

Episode #1047 The Flow of Truth Part 8-Twenty-Three Propositions Concerning Acts

I. All truth flows out of the Old Testament into the gospels. It flows out of the gospels into the book of Acts. It flows out of the book of Acts into Paul's final epistles. That is the flow of truth. We are studying this flow and how it can teach us about God's work with us today and how it differs from His work with others in the past and future.

II. The Character of the Acts Period.

A. Otis Q. Sellers contended that there are certain great truths regarding the Acts period that stand out like mountain peaks, and that without an understanding of these truths we will never understand the Acts period. These truths he set forth in 23 propositions in his TL020 – The Flow of Truth Part 4. We will examine these 23 propositions today. These propositions come from a number of sources.

1. The words spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ after his resurrection and as recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
2. The book of Acts and its history of a 33-year period.
3. Paul's epistles written during this period: Galatians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Corinthians, and Romans.
4. Hebrews, a record of things proclaimed to the Hebrews during Acts.

B. Upon this material, these sources, nothing else, that I base these 23 propositions. Not church history. Not church fathers.

III. Twenty-three propositions regarding Acts Continued.

11. The proclamation of the gospel was always confirmed to the hearers by signs in the Acts period. I do not believe that there was ever a time in the Acts period when the gospel was proclaimed without it being confirmed to the hearers by signs. Take Mark 16:19-20. That statement, the Lord working with them, was not just that He pepped them up a bit so they would give a good message. The Lord worked with them so that they would speak the exact message that these people needed, that the Lord wanted them to hear. This was given by inspiration so that they brought the inspired Word of God. I will bring the proof of this in later studies. I am simply stating these propositions now so that we might have the basis for a proper study of the Acts period. The proclamation of the gospel was always confirmed to those who heard it by signs. The signs might precede it, they might heal a man and then preach the message, or follow it, but they were always there. No one was asked to believe without seeing. They would not only speak to you; they would show you. That was the character of the Acts period. It never changed. It never failed. The word was always confirmed with the most definite signs, miracles, that followed it.

12. This is a strange proposition, and you might find it so, but I believe it to be the truth. In the Acts period, that 33 years, a man was given only one opportunity to hear the message and have Christ presented to him. This is entirely different than it is today. That is the way it was in that 33 years. The heralds of the gospel never spoke it to the same people twice. Paul may speak it once and then go back to teach the believers, but the heralds of the gospel never spoke it to the same people twice. If one could not believe without hesitation, but would raise some quibble after hearing the testimony of a God-commissioned man who spoke a Divinely-inspired message, and the truth was confirmed with signs following, there was nothing more God could do. What more could He do? If God had empowered and commissioned a man, sent him, put on

- his lips a Divinely-inspired man and confirmed that message with signs following, what else was there to do? Was it right to say we'll do this over? No! They could never do it over. Those who could not believe under those conditions simply demonstrated that they were not fit to be among the outcalled of God, and it was the outcalled of God that He was producing in the Acts period. This is most important. God intended that every Israelite should hear, but in the Acts period they got just one opportunity to hear the message.
13. Since a firm foundation for faith was laid in the proclamation of the message, God expected belief to be instantaneous., which it always was. Once God had done His work in the Acts period, there was nothing to think over or consider. God had spoken through His mediator directly to these people and confirmed it with signs following. There was only one question to be settled right then and there instantaneously: what the hearer would do about it. That is because of the very firm foundation for faith that God laid in the Acts period.
 14. In the Acts period, the faith of a believer was always publicly accredited and confirmed by God. Signs did follow those who believed. Mark 16:17. Signs did follow those who believe. A person's relationship to God in the Acts period was a manifest thing. There were no secret believers. There were no hypocritical professors. The life of an Acts-period believer was not hid with Christ in God. Notice that. Our lives are hid with Christ in God, but not an Acts period believer. God accredited a man's faith and made it manifest that this one was related to Him.
 15. After Peter's Divinely-commissioned visit to the house of Cornelius, Paul was the only man commissioned of God to the Gentiles. Romans 11:13.
 16. Paul's ministry to the Gentiles began in Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13. Nevertheless, Paul's ministry in the Acts period was always to the Jew first, that is, to the Jew primarily. Romans 1:16, an epistle written in the Acts period. First means primarily. Paul and his companions would walk straight through a city without stopping if there were no company of Jews in it. Remember that the Jews always lived in companies. Nothing but a renegade would go off by himself, and very few ever did that. At that time, it was a case of "if we do not hang together, they will hang us one at a time." They were always sorely persecuted wherever they were, and they lived, as we would say, in pockets. If there was no group of Jews in a city, they would simply walk straight through it. We might think that strange. We think they took it city by city, and when they came to a city they simply spoke as they came, but that is not the case. Acts 17:1-2. They didn't both with Amphipolis and Appolonia, as there were no Jews there. The true picture which the Bible presents of the 33 years of the Acts period is one in which thousands of Divinely-commissioned heralds carried the salvation-bringing message of God to every man in Israel, but only one lone herald taking it to the Gentiles, and that only after he had fulfilled every obligation to his own people Israel. That is not the picture people want to see, but that is the true picture and the picture you will get if you faithfully believe the Word of God. Then some might say there must have been very few Gentiles saved. That is exactly right. There were very few Gentiles saved. You would have great difficulty naming them. How many can you call by name who were saved in the Acts period. There was Cornelius. Yes. And his family. Then there was Titus. But beyond that you cannot go a step farther. The true picture of the Acts period is of tens of thousands of Jews who had put their faith

in Jesus Christ, but just a small company of Gentiles that God had saved through the apostle Paul for a certain purpose.

