

Bible Study Notes: Studies in the Book of Acts

January 27, 2006 and beyond
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Ed Knorr's Bible study notes. Much of this material comes from the following sources:

- M.R. DeHaan. "Pentecost and After: Studies in the Book of Acts", Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel publications, M.R. DeHaan trust, copyrights 1996 and 1964 (original). The same author has written numerous excellent commentaries. I urge you to add them to your reading list.
- Holy Bible: New International Version—an excellent translation. I especially recommend the *NIV Study Bible* (published by Zondervan, 2002), which has lots of study notes (approx. 1/3 of a page of notes per 2/3 of a page of the Bible, plus introductions giving the authorship, background, purpose, and summary of each of the 66 books contained in the Bible).
- Answers in Genesis
- Hank Hanegraaff, "The Bible Answer Man": www.equip.org
- Romans audio tape series by David Parsons
- Personal reflection
- Various other sources

Introduction

DeHaan, page 11:

"We cannot help but believe the compilers of the New Testament were divinely guided in placing the book of Acts between the gospels and the epistles, for it is the connecting link between the two. The Book of Acts records the transition from Judaism to Christianity, from law to grace, and from the Kingdom to the Church—the Body of Christ. Failure to distinguish between the program in the gospels and the program in the epistles [letters] is at the root of almost all the confusion among evangelicals, and the cause of the wide difference between the various groups of Bible-believing Christians. We earnestly believe that a correct interpretation of the book of Acts, and especially the meaning of Pentecost, would solve much of the confusion among believers concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation."

Page 13:

"It is important to remember that the book of Acts is a continuation of Luke, and records the things Jesus continued to *do* and *teach* from Heaven, through the Holy Spirit. In Luke we have Jesus' ministry *on earth*; in Acts we have a continuation of His ministry *in heaven*, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit."

ACTS 1:4-7: On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

Page 15:

"... the establishment of the Throne of David. The disciples understood it to mean just this, that when Messiah came to deliver Israel from the Gentile yoke of bondage and set up His glorious millennial Kingdom. They as yet knew nothing about the Church. That was still a mystery, not to be revealed until after the Holy Spirit came. They were still looking for Jesus to set up the Kingdom, not to build a Church. These disciples did not know that Israel would be set aside as a nation for a time, and in the interval Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, would call out the Church to be His Bride, and after that would come again to restore the Kingdom and deliver Israel."

Acts 28:25-28: They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet: "'Go to this people and say, "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving." For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'" "Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!"

Page 16:

"In the book of Acts the Church begins with 3,000 Jews—not a Gentile among them—being converted, and the book closes with Paul turning from the Jews, and to the Gentiles.

Acts 1:6-8: So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Note the 3 stages: (1) Jerusalem & Judea [up to the stoning of Stephen], (2) Samaria, and (3) the ends of the Earth

Page 25:

"The first 7 chapters of Acts "record the first division—the ministry of the apostles to the Jews 'in Jerusalem and Judaea.' They preached to no one but Jews. They did not go beyond Judaea and they still preached the message of the Kingdom. The second stage of this program 'and in Samaria' is recorded in chapters 8 to 12, and marks a transition period. The Gospel now goes beyond Judaea into Samaria. It had been preached in Jerusalem to the Jew first, and now it is to go beyond Judaea. After Philip carries the message to Samaria, the third stage of the commission begins in chapter 13, with the sending forth of the first missionaries to the Gentiles. This last stage of sending the Gospel to the 'uttermost part of the earth' occupies the rest of Acts, from chapter 13 to 28, and is still in the process of being carried out."

Acts 2:1-6: When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

Page 28:

“There are those who report present-day Pentecostal experiences, but where is the mighty wind, where are the visible tongues of fire? ... The languages these disciples spoke were not ‘unknown’ tongues. They were existing languages understood by the people who had gathered for the feast. They needed no interpreter.”

Page 30:

“But there is no record of any missionary since Pentecost who miraculously, instantaneously could speak in the language of the people to whom they went to minister. If there is any practical value in the modern-day claim of the gift of tongues, the most useful place to exercise it would be on the foreign field.”

Pages 33-34:

“When the revelation of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament is complete, there will be no more need of these special evidences, but we are expected to believe God’s Word just because He *says it*. These signs and miracles were then for the days of the *infancy of the Church*... This gospel of Christ to the Church was brand new to the Jews. How could they confirm the authenticity of the message? They could not turn to Scripture, for the New Testament was not yet given. So in the interval the Lord gave these signs to *confirm this new Message* in the absence of the *written Word of God*.”

