

THE MANIFESTATION OF LUKE'S
ACTS 1:8 THESIS IN ACTS 6-14

A Paper

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INTRODUCTION

In the second book of Luke's two-volume record of Jesus and the Early Church, he documented the early expansion of Christianity beyond the borders of Jerusalem and the ethnic limitations of Jewish religiosity. The no boundaries theme coupled with a racially all-inclusive characteristic of the gospel of Jesus Christ streamlined the book of Acts from beginning to end. Undoubtedly, Luke chose Jesus' response to the disciple's question concerning the fulfillment of the kingdom in Acts 1:8 which said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in *Jerusalem* and in all *Judea* and *Samaria*, and to the *end of the earth*," as the main thesis of his approach for re-telling the historical account of the infancy years of the Christian movement.¹ This verse represented in detail the geographical territory in which the gospel was to spread throughout the book of Acts. Furthermore, Luke displayed the work of the Apostles and the Early Church in a circular fashion rather than a straight-line path towards fulfilling each step of Christ's commission.²

Jesus' commission as stated in Acts 1:8 revealed two major themes in the book of Acts, namely the Holy Spirit and the world-wide missionary embarkment. Once the Holy

¹All Scripture quotations are taken from the ESV translation of the Holy Bible; Italics are the Author's Emphasis.

²John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 2001), 57-62.

Spirit fell upon the believers in Jerusalem, the missionary zeal began to spread.³

However, the mission imparted to the disciples by the risen Lord implied more than just casual, unordered attempts towards evangelism. In Acts 1:8, Jesus specifically alluded a much more grander scheme to the gospel application than the disciples imagined. Implicit in Jesus' statement was the international characteristic of the gospel.⁴

The kingdom of God was a spiritual kingdom. Thus, the requirements for citizenship no longer applied to race or culture. Christ's commission voided anyone of the opportunity to treat the kingdom of God and the gospel message with nationalistic pride or reservations.⁵ This truth was evident in the four main locations of ministry which Christ listed as He ascended to Heaven. Although the reference to Jerusalem as their first point of contact could have encouraged the disciples to link the exclusivity of the gospel only to the Jewish race, Jesus's final geographical installment ought to have corrected any misconception of a race-defined kingdom of God. Therefore, the disciples needed to emphasize the universalistic nature of the phrase "ends of the earth" more so than the geographical goal it implied.⁶ Furthermore, the nature of the gospel message automatically supported the inclusion of the Gentiles. Moreover, Luke's unveiling of the

³Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 35.

⁴John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 42-3.

⁵*Ibid.*, 43.

⁶Joel B. Green, "Acts of the Apostles," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 15.

Early Church's missionary attempts portrayed the need for the disciples to forsake the Jewish legal and racial stipulations concerning entrance into the kingdom of God.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the structure and content of Acts 6-14 in order to support the idea that Luke presented the expansion of the gospel mission according to the outline which Christ commissioned to the disciples in Acts 1:8. The paper will follow a four part format. Thus, the research and sections unfold in the same manner as the geographical and chronological sequence of Luke's thesis in Acts 1:8.

Gospel Witnesses in Jerusalem

The disciples' witness of the good news of Jesus Christ, the risen Savior and Lord, began in Jerusalem. By Acts 6 the evangelism of the disciples evolved into a growing church. The Holy Spirit fulfilled the promise of Jesus in Acts 1:8 during Pentecost. Therefore, under the power and authority of the Spirit, the Apostles and the new converts reached the Jerusalem community proclaiming that Jesus was the Messiah. However, a malfunction in the theological membrane of the disciples hindered them from ministering in a sufficient manner to all of the people in Jerusalem. Furthermore, these early Christians primarily witnessed and evangelized to those who were born out of the Jewish heritage, but neglected to reach the Gentiles in the Jerusalem population, even those who adopted the Jewish teachings and practiced some of the Jewish law and customs. These men were known as "God-fearers".⁷ Although the Apostles and the new Christians only succeeded in ministering to the Jews in Jerusalem, the events which occurred there

⁷A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 52.

catapulted the ministry of the gospel outside of the walls of Judaism and into the other regions and peoples that Jesus listed and intended.

