

HWMR: ONE ACCORD AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
(Week 8)

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:3; 2:32-36; 8:12; 14:22; 16:6-7; 20:28; 28:23, 31

The Divine Trinity and the Kingdom of God

- Acts 1:3 To whom also He presented Himself alive after His suffering by many irrefutable proofs, appearing to them through a period of forty days and **speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God**.
- Acts 2:32 This Jesus God has **raised up**, of which **we all are witnesses**.
- Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has **poured out this which you both see and hear**.
- Acts 2:34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, **Sit at My right hand**."
- Acts 2:35 Until I set Your enemies as a footstool for Your feet."
- Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that **God has made Him both Lord and Christ**, this **Jesus whom you have crucified**.
- Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip, who **announced the gospel of the kingdom of God** and of the **name of Jesus Christ**, they were baptized, both men and women.
- Acts 14:22 Establishing the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations we must **enter into the kingdom of God**.
- Acts 16:6 And they passed through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the **Holy Spirit** to speak the word in Asia.
- 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.
- Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the **church of God, which He obtained through His own blood**.
- Acts 28:23 And once they had appointed a day for him, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he expounded these matters, solemnly **testifying of the kingdom of God** and persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning until evening.
- Acts 28:31 **Proclaiming the kingdom of God** and **teaching** the things concerning the **Lord Jesus Christ** with all boldness, unhindered.

Day 1

*Acts 2:32-33 - This Jesus God has **raised up**, of which **we all are witnesses**. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has **poured out this which you both see and hear**.*

- I. Even as the Divine Trinity is the framework of the entire New Testament, so the **Divine Trinity is the structure of the book of Acts**; chapter after chapter of Acts unveils the operation of the Divine Trinity for the carrying out of God's New Testament economy—e.g., 1:1-2, 4-5, 8, 11, 21; 2:4, 17-18, 21-24, 27, 31-33, 36, 38; 13:2, 4, 7, 9-10, 12, 16, 23, 30, 33-39, 49-50, 52; 28:15, 23, 25, 31:

- A. We must be governed by the revelation that **God is uniquely one**—Psa. 86:10; Isa. 45:5; 1 Cor. 8:4:
 1. The unique God is **triune**, three-one—the **Father**, the **Son**, and the **Spirit**— Matt. 28:19.
 2. *The Triune God* refers mainly to **God Himself**; *the Divine Trinity* refers mainly to **God's being triune**, which is the primary attribute of the Godhead—v. 19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4-5.
- B. The Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—was fully involved with the **Son's ascension** and the **pouring out of the Spirit**—Acts 2:32-36:
 1. The Son **ascended**, the Father **exalted** Him, and the Spirit was **poured out**— Luke 24:51; Phil. 2:9; Acts 1:9-11; 2:32-36.
 2. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit were all **wrapped up with the outpouring of the Spirit** as the consummation of the processed Triune God—v. 33; John 7:37-39; Phil. 1:19.

The two main aspects concerning the Divine Trinity are the **essential Trinity** and the **economical Trinity**. In the **essential Trinity**, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit **coexist** and **coinhere** at the **same time and in the same way** with no succession. There is no first, second, or third. However, in God's plan, in God's administrative arrangement, in **God's economy**, the **Father takes the first step**, the **Son takes the second step**, and the **Spirit takes the third step**. The Father **planned**, the Son **accomplished**, and the Spirit **applies** what the Son accomplished according to the Father's plan. This is a successive procedure or a succession in God's economy to carry out His eternal purpose. The **essential Trinity** refers to the **essence** of the Triune God for His existence; the **economical Trinity** refers to His **plan for His move**. There is the need of the existence of the Divine Trinity, and there is also the need of the plan of the Divine Trinity.

We have seen that the Triune God **became a man** who lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years. This God-man then died a wonderful, **all-inclusive death** on the cross to solve all the negative problems and to release the divine life. Then He overcame death by coming out of death in **resurrection**. In resurrection He was born as the Firstborn of God, and at the same time He brought forth many sons of God who are His many brothers. Also, through His resurrection a new child was born, and He became the **all-inclusive life-giving Spirit** to apply Himself and all that He had accomplished, attained, and obtained to this new child. Therefore, on the day of His resurrection He came back to the disciples as the **pneumatic Christ** and breathed Himself into them as the Spirit of life.

