

EVANGELISM

Lesson #5

Gospel Preaching, Appropriation, and Response in the Book of Acts

Throughout church history the gospel has been neglected, adjusted, and added to in various ways. For instance, in the Roman Catholic church, the various pieces of the gospel are often seen portrayed on the walls of church buildings in pictures, in stained-glass windows, or verbally sprinkled about in the liturgy. Unfortunately, unbiblical approaches to appropriating the gospel are used in Roman Catholicism. Sacraments, both biblical and manmade, are presented as a system of works righteousness by which a person “might” be able to get to heaven after they suffer for their sins in purgatory. They will not be able to get to heaven at all if they commit a mortal sin immediately before they die without being able to go to confession.

In Baptist circles things are often the same. The gospel is preached, but when it comes to appropriating the gospel, manmade works, which nullify the gospel are added. The preacher says, “If you would like to become a Christian, or get saved—and then extra biblical works are inserted like poisonous daggers. I like to call these extrabiblical works, “Baptist Sacraments.” The preacher might say after preaching the gospel, “If you want to be saved, or become a Christian come forward to the altar, raise your hand, sign a prayer card, ask Jesus in your heart, receive the love of Christ” or “make a decision for Christ.” It never dawns on the preacher that *these things are never mentioned in the Bible*. Sadly, many do the works prescribed, “the Baptist sacraments,” trusting in *what they have done* to save them. Baptist churches are full of religious unbelievers who profess to believe in salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, but who practically trust in what they did to get saved and sadly, remain lost.

We could pick on the Presbyterians as well. Baptizing infants is not in the Bible, but supposedly infant baptism incorporates the unbelieving child into “the covenant community.” This is foreign to the Bible. Thus, the child grows up thinking they are “part of the covenant community” because of some work performed on them by another. Ask them their testimony and out comes a list of their works i.e., I was “baptized into the church,” “I was catechized,” “I went through confirmation,” “I believe in the Apostle’s Creed,” or “the Westminster confession,” none of which are the Savior. Again, extrabiblical works are added to the gospel of grace. I could pick on others, but let these three examples suffice for illustration purposes.

What confuses things even more is that a few professing Roman Catholics, who do not believe what Roman Catholicism teaches, end up repenting, believing the gospel, and are born again in the midst of the extrabiblical sacramental system of Roman Catholicism. Some Baptists repent and believe and are born again before, during, or after performing some “Baptist Sacrament.” Some Presbyterians repent and believe and are born again even though they were baptized as an infant. But here is the sad part, *many are not converted, regenerated, born again, yet think they are born again because of the extrabiblical works they have done or because of what others have done for them*.

Some churches are filled with unbelievers who think they know the Lord, yet the Bible never makes sense to them. They don’t love the Lord, the church, the Word of God, or the people of God. They have no power to overcome their sin because they are still slaves of sin and spiritually dead. They are professing believers on the broad road to destruction, who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but don’t know Him.

You may think I am being hard, ungracious, and am exaggerating, yet I assure you, I am not. I have been in the ministry for 35 years as I write this and have seen first-hand, and heard of far more *church members*, who have come to saving faith in Jesus Christ after becoming members, after they professed and receive the stamp of being a believer. Yes, they thought they were saved for years and even fooled themselves, the leaders of the church, and others, that they were born again. But they were not saved. At some later date, they are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. My experiences, however, are not authoritative, so let's look at what Jesus, and the New Testament authors have to teach us about religious unbelievers in local churches.

- Mt. 7:13-14 Many in the church will take the broad road to destruction.
- Mt. 7:15-17 Many in the church will follow false teachers to hell.
- Mt. 7:21-23 Many in the church will call Jesus "Lord," claim to do miraculous works in Jesus' name, and then be cast into hell.
- Mt. 7:24-27 Many in the church will build their lives upon the sand of works righteousness, and in the end be cast into hell.
- Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43 Jesus said there would be tares (unbelievers) among the wheat (believers) who will be gathered and thrown into the fire.
- The Apostle Paul says in Acts 20:28-31 that false disciples would rise up *inside the church*, who would be like wolves, not sparing the flock.
- Jude 4 tells us false believers will *creep into local churches unnoticed*, "who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever." They often remain undetected until judgment day.
- In Rev. 2:4 Jesus confronts the church of Ephesus, the most well taught church in Asia Minor, for leaving their first love, Jesus. They didn't even know they had done so!
- In Rev. 2:14-15 Jesus confronts the church of Pergamum because some in the church held to the false teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.
- In Rev. 2:20 Jesus confronts the church of Thyatira whose leaders let a false prophetess preach and deceive the sheep.
- In Rev. 3:1-2 Jesus confronts the church of Sardis for falling asleep and being dead.
- In Rev. 3:15-17 Jesus confronts the church of Laodicea for being proud, self-sufficient, and unbelieving.

