, the Acts closes with Paul's declaration:

"... Well spake the Holy Spirit by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." (Acts 28:25-28)

However, in Romans 11, Paul makes clear the fact that even though "through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles" the intended effect was "to provoke them to jealousy." The Gentiles were not to boast against the Jewish "branches" but to "bear" the Abrahamic root, recognizing that the "gifts and calling of God are without repentance." For Israel's "blindness" was only a temporary measure, and "if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" The revival of Israel would be a sign of the resurrection of the faithful, and the re-establishment of the Kingdom of Israel. The completion of the ingathering of the Gentiles would not occur until the "set time came to favor Zion." (Psa. 102:13-16)

As our story begins with these thoughts, so will it end, for the Apostle Paul was desperate that his kinsmen after the flesh would respond, that he "might save some of them." He saw the influence of the "Judaizers", infiltrate the Jerusalem Ecclesia - those who taught that the offering of Christ was not sufficient for salvation, but that the keeping of the Law was also necessary. So much did he desire a change of heart, he could wish himself "accursed from Christ" (Rom. 9:3) if it meant their response and salvation. He was prepared to offer himself, if need be. But God, in His infinite wisdom had chosen Paul to "be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." (Rom 15 NASB) And in this "priestly service", the Apostle collected the "offering" of the Gentile Ecclesias, for the poor saints in Jerusalem, bringing it up in "service for Jerusalem" that it might be "accepted of the saints" as he sought to knit together the hearts of Jew and Gentile in the bonds of the Truth. Through the fund, he hoped that the Gentile believers, having been partakers of the "spiritual things" of the Jews would be motivated to minister to them in "material things", in order that the Jewish brethren in Jerusalem might see what *Grace could inspire* as opposed to what *Law could compel*.

Would it be successful? Would it help stop the defection of Jewish believers, who were in danger of becoming "entangled again with the yoke of bondage"? Would the Jewish believers be able to lay aside their mistrust of their Gentile brethren? For that we will have to wait until the end of our studies!

The Acts

In the Acts, the Apostles bring the gospel message of the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ to the ends of the Roman habitable, witnessing that Jesus was the Messiah, being first-hand corroborators to his death and resurrection.

In this section of the workbook, we establish the setting and background out of the Acts of the Apostles - a background that is key to a full appreciation of the Jerusalem Poor Fund, and the surrounding issues.

Luke - The Author of the Acts

It is clear that Luke is the inspired Author of the Acts. Something to watch for is the “us/we” pronoun - this is an indication that Luke is a participant in the events. It is also important to remember that the Spirit has only recorded those events that we “need to know”, and in harmony with the revelation of God’s purpose, has been encoded that the Kings of the future age of Glory would search out a matter. (Prov. 25:2)

1. Luke’s name means “Light-giving.” Investigate the background and character of Luke. We have included a summary from the Acts “Expositor” notes in the Part I Appendix for your reference. Read the summary, and jot down some notes here:
 - a. What facts do we know about him?
 - b. What are some character traits?

Acts Breakdown

The book of the Acts of the Apostles also serves as a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles, setting the context for the Epistles, which were written to the Ecclesias whose establishment is recorded in Acts. Thus, Acts describes for us the beginning of Ecclesial life, showing how Ecclesias must be “rooted and grounded” and built upon the solid foundation of the One True Gospel. While Acts deals primarily with the *Foundation* and *Formation* of the Ecclesia, the Epistles go on to emphasize the need for continued building upon the basis of *Sound Doctrine* and *Sound Practice* in the Ecclesia. Often, the Epistles also round out our knowledge of events recorded in the Acts, especially the Ecclesial issues, and the comings and goings of Paul and those who assisted him.

This table, modified from the Expositor notes on the Acts, shows how the book can be divided into 2 sections, which parallel each other:

PART 1 - CHAPTERS 1-12		PART 2 - CHAPTERS 13-28	
<i>Events</i>	<i>Peter’s Ministry</i>	<i>Paul’s Ministry</i>	<i>Events</i>
Jerusalem - Centre of work	Chapter 2 Peter’s First Address	Chapter 13 Paul’s first address	Antioch - Centre of work
Peter - Chief figure	Chapter 3 Lame man healed	Chapter 14 Lame man healed	Paul - Chief figure
Gospel spreads to Samaria	Chapter 8 Simon the sorcerer	Chapter 13 Elymas the sorcerer	Gospel spreads to Rome
Gospel rejected by Jews in Israel	Chapter 5 - Influence of the shadow of Peter	Chapter 19 - Influence of the handkerchiefs of Paul	Gospel rejected by Jews in dispersion

PART 1 - CHAPTERS 1-12		PART 2 - CHAPTERS 13-28	
Peter is imprisoned	Chapter 8 Laying on of hands	Chapter 19 Laying on of hands	Paul is imprisoned
Judgment comes on Herod	Chapter 10 Peter is worshipped	Chapter 14 Paul is worshipped	Judgment comes on the Jews
	Chapter 9 Tabitha is raised	Chapter 20 Eutychus is raised	
	Chapter 12 Peter is imprisoned	Chapter 28 Paul is imprisoned	

The Jerusalem Poor Fund is primarily concerned with “Part 2” of the book of Acts. However, we will spend some time in “Part 1” looking at the key events which set the stage for our study, review relevant incidents, and help us get the sense of the overall context.

PART 1 - CHAPTERS 1-12		PART 2 - CHAPTERS 13-28	
<i>Acts</i>	<i>Events</i>	<i>Acts</i>	<i>Events</i>
1	The Apostles Prepared and Commissioned	13-14	Paul’s First Journey
2	Miracles and Witness by the Apostles: the Response by the People	15:1-35	The Conference in Jerusalem
3	Miracle: the Lame Man Healed - Witness and Opposition	15:36-18:23	The Second Journey of Paul
4	Miracle: the Shadow of Peter - Witness and Opposition	18:24-28	The Powerful Preaching of Apollos in Corinth
5	Miracle: the Release from Prison - Witness and Opposition	19-22	The Third Journey of Paul, and Final Rejection of the Jerusalem Jews
6	The Witness of Stephen	23	Paul Witnesses Before the Sanhedrin
7	The Challenge of Stephen - Witness and Opposition	24	Paul Witnesses Before Governor Felix
8	Witnessing to an Ethiopian Chancellor	25	Paul Witnesses Before Governor Festus
9	Conversion of the Pharisee Saul	26	Paul Witnesses Before King Agrippa
10	Conversion of the Roman Cornelius	27	Paul Witnesses on the Way to Rome
11	The Gospel from Antioch; centre of the Truth	28	In Rome and the Final Rejection of the Jews
12	James is killed; Peter delivered; Herod, as head of the nation is Judged		

Roman Historical Context

Please refer to the chart on the Roman historical context in Part I Appendix.

Timeline

Please refer to the timeline in Part I Appendix.

The Early Jerusalem Ecclesia - Acts 1

1. The early Jerusalem Ecclesia is established in Acts 1:13-15. How many brethren and sisters were there at that time?
2. One of the first tasks was to select a replacement for Judas. What were the main criteria used? Why did they need to “cast lots”? Was this common practice in the first century Ecclesia or an exceptional circumstance?

