

HWMR: ONE ACCORD AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
(Week 1)

*Scripture Reading: John 5:17; Matt. 16:18;
Eph. 4:13-16; 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7-9; Acts 9:4-5, 15; 28:31*

**The Continuation of the Book of Acts—
the Corporate Continuation of Christ**

- John 5:17 But Jesus answered them, My Father is working until now, and I also am working.
- Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
- Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a fullgrown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
- Eph 4:14 That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,
- Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her
- Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,
- Eph 5:27 That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.
- Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
- Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.
- Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
- Acts 9:4 And he fell on the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?
- Acts 9:5 And he said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute.
- Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;
- Acts 28:31 Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered.

Day 1

Acts 28:31 - Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered.

John 5:17 - But Jesus answered them, My Father is working until now, and I also am working.

I. The continuation of the book of Acts is the **continuation of Christ with the **corporate living of the perfected God-men** as the reality of the Body of Christ—28:31:**

- A. The Lord said, “My Father is working until now, and I also am working” (John 5:17); this shows that since the rebellion of Satan and the fall of man, **God has been working until now**, and the **Lord also is working**.
- B. The book of Acts is a record of the work of God; after Acts 28 many of **God’s vessels** are **still carrying on with His work**; His work is **continuing and has not stopped**.
- C. His work will go on until the kingdom and even until the new heaven and new earth; **God is always advancing**; He never stops; if we know this and believe in this, we will praise the Lord; even as the New Jerusalem, His slaves will serve Him as priests—Rev. 22:3; cf. Acts 13:36a.

There are sixty-six books in the Bible. When we come to the end of many of these books, we can say that the book is finished. There are fifty chapters in Genesis, and when we come to the end, we sense that we have come to the end. The Gospel of Matthew has twenty-eight chapters. When we come to chapter twenty-eight, we feel that we have come to the end. When we come to the Romans 16, we also feel that this is the end. When we read Revelation 22, we also feel that this is the end.

But there is one book in the Bible which does not have an end. All the other sixty-five books have an end. But one book does not have an end. This book is the Acts of the Apostles. Why does Acts 28 end the way it does? When you read Acts 28, you feel as if the book has not yet concluded. This book does not have an ending. The Acts of the Apostles is a book without an ending because this book is **still being continued**. Perhaps the acts of the first-century apostles have ended, but the book of Acts as a whole has not yet ended. Until now we still have the Acts of the Apostles with us. This book has not yet ended. (CWWN Vol. 2, Chapter 20)

Day 2

Romans 12:5

- So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Corinthians 12:12

- For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.

- D. The work of the Holy Spirit in **preaching Christ** for His propagation, multiplication, and spread through the believers of Christ was **not yet completed** and **needed to be continued** for a long period of time.
- E. The word of God is **still growing and being multiplied** for the increase of Christ—6:7; 12:24; 19:20:
 - 1. *Grew* in Acts 6:7 refers to the **growth in life**, indicating that the **word of God is a matter of life** that **grows as a seed** sown into man’s heart for the increase of Christ, the growth of God, within us—Mark 4:14; Col. 2:19.
 - 2. *Multiplied* in Acts 12:24 refers to the **increase of Christ in numbers**; actually, the multiplication of the disciples depends on the growth of the word.
 - 3. New disciples are “added to the Lord” to become the **parts of Christ**, the **members of Christ**—5:14; 11:24; Rom. 15:16.

- F. Such an evangelistic work for Christ's propagation, multiplication, and spread is according to God's New Testament economy for the **producing of many sons for God** (8:29) that they might be the **members of Christ** to constitute His Body (12:5) for the carrying out of God's eternal plan and the fulfillment of His eternal will; this is revealed in detail in the twenty-one Epistles and the book of Revelation, which follow the book of Acts.
- G. Since God is after a **corporate**, shining vessel, a vessel of testimony, His children must be brought to the **awareness of the Body of Christ** and learn to **live the Body life**; otherwise, they are useless in His hand and can never fulfill His goal—Rom. 12:1-3; 1 Cor. 12:12; Rev. 1:10-12.