One of the first situations that had a double-edged effect in not only ministering to Jerusalem, but also furthering the impact of the gospel beyond the Jewish boundaries was the problem the Apostles encountered concerning the negligence of the Greek-speaking widows.⁸ Apparently, the Christian-Jewish community still separated themselves from those of Gentile descent. In an attempt to reconcile these early conflicts, the Apostles's appointed seven deacons to serve the Grecians who were also known as the Hellenists.⁹

The Hellenists derived from the Diaspora sect of Judaism. By the first century, Judaism settled in communities in almost every part of the civilized world. At the time of Acts, people commonly recognized two main forms of Judaism: Palestinian (Hebrew, Aramaic-speaking) Judaism and Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Judaism. Recent studies and research showed that the main difference between these two groups was mainly a territorial and theological divergence.¹⁰ In light of the identified situation of the Hellenistic widows, the Diaspora Jews were not all necessarily given to poverty. Some of the Hellenistic Jews were soldiers, farmers, shepherds, artisans, traders, merchants, bankers, government officials and even slaves.¹¹ So, in order to solve the political and social problem of unequal food distribution to the Hellenistic widows, the Apostles had

⁸James M. Boice, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 112.

⁹*Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁰Paul R. Trebilco, "Diaspora Judaism," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 287.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 291.

the Christian community elect seven Hellenist deacons to oversee this ministry. The Hellenistic dispute functioned as an opportunity for the Christian-Jews to depart from its Jewish limitations and prejudices and serve those whom they never had been involved with in respect to their religious dealings.¹²

Because of this controversy, the first deacons of the Early Church were Hellenists men. The seven men were Stephen, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicolas. The two most notable figures of this list were Stephen and Philip. For the unfolding of his Acts 1:8 thesis, Luke focused on the short-lived impact of Stephen and his role in furthering the Gentile mission in Acts 6:8-7:60.

A second major event which occurred in Jerusalem that resulted in the expansion of the Gentile mission was the arrest and martyrdom of Stephen. The significance of Stephen's ministry was characterized by his outstanding Christian qualities. Luke called him a "man full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5), "full of grace and power" (Acts 6:8), and a man of unchallenged wisdom and inspired in word by the Spirit (Acts 6:10).¹³ Apparently, as Stephen fulfilled his duty as a deacon, he also mightily preached the gospel. However, a Jewish synagogue comprised of a group entitled the Freedmen despised the implications of Stephen's gospel teachings. One significant point to note in reference towards the members of this particular synagogue was the mentioning of Cilicia. The main landmark in Cilicia was Tarsus. Perhaps this was the synagogue where

¹²Craig C. Hill, "Hellenists, Hellenistic and Hellenistic-Jewish Christianity," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, eds. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 462.

¹³Ajith Fernando, *Acts*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 244.

Saul of Tarsus attended.¹⁴ Through deceptive methods and false witnesses, the Freedmen arrested Stephen and charged him with blasphemy because of supposed heretical accusations against God, Moses, the Law, and the Temple. This unfair trial mirrored the previous mistreatment of Jesus and His fixed trial before the Sanhedrin as He was also convicted of blasphemy in much the same way by the Jewish leaders.¹⁵

Inevitably, these accusations led to an organized trial which included the prosecution and examination of Stephen's teachings. The Jewish leaders charged Stephen with four main acts of blasphemy. In his sermon, Stephen responded to each one of them defending his position based upon the Old Testament scriptures. Furthermore, Stephen posed a formidable threat to the Jewish priests as he grounded himself upon the Old Testament teachings in order to prove that Jesus Christ was the Messiah.¹⁶ Stephen retold their Jewish ancestry with a hidden agenda which He revealed towards the end of his sermon. First, he began with the calling of Abraham. In the usage of this illustration, Stephen portrayed the relationship between Abraham and God as one that was not identified solely by geographical boundaries or ethnic limitations. Second, he reflected upon the life of Joseph. Here, Stephen described in the same sense that Joseph's brothers persecuted him, so also the Jews had killed and persecuted the prophets as well as Jesus himself. Ironically, once again the Jews made the same mistake with the martyrdom of

¹⁴F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 1979), 133.