Peter - The Early Leader of the Ecclesia at Jerusalem

The story of Peter’s life is well known, and because of this, we will not dwell much on his background (or ask you to do any research!) As we read through the first part of the Acts, it is clear that he was one of the leaders of the Jerusalem Ecclesia, and rightly so, for our Lord himself had told him to “Feed my sheep.” (John 21:17)

John - A Pillar of the Ecclesia at Jerusalem

John was undoubtedly the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” (John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7,20) Like Peter, John had the privilege of participating in the key events of Jesus’ ministry, including his transfiguration, where they “saw the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Matt 16:28). Peter and John had a long history together (consider the following references: Luke 5:10/John 18:15;20:4, Matthew 17:1, Mark 13:3, Luke 22:8, John 18:15, Mark 14:33). And so, they would provide a faithful foundation (pillars) for the Jerusalem Ecclesia. (Gal. 2:9)

The Day of Pentecost - Acts 2

1. Research the background of the day of Pentecost. Why was it appropriate that the events of Acts 2 occurred at the same time as this feast? Find both practical and spiritual reasons.
2. In Acts 2:1 we note the statement: “when the day of Pentecost was *fully* come.” Look up the Greek word for “fully”. What does it signify? What do you think we are being told?
3. Who is the “they” of Acts 2:1?
 - a. What does “one accord” mean? Find where this word is used outside the book of Acts. What are we being told?
 - b. Where were they when they received the Holy Spirit?
4. How are the visitors, who had travelled many miles to be in Jerusalem, to “keep the feast” described? What does “devout” mean?
5. Optional: How many people, being baptized, “put on Christ” as a covering for sin on this Pentecost? Why is that fitting?

6. The two leavened loaves of the Pentecost represented an acknowledgment of the unworthiness of the offering of Jew and Gentile, and the grace of Yahweh in accepting it. Can you find anywhere in the record of Gentiles offering or being at this Pentecost?

7. In verse 42, five pillars of Ecclesial life are outlined. Consider and explain the importance of each. How do they align with our practices as Christadelphians?
 - a. "Continued Steadfastly"

 - b. "Apostle's Doctrine"

 - c. "Fellowship"

 - d. "Breaking of Bread"

 - e. "Prayers"

8. Verse 44-47 describes the wonderful spirit that pervaded that early group. While our practices today might be slightly different, does our Ecclesial life today resemble the same spirit? (just answer yes, no, or sometimes. This is a warmup question to get you thinking)

9. What was the practice of the Jewish converts regarding going to the Temple? Where did they break bread?

The Lame Man at the Gate Beautiful - Acts 3

In Acts chapter 2, we were introduced to the gift of tongues as the first manifestation of the Spirit Gifts. In chapter 3, the gift of healing is used by the Apostle Peter.

10. Did you notice that the lame man's condition is an apt description of our own condition? List the ways, including the process by which he was healed.

11. The lame man "asked an alms." A key word in our study is the word "Alms". (Acts 3:3) Let's do some research and get to the bottom of it.
 - a. What is the Greek word? What does it mean?

- b. What is the Greek root? What does it mean?
- c. List some other significant passages where the root is used (see instructions at beginning)
- d. What is the corresponding Hebrew word for this root? (hint: find this by looking for Old Testament quotations among the results for [c] and then look up the Hebrew word in the actual Old Testament passage) Comment on the significance of this word.

12. If you haven't already, investigate and summarize what Jesus had to say about "Alms"?

13. Peter could have given alms to this man, but how long would it have lasted?

- a. In what way did Peter provide the true "Alms"?
- b. What did Peter say that ensured the man and any witnesses, understood how he had been healed?

14. There will always be a danger when we try to attract people to the Truth through some means that appeals to the flesh. Whether it is the promise of friendship, financial assistance, or even the prospect of a dating relationship or marriage, a stumbling block can be put in one's path that puts one's focus in the wrong place. Yahweh desires someone to come to Him who "hungers and thirsts after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6), as opposed to one who "did eat of the loaves, and were filled." (John 6:26-27)

- a. List some examples from today where there could be a danger of offering "silver and gold", and not first putting forth "such as we have" (i.e. the Gospel).
- b. Suggest ways we can eliminate or mitigate the danger.

“Silver and Gold” - Bro. John Ullman

*“In this materialistic society it is commonly thought that money or wealth will provide the answers to the problems of life. Even amongst the Brotherhood, such a philosophy often prevails, causing even greater difficulties. Some feel that if they had more possessions, or better financial security, their lives would be more productive in the Truth! Such reasoning is a highly dangerous fallacy. Through such rationalism brethren are led to change their direction in life, veering towards a pursuit of greater worldly gain. Anything that draws an individual closer to the world will draw them away from God. The Gospel does not offer mankind what they think is best for themselves, in their own estimation of their “needs.” It does not offer any guarantee of advantageous social conditions. It does not provide a promise of immediate materialistic benefits. It does not extend an assurance of immunity from the trials and pressures of life. The gospel does offer to fulfill the one essential need of all men and women: **“Rise up and Walk!”** This is achieved by acquiring a sound knowledge and understanding of the Truth, accepting it in humility, and setting our feet firmly in the direction that leads to eternal salvation, walking by faith in hope of the promises. The way of faith is not demonstrated by neutrality, nor can it be maintained through inattentiveness. It will not develop out of listlessness or inactivity, nor will it become a reality without commitment. Faith will come into existence when individuals are prepared to **look listen hearken and do** as God requires”*

The Fellowship , Generosity, and Common Fund of the Early Jerusalem Ecclesia - Acts 4

In Acts chapter 4, as the numbers of believers pass the 5000 mark (Acts 4:4), the movement is targeted by the Jewish leaders, as they had targeted Jesus himself. But the Apostles are not easily swayed, having prayed for and received “boldness” to speak the word of God, through the Holy Spirit.

15. Had the brethren and sisters been commanded to sell everything into a common fund?

- a. Were everyone’s needs met by this practice?
- b. What Old Testament situation(s) does this remind you of?

16. The early Ecclesia had “all things in common”. Why don’t we follow this model today? Was the model consistently followed in the First Century Ecclesia? If not, what model did they follow?

17. How can we achieve the spirit of “all things in common” in our Ecclesias today?

18. What is your attitude towards your material possessions? What principles do we learn from our first century brethren and sisters? Make note of some relevant scriptures on materialism, as well as on generosity to share our blessings.
19. In Acts 4, we are introduced to Barnabas, who figures prominently in Part I of our studies. Spend a few moments researching and getting to know Barnabas. What does his name mean?
- What is his background?
 - What are some of his defining characteristics?
 - Optional: Some have hypothesized that Barnabas may have been the “Rich young ruler” that met with Jesus. Research this idea and see if there is any scriptural support for this hypothesis.

Ananias and Sapphira - Giving With the Wrong Motives - Acts 5

A wise brother once noted that “Ecclesial perfection is not to be expected this side of the Kingdom.” An Ecclesia made up of flesh and blood will always have to strive against the thinking of the flesh, and it is the Spirit word that can overcome if it is elevated to the position it deserves in each of our lives.

And so, it wasn’t long before the thinking of the flesh became evident in the Jerusalem Ecclesia, manifesting itself in the attitude and behavior of Ananias and Sapphira.

