

# Salvation Message in Acts (II)

*Continuing from the Gospels*

*To the Jew First, Also to the Gentile*

(This article deals with continuing information concerning the salvation message seen throughout the Book of Acts, a salvation message previously seen beginning with Moses and subsequently continued in the epistles, with the salvation in this message ultimately realized following time and events referenced in the Book of Revelation.

For companion articles, refer to:

“Salvation Message in the Gospels” (I, II)

“Salvation Message in Acts” (I)

“Salvation Message in the Epistles” (I, II)

“Salvation Realized in Revelation”

The original offer of the kingdom to Israel in the gospel accounts is a relatively simple matter to understand, though few seem to do so. As previously seen, many individuals seem to want to see the central message proclaimed throughout the gospels, particularly John’s gospel, as a message pertaining to salvation by grace.

And *IF a person does this*, they can forget about everything when they come to Acts and begin reading about the re-offer of the kingdom, *for they have NOT understood the base, the original offer.*

*THEN, beyond Acts, any correct understanding of the epistles will be skewed as well, attempting to understand them within the same erroneous framework as previously seen in the gospels and in Acts, for the SAME subject matter is continued in the epistles.*

*IF* an individual comes out of the gospels in a correct manner, understanding what has happened in the gospels, Acts is not really that difficult, for it is simply a continuation of that previously seen in the gospels. Acts, in one sense of the word, forms a fifth gospel.

*BUT, IF* an individual comes out of the gospels in a wrong manner, *NOT understanding what has happened in the gospels, it will NOT be possible to have any type proper understanding of Acts, or the epistles beyond.* Both Acts (continuing from the gospels) and the epistles (continuing from Acts) *can ONLY be dealt with after the same erroneous manner that the gospels had been dealt with.*

*THIS is WHY,* for example, that Peter's message to the Jews in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:14-40 is often treated as a gospel message, directed to unsaved Jews, with individuals trying to fit and explain what is stated in the message, particularly in verse thirty-eight, into this erroneous type thinking.

### **Continuing from the Gospels**

Note the continuation of the subject matter from the gospels in Acts chapter one. Christ, following His resurrection, *spent forty days with the disciples teaching them things pertaining to "the kingdom of God"* (v. 3), the subject previously seen throughout the gospels.

Then, immediately prior to His ascension, Christ commanded His disciples to "not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father." They, through this promise being realized, were to "receive power" after the Spirit had come upon them (vv. 4, 8).

And this could *ONLY* have had to do with *His previous COMMISSION to the disciples* (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark. 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8), *which was to be carried out in its fulness by a REPENTANT and RESTORED JEWISH NATION,*

*with the stage being set through events on the day of Pentecost in chapter two, allowing this, over time, to subsequently occur.*

## **The Day of Pentecost**

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?

And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:1-11).

The true nature of the events which occurred on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in the first two chapters of the Book of Acts — when the re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel began — *is generally NOT understood in Christendom*

*today at all.* And because of this, among other things, whole denominations have been built on a misunderstanding of these chapters.

Then, this misunderstanding has resulted in related problems.

That which occurred in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost (vv. 1-13), followed by Peter's explanation of matters (vv. 14-36), is seen coming to a climax in verses 37, 38. And cult groups, not understanding the things revealed in this chapter at all, have isolated and singled out Acts 2:38 as revealing the way in which a person is to be saved.

Then, numerous individuals, to counter the teaching of the cults on this verse, though not understanding the context either, have taught things concerning Acts 2:38 which are equally erroneous.

And, if either the Christian groups or the cult groups *rightly understood that which is stated in the verses leading into Acts 2:38*, the whole matter wouldn't even exist. Neither would act so completely out of line with Scripture.

In this respect, the matter really doesn't revolve around what Acts 2:38 states per se. Rather, the matter revolves around what is stated in the verses leading into Acts 2:38.