Every one of the texts listed above, and others besides, speak of religious unbelievers “in local churches.” Why? Because many have been led astray by well-intentioned Christians or professing Christians who themselves are led astray and unbelieving. They learned to trust in extrabiblical works to save them like the Jews of the first century, and thus they make disciples who trust in their works as well. Thus, *it is critical when doing evangelism to exhort people in biblical ways to appropriate the person and work of Jesus Christ.*

Biblical gospel preaching and biblical gospel appropriation are necessary. But we do not want to nullify the gospel with works, lead people astray, and give them false assurance of salvation. So, what can we do to reduce the number of tares among the wheat in local churches? Many things might be done, but for our purposes in this lesson, we are going to survey the book of Acts which records the early days of the church, its growth, and spread of the gospel. As we work through the book of Acts, we will keep our eye out for three things:

- How the gospel was preached i.e., Jesus’ person and work.
- How people were exhorted to appropriate the gospel preached.
- How people responded to the gospel preached.

I. **HELPFUL REMINDERS ABOUT THE BOOK OF ACTS**

Before we jump into the book of Acts there are some helpful things to keep in mind, so we don’t misinterpret or misapply what we see in the book of Acts.

- A. Luke originally wrote his gospel and Acts for his friend, Theophilus, so Theophilus would know the exact truth (Lk. 1:1-3; Acts 1:1).
- B. The book of Acts records the birth and early days of the church, the church’s growth, and the spread of the gospel throughout the Mediterranean world.
- C. Acts focuses on two primary apostles, the Apostle Peter in the first eleven chapters and the Apostle Paul in the last seventeen chapters.
- D. Acts is historical narrative and mostly “describes” what happened. Because Acts is “descriptive,” we need to be careful not to take what is described and assume it is “prescribed” for all believers.
- E. The book of Acts explains the transition from Judaism under the law of Moses to New Covenant Christianity under the law of Christ.
- F. First century Jews had wandered far away from God, believing in works salvation. They didn’t see themselves as sinners in need of salvation by grace, through faith in the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

- G. The New Testament church was comprised almost entirely of Jews, a demonstration of the power of God in the gospel.
- H. The gospel presentations in Acts are often more specific earlier on in the book, but later in Acts Luke often employs synonyms for the gospel.
- I. Paul's first and second missionary journeys often speak of evangelizing those who have never heard the gospel. On Paul's third missionary journey we see how Paul strengthened churches by preaching *the whole counsel of God*, including the gospel.
- J. When on trial before the Jewish council, the high priest/s, before Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and the Jewish council in Rome, Paul chose to share his testimony of how he became a follower of Jesus Christ.

Gospel Presentations and Testimonies In Acts	
Text	Occasion
Acts 2:1-13	Day of Pentecost, apostles preach the gospel in tongues.
Acts 2:14-47	Peter's first sermon at Pentecost.
Acts 3:11-4:31	Peter's second sermon at Pentecost.
Acts 4:5-12	Peter's defense before the Jewish leaders.
Acts 7:1-60	Stephen's defense before the Jewish leaders and high priest.
Acts 8:4	Persecuted believers scatter and preach the Word.
Acts 8:5-13	Philip preaches Christ and the gospel to the Samaritans.
Acts 8:14-14	Peter and John preach to the Samaritans.
Acts 8:25-40	Philip preaches to the Ethiopian eunuch.
Acts 10:23-48	Peter preaches to the Gentiles in Joppa.
Acts 11:1-18	Peter's defense to the Jews for preaching to and eating with Gentiles.
Acts 11:19-30	Paul strengthens the church at Antioch.
Acts 13:4-41	Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary.
Acts 13:44-52	Paul and Barnabas preach to Gentiles at Pisidian Antioch.
Acts 14:1-23	Paul and Barnabas preach gospel to Jew and Gentile.
Acts 15:1-35	Jerusalem counsel and gospel progress among Gentiles.
Acts 15:46-31	Paul and Barnabas' second missionary journey.
Acts 16:11-40	Paul and Silas preach the gospel in Philippi.
Acts 17:1-9	Paul and Silas preach the gospel in Thessalonica.
Acts 17:10-15	Paul and Silas preach the gospel in Berea.
Acts 17:16-34	Paul and Silas preach the gospel at Athens.
Acts 18:1-17	Paul, Silas, and Timothy preach the gospel at Corinth.
Acts 18:18-21	Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila preach the gospel at Cencrea.
Acts 18:23-28	Paul, Pricilla, Aquila, and Apollos preach the gospel at Ephesus.
Acts 19:1-20	Paul preaches the gospel at Ephesus to disciples of John the Baptist.
Acts 19:21-41	Paul, Timothy, Erastus, Gaius, and Aristarchus preach the gospel in Macedonia and Achaia.
Acts 20:17-35	Paul, Timothy, Erastus, Gaius, and Aristarchus meet with Ephesian elders in Miletus about ministry, gospel preaching, and being good shepherds.
Acts 21:27-40	Paul returns to Jerusalem to preach the gospel on the temple mount during the feast of Pentecost.
Acts 22:1-30	Paul defends himself before the Jewish mob, who attacked, beat, and tried to murder him, after he was rescued by the Roman commander.
Acts 23:1-35	Paul preaches the gospel while on trial before the chief priests and council of Jewish elders.

Acts 24:1-27	Paul, still under arrest and protection from Rome at Caesarea, testifies before the governor Felix.
Acts 25:1-22	Paul, after two years in prison at Caesarea, gives testimony before the new governor Porcius Festus.
Acts 25:23-26:32	Paul gives gospel testimony before Agrippa, Bernice, Roman commanders, and prominent men of Caesarea.
Acts 28:16-31	Paul gives gospel testimony to Jewish leaders in Rome.