20. Read Acts 5:1-16. Did Ananias and Sapphira *have* to give the proceeds from the sale of their property to the Apostles?
- What appears to be their motive for this scheme?
 - How were their actions the same as the Pharisees and “Judaizers”? (Mal. 1:8,3:8, Luke 12:1, etc.) (We will be looking more at understanding who the “Judaizers” were later on)
 - What do we learn from verse 5 concerning our behavior in the Ecclesia? (Matt. 25:40, Luke 12:1-4)

- d. What are some more principles of giving and generosity that we gain from this account? Do we sometimes elevate the “good works” of other brethren and sisters in ways that may be harmful for them and others. How might we avoid that situation? Find some scriptural references that are relevant to this.
21. Read the rest of Acts 5. The ministry of our Lord is reflected in the lives of the Apostles, who by the Holy Spirit healed the multitudes, and performed signs that they would believe. And this stirred up the Jewish leaders against them. The response of the Apostles was that they “rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased no to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”
- a. Like the Lord, the Apostles had compassion on those who were suffering from the afflictions of the current dispensation, and healed them. Following the model of Jesus’ healing, what was required on the part of the person healed?
- b. What else would they have done for these people? (v42)

The First Welfare Crisis - Acts 6

In Acts chapter 6, we encounter the first welfare crisis to hit the growing Jerusalem Ecclesia.

22. As we have seen, the Ecclesia has been growing at an incredible rate. What was the main problem that came along with this growth? (Note: This forms a significant piece of background to the Jerusalem Poor Fund.)
23. Look up the word “murmuring” in Acts 6:1. What does it mean? Where else is it found in Scripture? (Note: The Septuagint uses the same word to describe the murmuring of Israel in the wilderness - 1 Cor. 10:10)
24. What was the “daily ministrations”?
25. Compare and contrast the two sides of Jewish converts who were arguing about the problem. What was the background of each group (Acts 6:1)?
26. What was the solution to this problem? What were the qualifications of the seven men chosen who were to “serve” in this administrative capacity? What was the final result (Acts 6:7)?
27. What does this teach us about “rules” and “organization” in Ecclesial life?

28. Of which “side” were the seven men chosen for the work (Hint: look at their names)? Why was this?
29. Optional: In Acts 6:7, the record tells us that, “a great company of Priests were obedient to the faith.” What did this mean for these Priests? What did they have to go through to change their way of life?
30. The Apostles realized that the burden of “serving tables” (welfare) would interfere with the preaching of the truth. What does this tell us about their relative importance? (both still needed to be accomplished!) Does this still apply today or was that a “special” perspective for the First Century as the truth was being established? Back up your answer with scriptures.

Stephen’s Defense - Acts 6-7

Though Stephen was selected to lead in administrative services, it is his defense of the Truth that he is remembered for. In fact, this incident marks a turning point in the history of the first century Ecclesia. Prior to Stephen’s articulation of the history of Israel, the followers of Jesus were not seen as a major threat. But after this, they were hunted down in an effort to stamp them out. (Acts 8:1-4, Acts 11:19)

31. What was it about Stephen’s teaching that resulted in widespread persecution against the truth?
32. How do we know Saul was present when all of this was happening (and not just there when Stephen was killed)? (Hint: see Acts 6:9) What impact did this have on his life? (Acts 8:1-4, Gal. 1:13-14)

The Gospel Spreads to Samaria and Beyond - Acts 8

It is amazing to see Jesus’ words of Acts 1:8 coming to pass, as the “witness” of the “things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12) spreads to Samaria, and then begins to go to the “utmost parts of the earth.”

33. In Acts 8, we have a remarkable contrast between Simon the Sorcerer and the Ethiopian Eunuch. Contrast them with regards to their background and perspective on money/wealth in relation to the “true riches” (Luke 16:11).

Further Reading

- "Acts Expositor" - Logos
- "Guidebook to the New Testament" - Bro. H.P. Mansfield
- "The First Century Ecclesia" - Bro. James B. Norris
- "From James to Jude Expositor" - Bro. H.P. Mansfield

Section 2 - The “Fellowship of the Mystery” of the Gospel (Eph. 3:9)

Reading

Read carefully Acts 9-14

Introduction

In “Elpis Israel”, brother Thomas wrote: “The establishment of God’s kingdom is based upon his sovereign principles... his choosing...” He made this statement based on the evidence of scripture that God’s kingdom has not been developed based on man’s choosing. For example, in the development of the promised “seed”, Abraham would have chosen Ishmael, Isaac would have chosen Esau, Samuel would have chosen one of David’s brothers. Though they had been instructed by Jesus on numerous occasions concerning the doctrine of the Atonement, the disciples refused to believe that Messiah needed to suffer and be crucified. As much as they desired the Kingdom, they needed to know that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” And so, Yahweh has always intervened in the affairs of mankind to further His purpose - demonstrating to all generations from Adam to Christ, that “the excellency of the power would be of God and not of men.”

Thus it is no surprise that during the First Century, and even with the Holy Spirit Gifts available, intervention would be necessary to shape the development of the Ecclesia in accordance with Yahweh’s purpose. And Yahweh would perform this in a way that would challenge the faith and understanding of even the Apostles. Dramatic events in the lives of Saul and Peter would change their lives, and change the world as the Grace of God was extended to the Gentiles.

Later on in the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul reflects back on the time immediately after his baptism, that it took three years in the deserts of Arabia for him to truly understand and come to grips with the Gospel message that he was to bring as the “minister” to the Gentiles. And he wanted them to know that “the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Gal 1:11-12)

Peter too would need a revelation that the “fellowship of the mystery” of the Gospel, that “the unsearchable riches of Christ” would be preached “among the Gentiles”. This aspect of the Gospel was previously hidden, but now was to be revealed to Jew and Gentile. Once the heady days of Cornelius’ conversion were faded, Peter struggled with the practical outworking of this new reality, and needed Paul’s determined rebuke.

Saul’s Conversion

1. In view of the prominent role Paul was to eventually take in the service of Christ, he is first mentioned in the Scripture in a most interesting way. Where is this reference?
2. What does the name Saul mean?
3. The record states that Stephen’s clothes were “laid down at a young man’s feet.” How old do you think Saul was at this point? Hint: research the Greek word for “young man”.

Events Covered

- The Conversion of Saul
- Peter and Cornelius
- Agabus and the Dearth
- Paul’s Commission
- The 1st Missionary Journey
- A “Door of Faith” Opened to the Gentiles

4. The next mention of Saul begins in Acts 8:1 and 9:1. What do we find him doing in these references? Also see Acts 26: 9-12
5. The young man who witnessed the murder of Stephen now becomes the foremost figure in continuing the violence against Stephen's brothers, the brethren of Christ. What does "made havoc" mean? Acts 8:3 How does Paul later feel about these actions? Acts 22:4, Gal 1:13-24
6. What was driving Saul to carry this out (Acts 22:3-4, Acts 26:9-10)?
7. Research the background of Saul's life. Make a list of facts about him, and his self-described characteristics (Phil. 3:4-6, 1 Tim 1:12-13, etc.).
8. Read Acts 9, 22, and 26. Why do you think this same story is recorded three times? Do you see any differences between the accounts?
9. Optional: Who was the high priest of Acts 9:1? Approximately what year is this happening?
10. Paul was going after "any of this way." Look up "this way." What does it mean?
 - a. Jesus also describes himself as being "the way." Where is the term "the way" first found in the Bible?
 - b. Look up also Acts 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22 and see how "the way" is used. This term is later mixed with error and mingled with apostasy (2 Pet. 2:2). Is your "way" of life still progressing on the pathway of life?
11. Saul was traveling from Jerusalem to Damascus to carry out more persecutions. How far was this journey?
 - a. What time of day does Acts 9:3 occur (see Acts 26:13, Acts 22:6)?
 - b. Did people normally travel during that time of day? What does this tell us about Saul's determination to persecute the Ecclesia?
12. Acts 9:3 states that "suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven." What did Saul see in this light (Acts 9:17, 27)? See also 2 Cor. 3:18