¹⁵Ibid., 134.

¹⁶John MacArthur, Jr., *Acts 1-12*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 201.

Stephen.¹⁷ Third, he recalled the constant Jewish rebellion against Moses. In addition, Stephen recognized that God in the same manner as with Abraham, revealed Himself to Moses in Mesopotamia despite the location. Therefore, God was not bound to land masses or certain races of people. Likewise, the Jews not only rebelled against the teachings of Jesus, but also had a long history of rebelling against Moses whom they now idolized.¹⁸ Fourth, Stephen approached the delicate subject of the Temple as a true place of worship. Most scholars agree that he was not entirely condemning the Temple as a just place suited for genuine worship. Instead, Stephen addressed the religious abuses of the Temple. He attacked the Jewish priests in a similar manner as Jesus did concerning its true purpose. However, Stephen seemingly prophesied that the Temple was a passing institution. Although the Temple was intended for worship and prayer, he did not count it equal with the God-ordained tabernacle of the Old Testament. Therefore, God was not to be manipulated and restricted to the Jewish center of worship.¹⁹

After saying these things, the Jewish leaders became erratic and enraged with hate and disgust. Under the authority and influence of Saul, he ensured them the right to execute Stephen for the charge of blasphemy. Then, the Jewish priests beat him, and took him outside the walls stoning him to death as Saul stood nearby affirming their actions.²⁰

The death of Stephen fueled a relentless momentum under the leadership of Saul to

¹⁷Boice, *Acts*, 120-2.

¹⁸Ibid., 123-4.

¹⁹Polhill, *Acts*, 203-4.

²⁰Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Acts*, The Communicator's Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 148.

persecute the Jerusalem church thus causing a dispersion of the Christians to new places and peoples in order to escape death.

Gospel Witnesses in Judea

In all actuality, the Apostle Paul's first great contribution to the Gentile mission was not his initial missionary journey, but rather his great persecution of the Jerusalem church. Because of the heavy threat posed upon the lives of Christian-Jews, they fled to the outer rims of Jewish society. Stephen's martyrdom led to the dispersion, and the dispersion led the wide-spread proclamation of the gospel. Now, the Christians who fled Saul's intense persecution preached the gospel everywhere they went independently as opposed to previously being led by the Apostolic leadership of the Twelve.²¹ Due to the scattering of the Christians, Luke continued to document the progress the early Christian community made in accomplishing the Acts 1:8 mandate. Luke vividly portrayed the spread of the gospel to all of Judea simultaneously with the fervent witness manifested in Samaria.

One man in particular received a great deal of attention from Luke. Philip, who was one of the original seven deacons listed in Acts 6:5, accomplished more for the Gentile mission than any other man in the book of Acts besides the Apostle Paul. In addition to his Samaritan ministry, God also called Philip to appear before the Ethiopian Eunuch in Judea. God removed Philip during an unlikely time to visit this one man in

²¹Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 145-6.

southern Judea. Although through his evangelistic efforts the Samaritans experienced the full force of the gospel, Philip obeyed God and left them to be used elsewhere.²²

The significance of Philip's witness to the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26-39 must not be seen as subordinate to Peter's witness to Cornelius. Luke inserted this story in order to continue to show the universal effect the gospel had even on men of great status and power. The Ethiopian Eunuch was not only a Gentile, but also was a man of wealth and authority. The manner in which he traveled pointed to the fact that he had the use of slaves and assistants as well as access to important documents such as the scroll of Isaiah.²³ Furthermore, just as in the case of Cornelius in Acts 10, the Eunuch was a "God-fearer". Therefore, this instance of evangelism on the part of Philip signified the need for the specific message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to be preached in order for anyone to be saved despite the fact of their social status or commitment to Judaism.²⁴

Philip explained the meaning of Isaiah 53:7-8 which the Ethiopian chose to read. This text was the last of the Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah. Because Jesus applied these texts to Himself, Philip as well as other Christians became very familiar with their interpretation. Fortunately, Philip was able to answer the lingering question of the Ethiopian Eunuch concerning the identity of the Suffering Servant.²⁵ Philip linked the

²²Donald G. Barnhouse, *Acts: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1979), 75.

