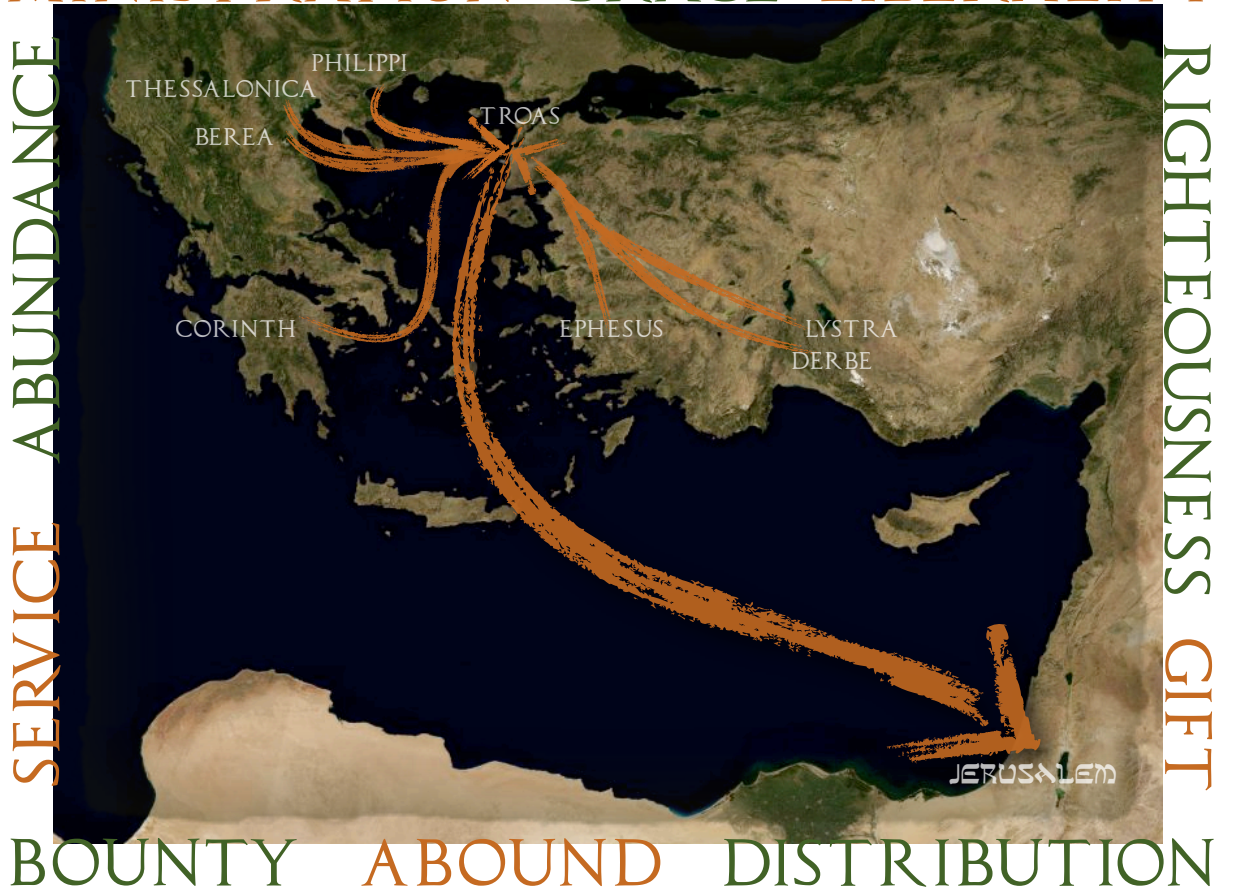


Manitoulin Youth Conference

2010

MINISTRATION GRACE LIBERALITY



"Thanks Be Unto God For His Unspeakable Gift"

The Story of the Jerusalem Poor Fund

Part I

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Introduction

Dearest Young Person,

Loving greetings in the Hope of Israel!

We are about to embark on a fascinating and lively journey with the Apostle Paul through the pages of God's Word as he delivers the Jerusalem Poor Fund to the poor saints at Jerusalem! The Apostles in Jerusalem initiated the Jerusalem Poor Fund when they asked the Apostle Paul to "remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10) on his travels. Little did they know that he would take this charge and treat it the same way as he treated all of his work in the Truth: with whole-hearted devotion, loving care, and bubbling zeal!

The evidence contained in Paul's letters and in the record of the Acts of the Apostles confirms that the Jerusalem Poor Fund deserves much more of our attention as we look at the life of this great Apostle to the Gentiles. It gives the believers of our day an up-close look at the motivation and zeal behind the Apostle Paul's effort to complete this particular work on behalf of the Truth. God willing, we'll see that this relief fund had more than simply a practical purpose. It was more than just a matter of money! It was Paul's heart's desire to bind Jewish and Gentile brethren together in the Hope of the Gospel through the work of the Jerusalem Poor Fund.

As we each focus on *giving* our lives to our God, this study provides us with great examples that we can use to motivate ourselves while we wait for the coming of our Lord. We'll look into the example of the Macedonians who, while experiencing deep poverty, begged earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints and first *gave* themselves to the Lord; the example of the children of Israel in the wilderness, who learned the benefits of sharing and working together; the example of the delegates of the fund, who emulated the same earnest care as the Apostle Paul; the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *gave* himself for our sins; and finally, the example of our Heavenly Father, who *gave* His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

God willing, by the end of this study, may we each be able to unite our hearts and minds together with praise and thanksgiving to God and to unite our voices together with the Apostle Paul to say, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" (2 Cor. 9:15)

May God add His blessing to your personal study so that we may each learn to grow and prepare for the coming of His Son. If you have any comments, questions, or concerns about the book, or just want to talk about what you have learned, please feel free to contact either one of us.

With much love,

Bro. Jordan Canady (jordancanady5@hotmail.com)

Bro. Glenn Abel (abelstable@earthlink.net)

Getting Started

Here are some tips to help you with your studies, and to get you started:

1. For each section be sure to read the passages that are marked under the "Reading" heading. It is important to read these thoroughly *at least* once before starting the section.
2. We will be looking at our subject from a broad basis, as opposed to a in-depth investigation of a few chapters/ passages. However, in part II of the workbook, there will be some in-depth study of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 which are directly related to the fund.
3. Mark questions that you are having trouble with or (more likely!) questions that don't make sense to you, and move on. Come back to them, and if you still are unable to make any progress, confer with a friend or ask someone for help! Feel free to contact Bro. Jordan or Bro. Glenn at our e-mail addresses provided on the first page.
4. Organize a Study group: Study groups are a good way to get motivated, share lessons, insights and discoveries. They also are a fun and rewarding fellowship opportunity. Having said that, it is important that we develop the habit and skill in personal Bible Study. Be sure you have some balance in this area of your Youth Conference preparations.
5. There are many, many nuggets left unexplored in this study! "Mine" them out by digging a little deeper on some of the questions.

3 Stages of Good Bible Study

1. Find the facts
2. Establish the principle
3. Apply the exhortation

Bible Study Tools

1. Your Bible. Questions and references are from the KJV, but a few different translations such as RSV or NASB or Rotherham's would be helpful to have around to compare passages with.
2. Marginal References: If your Bible has marginal references, these are great resources.
3. Concordances: Strong's, Young's, and Englishman's. Englishman's is particularly useful when you have a Strong's number (from Strong's Concordance - this is the number that represents the Greek or Hebrew word) and you want to find all the places that number occurs and the actual English word translated in every case.
4. Computer tools: Bible software like Libronix or e-sword (www.e-sword.net). Or make use of one of the online Bible websites such as www.biblegateway.com or www.blueletterbible.org
5. Bible Dictionaries - for looking up the background of the various places.
6. Bible Atlas - for tracing Paul's journeys, and seeing where the Ecclesias were.
7. Christadelphian Works: We have outlined at the end of some of the sections the resources that we found helpful.

Good Bible Study - Bro. Roger Lewis

"Good Bible study is all about good Bible reading. Good Bible reading is simply careful Bible reading."

Section 1 - "Ye Shall Be Witnesses Unto Me" (Acts 1:8)

Reading

Carefully read Acts 1-8.

Introduction

As Jesus hung on the cross, about to die, he prayed to Yahweh, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) This earnest and genuine prayer of our Lord was not merely directed towards those in attendance, but towards the people of God, the Jews - who were ignorant of the full enormity of their actions. (Isaiah 53:12)

The Acts of the Apostles records Yahweh's response to this "earnest prayer of a righteous man." (James 5:16) The Apostles were sent forth with a message, to "the Jews first" (Romans 1:16) as the Jews were given one final opportunity to acknowledge the "righteousness of God." The issue would come down to a key principle: can one intent on establishing one's own righteousness be able to acknowledge Yahweh's righteousness? (Romans 10:3) The answer would be a resounding no. And so, the Acts closes with Paul's declaration:

"... Well spake the Holy Spirit by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." (Acts 28:25-28)

However, in Romans 11, Paul makes clear the fact that even though "through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles" the intended effect was "to provoke them to jealousy." The Gentiles were not to boast against the Jewish "branches" but to "bear" the Abrahamic root, recognizing that the "gifts and calling of God are without repentance." For Israel's "blindness" was only a temporary measure, and "if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" The revival of Israel would be a sign of the resurrection of the faithful, and the re-establishment of the Kingdom of Israel. The completion of the ingathering of the Gentiles would not occur until the "set time came to favor Zion." (Psa. 102:13-16)

As our story begins with these thoughts, so will it end, for the Apostle Paul was desperate that his kinsmen after the flesh would respond, that he "might save some of them." He saw the influence of the "Judaizers", infiltrate the Jerusalem Ecclesia - those who taught that the offering of Christ was not sufficient for salvation, but that the keeping of the Law was also necessary. So much did he desire a change of heart, he could wish himself "accursed from Christ" (Rom. 9:3) if it meant their response and salvation. He was prepared to offer himself, if need be. But God, in His infinite wisdom had chosen Paul to "be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." (Rom 15 NASB) And in this "priestly service", the Apostle collected the "offering" of the Gentile Ecclesias, for the poor saints in Jerusalem, bringing it up in "service for Jerusalem" that it might be "accepted of the saints" as he sought to knit together the hearts of Jew and Gentile in the bonds of the Truth. Through the fund, he hoped that the Gentile believers, having been partakers of the "spiritual things" of the Jews would be motivated to minister to them in "material things", in order that the Jewish brethren in Jerusalem might see what *Grace could inspire* as opposed to what *Law could compel*.

Would it be successful? Would it help stop the defection of Jewish believers, who were in danger of becoming "entangled again with the yoke of bondage"? Would the Jewish believers be able to lay aside their mistrust of their Gentile brethren? For that we will have to wait until the end of our studies!

The Acts

In the Acts, the Apostles bring the gospel message of the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ to the ends of the Roman habitable, witnessing that Jesus was the Messiah, being first-hand corroborators to his death and resurrection.

In this section of the workbook, we establish the setting and background out of the Acts of the Apostles - a background that is key to a full appreciation of the Jerusalem Poor Fund, and the surrounding issues.

Luke - The Author of the Acts

It is clear that Luke is the inspired Author of the Acts. Something to watch for is the “us/we” pronoun - this is an indication that Luke is a participant in the events. It is also important to remember that the Spirit has only recorded those events that we “need to know”, and in harmony with the revelation of God’s purpose, has been encoded that the Kings of the future age of Glory would search out a matter. (Prov. 25:2)

1. Luke’s name means “Light-giving.” Investigate the background and character of Luke. We have included a summary from the Acts “Expositor” notes in the Part I Appendix for your reference. Read the summary, and jot down some notes here:
 - a. What facts do we know about him?
 - b. What are some character traits?

Acts Breakdown

The book of the Acts of the Apostles also serves as a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles, setting the context for the Epistles, which were written to the Ecclesias whose establishment is recorded in Acts. Thus, Acts describes for us the beginning of Ecclesial life, showing how Ecclesias must be “rooted and grounded” and built upon the solid foundation of the One True Gospel. While Acts deals primarily with the *Foundation* and *Formation* of the Ecclesia, the Epistles go on to emphasize the need for continued building upon the basis of *Sound Doctrine* and *Sound Practice* in the Ecclesia. Often, the Epistles also round out our knowledge of events recorded in the Acts, especially the Ecclesial issues, and the comings and goings of Paul and those who assisted him.

This table, modified from the Expositor notes on the Acts, shows how the book can be divided into 2 sections, which parallel each other:

PART 1 - CHAPTERS 1-12		PART 2 - CHAPTERS 13-28	
<i>Events</i>	<i>Peter's Ministry</i>	<i>Paul's Ministry</i>	<i>Events</i>
Jerusalem - Centre of work	Chapter 2 Peter's First Address	Chapter 13 Paul's first address	Antioch - Centre of work
Peter - Chief figure	Chapter 3 Lame man healed	Chapter 14 Lame man healed	Paul - Chief figure
Gospel spreads to Samaria	Chapter 8 Simon the sorcerer	Chapter 13 Elymas the sorcerer	Gospel spreads to Rome
Gospel rejected by Jews in Israel	Chapter 5 - Influence of the shadow of Peter	Chapter 19 - Influence of the handkerchiefs of Paul	Gospel rejected by Jews in dispersion
Peter is imprisoned	Chapter 8 Laying on of hands	Chapter 19 Laying on of hands	Paul is imprisoned

PART 1 - CHAPTERS 1-12		PART 2 - CHAPTERS 13-28	
Judgment comes on Herod	Chapter 10 Peter is worshipped	Chapter 14 Paul is worshipped	Judgment comes on the Jews
	Chapter 9 Tabitha is raised	Chapter 20 Eutychus is raised	
	Chapter 12 Peter is imprisoned	Chapter 28 Paul is imprisoned	

The Jerusalem Poor Fund is primarily concerned with “Part 2” of the book of Acts. However, we will spend some time in “Part 1” looking at the key events which set the stage for our study, review relevant incidents, and help us get the sense of the overall context.

PART 1 - CHAPTERS 1-12		PART 2 - CHAPTERS 13-28	
<i>Acts</i>	<i>Events</i>	<i>Acts</i>	<i>Events</i>
1	The Apostles Prepared and Commissioned	13-14	Paul’s First Journey
2	Miracles and Witness by the Apostles: the Response by the People	15:1-35	The Conference in Jerusalem
3	Miracle: the Lame Man Healed - Witness and Opposition	15:36-18:23	The Second Journey of Paul
4	Miracle: the Shadow of Peter - Witness and Opposition	18:24-28	The Powerful Preaching of Apollos in Corinth
5	Miracle: the Release from Prison - Witness and Opposition	19-22	The Third Journey of Paul, and Final Rejection of the Jerusalem Jews
6	The Witness of Stephen	23	Paul Witnesses Before the Sanhedrin
7	The Challenge of Stephen - Witness and Opposition	24	Paul Witnesses Before Governor Felix
8	Witnessing to an Ethiopian Chancellor	25	Paul Witnesses Before Governor Festus
9	Conversion of the Pharisee Saul	26	Paul Witnesses Before King Agrippa
10	Conversion of the Roman Cornelius	27	Paul Witnesses on the Way to Rome
11	The Gospel from Antioch; centre of the Truth	28	In Rome and the Final Rejection of the Jews
12	James is killed; Peter delivered; Herod, as head of the nation is Judged		

Roman Historical Context

Please refer to the chart on the Roman historical context in Part I Appendix.

Timeline

Please refer to the timeline in Part I Appendix.

The Early Jerusalem Ecclesia - Acts 1

1. The early Jerusalem Ecclesia is established in Acts 1:13-15. How many brethren and sisters were there at that time?
2. One of the first tasks was to select a replacement for Judas. What were the main criteria used? Why did they need to “cast lots”? Was this common practice in the first century Ecclesia or an exceptional circumstance?

Peter - The Early Leader of the Ecclesia at Jerusalem

The story of Peter's life is well known, and because of this, we will not dwell much on his background (or ask you to do any research!) As we read through the first part of the Acts, it is clear that he was one of the leaders of the Jerusalem Ecclesia, and rightly so, for our Lord himself had told him to "Feed my sheep." (John 21:17)

John - A Pillar of the Ecclesia at Jerusalem

John was undoubtedly the "disciple whom Jesus loved." (John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7,20) Like Peter, John had the privilege of participating in the key events of Jesus' ministry, including his transfiguration, where they "saw the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt 16:28). Peter and John had a long history together (consider the following references: Luke 5:10/John 18:15;20:4, Matthew 17:1, Mark 13:3, Luke 22:8, John 18:15, Mark 14:33). And so, they would provide a faithful foundation (pillars) for the Jerusalem Ecclesia. (Gal. 2:9)

The Day of Pentecost - Acts 2

1. Research the background of the day of Pentecost. Why was it appropriate that the events of Acts 2 occurred at the same time as this feast? Find both practical and spiritual reasons.
2. In Acts 2:1 we note the statement: "when the day of Pentecost was *fully* come." Look up the Greek word for "fully". What does it signify? What do you think we are being told?
3. Who is the "they" of Acts 2:1?
 - a. What does "one accord" mean? Find where this word is used outside the book of Acts. What are we being told?
 - b. Where were they when they received the Holy Spirit?
4. How are the visitors, who had travelled many miles to be in Jerusalem, to "keep the feast" described? What does "devout" mean?
5. Optional: How many people, being baptized, "put on Christ" as a covering for sin on this Pentecost? Why is that fitting?
6. The two leavened loaves of the Pentecost represented an acknowledgment of the unworthiness of the offering of Jew and Gentile, and the grace of Yahweh in accepting it. Can you find anywhere in the record of Gentiles offering or being at this Pentecost?
7. In verse 42, five pillars of Ecclesial life are outlined. Consider and explain the importance of each. How do they align with our practices as Christadelphians?
 - a. "Continued Steadfastly"
 - b. "Apostle's Doctrine"

- c. "Fellowship"
- d. "Breaking of Bread"
- e. "Prayers"

- 8. Verse 44-47 describes the wonderful spirit that pervaded that early group. While our practices today might be slightly different, does our Ecclesial life today resemble the same spirit? (just answer yes, no, or sometimes. This is a warmup question to get you thinking)
- 9. What was the practice of the Jewish converts regarding going to the Temple? Where did they break bread?

The Lame Man at the Gate Beautiful - Acts 3

In Acts chapter 2, we were introduced to the gift of tongues as the first manifestation of the Spirit Gifts. In chapter 3, the gift of healing is used by the Apostle Peter.

- 10. Did you notice that the lame man's condition is an apt description of our own condition? List the ways, including the process by which he was healed.
- 11. The lame man "asked an alms." A key word in our study is the word "Alms". (Acts 3:3) Let's do some research and get to the bottom of it.
 - a. What is the Greek word? What does it mean?
 - b. What is the Greek root? What does it mean?
 - c. List some other significant passages where the root is used (see instructions at beginning)

- d. What is the corresponding Hebrew word for this root? (hint: find this by looking for Old Testament quotations among the results for [c] and then look up the Hebrew word in the actual Old Testament passage) Comment on the significance of this word.

12. If you haven't already, investigate and summarize what Jesus had to say about "Alms"?

13. Peter could have given alms to this man, but how long would it have lasted?

- a. In what way did Peter provide the true "Alms"?
- b. What did Peter say that ensured the man and any witnesses, understood how he had been healed?

14. There will always be a danger when we try to attract people to the Truth through some means that appeals to the flesh. Whether it is the promise of friendship, financial assistance, or even the prospect of a dating relationship or marriage, a stumbling block can be put in one's path that puts one's focus in the wrong place. Yahweh desires someone to come to Him who "hungers and thirsts after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6), as opposed to one who "did eat of the loaves, and were filled." (John 6:26-27)

- a. List some examples from today where there could be a danger of offering "silver and gold", and not first putting forth "such as we have" (i.e. the Gospel).
- b. Suggest ways we can eliminate or mitigate the danger.

“Silver and Gold” - Bro. John Ullman

“In this materialistic society it is commonly thought that money or wealth will provide the answers to the problems of life. Even amongst the Brotherhood, such a philosophy often prevails, causing even greater difficulties. Some feel that if they had more possessions, or better financial security, their lives would be more productive in the Truth! Such reasoning is a highly dangerous fallacy. Through such rationalism brethren are led to change their direction in life, veering towards a pursuit of greater worldly gain. Anything that draws an individual closer to the world will draw them away from God. *The Gospel does not offer mankind what they think is best for themselves, in their own estimation of their “needs.” It does not offer any guarantee of advantageous social conditions. It does not provide a promise of immediate materialistic benefits. It does not extend an assurance of immunity from the trials and pressures of life.* The gospel does offer to fulfill the one essential need of all men and women: **“Rise up and Walk!”** This is achieved by acquiring a sound knowledge and understanding of the Truth, accepting it in humility, and setting our feet firmly in the direction that leads to eternal salvation, walking by faith in hope of the promises. The way of faith is not demonstrated by neutrality, nor can it be maintained through inattentiveness. It will not develop out of listlessness or inactivity, nor will it become a reality without commitment. Faith will come into existence when individuals are prepared to **look, listen, hearken, and do**, as God requires.”

The Fellowship , Generosity, and Common Fund of the Early Jerusalem Ecclesia - Acts 4

In Acts chapter 4, as the numbers of believers pass the 5000 mark (Acts 4:4), the movement is targeted by the Jewish leaders, as they had targeted Jesus himself. But the Apostles are not easily swayed, having prayed for and received “boldness” to speak the word of God, through the Holy Spirit.

15. Had the brethren and sisters been commanded to sell everything into a common fund?

- a. Were everyone’s needs met by this practice?
- b. What Old Testament situation(s) does this remind you of?

16. The early Ecclesia had “all things in common”. Why don’t we follow this model today? Was the model consistently followed in the First Century Ecclesia? If not, what model did they follow?

17. How can we achieve the spirit of “all things in common” in our Ecclesias today?

18. What is your attitude towards your material possessions? What principles do we learn from our first century brethren and sisters? Make note of some relevant scriptures on materialism, as well as on generosity to share our blessings.

19. In Acts 4, we are introduced to Barnabas, who figures prominently in Part I of our studies. Spend a few moments researching and getting to know Barnabas. What does his name mean?

- a. What is his background?
- b. What are some of his defining characteristics?
- c. Optional: Some have hypothesized that Barnabas may have been the “Rich young ruler” that met with Jesus. Research this idea and see if there is any scriptural support for this hypothesis.

Ananias and Sapphira - Giving With the Wrong Motives - Acts 5

A wise brother once noted that “Ecclesial perfection is not to be expected this side of the Kingdom.” An Ecclesia made up of flesh and blood will always have to strive against the thinking of the flesh, and it is the Spirit word that can overcome if it is elevated to the position it deserves in each of our lives.

And so, it wasn’t long before the thinking of the flesh became evident in the Jerusalem Ecclesia, manifesting itself in the attitude and behavior of Ananias and Sapphira.

20. Read Acts 5:1-16. Did Ananias and Sapphira *have* to give the proceeds from the sale of their property to the Apostles?

- a. What appears to be their motive for this scheme?
- b. How were their actions the same as the Pharisees and “Judaizers”? (Mal. 1:8,3:8, Luke 12:1, etc.) (We will be looking more at understanding who the “Judaizers” were later on)

- c. What do we learn from verse 5 concerning our behavior in the Ecclesia? (Matt. 25:40, Luke 12:1-4)
 - d. What are some more principles of giving and generosity that we gain from this account? Do we sometimes elevate the “good works” of other brethren and sisters in ways that may be harmful for them and others. How might we avoid that situation? Find some scriptural references that are relevant to this.
21. Read the rest of Acts 5. The ministry of our Lord is reflected in the lives of the Apostles, who by the Holy Spirit healed the multitudes, and performed signs that they would believe. And this stirred up the Jewish leaders against them. The response of the Apostles was that they “rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased no to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”
- a. Like the Lord, the Apostles had compassion on those who were suffering from the afflictions of the current dispensation, and healed them. Following the model of Jesus’ healing, what was required on the part of the person healed?
 - b. What else would they have done for these people? (v42)

The First Welfare Crisis - Acts 6

In Acts chapter 6, we encounter the first welfare crisis to hit the growing Jerusalem Ecclesia.