17. It was the man Paul who was commissioned to the Gentiles. That I insist upon. It was not Peter. It was not Cornelius. It was not Barnabas. It was not Titus. It was the man Paul who was commissioned to the Gentiles, not the salvation-bringing message. Later on we will see that the salvation-bringing message was authorized to the Gentiles, but in the Acts period it was a man who was commissioned to the Gentiles. The man Paul became the mediator between God and the Gentiles in respect to that message. Yes, God could save a Gentile, but Paul became the mediator to carry the message, and his duty was primarily to the Jew first, for the Jew had priority. The great principle of one Mediator between God and man, I Timothy 2:5, was not true at that time, until after Acts 28:28. One of the greatest truths of the present time, not true at any other time, is that of one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus.
18. In the Acts period, the children of Israel are described as to number as being like the sand of the sea, Romans 9:27, scattered throughout the Roman world. God's purpose in this 33-year period was to sift through every grain of this sand that made up this company. Among them were many diamonds who would shine forth the moment they heard the message and saw its confirmation. These in the Acts period will have a special place and perform a special service in the day He makes up His jewels, Malachi 3:17. This proposition is that the number of the children of Israel could not be counted. They were like the sand of the sea, and they were scattered throughout the Roman world. It was God's purpose in that 33-year period to put every grain of sand to the test, to sift through every grain of sand that made up that great body called the nation of Israel. Among that were many diamonds, small but they were diamonds, and these diamonds would shine forth and could be recognized the moment they heard the message and saw its confirmation. John 10:27. That was fulfilled and demonstrated to the letter in the Acts period.
19. At the close of the Acts period, God had accomplished everything He had set out to do. Remember that carefully. From the day of Pentecost right up to the close of Acts, God had accomplished everything He set out to do. No purpose of God was left unfinished. No project of God is incomplete. The message had gone forth to the ends of the earth. Every Israelite has heard, a remnant has been established, a small company for his name has been called from among the Gentiles. The blade stage of the kingdom is over. The manifest kingdom of God was ready to burst on mankind. Yet we know it did not come. In the great flow of truth, everything is suspended while God accomplishes a purpose which had never before been revealed. God is going to take time out, and take plenty of time, to write into the history of His long dealings with men an absolute record, a record that can never be challenged, of the absolute grace that is inherent in His character. This is now being done in a dispensation or administration of grace. Thus the truths that were applicable in the Acts period may or may not be applicable today. We must study to rightly divide the word of truth and find out those things that were true in the Acts period, but are not true today.
20. The salvation-bringing message of God was authorized, that is, made freely available to the Gentiles by Paul's declaration in Acts 28:28, and from that moment forth, any believer in Jesus Christ, as long as he knows the salvation-bringing message, can

freely proclaim the gospel of Christ to anyone without any hindrance, without any restriction, without paying any attention to priorities. That has been done by many believers, and that is still being done. I myself make a claim to being a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. I also make the claim that I know His salvation-bringing message. I know where it is written. I have incorporated it into my thinking. I can freely proclaim this salvation-bringing message, this gospel of Christ, to anyone. I don't have to go to the Jew first. I don't have to give the Jew priority. I don't have to think this is for the Jew primarily, as Paul had to do throughout the Acts period. No. I can proclaim the salvation-bringing message. I have done it. I am still doing it. I thank God for anyone who has heard the salvation-bringing message from me and believed it, and believing is now enjoying life through His name.

21. In Acts 28:28, God guaranteed that the Gentiles would hear this message; that is, that it would get through to them, as I showed you when I set up the translation of Acts 28:28. In view of that promise and guarantee, steps must be taken by God to make this promise good. If the salvation-bringing message of God has been made available, to make this authorization of any value, the message had to be put in writing, for once it is put in writing, that makes it the possession of all. Then it can be copied, studied, and proclaimed.
22. The message that proclaims Christ, the gospel that is the power of God unto salvation, was put into writing. That message is found in the book that God inspired and caused to be written so that anyone who reads it might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and believing might have life through His name. This is the book that we now call the gospel of John. I believe it was the first book God caused to be written after the salvation-bringing message was authorized, that is, made freely available, to the Gentiles, Acts 28:28.
23. God's Word never returns to Him void. It always accomplishes that which He pleases, and it always accomplishes its purpose in the thing for which He sends it. Concerning the gospel of John, God has declared that it was written so that anyone reading it might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that anyone believing it might have life through His name, John 20:31. This is God's avowed purpose for this book. The gospel of John was intended by God to produce believers, it has produced believers, and it is continuing to produce believers. As soon as it was written and began circulating, a new and different company of believers in Jesus Christ appeared on the scene. These are the first company of believers ever produced by the written Word. These are the result of a God-inspired book, and not the result of God-inspired men. They are the first company who ever attained to that great company of blessed ones who, having not seen, yet have believed, John 20:29.

IV. Conclusion. These 23 propositions set forth many things that were true in the Acts period, but that are not truth for today. They will sound very radical to many who hear these words, and if their knowledge of the book of Acts and the epistles of Paul is somewhat hazy or superficial, if their knowledge of the book of Acts is the result of hearsay rather than personal study, they will be inclined to repudiate these out of hand. I would ask them to note that the Scriptural proof of these statements will be supplied in the messages that are to follow.