13. Describe the process that Saul went through in his conversion to the Truth? Note the words “fell to the earth”, “arose,” “putting his hands on him,” “received meat,” and “he was strengthened.”
- a. How did our Lord Jesus Christ go through the same process in his death, burial, and resurrection? (Also note Daniel's vision in Daniel 10:8-19)
14. We can learn a lot about someone by how they react to different situations in their life. The Lord Jesus reveals to Saul that he is really persecuting him (Acts 9:4, 5)! Saul thinks he is doing the Lord's work. How does Saul react to this news? What is his response (Acts 9:6)? What kind of man does this show Saul to be?
- a. This same response is used earlier in the book of Acts. Where? Perhaps Saul had even been there. Now he is caused to repeat the same question for himself.
 - b. Have you had a “Damascus Experience”? An incident where you knew you needed to change course? How did you react? Have you kept true to your determination?
15. Acts 26:16-18 picks up the Lord’s instructions for Saul. Saul’s purpose was to become a minister and witness. What do each of the words mean here?
16. How well do you think Paul knew the Scriptures? Give at least 2 references for your answer.
- a. Where did Paul go immediately after this? How long was he there, and what do you suppose he did during that time before his missionary work was to begin? (hint: the answer is in one of Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians)
 - b. How should this fact guide our decisions on when we are ready for missionary work? W
17. Paul never forgot Stephen’s death. How does this introductory event to the record of the Apostle Paul change his life? See Luke 23:34, 1 Timothy 1:13, 2 Timothy 4:16
18. When are we introduced to “Paul” as opposed to “Saul”? What does the name Paul mean? Why do you suppose he changed it to that? (hint: 1 Cor. 15:9)
19. We see a changed man after Acts 9. Paul would often look back on this point in his life and regret his persecution of the saints, but it provides us with a great lesson and example that we all need to change our

“Minister”

The Greek word minister signifies an under-rower (oarsmen), one who accepts directions from another without necessarily knowing the course taken. This tells us that Saul was not yet ready to map out his own course.

thoughts and our ways to become aligned with the character of our God. (Isaiah 55:7-9) As you have considered the example of the conversion of Saul to the great apostle Paul, identify the areas that you need to change in your own life. Before moving on to the next question, list 3 areas that you would like to improve on before attending Youth Conference.

The Raising of Dorcas - Acts 9:36-43

20. What two things was Dorcas known for?

Peter and Cornelius - Acts 10 - 11:18

21. Who was Cornelius and what does his name mean?

22. Look at Luke chapter 7. Some believe that this is Cornelius. Find at least three similarities between these two individuals. What is your conclusion?

23. What are the four things we learn about Cornelius in Acts 10:2?

24. Explain how each of these characteristics is important for us to show forth today? Find a Bible verse to back up each principle.

25. What comes up as a memorial before God from Cornelius? Is this the same word we have already researched?

- a. What does the word "memorial" mean? Where do you think this memorial was "recorded"? See verse 31. Also, Malachi 3:16.

26. Compare Acts 10:34-35 with Romans 2:11-12, Ephesians 6:8-9, and Colossians 3:23-25. How do all of these passages relate to 1 Timothy 2:4?

27. What does Peter mean by the term "every nation" in Acts 10:35? See Revelation 5:9-10.

28. Describe the vision that Peter receives in your own words. What is Peter being taught here? How is Paul taught this same lesson?

29. In Acts 11:1-3, the news of Cornelius' conversion has reached Judea and Jerusalem before Peter had even returned to Jerusalem. What was the reaction to the rumors?
- What group immediately "contended" with Paul?
 - What does the word "contended" mean?
 - Does it appear as though they attempted to validate what they had heard?
 - What scriptural principles should be applied to a situation like this? How can we determine that we will not "jump to conclusions" or "react" without having the full story?
- e. When Peter had the chance to explain what had happened, what was the response?
30. Optional: Have you ever considered the wonder of God's providence and selection in the lives of Saul and Peter? Saul had the credentials that could impress the Jews, and Peter received the vision and participated in Cornelius' conversion making him the ideal person to preach to the Gentiles. But God selected Saul to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, and Peter served the Jews in Jerusalem. Brain storm some good reasons why God would have it go this way.

The Progression of the Witness of the Apostles

31. Acts 11:19 uses very similar language to a verse in Acts 8. Find the verse in Acts 8. Which verse is it?
32. Fill out this chart making note of the progression of preaching, in fulfillment of Jesus' words in Acts 1:8.

REFERENCE	WORD PREACHED TO...	BACKGROUND OF PERSON
<i>ACTS 1-7</i>		
<i>ACTS 8:5-25</i>		
<i>ACTS 8:26-40</i>		
<i>ACTS 9</i>		
<i>ACTS 10:1-11:18</i>		
<i>ACTS 11:20-ACTS 28</i>		

33. Acts 11:20 states that they spake "unto the Grecians." Who were the Grecians in this case? Read verse 19 and 20 in the Revised Version. Was this group Jewish?

34. What was the response of this new group? (Acts 11:21)
- What does the word “turned” mean?
 - What is the context of it's use in Acts 3:19? What about the context of Acts 14:15, Acts 15:19, and Acts 26:20?
 - Do these references relate to Jews or Gentiles?
35. The Jerusalem Ecclesia sent Barnabas to “investigate” in Antioch. Was this necessary? Why do you think they felt it necessary?
36. Was Barnabas a good brother to send on this work? explain.
- Recall... What does his name mean? Did he live up to the mission?
 - What did Barnabas “see” when he arrived? What is the Greek word for “see”? This word features prominently in our second section, on the Fund.
 - Who did Barnabas think could help the Ecclesia at Antioch? Where did he find him?
37. Acts 11:26 tells us that “the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.” Why did this group need a new name? Why did we as Christadelphians need a different name?

Agabus and the Dearth (Acts 11:27-30) The Model Fund – The Apostle's Seed Idea

38. What is being described by the term “these days” in Acts 11:27? What is happening in the Ecclesial world during this time period?
39. What does the name Agabus mean? Where else does he appear in the Bible?
40. There never was a great dearth throughout all the world in the sense of a world-wide famine throughout the whole Roman habitable; but there was a series of famines that occurred throughout the reign and the time of Claudius. In fact, there were 4 great famines which occurred in his reign which began in AD.41. Research some history and see where these 4 famines occurred. (Match the place with the time period)

YEAR
41 AD
45 AD
49 AD
51 AD

LOCATION
Greece
Rome
Judea
Rome

41. Which famine is Agabus here signifying through the Spirit? And based on your answer, what is the timing of this “great dearth”?

42. Famine wasn't the only problem that beset the Jerusalem Ecclesia during these days. What else was happening during this period of tremendous growth in the Ecclesial world? Remember Acts 6. Find references throughout the New Testament to back up each challenge listed below.

CHALLENGE	PASSAGES
EXPANSION	
EXCOMMUNICATI TION	
PERSECUTION	
CONFISCATION	
DEPRIVATION	

43. How many of these situations do you face today? What does that make you think about this time period in Ecclesial history?