Page 44:

“If you have not been baptized in the Spirit, you are *lost*. There is no baptism in the Spirit *after* you are saved, for if you are saved you have the Spirit dwelling in you.”

Matthew 22:1-9: Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.' "But they paid no attention and went off--one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.'

The latter event was fulfilled when the Roman army destroyed the Temple and city of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Note the following transition from: “Jerusalem and Judea” to “Samaria”. It begins with Stephen speaking, and being martyred. Then, note the transition to Paul [Saul]:

Acts 7:52-60: Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him-- you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it." When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

Acts 8:1-12: And Saul was there, giving approval to his [Stephen's] death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city. Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Page 72, on receiving the Holy Spirit:

"As the program was in these three steps: Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles; so Pentecost came first on the believers in Jerusalem, was extended to those in Samaria, and finally also to the Gentiles in Caesarea. In the case at Jerusalem it was accompanied by a mighty wind, tongues of fire, and speaking in the various languages of the world. When the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit there is no mention of wind or fire or any speaking in tongues. In the case of Cornelius, there is speaking in tongues, but no wind and no fire."

Pentecost means "fifty days". It was 50 days from Christ's resurrection. The Day of Pentecost is associated with a new revelation of God's will. In Exodus, it was the day in which the Law [Torah] was given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The law only showed our hopelessness outside of God. In Acts, it was the day in which the Holy Spirit was given or manifested upon the early Church. Pentecost is also called the Feast of Weeks, or the Feast of Harvest [Barley harvest, recall the book of Ruth]. Pentecost began the harvest season. According to Jewish tradition, it is believed that King David was born and died on Pentecost.

Major feast days, or Holy days, in the Jewish calendar:

Nisan 14—the Passover Supper—the Passover in Egypt, Christ's Last Supper

Nisan 15—the Feast of Unleavened Bread—the Exodus from Egypt begins, Christ's crucifixion

Nisan 17—the Feast of Firstfruits—Noah's Ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat, the Israelites pass through the Red Sea during the Exodus, the Israelites eat the firstfruits of the Promised Land, the resurrection of Christ

Sivan 6—the Day of Pentecost—the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, the giving of the Holy Spirit to the Church

Tishri 1—the Feast of Trumpets—new beginnings

Tishri 10—the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)—Aaron, Israel's first high priest, makes atonement for Israel

Tishri 15—the Feast of Tabernacles—the dedication of the first and second Temples, possible birthday of Jesus Christ

Leviticus 23:22: "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God."

Note the 3 parts: The main body of the harvest, the corners of the field, and the gleanings of the harvest. The first part corresponds to the owners of the land (Israel); the second part, the poor people, correspond to the Samaritans; and, the third part are the strangers: the Gentiles.

Acts 9:43: Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

Acts 10:9-15: About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

Acts 10:25-35: As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself." Talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?" Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us." Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

Acts 11:4-21: Peter began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened: "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the air. Then I heard a voice telling me, 'Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.' "I replied, 'Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' "The voice spoke from heaven a second time, 'Do not call anything impure that God has made

clean.' This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again. "Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man's house. He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.' "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life." Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

In the sheet from Heaven were many animals that the Jewish people were forbidden to eat, according to the law of Moses (i.e., the first 5 books of the Bible—the Pentateuch). What could this vision mean? The clean animals in the sheet represent the Jews; the unclean animals represent the Gentiles. The sheet itself represents the Church.

DeHaan clarifies on pages 93-94:

“Under the dispensation of the law, Israel was forbidden many things and commanded to do many things which do not apply today to this dispensation of grace. Israel was commanded to keep the seven feast days, to destroy their enemies and burn their cities. All these laws were given to keep Israel separate from the Gentiles about them. ... The orthodox Jew could not accept an invitation to dinner with a Gentile because these unclean foods would be served. Israel must be kept segregated in order to fulfill God’s purposes through them.”

“But now God has set Israel aside for a time, and is calling out from all nations a Church, a body of believers who under grace would not be in bondage to the law of Moses. Jews and Gentiles in this body of this dispensation are united in one. They are one, and the restricting laws which separated Jew and Gentile are done away in Christ.”

Colossians 2:16-17: Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Water baptism is not a requirement for salvation, but a testimony of it. When going into the water, we see this as a symbol of being buried with Christ in our trespasses, and when we come up out of the water, we see this as a symbol of a cleansed life in Christ.