*Understand the contextual verses FIRST; THEN, the text can be properly understood. But, attempt to isolate a verse such as Acts 2:38 from its context, and an individual finds himself in EXACTLY the same place that so many find themselves today — committing mayhem with Scripture and involved in non-Scriptural, sometimes cultic, teachings.*

*Correct Scriptural interpretation and understanding is really that simple. Note the EXACT wording of the text, READ and UNDERSTAND the context, and COMPARE Scripture with Scripture (I Cor. 2:9-13).*

On the day of Pentecost, 33 A.D., one hundred twenty

believers were waiting in a house in Jerusalem for the Spirit which Jesus had, ten days prior to that time, promised. They were “all with one accord in one place,” *waiting* (Acts 1:15; 2:1).

(Note the significance of the number *one hundred twenty* [10X12], particularly contextually. “Ten” is the number of *numerical completeness*, and “twelve” is the number of *governmental perfection*.

Christ has just spent “forty” post-resurrection days instructing His disciples in things pertaining to “the kingdom of God” [Acts 1:3]. Now, ten days later [again, completeness shown in both the numbers “forty” and “ten”], something very significant in relation to the kingdom previously proclaimed was about to occur [events on the day of Pentecost].)

*THEN*, “when the day of Pentecost was *fully come*,” just as the Lord had previously promised (though not having specified the particular day), the one hundred twenty were all “immersed in the Holy Spirit” (literal rendering of the promise in Acts 1:5 [*cf.* Matt. 3:11, *lit.*, immersion “in water,” “in Holy Spirit,” “in fire”]):

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:2-4).

As seen, the promise concerning the Spirit being sent in Acts 1:5 had to do with an *immersion in the Spirit*; and that promise was fulfilled in Acts 2:2 (the house *filled*, those inside *immersed*). Then these disciples were also correspondingly *filled with the Spirit* (v. 4). And the latter can be seen occur-

ring at subsequent times in other parts of the Book of Acts as well (e.g., 10:45; 11:15, 16; cf. 9:17, 18; 13:9).

A two-fold experience of the nature seen in Acts 2:2-4 though *has NO PARALLEL in Christendom today.*

When an individual is saved by grace through faith today, the norm is *ALWAYS the same.* "Immersion" in the Spirit *ALWAYS occurs at the point of salvation* (I Cor. 12:13), and "a filling" with the Spirit is *ALWAYS a subsequent experience, progressively occurring over time (having to do with maturity in the faith, wrought through an assimilation of the Word [cf. Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16, 17]).*

(Note that *neither immersion in the Spirit, occurring at the time of one's salvation, nor the subsequent filling with the Spirit can have anything to do with one's salvation experience per se. IF either had to do with one's salvation, then salvation could ONLY be seen occurring different ways in different dispensations, for, throughout the three dispensations during Man's Day — Gentile, Jewish, Christian — immersion in the Spirit is something peculiar to the present [Christian] dispensation.*

The means which God uses to restore ruined man *were SET in the opening chapters of Genesis and CAN NEVER change.* Thus, to see either *the immersion in the Spirit or a filling with the Spirit having to do with one's presently possessed salvation today is an impossibility.*

The immersion in the Spirit has to do with *the new creation "in Christ," [cf. II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:26-29], which, again, has NOTHING to do with one's presently possessed salvation; and the filling with the Spirit, having to do with dwelling in the Word — an eating of His flesh and a drinking of His blood [cf. John 6:53-56; Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16, 17] — has to do with something subsequent to the immersion in the Spirit, with the continuing process of salvation, the salvation of the soul.*

And, though one's eternal salvation always remains in view, *the central subject in the whole of the matter, as seen in*

*Scripture, is ALWAYS upon the continuing part of salvation, which has to do with the coming kingdom of Christ, with realizing or not realizing an inheritance in this kingdom.)*

Thus, the immersion in the Spirit and the filling with the Spirit *NEVER occur at the same time today*, as in the first two chapters of Acts and several other parts of the book. And there is a clearly revealed reason why these differences exist in Scripture.

In short, one experience (a filling with the Spirit, as seen in Acts chapter two) is seen *ONLY DURING the time when the kingdom was being offered/re-offered to Israel*; and the other (an immersion in the Spirit) is seen *DURING the re-offer as well, but this experience CONTINUES FOLLOWING this time*.

