

LESSONS

from the

Early Church

Part 1



Dear

At the closing of Jesus' earthly ministry, He gave assurance that His presence would be with His followers, from the day He spoke those words, until the end of the world. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." —Matthew 28:18-20

That promise of His presence started in those early days in the new Christian Church, and with enthusiasm. "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." —Acts 2:46,47

The early church's sense of urgency could not have been stronger. The way that Jesus had answered the question concerning the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, everything depended on the coming of the Holy Spirit and the completion of the apostolic mission.

So, when Pentecost came, early believers thought that everything was fulfilled, they had received the Spirit and shared the gospel to the then known world, even though they had not left Jerusalem at this point. But was the mission of taking the gospel to the whole world completed? Obviously not!

The admonition still stands; "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." —Acts 1:8

To this day, humanity has not completed the task of taking the gospel to all the world – or we wouldn't be here. But we have the counsel of Christ Himself. "Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." —Matthew 24:44

"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." —Acts 2:46,47

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—Acts 1:8





*"Now is the time
to prepare for
the coming of
the Lord.
Readiness to
meet Him
cannot be
attained in a
moment of time.
Preparatory to
that solemn
scene, there
must be vigilant
waiting and
watching."*

—Maranatha, p.76

We are to be prepared at any time to meet the Son of man in our daily home lives, in our daily working routines, in our dealing with other people. We are to always function and conduct ourselves as if Jesus were watching our every thought and action. But know that He already is. The unseen eye is observing.

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." —Matthew 24:36

"The Lord has wisely concealed His coming from us, that we may always be in a state of expectancy and preparation for the second appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven.

"We are to search the prophecies that point to the roll of fast fulfilling events, and which Christ has plainly told us will take place prior to the end of this earth's history. We are to watch and pray, wait patiently, and work faithfully to save perishing souls. Time is a most precious talent, and every moment is to be improved in doing our work wisely and well, so that if we are suddenly called to lay off the armor, we may be prepared to give up our account to God." —Letter 28, 1897

We are still here, professing to be God's true church – the remnant; but are we as fervent in our day as the apostles were 2000 odd years ago? Perhaps God had a better equipped people to work with then than He does now!

Today with the media and publications and ease of travel, we have so many advantages, but what about the willingness, the will to go and share our message in our homes, in our neighbourhood, in our cities and nations? It's not so much the money and means that God needs, it men's and women's willing hearts!

If our hearts were right with God and with each other, we would see a repeat of Acts 2:46,47. "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

What happened next was the church's detachment from material goods. Sensing that the time was short, they sold all they had and devoted themselves to learning and to fellowship while continuing to witness about the resurrection of Jesus.

But at this early stage, they had only fulfilled first base of Acts 1:8, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Yes, they were still in Jerusalem, there was a huge work ahead of them, but they were fervent to fulfil all that verse – even to the uttermost part of the earth.

Teaching and Fellowship

After the miraculous experience of Pentecost, Luke focuses more on the inner experience of those involved. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." —Acts 2:42

Four main ingredients in this verse are; teaching and learning the doctrine, fellowship one with another, breaking of bread together, time in prayer.

With the magnificent display of the Holy Spirit's coming and His presence, it is obvious that it left a deep impression on all the beholders; but even more than that, it activated them to learn more and do something with it. With this learning and willingness to be possessed by the Holy Spirit, it was not without effect. "And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles." —Acts 2:43

They were individuals, and they had their struggles, but from their dedication and praying, they were all able to come together with one accord. All differences were put aside. Pride and independence were laid aside. In today's independent climate, it seems hard for us to comprehend that they could be with one another and get on with each





other with no contention. Their belief and dedication were so strong, they focused on the one object of their experience, Jesus Christ, His life and death, His resurrection and His commission to them.

"And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." —Acts 2:44,45; 4:34,35

With the belief that the time was at hand, that this world was about to close off and Christ was coming again, material 'things' lost their significance, the spreading of the gospel became the focus and was paramount. They were prepared to sell off all they could and pooled the money to see the work go ahead. They had implicit trust in their brethren and this sharing allowed them to experience a deeper sense of unity together.

They all trusted God that He would supply their daily needs, they all felt there would not be a need for a future, as the end was nigh at hand and their resources went to where their passion was.

"After the descent of the Holy Spirit the disciples went forth to proclaim a risen Saviour, their one desire being the salvation of souls. They rejoiced in the sweetness of the communion with saints. They were tender, thoughtful, self-denying, willing to make any sacrifice for the truth's sake. In their daily association with one another they revealed the love that Christ had commanded them to reveal.