Acts 19:4-7: Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

We contrast the baptism of John with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the former case, the baptism was one of repentance, but not necessarily identification with Christ. With the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the identification is with Christ as Lord and Saviour. It need not be accompanied by signs such as speaking in tongues. A footnote on page 1723 of the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* states that the Baptism of John was a “summation of John’s teaching. It was preparatory and provisional, stressing human sinfulness and thus creating a sense of need for the gospel. John’s baptism looked forward to Jesus, who by his death would make possible the forgiveness of sins.” God always grants forgiveness when there is repentance. Page 1471 states, “The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all God’s people was promised in Joel 2:28-29 and at least partially fulfilled in Acts 2:16-21”.

Acts 2:16-21: No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

DeHaan, page 99:

“In none of the three incidents of the Gospel going to Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles, was the experience the same. At Pentecost the Spirit was manifested by a mighty wind and tongues like as of fire. In Samaria the Holy Spirit was received by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. There is no baptism mentioned and no speaking in tongues. However, in the case of the Gentiles the Spirit came in response to the hearing of the Word. There was no laying on of hands, no wind or fire, but here speaking in tongues did follow. Here are three different circumstances where Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles received the Holy Spirit, and they were all different. Which shall we follow, if these are meant for us today?”

DeHaan, page 100:

“To demonstrate to the Jewish believers that the Gospel is now also to go to the Gentiles, they were made to speak in tongues. ... It was not an easy matter to prove to these Jewish disciples from Jerusalem that these strangers in Caesarea had been admitted into the Body, and they needed some proof as seen in the manifestation of tongues. The sign of tongues was given because of their *unbelief*. There were many in the church of Corinth who would not believe except they saw signs and wonders. They were weaklings in the faith ...”

1 Corinthians 14:22: Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers.

1 Corinthians 14:27-28: If anyone speaks in a tongue, two--or at the most three--should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.

Acts 11:17-21: So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I [Peter] to think that I could oppose God?" When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life." Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled

as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

What is the evidence that the Gentiles truly belonged to Christ? First of all, their faith was lasting, not just a singular event with no further effect. Second, their faith is evident by all kinds of good works, which is a testimony to others about the new life in Christ:

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Other events:

Acts 11:27-28: Agabus prophesies that a famine will come and leave the Christians in Jerusalem in distress, with presumably no help coming from their Jewish neighbours, so the church in Antioch takes up a collection to forward to them.

Acts 12:2: Herod kills James the brother of John. So, persecution continues, and the early Christians feared for their lives (as do many Christians today in the persecuted church in many countries around the world). So, we see a parallel between then and now. This parallel goes unnoticed to many people in the Western world who have religious freedom.

Acts 12:1-17: Peter is jailed for the third time. Again, the parallel exists in today's world where some pastors around the world are imprisoned. In Peter's case, however, an angel opens the prison doors and Peter walks to the house of Mary the mother of John.

DeHaan, pages 107-109:

“After the death of James and the imprisonment of Peter, Barnabas and Saul departed to go back to Antioch and took with them another disciple, John Mark. Their arrival in Antioch marks an important change in the program of the Early Church. In this chapter, the first foreign missionaries are sent out from the church at Antioch. ... Peter disappears from view and the Apostle Paul takes over from here on. ... The call to Israel, ‘to the Jew first,’ had been concluded, and now the Church began at Pentecost with an ‘all Jewish’ congregation, becomes predominantly Gentile. Hence the balance of Acts shifts from Jerusalem to Antioch.

“During those days before the New Testament was written, God gave prophets to the Church to make His will known. After the New Testament was complete the gift of prophecy ceased, for there was no more need for it. All we need to know to be assured of God's will for our lives is in this Book. However, the Christians at Antioch had no New Testament Scriptures and so God revealed Himself through prophets, and by signs and wonders.”

Acts 13:6-12 They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn

the proconsul from the faith. Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

DeHaan, page 112:

"Acts 13:6-12 [is a] tremendous dispensational picture of this present age. It occurs at the very outset of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles, right after the rejection of the Gospel message by Israel. ... His name ... Bar-jesus means "son of Jehovah", but he is a false prophet. ... The ears of the Gentiles are open to the Gospel, but this false prophet whom Paul addresses ... represents the nation of Israel in unbelief, as enemies of the gospel and seeking to turn the Gentiles away from the truth.

... [Paul] pronounces a temporary blindness upon him."