The emphasis in Acts chapter two is on *Israel and the kingdom, NOT on the Church*. Though the Church was brought into existence on this day as the entity *NOW in possession of the kingdom of the heavens* and the entity through which God would begin extending a re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, events throughout Acts chapter two are essentially Jewish, *NOT Christian*.

Acts chapter two records the beginning of a re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel, an offer connected with Joel's prophecy (vv. 16-21), and an offer attended by signs, wonders, and miracles (vv. 6-13, 43). And *the immersion in and the filling with the Spirit* which were brought to pass on this day had to do with two things:

- 1) *The beginning of the Church (an immersion in the Spirit).*
- 2) *A beginning fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (a filling with the Spirit).*

A filling with the Spirit *in connection with Joel's prophecy* — something experienced by individuals on the day

of Pentecost and at subsequent times during the period when the kingdom was being re-offered to Israel (from 33 A.D. to about 62 A.D.) — *CANNOT be the norm for any type Christian experience today, for Joel's prophecy is NOT presently being fulfilled. The fulfillment of this prophecy has been set aside UNTIL such a time as God once again resumes His dealings with Israel.*

## Two Explanatory Greek Words

Though *Christians experience an immersion in and a filling with the Spirit throughout the present dispensation*, there are marked differences when these experiences are viewed in the light of a beginning fulfillment of Joel's prophecy in Acts chapter two. The latter is something which the Spirit of God deals with in the New Testament through the use of two different Greek words for "fill."

### 1) *Pimplemi*

The word in the Greek text for *fill* in Acts 2:4 is not the same as the word for *fill* in Eph. 5:18 (for Christians today). The word used in Acts 2:4 is *pimplemi* (*pletho* [a different rendering of the same word] in some lexicons or concordances), and the word used in Eph. 5:18 is *pleroo*. Both words mean "to fill"; but there is a contextual difference in how the words are used, *seen in the purpose in view*.

*Pimplemi* in Acts 2:4 is used in a manner which refers to individuals being filled with the Spirit in view of *an end to* or *a conclusion of* something being attained. This is the word, for example, which is used referring to Elizabeth being brought to full-term in her pregnancy, prior to the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:57). And, in conjunction with this thought, it is also the word used of John the Baptist being "filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15).



John was the forerunner of the Messiah. He was the one who *initially* appeared to Israel with the message, “Repent ye [a plural pronoun, *the entire nation*], for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand” (Matt. 3:2).

And note the terminal point — *the kingdom WAS AT HAND*. And John was filled with the Spirit, from his mother’s womb, to proclaim this fact as he went forth preparing the way for the Messiah.

This word is used *five times* in the Book of Acts referring to individuals being filled with the Spirit.

*The first occurrence* has to do with events on the day of Pentecost (2:4); *the second* has to do with Peter addressing the Sanhedrin (4:8); *the third* has to do with individuals collectively (as on the day of Pentecost [4:31]); and *the fourth and fifth* have to do with Paul, following his conversion on the Damascus road (9:17; 13:9).

*In the first three occurrences*, where a filling with the Spirit is referred to by the word *pimplemi*, a message to the Jews is in view; and that message is accompanied by signs, wonders, and miracles (2:43; 4:14-16). That is, a re-offer of the kingdom to Israel is in view, accompanied by miraculous signs.

And the re-offer of the kingdom is continued *in the fourth and fifth occurrences* of the word, following Paul being introduced in the book.

When Israel had reached a climactic point in the nation’s rejection of the kingdom in Acts 7:54ff (similar to the climactic point which the nation reached in the original offer [Matt. 12:22ff]), Paul appears in the book for the first time (Acts 7:58), the Samaritans from Acts 1:8 appear in the book for the first time (Acts 8:5), and Paul was subsequently set apart as the apostle who would carry the message concerning the proffered kingdom to the Gentiles (Acts 9:1-15).

Note the order for the proclamation of this message as originally given to the disciples in Acts 1:8:

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Paul was the one called to carry this message to the latter group (Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:7). And the word *pimplemi* is used of Paul being filled with the Spirit for power, to carry this message, simply because the offer of the kingdom was still open to Israel (with the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy still being in view); and the offer would remain open for over two more decades.