²³F. Scott Spencer, "The Portrait of Philip in Acts: A Study of Roles and Relations," ed. Stanley E. Porter, JSNT Supplement Series 67 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 159.

²⁴Ibid., 161.

²⁵Fernando, *Acts*, 284.

Messianic prophecy in Isa 53:7-8 to the good news of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the lamb who was sent to the slaughter. According to Luke, the Ethiopian believed in the message, and immediately volunteered to be baptized. Nothing prevented the Eunuch from being baptized. Once again, Luke displayed the willingness of the Ethiopian to humble himself despite his status. Luke displayed the usage of his power to order the chariot to halt so that he might be baptized. Immediately after Philip baptized him, the account of this Judean witness came to an abrupt end.²⁶

The positioning of this Gentile mission story proceeded the leap that the Christians took in evangelism in Acts 9-14 for a specific reason. Luke showed the extreme nature in which the gospel was to be offered. Philip left Samaria amidst spiritual revival to share Christ with an Ethiopian Eunuch who was a Gentile, an upper class official, a “God-fearer”, from a far away land.²⁷ In this account, Philip breached every barrier that most Jewish Christians had not dared to cross due to their blindness in traditional Judaism. In fact, the result of Philip’s obedience and the Ethiopian’s conversion possibly opened the door for the future establishment of thousands of Christian churches along the Valley of the Nile.²⁸

²⁶Kistemaker, *Acts*, 319-20.

²⁷Spencer, *JSNT Supplement Series 67*, 185-6.

²⁸Steven C. Hawthorne and Ralph D. Winter, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 92.

Gospel Witnesses in Samaria

Contemporaneous to the Judean witness was the Apostolic witness in Samaria. The two major figures in this evangelistic breakthrough were Philip and Peter. Philip left Samaria during the middle of his ministry there to answer the call of God to preach the gospel to an Ethiopian Eunuch in southern Judea. Meanwhile, Peter made his way to Joppa along the Mediterranean coast after healing Aeneas in Lydda and restoring Dorcas back to life.

Although Paul served as the greatest missionary in the book of Acts for the sake of the Gentiles, Luke devoted most of Acts 9 to his conversion experience near Damascus. The conversion event itself served as a mile-marker for the expansion of the Gentile mission. For example, Paul was already in Gentile territory when he encountered the Lord on the road. Also, when the disciple Ananias questioned the Lord about approaching Saul, the Lord answered him calling Saul, “. . . a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the *Gentiles* and *kings* and the *children of Israel*.”²⁹ Implicit in the statement of the Lord concerning the nature of Saul’s missionary calling was the universalistic nature of the gospel. Saul was to be God’s missionary not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles alongwith with everyone else no matter their social or political stature.³⁰ In addition to the general perception of Paul’s missionary calling in Acts 9, Luke recorded his earliest efforts of ministry in Damascus as well.

²⁹Acts 9:15; Author’s Emphasis.

³⁰Polhill, *Acts*, 237.

In observing Luke's steps towards the fulfillment of the Acts 1:8 thesis, Paul's conversion and early ministry in Acts 9 proved to be separate stories of the Gentile mission in relation to the coordinating ministries of Philip and Peter in Samaria. First, previous to his departure to Judea in search of the Ethiopian Eunuch, Philip ignited the Samaritan Christian movement. Luke's portrayal of Philip's ministry to the Samaritans complimented his recollection of Jesus' ministry to them in his gospel account.