Compare this to:

Romans 11:25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

DeHaan, pages 125-126:

"It seems that Peter had heard about the glowing report of Paul and Barnabas and personally had gone down to Antioch to get firsthand information. Paul and Barnabas were back from their first missionary trip and Peter pays them a visit. When Peter, an orthodox Jew, saw the evidence of the grace of God among these Gentile Christians, he cast off all his legal restraints, recognized the genuineness of Paul's message of grace, and entered fully and completely into fellowship with these Gentile believers...

"Of course Peter already knew this, for when he was used to open the door to the house of Cornelius in Acts 10 the Lord had shown him, by means of the great sheet filled with all sorts of animals, that the middle wall between Jew and Gentile had broken down ... (Acts 10:34). Moreover, the apostles had agreed that Peter should stay in Jerusalem to minister to the Jews, while Paul was to go and bring the message to the Gentiles.

"... After this agreement Peter goes to Antioch and enters fully into fellowship with the Gentile Christians there, even eating of their legally unclean foods. But then, when the legalistic sabbatarian teachers from Jerusalem came to Antioch, Peter withdrew himself from the group, because he was afraid of the criticism of these legalistic, Judaistic law-teachers. This so incensed Paul that he publicly rebukes and dresses Peter down for his inconsistent conduct." [See Galatians 2:11-14]

DeHaan, page 128:

"If the Gospel is now open to the Gentiles, and the church is being formed of both Jews and Gentiles, then what about all the hundreds and hundreds of prophecies concerning the Messianic Kingdom? What about Christ sitting upon the throne of David in Jerusalem? Then what about the restoration of the nation of Israel and the defeat of their oppressors and conquerors? Is God all through with national Israel, and has the Church taken

Israel's place? Is the Church now spiritual Israel? These were questions which had to be answered. These were questions uppermost in the minds of the apostles before Jesus left them. They believed in the literal setting up of the Messianic Kingdom upon earth, and they asked Christ repeatedly about the time. Even at the Mount of the Ascension they were still looking for the Kingdom. They knew nothing about the Church of this age. That was a mystery to be revealed only after Pentecost. And so they had asked the Lord their last question before He went away."

Acts 15:13-18 When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me. Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: "'After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things' that have been known for ages.

DeHaan, pages 131-132:

"Dispensationally it gives God's plan and purpose for this Church Age, and the beginning of the Kingdom Age. Peter says first God is taking out from among the Gentiles a people for His Name. This is the Church, born at Pentecost, and consisting of Jew and Gentile without difference. The world 'church' in the original is *ecclesia* or a *called out assembly*."

Romans 11:11-12 Again I ask: Did they [Jews] stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!

Romans 11:17-21 If some of the branches [Israel] have been broken off, and you [Gentiles], though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root [Christ], do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

Romans 11:23-26 And if they [Jews] do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you [Gentiles] were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches [Jews], be grafted into their own olive tree! I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so [at Christ's Second Coming] all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob."

Acts 15:36-40 Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

DeHaan, page 136:

“There is nothing quite so sad as to see two servants of God, after laboring together, facing trials and suffering, come to a misunderstanding over a personality or minor difference of opinion and break up and go their separate ways.”

DeHaan, page 148:

“Paul was commissioned to go to the Gentiles, and to stay away from the city of Jerusalem. As long as Paul stuck to his job of evangelizing the Gentiles all was well, but when Paul became obsessed with the desire to step out of the will of God, and go to the city of Jerusalem, his ministry to the Gentiles comes to an abrupt end, and the apostle of grace is to find out that grace does not justify disobedience to the will of the Lord.”

Acts 22:17-18 "When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance and saw the Lord speaking. 'Quick!' he said to me. 'Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about me.'

DeHaan, page 152:

“The next step in Paul’s willful ignoring of God’s warning was in the city of Corinth when he takes a legal vow, shaves his head, places himself under law, and determines to visit Jerusalem once more anyway (Acts 18:18-21). When we begin to disobey God, the tendency is for this disobedience to increase and blind us to the folly of our sinful course.”

Acts 18:18-21 Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken. They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

Acts 21:3-4 After sighting Cyprus and passing to the south of it, we sailed on to Syria. We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo. Finding the disciples there, we stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.

Acts 21:10-13 After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Questions to consider: How do we know what the will of God is, for situations in our lives today? Does the Lord “speak” to us directly, or perhaps through dreams and visions? Should our emotions be used to determine what the will of God is (e.g., having “peace” about something, or anxiety about something)? What if another Christian tells you, “The Lord spoke to me [about your situation] ...”? Should we look for the will of God (for a given situation) in Scripture?