The fact that the offer was still open to Israel was the reason Paul *ALWAYS* went “to the Jew first” before turning to the Gentiles, though he was the apostle called to go to the Gentiles.

The order in Rom. 1:16, in accord with Acts 1:8, was “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [Gentile]” (*cf.* Rom. 2:9, 10); and Paul didn’t, he couldn’t, violate this order (note that the Book of Romans was written very near the end, though within the approximate thirty-year period in which the kingdom of the heavens was re-offered to Israel).

## 2) *Pleroo*

The word *Pleroo* though, used for being filled with the Spirit in Eph. 5:18, is used in a different manner. Both *pleroo* and *pimplemi* mean “to fill”; and both words can be used referring to an end or to the fulfillment of something, such as “time,” etc. (*e.g.*, Acts 7:23, 30); but the use of *pleroo* in Eph. 5:18 is not connected with Joel’s prophecy. The Holy Spirit previously used *pimplemi* for that purpose, at a time when the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy was in view.

(Note that the Holy Spirit was very careful in His use of words in Acts 2:2-4.

The word used for “fill” in verse two is *pleroo* [same as in Eph. 5:18], referring to the house where the one hundred twenty disciples were waiting *being filled* by “a rushing mighty wind”; but the Spirit of God changed words when He wanted to reveal that those inside that house had been “filled” with the Spirit in verse four, *having to do with Joel’s prophecy*.

Here He used *pimplemi*, and He continued to use *pimplemi* for this purpose [or a cognate, *pleres* (6:3, 5, 8; 7:55; 11:24)] in other parts of the Book of Acts.)

Joel’s prophecy either being fulfilled or not being fulfilled is *the key*. The Spirit used *pimplemi* to describe His filling work *IN CONNECTION WITH the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy*; and the Spirit later used *pleroo* to describe His filling work *APART FROM the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy*.

This is *the distinguishing difference* which marks the way that the two words are used in Scripture.

(The preceding presents the basics of how two different Greek words for “fill” are used in the New Testament — something which will allow a person to better grasp the true nature of that which began on the day of Pentecost and continued for about thirty years.

And possessing at least some understanding of this period is vital to a correct understanding of the central subject matter in both the Book of Acts [which presents a history of this period] and the epistles which follow [which were written both during the latter part of and immediately following this period].)

### **The Scene in Jerusalem, 33 A.D.**

On the day of Pentecost in 33 A.D. there were Jews gathered in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven. Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian, states that it was not uncommon to have as many as 2,000,000 Jews in Jeru-

salem on this day.

The day of Pentecost was one of three annual feast days (Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles) which adult Jewish males were required to keep *in Jerusalem* (Ex. 23:14-17; Deut. 16:1-16), and some had to travel great distances to get to Jerusalem in order to keep these feasts.

Consequently, it was only natural that many Jews who came for the feast of Passover would remain in Jerusalem until the feast of Pentecost, slightly over fifty days later.

Thus, the Spirit was sent on a particular day — the day of Pentecost, effecting a beginning fulfillment of this festival — when numerous Jews from “every nation under heaven” were in Jerusalem; and those filled (*pimplemi*) with the Spirit (the one hundred twenty) were empowered to proclaim a message concerning the kingdom to these Jews, in all the various languages of their native countries. And these Jews, having heard the message, were, in turn, evidently expected to carry this message back to other Jews in the countries from which they had come.

This was the beginning of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, a ministry which would last for about thirty years (until about 62 A.D.).

Then, as previously stated, all of this was inseparably connected with a beginning fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (vv. 15-21). And immediately afterward, Peter delivered a message to Israel, which, after different fashions, became quite common in the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel (vv. 22-36; *cf.* 3:12-26; 4:5-12; 5:12-16, 29-32; 6:8-7:53).

And that which the religious leaders and all the others in Israel were accordingly confronted with is also something which became quite common in this re-offer of the kingdom (vv. 37-41; *cf.* 4:1-4, 13-22; 5:17-28, 33-42; 7:54-60).

The religious leaders in Acts 2, confronted with what they had done, asked:

“Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (v. 37).

