

# ACTS

## Bible Study

### Not for you to know

#### Acts 1:6—8

There is much that God has revealed to mankind throughout the years. God first revealed Himself through creation (Romans 1:19—20; Psalm 19:1). God even reveals His power and mercy with rain and sun so we will be able to eat (Acts 14:16—17). Man has no excuse for rejecting that there is a God, because God reveals Himself throughout all of creation. This general revelation of God will not save a person, but should cause all people to seek Him out.

God has also built into man's being the idea that there is right and wrong. This is a testament to the holiness of God. If we did not have this build-in law of conscience (Romans 2:14—15), we would probably destroy ourselves. Observing that godless men do good deeds should be a clue that there is some "higher power." Why is it that all men seem to have the same basic idea of what is right and wrong?

God has also given us specific revelation through His prophets. Throughout history, up through the Apostle Paul, God has used prophets to communicate to the human race. Some of these things were written down and later put into a book we call the Bible (2 Peter 3:16). The Holy Spirit moved these men of God to write what God wanted them to write (2 Peter 1:21). These men had absolutely no doubt that what they were writing came directly from God. This can be inferred from 1 Corinthians 7:12, 40 where the Apostle Paul writes a section that he knew was not given to him directly from God by writing his opinion on the matter of marriage. Obviously, the Holy Spirit agreed that it was proper for him to say what he said since it is now part of Scripture.

These special, direct revelations from God are no longer happening. Paul tells us that these supernatural gifts of the Spirit will pass away once Scripture has been completed (1 Corinthians 13). Once God has said everything He is going to say to the human race, He pulls back. The gifts of healing, tongues, interpretations, words of knowledge, healings, etc. have all passed away. The Holy Spirit no longer manifests Himself in that manner. This applies even in Bible translation. Some claim that the Holy Spirit supernaturally caused certain translators to perfectly translate the Bible from Greek manuscripts, even correcting or changing words used in, what they would claim are God-given and preserved Greek manuscripts. Yes, I believe the Holy Spirit does guide translators as they carefully deal with God's Word, in much the same way He guides pastors and teachers in their study of Scripture. None of these people will be one hundred percent perfect in their endeavors, no matter how godly they are, because the Holy Spirit does not work in this manner in this age. Note that after the Rapture, Israel will be able to perfectly know and obey God's Word, and teach it, when they are given the Holy Spirit prior to going into the Kingdom (Jeremiah 31:33). This is not a promise given to us in this dispensation of Grace.

#### **It's not for you to know (verse 7)**

Although Jesus spent the last 40 days of His life teaching and preparing the Disciples to take over His ministry to Israel (Acts 1:3), there were still some things that they were left in the dark about. Jesus had spent the past three years teaching them all about the coming Millennial Kingdom, and preparing them to go through the seven year Tribulation. One big question remained; "Is it at this time that you will be restoring the Kingdom to Israel?" Just as children ask about when they will "get there," the Disciples wanted to know if this means that the Kingdom was about to be restored, which will be their final destination.

It's obvious, from Jesus' answer, that the Disciples had not been told everything about their Kingdom program. In this case, they were left in the dark about the timing of the restitution of all things (Acts 3:21). They knew that things were going to be restored, but they were left wondering about how long they would have to wait before these things were going to happen. They were given much information about the times

and seasons (Israel's prophecy program), but not the specific time when the Millennial Kingdom would be set up. From their understanding of the Old Testament, and of what Jesus had taught them, the Disciples were probably aware that the prophetic timeline indicated the Kingdom would be set up within a very short time. However, Jesus was very vague in His answer to them by telling them it was not for them to know the times or epochs (seasons). In this case, we can look back and see that the Dispensation of Grace was going to interrupt the kingdom program. Israel's program will shortly be put on the back burner.

### **Fixed times and epochs (verse 7)**

An interesting phrase that Jesus uses in His answer to the Disciples is that the Father has already set these times and epochs (ages or seasons). They are written in stone and will absolutely come to pass. We see this principle at work with Jesus being crucified on the cross. Luke 24:7 says the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and the third day rise again. As Peter says, Jesus was delivered over by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23). We know that these plans were made even before the beginning of the world (1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2).

Knowing that God has already determined the end from the beginning should give us great comfort. Nothing is going to slip through God's fingers. There will be no surprises that catch God off-guard. When Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, God didn't change His plans, He actually advanced them. When the Gentile nations completely rejected God at the Tower of Babel, God didn't change His plan, but began the next phase of His plan by calling out to Abraham, the Father of the future nation of Israel. When Israel rejected the call for them to believe in the Messiah and come into the Kingdom, God put Israel temporarily aside and began working with the Gentiles through the Apostle Paul, which was planned from before creation. When the Rapture happens, according to God's timing, God will once again turn His focus upon Israel to complete her unfinished Kingdom program. From our standpoint, God had to stop the direction He was going and change His plans. From His standpoint, He had planned everything out before He even created the heavens and the earth. Everything that happens is in accordance with His pre-ordained timeline.

Some people carry this way too far by saying that God preordained every minute detail in each individual life including what I am going to eat for breakfast, what color socks I will wear, will I go to heaven or hell. Some even say God foreordained evil to come into the world. There is just no credible biblical evidence that we exist under these fatalistic decrees. How could a God who hates evil be the author of evil? How could a God who hates sin make me sin? Just because God allows mankind to sin does not make Him the author of sin. His lovingkindness in this age is a testament to His mercy. It is through His goodness that He is drawing people to Him (Romans 2:4). God has allowed great freedom in allowing mankind to follow his own evil desires, but in so doing is allowing more time for people to believe on Him for their salvation. However, there will come a day of judgment when all unbelievers will be held accountable (Acts 17:30—31). Individually, we are shown to have free will, able to determine our eternal fate by believing or not believing. The Lord does not want anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9).

God works his perfect will in spite of man's free will. He uses imperfect men to accomplish His preordained, perfect will. Praise God for His infinite power.

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