DeHaan, page 155:

Why did not the Lord stop Paul? He could have taken him home to glory or prevented him in some other way from continuing in his mad determination. It was because God knew it all before hand, and was going to demonstrate His abounding grace in making Paul's mistake the occasion for a great and wonderful ministry after he reached Rome. ... And so in the purpose and plan of God, He overruled Paul's willfulness and turned it into the greatest ministry of Paul—the writing of the prison epistles to the churches while he spent his closing days a 'prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ.'

DeHaan, page 158:

"Now at this last visit to Jerusalem we find this same Paul falling into the same trap for which he had rebuked Peter. Peter compromised to avoid the animosity of the legalists from Jerusalem. Here Paul compromises for the same reason. ... But are we ever justified in compromising the truth, even though our motives are the very best?"

Acts 21:26 The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.

DeHaan, page 161:

"The lessons we may learn from Paul's experience are numberless. First, we repeat, the Bible was not written to exalt human nature even in the godliest of men, but rather to exalt the grace of God. If Paul was not immune to the danger of acting in self-will, how much ought we to be on constant guard! Second, our own conscience, no matter how sincere, is not a safe guide when it is in conflict with the clear teachings of Scripture. Third, we may learn that God's people are not spared the rod when walking in self-will and disobedience. There is an awful price attached to disobedience, for Paul had to spend the rest of his life in prison. And then another lesson lies hidden here. We see the matchless grace of God, for the Lord did not cast aside Paul because of his defection; in infinite grace He overruled it all and made Paul's years in confinement the occasion for the greatest of blessing, for the seven prison epistles were written for the Church during his imprisonment."

We note that there are consequences to sin. For example, David was forgiven of his sin with Bathsheba, yet he and his family suffered the consequences of sin for many years to come.

A summary of the book of Acts is given in DeHaan, pages 174-175:

"The book of Acts begins in Jerusalem and it closes in Rome. It begins with the ministry of Peter and ends with the ministry of Paul. It begins with the nation of Israel; it ends with the Church, the Body of Christ. It gives us in the first chapter the last commission of our Lord, and also the outline of the book itself, as well as the program for this entire age. ... The book records the transition from Judaism to Christianity, the revelation of the new program for the Church, an unknown mystery not revealed until after Pentecost. All the Old Testament prophets had foretold and predicted that when Messiah came He would come to the nation of Israel, would deliver her from the bondage of Gentile dominion, set up the Messianic Kingdom, and restore Israel as a nation to its former glory. The Old Testament prophets know nothing about this Church Age. They knew nothing about the setting aside of the nation and the postponement of the Kingdom. When John the Baptist came he expected Jesus to be the Messiah and so his message to the nation was:

Matthew 3:1-2 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

“... Even as late as the day of the Ascension the disciples were still expecting the Kingdom to be ushered in and asked their last question before Jesus left them,”

Acts 1:6 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

“In the foreknown plan of God, the Messiah was to be rejected by the nation, and as a result the Kingdom was to be postponed, the nation of Israel was to be set aside, and in the interim, during this time of the postponement of the Kingdom, God would reveal the ‘mystery’ of the Kingdom, the calling out from among the Gentiles a people for His Name, called the Church and the Body of Christ.”

On the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit”, DeHaan writes on pages 181-183:

“What then is this experience which sincere believers talk about when referring to the baptism of the Spirit *after* they are saved? It is a *filling* with the Spirit. There can be no question that many who testify to a receiving of joy, victory, peace and power at some time during their Christian life after they are saved, have had a definite experience when they yielded themselves to the will of God, whether accompanied by a tremendous emotional sense of ecstasy or not. We do not for one moment doubt their testimony. In many cases something really happened, *but* it was not the baptism *in* the Spirit, instead it was a *filling with the Spirit*. We repeat again and again, much of the confusion arises from failure to differentiate between the two. Once this is realized most of the confusion ends.

“The filling of the Holy Spirit is the greatest need of Christians today. Our churches are full of defeated, starved and seeking believers who know there is more to salvation than just being saved. This sense of the need of a deeper experience, a closer touch with God, can be satisfied by being filled with the Spirit. This accounts for the many who, while seeking such an experience without understanding the Bible requirements, go to all kinds of unscriptural extremes, confusing emotional upsets and physical sensations with true fulness of the Spirit.”