Throughout the book of Acts there is a continual propagation. Chapter 1 speaks of the preparation for the propagation, and from chapter 2 onward there is a propagation that continues through the last chapter. Bible scholars and readers acknowledge that the book of Acts does not have an ending; it is **continuing even now**. If there were a written record of the continuing acts of the propagating disciples, we might have twenty-eight thousand chapters. **Christ's propagation has never ceased**, even though the record in Acts goes only to around A.D.66. Christ's propagation did not stop with Paul. It went west from Asia Minor to Europe, south to Africa, and east to India. According to historical accounts, many believe that the apostle Thomas brought this propagation to India. When Columbus sailed west and discovered a new continent, this propagation came from Europe to America. Today the propagation of Christ has been extended throughout the earth.

In recent days methods of transportation and new ways of video and audio transmission are continually being improved, making the world seem smaller and smaller and more convenient for Christ's propagation. Consider the work of the Lord's recovery: A message given in a meeting can reach every continent on the earth in less than a week through video and sound recordings. In less than a month the messages can be translated into different languages and printed as books. All this is for Christ's propagation.

Acts is specifically on **Christ's propagation**; this propagation **produces the churches**. The churches are not only Christ's propagation but also God's kingdom. Therefore, Christ's propagation, the churches, and the kingdom of God are synonymous. Christ's propagation is Christ's increase; it is also the spread of Christ. Christ not only propagates; He spreads to the four corners of the earth. **This increase and spread are the church**, and the church is God's kingdom on earth today. The entire content of Acts is focused on the propagation, increase, and spread of Christ, which produce churches on earth in locality after locality, and these churches are the kingdom of God. (CWWL 1985 vol. 1, chapter 1)

Day 3

- Micah 5:2** - *(But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, / So little to be among the thousands of Judah, / From you there will come forth to Me / He who is to be Ruler in Israel; / And His goings forth are from ancient times, / From the days of eternity.)*
- Isaiah 42:4** - *He will not faint, nor will He be discouraged, / Until He has established justice in the earth; / And the coastlands will wait for His instruction.*
- Isaiah 53:10-11** - *But Jehovah was pleased to crush Him, to afflict Him with grief. / When He makes Himself an offering for sin, / He will see a seed, He will extend His days, / And the pleasure of Jehovah will prosper in His hand. He will see the fruit of the travail of His soul, / And He will be satisfied; / By the knowledge of Him, the righteous One, My Servant, will make the many righteous, / And He will bear their iniquities.*

II. The continuation of Christ in the book of Acts is **prophesied in the Bible**:

- A. **Isaiah 42:4** says that Christ will come again when He finishes the establishing of God's justice in the earth, which means to **establish God's salvation** as the issue of **God's righteous judgment on Christ**—see footnote 3.
- B. **Isaiah 53:10** prophesies about the **continuation of Christ in His resurrection**—"He will see a seed, He will extend His days, / And the pleasure of Jehovah will prosper in His hand":
 - 1. The **seed** here, a **corporate seed**, is the church as the Body of Christ, **comprising all the believers** produced as the many grains by the death of Christ as the one grain and by His reproductive resurrection (John 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:3); Christ as the Servant of Jehovah is the resurrected Life-giver, the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:6, 17), to produce a seed for the building up of His Body **as His continuation** for Jehovah's pleasure and for Christ's satisfaction.
 - 2. For Christ to "extend His days" means that today **Christ is extending His days by living in His believers** (Gal. 2:20; see footnote 1 on Acts 28:9); His believers as His Body are His extension.
 - 3. The pleasure of God (Eph. 1:5, 9; Phil. 2:13) is to **see many sons born of Him** to become the **members of Christ**, who constitute the **church as the Body of Christ**, the **corporate expression of Christ**.
- C. **Isaiah 53:11** says that Christ "will see the fruit of the travail of His soul, / And He will be satisfied"; the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul implies **all the items produced in and through Christ's resurrection as His continuation**:
 - 1. As the **processed One**, the last Adam, Christ became the **life-giving Spirit** as the reality of the pneumatic Christ for **His propagation through life-imparting**—1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17.
 - 2. As the **preeminent One**, the One who has the first place in all things, Christ became the **Firstborn from the dead** for the **germinating of God's new creation** and for **Christ to be the Head of the Body**—Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5a.
 - 3. As the **God-man**, Christ was begotten of God in His humanity (Acts 13:33) to be the **firstborn Son of God** in both the divine and human natures, to be a model for **conforming many sons to His image** (Rom. 8:29b).
 - 4. As the **resurrection life** (John 11:25), **Christ regenerated all His believers** (1 Pet. 1:3), making them His brothers and the many sons of God (Heb. 2:10-12; Rom. 8:29b; John 20:17), who are the members of God's household to be God's kingdom (Eph. 2:19; Gal. 6:10) and God's precious inheritance (Eph. 1:11).
 - 5. As the **one grain of wheat**, **Christ became the many grains** (John 12:24), who are His increase (3:30) and the components of His Body, that is, the one bread, the church (1 Cor. 10:17; Eph. 1:22-23).
 - 6. Through His **life-releasing death and with His life-imparting resurrection**, Christ **produced a corporate seed** as the issue of the travail of His soul, which seed He saw in His resurrection and was satisfied (Isa. 53:10-11; cf. Gal. 3:29).
 - 7. As the **life of the believers**, the resurrected Christ is **all the members** and **in all the members** of the new man—Col. 3:10-11.
- D. **Micah 5:2** prophesies concerning the incarnation of Christ in Bethlehem, and that "His **goings forth** are from ancient times, / From the days of eternity":