"By unselfish words and deeds they strove to kindle this love in other hearts... They were to go forward in willing obedience to the new commandment: 'As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' —John 13:34

"So closely were they to be united to Christ that they would be enabled to fulfill His requirements. The power of a Saviour who could justify them by His righteousness was to be magnified." —Testimonies For The Church, Vol. 8, p. 241

The Healing of a Lame Man

"Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." —Acts 3:1

In the hearts of even those early disciples, the Jewish religion was still very much a part of them, as it would have been instilled in their culture and thinking for all their lives prior to this huge culture change that Jesus brought. But while that may have been the case, there could well have been another reason for their attending the synagogue, and the result of this visit to the temple was exactly to share the present truth of Jesus and His resurrection.

The whole of Acts 3 is a record of what happened at that prayer service. Essentially, in Peter's sermon this time, there are five main points he powerfully proclaims.

Jesus was the expected Messiah (verse 18)

God resurrected Him (verse 15)

Jesus was exalted in heaven (verse 13)

He will come again (verse 20)

Repentance is necessary for the forgiveness of sin (verse 19)

In many ways, this is the same message we are to take to the world. The 'present truth' may have changed from the time of their teaching; but we are still to present 'present truth' for the time we are teaching. There was a significant shift in the

"God will accomplish a great work through the truth if devoted, self-sacrificing men will give themselves unreservedly to the word of presenting it to those in darkness"

—Counsels to Parents Teachers and Students, p. 507





"As the lame man was healed and held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. They were astounded that the disciples could perform miracles similar to those performed by Jesus."

—Acts of the Apostles, p.58

thinking of the Jews and even the disciples from the traditional Jewish teachings and services. They were to grasp the change from the 'old' covenant to the 'new' – that was a huge transition!

And so for us; there is to be a significant shift in our thinking, from asleep to awake! It may be just as difficult and huge for us to shift from 'old' Laodicean condition to grasp the 'new' condition and take 'gold, white raiment, eyesalve'.

So though the situation is now different, the message is essentially the same. Christ sacrificed His life for us, in that He died for those in the early church's sins as well as for ours. He was resurrected for them as well as for us. He will return for them, as well as for us. All mankind can find salvation in Him, for them and for us.

Present truth for their day did differ though. For the early disciples, the power in their message was Jesus had died, but His resurrection was hope for them in that Christ. It was 'current news'. For us, the power of the message is the coming of Christ – it is 'current news'.

But to a short overview of the diary of events, with a purpose as it progresses.

"...Peter and John, going up to the temple to worship, saw a distressed and poverty-stricken cripple, forty years of age, who had known no other life than one of pain and infirmity. This unfortunate man had long desired to go to Jesus and be healed, but he was almost helpless, and was far removed from the scene of the Great Physician's labors. Finally his earnest pleadings induced some kind persons to bear him to the gate of the temple. But upon arriving there he discovered that the Healer, upon whom his hopes were centered, had been put to a cruel death..."

"...As Peter and John passed, he begged charity from them... The poor man's countenance had fallen when Peter declared his own poverty, but grew bright with hope and faith as the disciple continued. 'And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength'... 'The Jews were astonished that the disciples could perform miracles similar to those of Jesus. He, they supposed, was dead, and they had expected all such wonderful manifestations to cease with Him. Yet here was this man who had been a helpless cripple for forty years, now rejoicing in the full use of his limbs, free from pain, and happy in believing on Jesus.'"

"The apostles saw the amazement of the people, and questioned them why they should be astonished at the miracle which they had witnessed, and regard them with awe as though it were through their own power they had done this thing. Peter assured them it was done through the merits of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had rejected and crucified, but whom God had raised from the dead the third day...." —

Story of Redemption, p.248,249

The Rise of Opposition

"And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them." —Acts 4:1

Even as they spoke this message, it began to raise the ire of the leaders of the temple. The Jerusalem temple was run by the high priest and his associates, primarily Sadducees. The high priest was also the leader of the Sanhedrin council, which in those days was made up mostly of Sadducees and Pharisees. Because the Sadducees did not believe in resurrection, they were greatly disturbed that Peter and John were teaching that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Arrested by the temple guards, the apostles were put in hold until the following day, where they were brought before council.

As the council assembled the following morning, the first question was asked; "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" —Acts 4:7 Peter and John could have easily retorted back and said, "Didn't you listen yesterday? Are you so clouded in your mind that you don't know what has happened over recent weeks?" But no, this just gave another opportunity to share the 'present truth'.





"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel..." —Acts 4:8

It was not so much Peter that did the talking – he was the vessel, but it was the Holy Spirit that gave unction to proclaim this message. It seemed that this question was not a matter of ignorance in regards to who the disciples were talking about, it was more about a concern of power – that if this message and movement was allowed to continue, it would soon be out of their control, but Peter bypassed that. He just declared the miracle of the healing of the cripple was performed in the name of Jesus Christ and that salvation comes directly from Him.