I. SURVEY OF GOSPEL PRESENTATIONS, APPROPRIATIONS, AND RESPONSES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

A. Acts 2:1-13 The birth of the church at Pentecost, tongues of fire settle upon Apostles, they speak in languages unknown to themselves, but the native tongues of their listeners.

1. *Gospel:* “The mighty deeds of God” (vs. 11).
2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.
3. *Response:* Hearers were amazed and greatly perplexed (vs. 12). Some mocked and accused apostles of being drunk (vs. 13)

B. Acts 2:14-47 Peter preaches his first sermon at Pentecost.

1. *Gospel:* Joel 2:28-32 quoted about the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, ending with, “And everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (vs. 21). You killed, Jesus of Nazareth, attested by God by signs and wonders performed in your midst” (vs. 22), delivered over to death according to God’s plan (vs. 23). Jesus rose from the dead (vs. 24, 32) as predicted and did not undergo decay (vss. 10, 27, quoting Psa. 16:8-11). King David died and is in the tomb (vs. 29) but was promised a descendent to sit on his throne (vs. 30) and spoke of the resurrection of Christ (vs. 31, quoting Psa. 16:10). Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God, who granted Jesus the outpouring out of the Holy Spirit, which was witnessed (vs. 33). The Messiah would be exalted (vss. 33-34, as predicted in Psa. 110:1). God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ, “this Jesus, whom you crucified” (vs. 36).
2. *Appropriation:* Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and to receive the Holy Spirit (vs. 38). Promise of salvation for Jews and Gentiles (vs. 39). Solemnly testifying and exhorting the people to be saved from this perverse generation (vs. 40).
3. *Response:* Hearers were pierced to the heart, wanted to know what to do (vs. 37), and 3,000 were baptized (vs. 41). Believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to

breaking bread, and prayer (vs. 42). Believers felt a sense of awe (vs. 43), shared all things in common, selling possessions and property to meet needs (vs. 44), continued in one mind, practiced hospitality, with gladness and sincerity of heart (vs. 46). Praising God and having favor with the people (vs. 47).

C. Acts 3:11-26; 4:1-7 Peter's second sermon at Pentecost after healing the lame man.

1. *Gospel:* God healed lame man (vs. 12), God has glorified Jesus, who was delivered and disowned by the Jews in the presence of Pilate, though Pilate wanted to release Him (vs. 13). Jesus was the Holy and Righteous One who you exchanged for a murderer (vs. 14). You put to death the prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, we are witnesses (vs. 15). The lame man was healed by placing his faith in Jesus (vs. 16). You and your rulers acted in ignorance when putting Jesus to death (vs. 17). God fulfilled the prophecies of the Messiah's suffering (vs. 18).

Repent, so your sins can be wiped away, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord (vs. 19), and that He may send Jesus, the Christ, appointed for you (vs. 20), whom heaven must receive until the restoration of all things, which God also spoke about through the prophets (vs. 21).

Jesus is the prophet prophesied by Moses (vs. 22, quoting Deut. 18:15, 18). Everyone who does not obey the prophet, Jesus Christ, will be utterly destroyed (vs. 23). The prophets from Samuel onward spoke of these days (vs. 24). God told Abraham, "in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (vs. 25, quoting Gen. 22:18). It was for the Jews first that God raised up His Servant Jesus and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways (vs. 26).

2. *Appropriation:* Repent and return from your wicked ways (Acts 3:19, 26).
3. *Response:* Sadducees greatly disturbed about Jesus' resurrection (Acts 4:1-2). The apostles arrested and thrown into jail (vs. 3). 5,000 believe the gospel (vs. 4). The apostles examined before the Jewish leaders (vss. 5-7).

D. Acts 4:5-12 Peter's defense before the Jewish leaders.

1. *Gospel:* Peter preaches the gospel (Acts 4:8-11). Proclaimed Jesus, who they crucified and who God raised from the dead, healed the lame man (Acts 4:7-8). Jesus is the chief cornerstone,

prophesied to be rejected by the Jewish leaders in Psa. 118:21-23, (Acts 4:11). There is salvation in no one else but Jesus Christ, no other name under heaven, given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.

Response: The apostles ordered not to speak or teach in Jesus' name or preach the gospel (Acts 4:18, 21). Believers glorify God for the healing of the lame man (vss. 21-22), worship and praise God the Creator, Ex. 20:11. Psa. 2 fulfilled in the gentiles, kings of the earth, and Jewish rulers uniting against the Lord and His Christ (vss. 25-26). The arrest, persecution, suffering and death of Jesus Christ at the hands of godless Jews and gentiles was predestined by God to occur (vss. 27-28). Believers pray about threats, ask to be able to preach the gospel, and that attesting miracles would be granted to verify they were speaking from God (vss. 29-30). The place where the believers were praying shook, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the Word of God with boldness (vs. 31).

E. Acts 7:1-60 Stephen's sermon before the leaders of the Jews.

1. *Gospel:* Survey of God's historical redemptive plan i.e., Abraham (vss. 2-4), the Abrahamic covenant (vs. 5), Jewish sojourn and enslavement in Egypt, God's judgment on Egypt (vss. 6-7, as prophesied in Gen. 15:13-14), the exodus, (Ex. 3:12), the covenant of circumcision (Gen. 17:10ff), and Abraham's descendents (vs. 8). Joseph being sold into Egypt (vs. 9), God's favor and exaltation of Joseph (vss. 9-10), the famine that brought Jacob and his sons to Egypt (vss. 11-16).