And Peter told them *EXACTLY* what they must do:

“Repent [*i.e.*, ‘Change your minds’], and be baptized every one of you [national repentance and baptism]...”  
(v. 38; *cf.* Matt. 3:1ff).

Only through this means could the wrong be corrected (the Jewish people, having previously rejected the message and crucified the Messenger, *now* being called upon *to change their minds* [vv. 22, 23, 36-38a]); only through this means could the Jewish people receive “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v. 38b; *cf.* vv. 4, 16-21; Acts 10:45; 11:15, 16), which had to do with Joel’s prophecy and a filling with the Spirit in connection with the Greek word *pimplemi*.

And only after the Jewish people had done this would Messiah return and dwell in Israel’s midst, resulting in a continued and complete fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy — the entire Jewish nation filled with the Spirit, speaking other languages in a bold manner, enabling them to go forth to the Gentile nations of the earth with God’s message (Joel 2:27-32; Acts 3:19-21; 7:51-56; *cf.* Jonah 3:1ff).

(Note two things about Acts 2:38, one positive, the other negative:

- a. *That dealt with in the verse.*
- b. *That not dealt with in the verse.*

Acts 2:38 has to do *SOLELY* with a message to Israel pertaining to *THE KINGDOM*. Accordingly, this verse has *NOTHING* to do with *unsaved man today* — Jew or Gentile — in relation to *eternal life*.

Acts 2:38 has perhaps been misused and abused about as much as any other verse in Scripture.

Cult groups reference this verse, attempting to show how an unsaved person is to be saved. And even conservative

groups, in an attempt to show what is wrong with cultic teachings concerning this verse, invariably approach the verse from the wrong standpoint — thinking only of salvation by grace [same as the cults, with those from conservative groups being just as wrong as those from the cult groups in this respect].

It is amazing to see the numerous articles and sermons that have been written or delivered over the years trying to explain, usually through reference to the Greek text, *certain things from this verse that are NOT even dealt with in the verse* [i.e., trying to explain, from a verse that DOESN'T deal with salvation by grace, the relationship of repentance and baptism to salvation by grace].

Acts 16:31 would address the latter issue, answering the question in verse thirty [“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”] and being perfectly in line with all of the Old Testament types bearing on the subject.

Attempting to see Acts 2:38 as having to do with the unsaved and eternal verities — then or today — is *completely out of line with:*

- a. *That which this verse states.*
- b. *The question asked in the preceding verse.*
- c. *The context leading into this question and the response.*
- d. *All Old Testament typology dealing with the subject.)*

## **Re-Offer of the Kingdom, Pentecost, the Commission**

The ministry of the apostles (and others), seen beginning anew as the kingdom began to be re-offered to Israel on the day of Pentecost, *would have had to be IN COMPLETE KEEPING with Christ's previous commission to them*, seen at the end of the three synoptic gospels and the beginning of the Book of Acts.

*The message COULD NOT possibly have been separated from this previous commission. One COULD ONLY have been part and parcel with the other.*

Christ's commission to His apostles during His forty-day post-resurrection ministry appears to have been given in four different parts at different times, *with all four parts together forming the whole of the commission as it COULD ONLY be seen and understood.*

(This would be similar to the statement Pilate placed above Christ's head at the time of His crucifixion — "This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." All four of the gospel writers record a part of this statement, but not the complete statement. The complete statement *is seen only through comparing all four.*

Four parts of a complete commission, forming the whole of that commission, would also be completely in line with the way Scripture is structured throughout. No one part of Scripture provides the complete picture. But, comparing Scripture with Scripture, as Scripture is added to Scripture, *the picture ALWAYS progressively comes more and more into focus.*)

Thus, the different recorded accounts in which Christ commissioned His apostles during the forty days following His resurrection — given at the end of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and at the beginning of Acts — *CAN ONLY be viewed as different parts or forms of one commission, with ALL FOUR having to do with EXACTLY the same thing.*

These different accounts of what *CAN ONLY be seen as ONE commission MUST ALL be seen as a message "beginning at Jerusalem," with the message to the Jews in Jerusalem (also elsewhere to both Jews and Gentiles, but proclaimed by Jews and attended by signs, wonders, and miracles [cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8]).*

And, as becomes quite evident, the carrying out of this commission began to occur ten days following Christ's ascension — on the feast of Pentecost. As well, that which occurred on this day, inseparably associated

with the carrying out of this commission, was the beginning of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, along with bringing the Church into existence (forming those who would begin carrying out this commission during the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel).