44. What is the the response of the Antioch Ecclesia in Acts 11:29? What were they determined to do?

45. Was the Antioch Ecclesia made up mostly of Jews or Gentiles (Hebrews or Grecians)?

46. Look up the phrases of Acts 11:29 in 3 other translations and write them down here to get a good sense of the meaning of this phrase.

47. What does “they determined to send relief” really mean?

a. How were they determined to do it?

The Model Fund of Acts 11

Remember, this fund collected and delivered by Paul and Barnabas is **not** the Jerusalem Poor Fund. This is an earlier collection from which Paul gets the idea for the Jerusalem Poor Fund. From this section in Acts 11:27-30, he pulls the principles together that will guide the Jerusalem Poor Fund

- b. What does the word “determine” mean in the Greek?
- c. What was the procedure they would do to make this relief happen?
- d. What Old Testament provision of the Law does this remind you of?

48. Can you see this spirit and idea of “determining to send relief” today in our worship service on Sunday morning? When is it done on Sunday morning?

49. Can you see the same response in your labors for the Truth today?

- a. What are some examples of how we can “send relief unto the brethren” today?
- b. Make a list of three other Bible characters who showed this same spirit.

Hymn 357

Take courage, my brother
 And be not fainthearted,
 Let none of your sorrows
 Nor trials impede,
 But reach forth your hand
 and
 Remember your brother,
 Forget all your troubles

50. The guiding principles for the Jerusalem Poor Fund are found in 1 Corinthians 16:1-3. While we have not yet come to our examination of the Jerusalem Poor Fund (for that we have to wait for part II), we see that this fund in Acts 11 was certainly the source of the idea. Take a few minutes to read verse 1-3 and then outline what appear to be the guiding principles.

51. There are approximately five guiding principles used by Paul in the Jerusalem Poor Fund. The principles are listed below. Match each principle with a phrase from Acts 11:27-30 and 1 Corinthians 16:1-3.

1. Their giving was to be based on God's blessing of them.
2. It was to deliberately set aside from their resources.
3. It was to be their personal response.
4. It was to be a practical show of brotherly love.

5. It was to be conveyed by chosen delegates (decently and in order).
52. Do these five principles show themselves in our relief efforts today? Give examples.
53. Consider what it must have felt like to be a recipient of the care and generosity of your brothers and sisters from afar. Many of whom you would not even know. Now consider how you would feel if these were brethren and sisters of whom you had voiced suspicion, wondering whether they really were "Christadelphians"? How humbling! Make some notes on these considerations.

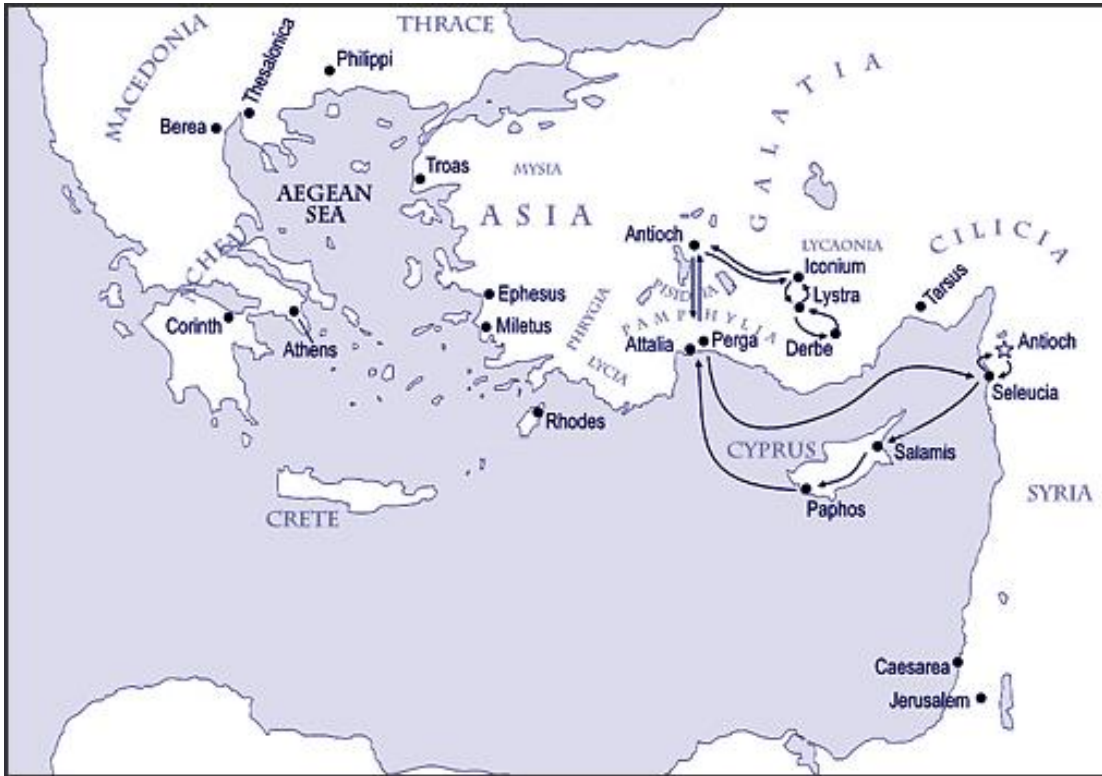
Tumultuous Events in Jerusalem - Acts 12

In Acts 12, we read about James' murder, Peter's imprisonment and his providential escape. We also read about the death of Herod, an act of divine judgment because he "gave not God the glory."

54. During this tumultuous time for the brethren and sisters in Jerusalem, who were staying in Jerusalem and witnessed these events? (Acts 11:30,12:25)

Paul's First Missionary Journey - Acts 13 - 14:26

55. Paul and Barnabas returned from Jerusalem bringing with them John Mark (Acts 12:25). It wasn't long before Yahweh intervened again with regards to the Gentiles. Explain the circumstances resulting in Paul and Barnabas heading into the mission field. What was their commission?



56. Trace their travels on a map, while reading Acts 13-14:26. Notice that now there are two “Antioch” Ecclesias? We differentiate them by referring to the original as “Antioch in Syria”, and the new one as “Antioch in Pisidia”
57. Unfortunately, we cannot allow ourselves to get side-tracked with the interesting events of Paul’s first journey. Make note of the following:
- During this time, the Galatian Ecclesias of Antioch in Pisidia, Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium were established. Galatians 4:12-15 seems to indicate that Paul became sick during this journey and it was a result of his sickness (providential of course) that brought him there.
 - Paul is now going to get a taste for what he will face the rest of his life. We get insight into his approach to teach the Gospel out of “Moses and the Prophets.”
 - We see the typical response of the Jews. Just as the Jews in the land rejected this last offer, so do most of the Jews in dispersion. Be sure to make note of Acts 13:46-47.
 - We see faith amongst the Gentiles and great joy proclaimed by those who realized the privilege they were under. (Acts 13:48)
 - We see the suffering that Paul and many other believers endured as a result of the Jews stirring things up. After being stoned and left for dead what an encouragement it must have been to hear Paul exhorting the brethren that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”!

The Door of Faith Opened unto the Gentiles (Acts 14:27)

Upon their return to Antioch: “And when they were come, and had gathered the Ecclesia together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.”

Section 3 - “A Yoke Upon the Neck of the Disciples”

(Acts 15:10)

Reading

Carefully read Acts 15 and Galatians 1-2. (The Epistle to the Galatians was written after the events of Acts 15.)