Jews increased greatly in Egypt for 400 years, enslaved by a pharaoh (vss. 17-19), raised up Moses (vss. 20-22), Moses killed an Egyptian for unjust treatment of a Jew (vss. 23-24). Jews rejected Moses, like they rejected Joseph. Moses fled to Midian, married, and had two sons (vss. 25-29). God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, a holy God who saw the Jews being oppressed (Acts 7:30-35). Moses appointed deliverer, performed signs and wonders in Egypt, the Red Sea, and the wilderness for forty years (vss. 35-36). Moses prophesied about a prophet, and received the Word of God to give to the Jews (vss. 37-38).

Jews unwilling to obey Moses, wanted to return to Egypt (vs. 38), rejected the Lord and worshiped a golden calf (vs. 39-41). Their idolatry would lead to the Babylon captivity (vss. 42-43). Plans for the tabernacle given by God to the Jews (vs. 44). Joshua led them into the promised land, inhabitants driven out through the

reign of King David (vs. 45). Solomon built the temple (vs. 46-47), which couldn't contain God (vss. 48-50, quoting Isa. 66:1-2).

Stephen boldly confronts and denounces unbelieving Jewish leaders, "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it" (Acts 7:50-53).

2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.
3. *Response:* The Jewish leaders are cut to the quick, gnashed their teeth at Stephen (vs. 54), cried out with a loud voice, covered their ears, rushed at Stephen with one impulse, drive Stephen out of the city, and stoned him to death (vss. 57-58).

F. Acts 10:34-11:1, 18 Gentiles have the gospel preached to them.

1. *Gospel:* Fear God, do what is right (vs. 35), preach peace with God through Jesus Christ who is Lord of all (vs. 36). Jesus announced by John the Baptist, anointed by God with the Holy Spirit, did good, healing all who were oppressed by the devil, assisted by God (vs. 37). Jesus was put to death on a cross (vs. 39), raised from the dead on the third day, appearing to many witnesses, whom He ate and drank with (vss. 40-41). Jesus ordered his witnesses to preach to the people and solemnly testify that He was Judge of the living and the dead (vs. 42). Prophets prophesied that everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins (vs. 43).
2. *Appropriation:* They received the Word of God (Acts 11:1) and repented (vs. 18).
3. *Response:* Holy Spirit fell on those listening (Acts 10:44). The Jews who accompanied Peter were amazed the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles (vs. 45). Believers were baptized and asked Peter and his companions to stay for a few days (48).

G. Acts 11:19-30 Paul strengthens the church at Antioch.

1. *Gospel:* Speaking the Word of God (vs. 19) and preaching the Lord Jesus (vs. 20).
2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.

3. *Response:* Believed and turned to the Lord (vs. 21), were brought to the Lord (vs. 24), and gave to believers in Judea (vs. 29).
- H. Acts 13:4-41 Paul and Barnabas sent out on their first missionary journey and preach the gospel to Jews and Gentiles in Cyprus, Salamis, Paphos, Perga, Pamphylia, and Pisidian Antioch.
1. *Gospel:* The Word of God preached (vs. 5). Elymas the magician—rebuked and exposed as deceitful fraud, a son of the devil, an enemy of righteousness, corrupting ways of the Lord (vs. 10). Paul and Barnabas taught about the Lord (vs. 12) and gave words of exhortation (vs. 15). God of Israel chose the patriarchs, made Israel great in the land of Egypt, and led them out of Egypt (vs. 17). God put up with Israel in the wilderness for forty years (vs. 18). God destroyed nations in Canaan to give to Israel as an inheritance after 450 years (vs. 19). God gave Israel judges until Samuel the prophet (vs. 20).

Israel asked for a king, got Saul for forty years (vs. 21). God removed Saul and raised up David, a man after God’s own heart, who would do God’s will (vs. 22). A Savior, the Lord Jesus, would come from David’s descendants (vs. 23).

Jesus was announced by John the Baptist (vs. 24). John was not the Christ (vs. 25). Paul preached the message of this salvation (vs. 26). The leaders of Israel didn’t recognize their own Savior, didn’t understand the prophets, and condemned their own Savior to death (vss. 27-28), fulfilling what was prophesied by crucifying Jesus, dead, buried, and resurrected from the dead (vss. 29-30).

Jesus appeared to many of His followers (vs. 31) God fulfilled Psalm 2 by raising up Jesus (vs. 33). Jesus was resurrected, never to die again or decay (vs. 34, alluding to the fulfilment of Psa. 16:10). Jesus received the holy and sure blessings of David (vs. 34, quoting Isa. 53:3) as God’s holy one and Savior (vs. 35, quoting Psa. 16:10). David died, was buried, and underwent decay (vs. 36). Jesus, whom God raised did not undergo decay (vs. 37). Forgiveness of sins is in Jesus’ name (vs. 38).
 2. *Appropriation:* Repent (vs. 24), believe (vs. 39), fear judgment if you reject Jesus Christ (vss. 40-41, quoting Hab. 1:5).
 3. *Response:* Hunger to hear the Word of God preached (vs. 7). Opposed by Elymas the magician (vs. 8) who was struck blind (vs. 11), verifying Paul as sent from God (vs. 12). People beg to hear the gospel again the next Sabbath (vs. 42). Believing Jews and Gentiles follow and encourage Paul and Barnabas (vs. 43).