22. As we have seen, the Ecclesia has been growing at an incredible rate. What was the main problem that came along with this growth? (Note: This forms a significant piece of background to the Jerusalem Poor Fund.)
23. Look up the word “murmuring” in Acts 6:1. What does it mean? Where else is it found in Scripture? (Note: The Septuagint uses the same word to describe the murmuring of Israel in the wilderness - 1 Cor. 10:10)
24. What was the “daily ministrations”?
25. Compare and contrast the two sides of Jewish converts who were arguing about the problem. What was the background of each group (Acts 6:1)?

26. What was the solution to this problem? What were the qualifications of the seven men chosen who were to “serve” in this administrative capacity? What was the final result (Acts 6:7)?
27. What does this teach us about “rules” and “organization” in Ecclesial life?
28. Of which “side” were the seven men chosen for the work (Hint: look at their names)? Why was this?
29. Optional: In Acts 6:7, the record tells us that, “a great company of Priests were obedient to the faith.” What did this mean for these Priests? What did they have to go through to change their way of life?
30. The Apostles realized that the burden of “serving tables” (welfare) would interfere with the preaching of the truth. What does this tell us about their relative importance? (both still needed to be accomplished!) Does this still apply today or was that a “special” perspective for the First Century as the truth was being established? Back up your answer with scriptures.

Stephen’s Defense - Acts 6-7

Though Stephen was selected to lead in administrative services, it is his defense of the Truth that he is remembered for. In fact, this incident marks a turning point in the history of the first century Ecclesia. Prior to Stephen’s articulation of the history of Israel, the followers of Jesus were not seen as a major threat. But after this, they were hunted down in an effort to stamp them out. (Acts 8:1-4, Acts 11:19)

31. What was it about Stephen’s teaching that resulted in widespread persecution against the truth?
32. How do we know Saul was present when all of this was happening (and not just there when Stephen was killed)? (Hint: see Acts 6:9) What impact did this have on his life? (Acts 8:1-4, Gal. 1:13-14)

The Gospel Spreads to Samaria and Beyond - Acts 8

It is amazing to see Jesus' words of Acts 1:8 coming to pass, as the "witness" of the "things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12) spreads to Samaria, and then begins to go to the "uttermost parts of the earth."

33. In Acts 8, we have a remarkable contrast between Simon the Sorcerer and the Ethiopian Eunuch. Contrast them with regards to their background and perspective on money / wealth in relation to the "true riches" (Luke 16:11).

Further Reading

- "Acts Expositor" - Logos
- "Guidebook to the New Testament" - Bro. H.P. Mansfield
- "The First Century Ecclesia" - Bro. James B. Norris
- "From James to Jude Expositor" - Bro. H.P. Mansfield

Section 2 - The “Fellowship of the Mystery” of the Gospel (Eph. 3:9)

Reading

Read carefully Acts 9-14

Introduction

In “Elpis Israel”, brother Thomas wrote: “The establishment of God’s kingdom is based upon his sovereign principles... his choosing...” He made this statement based on the evidence of scripture that God’s kingdom has not been developed based on man’s choosing. For example, in the development of the promised “seed”, Abraham would have chosen Ishmael, Isaac would have chosen Esau, Samuel would have chosen one of David’s brothers. Though they had been instructed by Jesus on numerous occasions concerning the doctrine of the Atonement, the disciples refused to believe that Messiah needed to suffer and be crucified. As much as they desired the Kingdom, they needed to know that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” And so, Yahweh has always intervened in the affairs of mankind to further His purpose - demonstrating to all generations from Adam to Christ, that “the excellency of the power would be of God and not of men.”

Thus it is no surprise that during the First Century, and even with the Holy Spirit Gifts available, intervention would be necessary to shape the development of the Ecclesia in accordance with Yahweh’s purpose. And Yahweh would perform this in a way that would challenge the faith and understanding of even the Apostles. Dramatic events in the lives of Saul and Peter would change their lives, and change the world as the Grace of God was extended to the Gentiles.

Later on in the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul reflects back on the time immediately after his baptism, that it took three years in the deserts of Arabia for him to truly understand and come to grips with the Gospel message that he was to bring as the “minister” to the Gentiles. And he wanted them to know that “the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Gal 1:11-12)

Peter too would need a revelation that the “fellowship of the mystery” of the Gospel, that “the unsearchable riches of Christ” would be preached “among the Gentiles”. This aspect of the Gospel was previously hidden, but now was to be revealed to Jew and Gentile. Once the heady days of Cornelius’ conversion were faded, Peter struggled with the practical outworking of this new reality, and needed Paul’s determined rebuke.

Saul’s Conversion

1. In view of the prominent role Paul was to eventually take in the service of Christ, he is first mentioned in the Scripture in a most interesting way. Where is this reference?
2. What does the name Saul mean?
3. The record states that Stephen’s clothes were “laid down at a young man’s feet.” How old do you think Saul was at this point? Hint: research the Greek word for “young man”.

Events Covered

- The Conversion of Saul
- Peter and Cornelius
- Agabus and the Dearth
- Paul’s Commission
- The 1st Missionary Journey
- A “Door of Faith” Opened to the Gentiles

4. The next mention of Saul begins in Acts 8:1 and 9:1. What do we find him doing in these references? Also see Acts 26: 9-12

5. The young man who witnessed the murder of Stephen now becomes the foremost figure in continuing the violence against Stephen's brothers, the brethren of Christ. What does "made havoc" mean? Acts 8:3 How does Paul later feel about these actions? Acts 22:4, Gal 1:13-24

6. What was driving Saul to carry this out (Acts 22:3-4, Acts 26:9-10)?

7. Research the background of Saul's life. Make a list of facts about him, and his self-described characteristics (Phil. 3:4-6, 1 Tim 1:12-13, etc.).

8. Read Acts 9, 22, and 26. Why do you think this same story is recorded three times? Do you see any differences between the accounts?

9. Optional: Who was the high priest of Acts 9:1? Approximately what year is this happening?

10. Paul was going after "any of this way." Look up "this way." What does it mean?
 - a. Jesus also describes himself as being "the way." Where is the term "the way" first found in the Bible?

 - b. Look up also Acts 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22 and see how "the way" is used. This term is later mixed with error and mingled with apostasy (2 Pet. 2:2). Is your "way" of life still progressing on the pathway of life?

11. Saul was traveling from Jerusalem to Damascus to carry out more persecutions. How far was this journey?
 - a. What time of day does Acts 9:3 occur (see Acts 26:13, Acts 22:6)?

 - b. Did people normally travel during that time of day? What does this tell us about Saul's determination to persecute the Ecclesia?

12. Acts 9:3 states that "suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven." What did Saul see in this light (Acts 9:17, 27)? See also 2 Cor. 3:18

13. Describe the process that Saul went through in his conversion to the Truth? Note the words “fell to the earth”, “arose,” “putting his hands on him,” “received meat,” and “he was strengthened.”
- How did our Lord Jesus Christ go through the same process in his death, burial, and resurrection? (Also note Daniel’s vision in Daniel 10:8-19)
14. We can learn a lot about someone by how they react to different situations in their life. The Lord Jesus reveals to Saul that he is really persecuting him (Acts 9:4, 5)! Saul thinks he is doing the Lord’s work. How does Saul react to this news? What is his response (Acts 9:6)? What kind of man does this show Saul to be?
- This same response is used earlier in the book of Acts. Where? Perhaps Saul had even been there. Now he is caused to repeat the same question for himself.
 - Have you had a “Damascus Experience”? An incident where you knew you needed to change course? How did you react? Have you kept true to your determination?
15. Acts 26:16-18 picks up the Lord’s instructions for Saul. Saul’s purpose was to become a minister and witness. What do each of the words mean here?
16. How well do you think Paul knew the Scriptures? Give at least 2 references for your answer.
- Where did Paul go immediately after this? How long was he there, and what do you suppose he did during that time before his missionary work was to begin? (hint: the answer is in one of Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians)
 - How should this fact guide our decisions on when we are ready for missionary work? W
17. Paul never forgot Stephen’s death. How does this introductory event to the record of the Apostle Paul change his life? See Luke 23:34, 1 Timothy 1:13, 2 Timothy 4:16
18. When are we introduced to “Paul” as opposed to “Saul”? What does the name Paul mean? Why do you supposed he changed it to that? (hint: 1 Cor. 15:9)

“Minister”

The Greek word minister signifies an under-rower (oarsmen), one who accepts directions from another without necessarily knowing the course taken. This tells us that Saul was not yet ready to map out his own course.

19. We see a changed man after Acts 9. Paul would often look back on this point in his life and regret his persecution of the saints, but it provides us with a great lesson and example that we all need to change our thoughts and our ways to become aligned with the character of our God. (Isaiah 55:7-9) As you have considered the example of the conversion of Saul to the great apostle Paul, identify the areas that you need to change in your own life. Before moving on to the next question, list 3 areas that you would like to improve on before attending Youth Conference.

The Raising of Dorcas - Acts 9:36-43

20. What two things was Dorcas known for?

Peter and Cornelius - Acts 10 - 11:18

21. Who was Cornelius and what does his name mean?
22. Look at Luke chapter 7. Some believe that this is Cornelius. Find at least three similarities between these two individuals. What is your conclusion?
23. What are the four things we learn about Cornelius in Acts 10:2?
24. Explain how each of these characteristics is important for us to show forth today? Find a Bible verse to back up each principle.
25. What comes up as a memorial before God from Cornelius? Is this the same word we have already researched?
- a. What does the word "memorial" mean? Where do you think this memorial was "recorded"? See verse 31. Also, Malachi 3:16.
26. Compare Acts 10:34-35 with Romans 2:11-12, Ephesians 6:8-9, and Colossians 3:23-25. How do all of these passages relate to 1 Timothy 2:4?
27. What does Peter mean by the term "every nation" in Acts 10:35? See Revelation 5:9-10.

28. Describe the vision that Peter receives in your own words. What is Peter being taught here? How is Paul taught this same lesson?
29. In Acts 11:1-3, the news of Cornelius' conversion has reached Judea and Jerusalem before Peter had even returned to Jerusalem. What was the reaction to the rumors?
- What group immediately "contended" with Paul?
 - What does the word "contended" mean?
 - Does it appear as though they attempted to validate what they had heard?
 - What scriptural principles should be applied to a situation like this? How can we determine that we will not "jump to conclusions" or "react" without having the full story?
- e. When Peter had the chance to explain what had happened, what was the response?
30. Optional: Have you ever considered the wonder of God's providence and selection in the lives of Saul and Peter? Saul had the credentials that could impress the Jews, and Peter received the vision and participated in Cornelius' conversion making him the ideal person to preach to the Gentiles. But God selected Saul to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, and Peter served the Jews in Jerusalem. Brain storm some good reasons why God would have it go this way.

The Progression of the Witness of the Apostles

31. Acts 11:19 uses very similar language to a verse in Acts 8. Find the verse in Acts 8. Which verse is it?
32. Fill out this chart making note of the progression of preaching, in fulfillment of Jesus' words in Acts 1:8.

REFERENCE	WORD PREACHED TO...	BACKGROUND OF PERSON
<i>Acts 1-7</i>		
<i>Acts 8:5-25</i>		
<i>Acts 8:26-40</i>		
<i>Acts 9</i>		
<i>Acts 10:1-11:18</i>		
<i>Acts 11:20-Acts 28</i>		

33. Acts 11:20 states that they spake "unto the Grecians." Who were the Grecians in this case? Read verse 19 and 20 in the Revised Version. Was this group Jewish?

34. What was the response of this new group? (Acts 11:21)
- What does the word “turned” mean?
 - What is the context of it's use in Acts 3:19? What about the context of Acts 14:15, Acts 15:19, and Acts 26:20?
 - Do these references relate to Jews or Gentiles?
35. The Jerusalem Ecclesia sent Barnabas to “investigate” in Antioch. Was this necessary? Why do you think they felt it necessary?
36. Was Barnabas a good brother to send on this work? explain.
- Recall... What does his name mean? Did he live up to the mission?
 - What did Barnabas “see” when he arrived? What is the Greek word for “see”? This word features prominently in our second section, on the Fund.
 - Who did Barnabas think could help the Ecclesia at Antioch? Where did he find him?
37. Acts 11:26 tells us that “the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.” Why did this group need a new name? Why did we as Christadelphians need a different name?

Agabus and the Dearth (Acts 11:27-30) The Model Fund – The Apostle's Seed Idea

38. What is being described by the term “these days” in Acts 11:27? What is happening in the Ecclesial world during this time period?
39. What does the name Agabus mean? Where else does he appear in the Bible?
40. There never was a great dearth throughout all the world in the sense of a world-wide famine throughout the whole Roman habitable; but there was a series of famines that occurred throughout the reign and the time of Claudius. In fact, there were 4 great famines which occurred in his reign which began in AD.41. Research some history and see where these 4 famines occurred. (Match the place with the time period)

YEAR
41 AD
45 AD
49 AD
51 AD

LOCATION
Greece
Rome
Judea
Rome

41. Which famine is Agabus here signifying through the Spirit? And based on your answer, what is the timing of this “great dearth”?

42. Famine wasn't the only problem that beset the Jerusalem Ecclesia during these days. What else was happening during this period of tremendous growth in the Ecclesial world? Remember Acts 6. Find references throughout the New Testament to back up each challenge listed below.

CHALLENGE	PASSAGES
Expansion	
Excommunication	
Persecution	
Confiscation	
Deprivation	

43. How many of these situations do you face today? What does that make you think about this time period in Ecclesial history?

44. What is the the response of the Antioch Ecclesia in Acts 11:29? What were they determined to do?

45. Was the Antioch Ecclesia made up mostly of Jews or Gentiles (Hebrews or Grecians)?

46. Look up the phrases of Acts 11:29 in 3 other translations and write them down here to get a good sense of the meaning of this phrase.

47. What does “they determined to send relief” really mean?
- How were they determined to do it?
 - What does the word “determine” mean in the Greek?
 - What was the procedure they would do to make this relief happen?
 - What Old Testament provision of the Law does this remind you of?

The Model Fund of Acts 11

Remember, this fund collected and delivered by Paul and Barnabas is **not** the Jerusalem Poor Fund. This is an earlier collection from which Paul gets the idea for the Jerusalem Poor Fund. From this section in Acts 11:27-30, he pulls the principles together that will guide the Jerusalem Poor Fund.

48. Can you see this spirit and idea of “determining to send relief” today in our worship service on Sunday morning? When is it done on Sunday morning?

49. Can you see the same response in your labors for the Truth today?
- What are some examples of how we can “send relief unto the brethren” today?
 - Make a list of three other Bible characters who showed this same spirit.

Hymn 357

Take courage, my brother
 And be not fainthearted,
 Let none of your sorrows
 Nor trials impede,
 But reach forth your hand and
 Remember your brother,
 Forget all your troubles
 In meeting his need.

50. The guiding principles for the Jerusalem Poor Fund are found in 1 Corinthians 16:1-3. While we have not yet come to our examination of the Jerusalem Poor Fund (for that we have to wait for part II), we see that this fund in Acts 11 was certainly the source of the idea. Take a few minutes to read verse 1-3 and then outline what appear to be the guiding principles.

51. There are approximately five guiding principles used by Paul in the Jerusalem Poor Fund. The principles are listed below. Match each principle with a phrase from Acts 11:27-30 and 1 Corinthians 16:1-3.

- Their giving was to be based on God's blessing of them.

2. It was to deliberately set aside from their resources.
 3. It was to be their personal response.
 4. It was to be a practical show of brotherly love.
 5. It was to be conveyed by chosen delegates (decently and in order).
52. Do these five principles show themselves in our relief efforts today? Give examples.
53. Consider what it must have felt like to be a recipient of the care and generosity of your brothers and sisters from afar. Many of whom you would not even know. Now consider how you would feel if these were brethren and sisters of whom you had voiced suspicion, wondering whether they really were "Christadelphians"? How humbling! Make some notes on these considerations.

Tumultuous Events in Jerusalem - Acts 12

In Acts 12, we read about James' murder, Peter's imprisonment and his providential escape. We also read about the death of Herod, an act of divine judgment because he "gave not God the glory."

54. During this tumultuous time for the brethren and sisters in Jerusalem, who were staying in Jerusalem and witnessed these events? (Acts 11:30,12:25)

Paul's First Missionary Journey - Acts 13 - 14:26

55. Paul and Barnabas returned from Jerusalem bringing with them John Mark (Acts 12:25). It wasn't long before Yahweh intervened again with regards to the Gentiles. Explain the circumstances resulting in Paul and Barnabas heading into the mission field. What was their commission?



56. Trace their travels on a map, while reading Acts 13-14:26. Notice that now there are two “Antioch” Ecclesias? We differentiate them by referring to the original as “Antioch in Syria”, and the new one as “Antioch in Pisidia”

57. Unfortunately, we cannot allow ourselves to get side-tracked with the interesting events of Paul’s first journey. Make note of the following:

- a. During this time, the Galatian Ecclesias of Antioch in Pisidia, Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium were established. Galatians 4:12-15 seems to indicate that Paul became sick during this journey and it was a result of his sickness (providential of course) that brought him there.
- b. Paul is now going to get a taste for what he will face the rest of his life. We get insight into his approach to teach the Gospel out of “Moses and the Prophets.”
- c. We see the typical response of the Jews. Just as the Jews in the land rejected this last offer, so do most of the Jews in dispersion. Be sure to make note of Acts 13:46-47.
- d. We see faith amongst the Gentiles and great joy proclaimed by those who realized the privilege they were under. (Acts 13:48)
- e. We see the suffering that Paul and many other believers endured as a result of the Jews stirring things up. After being stoned and left for dead what an encouragement it must have been to hear Paul exhorting the brethren that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”!

The Door of Faith Opened unto the Gentiles (Acts 14:27)

Upon their return to Antioch: “And when they were come, and had gathered the Ecclesia together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.”

Section 3 - “A Yoke Upon the Neck of the Disciples”

(Acts 15:10)

Reading

Carefully read Acts 15 and Galatians 1-2. (The Epistle to the Galatians was written after the events of Acts 15.)

Introduction

The “yoke” in scripture is predominantly a symbol of service and submission (obedience), but it is also a symbol of servitude and oppression. It is the latter sense that Paul used when he addressed those disciples who insisted on keeping the Law of Moses as a basis for righteousness. The yoke of oppression was even greater considering that their concept of “keeping” the Law was based on the corrupted practices of the Jewish leaders, who “bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.” (Matt. 23:4)

To better understand the challenge this posed for the devout Jew, think back to the natural feelings and challenges the Israelites would have felt when the manna ceased. Those who for all their lives had gone out early in the morning to gather of God’s provision, no longer needed to do so; but to sow and reap effectively in the land of promise, they would need to apply the same principles - rising early to labour in faith of God’s harvest.

Those who had developed a spirit of “going through the motions” in “keeping” the Law, now found themselves challenged to keep the “spirit” of the Law in daily life, while no longer under the “letter.”

Additionally, they had never formerly contemplated that the same message of salvation delivered to the “chosen people” would be made available to Gentiles without their compliance to the traditions and laws of the Jews. No longer were Gentiles required to become converts to the Jewish faith – since the circumstances of Cornelius were a direct intervention by God to achieve His purpose. Thus the “seed of Abraham” was extended to include faithful Gentiles as well as Jews. Contention and discord were to affect the early Ecclesias as this issue became a problem. What about the gross immorality and vain philosophy that was a way of life for Greeks and Romans? Could Gentiles really understand the principles of separation and holiness?

Further inflaming the situation was the spread of the truth, and the establishment of another Ecclesial center in Antioch. Could there be another “Ecclesial center” other than Jerusalem?

Thus the Jewish converts were particularly vulnerable to the false teaching of the Judaizers. This teaching, originating in Jerusalem, eventually spreads to every area. It is clear from reading Galatians that Paul has written them because they too have been drawn in. He “ marvels ” at the speed in which they were willing to put aside the “grace of Christ”, and follow those who would “pervert the gospel.” As Paul goes forth on his second journey, and into the events of his third journey, this issue raises its ugly head time and again.

In this section, we consider the events surrounding the Jerusalem Conference, where the issue was clarified (at least for the Gentiles), and where Paul receives his commission to “remember the poor.” It is doubtful that James and Peter anticipated the extent to which Paul would go in fulfilling this simple request, as we shall see in due course!

Events Covered

The Jerusalem Conference

The Jerusalem Conference: The merging of the work of Peter and Paul

1. Read Acts 14:27-15:41. What are the two opposing sides? How did the Jews normally view the Gentiles? Compare Mark 7:27
2. Read also what happens in Paul's speech in Antioch, Acts 13:14-52. What is the message of this speech?
3. How did the Jews react to Acts 13:39? How did the Gentiles react?
4. Where does Paul quote from in Acts 13:47?
5. How did Paul react to their persecution in verse 51? Where is this action spoken of by the Lord? Find at least 3 references.
6. Read Acts 15:1 carefully. Where was Antioch in relation to Jerusalem geographically? Would it be possible for them to "come down from Judea"? Why do you think Luke records this phrase for us?
7. What is a "Judaizer"? Is this term found in the Bible? What are synonymous terms?
8. In Acts 15:1, the "Judaizers" taught, "that except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Circumcision did not originally begin with Moses, but with which Old Testament character? Why would this crafty teaching be important to the issue of keeping the law?

Titus - Paul's Son After "the Common Faith"

9. Though not mentioned in the Acts account, Titus was there with Paul on this occasion. (Gal. 2:1-3) Why would Paul bring Titus along? What was Titus' background? (Titus is a key participant in part II of our studies)

- a. Why wasn't Titus compelled to be circumcised?
 - b. Optional: Some have suggested that Titus was actually the brother of Luke. Research the reasons for this suggestion. Were you able to form an opinion?
10. Compare and contrast verse 5 with verses 7-11 of Acts 15. What is the difference between what the sect of the Pharisees say and what Peter says?
 11. Why do you think Paul felt it necessary to join in this debate (Gal. 2:1-8)? Do you think Paul's background (Phil. 3:2-9) helped him deal with this issue effectively? Do you think he personally knew some of the "sect of the Pharisees" who planned this debate?
 12. Paul's strong resistance to this teaching is evident from Galatians 1 and 2. "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." Can we learn some principles for dealing with false doctrine in the Ecclesia from Paul's response?
 13. What had the Holy Spirit already witnessed about this matter? (Hint: Peter and Cornelius). Why had the "Judaizers" not accepted that answer?
 14. What had historically separated the Jews and Gentiles (Gen. 17:11, Lev. 17:11-13)?
 15. What is true circumcision in the eyes of God (Deut. 10:15-17, Rom. 2:29)?

Bro. John Thomas on the Judaizers

"...not being satisfied with the things of Christ, but seeking to combine the Mosaic institutions with the gospel. This was Judaizing, and the first step to that awful apostacy by which the world has been cursed for so many ages." (Elpis Israel)

Summary of the Judaizer's Position

Take a moment to review the table in Appendix I, which is taken from Bro. Ron Abel's book on the Jerusalem Poor Fund. This table does a nice job of summarizing their position and puts forth the correct doctrine.

Also included in Appendix I are some notes from Eureka Volume I, "The Harlot of the Ephah." Admittedly, hard reading, this fascinating article demonstrates how the doctrine and practice of the Judaizers laid the groundwork for the Apostacy.

James “the Just” - Emerging Leader of the Ecclesia at Jerusalem

Before we consider the conclusion of the Jerusalem Conference, let’s look at one of the key participants, James.

In Acts chapter 12, Peter is going away in verse 17 - and seems to point out James, the half-brother of Jesus as being an emerging leader in the Jerusalem Ecclesia. James as well as his brother Jude take great pains to ensure they are not seen as “riding the coat-tails” of their half-brother. They follow his example because of who he is, the Messiah. We know that this James is not James the brother of John since he was killed in Acts 12:2.