This **Holy Breath is all-inclusive**. In this breath are all the elements of the person of Christ and all the elements of what He has accomplished, attained, and obtained. This breath is the compound, all-inclusive Spirit, which actually is the Lord Himself as the all-inclusive Christ breathed into His disciples. On the evening of the day of resurrection the Lord **exhaled Himself as the breath**, and the disciples **inhaled Him as the breath**. By this exhaling and inhaling, this wonderful One got into the disciples. He entered into them to be their life, to be the essence of their new being. Their **receiving of this breath was altogether a matter of life essentially**. They received Him as their life, as the very intrinsic essence of their being. This is a most marvelous, excellent, and wonderful fact. We must thank the Lord that in these last days He has taken away the veil to disclose to us all these things in such a detailed way.

This wonderful One, who is the Triune God mingled with humanity, became wrapped up with human living and entered into an all-inclusive death that dealt with sin and sins, that destroyed Satan and his satanic system, the world, and that annulled all the religious ordinances, terminated the old creation, and released His divine life. All these aspects of His death became elements of His compounded being. He has overcome Satan and death, and He has entered into resurrection. He became the Firstborn of God, and He produced many brothers to bring forth a new child. After all this, such a wonderful person became the all-inclusive, compound, life-giving Spirit to be breathed into His disciples as their very breath. **This breath is not a small matter, but it is all-inclusive, life-giving, and indwelling.** This breath, which is His indwelling presence, is life to us; it is our essential being. Now we are one with Him in the essential way of life. The believers in Christ are new beings, new persons, even divinely human persons. (CWWL 1994, vol. 2, *Elder's Training Book 3, Chapter 8*; CWWL 1984, vol.3, *God New Testament Economy, chapter 7*)

Day 2

Acts 16:6-7 - And they passed through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, yet the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

- C. In *Acts 16:6-7* the *Holy Spirit* and the *Spirit of Jesus* are used **interchangeably**, revealing that the **Spirit of Jesus is the Holy Spirit**:
1. *The Holy Spirit* is a **general title** of the Spirit of God in the New Testament—Acts 9:17, 31.
 2. *The Spirit of Jesus* is a **particular expression** concerning the Spirit of God and refers to the Spirit of the **incarnated** Savior who, as Jesus in His **humanity**, passed through human living and **death** on the cross—16:7:
 - a. This indicates that in the Spirit of Jesus there is not only the **divine element** of God but also the **human element** of Jesus and the elements of His human living and His suffering of death as well—Phil. 2:7-8.
 - b. In his ministry the apostle Paul needed such an **all-inclusive Spirit**.

God's New Testament economy is carried out through the Lord's **incarnation, humanity, human living, death, resurrection, and ascension**. The Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus include these matters. This means that the Spirit who is now called the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus is the totality and ultimate consummation of Christ's incarnation, humanity, human living, death, resurrection, and ascension. When we have this Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus, we have Christ in His incarnation, in His humanity and human living, and in His death, resurrection, and ascension.

If we see the significance of the titles the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus, we shall mourn and lament over the pitiful situation among Christians today with respect to understanding these matters. Who knows that the Spirit of Jesus is the totality and realization of Christ as the unique qualified One, the One qualified through incarnation, humanity, human living, death, resurrection, and ascension? We certainly are not proud of what the Lord, in His mercy, has shown us. But we are burdened to **tell the truth to God's seeking people**. The depths of the truth regarding the Spirit is not found in traditional theology; on the contrary, it is in the depths of the Word. If we would know these depths, we should not be content to "skate on the ice" of the surface of the Word. We in the Lord's recovery should no longer stay on the surface in such a way. May we all see the revelation here and not be satisfied with a superficial understanding of the Word of God. (*Life Study of Acts, chapter 44*)

Day 3

Luke 1:35 - And the angel answered and said to her, The **Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore also the holy thing which is born will be called the **Son of God**.

Philippians 1:19 - 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**,

3. As a **vessel** containing the Triune God, Paul was **fully constituted** of the Holy Spirit, who was involved with the Lord's incarnation and birth, and of the Spirit of Jesus, who was involved with the Lord's humanity, human living, all-inclusive death, life-imparting resurrection, and ascension—Eph. 3:14-17; Luke 1:35; Acts 2:32-36; Phil. 1:19.
4. The kind of work that we do for the Lord depends on the kind of Spirit by whom we are guided, directed, instructed, and constituted; when the all-inclusive Spirit becomes our constitution, **our work will be the expression of this Spirit**—Acts 16:6-7; Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19.