- I. Acts 13:44-52 Paul preaches to the Gentiles.
 1. *Gospel*: Preached the Word of the Lord (vs. 44), a message of eternal life, rejected by Jews, but to be preached to the Gentiles as prophesied (vss. 46-47, quoting Isa. 42:6 or 49:6).
 2. *Appropriation*: None mentioned.
 3. *Response*: Jews filled with jealousy, contradicted the gospel, and blasphemed Jesus (vs. 45). Gentiles hear, rejoice, glorify the Word of the Lord, and those appointed to eternal life, believe (vs. 48). The Word of the Lord spread (vs. 49). Jews convince women and men to persecute Paul and Barnabas, driving them out of their district (vs. 50). Paul and Barnabas shake the dust off of their feet in protest and to preach the gospel in Iconium (vs. 51).

- J. Acts 14:1-23 Paul and Barnabas preach the gospel to both Jews and gentiles at Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga, and Atallia.
 1. *Gospel*: Boldly preached the Word of God's grace (vs. 3), the gospel, even while being persecuted (vs. 7, 15). God preserves, provides for, and is good to all (vss. 16-17). Preached the gospel (vs. 21) and spoke the Word (vs. 25).
 2. *Appropriation*: Turn from your idolatry to a living God who created heaven and earth (vs. 15). Believe (vs. 23).
 3. *Response*: Many believed (vs. 1). Unbelieving Jews embittered Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas (vs. 2). People of the city were divided, some believing, some unbelieving (vs. 4). Unbelieving Gentiles and Jews attempted to mistreat and stone Paul and Barnabas (vs. 5). After healing a lame man (vs. 10), Paul and Barnabas are worshiped as gods (vss. 11-13) who offer sacrifices to them (vs. 18). Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, won over the crowds, stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city thinking he was dead (vs. 19). Many disciples were made in Derbe (vs. 21).

- K. Acts 15:1-35 Discussion of apostles at the Jerusalem counsel about the gospel progress among the gentiles.
 1. *Gospel*: Preaching the Word of the gospel (vs. 7) and teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord (vs. 35).
 2. *Appropriation*: Hear the Word of the gospel and believe (vs. 7). Be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus (vs. 11), seek the Lord (vs. 17, quoting Amos 9:12).

3. *Response:* Pharisees try to compel new believers to obey the Law of Moses (vs. 1, 5), Gentiles are converted (vs. 3), and their hearts are cleansed by faith (vs. 8). They turn to God (vs. 19).
- L. Acts 15:36-41 Paul and Barnabas on the second missionary journey.
1. *Gospel:* Proclaimed the Word of the Lord (vs. 36).
 2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.
 3. *Response:* None mentioned.
- M. Acts 16:11-40 Paul and Silas preach the gospel in Philippi.
1. *Gospel:* Proclaiming the way of salvation (vs. 17) and spoke the Word of the Lord to the jailer and his household (vs. 18).
 2. *Appropriation:* Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household (vs. 31).
 3. *Response:* The Lord opened Lydia's heart to respond to the gospel (vs. 14). Lydia and her household are baptized, asks Paul and Silas to stay in her house (vs. 14). Paul and Silas seized, dragged into the marketplace before the authorities, falsely accused (vss. 19-21). Paul and Silas have their robes torn off them, are struck, beaten with rods, and thrown into prison with their feet fastened in stocks (vss. 22-24). Jailer and his household believe (vs. 34).
- N. Acts 17:1-9 Paul and Silas preach the gospel at Thessalonica.
1. *Gospel:* Reasoned with Jews from the Scriptures, explaining, and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer, die, and rise again from the dead (Acts 17:2-3).
 2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.
 3. *Response:* Some Jews, Greeks, and leading women were persuaded (vs. 4). Unbelieving Jews became jealous, formed a mob, attacked the house of Jason who showed hospitality to Paul and Silas. The mob was shouting, making false accusations, "these men have upset the world!" "They act contrary to the laws of Caesar saying that they teach there is another king Jesus" (vss. 5-8). They received a pledge from Jason and other believers before releasing them (vs. 9).

- O. Acts 17:10-15 Paul and Silas preach the gospel at Berea.
1. *Gospel*: Preached the Word of God (vs. 11)
 2. *Appropriation*: Belief (vs. 12)
 3. *Response*: They received the Word with much eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if what the Apostle Paul and Silas were teaching was true (vs. 11). Unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica came to Berea and stirring up the crowds against Paul and Silas (vs. 13).
- P. Acts 17:16-34 Paul and Silas preach the gospel at Athens.
1. *Gospel*: Reasoned with the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles in the synagogue and market place every day (vs. 17). Preached Jesus and the resurrection (vs. 18). Appealed to the religiosity of the philosophers (vs. 22). Referred to the altar of the unknown God and proclaimed the unknown God to them (vs. 23). Paul gave them a mini-systematic study of God without quoting Scripture i.e., God is Creator, Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples, is not served by men, is self-sufficient, gives and sustains all life, (vss. 24-25). Made every nation from one man, hoping men would seek Him, for He is not far from each of us (vss. 26-27). In the Creator God we live, move, and exist, and are His children (vs. 28). God isn't made by men of silver, gold, or stone (vs. 29). Judgment is coming through Jesus (vs. 31)
 2. *Appropriation*: All people everywhere should repent (vss. 30).
 3. *Response*: Paul and Silas accused of being idle babblers and proclaimers of strange deities (vs. 18). Paul taken to the Aeropagus to be examined by the Greek philosophers (vss. 19-20). After the Greek philosophers heard the gospel, some sneered, others wanted to hear more, some men believed (vss. 32, 34).
- Q. Acts 18:1-17 Paul, Silas, and Timothy preach the gospel at Corinth.
1. *Gospel*: Reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath. Tried to persuade Jews and Greeks (vs. 4). Were completely devoted to the Word of God, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ (vs. 5). After the Jews reject the gospel and blasphemed Jesus, Paul shook out his garments in protest and said to the Jews, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. I now will go to the Gentiles" (vs. 6, note Paul preached to the Jews in the next city). Jesus tells Paul not to be afraid but to keep preaching the