The beginning of and initial carrying out of this commission on the day of Pentecost had to do with one hundred twenty disciples *filled with and empowered by the Spirit, speaking other languages, beginning at Jerusalem, with everything completely in line with that which Christ had previously laid down when He gave the commission* (cf. Acts 1:8; 2:2-43; 3:1-4:13).

The fact that the message was to be carried to Israel *first*, attended by supernatural signs (Acts 2:4-43; 3:1ff), reveals one truth. And the fact that the message was subsequently to be carried to the Gentile world, also attended by supernatural signs (Mark 16:15-18; Acts 1:8), reveals another.

(In the previous four gospel accounts, during the offer of the kingdom to Israel, there are at least thirty-five separate *signs*, along with a number of general statements regarding signs [often referred to as “miracles,” *i.e.*, *miraculous events* forming “signs”]. Several of the same signs appear in all four gospels, a number appear in all three synoptic gospels, and a few appear in only one gospel, particularly in John’s gospel.

In the Book of Acts, during the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, there are at least thirty separate signs, along with a number of general statements regarding signs.

But these are only the recorded signs. Note the statement in John 20:30: “And many other signs...” [many unrecorded (John 21:25)]. And continuing “signs” in Acts *could ONLY be looked upon in the SAME manner.*)

Israel, hearing the message *first*, beginning on the day of Pentecost, *was expected to repent, bringing to pass the return*



*of the King and the restoration of the kingdom.*

And, following Christ's return and the restoration of the kingdom, *Israel was to carry this message to the Gentile world. The nation was to fulfill its calling as Jehovah's witness to the ends of the earth (Isa. 43:1-10), carrying the message concerning the King and the kingdom to the Gentiles worldwide.*

Viewing Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38 together, one can easily see and understand this complete, overall truth. And these are two verses which have suffered about as much at the hands of Christians in general as they have from the cult groups.

Cult groups have removed these verses from their contexts to form a basis for their false salvation doctrines and practices. And numerous Christians, attempting to counter the cults — but, as the cults, seeing only basic issues surrounding one's eternal salvation in these verses — have, as well, removed them from their contexts (though interpreting them quite differently, but *ALWAYS non-contextually*).

Thus, with respect to correct, basic interpretation, both groups — usually attempting to align all Scripture, regardless of the text and context, with basic issues regarding the salvation message — *have MISSED the mark COMPLETELY. Both have ignored and, accordingly, have not dealt with THE SUBJECT AT HAND.*

Note how these two verses read:

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

The verse in Acts has to do solely *with Israel and the kingdom* (vv. 36, 37, 43). The fulfillment of this verse does not extend beyond Jerusalem and Judaea in the Lord's commission.

But the verse in Mark has to do with *the Gentile nations and the kingdom* (v. 15), with *Jews proclaiming the message*. The fulfillment of this verse extends beyond Jerusalem and Judaea, into Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

*But Jews MUST be the ones present as the proclaimers of this message, for "signs" would accompany the message* (v. 17).

(Note something about *the message to the Gentiles in Mark 16:15-18*. "Signs, wonders and miracles" cannot exist apart from two things being present — *ISRAEL, and THE KINGDOM*. This is the way matters were set forth at the beginning in the O.T., forming a first-mention principle, *necessitating that matters remain this way throughout the remainder of Scripture*.

[For information on the preceding, refer to the author's article, "Signs, Wonders, Miracles"].

Thus, first and foremost, the message seen in Mark 16:15-18 *CAN ONLY have to do with Israel and the kingdom*. *Accordingly, it CAN ONLY have to do with saved Jews proclaiming the message to saved Gentiles, with the message having to do with the kingdom, NOT salvation by grace through faith*.

This, as well, is perfectly in line with the commission as seen in Matt. 28:18-20. There is *NOTHING in this part of the commission about salvation by grace*. Rather, *matters begin with baptism and progress to discipleship and keeping the Lord's commandments*.