According to the Lukan record, Philip continued to build upon the work of Jesus in Samaria as he preached a Christ-centered message and baptized all who believed. Like Jesus, Philip brought the kingdom of God to the outcasts of Jewish society thus empowering the disciples with even more zeal and reason to reach the Gentiles with the gospel.³¹ Philip's great success in evangelizing the Samaritans led to the formal investigation of two of the Apostles from the Jerusalem church, Peter and John. This event led to their infamous encounter with Simon the Magician.

Second, Peter later embarked out onto his own missionary journey. Peter briefly ministered in the Judean cities of Lydda and Joppa. While he rested in Joppa he received an opportunity from the Lord to participate in the final Apostolic seal concerning the true nature of the gospel.³² Unlike Philip who was a Hellenist, Peter found greater reluctance and conflict in pursuing and accepting the Gentile mission. Two main issues became hindrances for most Jewish Christians such as Peter that caused confusion concerning the salvation of the Gentiles. First, Jewish Christians did not understand whether or not

³¹Spencer, *JSNT Supplement Series 67*, 87.

³²Polhill, *Acts*, 245.

Gentiles needed to be proselytized in order to become true Christians. And second, Christian-Jews still submitted to the kosher food laws which the Gentiles did not observe.³³

In respect to Peter's meeting with Cornelius, he overcame both of these Jewish barriers. Cornelius, like the Ethiopian Eunuch, was also a Gentile who was a "God-fearer". God prepared Cornelius with vision to retrieve Peter from Joppa. Likewise, God also delivered a vision to Peter which shocked his Jewish world-view. Within the context of the vision, Peter saw a great sheet unfolded from Heaven over the four corners of the earth. As the sheet unfolded, all sorts of animals, clean and unclean, proceeded from the cloth. Then, Peter heard the command of the Lord to kill and eat what he saw.³⁴ Here in this verse, the vision abolished the need for the Gentiles partake in the Jewish customs and laws in order to be saved alongwith the observance of the ceremonial food laws. Peter soon realized that this vision had a much deeper interpretation than the abolishment of mere customs and food laws.³⁵

Once Peter reached Cornelius' house in Caesarea he realized the true meaning of the vision. According to the gospel, Christ left no room for Jewish prejudice towards the Gentile community.³⁶ Upon his arrival at Cornelius' house, Peter preached a sermon to the eager Gentiles. He delivered the basic Apostolic gospel. He presented the gospel

³³Ibid., 249.

³⁴Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 217-8.

³⁵Ibid., 219.

³⁶C. Gordon Olson, *What in the World is God Doing?: The Essentials of Global Missions*, 5th ed., rev. ed. (Cedar Knolls, NJ: Global Gospel Publishers, 2003), 52.

message of Christ's peace, baptism, public ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, and judge.³⁷ Because man's common ailment was sin and all in Adam were in need of forgiveness of sins, partiality in the gospel was unjustified. Therefore, the Gentiles were worthy recipients of the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Astonishingly, when he finished preaching his sermon, Peter witnessed the same outpouring of the Holy Spirit coupled with the same outward manifestations of the gift of the Spirit as at Pentecost. Furthermore, this event inaugurated the Gentile mission from the Christian-Jewish perspective due to the visible realization of God's blessing upon the Gentiles just as the Jews.³⁸ Moreover, by Acts 11 the fulfillment of Luke's Acts 1:8 thesis was well on its way to completion.

Gospel Witnesses to the End of the Earth

Despite the fact that Peter faithfully completed the Gentile mission in Caesarea and reported his new theological awareness to the Jerusalem church in Acts 11:1-18, the two main roles revealed in the next step towards fulfilling the Acts 1:8 thesis were the Antioch church of Syria and Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey.

Christian-Jews fled Jerusalem to far stretches of the kingdom. Antioch of Syria was one of them. However, at first the Jewish Christians preached the Word of God only to the Jews. Eventually, a certain group of Christians heeded the call to evangelized the local Hellenists in that area. Once again, the Hellenists played a major role in furthering

³⁷Boice, *Acts*, 182-5.