gospel, for the Lord would protect him at Corinth (vss. 9-10). Paul taught the Word of God (vs. 11).

2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.
3. *Response:* Believers become devoted to the Word of God (vs. 5). Unbelieving Jews blasphemed Jesus (vs. 6). Many Jews and Gentiles believe and are baptized (vs. 8). Unbelieving Jews bring Paul to the proconsul, accuse Paul of encouraging Jews to violate the law of Moses in worship (vss. 12-13). Paul is acquitted (vss. 14-16). The unbelieving Jews beat Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue who believed (vs. 17).

R. Acts 18:18-21 Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila preach the gospel at Cenchrea.

1. *Gospel:* Reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue (vs. 19).
2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.
3. *Response:* Believing Jews ask Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila to stay longer (vs. 20).

S. Acts 18:23-28 Paul, Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos preach the gospel at Ephesus.

1. *Gospel:* Apollos taught people about Jesus (vs. 25). Spoke about the Scriptures eloquently and boldly in the synagogue (vss. 24, 26). Powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (vs. 28).
2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.
3. *Response:* Converts believed through grace (vs. 27).

T. Acts 19:1-20 Paul at Ephesus preaches the gospel to twelve disciples of John the Baptist.

1. *Gospel:* Spoke boldly in the synagogue for three months reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God (vs. 8). Preached the Word of the Lord (vs. 10). Preached Jesus (vs. 13).
2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.
3. *Response:* Some Jews became hardened, disobedient, and spoke evil of the gospel (vs. 9). The Lord Jesus was magnified, and many believed, hungered for the word preached, confessed their sins,

disclosed their evil practices (vss. 17-18). Those who had practiced magic burned valuable magic books (vs. 19). The Word of the Lord grew mighty and prevailed (vs. 20).

- U. Acts 19:21-41 Paul, Timothy, Erastus, Gaius, and Aristarchus in Macedonia and Achaia.
1. *Gospel*: None mentioned.
 2. *Appropriation*: None mentioned.
 3. *Response*: Gospel preaching caused a great disturbance (vs. 23). The idol business took a huge hit (vs. 26). Worshipers of Artemis formed a Mob, were filled with rage crying out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians” (vs. 28, 34). The mob grabbed Gaius and Aristarchus (vs. 29, 32). Mob dismissed by town clerk (vss. 35-41).
- V. Acts 20:17-35 Paul, Timothy, Erastus, Gaius, and Aristarchus in Miletus meet with Ephesian elders about ministry, gospel preaching, and being good shepherds.
1. *Gospel*: Paul declared God’s Word both publicly and from house to house, solemnly testified to Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ (vss. 20-21), testified solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God (vs. 24), preached the kingdom (vs. 25) and didn’t shrink from declaring the whole purpose of God (vs. 27). Preached that Christ purchased the church with His own blood (vs. 28). Admonished each one with tears (vs. 31) Preached the “Word of His grace” (vs. 32) and “the words of the Lord Jesus” (vs. 35).
 2. *Appropriation*: Repentance and faith (vs. 21).
 3. *Response*: Warning about false teachers rising up from within the church and coming in from outside the church leading disciples astray (vss. 29-30).
- W. Acts 21:27-40 Paul preaches the gospel on the temple mount in Jerusalem at Pentecost.
1. *Gospel*: Preached (vs. 27).
 2. *Appropriation*: None mentioned.
 3. *Response*: Unbelieving Jews stir up a crowd against Paul, falsely accuse Paul of disobeying the Law of Moses, and defiling the

temple with Gentiles (vss. 27-28). All of Jerusalem was provoked against Paul, rushed upon, grabbed, and drug Paul out of the temple to a secret place of interrogation (vss. 29-30). Wanted to kill Paul and beat him (vss. 30-31). Roman commander rescued, arrested, and put Paul in chains (vss. 32-33). Paul was falsely accused by the mob and imprisoned (vss. 34-35).