And, the other two forms of the commission [Luke's, in both his gospel and the Book of Acts] *MUST be understood in this same respect*.

Attempts to associate any of the four forms of this commission with the Church and evangelism, as has invariably been done over the years, is *completely out of line with any type sound Scriptural interpretation, closing the door to any correct understanding of the complete, overall message as presented in Scripture*.)

Israel though, preceding the carrying of this message to the Gentiles, had to repent and be baptized *first* (national repentance and baptism [Acts 2:38]) — same message as seen in the original offer of the kingdom in the four gospel accounts. And this would result in the nation receiving “the gift of the Holy Spirit” — as previously seen (vv. 4-38), *the Spirit being poured out on all flesh (i.e., those forming the Jewish nation being filled with and empowered by the Spirit, being able to deliver the message in all of the different Gentile languages worldwide [cf. Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:15-21])*.

Then Israel, as Jehovah’s witness (Isa. 43:1-10), would be in a position to go forth to Samaria and to the Gentile nations throughout the earth, *boldly carrying the message to these nations in their own languages*, bringing about the fulfillment of the Lord’s commission in Mark 16:15 (*cf. Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8*).

And *supernatural signs* would follow the proclamation of the message *to ALL seen throughout the commission* — whether to Jews, to Samaritans, or to Gentiles throughout these different nations.

Had Israel followed Peter’s instructions on the day of Pentecost (in response to the question which had been asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” [Acts 2:37] — “Repent, and be baptized...” [v. 38]) — Christ would have returned and restored the kingdom to Israel (see indented section, bottom of page).

And the nation — following the reception of “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (a continued and complete fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy) — would subsequently have gone forth to the Gentiles with the message concerning the King and the kingdom, fulfilling Mark 16:15ff, along with that seen in the other three forms of the commission.

Christ’s return and the “restitution [‘restoration’] of all things” (which would have included the restoration of the

kingdom to Israel) was contingent on *Israel's repentance* (Acts 3:19-21; cf. Acts 7:51-56). And the ministry of the disciples throughout the Book of Acts was a ministry toward this end.

*That toward which ALL THINGS had been moving for the past 4,000 years was in the offing.*

*A repentant and restored Jewish nation would dwell in both heavenly and earthly lands, the theocracy in its fulness would be realized, and the Gentile nations of the earth would be reached through the Jewish people going forth as God's witness to these nations, fulfilling their calling.*

And these disciples, realizing the importance of Israel's repentance in the preceding respect, carried the message to the nation after *such a zealous fashion and with such fervor* that they were threatened, beaten, imprisoned, and even killed by the Jewish religious leaders (Acts 3:1ff; 4:1ff; 5:1ff; 7:1ff).

And Paul, *comprehending the importance of this matter*, near the close of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, went so far as to say:

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh [if such could bring about Israel's repentance and that which would follow]" (Rom. 9:3).

(Note that the previous statement had to do with *Paul's position in the kingdom, NOT with his eternal salvation. The former COULD be forfeited, BUT NOT the latter.*

Israel's repentance was of such import that Paul, knowing and understanding the gravity of that involved, *was willing to go to the extent of relinquishing HIS OWN POSITION in Christ's coming kingdom IF the nation's repentance COULD be effected through such actions on his part.)*

But Israel didn't repent — not on the day of Pentecost nor

on any subsequent day throughout the approximately thirty years in which the re-offer of the kingdom remained open.

Thus, since Israel didn't repent, Mark 16:15ff *NOT ONLY remained unfulfilled BUT, in actuality, CAN'T be fulfilled today.*

## The Message Today

As previously seen, the gospel to be proclaimed in the Lord's commission in Mark 16:15ff, or in any of the other forms of the commission, was *the gospel of the kingdom*; and the message was to be attended by *signs, wonders, and miracles*.

And all of this is *COMPLETELY ALIEN to the message which is to be proclaimed by the Church today, to either Israel or to the Gentile nations.*

The message which the Church is to carry today *begins with the simple gospel of grace, progressing to the gospel of glory.* Israel has been set aside, and the kingdom is no longer "at hand."