³⁸William Neil, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 140.

the Gentile mission. Antioch became a base as well as a gateway for the expansion of the kingdom of God unto the Gentiles. The city of Antioch served as a sort of microcosm of Rome. The city was composed of similar advantages, problems, and human interests that the Christians would face in Rome itself. In addition, the hostility between Jews and Gentiles there was not as oppressive and sharp as it was in Jerusalem. Therefore, Antioch developed an open atmosphere for diverse methods of reaching the community.³⁹

Due to the rapid growth of the Hellenistic church of Antioch, the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas whom Luke called, “. . . a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.” to oversee the new congregation.⁴⁰ With the newly established ministry in Antioch, the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to help guide and order their church with the seal of approval from the Apostolic fathers.⁴¹ Under the care of Barnabas the church began to grow into a healthy, community of believers. Next, in the church’s stability, Barnabas journeyed to Tarsus in order to retrieve Saul so that he might share in the ministry with Barnabas in Antioch. Furthermore, through the teaching of Saul and Barnabas the Antiochene church grew in their discipleship to the point that outsiders garnered them with the name “Christians”. Apparently, the content of Saul and Barnabas’ teaching consisted of theological lectures and discussions centered around Jesus as the Messiah and Lord.⁴² Interestingly, the church in Antioch not only succeeded in spreading the

³⁹Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), 114.

⁴⁰Acts 11:24.

⁴¹Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Church* (Tarrytown, NY: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1990), 101.

⁴²Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 205.

gospel to Jews and Gentiles, but also managed to assist those who were in need.

Reminiscent of when the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to aid the Hellenists in Antioch with their church, now the Hellenists sent a monetary gift by means of Saul and Barnabas to the Judean church in an attempt to satisfy their needs during the Jerusalem famine.⁴³

The second greatest event which impacted the expansion of the Gentile mission to the ends of the earth was Paul's first missionary journey in Acts 13-14. Noticeably, the church at Antioch became an established church full of well taught people who earnestly sought the Lord in worship, fasting, and prayer. Yet, Luke still emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in their preservation. As Luke taught all throughout the book of Acts, without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, mission work would always be unsuccessful.⁴⁴ Through the influence of the Holy Spirit, the Antiochene church became the first missionary sending church in Christian history. They chose Paul and Barnabas to leave out of Antioch under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel to the Jews and Gentiles.

Paul and Barnabas ministered in four major locations during this first missionary exploration. They visited Cyprus, Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, and Lystra. First in Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas immediately began preaching and teaching the Scriptures in the nearby Jewish synagogues. While they ministered to the entire island, Luke

⁴³Robert L. Reymond, *Paul: Missionary-Theologian* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 100.

⁴⁴Boice, *Acts*, 226-9.

highlighted the conversion of the Proconsul, Sergius Paulus which again displayed the inclusive nature of the gospel beyond the realm of Judaism.⁴⁵

Second, the two Antiochene missionaries traveled to Antioch of Pisidia. This city was located in the province of Galatia and was a Roman colony. Similar to their ministry in Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas began their evangelistic efforts teaching in the Jewish synagogue the first Sabbath after their arrival. Luke recorded Paul's exhortation which consisted of Jesus as the Messianic fulfillment of the Old Testament.⁴⁶ Due to Paul's ability to teach and explain Jewish thought in light of the New Covenant in Christ, the congregation beseeched him to speak another message on the following Sabbath. However, the Jews built up animosity towards the overwhelming amount of Gentiles that were present to listen to Paul's discourse. In response to the embitterment of the Jews, Paul accused them of casting aside the true meaning of the gospel. Due to the rejection and rebellion of Jews concerning the gospel and Paul, he declared the salvation of the Gentiles as his calling which included the Acts 1:8 commandment of bringing the gospel message to the ends of the earth.⁴⁷

Third, Paul and Barnabas fled about ninety miles southeast to Iconium due to the persecution of the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia. Luke continued to emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit on the ministry of these first missionaries as he asserted that many Jews and Gentiles believed in the Apostolic gospel message. Just as in the previous cities, Paul

⁴⁵F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 161-2.