1. Christ's going forth, His appearing, is a continuous matter; at the time of His incarnation He began to come forth; after His incarnation, He continued to go forth through His human living, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His outpouring of the consummated Spirit (who is the reality of Christ Himself), and His spreading through the preaching of the gospel to the whole inhabited earth; all of these are great steps in Christ's going forth.
2. His going forth has not ceased but is continuing today; Christ's going forth, His manifestation, will consummate when He comes back with the overcomers as the mighty ones (Joel 3:11) to defeat Antichrist and cast him into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:19-20), when Satan is cast into the abyss (20:2-3), and when Christ sets up His throne to reign as King (Matt. 25:31, 34, 40); at that time His appearing will be complete.

Many Christians today do not know the real significance of the book of Acts. Although many books have been written about Acts and many teachings put forth about it, even up to today our understanding of this book may not be very deep. This is because this book records matters that are wonderful and beyond our human concept. We may consider Acts to be an easy book, relating the story of how the disciples of Christ after His ascension into heaven exercised extraordinary power to do things in a miraculous way, convincing people, bringing people to Christ, and setting up churches. However, if we have only this much understanding of this book, we lack the full revelation and insight.

We need the real insight concerning the record of this book. There are two important things transpired after the Lord's death—resurrection and ascension. Resurrection is the strongest proof that the Son of God is the divine life, a life that nothing can damage, hold, or overcome. This life overcomes all things—Satan, death, Hades, and the grave. Nothing and no one can hold Him, damage Him, or overcome Him. This was fully proved and testified by the resurrection of Christ. This is one significance of the resurrection.

However, the resurrection of Christ is not only a proof or testimony; it is also an imparting of Himself into His members. In His resurrection Christ imparted Himself into all those who identify themselves with Him in faith. Therefore, objectively speaking, His resurrection is a proof, a testimony, that He is the indestructible life, and subjectively speaking, it is the imparting of Himself into us to make us the members of His Body. (CWWL, 1964 vol. 2, Chapter 8)

Day 4

Matthew 16:18 - And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Ephesians 4:13 - Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

- E. These Old Testament prophecies culminate in the greatest prophecy in the Bible concerning the continuation of Christ; in Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said, "I will build My church"; even today this prophecy still remains unfulfilled:

1. The prophecy on the building up of the church started by the Lord in Matthew 16 is continued by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:13-16, a prophecy concerning the building up of the church in a specific way that remains unfulfilled today.
2. This prophecy may also be seen as the preparation of Christ's bride, which is still unfulfilled today (Rev. 19:7-9; Eph. 5:25-27); the fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy concerning the **building up of the church** and the **preparation of His bride** will bring Him back; **now** is the time for the Lord to fulfill His prophecy.

Day 5

Philippians 3:9 - And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,

Acts 16:7 - And when they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, yet the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

III. The apostle Paul, as a **pattern to all the believers**, the members of the Body of Christ, **lived Christ for His magnification as His continuation**—Phil. 1:19-21a; Acts 9:4-5, 15; 26:18-19; 1 Tim. 1:16:

- A. Paul was a disciple of Christ—**seeing** Christ, **hearing** Christ, and **learning** Christ as the reality is in Jesus—Acts 9:1-19, 25-27; 22:14-15; Eph. 4:20-21.
- B. Paul was a chosen vessel of Christ to **contain** Him, be **filled** with Him, and **overflow** with Him for His fullness—Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 4:7; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19.
- C. Paul was a **man of prayer**—Acts 9:11; 13:1-3; 14:23; 16:13, 25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17; 28:8; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2.
- D. Paul **depended on the Body**, doing everything **in** the Body, **through** the Body, and **for** the Body—Acts 9:11, 17-18, 25-27; 1 Cor. 1:1; 12:14-27.
- E. Paul practiced **calling on the name of the Lord**—Acts 9:14, 21; 22:16; 2 Tim. 2:22; Rom. 10:12-13; Phil. 2:9-11.
- F. Paul **lived by the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus** (the Spirit of a man with abundant strength for suffering) for his preaching ministry, a ministry of suffering carried out among human beings and for human beings in the human life for the building up of the Body of Christ—John 7:37-39; Acts 9:16; 16:7, 22-34; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 6:4; 11:23; Heb. 6:19-20; 13:13.
- G. Paul **lived in his mingled spirit** (the divine Spirit mingled with his human spirit as one spirit)—Acts 17:16; 19:21; Rom. 8:4, 6, 16; 1 Cor. 6:17.
- H. Paul was **filled with the Spirit of joy**, essentially for his existence, and with the Spirit of power, economically for his function—Acts 13:9, 52; Eph. 5:18.
- I. Paul exercised himself to always have a **good and pure conscience**—Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9.
- J. Paul lived a life of **always rejoicing** in the Lord, **praying unceasingly**, and **thanking Him in everything**—Acts 16:25; 27:35; Phil. 4:4; Col. 3:16; 1 Thes. 5:16-18.
- K. Paul was allied with God and assisted by God to **speak the gospel boldly** in the name of Jesus to spread the testimony of Jesus unto the uttermost part of the earth—Acts 9:20, 27; 26:22-29; 28:31; 1:8; 1 Thes. 2:2; cf. Rom. 15:24, 28.

- L. Paul **cherished the saints** in the humanity of Jesus and **nourished** them in the divinity of Christ with all the truths of God's eternal economy, displaying in his living the word of the Lord Jesus that it is better to give than to receive—Acts 20:18-38; 1 Thes. 2:1-12.

Paul was **filled with the Spirit of joy**, essentially for his existence, and with the Spirit of power, economically for his function. Romans 14:17-18 says, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in this is well pleasing to God and approved by men." In The Vital Groups Brother Lee says, "We must have a pleasant countenance when we contact people. We should be happy and rejoicing. We should not contact anyone with a cheerless countenance. We must give people the impression that we are genuinely happy and pleasant. Otherwise, we will not be able to cherish them, to make them happy" (The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1994–1997, vol. 5, p. 152). This does not mean that we present a fake countenance but that we **need to be filled with joy**. When we are **full of the Lord's joy**, we will have a cheerful countenance. When I see brothers or sisters having a cheerless countenance, I become concerned. I might say something to cheer him or her up, although they may not realize my intention. Cherishing means to make someone happy, not in a natural sense but with the presence of the Lord.

George Müller testified, "The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord" (The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, vol. 48, p. 138). As elders and responsible brothers, we all have many responsibilities, including our human responsibilities of caring for our family. For this reason it is crucial that **every morning we make our soul happy in the Lord**. We desperately need to **eat God's words** so that His words **become the joy and rejoicing of our heart**. This is not a doctrinal matter. (The Ministry of the Word, vol. 29, No. 05, chapter 1)

Day 6

Philippians 1:19-21 - For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

- M. Paul's fourth ministry journey (Acts 27—28) shows in a particular way his life of **living Christ, magnifying Christ, doing all things in Christ**, and **pursuing Christ** in order to be found in Christ (Phil. 1:19-21a; 3:8-9, 14; 4:13):

1. All during the apostle's long and unfortunate imprisonment-voyage, the **Lord kept the apostle in His ascendancy** and enabled him to **live a life far beyond the realm of anxiety**; this life was fully dignified, with the highest standard of human virtues expressing the most excellent divine attributes—Acts 28:5-9.
2. This was **Jesus living again on the earth in His divinely enriched humanity**! This was the wonderful, excellent, and mysterious God-man, who lived in the Gospels, continuing to live in the Acts through one of His many members! This was a living witness of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and God-exalted Christ!

IV. The ultimate issue of the church will be the **New Jerusalem** in eternity future as God's full and eternal expression; this should be the **reality and goal of all our gospel preaching today** as we follow the pattern of the apostle Paul—"proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered"—28:31.