We need to pay careful attention to two divine titles in verses 6 and 7: the **Holy Spirit** and the **Spirit of Jesus**. The interchangeable use of the Spirit of Jesus with the Holy Spirit in the preceding verse reveals that the Spirit of Jesus is the Holy Spirit. The **Holy Spirit is a general title** of the Spirit of God in the New Testament. The **Spirit of Jesus is a particular expression** concerning the Spirit of God, and refers to the Spirit of the incarnated Savior who, as Jesus in His humanity, passed through human living and death on the cross. This indicates that in the Spirit of Jesus there is **not only the divine element of God**, but also the **human element of Jesus** and the elements of His human living and His suffering of death as well. Such an all-inclusive Spirit was needed for the apostle's preaching ministry, a ministry of suffering among human beings and for human beings in the human life.

We have seen that in Acts 16 Luke first speaks of the Holy Spirit and then of the Spirit of Jesus. In the Old Testament we read of the Spirit of God in Genesis 1:2b: "*The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*" There the Spirit of God brooded over the death waters. Elsewhere in the Old Testament the Spirit of God is called the Spirit of Jehovah. The title "the Holy Spirit" is not used in the Old Testament. In Psalm 51:11 and in Isaiah 63:10-11 the "Holy Spirit" should be translated "the Spirit of holiness." The main titles of God's Spirit in the Old Testament, therefore, are the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jehovah. God's Spirit is never called the Spirit of Elijah or the Spirit of David. From this we see that in Acts 16 Luke uses two titles for the Spirit of God that are not found in the Old Testament.

The title “the Holy Spirit” was used for the first time at the time of the conception of the Lord Jesus. It was when the time came to **prepare the way for Christ’s coming** and to prepare a human body for Him to **initiate the New Testament dispensation** that the term the Holy Spirit came into use. In order to understand the first usage of the title the Holy Spirit, we need to see that this title is involved with the **Lord’s incarnation**. Hence, according to the principle of first mention, the Holy Spirit is related to Christ’s incarnation and birth.

In **Acts 16:7** Luke turns from the Holy Spirit to the Spirit of Jesus. As a man, Jesus was first living a human life and then was crucified and resurrected, and He ascended to the heavens and has been made Lord and Christ. The Spirit of Jesus involves more than the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit involves only the incarnation and birth of the Lord Jesus, but the **Spirit of Jesus involves His humanity, human living, death, resurrection, and ascension**. (*Life Study of Acts, chapter 44*)

Day 4

Acts 20:28 - Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the **Holy Spirit** has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which **He obtained through His own blood**.

1 John 1:7 - But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the **blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin**.

D. God obtained the church “**through His own blood**”—Acts 20:28:

1. God purchased the church by **paying the price** of “**His own blood**.”
2. Through incarnation our God, the Creator, the eternal One, became **mingled with man**—John 1:1, 14:
 - a. As a result, He was no longer only God—He became a **God-man**, who had blood and was able to die for us—1 John 1:7.
 - b. When the Lord Jesus, the God-man, died on the cross, He died **not only as man but also as God**.
3. The blood that He shed was not only the blood of the man Jesus but also the **blood of the God-man**.
4. Therefore, His blood, through which God obtained the church, is “**His own blood**”—Acts 20:28.

Day 5

Acts 1:3 - To whom also He presented Himself alive after His suffering by many irrefutable proofs, appearing to them through a period of forty days and **speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God**.

Acts 8:12 - But when they believed Philip, who **announced the gospel of the kingdom of God** and of the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

II. The kingdom of God is the main subject of the apostles’ preaching in Acts—1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31:

- A. The fact that the resurrected Christ, in His appearing to the apostles through a period of forty days, spoke to them “the things concerning the kingdom of God” indicates that the **kingdom** would be the **main subject of the apostles’ preaching** in their coming commission after Pentecost—1:3.
- B. According to the New Testament, the kingdom of God is not a visible, material realm; actually, the **kingdom of God is a person**, the **Lord Jesus Christ Himself**—Luke 17:20-21.
- C. The **churches and the kingdom of God go together**; the churches produced by the propagation of the resurrected Christ are the kingdom of God on earth today—Acts 14:22; 20:25:
 1. The resurrected Christ, who is **propagating Himself** in His ascension, by the Spirit, and through the disciples, is the reality of the kingdom of God; the **kingdom of God is His expansion**—1:8; 8:12:
 - a. The **churches are the expansion of Christ**, who came to sow Himself as the **seed** of the kingdom of God; this is revealed in the Gospels—Mark 4:3, 26.
 - b. In the Gospels **Christ was the seed of the kingdom**; in the book of Acts we have the propagation of this seed to produce the churches as the kingdom of God—8:1, 12; 13:1-4.
 2. **We** in the churches are the **propagation** of Christ and the **expansion** of Christ, and **we** are **enlarging the kingdom of God**—Rev. 1:9, 11.