⁴⁶Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 267-78.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 280-2.

and Barnabas attended the local synagogues in order to teach and exhort the people to believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. The two Antiochene missionaries endured at Iconium under Jewish opposition for a prolonged amount of time, but eventually departed from there due to a plot to stone them.⁴⁸

Fourth, Paul and Barnabas traveled a short distance south to the Lycaonian city of Lystra. Unlike their previous ministries, the two immediately began to preach the gospel to the Gentiles due to the fact that there was not an available synagogue for them enter.⁴⁹ Luke presented Paul's experience at Lystra as the climax of this first missionary journey. This was the first time the disciples intentionally sought out to evangelize strictly to the Gentiles.⁵⁰ The missionaries received an unexpected response to their message in the form of the people honoring them as gods. Of course, Paul and Barnabas rebuked the people from their pagan ignorance concerning the gospel, but still the people sought to offer sacrifices to them. In addition to the mishap, Jews from Antioch of Pisidia and Iconium traveled to Lystra and persuaded the Lycaonians to rebel against Paul and Barnabas which led to Paul's stoning. Barnabas and the beaten Paul left Lystra and journeyed to Derbe, but then left and returned to their place of departure, Antioch of Syria.⁵¹ As a result of this first missionary journey empowered by the Antiochene church and the Holy Spirit, the Apostles and disciples of the Early Church, namely Paul and his associates, in the book of

⁴⁸Reymond, *Paul: Missionary-Theologian*, 124-5.

⁴⁹Ibid., 125.

⁵⁰Dean P. Bechard, *Paul Outside The Walls: A Study of Luke's Socio-Geographical Universalism in Acts 14:8-20* (Roma, Italia: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), 141.

⁵¹Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, 171.

Acts worked vigorously to continue to expand the borders of Christianity to the ends of the earth.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the format and content of Acts 6-14 in order to prove the idea that Luke wrote the book of Acts in coherence with the geographical and progressive nature of the outline Christ gave to the disciples before His ascension in Acts 1:8. Through careful research, the paper supported the fact that Luke organized his historical narrative account of the Early Church and Christianity according to the expansion of the Gentile mission in conjunction with the mission statement in Acts 1:8. The unfolding of the Gentile mission in Acts 6-14 liberated the ritualistic Christian-Jews and welcomed the suppressed desires of the Gentiles.

Two main aspects of missions and evangelism were realized during these crucial years of early Christianity. First, the gospel was to be sent to all nations. Luke's thesis in Acts 1:8 set the theme of the kingdom of God as a global entity. One example of this in Acts was Paul and Barnabas' ministry to the Gentiles in Iconium in Acts 13. Paul aligned his mission with the promise in Isa 49:6 that the Messiah would be the servant and light to all the nations in the world. Hence, Christ's gospel message instinctively became universally relevant for all of mankind.⁵²

Second, the recipients of the gospel were not limited to any particular ethnic group or culture. The Jerusalem church realized that the universal appeal of the gospel not

⁵²John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 2nd ed., revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 177.

only applied to every race, but also to every class of society. Later, the Apostle Paul affirmed the inclusiveness of the gospel in his writings such as Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11-13.⁵³

In conclusion, the events which occurred during Acts 6-14 depicted the constant struggles and successes of the Apostles and the disciples as they attempted to fully grasp the meaning of the kingdom of God and the relevance of Christ's gospel message to the world. In Revelation 14:6, the Apostle John wrote, "Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an *eternal gospel* to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to *every nation and tribe and language and people.*"⁵⁴ Not only is the gospel not bound by land masses and racial qualities, but it is also not bound by time. The relevance of the gospel is eternal. The message never needs to be changed, updated, or altered in order to meet the common need of sin for all of mankind. People will never outgrow it and time will never outlast it. Therefore, the Christian may take hope just as the early believers did in the book of Acts, that the gospel is the one necessity for reaching the entire world throughout all time for the glory of God and for the joy of all peoples.

⁵³Herbert J. Kane, *The Christian World Mission: Today and Tomorrow* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 39.

⁵⁴Author's Emphasis.

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