The spiritual development of James is every bit as dramatic as that of Peter, but much less known. During Jesus’ ministry, his brethren did not believe in him (John 7:5, Mark 3:21) but it would be the power of the resurrection of Christ that would change everything for James (Acts 1:14). The following chart gives an indication of how James was listening:

THE LORD’S IMPACT ON JAMES		
<i>Jesus’ Teaching</i>	<i>James’ Teaching</i>	<i>Subject</i>
Matt. 7:1	James 5:9, 4:11-12	Judgment
Matt. 6:19	James 5:2-5	Materialism
Matt. 7:24	James 1:22	Oaths

This table outlines the emergence of James as a leader in the Jerusalem Ecclesia:

Acts 12	“and he (Peter) said, Go shew these things unto James and to the brethren..”
Acts 15:13,19	“And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me ... Wherefore my sentence is that we trouble not them...”
Acts 21:18	“and the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present
Gal 2:9	“and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars...”
Gal 2:12	“For before that certain came from James”

The Epistle of James

James wrote his Epistle in to the Jewish brethren in the Diaspora. Examples of these would be those who were converted on the day of Pentecost, who were from far-flung locations (Acts 2:5-11), as well as the brethren who were scattered as a result of the persecution that arose after Stephen’s death (Acts 11:19).The content of the Epistle seems to indicate it was written before the Gospel went to the Gentiles, at least before the Jerusalem Conference. That would put the timing between AD 43-50.

16. This may be a good opportunity to have a quick read of James’ Epistle, as much if not most of it is relevant to our study.
 - a. Do concordance searches on the keywords “rich”, “poor”, “give”, “visit”, and “gain” in the Epistle of James. (there are more too so find your own by reading too)
 - b. What are some of the situations that James condemns?

- c. What are some principles that we learn from this Epistle about our perspective and actions towards our brethren and sisters who may be rich as well as to those who may be poor?

Now, back to Acts 15!

- 17. Read James' words in Acts 15:13-18. He states that what Peter has said is in agreement with the words of the prophets! "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name."
 - a. Where does the context of this verse come from? Hint: Exodus 12:1-15:21. This phrase calls to mind the whole book of Exodus, a repetition of the call of Israel out of Egypt. What does this show you about the character and ways of Yahweh?

- 18. What context is James using in verses 16-18? Look up the following references to help.
 - a. Jeremiah 12:15-16

b. Amos 9:11-12

c. Isaiah 45:21

19. What was the final resolution of the Jerusalem Conference of Acts 15? List the decision of Acts 15:20-21.

a. "Pollution of idols" - Romans 14:13-23, what principle is Paul stating here?

b. "and from fornication" - what does the word "fornication" mean?

c. "and from things strangled" - Did the Gentiles really have an issue with how they killed their food? Why do you think this was added to the decision?

d. "and from blood" - Lev 17:11, Hebrews 9:22 – What is the significance of blood in the Scriptures?
*How do the Jehovah's Witnesses misuse this verse?

20. Did this decision clear up the matter of Judaism? Did it answer the question of the Gentiles keeping the law? What was the purpose of the final decision?

a. Can you find the decision of this Conference anywhere else in the New Testament? If so, where?

b. Who is chosen to deliver this decision to the Ecclesias? What Ecclesias are they sent to?

21. Acts 15:28 states that these rules were "necessary things" and that the Conference did not want to lay upon them a "greater burden." What does the word "burden" mean? Why do you think these were "necessary things?" Reference the following passages with regards to this decision. Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 8,

Matthew 5:17-20, Matthew 15: 17-20.

22. In Galatians 2:9, Paul recounts how he was given the “right hands of fellowship” as he leaves to preach to the Gentiles. In the next verse he is told by James, Peter, and John to include something else in his work. What is this direction? And what is Paul’s response?
23. Look up the phrase “forward to do” in other translations and in your concordance. What does this tell us about Paul’s character, and how can this be a lesson for us?
24. Was this new instruction to Paul related to the decision of the Jerusalem conference?
25. Read Paul’s incident with Peter in Galatians 2:11-17. What is this incident all about? How does it relate to the Jerusalem Conference’s decision?
26. Find a reference in each of Paul’s epistles to the problem of Judaism (examples: James 2:10, 1 Tim. 1:9). Why was this such a large issue for Paul to deal with? Do you think the Jerusalem Conference settled this issue?
27. Optional: It would seem as though the Epistle to the Galatians was written immediately after the Jerusalem Conference. But, it could have been written later, perhaps at the end of Paul’s second journey. Do some research on when this Epistle might have been written, and record your conclusion here.

Silas - a “faithful brother”, and Paul’s companion

28. Here we are introduced to Silas, who will be Paul’s traveling companion during his Second Journey. Do some research on Silas. What was his background? What was he like? (hint: he is also referred to as “Silvanus”)

The Decision Brought to Antioch

29. What was the response of the Ecclesia at Antioch to the decision on the Conference? How do you see the context of Romans 2:14-15 apply here?

Section 4 - “Come Over into Macedonia and Help Us”

(Acts 16:9)

Reading

Read carefully Acts 15:30-Acts 18:18-22 (Paul’s 2nd Missionary Journey)

Trace his journey on a map to get a good feel for the locations of the various places, and the travel routes between them.

Introduction

Our last section ended with the decision of the “Jerusalem Conference” being brought to the Ecclesia at Antioch, and confirmed by the mouth of Judas and Silas as their representatives. We are told in 15:31 that the result of receiving the encouragement was great joy.

The 2nd Missionary Journey begins in Acts 15:36: “And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.”

This was classic Paul. He understood that the Ecclesias needed to be rooted and grounded in sound doctrine and practice. He took his responsibility seriously, and his earnest care for their welfare is evident in this initiative.

But Yahweh had more in store for Paul than what he may have initially had in mind! Recall that we are focusing on those events relevant to our study, so we will have to leave out some important events of the 2nd journey.

During the 2nd Journey, the Gospel comes to Macedonia and Achaia, the two areas of focus in part II of our study. So we are going to look at the events surrounding the establishment of Ecclesias in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth, and meet some of the individuals whose character and faith are seen in their response to the Jerusalem Poor Fund.

At this point, Paul and Barnabas’ work in the truth took separate paths .(Acts 15:37-41) It looks like they part company with hard feelings between them over John Mark’s capability to handle the mission Paul taking Silas, and Barnabas taking John Mark. No matter, for Yahweh’s work is bigger than personalities, and so Paul harbored no ill will towards either of them. (1 Cor. 9:6, 2 Tim.4:11) Barnabas, having played a key role in the first part of our studies, fades from the picture.

Timothy - Paul’s “Beloved Son” in the Truth (1 Cor. 4:17)

1. Take a few moments to research Timothy. (Search “Timothy” and “Timotheus”) What does his name mean?
 - a. What was his background?
 - b. Comment on his character and relationship with Paul as depicted in the Acts and the Epistles.

Events Covered

- The origins of Paul’s 2nd Missionary Journey
- The Gospel comes to Macedonia:
 - Philippi
 - Thessalonica
 - Berea
- The Gospel comes to Achaia:
 - Corinth

The Circumcision of Timothy - Acts 16:1-3

2. Why did Paul circumcise Timothy? (Acts 16:1-3)
 - a. Given everything that happened with the Jerusalem Conference, what did this open Paul up to be charged with?
 - b. We should *always* avoid personal hypocrisy, in addition, we must “abstain from all appearance of evil.” (1 Thess. 5:22) Have you ever been in a situation where to do the right thing, your actions would appear hypocritical to others who didn’t understand? What are some ways we can minimize the damage?
3. What were the “decrees” that they were delivering? (Acts 16:4, Acts 15:20-21)

Providential Direction

Follow the places of Acts 16:6-8 on a map. It is important for us to remember that when we pray for God’s providential guidance, we are not only praying for doors to open, but also for doors to close!

4. After Paul received the vision of the man of Macedonia, how would you characterize his response? (note down the action words in verse 10 and 11)
 - a. Note the personal pronoun “we” in verses 10 and 11. Who has joined Paul, Silas and Timothy?
 - b. How long did it take them to travel from Troas to Philippi? Later on, at the end of our studies, Paul travels in the opposite direction (from Philippi to Troas) in Acts 20:6, how many days did it take on that occasion? How does this indicate the speed and urgency with which they travelled on this occasion? Since most of that journey was made by ship, it seems they providentially had the wind filling their sails!
 - c. We can learn from Paul’s response. How?

Paul’s Policy on Accepting Support

The Apostle Paul had an unusually strong policy when it came to accepting support from the local Ecclesia and brethren and sisters. Consider the following passages as a starting point: Acts 18:3, Acts 20:33-35, 1 Cor. 9:18, 2 Cor. 11:9, 1 Thess. 2:9, 2 Thess. 3:8.

5. What was his policy and were some of the reasons behind it?

Bro. Thomas No Trader in Religion “... that we might not be chargeable to any of you” 2 Thess. 3:8

“It is a gratification to the writer to be able to say that he has left his home, 4,000 miles in the south-west; that he has travelled twice through Britain; delivered 170 addresses to the people; sat up early and late conversing with them on the things of the Kingdom, and written this work, that he may leave a testimony behind him, and as yet he has received no more than four shillings over his traveling expenses. He mentions this that the reader may be able to acquit him of being a trader in religion, and that what he says in this book concerning the “scriptural merchants” may not lose its point under the supposition that he also is one of the wealthy and thriving firm.” - John Thomas (Elpis Israel)

Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy Reach Philippi

6. Do some research on the city of Philippi and the area of Macedonia. Jot down some pertinent facts (start with facts given in the scriptures, and branch out to those from other sources such as Bible dictionary, etc.)

The Conversion of Lydia



7. Where did Paul usually go on the Sabbath? (Acts 13:14, 17:2, 18:4)
8. Where did Paul go on *this* Sabbath? What can we then infer about the Jews in Philippi?
9. Who had assembled together there for prayer?

10. What does Lydia's name mean?

- a. Where is Lydia from?
- b. Optional: Do some research on the phrase "seller of purple" what do you think she sold? Where did the purple dye come from?
- c. List some of the clues we are given in the record to indicate that Lydia is a business woman of considerable means (affluent). The fact that she is at the place where "Prayer was wont to be made" on the Sabbath indicates what about her character?
- d. Who "opened her heart"? Why? What is the lesson?
- e. What was the usual result for someone who accepted the truth and housed the Apostles in those days? (see Acts 17:5-7, for Macedonians: 1 Thess. 2:14)
- f. Look up "besought" and "constrained", examine some other translations. What is happening here? How did Lydia convince Paul to make an exception to his policy? What can we learn from this situation?
- g. Optional: Compare Lydia to the Virtuous Woman of Proverbs 31
- h. What Old Testament personality does Lydia remind you of?

The Man of Macedonia

Isn't it interesting that in his vision, Paul saw a "man" of Macedonia, but upon their arrival, the first convert is a "woman" who actually is not even from Macedonia?

The Philippian Ecclesia Established

11. Lydia was the first member of the Ecclesia at Philippi. Who else were converted during Paul's time in Philippi?
12. When Paul and Silas were officially released, they went to Lydia's house and "exhorted" (RSV) the brethren prior to departing. (v40) Where then was the Ecclesia meeting at that time?
13. What are some principles we learn about hospitality and genuine care from Lydia? (place a mark here because you may want to come back and add to your answer after completing our studies!)

20. Who appears to have been housing Paul and Silas?

The Berean Ecclesia Established Acts 17: 10-15

21. Do some research on the city of Berea. Jot down some pertinent facts. Use your concordance to find someone who was from here.

22. What were the Bereans commended for and how can we be commended in the same way?

23. Review the converts from the three cities in Macedonia. What group is prominently mentioned in all three situations? Do you see any significance in that?

Paul in Athens

When the Jews of Thessalonica stirred up the people of Berea against Paul, the brethren helped conduct Paul by sea to Athens. Silas and Timothy stayed behind in Berea until the brethren returned with a message from Paul to join him. (Acts 17:14-15). Paul's time in Athens was significant, but does not have a major bearing on our subject so we will not be covering it.

24. Note on the map that Athens (and Corinth) are not in Macedonia. What region are they part of?

The Corinthian Ecclesia Established Acts 18: 1-18

25. Research the city of Corinth. Spend a little more time on Corinth than you may have on Thessalonica and Berea, since this Ecclesia figures prominently in Part II, and the Jerusalem Poor Fund. What was Corinth known for? Where was it located? etc.

Daily Portion of the Word

"It is possible to yield to fits of intense application, to be followed by intervals of lassitude and spiritual aversion. Some let weeks roll on without reading their daily portion of scripture, thinking to make it up by reading a great deal more on some particular day. Both these are mistakes. We cannot feed healthily either in body or mind, by the plan of gorging. A steady supply, day by day, in quantity suited to our needs and capacities, is the method that leads to strength. A pertinacious adherence to the plan of daily reading an allotted portion (as by the Bible Companion) - a practice now happily common - will be found the best way to spiritual health." - Bro. Robert Roberts. "Crotchets"

26. Who were the first converts at Corinth? What was their background? Where were they from? Why were they there? What did Paul have in common with them?

27. While Paul was in Corinth, who provided for his needs above what he was able to make as a tent-maker so that he did not burden anyone? (you need to dig for this one - there is a reference in 2 Corinthians)
 - a. Logically, which Ecclesia would this have been, and who's spirit of genuine care must have been behind it?
28. Who joined Paul in Corinth and where did they come from?
29. Who else are named as converts in Corinth during Paul's time there?

30. What did the Lord say to Paul in a vision?
 - a. Why Paul need this encouragement?
31. How long did Paul stay there?
32. Optional: The naming of the pro-consul (deputy), Gallio helps us determine an approximate date for these events. Research this and determine the approximate date
33. In typical fashion, the Judaizers sought to bring Paul before the authorities. But instead of charging Paul with insurrection against Rome, they make their charge that he was persuading men to worship God contrary to the Law of Moses. Gallio wasn't interested in this angle and gave them no place. So, instead of fleeing to the next city, what was Paul able to do? How does this relate to our situation today?

Paul's Journey Back Acts 18:18-22 - End of 2nd Journey

34. Who accompanied Paul when he left Corinth? Where did he go next?
35. Optional: We are told in Acts 18:18 that Paul had a vow, and had shorn his head. What did this indicate?

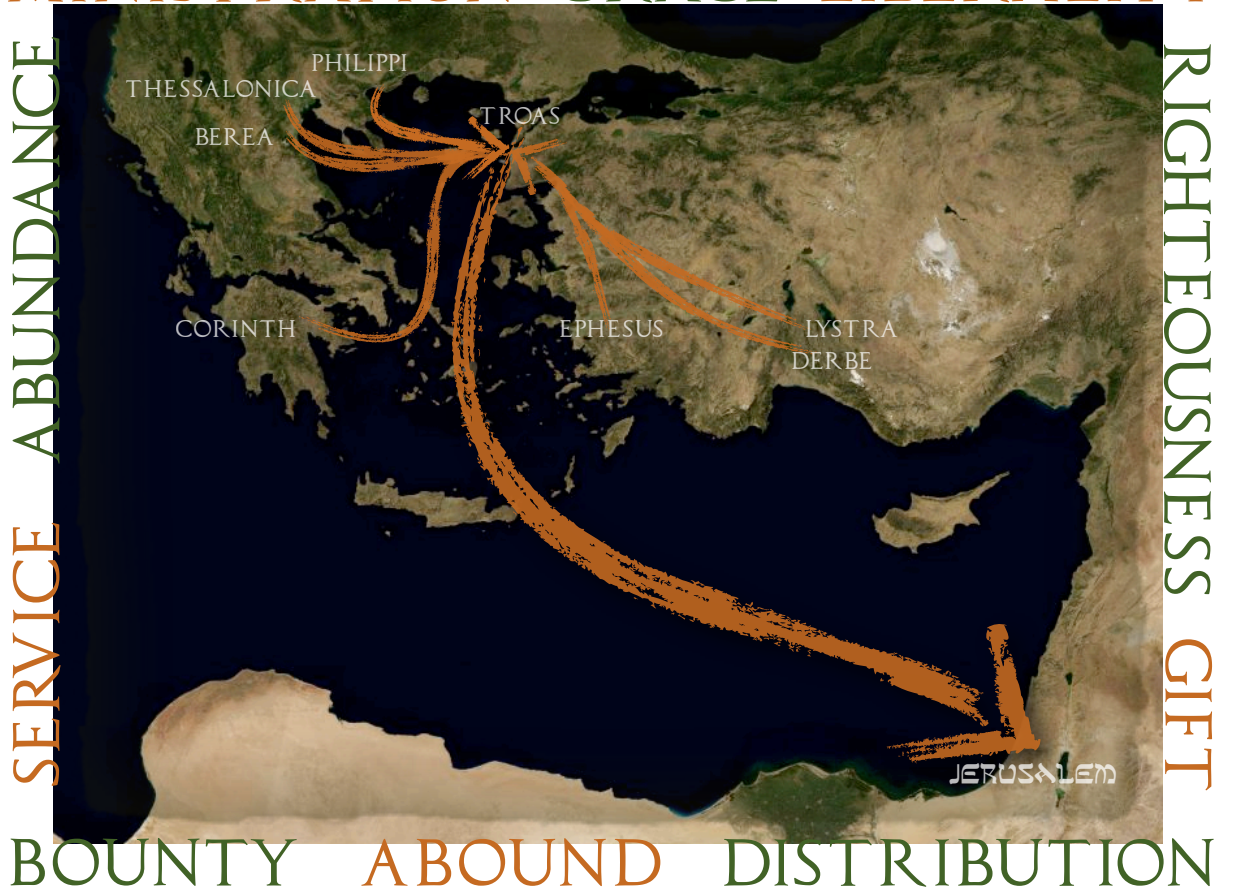
36. Why didn't Paul stay in Ephesus? What feast do you think it was?
37. Who stayed behind in Ephesus?
38. Optional: When Paul had "gone up" to Jerusalem, he "saluted the Ecclesia". Look up "saluted". What does it mean?

With that background, we have concluded part I of our studies. Let's now move to part II, where we learn about the Jerusalem Poor Fund, and how many of these events fit in!

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"Thanks Be Unto God For His Unspeakable Gift"

The Story of the Jerusalem Poor Fund

Part II

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Section 5 - “We had the sentence of death in ourselves”

(2 Cor. 1:9)

Reading

Carefully read Acts 18:23-20:2, 1 Corinthians 16

Introduction

We begin the second part of our study by considering Paul’s third journey. During this time, he continues the great work of preaching the gospel, but threaded into the narrative is the story of the collection for the “poor saints” in Jerusalem. In this section, we will attempt to bring out some of those threads. Most of the third journey is spent in the area of Asia, with Ephesus being his home base. While at Ephesus, he encountered fierce opposition to the Truth, yet persevered for over 3 years to ensure that the gospel would take root.

The situation in Corinth deteriorated rapidly from the time Paul established the Ecclesia there. The initial issues were of a moral nature, as a result of the vastly different moral code expected by God than these former Pagans were used to. Adding to the troubles, the Judaizing elements moved in and sowed seeds of division, doubt, and discord within the young and impressionable Ecclesia. Scandalous accusations and connotations were being made and inferred concerning Paul - assailing his apostleship, character, motivations, and actions.

In such a poisoned atmosphere, it is no wonder the initial enthusiasm of the Corinthians for the Jerusalem poor fund waned. In fact, they completely stopped collecting for the fund! We’ll spend a good amount of our time in part II of the workbook considering Paul’s moving appeal in 2 Cor. 8 and 9 to inspire them to complete what they had started.

Paul’s Third Missionary Journey - Acts 18:22 - 21:15

1. After spending time back at his “base” Ecclesia of Antioch, Paul begins his third journey by visiting the Ecclesias in Galatia and Phrygia. The phrase “in order” give us the sense that he methodically went from Ecclesia to Ecclesia. What was his motivation for these visits? What else was he doing? (Hint: 1 Cor. 16:1)
2. In the mean time, where were Aquila and Priscilla?
3. **Optional:** Apollos is a most interesting character. Do a mini character study on Apollos and his “story” (write up on a separate document) Note the descriptive words used to describe his character!
4. Where was Apollos headed? Why do you think he was “disposed” to go there? what was his impact there?

Paul in Ephesus and surrounds - Acts 19

5. If we recall back in Acts 16:6, the Apostles were forbidden to preach in Asia, and providentially guided to Macedonia and on to Achaia. On the return voyage, they did visit Asia, and established a fledgling Ecclesia there, leaving Aquila and Priscilla to continue the efforts. Now Paul is back and is given opportunity and direction to spend several years in the area. What do these events teach us about “the ways of providence”?

6. Read the following passages: Acts 19, 1 Cor. 15:32, 16:8-9, 2 Cor. 1:8-10. How long was Paul in Ephesus and how would you characterize his time there?

7. Paul was undertaking a good work, but God did not make it easy on him. In fact, He made it harder, to the point where they “despaired even of life itself.” This brings up a key reality for our efforts in the Truth. We are going to encounter “fears within, fightings without” and the burning question is... how do we respond? What kept Paul going during this time, and how can we do the same?

“Fighting with Beasts at Ephesus”

“I have said with sincerity, and will say, perhaps, many times over again, because they are the words of sober truth – that God has revived the Truth in our age by Bro. Thomas, and that **the best work a man can put his hand to, in this age, is to defend that work against all assaults** whether the open antagonism of those who call the Truth “blasphemy” or the insidious attacks involved in theories that make the Word of God of none effect.” - R. Roberts (quoted in Christadelphian Standards)

The letters to Corinth - where do they fit in?

It is useful to see where the letters to Corinth fit in our story. The evidence points to a series of communications during Paul’s 3 years in Ephesus and surrounding areas (1 Cor. 16:8). We will attempt to elucidate a straightforward outline from snippets of information given in the scriptures, and for further research direct you to Bro. Barling’s book on “The letters to Corinth” and Bro. Ashton’s book on “The challenge of Corinthians.” We recommend that you take some time to read both letters to Corinth.

8. While at Ephesus, Paul receives a number of reports from the Corinthian Ecclesia. The following passages in 1 Corinthians reveal this: 1:11-17, 5:1-13, 7:1, 16:17

- a. What were some of the sources of these reports?
- b. What were some of the things that he heard? How would this have added to his stress? How would this have ‘confirmed’ the ‘suspicions’ of the Jewish brethren?

c. What do we learn about Paul’s communications to the Corinthians? Is 1 Corinthians really the first letter he has written to them?

9. Here is Bro. Ashton’s suggested sequence leading up to 1 Corinthians:

EVENTS	
1	While he is in Ephesus, Paul hears of the moral problems affecting brothers and sisters in Corinth
2	He writes to the Ecclesia with an urgent appeal to deal with their problems. This letter has been lost and is sometimes referred to as the "Hortatory letter" (Exhortation).
3	Further reports reach him at Ephesus that the problems are continuing and deep-seated
4	He also receives a letter from the Ecclesia in Corinth asking questions about a variety of subjects
5	Timothy is sent from Ephesus to Macedonia and Achaia (Corinth). (Acts 19:22, 1 Cor. 4:17, 16:10-11)
6	He writes another letter of appeal, and tries also to answer their specific questions (1 Corinthians), sending it with Titus.

10. Given the character of Apollos, one would have expected his presence in Corinth (Acts 19:1) to have mitigated some of these issues. Why was he not a factor? (Hint: 1 Cor. 16:12)

The fund in 1 Corinthians

11. The fund is directly mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16. Recall that in part I of the workbook, we examined this chapter, and established the principles concerning the fund. (take a moment to look back and review them)

- a. When were the Ecclesias to collect for the fund? What else happened at that time? (Acts 20:7)
- b. This is obviously the scriptural precedent for taking up a "free-will offering" on Sunday mornings. Track down a copy of the "Ecclesial Guide" by Bro. Robert Roberts and read his comments about the place of the collection on Sunday Mornings

12. The churches of apostate christianity as well as many secular socialist "organizations" have developed a broad range of "methods" for raising funds for their benevolent acts. Some of the "methods" include: bingo games, bake sales, fee-based dinners, raffles, variety concerts, and plays. Other "methods" that guarantee a more consistent stream of income involve "sponsoring" whether a family, child, town, or project, where donors commit to a monthly "donation" of a certain, fixed amount.