The Lord came to the earth to establish God’s kingdom. There are two sides to the gospel. On the one hand, there is the **individual aspect**. On the other hand, there is the **corporate aspect**. Individually, the gospel gives **eternal life to those who believe**. Corporately, the gospel **calls people to repentance** unto the kingdom of God. God’s eyes are upon the kingdom. In the Lord’s prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, the kingdom is spoken of at the beginning and the end. Verse 10 says, “*Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.*” The kingdom of God is the sphere where His will is accomplished in an unhindered way. Verse 13 says, “*For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*” The kingdom, the power, and glory are related. Revelation 12:10 says, “*Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ.*” The kingdom is the sphere of authority. In Luke 17:21 the Lord said, “*For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.*” (He did not say that it is in you.) This word indicates that the **Lord Jesus is the kingdom of God**. For the Lord Jesus to be in the midst of you is for the kingdom of God to be in the midst of you, because the authority of God is fully executed in Him. The **kingdom of God is upon the Lord**. It is also **upon the church**. Because the Lord’s life has been released to the church, His **kingdom must also be propagated and established through the church**. From the time of Noah, God established a kingdom. But that was just a kingdom of man; it was not the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God began with the Lord Jesus, but how small was its sphere! Today the one grain of wheat has produced many grains. Today the sphere of the kingdom of God is not limited to the Lord alone. It is also in the many believers.

God’s purpose is **not only for us to become the church**, but also **for the church to become the kingdom of God**. She is to be the sphere of God’s kingdom, the place where God executes His authority. Hence, God’s desire is not only to gain ground in a few, but to have the whole church free from rebellion. There must be an absolute submission and an absolute position for God so that His authority can be perfectly carried out. In this way authority is established among God’s creatures. Not only does God want man to submit to His direct authority, He wants man to submit to all of His appointed, deputy authorities as well. God does not ask for a little submission; **He demands a perfect submission**. (*Authority and Submission, Chapter 6*)

Day 6

Acts 14:22 - Establishing the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations *we must enter into the kingdom of God*.

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

- D. The kingdom of God is the **spreading of Christ as life** into His believers to form a realm in which God rules in His life—2 Pet. 1:3-11:
1. To enter into this kingdom, people need to **repent of their sins** and **believe in the gospel** so that their sins may be **forgiven** and so that they may be **regenerated** by God to have the divine life, which matches the divine nature of this kingdom—Mark 1:15; John 3:3, 5.
 2. **All the believers in Christ can share** the kingdom in the church age for their enjoyment of God in His righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit—Rom. 14:17.
 3. The kingdom of God will become the kingdom of Christ and of God for the overcoming believers to **inherit and enjoy** in the coming kingdom age so that they may reign with Christ for a thousand years—1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 20:4, 6.
 4. As the eternal kingdom, the kingdom of God will be an **eternal blessing of God's eternal life** for all of God's redeemed to enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity—21:1-4; 22:1-5, 14, 17.
- E. In *Acts 14:22* Paul entreated the believers who were continuing in the faith to realize that through many tribulations **we must enter into the kingdom of God**, because the whole world opposes our entering in; to enter into the kingdom of God is to enter into the **full enjoyment of Christ** as the kingdom.
- F. In *Acts 19* we see that Satan is fighting against God's spreading of His kingdom on earth; the prevailing ministry for the propagation of Christ is a **fighting**, a **battle**, for God's kingdom—vv. 23-41.
- G. Paul's proclaiming the kingdom of God in 28:31 was the **propagation of the resurrected Christ**:
1. This is proved by the words *teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ*, which things **go together with the kingdom of God**—vv. 31, 23.
 2. To **teach** concerning Christ is to **spread the kingdom of God**; therefore, the kingdom of God is actually the propagation of the resurrected Christ—a process that continues to be carried out through the believers today—v. 31.