And with Israel set aside and the kingdom no longer at hand, *signs, wonders, and miracles can NO longer form a part of any message being proclaimed (ref. the continuing articles, "Salvation Message in the Epistles," Parts I, II).*

Thus, a message today, in line with that which is stated in Mark 16:15-18, would be *COMPLETELY out of place.*

A message of this nature, under the direction and power of the Spirit of God, *CANNOT possibly exist during the present time. Such, from a Biblical standpoint, would be IMPOSSIBLE.*

And the reason for *the impossibility of the matter* is very simple: The Spirit of God empowering individuals to manifest supernatural signs today would be acting contrary to the very Word which He had previously moved men to pen.

But, note what can presently be found in Christendom.

Entire denominations have been founded on seeking after signs, wonders, and miracles, as seen in parts of Christ's

commission to His disciples, along with related parts of the gospels and Acts (also I Corinthians, written during the time covering Acts).

And the present Charismatic Movement, which has crossed all denominational lines, has been founded upon and proclaims the same erroneous view relative to these supernatural signs.

This whole thing has taken its toll in Christendom over the years. And Christians today, seeing all of this, *are confused to say the least*. They generally have little to no understanding of the place which signs, wonders, and miracles occupy in Scripture; and Christians, on a scale larger than at any other time in history, *are, accordingly, being misled on every hand* (cf. Matt. 7:21-23).

And note the serious nature of the matter. We're dealing with *the very crux* of a central teaching in Acts, which will allow one to properly understand this book, a book leading into the epistles.

*Go wrong here, and you will remain wrong the rest of the way.  
But, go right here...*

(Reflecting back on the data in this and the preceding chapter of this book, the Acts period is vastly misunderstood. *BEFORE this time* [in the gospels], the message pertaining to the kingdom was *to the Jew ALONE* [Matt. 10:5-8]. *AFTER this time*, this message was *to the one new man "in Christ" ALONE* [Eph. 3:1-6; Heb. 2:3, 4; I Peter 2:9, 10].

*BUT*, during the Acts period, the message was *to BOTH*, *with the Jew holding priority* [Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10, 16].

Jews being saved during this time [e.g., the 3,000 and 5,000 in Acts 2, 4], contrary to common belief, *DID NOT* become part of the previously newly formed Church. Rather, they became part of those Jews saved during the original offer of the kingdom, during the previous ministries of John, Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy in the gospels.

And the salvation of these Jews [whether in the gospels or in Acts] had to do with a deliverance from an unbelieving, perverse nation, with the kingdom in view [Acts 2:40, 43], *NOT* with eternal salvation.

Then there is the use of terms during the Acts period, which would be out of place following this period [e.g., the word, "Church," is used numerous times referring to *saved Jews*, *NOT* to the one new man "in Christ," as in Acts 7:38 (e.g., Acts 2:47, if authentic; the better manuscripts omit the word for "Church," *ekklesia*, in this text; 5:11; 8:1, 3; 9:31; I Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13).

Also during this time, "Gentile" is often used of *saved Gentiles to distinguish them from saved Jews* (e.g., Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10)].

Note in the preceding respect, that *Paul, before his conversion, was the great persecutor of "the Church."*

However, *this CAN'T be referring to the Church made up of the one new man "in Christ," as seen following the Acts period, or today, for the ONLY ones forming the Church in this respect, up to Acts 10, when the first Gentile was saved, were the one hundred twenty forming the Church in Acts 2. Paul persecuted believing Jews, a believing part of the Jewish nation, believing that they formed a heretical sect.)*

The Book of Acts, covering some thirty years, is a one-of-a-kind time. There was *NOTHING* like it before or after.

A number of things occurred during Acts which were peculiar to this period. And attempting to harmonize or fit these things into events during the time preceding (time covered by the gospels) or following (time covered by the epistles, leading into today) *can ONLY result in mayhem in Biblical interpretation.*

On the other hand, in conjunction with these peculiarities, there is a natural flow of subject matter from the gospels into Acts and, in turn, from Acts into the epistles.

Remain with the central subject matter, which begins

with Moses, and you *WON'T* go wrong. *BUT*, depart from this central subject matter, and ...