- a. Are any of these "methods" based on scriptural precedent? (provide references)
- b. Do we see any of these "methods" in use in the Ecclesial world today?
- c. What "methods" were associated with the Jerusalem Poor Fund? Do we see any of *these* "methods" in use in the Ecclesial world today?

- d. Discuss the pros and cons of using outside “methods”, that are not backed by first-century precedent in our works of benevolence. Do the “ends” justify the “means”? Place a “star” next to this question and return to it at the end of our studies. See if you have developed further insight.

Planning to complete the fund - Acts 19:20-22

13. In Acts 19:20-22, the sowing in Ephesus was bearing fruit with the word of God “growing mightily” and “prevailing.”, Paul turns his attention on his larger mission. Where was he ultimately determined to go”? Can you find a prior command that explains his determination to go there? (hint: think about the Apostles commission as well as Paul’s commission)
14. Paul is in Ephesus, and as he plans to go to Jerusalem before heading to his ultimate destination, he plans a route that takes him through the areas of Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 19:21). Were these cities on the way to Jerusalem from Ephesus? Do you think that one reason to travel through each of these Ecclesias again was to collect for the fund?
15. Who did he send ahead of him into Macedonia?

From Ephesus to Macedonia - 20:1-2

16. After the uproar in Ephesus, Paul heads to Macedonia. What indicates that he likely went from Ecclesia to Ecclesia in Macedonia?

While in Macedonia, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 2:12-13,9:2). Here is a suggestion of the sequence of events leading up to 2 Corinthians. Please read Bro. Ashton’s or Bro. Barling’s book for a full explanation of the pieces of information that lead to this sequence.

EVENTS	
1	While in Corinth, Titus helped to organize the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem
2	Timothy returned to Ephesus with news of a rapidly deteriorating situation in Corinth
3	Paul made a very short and hurried visit to Corinth, and was strongly opposed by adversaries in the Ecclesia.
4	After returning to Ephesus, Paul wrote a very severe letter to the Ecclesia, probably sending it again with Titus who must have returned to Ephesus.
5	After sending the letter, Paul was anxious about its effects. He left Ephesus for Macedonia, and met Titus, probably at Philippi, who brought encouraging news about the majority in the Ecclesia (2 Cor. 2:12-13)
6	From Macedonia, Paul wrote the letter we have as 2 Corinthians, and sent it by Titus and two other brethren: one of whom was probably Luke. (2 Cor. 2:12-13, 9:2)

The fund in 2 Corinthians

The background of the situation in the Corinthian Ecclesia, Paul's relationship with the brethren and sisters there, and the charges made against him all have bearing on Paul's passionate appeal in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 concerning the Jerusalem Poor Fund.

17. Review the table on pages 9-14 of Bro. Ron Abel's book (PDF available on website), outlining the charges that the Judaizers had made against Paul, and his response. It is helpful to realize from the outline of events that Paul had only recently been reconciled to the brethren and sisters in Corinth (event 5 above) and so his appeal concerning the fund would need to be presented with great care, in light of the previous charges against him of embezzling the funds.

Scriptural "Agape"

"Agape is complementary to a belief of the Truth, and **if severity is required to establish the Truth then such conduct is in keeping with agape** - how different from the "love" of Evangelical Christianity, in which benevolent acts devoid of a belief of the Truth are applauded as the apex of Christianity." - Bro. Ron Abel, "2 Corinthians" pp. 36.

In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, we discover that the charges against Paul have had their impact... the Corinthians have stopped collecting for the fund. And so the Apostle delicately yet powerfully gives them every reason to complete the fund. With that background of the Third Journey, and the Corinthian Ecclesia, let's look at chapters 8 and 9 of 2nd Corinthians in detail.

Further Reading

- "The Letters To Corinth" - Bro. W.F. Barling
- "2 Corinthians" - Study Notes - Bro. Ron Abel
- "The Challenge of Corinthians" - Bro. Michael Ashton
- "The Letter to the Philippians" - Bro. T. J. Barling
- "Philippians" - Bro. Jim Luke
- "The Letter to the Ephesians" - Bro. John Carter
- "Quenching all the Fiery Darts of the Wicked" - Bro. Ron Abel
- "Paul the Apostle" - Bro. W.H. Boulton

Section 6 - “Now therefore perform the doing of it”

(2 Cor. 8:11)

Reading

Carefully read 2 Corinthians 8

Introduction

In the previous section, we continued to build our insight and understanding of the events of Paul’s third journey, and the circumstances surrounding the 1st and 2nd letters to the Corinthians.

Having come to the 2nd letter, we want to now investigate chapters 8 and 9. This section of Scripture forms the essential part of a study of the Jerusalem Poor Fund, where Paul appeals to the Corinthians to restart their collections for the poor saints in Jerusalem, and thus match initial enthusiasm with “performance”.

Let’s take a closer look at these two chapters and the desire of the Apostle to continue this collection with the Ecclesias of Achaia. As Bro. Ron Abel writes, “Paul’s appeal to the Corinthians in these two chapters must be one of the most moving and tactful appeals in all of the Scriptures. It is an appeal worthy of careful study and emulation.”

Three Key Words

Before we get into the verse-by-verse study, we want to pick out some key words that we are going to run across as we read through these two chapters. Key words often give us the main idea of any section of the Bible we are considering.

1. Read through 2 Corinthians 8 & 9 and see if any words are used in this section of Scripture that catch your attention. Jot them down here:

2. **The first key word** is used in **2 Cor. 8:1,4,6,7,9,16,19** and **2 Cor. 9:8,14,15** (Hint: it’s not always translated the same way so you’ll have to get out your Concordance to double check).
 - a. This key word has two aspects in it’s definition. Look up it’s meaning in Strong’s Concordance and any other Bible study tools and write down it’s meaning here.

 - b. How many times is this word found in these two chapters? Do you believe there to be any significance behind that? (Think Jew and Gentile)

3. **The second key word** is used in **2 Cor. 8:2,2,7,7,14,14** and **2 Cor. 9:8,8,12** (Hint: it’s not always translated the same way so you’ll have to get out your Concordance to double check).

- a. Look up it's meaning in Strong's Concordance and any other Bible study tools and write down it's meaning here.
4. **The third key word** is used in **2 Cor. 8:4,19,20** and **2 Cor. 9:1,12,13** (Hint: it's not always translated the same way so you'll have to get out your Concordance to double check).
- a. Look up it's meaning in Strong's Concordance and any other Bible study tools and write down it's meaning here.
5. These key words are also used in different parts of Scripture that relate to the Lord Jesus Christ. Look up the following references and match them with each of the key words found in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9. (One of the verses has 2 key words)

REFERENCE	KEY WORD
Acts 15:11	
Romans 5:15	
Mark 10:45	

The lesson of 2 Corinthians 8 & 9

6. As we continue to look at these two inspiring chapters, remember these three key words and the lesson the Apostle is trying to teach each of us. Fill in the three blanks below with the key words to form a complete sentence that truly expresses what our personal response should be from this study.

The spirit of _____ at work in the life of an individual would inspire them to _____ in a spirit of _____ to the needs of others.

2 Corinthians 8:1-12: An appeal for enthusiastic support of the fund

Verses 1-5: The example of Macedonia – the grace of extreme generosity

7. The Apostle Paul begins his appeal to the Corinthian Ecclesia to give generously for the sake of the fund by encouraging them to match the enthusiasm of the Macedonian Ecclesias.
- a. Is this an example of “friendly competition” or “positive peer pressure”? Explain your answer
- b. Was this an effective strategy for Paul to use? Why/Why not?
- c. How could we attempt to use this strategy in our Ecclesias and CYCs? List both pros and cons.

2 Cor. 8:1: "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the Ecclesias of Macedonia; "

8. The Apostle does not bother to explain to the Corinthians the background of the fund. In what chapter has he already done this in 1 Corinthians?
9. Look in another translation for another meaning of "we do you to wit." What does it mean?
10. Which Ecclesias are Paul referring to? (Remember from part I)

2 Cor. 8:2: "How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. "

11. This statement presents a contradiction from the human point of view. How could a "superabundance of joy" be experienced during a "severe trial of affliction" and "extreme poverty"?
12. Give two other Scriptural examples of joy being shown during a severe trial. Also compare Phil. 2:25-30 and Phil. 2:4.
13. Look back through a "history book" to see if you can find what was happening in Macedonia at this time that was causing these brethren deep poverty and great trial of affliction.
14. Give another Scriptural example of a person who gave their all, but had very little. What does the word "penury" mean in Luke 21:2? What is the Divine principle in these examples?

2 Cor. 8:3: "For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;"

15. What does the Greek word for "power" mean in this verse?

16. What do you think motivated them?

17. How was Paul able to bear record? Where was he writing this letter (2 Corinthians) from?

“Willing of Themselves”

There was no pressure on these brethren to give. They were “willing of themselves” and this was really the key to their giving. They gave of their own free will, “quite spontaneously”, “voluntarily.”

2 Cor. 8:4: “Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.”

Note: In most texts the phrases “that we would receive” and “take upon us” are omitted.

18. Of all the characters from Macedonia that we considered in Part I, whose spirit permeates this description of the Macedonian response?

19. Which word in this verse is the word “charis” or “grace”? In what sense is it being used here?

20. The word fellowship in this verse give us the idea of “participation or sharing.” So the brethren in severe trial in Macedonia were really “begging for the favour (grace) of taking part in the relief of the saints.” Read this verse in the RSV and the Jerusalem Bible. How often do you beg for the favour of doing work in your Ecclesia? Or around your house? Or within the CYC? What does this tell us about the level of enthusiasm that we need to bring to our Ecclesias?

21. Who was the ministering for? How do you think this applies to Galatians 6:10.

2 Cor. 8:5: “And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.”

22. What does “this they did, not as we hoped” really mean? Is Paul implying that he was a bit disappointed in their effort? Look up the phrase in Moffatt’s translation to get a better sense of the phrase.

23. What was the secret to the success of the Macedonian brethren and sisters? What did they first do before they gave to their brethren?

24. Look up the word “first” used here in Strong's. Give the definition here.
25. What does this tell us about our own personal priorities in relation to the Truth? Compare the following two passages Mark 6:33, Mark 12:29-30. Find at least one more reference that shows what should come first in our life. Who was the ultimate example of giving, even to the laying down of his life?

The Macedonian Example

So the brethren of Macedonia did not just give their money to the poor saints of Judea. The Jerusalem Poor Fund and the principles behind it are about much more than simply money. This is about learning the spirit of the Truth and learning to give ourselves to the work of the Truth. The spirit of giving is fundamental to the work of the Truth and has its start with our own personal dedication to our Heavenly Father. We must first give our own selves to the Lord, and when we learn to put the Truth first in our lives, then everything else will flow off that spirit, including our collections. The Apostle Paul uses a wonderful example for the Corinthians to follow by pointing out the love and dedication of the Ecclesias of Macedonia. Let us also follow their spirit!

2 Corinthians 8:6-8: An appeal to Corinth for a similar demonstration of their genuine love.

2 Cor. 8:6: “Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.”

26. What does Paul mean by “desired Titus to finish”? See 2 Corinthians 7:6-13.
- Why was a visit by Titus necessary? (The background of chapter 7 tells us of the recent reconciliation between the Apostle and the Ecclesia of Corinth.)
 - It seems as though Titus had already been to visit Corinth by Paul's request. What was the outcome of this visit?
27. What does Paul mean by the term “grace” in this verse? He is really talking about the collection, but he refers to it as “grace”. It was not simply a collection of funds, but the motive spirit behind the collection that mattered to the Apostle.
- What does he mean by “the same grace”? (same as what? Or who?) See verse 1. Read verse 6 in the RSV. The work was a work of grace since it involved the providential care of God and was nourished by the power of His Word and His vessel, Titus.

2 Cor. 8:7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

28. What does Paul mean by the Corinthians “abounding” in every thing? (See 1 Cor 1:17, 12:13)
29. What is Paul trying to get across in this verse? Read from Moffatt's translation to get a good sense of his meaning.

2 Cor. 8:8: “I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.”

30. Compare 1 Corinthians 7:10. Does the phrase, “I speak not by commandment” imply that Paul doesn't have God's authority (that this advice was not inspired) for what he is saying? Read from the Jerusalem Bible to get a better translation.
31. Who are the “others”? How was Paul trying to inspire the Corinthians in this case? He could not and would not force the Corinthians to donate to the fund for the relief in Judea, but he could show them a wonderful example.
32. We should never compare ourselves to others in a competitive way. Our greatest example is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is him alone whom we should follow, but that doesn't mean we can't surround ourselves with positive, spiritual influences. List 3 ways we can do this in family and Ecclesial life.

2 Corinthians 8:9: The example of Christ – selfless giving for others

2 Cor. 8:9: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

Just so the Corinthians wouldn't think that they were in competition with the Macedonian brethren, Paul now makes them aware of the greatest example. Even though the Macedonians were a good example, they were only

a good example because they were following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, who lived the principle of selflessly giving his life for others.

33. Compare and contrast how our Lord was/is both “rich” and “poor.” (See Hebrews 12: 2-3, Isaiah 53)

RICH	POOR

34. Compare the word used here in verse 9 for “poor” with the one used in verse 2 concerning the Macedonians. Do you think these two examples are powerful enough to make an impact on the Corinthians?

35. “yet for your sakes” - Look up the example of Christ in the following passages. Add others to this list when you run across any. Galatians 1:4, Galatians 2:20, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, Titus 2: 13-14. What is the main lesson of these passages?

36. Our response to these passages should be one of selfless giving for others. Check the following three passages and write down the lesson of each. Romans 12: 8,13, Ephesians 4:28, and Phil. 2:4. How do we give ourselves to the work of the Truth after the example of Christ?

37. Obviously the “riches” which are available to believers by the sacrificial work of Christ are not the riches of silver and gold, i.e. money. Believers are warned against the accumulation of natural riches often in the Bible. Find two references that relate to this. What “riches” are spoken of here? Find two references to solidify your answer.

2 Corinthians 8:10-12: The need to match initial enthusiasm with a practical response.

2 Cor. 8:10: "And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago."

38. What does the Greek word for "advice" mean here? What does the Greek word for "expedient" mean?

39. What does the Apostle mean that the Corinthians had "already begun a year ago"? See 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.

40. Why did they stop? Back up your answer with a Scriptural reference.

2 Cor. 8:11: "Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have."

41. What is the difference between "performance" and "readiness"? Define each word from the Concordance.

42. Often when we come back from a study weekend or Bible school we are excited about the Truth and have many big plans about Bible study and CYC. Our motives are often in the right place, but it always seems hard to follow through (the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak). What is the lesson of this verse in regards to this concept? What are some ways to overcome the flesh so that "there may be a performance" when we return from Youth Conference?

2 Cor. 8:12: "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

43. Which is the same word for "readiness" used in this verse? What point is Paul making?
44. Paul had earlier stressed this fact: "and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor... and have not charity (agape love) it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor, 13:3). What is Paul's conclusion therefore on what pleases Yahweh? Only a willing, eager mind? Or only the actions?
45. True or False: From the Divine point of view in regards to the collection, the **amount** of the contribution is not nearly so significant as the **motive** for giving.

2 Corinthians 8:13-24: The need to work together to finish the fund

2 Corinthians 8: 13-15: The example of Israel – the virtues of cooperation and sharing

2 Cor. 8:13: "For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:"

46. Define the words "eased" and "burdened" from Strong's concordance.
47. Paul is saying that he is not simply trying to reverse the financial situation of the two parties. He is not intending to relieve the Judean brethren while burdening the Corinthians. Why does the Apostle have to make this statement? Do you think there would be some members in Corinth that would make excuses about why not to give?

2 Cor. 8:14: "But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:"

48. Define the words "equality" and "want." Read this verse from the Jerusalem Bible.
49. The Apostle Paul is making the point here that in the course of time there might be a situation when these two groups are in opposite circumstances. Sometimes we are in the position of help and sometimes we are in the position to receive. Look up Romans 15:27 and 1 Corinthians 9:11 and write down the spiritual principle. How does this make you think about helping people financially/naturally without helping them spiritually?

2 Cor. 8:15: "As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack."

50. Paul shows his knowledge of the Scriptures by pulling this quote out of Exodus. Where specifically does it come from and what is the context? (Familiarize yourself with this story if needed)

51. Did everyone gather the same amount of manna (see Exodus 16:17)?

52. Why would some be able to gather more than others?

53. Did every person receive the same amount in the end? What happened to the excess portion that some of the children of Israel tried to selfishly keep for themselves? For this principle to work, those who gathered more would need to continue to keep gathering more for how long?

54. How does this apply to the distribution of the Truth in Ecclesial life/CYC?

55. What is another Scriptural example of someone wanting to keep a portion back for themselves? (Think back to part I)

56. Why would this have been a powerful quotation (Exodus 16) for the Apostle to use in the context of asking the Corinthians to donate to their Judean brethren?

2 Corinthians 8:16-19: The example of the delegates – earnest zeal and care

2 Cor. 8:16: "But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you."

57. What is the meaning of the word "thanks?" In what sense is it used here?
58. Define the term "earnest care." Who's care was Titus' the same as? Read this verse in the Moffatt translation.

59. This word “earnest care” is actually a key word of chapter 8. It describes the spirit of the delegates or representatives of the fund. This word “earnest care” or “spoude” in the Greek is translated differently 6 times in this chapter. Locate the word and write down it’s different translations here. Do you think this appropriately describes the spirit of Titus and the other delegates of the fund?
60. What does it mean that “God put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus”? Did Titus have a choice in the matter? Did it remove free will? See Phil. 2:12-13. Give two other examples of God working like this in an individual (good or bad) in the Bible record.

2 Cor. 8:17: “For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you”

61. What does the word “exhortation” mean? What was the exhortation that Titus accepted? How is this word translated in verse 6 of this chapter?
62. What does this tell us about the man Titus? Read this verse from the NIV to pick up the phrase “of his own accord.” Titus had already been sent to Corinth by Paul once (see verse 6). Now he is going back to finish the work which he started. How far of a journey was this from Macedonia to Corinth? Does the amount of mileage Titus travelled on foot show us the idea of earnest care and zeal? Compare Titus and Isaiah (Isa. 6:8)
63. How can this spirit of initiative and willingness be actioned in own work for our Ecclesias and CYCs?

2 Cor. 8:18: “And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches”

64. Which brother is this? This phrase has also been translated “his brother” and this translation has the support of the Greek text.
65. Remember the pronouns of Acts 20:4-6? Which Ecclesia would Luke have been the delegate of? Can you support the hypothesis that Titus and Luke were brothers?

2 Cor. 8:19: "And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:"

66. Was this delegate Paul's personal choice? If not, who chose him?
67. The phrase "to the glory of the same Lord" can also be translated as "the glory of the Lord Himself." This is the whole reason the Apostle was gathering the fund. It wasn't for himself and it wasn't really for the Jerusalem Ecclesia, but instead it was for the Truth's sake and to follow the example of Christ. How can this attitude show itself in our own actions?

2 Corinthians 8:20-21: The example of Paul – guarding against criticism.

2 Cor. 8:20: "Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:"

68. What was the reason that the delegates had to be chosen to administer the fund with the Apostle Paul?
69. What does the Greek word "blame" mean here? Who were they going to blame if things went wrong?
70. The Apostle Paul was not worried about blame being put on him though. His primary concern was the success of the fund and what it stood for. Do you think the Apostle made the appropriate decision in having chosen delegates? Do we use this same method in our Ecclesias today?

2 Cor. 8:21: "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."

71. Which would be more difficult to achieve, "providing for honest things in the sight of the Lord?" or providing for honest things in the sight of men?" Why?
72. Paul had to "provide for honest things in the sight of men" because he was being accused by the Judaizers of stealing the money, among others things. Read 2 Corinthians 12:13-21. Write down all the terms that relate to money in this section. Paul's opponents had made him look like a common thief, but what is his honest defense?

73. Put yourself in Paul's shoes. How would you feel if after giving over three years of your life to a work of the Truth that all your adversaries did was criticize you? What would have been the easy thing for Paul to have done here? What would have been best for the Truth?

74. This verse (8:21) is a quotation from Proverbs 3:4. Fill out the following chart with scriptural principles regarding our honest conduct. How do we measure up to these principles in daily life?

PASSAGE	PRINCIPLE
Prov. 3:4 (LXX)	
1 Thess. 5:22	
1 Tim. 3:7, 5:14	
2 Cor. 8:20-21	
Rom. 12:17-18	
Col. 4:5	
1 Thess. 4:12	

75. Bro. John Carter commenting on this passage in his book on Romans states, "the spirit of that proverb was that actions that might be misunderstood should be avoided." Often we can justify our actions by saying, "well, this isn't wrong" instead of asking ourself the question, "Would this action be helpful to both myself and my brothers and sisters?" or even better, "How does this reflect God's character?" Look up the word "providing" (the Greek word "pronoeo") in this verse. How does this definition make you think about this Divine principle? Should we question all the possible outcomes of an action before we take action?

2 Corinthians 8:22-23: The example of the delegates – earnest zeal and care.

2 Cor. 8:22: "And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you."

76. Look at the list of delegates in Acts 20:4-5. Which delegate do you think Paul is now speaking about?

2 Cor. 8:23: "Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ."

77. **Optional:** Look up "partner" and "fellow-helper". What do they mean?

78. In what way were the delegates the "messengers of the Ecclesias"?

79. In what way were the delegates the "glory of Christ"?

2 Corinthians 8:24: A final appeal for loving cooperation.

2 Cor. 8:24: "Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the Ecclesias, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf."

80. What would be the "proof" of the Corinthian's agape towards their brethren? Who would recognize the "proof"?

81. List some practical things in the Truth that you find easy to give lip service to, but harder to "perform the doing of it"? How can you overcome this very human tendency?

Section 7 - "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy"

(Psalm 126:5)

Reading

Carefully read 2 Corinthians 9

Introduction

In chapter 9, the Apostle Paul continues his appeal to the brethren and sisters of the Corinthian Ecclesia to rekindle the enthusiasm and zeal they once had for the fund. He appeals to their conscience and example. He also appeals to scriptural principle, and draws a direct line to the prime directive of the Gospel: God Manifestation.

When we consider the principle of reaping and sowing, our mind casts back to the life of Isaac in Genesis 26, who on the heels of an embarrassing lack of faith, repented, and in a remarkable act of faith, sowed during an oppressive drought and "received in the same year an hundredfold: and Yahweh blessed him." How true are the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 126:5-6: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

In this part of his appeal, Paul uses a plethora of Old Testament examples. This serves a number of purposes, including a demonstration that the principles involved are not just Paul's ideas but are consistent with God's word, and the practices of the faithful of old. They also teach that even under the old covenant, Yahweh sought to inspire His people to raise their thinking to the motivation behind their actions. How much more then ought the believers who had a full knowledge of the "unspeakable gift" which the Law foreshadowed, be able to demonstrate the operative principles of the new covenant, by providing for their brethren and sisters in need?

2 Corinthians 9:1-7: The value of a generous contribution to the fund.

2 Corinthians 9:1-2: "An encouraging reminder of their early zeal to minister to others."

2 Cor. 9:1: "For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:"

1. This verse sounds a bit odd because while Paul is writing to them he says it is superfluous for him to write to them. Paul essentially says in this verse that, "it is not necessary for me to write to you." Why was this not necessary (answer in the next verse)? What was he writing about?

2 Cor. 9:2: "For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many."

2. What does the word "forwardness" mean in the Greek?
3. What had brought these collections to a stop in Corinth (2 Cor.8:10)?