- X. Acts 22:1-30 Paul defends himself before the Jewish mob after being rescued from mob by the Roman commander.
1. *Gospel:* Paul gave his personal testimony to the Jews and the Roman commander, telling about his life, education, persecution of the church, and conversion (vss. 3-21).
 2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.
 3. *Response:* Jews raised their voices asking that Paul be put to death (vs. 22). Cried out, threw off their cloaks, and threw dust into the air (vs. 23). The Roman commander ordered that Paul be interrogated and scourged to find the truth (vs. 24). Paul appealed to Roman Law as a Roman citizen (vss. 25-29). The Roman commander brought Paul before the chief priests and council of Jewish elders again to find out why they wanted him dead (vs. 30).
- Y. Acts 23:1-35 The Apostle Paul preaches the gospel while on trial before the chief priests and council of Jewish elders.
1. *Gospel:* Paul said he had a good conscience before God (vs. 1). Rebuked the high priest for breaking the law of Moses (vs. 2) then apologized (vs. 5, quoting Ex. 22:28). Knowing Sadducees and Pharisees were present, Paul said he was on trial for the hope of the resurrection (vs. 6). Jesus appeared to Paul again in prison, told him to take courage for he would preach the gospel in Rome as he had done in Jerusalem (vs. 11).
 2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.
 3. *Response:* High Priest had Paul struck in the mouth (vs. 2). Sadducees and Pharisees argue about the resurrection. Pharisees say they find nothing wrong with Paul (vss. 7-9). Paul sent back to prison by the Roman commander (vs. 10). Jews bind themselves under oath to murder Paul (vss. 12-15). Plot revealed to Roman commander (vss. 16-22). Paul transferred at night to Caesarea, to have his case heard before Felix the governor (vss. 23-35).
- Z. Acts 24:1-27 Paul under arrest at Caesarea testifies to Felix.

1. *Gospel:* Paul explains to Felix what happened when he arrived and that he didn't cause a riot but observed the law and the prophets and gave alms, placing his hope in the resurrection, causing no uproar (vs. 12-18). Jews from Asia, his accusers, weren't there, but should have been, for Paul believed in the resurrection (vss. 18-21). Paul later spoke to Felix and Drusilla about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come (vss. 24-25).
 2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.
 3. *Response:* Paul accused of being a pest, a disturber of the peace, a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, desecrater of the temple (vss. 5-6). Paul kept in custody by Felix (vss. 22-23). Felix, after hearing the gospel, became frightened but kept Paul in prison (vs. 25). Felix wanted a bribe from Paul so talked to him often (vs. 26). Felix wanted to please the Jews so left Paul in prison for two years until he was succeeded by Porcius Festus (vs. 27).
- AA. Acts 25:1-22 Paul gives a defense before new governor Porcius Festus.
1. *Gospel:* Paul says he did not violate Law of Moses or Caesar (vs. 8). Paul said Festus knew he hadn't committed any crime (vs. 10). Paul was ready to die if it could be proved he committed a capital offence and appealed to Caesar (vs. 11). Paul spoke about Jesus' death and resurrection (vs. 19).
 2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.
 3. *Response:* Jews bring charges against Paul, want to take him into custody in order to murder him (vss. 2-3). Paul is brought before Jewish leaders and Festus (vss. 5-6). Many false and unprovable accusations are made against Paul (vs. 7). Festus was tempted to please the Jews and deliver Paul into their custody (vs. 9).
- BB. Acts 25:23-26:32 Paul gives gospel testimony before Agrippa, Bernice, Roman commanders, and prominent men of the city of Caesarea.
1. *Gospel:* Paul gives personal testimony before and after his conversion appealing to Agrippa as an expert in Jewish law and customs (Acts 26:1-23). Festus accuses Paul of being out of his mind and mad. Paul denies it (vs. 25) and appeals to King Agrippa's belief in the prophets (vs. 26). Paul tries to persuade Agrippa and all who are present that day at the trial to believe in Jesus (vs. 27-29).
 2. *Appropriation:* None mentioned.

3. *Response:* Jews wanted to murder Paul for preaching the gospel (Acts 25:24). Agrippa and Festus find Paul innocent of any capital crimes and send him to Rome to appeal to Caesar, though there is no reason to keep him under arrest (Acts 25:25-32).

CC. Acts 28:16-31 Paul gives gospel testimony to Jewish leaders in Rome.

1. *Gospel:* Paul declares his innocence and explains why he was under arrest though found innocent (vss. 17-18). Paul was forced to appeal to Caesar (vs. 19). Paul said he was in chains for the sake of the hope of Israel (vs. 20). The Jewish leaders ask about Christianity opposed everywhere by the Jews (vss. 21-22). Paul explained and solemnly testified about the kingdom of God and Jesus from the Law of Moses and the prophets all day long (vs. 23). Paul's parting words to the Jewish leaders was Isaiah 6:9-10:

“GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY, “YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES; OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM” (Acts 28:25-27, quoting Isa. 6:9-10).

Paul then declared the gospel would be preached to the Gentiles who would listen (Acts 28:28). Paul was under house arrest for two more years in Rome, welcomed all who came to him, and was able to preach the kingdom of God and teaching people about the Lord Jesus with all openness, unhindered (vss. 30-31).

2. *Appropriation:* Believe (vs. 24). Repent (vs. 27).
3. *Response:* Some Jewish leaders in Rome believed and others would not believe (vs. 24).

II. **OBSERVATIONS OF GOSPEL MESSAGES, APPROPRIATIONS, AND RESPONSES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS**

Remember that the purpose of this lesson is to learn *how* the early church preached the gospel, *how* the gospel was to be appropriated, and *the responses* of those who heard the gospel. Doing this will equip us to evaluate how we and others preach the gospel and how we tell people to appropriate the gospel in evangelism. Key observations from the Acts survey are listed below.