Introduction

The “yoke” in scripture is predominantly a symbol of service and submission (obedience), but it is also a symbol of servitude and oppression. It is the latter sense that Paul used when he addressed those disciples who insisted on keeping the Law of Moses as a basis for righteousness. The yoke of oppression was even greater considering that their concept of “keeping” the Law was based on the corrupted practices of the Jewish leaders, who “bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.” (Matt. 23:4)

Events Covered
The Jerusalem Conference

To better understand the challenge this posed for the devout Jew, think back to the natural feelings and challenges the Israelites would have felt when the manna ceased. Those who for all their lives had gone out early in the morning to gather of God’s provision, no longer needed to do so; but to sow and reap effectively in the land of promise, they would need to apply the same principles - rising early to labour in faith of God’s harvest. Those who had developed a spirit of “going through the motions” in “keeping” the Law, now found themselves challenged to keep the “spirit” of the Law in daily life, while no longer under the “letter.”

Additionally, they had never formerly contemplated that the same message of salvation delivered to the “chosen people” would be made available to Gentiles without their compliance to the traditions and laws of the Jews. No longer were Gentiles required to become converts to the Jewish faith – since the circumstances of Cornelius were a direct intervention by God to achieve His purpose. Thus the “seed of Abraham” was extended to include faithful Gentiles as well as Jews. Contention and discord were to affect the early Ecclesias as this issue became a problem. What about the gross immorality and vain philosophy that was a way of life for Greeks and Romans? Could Gentiles really understand the principles of separation and holiness?

Further inflaming the situation was the spread of the truth, and the establishment of another Ecclesial center in Antioch. Could there be another “Ecclesial center” other than Jerusalem?

Thus the Jewish converts were particularly vulnerable to the false teaching of the Judaizers. This teaching, originating in Jerusalem, eventually spreads to every area. It is clear from reading Galatians that Paul has written them because they too have been drawn in. He “marvels” at the speed in which they were willing to put aside the “grace of Christ”, and follow those who would “pervert the gospel.” As Paul goes forth on his second journey, and into the events of his third journey, this issue raises its ugly head time and again.

In this section, we consider the events surrounding the Jerusalem Conference, where the issue was clarified (at least for the Gentiles), and where Paul receives his commission to “remember the poor.” It is doubtful that James and Peter anticipated the extent to which Paul would go in fulfilling this simple request, as we shall see in due course!

The Jerusalem Conference: The merging of the work of Peter and Paul

1. Read Acts 14:27-15:41. What are the two opposing sides? How did the Jews normally view the Gentiles? Compare Mark 7:27

2. Read also what happens in Paul's speech in Antioch, Acts 13:14-52. What is the message of this speech?

3. How did the Jews react to Acts 13:39? How did the Gentiles react?

4. Where does Paul quote from in Acts 13:47?

5. How did Paul react to their persecution in verse 51? Where is this action spoken of by the Lord? Find at least 3 references.

6. Read Acts 15:1 carefully. Where was Antioch in relation to Jerusalem geographically? Would it be possible for them to "come down from Judea"? Why do you think Luke records this phrase for us?

7. What is a "Judaizer"? Is this term found in the Bible? What are synonymous terms?

8. In Acts 15:1, the "Judaizers" taught, "that except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Circumcision did not originally begin with Moses, but with which Old Testament character? Why would this crafty teaching be important to the issue of keeping the law?

Titus - Paul's Son After "the Common Faith"

9. Though not mentioned in the Acts account, Titus was there with Paul on this occasion. (Gal. 2:1-3) Why would Paul bring Titus along? What was Titus' background? (Titus is a key participant in part II of our studies)
 - a. Why wasn't Titus compelled to be circumcised?

- b. Optional: Some have suggested that Titus was actually the brother of Luke. Research the reasons for this suggestion. Were you able to form an opinion?
10. Compare and contrast verse 5 with verses 7-11 of Acts 15. What is the difference between what the sect of the Pharisees say and what Peter says?
11. Why do you think Paul felt it necessary to join in this debate (Gal. 2:1-8)? Do you think Paul's background (Phil. 3:2-9) helped him deal with this issue effectively? Do you think he personally knew some of the "sect of the Pharisees" who planned this debate?
12. Paul's strong resistance to this teaching is evident from Galatians 1 and 2. "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." Can we learn some principles for dealing with false doctrine in the Ecclesia from Paul's response?
13. What had the Holy Spirit already witnessed about this matter? (Hint: Peter and Cornelius). Why had the "Judaizers" not accepted that answer?
14. What had historically separated the Jews and Gentiles (Gen. 17:11, Lev. 17:11-13)?
15. What is true circumcision in the eyes of God (Deut. 10:15-17, Rom. 2:29)?

Bro. John Thomas on the Judaizers

"...not being satisfied with the things of Christ, but seeking to combine the Mosaic institutions with the gospel. This was Judaizing, and the first step to that awful apostacy by which the world has been cursed for so many ages."

Summary of the Judaizer's Position

Take a moment to review the table in Appendix I, which is taken from Bro. Ron Abel's book on the Jerusalem Poor Fund. This table does a nice job of summarizing their position and puts forth the correct doctrine.

Also included in Appendix I are some notes from Eureka Volume I, "The Harlot of the Ephah." Admittedly, hard reading, this fascinating article demonstrates how the doctrine and practice of the Judaizers laid the groundwork for the Apostacy.

James "the Just" - Emerging Leader of the Ecclesia at Jerusalem

Before we consider the conclusion of the Jerusalem Conference, let's look at one of the key participants, James.

In Acts chapter 12, Peter is going away in verse 17 - and seems to point out James, the half-brother of Jesus as being an emerging leader in the Jerusalem Ecclesia. James as well as his brother Jude take great pains to ensure they are not seen as “riding the coat-tails” of their half-brother. They follow his example because of who he is, the Messiah. We know that this James is not James the brother of John since he was killed in Acts 12:2.

The spiritual development of James is every bit as dramatic as that of Peter, but much less known. During Jesus’ ministry, his brethren did not believe in him (John 7:5, Mark 3:21) but it would be the power of the resurrection of Christ that would change everything for James (Acts 1:14). The following chart gives an indication of how James was listening:

THE LORD’S IMPACT ON JAMES		
<i>Jesus’ Teaching</i>	<i>James’ Teaching</i>	<i>Subject</i>
Matt. 7:1	James 5:9, 4:11-12	Judgment
Matt. 6:19	James 5:2-5	Materialism
Matt. 7:24	James 1:22	Oaths

This table outlines the emergence of James as a leader in the Jerusalem Ecclesia:

ACTS 12	“and he (Peter) said, Go shew these things unto James and to the brethren..”
ACTS 15:13,19	“And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me ... Wherefore my sentence is that we trouble not them...”
ACTS 21:18	“and the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present
GAL 2:9	“and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars...”
GAL 2:12	“For before that certain came from James”

The Epistle of James

James wrote his Epistle in to the Jewish brethren in the Diaspora. Examples of these would be those who were converted on the day of Pentecost, who were from far-flung locations (Acts 2:5-11), as well as the brethren who were scattered as a result of the persecution that arose after Stephen’s death (Acts 11:19).The content of the Epistle seems to indicate it was written before the Gospel went to the Gentiles, at least before the Jerusalem Conference. That would put the timing between AD 43-50.