4. The Apostle had used the Corinthians as an example to the Ecclesias of Macedonia because a year before this writing they had been very zealous. What does the Greek word for zeal mean (also look at it's root word)? Read this verse from the RSV.
5. What is the Apostle Paul's lesson to the Corinthians here? (Keep in mind that he has already told them how generous the contributions from Macedonia had been.)

2 Corinthians 9:3-5: The need for their collections to be carefully prepared and ready.

2 Cor. 9:3: "Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:"

He says in verse 1 that he didn't have to write to them about their motives for giving, but if we follow the context, the Apostle uses a lot of joining words to arrive at verse 3 (yet, lest, therefore, but). So here are the two things he is writing about: 1)the speed of their collections and 2) the size of their contribution.

6. Who are the brethren referred to in this verse? Who was "the brother sent"? (Reference 2 Cor. 8:22, Eph. 6:21, Colossians 4:7, Titus 3:12, 2 Tim. 4:12)
7. How many times in these two chapters does he talk about "his boasting"? Cite the references. What do you think he means by this phrase?
8. Look up the word "ready" in your Concordance. Where else is it used in the Bible? Does it mean more than just to be ready?

2 Cor. 9:4: "Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting."

9. The word for "ready" in this verse is different. What is Paul now speaking about?
10. The word for "ashamed" means to disgrace, to cause to blush, and to dishonour. Not only would Paul feel humiliated, but he suggests that the Corinthians would as well.
11. Stop for a moment and put yourself in Paul's shoes. If you had been asked to do something by the CYC or Ecclesial members at your meeting, would you put this much time and energy into it? Paul spent three years of his life organizing this fund. He went over all the Ecclesial world, Ecclesia by Ecclesia, giving them specific instructions on what to do as well as motivated them to do it. What made him so driven? He didn't push off this work on other people or take it lightly! How do we measure to this standard with our responsibilities to our brethren and to our Ecclesias?

2 Cor. 9:5: "Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness."

12. Why does Paul need to send the brethren "before" unto them?

13. Paul uses the term "bounty" here in reference to the collection. There are at least eight other terms he uses to describe the same thing in these two chapters. List six of these terms and write down why he doesn't just use the term "money"? (hint: think back to the claims against him)

14. Turn to the example in Exodus 35:21-22. Where did the bracelets, earrings, rings, and all the other jewels come from? What principle then comes out of this Biblical example? When we give our money to a collection on Sunday morning what does it become?

15. Which of the children of Israel participated in this offering? Do you see a similarity with the brethren of Achaia and Corinth?

16. What does the Greek word for "covetousness" mean? Compare other translations to match this to the spirit of Exodus 35.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7: An appeal to give with a joyful, spontaneous liberality.

2 Cor. 9:6: "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

17. The word "but" here is translated as "Mark this" and "But note this." The Apostle Paul is now going to make a point that he wants the Corinthians to remember and think about. Where else does he paraphrase this verse?

18. Follow the references listed below on "sowing and reaping" and label those that are used in a positive context and which are used in a negative context.

REFERENCE	POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?
Job 4:8	
Proverbs 11:18	
Hosea 10:12	
Proverbs 22:8	
Hosea 7:8	

REFERENCE	POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?
Psalm 126:5-6	

19. Read Galatians 6:8. The lesson is that we reap the same **kind** of seed that we sow. How can you apply this to your daily life? Reference Ecclesiastes 11:6. What kind of seed do you regularly sow, the daily Bible readings and the “pioneer” works (Elpis Israel/Eureka etc.) or television and the internet? What language do you regularly use? What literature or magazines do you find yourself reading? What music do you have on in the car and in your home?

Sowing and Reaping

This seems like a fairly simple concept, but it is probably the hardest principle to put in action in our own lives. This is a fundamental law of nature that cannot be changed or overturned and it cannot be changed in our lives either.

20. What about the **amount** of seed that we sow? The single greatest reason for a poor harvest is poor sowing. How much time do you spend on things of the Truth as opposed to things of the world? If Christ remains away, we will all have responsibilities in our Ecclesias to preach the Truth (it is not always someone else's job). What are you doing now to prepare for this role?

21. How does this apply to 2 Corinthians 9? Why was Paul using this fundamental law of nature?

22. Why do you think the Apostle says “be not deceived”? Reference the following quotations to look at where else this phrase is used.

REFERENCE	BACKGROUND / CONTEXT
Proverbs 20:1	

REFERENCE	BACKGROUND / CONTEXT
Luke 21:8	
1 Corinthians 6:9	
1 Corinthians 15:33	
1 Timothy 2:14	

2 Cor. 9:7: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

23. Look back at Acts 11:29, what principle in the beginning of this verse repeating?
24. How can the phrase "as he purposeth in his heart" apply in your own work for the Truth today? What do you plan to do for the sake of the Truth?
25. Define the Greek words for "grudgingly" and "necessity."
26. This verse comes in part from the context of Deuteronomy 15. Read the chapter and write down at least two of the principles that are similar.
27. The statement at the end of this verse, "for God loveth a cheerful giver" is drawn from the Septuagint translation of Proverbs 22:8, where it says, "God loves a cheerful and liberal man." Why would Paul change the words from Proverbs (Hint: context)?

Sowing and Reaping

So in these first seven verse of chapter 9 we have the Apostle Paul exhorting the brethren of Corinth to careful preparation, sowing generously, sowing bountifully, sowing spontaneously, and sowing liberally. We need to remember that these principles not only influence our collections, but every aspect of the Truth in our lives. May we each be motivated by the spirit of God's grace at work in our own life and give ourselves for the work of the Truth.

2 Corinthians 9: 8-15: The Blessings and Benefits Accomplished in the Fund

2 Corinthians 9:8-11: God's power to bless the generous.

2 Cor. 9:8: "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:"

28. Count the number of times "God" is used in chapter 8:1-9:7. Now count the number of times "God" is spoken of in 9: 8-15 (remember the pronouns). What does this tell us about the emphasis of this last section?

God is the ultimate example of a giver and it is God's goodness towards us that is our ultimate basis of motivation in the Truth.

- 29. **Optional:** Count the superlatives used in verse 8. Paul uses these to emphasize the fact that he is now talking about God's power and there can be no limit to what God can do.
- 30. Locate the three key words from our study used in reference to God. (Verses 8-10) What does this tell you about Yahweh's character? If you look back at the "Key lesson of 2 Corinthians 8 & 9," who are you really following?
- 31. The 20th Century New Testament translates verse 8 this way, "God has the power to shower upon you every kind of blessing in abundance; so that having in all things and on all occasions a full supply for all your wants; you may be able to do an abundance of good actions of every kind." This is the principle of God manifestation. God gives to us that we might give to others through our actions. How has this worked in your own life?

2 Cor. 9:9: "(As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.)"

- 32. A few different verses are now cited in the next couple verses by the Apostle as proof that generous giving in the Truth is always rewarded. What are these verses (Hint: Psalm 112 and Isaiah 55)?
- 33. Continue to look at Psalm 112. Compare this chapter with Deuteronomy 15. What verse of the chapter seems to parallel 2 Corinthians 9:9?
- 34. The sense of these passages is that, "the righteous man gives to the poor and in turn, God blesses him for doing so. He can continue to give because God constantly replenishes his resources. How do people in the world generally view giving to others? Do you think they believe that if you give then God will bless you? How does this seem to work in the "real world?"
- 35. How is the word for "righteousness" used in this verse? (See the RSV margin and Weymouth) How is it used in Psalm 112:9?

REFERENCE	CONTEXT OF "RIGHTEOUSNESS"
Deuteronomy 24:10	
Psalm 112:9	

REFERENCE	CONTEXT OF "RIGHTEOUSNESS"
Daniel 4:27	(Look For Parallel Ideas)
Matthew 6:1	(The Word "Alms" = "Righteousness")

36. After looking at these references in the table above, what is your conclusion of how Paul is using these quotations, is "almsgiving" the same as "righteousness"?

2 Cor 9:10: "Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) "

37. Read Isaiah chapter 55. What is the rain in Isa. 55:10 likened to?

38. God's word doesn't return to Him void, but prospers in the thing whereto He sends it. How does the rain also "prosper"?

39. What are the three results outlined in 2 Cor. 9:10? What sort of fruits of righteousness are going to be increased here? (Read from Moffatt's or Weymouth.)

40. Surely, the Apostle is not going through these principles to tell us that if we put ten dollars in the collection on Sunday morning, we'll somehow make ten or more dollars during the week! What are the ways that we are blessed in return for our giving?

41. There is a current "Evangelical" movement, who preach what is referred to as the "Prosperity Gospel" - that if we are generous with our money, and help the poor, God will bless us with material wealth, because "God wants us to be rich". What scriptural principles would you use to refute this idea? (if you have the time, look up this movement to better understand the scriptures they use as their basis)

42. As opposed to the society around us, if we have been blessed in material things, what is the lesson of Ephesians 4:28? How should we, as followers of Christ, use an increase in riches and temporal blessings?

2 Cor. 9:11: "Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God."

43. Notice that verses 9 and 10 are in brackets. Read verse 8, then verse 11. What does Paul mean that we will be enriched in **every thing**?

44. What happens to our focus on self when we make concern for others a habit?

45. What does the Greek word for "bountifulness" mean? What does this tell us about our focus?

46. What are ways we can give with singleness of heart?

2 Corinthians 9:12-14: The benefits of unity and thanksgiving accomplished in the fund.

2 Cor. 9:12: "For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;"

47. The word "service" in this verse is used almost exclusively of the ritual and sacrificial services of the Tabernacle and the Temple. Reference Romans 15:16. How was the Jerusalem Poor fund a part of Paul's ministry? What was the "offering of the Gentiles"?

48. Identify both a practical and a spiritual need in this verse.

2 Cor. 9:13: "Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;"

49. This was not just an experiment by the Apostle, what does the word "experiment" really mean?

50. What did the evidence of this ministration cause the Jewish brethren to do?

51. What is the word for “liberal”? How is it translated in 2 Cor. 9:11? What is the meaning of “distribution” in this verse?
52. The lesson of this verse is that the recipients of the fund, the brethren in Judea, will bless God because of their single-minded fellowship unto them. So the Apostle Paul, as he ends his appeal to the Corinthians, tells them the wonderful effect that he believes and prays it will have upon the brethren in Judea in terms of binding them all together through the work of this collection. Reference Matthew 5:16. What does this teach us about the power of our example?

2 Cor. 9:14: “And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.”

53. Paul tells the Corinthians that they should not only give to supply the natural needs of their brethren in Judea, but that these brethren in Judea would also pray for them because the grace of God was evident in their actions. What does this verse tell us about what Paul is really hoping for?
54. Why would an Ecclesia such as Corinth, so famous for Gentile problems (immorality, idolatry, eating of meats offered to idols, etc), be a good test for the acceptance by the Judean brethren? Do you think Paul planned this?

2 Corinthians 9:15: The example of Yahweh – the unspeakable gift. A final prayer of gratitude.

2 Cor. 9:15: “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

55. Define the Greek words translated “Thanks”, “unspeakable”, and “gift.”

The Apostle Paul concludes his wonderful appeal by saying that the gift of God is something which is hard to put into words, something that is hard to express. It's inexpressible what God has done for us in what He has **given!**

56. What is “the gift” spoken of by Jesus in John 4:10?

57. Who was the gift given by God in Isaiah 9:6? Give another scriptural reference where a child was dedicated to the work of the Truth.
58. What is "the free gift" spoken of by Paul in Romans 5:15 and Romans 8:31-32?
59. What then is your conclusion on what this final verse means? Is Paul speaking about the "gift" being the Lord Jesus Christ? Or something else?

All of our blessings are based on God's love in giving. Read John 3:16. So whatever we are able to give, we can never match what God gave because God Himself is the perfect example of giving. We will never be able to give what God has given and even if we endeavor all our lives to give for the needs of others, it will only be a small resemblance of the greatness and superiority of what God has given and offered to each of us. So when we give for others, all we are really doing is following the example of Yahweh Himself and uniting with the Apostle Paul in saying, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!"

Section 8 - “The offering up of the Gentiles”

(Rom. 15:16)

Reading

Carefully read Romans 15, Acts 20:2-21:26

Introduction

Did Paul’s appeal to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 work? Did they return to their previous enthusiastic support? It appears that it did work! (see Romans 15:26)

Now, we have reached the point where the fund is ready to be delivered, the bags are sealed to mitigate any further charges against Paul of embezzlement, and the group is ready to go. Paul is determined to make it to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. And how fitting, where the 2 leavened loaves representing Jew and Gentile are presented up for an offering, the leaven representing the recognition of the failure of the offerer to fully attain to the principles involved, and therefore their complete dependence on the grace of God.

We began the first part of our workbook with some intriguing questions about the results of the Jerusalem poor fund : “Would it be successful? Would it help stop the defection of Jewish believers, who were in danger of becoming “entangled again with the yoke of bondage”? Would the Jewish believers be able to lay aside their mistrust of their Gentile brethren? For that we will have to wait until the end of our studies!”

Well, we are at “the end of our studies”, and the events which occurred were real events. Were this merely a fictional story, there would be moving scenes of thankfulness and reconciliation after a triumphant and celebratory journey to Jerusalem. Instead, the journey to Jerusalem is thick with foreboding and sorrow, and the conclusion perhaps not what might have been expected.

The initial “seed” idea of the fund started with a prophecy by Agabus, and fittingly, our story concludes with a prophecy by Agabus that Paul would be bound in Jerusalem. The emotional goodbye of Paul and the disciples from the various Ecclesias gives us a window into the raw emotions felt by all, not knowing what would happen - but Paul, typing our Lord Jesus Christ’s response to Peter, set his face like flint and said “what mean ye to break my heart?” for it was his determination to “finish my course” as Christ to the Gentiles.

Paul’s third missionary journey concluded - Acts 20:2 - 21:15

1. We pick up the story of the 3rd journey in Acts 20:2. Trace the locations visited as Paul leaves Ephesus and makes his way to Jerusalem. It might make it easier to make a list of the locations from the following references, then find them on a map: Acts 20:1,2,3,6,13,14,15; Acts 21:1,3,7,8,15.

In Acts 20:2-3, Paul arrives in Greece and spends 3 months in Corinth

The fund in Romans - Paul’s plan’s detailed - Romans 15

2. While at Corinth, Paul writes the letter to the Romans. Optional: prove this from Romans 16:1-2,23

There is no record of the founding of this Ecclesia. Evidently Paul knew many brethren and sisters there, including Priscilla and Aquila who must have returned to Rome sometime during Paul’s third journey (Romans 16:3). The lucid and powerful expositions about God’s righteousness, salvation, and Israel reflect many themes that Paul would have underscored as he faced Jews, Gentiles, and Judaizers.

Chapter 15 of Romans has reference to the fund, and gives us insight into Paul’s motivation and plans.

3. Romans 15:8-12: Jesus Christ, the “minister” of the Jews (“of circumcision”). **Optional:** What does the word “minister” mean in this case?

4. You can see Paul really pressing point the intention of God to include the Gentiles in the hope of Israel as he selects four quotations from the Law and the Prophets. What did the prophets predict concerning the “response” of the Gentiles to the mercy of God? Is this response evident in the Jerusalem poor fund?
5. Romans 15:16: Paul, the “minister” of the Gentiles. What does the word “minister” mean in this case?
6. Romans 15:16: What is the “offering” of the Gentiles? How would it be acceptable? Is there a secondary application to the delivery of the fund?

Read Romans 15:23-24 in the RSV. Paul has completed his work - He has now covered all the areas, and before he heads to Rome, the culmination of his 3 journeys, the crowning act, is to bring the generosity and grace of the Gentile Ecclesias to Jerusalem.

Romans 15:25-28: The fund

7. In verse 26, we have our proof that the Corinthians responded positively to Paul’s appeal. Notice that Paul doesn’t draw attention to himself. He doesn’t go on about how he organized this huge fund, etc. He doesn’t recount the prodding that was necessary in Achaia. He simply says “it hath pleased them...” What principle do we see in operation here? Can we resolve to do the same in our own circumstances?
8. Look up the word “contribution” what does it mean and how does it bring a new meaning to the work of the fund?
9. Explain Romans 15:27. What point is Paul making here? What bearing should this have on our attitude towards the Jews?
10. Romans 15:28: “sealed them this fruit”. Lookup “sealed” and “fruit” to see what Paul is saying. Do you think this is telling us the bags were personally sealed by Paul? Or just another way of saying “delivered them the fruits of their faith”?
11. Romans 15:30-31 - “service” for “Jerusalem”. What does Paul ask the disciples in Rome to pray for?

Acts 20:4-6: The Ecclesial delegates of the fund

12. From Acts chapter 20, fill out the missing information in this chart:

ECCLESIA	DELEGATE
Berea	
Thessalonica	Aristarchus
	Secundus
Derbe	Gaius
Derbe	
Asia	Trophimus
	Tychicus
Philippi	
Corinth	Titus
Corinth	Paul?

13. Some have felt that Paul was the other delegate for Corinth, as their reconciled brother. What evidence is there to support this idea?

Acts 20:13-15 The journey to Jerusalem - Troas to Miletus

The fascinating journey from Troas to Jerusalem is worthy of careful study and reflection. We must content ourselves with picking up only a few of the events. Traveling with all of that money would have been very dangerous for these brethren!

14. Acts 20:5-6. The NASB get's the sense right that these delegates went ahead and the rendezvous point was Troas. As he travelled back through Macedonia, who did Paul pick up at Philippi? (hint: look for the pronoun)

15. **Optional:** Follow Acts 20:13-14 on your map. What was Paul doing? What would have been "on his mind", perhaps?

Acts 20:16-38 Paul's moving exhortation to the Ephesian leaders while at Miletus

Even though he didn't have time to go to Ephesus, he made time for the leaders of the Ecclesia - to deliver a farewell exhortation, and warning of the growing apostacy in their midst.

16. What was Paul trying to get to Jerusalem in time for? Do you see any significance in the fund being delivered at this time? (think back to our previous research)

17. Based on Paul's exhortation in Acts 20:16-38, how do we know the Judaizers have been at work in Ephesus? Give at least 3 examples of Paul refuting the typical claims concerning himself as well as the fund.

18. In Acts 20:22, Paul states: “And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:” What does he mean by “bound in the spirit”?

19. In Acts 20:34, Paul tells the Ephesians what “drives” him, in the face of “bonds and afflictions”. What is it, and how can we develop the same spirit?

20. In Acts 20:35, Paul concludes his exhortation by pointing out that everything he has done was motivated by a desire to imitate Christ, and in so doing motivate others to do the same: “I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak (c.p. Romans 15:1), and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”
 - a. Where is it recorded that Jesus spoke these words? (hint: John 21:25)
 - b. Explain using scripture why “it is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Some helpful passages: Ps. 41:1-3, Prov. 19:17, Heb. 13:1-3)

Acts 21:1-6 - The journey to Jerusalem - Miletus to Tyre

21. Have you noticed that on this journey to Jerusalem, in nearly every case, the disciples pray as Paul and his band leave? Do you make it a habit to pray before you or other brethren & sisters embark on a journey?
22. The disciples in Tyre “said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem” (v4) Was Paul disobeying the command of the Spirit by going up to Jerusalem? Explain.

Acts 21:7-14 - The journey to Jerusalem - Tyre to Caesarea

23. In Caesarea, whose house did they stay at? Name at least 2 things he had in common with Paul’s mission (Hint: think back to Part 1)

24. Agabus’ prophecy. Why is it fitting that Agabus makes an appearance just as the fund is about to be brought to Jerusalem?

25. Who joins with the brethren and sisters of Caesarea to try and convince Paul not to go (v12)?

26. Have you ever placed practical concerns over spiritual ones? How can we with the right motives make the mistake of trying to convince someone from making a spiritually motivated decision? (here’s an example: your friend is considering a low-paying career that leaves lots of time for the work of the Truth)

27. Look up “breaking my heart”. What is an alternative rendering (try Youngs Literal Translation)?

28. How was this a journey of personal “atonement” for Paul?

Acts 21:15-17 - The journey to Jerusalem - Caesarea to Jerusalem

29. Look up the word “carriages” (v15) what is being referred to?

Notice v17: “the brethren received us gladly” - is it not amazing to see the spirit of earnest care and genuine hospitality that Paul encountered at every place in his journey to Jerusalem?

Acts 21:18-26: The presentation of the fund

30. When Paul and the delegates brought the fund to James and the elders, where did Paul place the emphasis as to who was behind the amazing events of his third journey, including the collection for the fund?

31. In true Luke style, there is no fanfare about the actual presentation of the money. Acts 24:17 makes it clear that this was the time when the fund was delivered. Describe the response of the brethren as outlined in Acts 21

32. We can imagine Paul breathlessly recounting the powerful work that Yahweh accomplished during his third journey, and the spirit of grace at work amongst the Gentiles and here is the evident token, the “fruit” of their agape love - alms for Jerusalem. Then the brethren from Jerusalem very quickly turn the conversation to all the thousands of Jews who are “zealous of the law”, and bring up the old accusations against Paul that is concerning these Jews, and what he needs to do. Does this sound like the hearts of Jew and Gentile “knit together” to you? Was this the conclusion to the fund that you envisioned? Read this chapter from a few different versions, and try to “put yourself there” and “picture the scene”. Jot down some notes about the conclusion and delivery of the fund.

33. We may never have an experience like Paul, where a work in the truth that we have put years of effort into, and weathered the ups and downs, doesn't work out as plans. Perhaps though, we have had a similar experience on a smaller scale.

a. How do we react when our efforts are not appreciated? What have we learned from Paul?

34. Interpretation of results. Like Paul, we may have a grand goal in mind, and it may be that it is not God's will for now. For instance, we may make a huge investment in time, energy, and resources into a preaching campaign that yields not a single visitor. Was that effort wasted? What are some important scriptural principles around the interpretation of results that can help us straighten our perspective?

The Apostle Paul - Dying to Self

When you are forgotten or neglected or purposely set at naught
And you don't sting and hurt with the insult of the oversight
But your heart is happy being counted worthy to suffer for Christ
Then that is dying to self.

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed
and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart or even defend yourself
But take it in patience and loving silence
That is dying to self

When you are content with any food, any offering, any raiment, any climate
Any society, even solitude, any interruption, as the will of God
That, my brother, is dying to self.

When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity
Any unpunctuality, any annoyance; when you can stand face to face
With waste and folly and extravagance and spiritual insensitivity
And endure it as Jesus endured it
That, my sister, is dying to self

When you no longer care to hear yourself in conversation
To record your own good works or itch after commendation
When you truly love to be unknown
That's dying to self.

When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself
And can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly
Finding no rebellion or resentment rising within your heart
That truly is dying to self.

When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met
And you can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy or question God
While your own needs are far greater and you are in desperate circumstances
That indeed is dying to self.

35. **Optional - Christ to the Gentiles:** The apostle Paul was truly a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is amazing to see the number of connections and types in Paul's journey to Jerusalem (with the offering of the Gentiles) that parallel the Lord's last days as he headed towards his great offering. Trace Paul's journey starting in Ephesus and see how many types you can come up with. See if you can find types for Jesus's rebuke of Peter, his struggle in the garden - and determination for God's will to be done, the "daughters of Jerusalem" that wept for him, Jesus prophecy in Luke 18:31, and more! (write up on a separate paper)

Conclusion

After all that work - the tireless efforts of the delegates like Titus to bring the gentile Ecclesias on board; the enthusiastic zeal of the Macedonians; the amazing way in which the spirit of Grace had motivated the Gentile brethren and sisters... and all the brethren in Jerusalem are interested in talking about is being "zealous for the Law."? One can feel the enthusiastic spirit being sucked out of the room, as Paul and his little group realizes their work did not have its intended effect. The old fears and fightings were stronger than ever. A lesser man would have completely thrown in the towel. But not the Apostle Paul. The fund was never about him, and so there was nothing to take personally. He would continue the work even while in bonds.