The apostles knew the authority these men had, yet standing in their presence, they well knew they had still a higher power in their midst as well – One that the temple leaders needed to meet and know – personally. Also these leaders did not realise how accurate they themselves were fulfilling prophecy by their actions to the disciples.

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh unto you." —Matthew 10:16-20

To add insult to injury for the Sanhedrin, the man who had just been healed was present. The miracle could not be denied. It became so intense that the leaders demanded the disciples to stop preaching. They feared the message as much as the force of the message and popularity of the movement now under way.

Rather than thinking it through for long term results, they could only think of the immediate effect, that they were losing control over the people and they would fight it tooth and nail to save their authority and power. Their response was self-preservation.

But Peter and John used some impacting words at the closure of his discourse. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." —Acts 4:19,20

This conclusion was very similar to the words spoken by Gamaliel in Acts 5:38, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

This is part one of two on the subject of lessons for the early church. In the October edition, we will continue to look at other aspects of the early church. We will look at Ananias and Sapphira highlighting the dangers of offering a commitment to God, then withholding it.

Many of the happenings in those early days will again find light in our day. There surely are valuable lessons we can learn from those early workers in the proclamation of the gospel.

As mentioned at the beginning of this study, "And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying. All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

We haven't got to the end of the world just yet, so that promise given so many years ago, still stands and will continue to stand. Bear up friends, let's make it through together and endure to the end.

Doug Hurley

"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." — Acts: 19,20

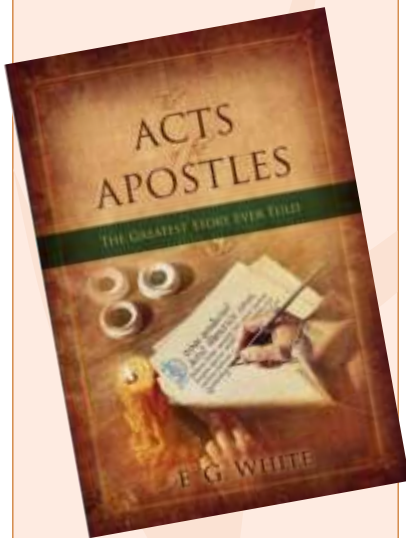




Good Reading

The Acts of the Apostles

Ellen G White



Today, God's church needs this same power again. Christians need power to live as Jesus lived. Power to win the war of sin. Power to blast through solid walls of selfishness, indifference, and hostility. Power to reach and change human hearts. Power to see committed rebels changed into loyal sons and daughters of God. Power to finish the work of taking God's good news to the entire sin-scarred world.

And not just any kind of power, these pages bring into view a source of power stupendous, awesome, and limitless. It is the power that created the universe—the power of God Himself, as channeled through the Holy Spirit.

Paperback - 368 pages
\$18.00 +p&p

In the Office

System Changes: We are currently in the middle of change in the office. We are switching to a new inventory management system and developing integrations with our webshop, accounts and couriers. This will speed up our processes but is also a bit of a process in the transition phase. There will be some changes in roles and workflow, but we are confident we can end up more efficient. We'd be keen on any feedback though the process.

Semi Retirement: After putting 40 years into active ministry work and continuing past retirement age, Doug has had to make the decision to slow down a little while he is still able to. You'll still be hearing from Doug & Angela, they will continue to travel and are still very involved, but the day-to-day work will be in the hands of the younger generation.



Free offers: Our regular free offers promoted on social media have proven too successful over the last month. Our July offer of a free children's books ended early with us needing to pull down our advertisement due to higher than expected requests and we ran out of books! Thank you to those who give to fund these types of projects so that others can freely receive!



Videos: View our latest content on our YouTube Channel includes a 6-part series by Daniel Pel called *Stories that Transform* which is based on the Parables. This series was initially recorded at our Camps in January and is now fully prepared for Broadcast. Daniel has also just released a book by the same title available on Amazon. You can keep up to date with our weekly video releases on our YouTube channel (autumnleavesnz) and via Facebook. In the last month we had 33,000 minutes of videos watched across the channel. The more you watch, share and comment the more people that are blessed by the content.

Book Distribution: We recently supplied Desire of Ages books to an individual in the lower South Island. She shared these inspiring books and sent a report to us:

"4 empty cartons !!! That was 2hrs this aftn. 10 went to my Bible study group... 2 men were given in a Vape Shop!! 1 man in a liquor store, 1 man in a butcher shop. The rest were ladies as I went in and out of the shops. I'm so delighted that the HS prepared the way... I never thought I would deliver 40 books so quickly."

We were also able to supply a box of Fijian Great Controversy books to a person travelling to Fiji. Bibles were also taken. We received the following report:

"The GC and Bibles were taken... I was told they would be used in an outreach program... There were 9-10 baptisms from that outreach program and they received the Bibles and GC. The exact number I had given. So thanks for getting me to take some books with me."