A. Key Observations About Gospel Messages

1. In general, earlier on in the book of Acts we have more detailed narrations of the gospel being preached. Later many synonyms of the gospel are used by Luke since he had already established the content of the gospel. Luke used synonyms for Jesus' person, death, burial, and resurrection and phrases like, "the gospel," "the Word of the Lord," "the Word of God's grace," "the kingdom," "the resurrection," "the Word of God," "proclaim the forgiveness of sins through Jesus," "preached Jesus," etc.
2. It is also interesting to note that Luke only records Paul giving his testimony when on trial before Jews or Jews and Gentiles together.
3. When preaching to Jews or Jews and Gentiles, the Scriptures are either quoted or alluded to, but when preaching to the Gentiles, the truth of the Scriptures are proclaimed, but the Scriptures are not quoted.
4. A survey of God's historical redemptive plan of salvation for Israel is given when preaching the gospel to the Jews.
5. John the Baptist, who was held to be a prophet by many Jews in the first century (Mt. 21:26), is proclaimed as the forerunner of the Messiah (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 4:5-6; Mt. 3:3; Lk. 1:17) when preaching the gospel to Jews.
6. Judgment for rejecting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is sometimes proclaimed as part of the gospel
7. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is so significant that sometimes the gospel is referred to as "preaching the resurrection" (Acts 4:2, 33; 17:18). When preaching to Jews, David as dying and undergoing decay is often contrasted with Jesus' dying and not undergoing decay (Psa. 16:10).

B. Key Observations of Gospel Appropriation in Acts

Repent and believe are the most common stated ways people were to appropriate the gospel in the book of Acts. Strikingly absent are all the unbiblical ways people are told to appropriate the gospel today.

1. No one is told to come forward to an altar.
2. No one is told to raise their hand.
3. No one is told to sign a prayer card.

4. No one is told to pray the sinner's prayer.
5. No one is told to ask Jesus in their heart.
6. No one is told to make a decision for Christ.
7. No one is told to keep the sacraments, either biblical, or extra-biblical, or do good works in order to be saved.
8. The most common way people are told to appropriate the gospel in the book of Acts is to repent of their sin, to admit they are wrong, and turn from their sinful ways to the Lord Jesus Christ.
9. The most common description in the book of Acts of those who have already repented is that they "believed" i.e., placed their faith in, trusted in so as to obey the Lord of the gospel, Jesus.
10. About two thirds of the time when the gospel is preached in the book of Acts, Luke doesn't record any call to appropriate the gospel. It may be since he establishes early on in Acts how the gospel was appropriated that he leaves it out for the sake of brevity. But if we go by what is written, there is often no call to repent or believe in Jesus. There is a bold declaration of Jesus' person, death, burial, and resurrection only.
11. Threatening judgment is often used in conjunction with preaching the gospel for those who will not repent of their sins and believe in Jesus.

C. Key Observations About Gospel Responses

1. When people repent, they bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance i.e., obedience, service, giving, singing praises, praying, hungering for the Word, practicing hospitality, etc.
2. Those who reject the gospel often persecute those who preach the gospel because of:
 - a. Anger for being called to give up their sin.
 - b. In order to defend their false god, idol, or religion.
 - c. Greed, in order maintain their livelihood based on idolatry.
 - d. Jealousy because others are turning from their false religion to another they don't want to turn to.

- e. Pride because they don't want to admit their beliefs are false.
 - f. Shame because they don't want to admit they killed their own Messiah.
 - g. Fear because they don't want to admit that they have never understood the Word of God, though they claim to be experts.
3. Ironically, Jews were often the most hostile to the preaching of the gospel and about Jesus being their prophesied Messiah.
 4. It is clear in the book of Acts that the Word of God and the gospel are living and active, powerful to convict sinners and bring them to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.
 5. It is obvious in the book of Acts that God is completely sovereign over who is saved and when they are saved by the gospel preached.
 6. When there is strong opposition and persecution against the gospel, those who proclaim the gospel often move on to another place.
 7. When imprisoned for preaching the gospel, gospel proclaimers defend themselves verbally and according to the civil laws.
 8. Making false accusations is a common tactic used by unbelievers who are hostile to the gospel.
 9. When told by the civil authorities not to obey a clear command of God, believers chose to obey God rather than men.

Homework

- Listen to Steve Lawson, Phil. 1:12-14 [The Indominable Gospel](#).
- Listen to Jack Hughes, Acts 4:12, [Solus Christus](#).
- Listen to Jack Hughes Acts 17:18, [Proclaim Jesus and the Resurrection](#)
- Read C. H. Spurgeon's sermon Luke 14:23, "[Compel Them to Come In.](#)"
 - Listen to audio by Jeremy Walker [listen to this sermon here](#).
 - Listen to audio by Charles Koelsch [listen to this sermon here](#).
 - Listen to audio by Mike Riccardi [listen to this sermon here](#).

Extra Credit Homework

- Arnold Dallimore's [one volume biography of George Whitefield](#).
 - [Read Kindle digital version](#)
 - [Read Apple digital version](#)
 - [Listen to audio on Audible Books](#)
 - [Listen to audio on Apple books](#)