If the practical example of the motivating power of "grace" to inspire love and good works was not enough to get through to these brethren, could anything? The Spirit would motivate the Apostle to author the greatest exposition of the Law since Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy, (excluding the example and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ himself). The letter to the Hebrews would powerfully and eloquently demonstrate the superiority of the New Covenant in Christ Jesus (over the Law of Moses) as the true "Hope of Israel" having a better hope; a better mediator; a better High Priest; better Priesthood; better sacrifice; better holy of holies; better and more effectual everything.

The great struggles with both the Jews as well as the Judaizing spirit within the Ecclesia produced the letter to the Galatians, as well as that to the Hebrews. It is hard to imagine fully understanding the type of the Law, and how it fits with the New Covenant without these two letters. Likewise, in the modern history of the Truth, it is sobering to realize that much of our greatest exposition has occurred in the face of controversy. It can be easy to become discouraged when we encounter "fears within, fightings without" let us not be discouraged but realize that it has always been so. We can take comfort as the Apostles did when we fellowship the sufferings of Christ.

In the last days of Judah's Commonwealth, the great falling away had already begun to grow out of the nascent beginnings of the 1st century Ecclesia in Jerusalem. The Judaizing element would not return to the Law of Moses. Instead, they brought the focus on externals and justification by works of law into the Ecclesia. The results are still with us today, in the masses of false Christianity, and the Roman apostacy which will be judged at the return of Christ.

As we await our Lord's return in the waning days of the times of the Gentiles, let us determine to keep alive the pioneering spirit of the Apostle Paul and all those men and women of faith who first gave themselves to the Lord. Who experienced the joys of seeing the transformative power of God's word provoke brethren to respond with love and good works.

The Jerusalem Poor Fund is still in operation today, when brethren and sisters determine to “send relief” - of a willing spirit, being motivated and inspired by Yahweh’s Grace. When the example of the Macedonian brethren stirs us to go beyond our means in service to others; When the spirit of Lydia provokes a response of faithful hospitality; When a young brother, in the spirit of Isaiah and Titus says: “Here am I, send me” in the work of the Truth; When an aged brother holds fast to the end; When ordinary and seemingly mundane Ecclesial activities are zealously turned into something so much more - on a spiritual level; Then Yahweh will assuredly reap what has been sown by the Apostle Paul and the brethren and sisters who’s faithfulness has been recorded for our benefit. The principle of reaping and sowing doubtless holds true, for: “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” (Psalm 126:5-6)

At the great harvest, it will be seen that the work of the Apostle was not in vain. When he is raised from the dead to “stand in his lot”, he’ll discover that faithful men and women over the course of two-thousand years have benefitted from his tireless example as they sought to join him in imitating Christ and as it were “minister for Jerusalem” in their own lives and Ecclesias, for the hope of Israel.

More than anyone, Paul recognized that Israel was subject to their “turn” of blindness during the age of Gentile darkness, having . Yet he knew the scriptures: “all Israel shall be saved”, when the Gentiles would bring the Jewish “sons from afar” back to Zion. That time when the hearts of Jew and Gentile will be knit as one, when the offering of the Gentiles will be accepted, and the Jews grafted back into their own olive tree, in the bonds of the New Covenant. “When Yahweh turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. [2] Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, Yahweh hath done great things for them. [3] Yahweh hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.” (Psalm 126:1-3)

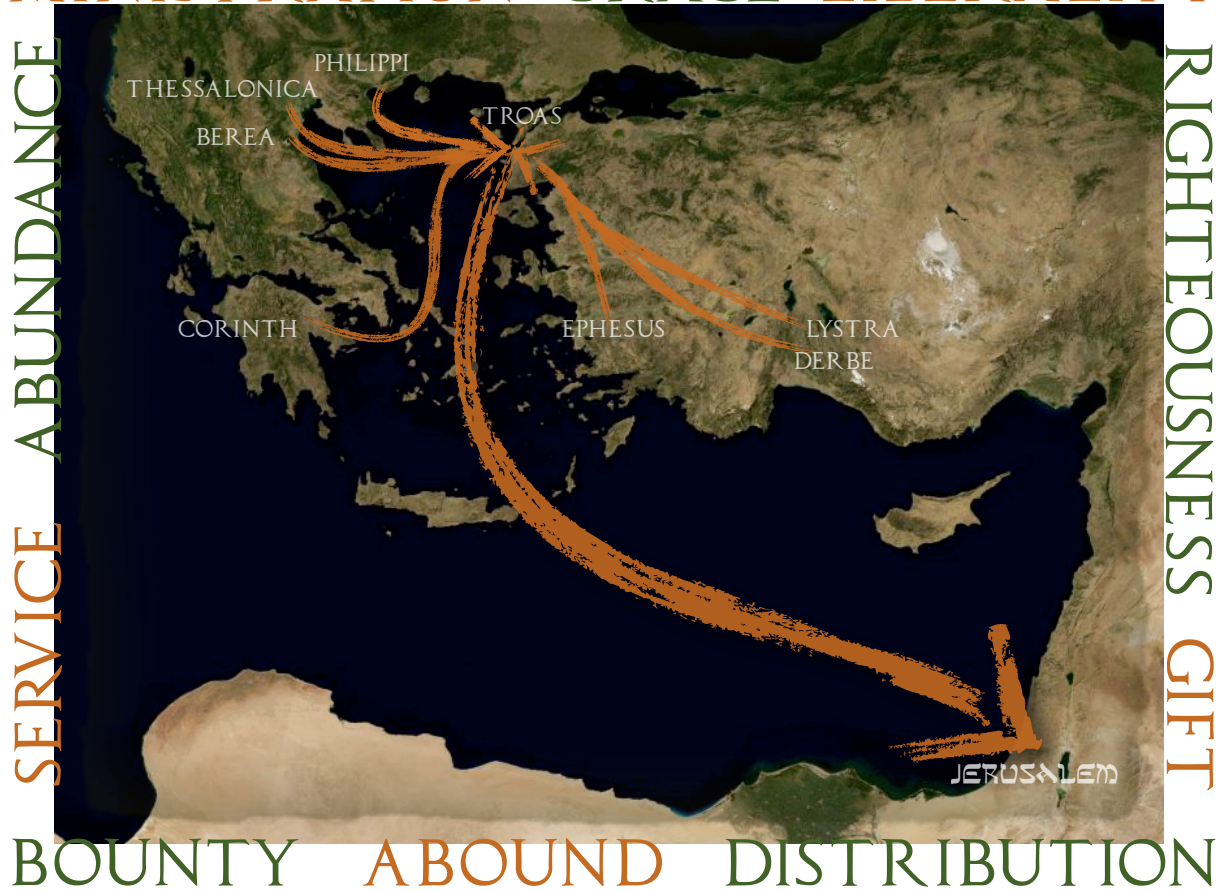
In light of all this, with bursting hearts we surely are able to exclaim:

Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!

Manitoulin Youth Conference

2010

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"Thanks Be Unto God For His Unspeakable Gift"

The Story of the Jerusalem Poor Fund

Part I - Appendix

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Luke “The Author of the Acts”

From “the Acts Expositor” (Bro. G. Mansfield)

Although his name does not appear in the record of Acts, authorship is attributed to “the beloved physician,” Luke. It is appropriate that this be so, for it is only Luke’s gospel which notes the significant prayer of the Master for the forgiveness of those who crucified him (Lk. 23:34), and, again, it is Luke who records further evidence that the prayer was answered in the wonderful mercy of the Father. This is apparent from the opening words of the book which refer to “the former treatise” documenting the activities of the Lord Jesus, and indicate that the record of Acts is a continuation of Luke’s gospel account.

Luke was a constant companion of the apostle Paul, and assisted him on the often difficult journeys that the apostle undertook in the cause of the Truth. Yet concerning him little is known; he is only mentioned three times in all the epistles. In Col. 4:14 he is referred to as “the beloved physician” - a term which obviously indicates the comfort that Paul enjoyed by his association. The apostle did not enjoy good health, and he had need of the assistance of someone with medical knowledge. Luke provided that need, and remained with him throughout the years. “Lucas” is found in Philemon 24, in a company of “fellow-labourers,” indicating the support and encouragement that the great apostle sought and received from his companions. The third reference is in 2 Tim. 4:11, recorded by Paul as he was facing execution at the hand of the Roman Emperor Nero: “Only Luke is with me, Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.” The loneliness of his isolation in the prison of Rome, the sadness of the experience in being separated from his brethren and sisters, and the overwhelming desire to do what he could for “the ministry” absorbed his mind. But in those circumstances, he was comforted in that the faithful Luke remained his companion to the end.

Luke was a Gentile, and must have been financially independent, otherwise he could not have travelled with Paul as his friend and useful companion, without some means of support. It is probable that Luke learned the Truth from the apostle, and in affection and gratitude, took upon himself the medical care of the oft-afflicted Paul. As a physician, Luke was a man of learning and knowledge, a keen observer and faithful recorder of the journeys and addresses of the apostles, He was evidently commissioned by Theophilus to record his knowledge of the facts concerning Jesus Christ and his apostles (Lk. 1:1-3; Acts 1:1-3). His gospel record is the most chronological and literary of the four; his record of the Acts takes into account the important aspects of the work as it developed from the ministry of Christ. It is said that “with his Greek mind he had a sense of form, a beautiful style - studied and elaborate.”

Luke must have written his gospel and the record of Acts before the death of the apostle Paul; thus his writing can be dated no later than AD67; most likely being completed in about AD63 when the events described in Acts concluded. Luke evidently joined the group of the apostles about fifteen to twenty years earlier, introduced by the term “we” in Acts 16:10. Some believe him to be the “man of Macedonia” mentioned in Acts 16:9, for it is immediately at this point that the personal references predominate the record.

After this vision, Luke crossed the sea with Paul and witnessed the baptism of Lydia, the first European believer, at Philippi. It was at Philippi, too, that Luke appears to have rejoined Paul during the last months of the third journey (about AD57), which ended with Paul’s removal in secrecy to Caesarea. At Caesarea, the apostle was allowed visitors during his two-year imprisonment, and Luke was almost certainly among them. It is possible that Luke used part of his time at, and around, Caesarea to collect material for his gospel, perhaps assisted through interviews with others and with Paul, who would have had time to discuss these matters with him. Certainly, however, this account recorded in Scripture was inspired, “as he was moved by the holy spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

When Paul was sent to Rome, probably in AD59, Luke sailed with him, and recorded the remarkable experiences of the sea journey - a masterpiece of nautical description found in Acts. 27.

Luke's qualifications for his great literary and historical works were manifold. He acquired an accurate knowledge of these events (Lk. 1:3), evidently gained from his long and close companionship with Paul, and his abundant opportunities of personal acquaintance with the other apostles. He had remarkable ability to chronicle and define the events in their important relationship to the work of Christ. Above and beyond all, however, he had the inspiration of the Spirit, by which divine authenticity is given to the purpose and benefit of the records he left for a faithful posterity. We can be most grateful to God for this picturesque and scriptural record of the work extended through His servants of the first century.

A tradition claims that following the death of his great friend, Luke retired to mainland Greece, where he died in Boeotia (the central plain), at the age of about eighty-four. But his work lives on, by the overriding principle of inspiration. We are greatly indebted to his meticulous character, obviously strengthened through his medical training, and developed by the influence of the Word. His two books provide much valuable information, and essential instruction. Together, they comprise a testimony to a great man of faith, and are able to develop spiritually-minded men and women who read his writings with keen desire, and learn the value of "repentance" and "restoration" - the two words that figure so prominently in his record of the Acts.

The Roman Historical Context

From "the Jerusalem Poor Fund" (Bro. Ron Abel)

Event	Roman Emperors	Acts
	* = Governor of Judea AD14: Tiberius* (Luke 3:1-2) AD26: Pontius Pilate* (Luke 23:1-25)	
AD30: Ascension of Jesus Appointment of the seven AD35: Death of Stephen Conversion of Paul	AD36: Marcellus*	Acts 1:6-11 Acts 6:1-7 Acts 7:54-8:1 Acts 9:1-30
	AD37: Marullus* Gaius (Caligula Acts 9:24, cf. 2 Cor. 11:32)	
AD40: Ecclesia at Antioch Execution of James, Imprisonment of Peter	AD41: Claudius (Acts 18:2) Herod Agrippa 1* (Acts 12:1-23) AD44 Cuspius Fadus*	Acts 11:19-30 Acts 12:1-25
AD45: Paul's 1st Journey Galatians Jerusalem Conference	AD46: Tiberius Alexander* AD48: Ventidius Cumanus*	Acts 13:1-14:28 Acts 15:1-35
AD50: Paul's 2nd Journey 1 Thess. & 2 Thess.	AD52: Antonius Felix* (Acts 23:24-24:27) AD54: Nero (Acts 25:11-12)	Acts 15:36-18:22 Gallio proconsul ~
AD55: Paul's 3rd Journey 1 Corinthians, Romans 2 Corinthians Paul's arrest in Jerusalem	AD59 Porcius Festus* (Acts 25, 26)	Acts 18:23-21:17 Acts 21:27-36
AD60: Paul's Journey to Rome 2 Years there Colossians, Philemon Ephesians, Philippians	AD 61: Albinus AD64: Gessius Florus*	Acts 21:1-28:15 Acts 28:30-31
AD65: 1 Timothy, Titus 2 Timothy		

~ Gallio's proconsulship of Achaia (Acts 18:12-17) is known to be A.D. 51-2 because of the inscription found at Delphi in 1905. Also the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius (Acts 18:2) was probably in A.D. 49. When Paul arrived at Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla had recently arrived there from Italy because of Claudius' edict. See J.W. Packer, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the N.E.B.*, (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1966), pp. 18, 19.

Acts and Epistles Timeline



Here is a useful timeline on the Acts and the Epistles.

The full size image will also be available on the Youth Conference Website.

“The Judaiser’s Position”

From “the Jerusalem Poor Fund” (Bro. Ron Abel)

Unless a vivid reconstruction of the Judaiser’s argumentation is undertaken, much of the force and subtlety of the Epistles is lost. Large sections of Romans, Galatians, 2nd Corinthians and Hebrews are concerned with this problem as are some of the other epistles (e.g. Philippians) and Acts of the Apostles. The plausibility of the Judaiser’s position is indicated by the temporary defection of Peter and Barnabas at Antioch (Gal. 2). The Jerusalem Conference was convened (Acts 15) to resolve the agitation which followed the Judaiser’s insistence: “Ye must be circumcised and keep the law”, (Acts 15:24). It should be noted that although Paul narrowly escaped death at the hands of hostile Jews, (for whom Paul was regarded as a “turncoat”), the Judaizing influence was caused by primarily converts in the Truth, (Cf. Acts 15:1,5,24; Gal 2:4,12). The following is an attempted reconstruction contrasting the Judaizing position with that of the Truth.

Judaiser’s Position	The Truth
The Law of Moses could confer life eternal for faithful obedience, (“the man that doeth it shall live”, Lev. 18:5; cf. Gal 3:12).	<p>“By the works of the law shall <u>no</u> flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16; cf. Rom. 3:20)</p> <p><u>Faith</u>, not law-keeping is the basis of justification - “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, ‘the just shall live by faith’” (Gal. 3:11).</p> <p>Law brings <u>cursing</u> not justification. “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them’” (Gal. 3:10). Judaisers were, in fact, cursed by the very Law they tried to impose on others - it was a ministration of death (2 Cor. 3:7)</p>
The Law of Moses was eternal since given by God through Moses the great Mediator.	<p>It was not eternal, but rather it was <u>added</u> because of transgression, until the seed should come (Gal. 3:19).</p> <p>It was a child-tutor (a schoolmaster) to bring men to the Messiah (Gal. 3:24), but when the heir becomes of age he no longer requires the tutor (Gal. 3:25)</p> <p>Observance of the Law of Moses cannot be essential for salvation since believers apart from obedience to the Law received the Spirit-gifts, thereby validating their standing before God (Gal. 3:5)</p>
Circumcision - Commanded of Abraham’s seed <u>for ever</u> (Gen. 17:13, “and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant)	Real circumcision is a matter of the <u>heart</u> , spiritual and not physical, (Rom. 2:29). This is proven by the fact that Abraham was given the covenant <u>before</u> he was circumcised (Rom. 4:10).

Judaizer's Position	The Truth
<p>Circumcision - Jews are God's firstborn people (Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1), children of Abraham. To them belong the privileges (Deut.7:6-18;14:2; Amos 3:2). Therefore Gentile converts wishing to share in these blessings must accept the token of the covenant - circumcision (Gen. 17:11).</p>	<p>Abraham was justified by faith apart from works of law. This is proven by the fact that the Law of Moses was not given until 430 years later (Gal. 3:17). The very argument used to prove that Law observance is required for salvation would eliminate the firstborn, Abraham himself!</p> <p>Pedigree (descent from Abraham) did not confer a perfect capability for law-keeping, therefore to claim one was Abraham's seed was ineffective in obtaining life eternal, since the law cursed all who did not continue in <u>all</u> things commanded by the law (James 2:10). The promises relate to only one <u>kind</u> of seed those demonstrating faith (Gal. 2:15). Therefore, the <u>true</u> heirs must be justified on the basis of faith as was Abraham.</p>
<p>Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was the embodiment of perfect law-keeping, therefore he earned life eternal. As the champion of the seed of Abraham he set the example as to how others could be saved.</p>	<p>The Law had no power to confer life eternal on Christ, since he was cursed by the Law (Gal. 3:13). Christ was raised because the righteousness of God required it (Rom. 3:25-26).</p> <p>Jesus was the embodiment of the Law but not as the example of what sheer will-power can do. He was rather the supreme example of divine strength made perfect in human weakness.</p> <p>The Law taught (as a schoolmaster) what Christ demonstrated. The flesh profits nothing (John 6:63). It revealed man's sinfulness "that every mouth might be stopped" (Rom. 3:19; 5:19-20; 7:9-10). Jesus was heard in that he <u>feared</u> (Heb. 5:7).</p>

“The Harlot of the Ephah”

From Eureka Volume I, Page 67-74 (Bro. John Thomas)

To see how the Judaizing influence led to the Apostacy, read through this section of Eureka, which is rooted in the prophecy of Zechariah.

In Zech. 5:1, the prophet tells us that he "turned." In doing this, he occupied an altered position, which caused him to face new objects. The Lamp and Trees were behind him; and on lifting up his eyes, and looking, he beheld "a roll twenty cubits long, and ten cubits broad, lying." On this roll a curse was inscribed; it is, therefore, styled "the curse." The flying of the roll indicated its progress, which became coextensive with the whole earth. The angel's words express this. In telling the prophet what it signified, he said, "This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of all the earth:" not of all the globe; but of "all the earth" in the sense of the phrase as it is used in Dan. 2:39; 4:22. In these places, the dominion of Nebuchadnezzar is said to extend "to the end of the earth;" and the brazen kingdom of the Greeks to "bear rule over all the earth:" the extent, however, of these two dominions was unequal; and neither of them included the countries now known as China, Burma, Central India, Russia, Germany, Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, the British Isles, and other countries. We need not, therefore, look for something coextensive with the globe as the significancy of the symbol; but coextensive with that section of it over which the subject of the symbol prevails. This is "all the earth" in relation to it, though of very limited extent in regard to the globe at large.

The roll contained cursing on both sides upon certain criminals designated as thieves and perjurers. These were not common criminals; but "the prophets that steal my words, saith Jehovah [Yahweh], every one from his neighbor, and use their tongues, and say, "He saith" (Jer. 23:30). These prophets were not only thieves, but also swearers - they invoked the name of the Lord falsely. "Both the prophet and the priest were profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith Jehovah [Yahweh]." This was the moral condition of the leaders of the Jews who caused them to err, and brought the Chaldean desolation upon them, from which a remnant had just been saved. The roll, therefore, which Zechariah saw, related not to the past, but to the future; when the prophets and priests in Jehovah's [Yahweh's] house should become thieves and swearers falsely by his name. In due time the curses of the roll would be brought forth upon them to their utter destruction - "they shall be consumed, together with the timber and stones of their house" (Zech. 5:4).

The resemblance of these ecclesiastical thieves and false invokers of Jehovah's [Yahweh's] name, is an "Ephah going forth." It is the measure of their wickedness, which, when filled up, would cause them to be brought forth from their land, as their fathers were. "This ephah is their resemblance over all the earth." But their wickedness which filled the measure is personified by a Woman, who is confined within the measure by a leaden weight, indicative of their being destined for the furnace of Jehovah's [Yahweh's] anger, which should blow upon them like fire, and melt them as lead -- Ezek. 12:18-22. *A measure of wickedness subjected to the melting fury of Jehovah [Yahweh] inscribed upon the sides of the roll* is the signification of the Talent of Lead, the Woman, the Ephah, and the Roll. But, in order to show whose wickedness is contained within the ephah, Ezekiel's Two Women are attached by the Spirit to the ephah. They were seen by Zechariah "lifting up the ephah, between the earth and the heavens;" that is, exalting wickedness to high places. These women are Aholah or Samaria, and Aholibah, or Jerusalem (Ezek. 23:4,5); the two capitals put representatively for the nation. At a future period of their history, Zechariah saw them in vision, "going forth," and "carrying the ephah," or measure of their wickedness, with them into the land of the enemy, that rends them with its "great iron teeth" -- the land of their captivity, where they build for their wickedness "a house which should be established upon its own foundation;" -- a house destined, with its occupants, to be consumed "to the timber and stones thereof."

The two women are represented with wings, like the wings of a stork. Moses classed the stork with unclean birds; so that for them to have such wings, shows that they were lewd, or unclean, women or communities. The stork is also a bird of passage, migrating from one country to another, at an appointed time; hence the women-bearers of the ephah being storklike in their means of flight, were to migrate at an appointed time from the land of their uncleanness. The last feature of the symbol to be named is that "the wind was in their wings." Wind is air in motion. When birds fly the air fills their wings, and eddies into them, so as to waft them onwards in the course of

flight. The wings of the two women indicate that they were fugitive; and being storklike, as we have said, that they were unclean and migratory. But wings are of no use without air to fill them; and no bird can pass through the air without setting it in motion, or producing wind. A bird could not fly in vacuo. Hence these unclean, and fugitively migratory communities must be propelled by wind. What is "wind" in relation to such? "Terrors," says Job, "pursue my soul as the wind" (30:15). In Jer. 4:11-13, the coming in of an army swiftly and fiercely, destroying all before them, is expressed by a dry wind, and a full wind. Thus, "It shall be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse: even a full wind from those places shall come unto me. Now also will I give sentence against them. Behold, he (the Destroyer of the Gentiles) shall come up as clouds and his chariots as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled." This was the kind of wind that was in the storklike wings of the two ephah-bearing women. They were borne on the wings of the wind, into the land of the spoiler.

Here, then, in the vision of the Roll Flying, and the Ephah, was a symbolical representation to Zechariah of a captivity of Jerusalem and Samaria in a period of judgment subsequently to his time. Hence, in searching out the meaning of the vision, we have to consult the history of the Jews posterior to the times of the prophet, and to ask of it this question - What "going forth" or captivity, on account of wickedness, has happened to Judah, since her return from the seventy years in Babylon? The only answer that history gives, and therefore the only answer that can be given, is, the "going forth," compelled by that dry and full-destroying wind which swept over the land as a whirlwind when the legions of the LITTLE HORN OF THE GOAT came from the eastern frontiers of the empire; and planted their Eagles before the walls of Jerusalem, under VESPASIAN and TITUS ["Titus was adored by the EASTERN LEGIONS, which under his command had recently achieved the conquest of Judea." (Gibbon, vol. 1, p. 37).] It was the prophecy of Daniel in ch. 8:9-12,23-25; 9:26,27, symbolically reproduced before the mind of Zechariah; and embodied by the Lord Jesus in his denunciations of the ecclesiastical thieves and perjurers, who "filled up the measure" or EPHAH "of their fathers" in crucifying him, in rejecting and perverting the glad tidings of Jehovah's [Yahweh's] Kingdom and Name; and in imprisoning, banishing, and killing the apostles whom he sent to them: so that upon Jerusalem and Samaria, with all that adhered to their wickedness, personified in the Apocalypse as "that, woman, Jezebel, who styles herself a prophetess, teaching and seducing the Lord's servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols" (ch. 2:20) upon her came all the righteous blood shed upon the land, from the blood of the righteous Abel even to the blood of Zechariah, son of Barachus, whom they slew in the siege between the temple and the altar - all came upon this generation - Matt. 23:32-36.