16. This may be a good opportunity to have a quick read of James’ Epistle, as much if not most of it is relevant to our study.
 - a. Do concordance searches on the keywords “rich”, “poor”, “give”, “visit”, and “gain” in the Epistle of James. (there are more too so find your own by reading too)
 - b. What are some of the situations that James condemns?

- c. What are some principles that we learn from this Epistle about our perspective and actions towards our brethren and sisters who may be rich as well as to those who may be poor?

Now, back to Acts 15!

- 17. Read James' words in Acts 15:13-18. He states that what Peter has said is in agreement with the words of the prophets! "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name."
 - a. Where does the context of this verse come from? Hint: Exodus 12:1-15:21. This phrase calls to mind the whole book of Exodus, a repetition of the call of Israel out of Egypt. What does this show you about the character and ways of Yahweh?

- 18. What context is James using in verses 16-18? Look up the following references to help.
 - a. Jeremiah 12:15-16

b. Amos 9:11-12

c. Isaiah 45:21

19. What was the final resolution of the Jerusalem Conference of Acts 15? List the decision of Acts 15:20-21.

a. "Pollution of idols" - Romans 14:13-23, what principle is Paul stating here?

b. "and from fornication" - what does the word "fornication" mean?

c. "and from things strangled" - Did the Gentiles really have an issue with how they killed their food? Why do you think this was added to the decision?

d. "and from blood" - Lev 17:11, Hebrews 9:22 - What is the significance of blood in the Scriptures?
*How do the Jehovah's Witnesses misuse this verse?

20. Did this decision clear up the matter of Judaism? Did it answer the question of the Gentiles keeping the law? What was the purpose of the final decision?

a. Can you find the decision of this Conference anywhere else in the New Testament? If so, where?

b. Who is chosen to deliver this decision to the Ecclesias? What Ecclesias are they sent to?

21. Acts 15:28 states that these rules were "necessary things" and that the Conference did not want to lay upon them a "greater burden." What does the word "burden" mean? Why do you think these were "necessary things?" Reference the following passages with regards to this decision. Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 8, Matthew 5:17-20, Matthew 15: 17-20.

22. In Galatians 2:9, Paul recounts how he was given the “right hands of fellowship” as he leaves to preach to the Gentiles. In the next verse he is told by James, Peter, and John to include something else in his work. What is this direction? And what is Paul's response?
23. Look up the phrase “forward to do” in other translations and in your concordance. What does this tell us about Paul's character, and how can this be a lesson for us?
24. Was this new instruction to Paul related to the decision of the Jerusalem conference?
25. Read Paul's incident with Peter in Galatians 2:11-17. What is this incident all about? How does it relate to the Jerusalem Conference's decision?
26. Find a reference in each of Paul's epistles to the problem of Judaism (examples: James 2:10, 1 Tim. 1:9). Why was this such a large issue for Paul to deal with? Do you think the Jerusalem Conference settled this issue?
27. Optional: It would seem as though the Epistle to the Galatians was written immediately after the Jerusalem Conference. But, it could have been written later, perhaps at the end of Paul's second journey. Do some research on when this Epistle might have been written, and record your conclusion here.

Silas - a “faithful brother”, and Paul's companion

28. Here we are introduced to Silas, who will be Paul's traveling companion during his Second Journey. Do some research on Silas. What was his background? What was he like? (hint: he is also referred to as “Silvanus”)

The Decision Brought to Antioch

29. What was the response of the Ecclesia at Antioch to the decision on the Conference? How do you see the context of Romans 2:14-15 apply here?

Section 4 - “Come Over into Macedonia and Help Us” (Acts 16:9)

Reading

Read carefully Acts 15:30-Acts 18:18-22 (Paul’s 2nd Missionary Journey)

Trace his journey on a map to get a good feel for the locations of the various places, and the travel routes between them.

Introduction

Our last section ended with the decision of the “Jerusalem Conference” being brought to the Ecclesia at Antioch, and confirmed by the mouth of Judas and Silas as their representatives. We are told in 15:31 that the result of receiving the encouragement was great joy.

The 2nd Missionary Journey begins in Acts 15:36: “And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.”

This was classic Paul. He understood that the Ecclesias needed to be rooted and grounded in sound doctrine and practice. He took his responsibility seriously, and his earnest care for their welfare is evident in this initiative.

But Yahweh had more in store for Paul than what he may have initially had in mind! Recall that we are focusing on those events relevant to our study, so we will have to leave out some important events of the 2nd journey.

During the 2nd Journey, the Gospel comes to Macedonia and Achaia, the two areas of focus in part II of our study. So we are going to look at the events surrounding the establishment of Ecclesias in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth, and meet some of the individuals whose character and faith are seen in their response to the Jerusalem Poor Fund.

At this point, Paul and Barnabas’ work in the truth took separate paths .(Acts 15:37-41) It looks like they part company with hard feelings between them over John Mark’s capability to handle the mission Paul taking Silas, and Barnabas taking John Mark. No matter, for Yahweh’s work is bigger than personalities, and so Paul harbored no ill will towards either of them. (1 Cor. 9:6, 2 Tim.4:11) Barnabas, having played a key role in the first part of our studies, fades from the picture.

Timothy - Paul’s “Beloved Son” in the Truth (1 Cor. 4:17)

1. Take a few moments to research Timothy. (Search “Timothy” and “Timotheus”) What does his name mean?
 - a. What was his background?
 - b. Comment on his character and relationship with Paul as depicted in the Acts and the Epistles.

The Circumcision of Timothy - Acts 16:1-3

2. Why did Paul circumcise Timothy? (Acts 16:1-3)

Events Covered

- The origins of Paul’s 2nd Missionary Journey
- The Gospel comes to Macedonia:
 - Philippi
 - Thessalonica
 - Berea
- The Gospel comes to Achaia:

- a. Given everything that happened with the Jerusalem Conference, what did this open Paul up to be charged with?
- b. We should *always* avoid personal hypocrisy, in addition, we must “abstain from all appearance of evil.” (1 Thess. 5:22) Have you ever been in a situation where to do the right thing, your actions would appear hypocritical to others who didn’t understand? What are some ways we can minimize the damage?

3. What were the “decrees” that they were delivering? (Acts 16:4, Acts 15:20-21)

Providential Direction

Follow the places of Acts 16:6-8 on a map. It is important for us to remember that when we pray for God’s providential guidance, we are not only praying for doors to open, but also for doors to close!

4. After Paul received the vision of the man of Macedonia, how would you characterize his response? (note down the action words in verse 10 and 11)
 - a. Note the personal pronoun “we” in verses 10 and 11. Who has joined Paul, Silas and Timothy?
 - b. How long did it take them to travel from Troas to Philippi? Later on, at the end of our studies, Paul travels in the opposite direction (from Philippi to Troas) in Acts 20:6, how many days did it take on that occasion? How does this indicate the speed and urgency with which they travelled on this occasion? Since most of that journey was made by ship, it seems they providentially had the wind filling their sails!
 - c. We can learn from Paul’s response. How?

Paul’s Policy on Accepting Support

The Apostle Paul had an unusually strong policy when it came to accepting support from the local Ecclesia and brethren and sisters. Consider the following passages as a starting point: Acts 18:3, Acts 20:33-35, 1 Cor. 9:18, 2 Cor. 11:9, 1 Thess. 2:9, 2 Thess. 3:8.