If you have a project to distribute books or media and would like some suggestions or assistance. Be in touch and we'd love to work with you on scattering God's message on hope like the leaves of autumn.





Projects

Bible Projects: We recently received another request for Bibles for Uganda. With about \$1400 already set aside for such projects we decided to invest \$3000 in supplying a significant amount of Bibles for the Ugandan workers. With contributions



that have come in since we are now just \$1466 short of supplying this Bible project.

Then we also received a request from our contact in Zambia who is a self supporting missionary wanting Bibles for new contacts he and his wife are working with at present. Africa is a large continent and we have limited resources but we aim to assist where we have suitable contacts in those countries and as people are willing to contribute to this mission field.

Building Project: Significant progress has been made with over \$17,000 more raised to cover the ever diminishing portion of this project. Thank you!

Funding Progress

\$72.4k to raise Raised so far \$1,521,184.81

Events

Friday Night Live: Our next live-from-studio event will on **August 30 at 7pm.**



The popular Friday Night Live is a time of singing and devotion where you have the requests and we join with our local singers to enjoy an evening of fellowship and joy together. Early requests accepted and we have a number from last time that we were unable to get to.

Put this event in your calendar now to join us on YouTube or Facebook live.

Australian Camps: Plans are in place for two camps in Australia this year. The first at the usual place in Neville, NSW 10-13 October and the following weekend in Queensland 17-20 October. Be in touch or watch the newsletters for further details.

Subjects will be:

Earth's Final Warning, Faith Against All Odds, Light Shining in Darkness, Love or Self, Woman and the Whore 1 & 2, Need of Good Fathers, Crisis of Unbelief - and more!

Summer Camps 2025: Plans are under way for our annual North Island camp from Tuesday January 14 through to Sunday January 19.

We are re-introducing a South Island Bible Convention from Thursday evening, January 23, through to Sunday, January 26.

With the break over the pandemic era, we have not established a South Island programme, but with the speakers coming to bring a treasure trove of blessing this year to the North, we want to give the South the opportunity to again share in those blessings.

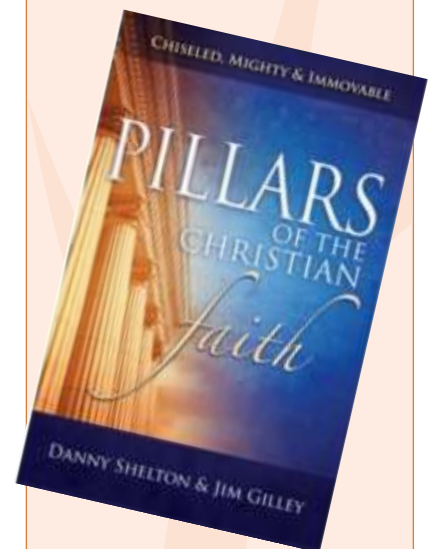
Getting a venue has not been easy, with so many being booked out, but we have found a suitable hall for hire over the dates required.

There will be no camping facilities at the South Island convention, but contact if you are needing accommodation and we can help advise where you may be able to book.

Our Doctrines

Pillars of the Christian Faith

Danny Shelton / Jim Gilley



On the firm foundation of Jesus Himself, mighty pillars of truth also stand as support columns for His last-day church—pillars such as the Sabbath, the state of man in death, the second coming, the sanctuary truth, and others.

Explore these pillars one by one, seeing how each is vital and indispensable to the mission and message of God's remnant people—how each of them make a difference in our own lives.

You'll be greatly blessed as you consider these stately pillars of truth and apply them to your own daily living.

Paperback - 126 pages

\$6.50 +p&p



"Souls are perishing, and hundreds of workers are now needed."

—Union Conference Recorder,
January 15, 1904



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This newsletter is also available electronically and online.

www.autumnleaves.co.nz/shop

Summer Camps

We are looking forward to having you join us for Summer Camps in January 2025 to receive a rich spiritual blessings and encourage one another in Christian faith.

Speakers



Conrad Vine



Andreas Mellas



Paul Klix

North Island Camp

January 14-19, 2025

Lakeview Bible Camp, 359 Hamurana Road, Rotorua

The North Island camp this coming summer will be at our usual location and in a similar format. We look forward to spending time with all who can attend!

South Island Convention

January 24-26, January 2025

Ouruhia Hall, 225 Guthries Road, Marshlands, Christchurch

We are re-introducing a South Island convention from Friday through to Sunday with the above speakers, the weekend after the North Island camp.

www.autumnleaves.co.nz/events



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Find us online!



The Leaflet is the newsletter of Autumn Leaves NZ Limited, a registered charitable company, with the purpose of scattering God's message of truth like the leaves of autumn.



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