But the wind in their wings was not to fan nor to cleanse, but to spoil, and send the women and their wickedness of the ephah, forth from the land they had defiled. That "wicked generation" was as a man exorcised of an unclean spirit; but afterwards repossessed of one seven times more wicked. John the Baptist had ministered to all "Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jerusalem," the immersion of repentance, on the confession of their sins; and many of the Pharisees and Sadducees even came to be baptized (Matt. 3:5-7). This was a great national repentance; a casting out of the unclean spirit - an emptying, sweeping, and garnishing of the house of Judah, which now waited for the manifestation of the King of Israel, whom John proclaimed to be in their midst, though unknown to him and them. But when their attention was directed to Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Mary - who was claimed by a voice from heaven, and designated by the descending Spirit in dovelike form, as Son of God - they "saw no form nor comeliness; no beauty in him, that they should desire him." This national feeling of disappointment was aggravated by the rulers, whose hypocrisy he unveiled and denounced. The old spirit of evil, sevenfold increased, effected its entrance into the house of Judah, and dwelt there. Under its inspiration, Jesus was despised and rejected; they hid their faces from him, and esteemed him not. They oppressed and afflicted him; and though he had borne their griefs, and carried their sorrows, healing their diseases; yet they scourged, imprisoned, and ignominiously crucified him between thieves (Isa. 53). Thus Jerusalem, that killed the prophets, and stoned those that were sent unto her, when she had added to her crimes the death of Jesus, and the iniquity of the subsequent forty years, had attained to the consummation of transgression; and nothing remained but for "her house to be left to her desolate." So that, though the first of that generation was bad enough, its last condition was worse. In the green tree they had crucified the Holy and the Just One; in the dry, there was no abomination they eschewed. The ephah was filled, and the lead for the furnace rested upon it, to be melted when the fire should be kindled in Zion.

But before the fire was kindled, Jerusalem and Samaria had received the word of the Lord - Acts 8:14; 5:28; 6:7. They did not, however, long continue faithful; but began to steal the words, and to swear falsely by the name of the Lord. They began to teach contrary to the wholesome words of the Lord Jesus; and to assume authority in rivalry to the apostles themselves. They were opposed to the glad tidings of the kingdom being preached to any but Jews; but not being able to prevent it, they contended that all Gentiles ought to be circumcised, and to keep the law of Moses, as well as to believe the gospel and be baptized, or they could not be saved (1 Thess. 2:16; Acts 15:1-5). These Judaizers were particularly troublesome to the apostles. They commended themselves and gloried after the flesh, saying that they were Hebrews, and Israelites, and the seed of Abraham, and apostles, and ministers of Christ (2 Cor. 10:12; 11:13,18,22). But Paul says that they were false apostles, deceitful workers, and ministers of Satan, who perverted the truth, and preached another Jesus, another Spirit, and another Gospel; and that therefore they were accursed - (Gal. 1:6-9; 2:4; 4:17; 4:42). These accursed Judaizers were indefatigable in exalting themselves to the exclusion of Paul and the other apostles. Peter, James, John, and Jude are very hot against them in their epistles and in the letters to the seven ecclesias, they are denounced as pretended apostles, Nicolaitans, the Synagogue of Satan, holders of the doctrine of Balaam, jezebel the pseudo-prophetess, Satan, liars, and so forth. They were evil men and seducers, deceiving and being deceived; having forsaken the right way; and therefore "cursed children." These were the "false prophets" that Jesus predicted would arise, and deceive many. The effect of their teaching was to cause the spread of iniquity in all the cities of the land; and because of this the love of the many became cold; and the congregations in Judea became as apostate as the faithless generation whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. Jerusalem and Samaria had again earned for themselves the character of Ezekiel's Aholah and Aholibah, two women of lewd and treacherous demeanour. The Judaizers had corrupted them, and nothing remained but for them to be brought forth from the land with judgment, according "to the curse," or Roll in flight.

When the Apostasy in Judea was fully matured, the Ephah contained the Woman under the Talent of Lead; and when the Mosaic Law and institutions had vanished away as the result of the desolation of the Temple, all that were not slain or imprisoned, became sojourners in the lands of the Little Horn of the Goat. This national dispersion of the Jews was the flight of the two women into the countries of the Fourth Beast dominion, then pagan. In their flight, the Judaic Apostasy from the Christian Faith was not left in Judea, to grow up into a papacy there. But having been formed and organized in that country, and propagated from that centre, it was expelled from thence, and driven by the national calamity, the wind in the storklike wings of the two women, out of Canaan, that "they might build for her a house in the land of Shinar."

This saying connects the Judaic Apostasy with the Babylon of the Apocalypse - that "they," the Harlot-Judaizers of Judea and Samaria, "might build for her," the Wickedness, or Falsehood, systematized by them, and symbolized by the Ephah, Woman, and Lead, they bore with them in their flight, "a house," or kingdom, "in the land of Shinar," into which they were expelled. The house of Judah, in which Christianity was born and nourished, and transformed by "false brethren" into a system of falsehood, had been demolished. If this had not come to pass, they would, doubtless, in process of time, have got the upper hand in the Jewish State; and have built for their Harlot of the Ephah a kingdom in the native land of Christianity. But the demolition of Judah's Commonwealth, and the dispersion of all Jewish communities from Judea and Samaria, compelled the adherents of the Harlot of the Ephah, or Jezebel the Prophetess, to build for her a house in some other region than the Holy Land. This other region is styled in Zech. 5:11, ertz Shinar. This phrase is as symbolical, or representative, as the ephah, the woman, the lead, and so forth; and consequently is no more to be interpreted of the Shinar where Nimrod flourished, and his contemporaries built the Tower of Babel, than that "Ephah" is to be interpreted of three pecks and three pints; or the woman therein, of a literal woman shut up in a three-peck measure under a cover of lead. The literal and typical land of Shinar was that country into which Aholah and Aholibah had gone forth, because of profanity and falsehood against the Mosaic Law; and from which they had returned before Zechariah saw the vision of the Harlot of the Ephah. That was the Shinar of the past -- the Shinar of the Chaldeo-Babylonian Olahm, beginning with Nimrod and ending with Belshazzar. The Chaldeans, the rod of chastisement in Jehovah's [Yahweh's] hand, had blindly punished Judah and her companions for their apostasy from Moses; and had afterwards been punished in turn for their own crimes by the Medes and Persians. Thus, the Chaldeans being set aside, Judah and the nations entered upon a new cycle. The judgment on Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the judgment on Babylon by Cyrus, had avenged the past. A new era was now commenced, as indicated in Jehovah's [Yahweh's] words by Haggai, saying, "Consider, now, from this day forward; from the four and twentieth of the

ninth month from the day that the foundation of Jehovah's [Yahweh's] temple was laid, consider. Is the seed yet in the barn? As yet the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-tree have not brought forth: from this day will I bless" (ch. 2:19). Judah was thus invited to faithfulness, and consequent blessedness. Nevertheless, Jehovah [Yahweh], foreseeing that, when Messiah should appear among them, and cause that system of truth to be proclaimed, which was the great burden of the Law and the Prophets, they would become more wickedly apostate even by sevenfold than when carried off the land to Babylon - revealed it to Zechariah in the vision of the Harlot of the Ephah who should dwell in a future Shinar, antitypical in its relations to Judah and her Apostasy from Jehovah [Yahweh] to the Shinar of the past.

The word Shinar is derived from the nouns shain, a tooth, and ur, an enemy; it means, therefore, Enemy's Tooth; as Shinab signifies Father's Tooth. Hence the phrase eretz Shinar, means "the Land of the Enemy's Tooth." This was a very appropriate appellation for the region into which the Harlot of the Ephah was to be transplanted; and to acquire a house set up upon the foundation of her own wickedness. The Fourth Beast of Daniel's vision, the beast of the "GREAT IRON TEETH," had been a wind in the storklike wings of the two women by whom the Harlot of the Ephah was carried forth; and the testimony of the Apocalypse, as we have already seen, reveals her subsequent existence with all the impudence of a harlot and pretended prophetess, in the midst of the Seven Ecclesias of Asia Minor. This was a province of the dominion of the Great Iron Teeth; the enemy of Jews by nature, and of Jews by grace; in other words, the land of the enemy's tooth, or Shinar's land, where "Babylon the Great" was to be built up for Jezebel, the Harlot of the Ephah, by those "who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie, and are of the Synagogue of Satan" - (Apoc.2:9; 3:9) -- the two women that carry the Ephah.

When John was in Patmos, the Judaic Apostasy as leaven was leavening the whole lump. It was on this account that the seven letters were written to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. It was an era of contending elements, from which a new civil and ecclesiastical order of things was to "be established, and set upon her own foundation in the land of the Great Iron Teeth." At the epoch of the Apocalypse, the Iron Teeth were a pagan power; and ready to rend all that were not pagans. The Jews were divided between the Synagogue and the Church; and though the former boasted in Moses, and the latter in Jesus, the Iron Teeth regarded them all as Jews, and was the enemy of both. But in John's day, the Jews of the Church were divisible into two classes; first, those who were Jews inwardly without regard to flesh; and secondly, those who said they were Jews, but were liars. The first class were in scriptural fellowship with the apostle, but rapidly falling into the minority; so that in Sardis, for example, only "a few names" remained undefiled. It was the second class of Jews that constituted the great majority of those who passed current by the name of Christian. It was these who labored indefatigably in building a house for the Harlot of the Ephah. They became a powerful political faction in the land of the enemy; and having found a warrior to their mind in Constantine, they placed themselves under his leadership; and in A.D. 324, became the sole ruling power "in the land of Shinar" as defined.

The twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse opens with the exhibition of Jezebel the Prophetess, tricked out with the paraphernalia of royalty - not the royalty of the Kingdom of God, but the royalty of "the Twelve Caesars." In this chapter, the two classes of Jews are necessarily comprehended in the same symbol until the birth of the Man Child, after which a separation ensues; or rather, is symbolically manifested. Those who are Jews inwardly are represented by the fugitive woman, a persecuted community, defended by "the earth," and nourished in the wilderness for 1260 years. But the Jezebel faction, commonly styled "Catholic," and "Holy Catholic Church," had become the Harlot of the State. Her palace was built in the land of the enemy's tooth; for the Fourth Beast dominion had become her habitation to dwell in.

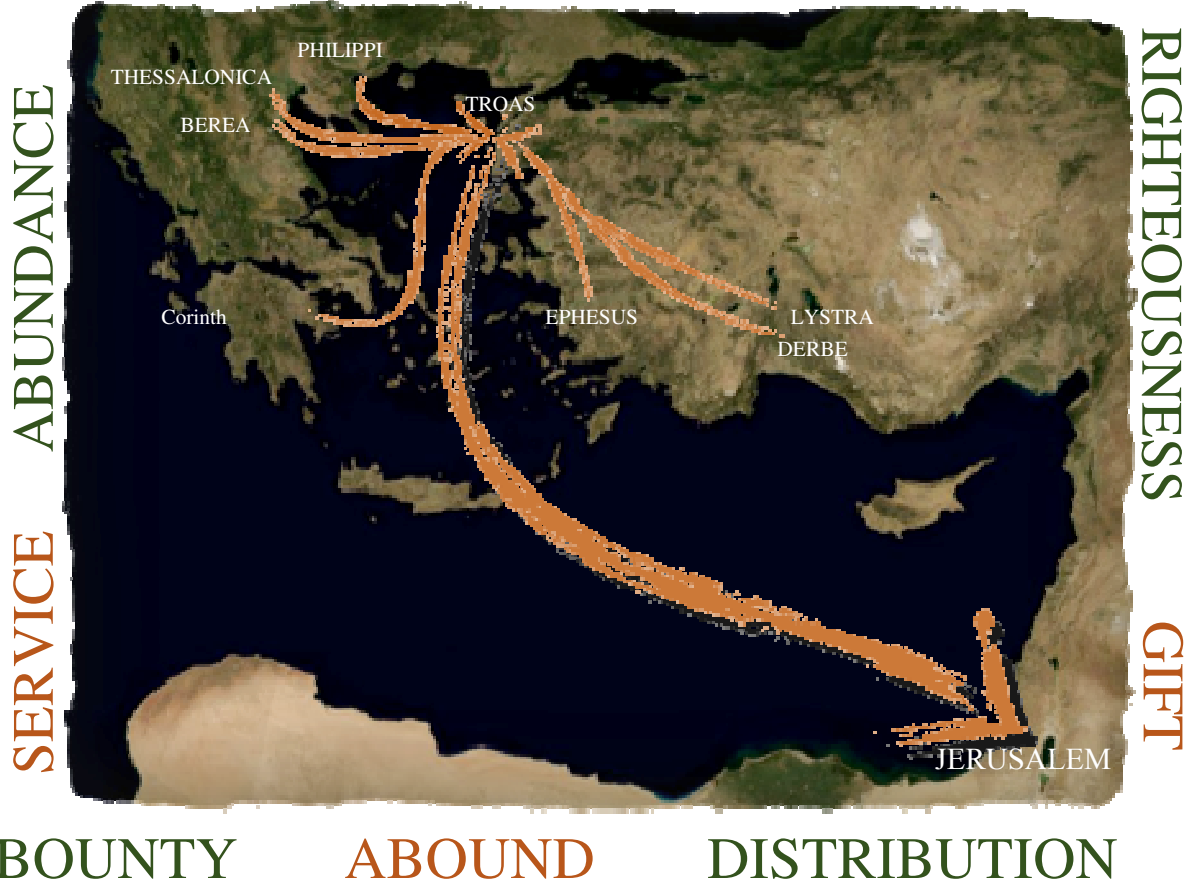
But she was not content to be subject to the civil power. She aimed to be THE STATE; and the State she at length became. Her growth was rapid, and her power became supreme over the Kings of the earth. She is brought out in this relation in Apoc.17 and 18. There she is seen in her house or kingdom, as the Great Harlot, ruling over many peoples, multitudes, nations, and their Kings; drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus; and saying, "I sit queen, and am not bereft, and sorrow can not at all behold." Such is the Harlot of the Ephah in the apocalyptic manifestation of Zechariah's vision. She is a ruling element in that "Great Mountain" which is to become a plain before Zerubbabel, according to the vision of the Lamp and Olive Branches - the Anointed Ones that stand before the Ruler of all the earth.

Manitoulin Youth Conference
2010

MINISTRATION

GRACE

LIBERALITY



“Thanks Be Unto God For His Unspeakable Gift”

The Story of the Jerusalem Poor Fund

Discussion Leaders Notes

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Day 1 - 1st Session - Workbook Section 1

Reading

- Acts 18:23-20:2, 1 Corinthians 16

General Advice

- A lot of ground to cover. Some of the lesson questions could generate hours of discussion. Keep it moving!

Key Principles and Points

- Five pillars of Ecclesial life - stress the importance of each, and examples for today
- What are “Alms”? (Righteousnesses)
- The spirit of the first century Ecclesia “All things in common” versus the literal “all things in common”. This model literally speaking was not consistently followed in the first century. But the spirit of it is important - the result of being of “one accord”
- Qualifications for those who serve in welfare capacity. The administrators of such need to be already bearing Godly fruit in their lives based on God’s word. Looking after welfare should not be an afterthought, but handled in harmony with scriptural directive by those most capable of discerning and properly applying it
- Preaching the truth to convert sinners is more important than providing “silver or gold” and more important than “serving tables”. This doesn’t mean we don’t provide for others needs (as we will see in our studies), but one has lasting, eternal benefit, the other is temporary.
- Understanding that Stephen’s defense marked an inflection point in the first century ecclesia. His articulation of the history of Israel, their disobedience to God, and God’s power to save outside of the Law was too much. Now the persecution is on!
- The abundant healing and signs of the apostles would have followed the pattern of Christ’s works with the purpose that “they might believe” (John 20:31)

Key Practical Lessons and Questions

- Bring out discussion on Q14, Q30
- Discussion on Q16-17 - The spirit of “all things in common”
- Discussion on Q18 - Materialism/Covetousness is a modern form of Idolatry Col 3:5.
- Giving with the wrong motives is Pharisaical.
- The dangers of elevating those who go above and beyond to do good works (e.g. missionaries, compelling speakers, etc.)
- Do we have the same compassion as exhibited by Christ and the Apostles? Why is it that sometimes we feel indifference or ambivalence? How can God’s word help us?

Neat Points

- Pentecost (Acts 2) - 3000 men “put on Christ” as a covering for sin, the first Pentecost would have been around the time when Israel was encamped at Sinai, receiving the Law, 3000 lives lost due to sin (Ex32:8), who were “naked” (v25)

Day 1 - 2nd Session - Workbook Section 2

Reading

- Acts 9-14 ... Don't read this in the group :-)

General Advice

- The "model" fund part is a must. Dedicate at least half the session on Q38-53

Key Principles and Points

- God's intervention necessary for his purpose to be worked out. The mysteries of the Gospel are now revealed, in this case, the "fellowship of the mystery of the Gospel" that the Gentiles were also to be called
- Recognize the enormous shift in thinking necessary for the Jews now!
- Discuss the character of Saul and his conversion
- Be sure you have done the research on "the way" Q10 so it can be properly explained
- The lessons of Cornelius are important and relevant, especially his "alms". Discuss Q22-26
- The issues facing the early Ecclesia Q42 - discuss and share references
- Discuss "determined to send relief"
- Discuss the guiding principles for the fund

Key Practical Lessons and Questions

- Bring out discussion on Q14 - Damaskan experiences. Be careful not to let the discussion run wild or have this topic take most of the session! Emphasize that while we are not superstitious, it is important for believers to see the providential hand of God in their lives, and to listen when he is trying to show us we are going the wrong way. In addition, emphasize that this is an introspective exercise... we don't want to be like Job's friends trying to come up with specific reasons why some things happen to others... fine for ourselves not fine for others.
- Talk about Q16 a and b. It is important to have spent some time mastering the first principles and be able to articulate the hope of Israel from the scriptures. It took Paul 3 years before he was ready... is it really right to burden our brethren in far off places with our inadequate preparation? Are we really able to help? Missionary work starts at home and in our local area... Paul's case was no different.
- Perhaps can have an exercise where everyone writes down 3 areas they want to change, and put it in their Bible in a passage from the New Testament reading 3 Sundays from now.
- The lesson from Q29 about jumping to conclusions without having the full story
- The practical questions from the model fund: Q48, Q49, Q52, Q53

Neat Points

- Paul's connection to "Saul" the failed king of Israel is unmistakable, including his persecution of God's "anointed". His decision to rename himself as "Paul" meaning "Little" has an interesting connection to "Mordecai" of Esther's day who had a similar connection to "Saul" and the Benjamites. "Mordecai" means "little", yet was able to wipe out the Amalekite (Haman and his family) which Saul had not done... and save God's people outside the land. Additionally, Paul considered himself as the "least" of all the Apostles.

Day 2 - 1st Session - Workbook Section 3

Reading

- Acts 15, Galatians 1-2

General Advice

- It can be tempting to draw a comparison between Ecclesial rules and regulations, and “Judaizers”. Hopefully this study helps avoid that wrong conclusion.
- Spend around half the time on James and Q16 since these are principles directly related to our attitudes and responsibilities regarding our brethren and sisters in need.

Key Principles and Points

- It is important that the definition of what is a “Judaizer” is understood. A “Judaizer” is someone who believes and is baptized into Christ, but still wants to keep the Law of Moses as a basis for righteousness. Those Jews who did not believe in Christ were not “Judaizers”... they were “unbelieving Jews”. Also note that the corrupted practices of the Jews at that time were quite far removed from what was intended by “the Law”.
- Q8 - remember that the “New Covenant” is really the “Abrahamic Covenant” and the token of the Abrahamic covenant was circumcision. This is why the issue was so contentious, and why it would need special exposition. Bring out the point and lessons of Q15
- Titus - Character study... was he Luke’s brother? Q9
- Paul had 3 years to digest, study, and come to terms with the mystery of the fellowship of the Gospel. His background as a Pharisee made him ideal to address this topic...
- Silas - Character study
- The decision of the Jerusalem conference Q19-21
- Paul’s commission Q22-24
- Important to see the connection between the Jerusalem conference and Paul’s work with the Fund. He is directed to remember the poor... yet there is all this acrimony amongst the Jewish brethren with respect to their Gentile brethren as well as with the keeping of the Law... so Paul comes up with a way to fulfill his commission and hopefully demonstrate what Grace can inspire as opposed to what Law can compel.

Key Practical Lessons and Questions

- Q12 - The false teachers weren’t allowed to give (as it were) one “bible class” on their views. The challenge today is our society is all about giving the chance to hear “all voices”. This is why our Ecclesial shepherds remove from speaking duties those who are introducing incorrect ideas into the meeting.
- Cover the practical lessons from Q16
- Q23 - Paul jumped on this, and took their simple directive to astonishing lengths. Talk about ways we can make mundane chores into something much more (on a spiritual level). Come prepared with examples!

Neat Points

- Who read “The Harlot of the Ephah”?

Day 2 - 2nd Session - Workbook Section 4

Reading

- Acts 13:30-Acts 18:18-22 (Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey)

General Advice

- The key Gentile Ecclesias that will eventually take part in the fund are established during this journey (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth) While not the only participating Ecclesias, they feature prominently in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.

Key Principles and Points

- Character study of Timothy
- Q2a Why did Paul circumcise Timothy? Because he was going to be bringing him with him... "to the Jew first" so they would be entering the Synagogue first at every city and his circumcision would avoid that being an issue and a stumbling block. Timothy was a Jew through his mother, Titus was a Gentile and Paul would use Titus in his work with established Gentile Ecclesias (Corinth, Crete, etc.) . Some will see Paul as a vacillating hypocrite but it was the right thing to do at the Jerusalem conference, and it was the right thing to do in the case of Timothy and the mission.
- Q3 The decrees were the results of the Jerusalem conference
- Be prepared with Paul's policy on accepting support Q5, and why he made an exception in Philippi
- The spirit of the Philippians would have had an effect on the Macedonian Ecclesias... and we see the same spirit evident in their amazing response to the Jerusalem Poor Fund (in 2 Corinthians 8). This background section gives us insight into the characters and their story who would beg to participate, and gave beyond their means to "fellowship" the ministering of the saints.
- Cover the establishment of the Corinthian Ecclesia, and the background of Corinth - the gross immorality they were known for.

Key Practical Lessons and Questions

- Consider the practical lesson raised in Q2b
- The lessons of providence from Q4 praying for not only doors to open... but also for doors to close!
- The lesson from Lydia - who opened her heart? Q10d, principles of hospitality and genuine care Q13, see how Lydia's house became a "safe" place for Paul to stay, where he didn't have to worry about being "chargeable" to the brethren because they understood the scriptural principles of hospitality.
- The lesson of the Bereans Q22. How can we be commended in the same way? Isolate the difference between earnest searching of the scriptures to confirm a doctrine versus the antagonistic spirit of "questioning everything"? God doesn't give us a firm yes or no / right or wrong on every issue... he expects us to apply the spirit thinking developed from knowing his word!

Neat Points

- Q4b - providence had the wind filling their sails!
- See the connection between Lydia and the woman of 2 kings 4:8? Dig a little and you'll find lots of connections.

Day 3 - 1st Session - Workbook Section 5

Reading

- Acts 18:23-20:2, 1 Corinthians 16

General Advice

- This section covers the 3rd Journey up until Paul heads to Macedonia
- We have only mentioned a couple of items here, but they should take 2/3 - 3/4 of the session. When done, feel free to start on Section 6 since that is a long one!