5. What was his policy and were some of the reasons behind it?

Bro. Thomas No Trader in Religion "... that we might not be chargeable to any of you" 2 Thess. 3:8

"It is a gratification to the writer to be able to say that he has left his home, 4,000 miles in the south-west; that he has travelled twice through Britain; delivered 170 addresses to the people; sat up early and late conversing with them on the things of the Kingdom, and written this work, that he may leave a testimony behind him, and as yet he has received no more than four shillings over his traveling expenses. He mentions this that the reader may be able to acquit him of being a trader in religion, and that what he says in this book concerning the "scriptural merchants" may not lose its point under the supposition that he also is one of the wealthy and thriving firm." - John Thomas (Elpis Israel)

Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy Reach Philippi

6. Do some research on the city of Philippi and the area of Macedonia. Jot down some pertinent facts (start with facts given in the scriptures, and branch out to those from other sources such as Bible dictionary, etc.)



The Conversion of Lydia

7. Where did Paul usually go on the Sabbath? (Acts 13:14, 17:2, 18:4)
8. Where did Paul go on *this* Sabbath? What can we then infer about the Jews in Philippi?
9. Who had assembled together there for prayer?

10. What does Lydia's name mean?

- a. Where is Lydia from?
- b. Optional: Do some research on the phrase "seller of purple" what do you think she sold? Where did the purple dye come from?
- c. List some of the clues we are given in the record to indicate that Lydia is a business woman of considerable means (affluent). The fact that she is at the place where "Prayer was wont to be made" on the Sabbath indicates what about her character?
- d. Who "opened her heart"? Why? What is the lesson?
- e. What was the usual result for someone who accepted the truth and housed the Apostles in those days? (see Acts 17:5-7, for Macedonians: 1 Thess. 2:14)
- f. Look up "besought" and "constrained", examine some other translations. What is happening here? How did Lydia convince Paul to make an exception to his policy? What can we learn from this situation?
- g. Optional: Compare Lydia to the Virtuous Woman of Proverbs 31
- h. What Old Testament personality does Lydia remind you of?

The Man of Macedonia

Isn't it interesting that in his vision, Paul saw a "man" of Macedonia, but upon their arrival, the first convert is a "woman" who actually is not

The Philippian Ecclesia Established

- 11. Lydia was the first member of the Ecclesia at Philippi. Who else were converted during Paul's time in Philippi?
- 12. When Paul and Silas were officially released, they went to Lydia's house and "exhorted" (RSV) the brethren prior to departing. (v40) Where then was the Ecclesia meeting at that time?
- 13. What are some principles we learn about hospitality and genuine care from Lydia? (place a mark here because you may want to come back and add to your answer after completing our studies!)

The Thessalonian Ecclesia Established Acts 17:1-9

14. Which personal pronoun is used to describe the group that leaves Philippi? Who likely stayed behind in Philippi?
 - a. Use your concordance to find the next occurrence of the personal pronoun “we” in the narrative that indicates he has rejoined the group?
 - b. How do you think his presence helped the fledgling Ecclesia of Philippi?

15. Do some research on the city of Thessalonica. Write down any important facts (start with facts given in the scriptures, and branch out to those from other sources such as Bible dictionary, etc.) How far was it from Philippi to Thessalonica? How long would it have taken them to travel by foot? Imagine making that journey while nursing the wounds they received in Philippi! (1 Thess. 2:1-4)

16. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12. What were some of the tricky situations Paul encountered amongst those who were converted to the Truth in Thessalonica?
 - a. How did he support himself so he was not “chargeable” (1 Thessalonians 2:9) to the Thessalonians?

17. Read Philippians 4:15-17. What had the Philippians done for Paul while he was at Thessalonica?
 - a. Look up the word “communicated”. What is it and what does it mean?
 - b. What does “once and again” mean?
 - c. Of those Paul just met at Philippi, who do you think would have been behind this gift?

18. Read Philippians 1:3-5. Look up the word “fellowshipped”.
 - a. Who had he “fellowshipped” on the first day in Philippi?
 - b. What is the Greek word for “first” in Philippians 1:5?

19. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10. In what way were the Thessalonians examples to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia?

20. Who appears to have been housing Paul and Silas?

The Berean Ecclesia Established Acts 17: 10-15

21. Do some research on the city of Berea. Jot down some pertinent facts. Use your concordance to find someone who was from here.

22. What were the Bereans commended for and how can we be commended in the same way?

23. Review the converts from the three cities in Macedonia. What group is prominently mentioned in all three situations? Do you see any significance in that?

Paul in Athens

When the Jews of Thessalonica stirred up the people of Berea against Paul, the brethren helped conduct Paul by sea to Athens. Silas and Timothy stayed behind in Berea until the brethren returned with a message from Paul to join him. (Acts 17:14-15). Paul's time in Athens was significant, but does not have a major bearing on our subject so we will not be covering it.

24. Note on the map that Athens (and Corinth) are not in Macedonia. What region are they part of?

The Corinthian Ecclesia Established Acts 18: 1-18

25. Research the city of Corinth. Spend a little more time on Corinth than you may have on Thessalonica and Berea, since this Ecclesia figures prominently in Part II, and the Jerusalem Poor Fund. What was Corinth known for? Where was it located? etc.

26. Who were the first converts at Corinth? What was their background? Where were they from? Why were they there? What did Paul have in common with them?

Daily Portion of the Word

"It is possible to yield to fits of intense application, to be followed by intervals of lassitude and spiritual aversion. Some let weeks roll on without reading their daily portion of scripture, thinking to make it up by reading a great deal more on some particular day. Both these are mistakes. We cannot feed healthily either in body or mind, by the plan of gorging. A steady supply, day by day, in quantity suited to our needs and capacities, is the method that leads to strength. A pertinacious adherence to the plan of daily reading an allotted portion (as by the Bible Companion) - a practice now happily common - will be found the best way to spiritual

27. While Paul was in Corinth, who provided for his needs above what he was able to make as a tent-maker so that he did not burden anyone? (you need to dig for this one - there is a reference in 2 Corinthians)
 - a. Logically, which Ecclesia would this have been, and who's spirit of genuine care must have been behind it?
28. Who joined Paul in Corinth and where did they come from?
29. Who else are named as converts in Corinth during Paul's time there?
30. What did the Lord say to Paul in a vision?
 - a. Why Paul need this encouragement?
31. How long did Paul stay there?
32. Optional: The naming of the pro-consul (deputy), Gallio helps us determine an approximate date for these events. Research this and determine the approximate date
33. In typical fashion, the Judaizers sought to bring Paul before the authorities. But instead of charging Paul with insurrection against Rome, they make their charge that he was persuading men to worship God contrary to the Law of Moses. Gallio wasn't interested in this angle and gave them no place. So, instead of fleeing to the next city, what was Paul able to do? How does this relate to our situation today?

Paul's Journey Back Acts 18:18-22 - End of 2nd Journey

34. Who accompanied Paul when he left Corinth? Where did he go next?
35. Optional: We are told in Acts 18:18 that Paul had a vow, and had shorn his head. What did this indicate?
36. Why didn't Paul stay in Ephesus? What feast do you think it was?
37. Who stayed behind in Ephesus?
38. Optional: When Paul had "gone up" to Jerusalem, he "saluted the Ecclesia". Look up "saluted". What does it mean?

With that background, we have concluded part I of our studies. Let's now move to part II, where we learn about the Jerusalem Poor Fund, and how many of these events fit in!