Key Principles and Points

- The third journey starts with Paul methodically visiting the Ecclesias “in order” - most likely collecting for the fund
- Review the table from Bro. Ron Abel’s book outlining the charges against Paul
- It is important that you try to get a good understanding of the number of letters, when they were sent, who delivered them, and the travels of Paul, Timothy, and Titus during this time. Some might be confused by this so perhaps you might help by writing up a timeline to hand out. Read the reference materials suggested. Be prepared to walk through the sequence of events
- Q11 - the fund was collected for during memorial meeting (1st day of the week). This is a good example of practices that may not have an explicit commandment, but we take up the spirit of the first century Ecclesias... have a copy of the reference from the Ecclesial guide handy in case some weren’t able to get it

Key Practical Lessons and Questions

- Q5 The ways of providence - just because God closes a door today, doesn’t mean it won’t be open some time in the future. Obviously, he does expect us to use our spiritual discernment as to whether an open door is appropriate for us to go through!
- Q7 What kept Paul going and how can we do the same?
- Q12 This is an important question around “scriptural precedence” vs. “what everyone else does”. The basic point is that the closer we adhere to first century practice, the better. There is nothing wrong with trying new approaches... but we should be very careful to analyze the impact... The “secularization” of the Ecclesia is a subtle but real challenge today. Have some pros and cons prepared around things like fund raising via novelty events versus fund raising by spiritual appeal.

Neat Points

- Character study on Apollos. See if anyone did this and if they have any lessons. Why didn’t he stop the issues at Corinth? Because he wasn’t there! (1 Cor. 16:12)

Day 3 - 2nd Session - Workbook Section 6

Reading

- 2 Corinthians 8

General Advice

- Important to realize that if Paul couldn't get the Corinthians onside, his plan for the fund would lose its effectiveness
- We believe that this was an earnest appeal and not Paul playing one Ecclesia against another just to further his agenda. He appeals to them on every level to finish what they had started - but it had to be of their own willingness and conviction otherwise the power would be lost.

Key Principles and Points

- The three key words. Here is Bro. Roger Lewis on the 3 key words:
- The first word, is the Greek word 'charis' (5485) the word translated 'grace' on the part of the bestower, that which conveys the friendly disposition from which the kindly act proceeds. It's a word that stresses the 'freeness', 'the spontaneous character of that which is given', and on the part of the receiver, a sense of a favour bestowed and a feeling of gratitude for that grace which has been received. A word that's found as we discovered occurs 10 times in the course of these two particular chapters. Grace x 2 extended to both Jew and Gentile, so there really is the key word that the apostle builds his arguments around in these two particular chapters. But it's only one of 3 key words.
- The second is the Greek word 'perisseia' (4050), it's a word translated 'abound or abundance' and it's found on several occasions throughout these particular chapters. It's a word that means literally 'an exceeding measure above the ordinary'. That which is superabundant in quantity and superior in quality, a word which denotes that which is preeminent, that which is beyond measure, that which is overflowing; you can almost sense the idea of 'perisseia' here, a word that bubbles up and overflows above and beyond that which is deemed to be necessary.
- The third key word is 'diakonos' (1249) the word translated quite commonly, of course, 'minister or ministration'. A word that means to act 'as a servant' or an 'attendant', 'to wait upon or to minister to the needs of others'. In these three words, we believe we have, the whole spirit of what this fund was all about and what spirit the apostle wanted to inspire in the hearts of the brethren. What he wanted was that spirit of grace that would so act in a person's life, that they would spontaneously abound in an overflowing spirit of ministering to the needs of others. That's what the apostle is talking about in these two chapters. That the spirit of grace at work in the life of the individual, would inspire them to overflow in a spirit of ministering to the needs of others; and if we can just focus on those three words and get that down into those two chapters, we really have the whole spirit of what the apostle is trying to deal with in this particular section of 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9.
- The secret to the success of the Macedonian brethren - Q23
- Q30-31 Talk about the use of "I speak not by commandment", and how it was important that he not "command" them to give... it would defeat everything... how could the 3 key words come into play if they were compelled by force?
- Q33 be sure you have examples and can explain how Christ was rich / poor
- Talk about the principles and lessons of the Manna and how it applies
- The principle of delegates is an important one that Christadelphians have long used for inter-ecclesial issues/planning/coordination, etc. When wisely appointed by the Ecclesia, we can trust that they represent the Ecclesia.

Key Practical Lessons and Questions

- Q7 - Discuss the tactics used by Paul to encourage the Corinthians, and the lessons/application
- Begging for the favor. Discuss Q20, if our motivations are right, we shouldn't wait around to be asked.
- Q25 - Talk about getting our priorities in life. We give ourselves first to God.
- Discuss the true "riches" Q37
- The difference between "performance" and "readiness". Not enough to be ready or of a willing mind, but we need to do! Discuss Q41, Q42, Q81 should generate good discussion about the importance of follow-through and perhaps you could come ready with some tips for the group on how to ensure we follow-through. For instance, one tip could be making yourself accountable to someone - that way they can both be inspired by your initial enthusiasm, but also challenge you if you fail to follow-through. Perhaps also talk about some of the reasons our faith, enthusiasm and conviction wanes, especially if we stop the daily intake of the word, skip Ecclesial functions, and fall back into bad habits... then focus on remedies!
- The principle of "earnest care" (Q59-60) God puts it into our heart by his word, and when we consider His gift of Christ and the grace extended to us, and His earnest care for us, we seek to manifest it towards others.
- Q62 - The spirit of Titus - "Here am I send me" - how can we emulate?
- The principle of appearances Q68-75. Talk about how these principles are important for us to follow. Prepare some scenarios for possible discussion. For instance, how does this apply to young people when they are dating? How about at school, work, or the places we go for leisure/entertainment?

Neat Points

- The Macedonian example - did you notice the Spirit of Lydia at work?

Day 4 - 1st Session - Workbook Section 7

Reading

- 2 Corinthians 9

General Advice

- In chapter 9, the Apostle Paul continues his appeal to the brethren and sisters of the Corinthian Ecclesia to rekindle the enthusiasm and zeal they once had for the fund. He appeals to their conscience and example. He also appeals to scriptural principle, and draws a direct line to the prime directive of the Gospel: God Manifestation.
- In this part of his appeal, Paul uses a plethora of Old Testament examples. This serves a number of purposes, including a demonstration that the principles involved are not just Paul's ideas but are consistent with God's word, and the practices of the faithful of old. They also teach that even under the old covenant, Yahweh sought to inspire His people to raise their thinking to the motivation behind their actions. How much more then ought the believers who had a full knowledge of the "unspeakable gift" which the Law foreshadowed, be able to demonstrate the operative principles of the new covenant, by providing for their brethren and sisters in need?
- Spend at least 1/3 of the session on the principle of reaping and sowing

Key Principles and Points

- In this chapter, Paul emphasizes both the speed of their collections as well as the size of their contribution.
- Every term is used except "money" why? (Q13)
- God manifestation becomes the focal point of his argument. (Q28-31 and beyond) When we follow Christ and his character, we are manifesting the Father.
- The relationship between "almsgiving" and "righteousness"... Q35-36
- How does God "multiply" our seed and "increase the fruits" of our righteousness?
- Be able to explain Q43 "enriched in every thing"
- Q47 start the discussion about the priestly ministration of Paul - wait until the next session to deal with it fully
- Q53-Q54 2 Cor. 9:13-14 is a king-pin verse for Paul's intentions with the fund!
- Be sure to cover Q55-59 about the "gift of God", which is the Lord Jesus Christ. This is really the theme of the study: All of our blessings are based on God's love in giving. Read John 3:16. So whatever we are able to give, we can never match what God gave because God Himself is the perfect example of giving. We will never be able to give what God has given and even if we endeavor all our lives to give for the needs of others, it will only be a small resemblance of the greatness and superiority of what God has given and offered to each of us. So when we give for others, all we are really doing is following the example of Yahweh Himself and uniting with the Apostle Paul in saying, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!"

Key Practical Lessons and Questions

- Reaping and sowing (Q17-27) - both the principle of the kind/amount as well as the application. The fact that Paul uses the phrase "do not be deceived" in Gal 6:7 means that we probably are deceived. If we are honest, we often live our lives as though some day we will not reap what we are sowing (Ecc 8:11) this is a great deception!

- Practical out workings of the principles Paul teaches in this chapter regarding how Yahweh blesses the generous hearted. Talk through Q34, Q40-42
- Q44 - when we make concern for others a habit, focus on self is diminished
- Q52 - Talk about the power of our example to others, and how it can reflect back praise to God!

Neat Points

- Q14 when we give our money or possessions to God (by giving them to the Ecclesia), they are sanctified for His use.

Day 4 - 2nd Session - Workbook Section 8

Reading

- Romans 15, Acts 20:2-21:26

General Advice

- Start by having everyone follow the route back to Jerusalem, point out Q14 and Q15 how Luke has joined them as one of the delegates, Paul walks across the shortcut perhaps to contemplate the events ahead... see the type with Christ?
- Be sure not to spend any of this session still on 2 Cor. 9 discussion, there is a lot of material in this session!

Key Principles and Points

- Paul as Christ to the Gentiles - Discussion leaders should have done Q35 - it would be great if you could put it in a table and pass out to the group
- Our attitude towards the Jews, even in their blindness, should be one of thankfulness, gratefulness, and longing for the peace of Jerusalem - for the time when Yahweh will turn away ungodliness from Jacob and all Israel saved (Q9) Christadelphians have long provided for the Jews in ways they can from clothes/money for Aliyah to housing Jewish children from the kinder-transports during WWII.
- Be sure you have worked out and can explain Q3 - Q6. Romans Expositor, John Carter's book on Romans can help on Romans 15
- The whole work of the fund, especially in these last chapters is a journey of spiritual atonement for Paul. He was responsible for the persecution that arose after Stephen, and taking it to greater levels. The brethren and sisters now desolate had been subject to persecution, confiscation, and no portion in the welfare provided by the synagogue. Expand and elaborate on this. What drives him? Acts 20:3
- Be prepared with an answer for Q18 "bound in the spirit"
- The presentation of the fund. Talk about Q31-32 - perhaps there is some disagreement on the conclusions reached in the workbook. Talk them through. The key is how you interpret "zealous for the Law"... based on all of our studies, we know that these brethren had multiple opportunities to realize the principle of 2 Cor. 3:6.

Key Practical Lessons and Questions

- Making prayer a habit (Q21) look who was praying over this mission! (Q10)
- Placing practical concerns over spiritual ones. Discuss Q26
- How do we react when our efforts are not appreciated? (Q33). Perhaps having a perspective like Romans 12:1 or Luke 17:10, etc. Or remembering that we are being shaped by God and this is probably good for our character! Look at how Paul talks to the Romans about the fund! (Q7)
- Interpretation of results. Spend some time discussing Q34. Think up some examples ahead of time for the group, have some passages ready to go on the scriptural principles (1 Cor. 3:6-7, Isa. 55:11, etc.)

Neat Points

- Our study started with Pentecost and Agabus and so it ends with Pentecost and Agabus!
- The connection with the two loaves of Pentecost... Jew and Gentile baked from the multiplication of Abraham's seed. Paul is so determined to be there for THIS feast!

Day 5 - 1st Session - Scenarios

General Advice

- We have provided a list of scenarios. Choose several to discuss in-depth in the group.
- It is recommended that you use the “mind map” format to help research all the “angles”, find the passages, establish the principles, and come to a conclusion. See the next section for an example.
- The purpose of the scenarios is not to generate debate or acrimony. The scenarios are also not intended to point out any specific groups, efforts, or individuals from the brotherhood today. Keep to the scenarios and the passages involved.
- The scenarios are all relevant to aspects of our studies. Most of the scenarios we face in daily life are multi-dimensional... that is there are multiple issues to consider. We have deliberately kept our scenarios simple so the key issue can be readily discerned.
- Challenge everyone in the group to express themselves without using the phrases “I think” or “I feel”!
- In some of the cases, the proposal may be more scripturally acceptable by making a few provisions and amendments. It is best to wait until all the relevant issues and scriptures have been considered before coming to that conclusion though.
- Feel free to make modifications to the scenarios if you feel that would help!
- Discuss the process of bringing the “whole council of God” to bear on our decisions, and how important it is to take the time to search the scriptures for advice on any subject. There may not be an explicit “thou shalt / thou shalt not” but Yahweh has given us His word and a mind with the mental capacity to work things out, and the moral capacity to willingly develop and manifest His character.
- Come prepared with your own list of issues and scriptural passages so you can keep things moving if your group is having difficulties coming up with passages. Bring a concordance to the session!
- Have your group members share the discussion results with others during the break and report back on any surprising *scriptural* insights developed by other groups.

Scenarios

Scenario #1: Appeal for brethren and sisters in poverty

A brother from your Ecclesia has just visited a “3rd world” country and returned with shocking reports of the poverty of the brethren and sisters there. He is very enthusiastic about sending relief to the brethren and sisters, and believes that everyone in the meeting should be required to give 10% of their income to the cause. He opens a bank account and sends appeals letters to every Ecclesia in the area, along with a moving video showing the squalid conditions they are living in. His goal is to personally deliver the funds within 2 months. The suggestion is made that he discuss his ideas and plans with the Ecclesia, and receive Ecclesial endorsement/support for his endeavors, perhaps bringing along with him some brethren from other Ecclesias who have also pledged support. The brother doesn’t take to this idea well, stating that the Apostle Paul went around wherever he wanted - and didn’t need “permission” from any Ecclesia so why should he. Besides, he says: “something needs to be done right away and it will take too long to explain everything and make everyone happy.”

The scenario: Independent welfare initiative. What are the issues involved? What scriptural passages and principles come to bear? Should he be left alone to do his own thing? Or should he be entreated to do things differently?

Scenario #2: Alms for the poor

The Ecclesia is soliciting ideas for outreach in the local community beyond the usual lectures and seminars. One idea is to open a soup kitchen on Friday nights to feed the homeless and the poor in the neighborhood. Instead of CYC, the young people can learn about community service and being a “neighbor” to those around us, letting our “light shine”. The idea is expanded to also offer free blood pressure and health check by several of our sisters who are nurses. The Ecclesial elders are concerned about this idea, but note that the most enthusiastic proponents of the idea are brethren and sisters who typically are not engaged much in Ecclesial life, and may feel disenfranchised if their idea is turned down.

The scenario: Good works proposal. What are the issues involved? What scriptural passages and principles come to bear? Can you reach a scripturally based conclusion whether to move ahead with this proposal?

Scenario #3: Prosperity gospel

A good friend in the Truth is spending a lot of energy working multiple jobs and overtime to be able to give money away so that eventually, it will “come back to her” in spades when God blesses her generosity. You personally know of several poor families in the Ecclesia who she has helped, and another whose way she paid to go to Bible school. However when you discuss her “generosity”, she embarrassingly reveals that she has also taken out a loan to be able to give away more money but has run into a situation where she can’t make the payments because she just paid for a sister’s college books. She knows you have the cash to help her make the payment, and asks you to donate a few payments. When you don’t jump all over the idea, she becomes upset, and quotes 2 Corinthians 8:6: “he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall also reap bountifully.” She seems more focused on what she will get for being generous than having a spirit of genuine care for others, and accuses you of “shutting your hand from your brother” (Deuteronomy 15:7-10)

The scenario: Do you help your friend or not? What are the issues involved? What scriptural passages and principles come to bear? Can you reach a spiritually based conclusion about what is the best way to help your friend?

Scenario #4: Honesty in the sight of God and men

A woman colleague from work has been coming to lectures and other functions for a while now, and would like to study for baptism. Being most comfortable with the brother from work, she asks him if he can come over once a week to help her studies. While not married yet, the brother is in a committed relationship with a sister who lives across the country. The plan is to be engaged when she finishes college in the spring. The brother realizes that it isn’t a good idea for him to be the one to help her one-on-one for a number of reasons, but is concerned that she might not be comfortable with someone else.

The scenario: How should he respond? What are the issues involved? What scriptural passages and principles come to bear?

Scenario #5: All the congregation are holy

The arranging brethren have made some recent decisions that are of concern. A popular sister has been disfellowshipped, and everyone is shocked and surprised. The situation seems to be a classic “he said” / “she said” and now that the news is out, people are taking sides without having all the information. Besides the issue at hand, a number of people begin to question the wisdom of even having elders in the ecclesia as arranging brethren. Shouldn’t every decision be made by the will of the majority? It is suggested that the Ecclesia undertakes a study of the scriptural principles involved.

The scenario: Does the Ecclesia need an arranging board? What are the issues involved? What scriptures come to bear? In our studies on the JPF, we saw first-hand the first-century Ecclesial practices. Are we able to model them in these days without the Apostles and the Holy Spirit Gifts?

Scenario #6 Outside professionals

Welfare and other pastoral issues in the Ecclesia are typically handled discretely by the Arranging board. However, a few are concerned that the brethren on the board may be of honest report and full of the wisdom of the scriptures, but they lack the professional training and credentials to deal with such sensitive issues. A suggestion is made to hire on retainer a “professional” counsellor for sensitive pastoral issues. Note: issues can range from substance abuse to marital problems to mental illness, to absence/attendance to welfare needs.

The scenario: Hire an outside “professional” to handle sensitive pastoral matters in the Ecclesia? What are the issues involved? What scriptural passages and principles come to bear? Can you reach a spiritually based conclusion whether to move ahead with this suggestion?

Scenario #7: Hard times family

A family in the Ecclesia has fallen on hard times. The father has lost his job, and their savings has run out. He is having difficulties landing another job since his skills are out of date. The mother is capable of working with her degree in education, and the local school board is hiring, but they are determined that she continue homeschooling their middle-school aged children. They sell some of their “toys” like the motorboat and the harley, and their home on the market, but soon are in need of help to pay the bills and put food on the table. They approach the Ecclesia for assistance as bankruptcy looms. The Ecclesia agrees to provide money every week for groceries and to help with the mortgage while they get back on their feet. A few months go by and the situation hasn’t changed. It seems to some that the father has given up trying to find a job. Those aware of the situation are concerned that the Ecclesial welfare fund is getting depleted, and there are other families in need too. It’s also hard not to notice the new iPad the children are toting around, and resentment starts to set in. The issue comes to a head at the monthly arranging board meeting during the welfare review. Options are discussed from telling the family they have one more month and they are on their own, to sitting down with the couple and discussing the situation. Others feel strongly that they should account for the iPad and other discretionary purchases.

The scenario: What to do about the Hard times family? What are the issues involved? What scriptural passages and principles come to bear? Can you reach a spiritually based decision?

Sample Mind-Map Diagramming Process

Sample scenario:

- You've become close friends at school or work with someone of the opposite gender and they ask you out.

Step 1:

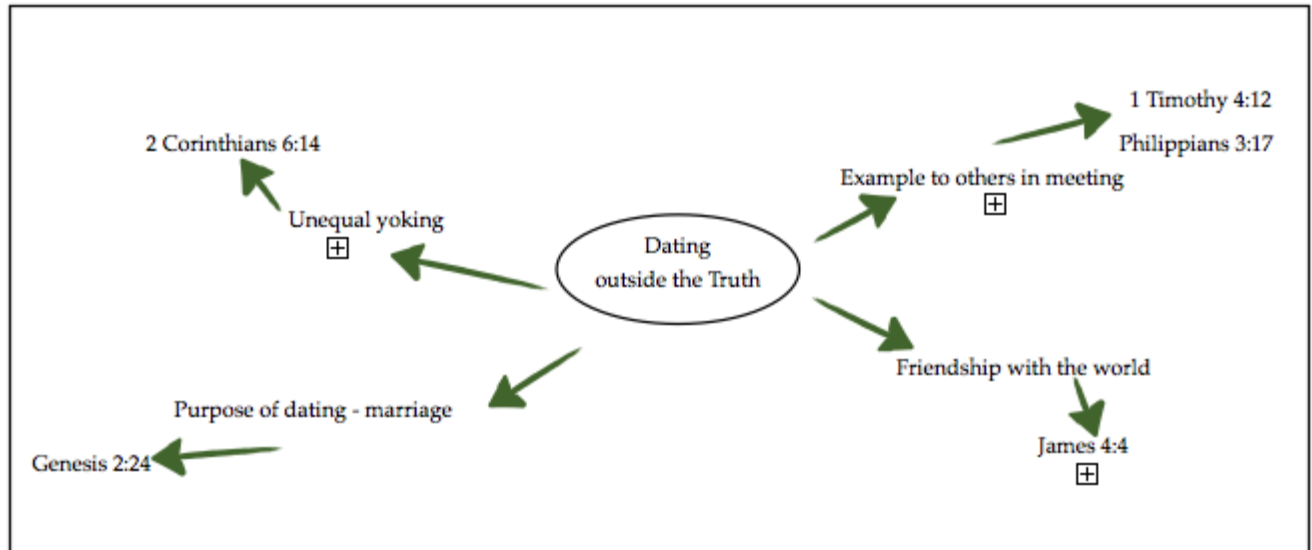
- Distill down to the heart of the issue. Try to focus in on a short phrase or word that represents the issue
- Place the phrase in the middle of our diagram (on paper or whiteboard or chalkboard) and draw a circle around it
- *For our sample, the scenario issue is: Dating outside the Truth.*

Step 2:

- Brainstorm the various issues that are involved with or directly/indirectly related to the primary issue
- Write down a word or short phrase to represent the issues - write them all around the circle and draw lines from the main circle in the center to each of the issues
- Try to consolidate the issues as you go along if some are really similar
- For our sample, the issues might be: dating (in general), friendship with the world, our example to others in the meeting, our example to the person in question, learning the truth before relationships, unequal yoking, etc.

Step 3:

- For each of the issues, write down the scriptural passages that come to bear on that issue
- If no scripture supports it, perhaps it isn't important? either that or we just can't come up with one on the spot :-)
- For our sample, here's an example of the mind map created with a couple of issues and scriptures:



Step 4:

- Return to the original scenario and see if you can come to a conclusion on the scriptural direction given to that scenario

Day 5 - 2nd Session - Wrap Up

General Advice

- Hopefully you are not reading this for the first time on Thursday evening :-)
- This may be the most important session from the perspective that the last impressions may stay with us the longest, and perhaps help is needed pulling everything together
- A suggestion is to take notes every day, as well as look through these notes to come up with a list of key take-aways from the week from a learning as well as practical perspective.

Key Principles, Points, and Lessons

- It should be obvious that one of the key themes of the study is God manifestation. This needs to be our driver for benevolent acts. Paul never once mentioned the poor, sick, malnourished children in Jerusalem.
- And of course, the “gift of God”, which is the Lord Jesus Christ is really the theme of the whole study: All of our blessings are based on God's love in giving. (John 3:16). So whatever we are able to give, we can never match what God gave because God Himself is the perfect example of giving. We will never be able to give what God has given and even if we endeavor all our lives to give for the needs of others, it will only be a small resemblance of the greatness and superiority of what God has given and offered to each of us. So when we give for others, all we are really doing is following the example of Yahweh Himself and uniting with the Apostle Paul in saying, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!”
 - Discuss ways we can assist ourselves and others to be thankful
 - Discuss scriptural strategies for avoiding being unthankful and losing sight of God’s gift
- Another important theme is about raising the bar on our service in the Truth. Paul’s commission to “remember the poor” was not likely expected to result in the Jerusalem poor fund. We can apply the same spirit to our own service by turning mundane Ecclesial service into edifying and unifying spiritual events.
 - Some ways (to get you thinking... come up with some more yourself and discuss in the group)
 - Playing the piano/organ for CYC? research the scriptural references in the hymns and prepare a handout that includes the words and the references
 - Responsible for hall work day? Organize workers into families from Nehemiah who built the wall... start the day with a devotional from Nehemiah
 - Did you organize a study group for completing the workbook? How about trying to keep the group going by starting right away on an independent study of next year’s topic?
 - etc...
- Have everyone in the group contribute something they “determined” this week as a result of the study that they are going to do/not do / finish / etc. when they return home. It can be a nice touch to write it all down and e-mail out to everyone that is part of the group in a few weeks or months after conference.