

Acts - **B**ackground - **C**ontext



By Daniel P. Trombley

ABC's of Soul Winning Scriptures

Acts - Background - Context

This is a beginner's guide designed for apostolic believers to use as a starting point when sharing the truth of God's plan of salvation.

'A'cts – The book of Acts is the book which records the actions (deeds) of the Apostles and the ratification of the New Covenant. This book gives us a clear picture of 'Who' the Apostles preached, 'What' they preached, and 'How' they lived it.

To look to the Gospels to discover the mechanics of New Covenant salvation is a mistake. One may discover the patterns, prophecies, and principles in the Gospels which point to the mechanics but only in the book of Acts do we find all these actuated.

It is equally unstable to look to the Epistles to discover the mechanics of New Covenant salvation as these letters were written to people who had already entered into the New Covenant. However we do see the patterns, prophecies, and principles found in the Gospels and actuated in the Book of Acts, **confirmed in the Epistles.**

Why is the Book of Acts so important?

The book of Acts is important because it is the book which records the doctrine of the Apostles. Certainly if you consider yourself to be in fact an Apostolic believer you are interested in finding out exactly what the Apostles believed, how they lived out

those beliefs, and how they related them within the renewed covenant confines.

Jesus made it clear that His Apostles' were firmly built on the foundation of the Torah, the prophets, and the Psalms.

Luke 24:44 “And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”

For thousands of years the Jewish people have referred to the Old Testament Scriptures as the TaNaKh which is an acronym for the order in which the Old Testament is laid out in the Hebrew Bible. We see Jesus actually make reference to this in Luke 24:44.

1. Law/Torah – Torah the first five books of the Bible
2. The Prophets – Nevi'im (Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.)
3. Writings – Ketuvim (Psalms, Proverbs, etc.)

This is a great spot to point out one of the primary **methods of studying the Scripture** and that is ‘to allow Scripture to define itself’.

Example: Psalms 40:7 & Hebrews 10:7

“Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book *it is* written of me,” Psalms 40:7

“Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” Hebrews 10:7

We see clearly using this method of studying Scripture that Jesus is the He that comes in the volume of the book.

All the Apostles (we can debate Luke) were Hebrews and lived a Torah observant life. In other words, the Apostles had a deep understanding of the Torah, the prophets, and the Psalms.

The book of Acts tells us that these early Jewish recipients of the renewed covenant continued in the 'apostles' doctrine'.

Acts 2:42 "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

So it is critical that we understand:

- a.) What foundation the Apostles' build upon?
- b.) Did they alter the foundation?
- c.) What did the structure they built reflect?

If you claim to be Apostolic and yet reject the Torah as outdated and irrelevant than indeed you have rejected the Apostles. Equally, if you reject apostolic doctrine you indeed build upon another foundation.

Primary Memory Verses on the **Plan of Salvation**:

Acts 2:38, John 3:5, Titus 3:5, I Corinthians 6:11

‘B’ackground - Acts 2:37-39

“Now when **they** heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, **what shall we do?** Then Peter said unto them, **Repent**, and be **baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the **Holy Ghost**. For the **promise** is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

- In verse 37

1. Who are the ‘they’?
2. Who was preaching what?
3. What question did they have for Peter?

Question - Where in the Gospels do we find a place where Jesus gives us the patterns, prophecies, and principles which line up with what Peter preaches here in Acts 2:38?

Answer - Luke 24:45-49 KJV “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, (46) And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: (47) And that **repentance** and **remission of sins** should be preached **in his name among** all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (48) And ye are witnesses of these things. (49) And, behold, **I send the promise of my Father upon you:** but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”

This is a great spot to point out one of the primary **methods of interpreting the Scripture**.

The Spirit of God is our teacher and is able to help us compare ‘spiritual things with spiritual’. With the Spirit as our guide, we

endeavor to ‘study to show thyself approved’ (II Timothy 2:15) by studying the Scriptures. The Spirit of God will lead us in allowing ‘at the mouth of two or three witnesses’ every Scripture to be established. (Deuteronomy 19:15, II Corinthians 13:1, Matthew 18:16, John 8:16-17)

Looking back at Luke 24:44 we see this is exactly the principle method of interpreting the Scripture that Jesus fulfilled:

1. Law/Torah – the first five books of the Bible
2. The Prophets – Nevi'im (Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.)
3. Writings – Ketuvim (Psalms, Proverbs, etc.)

How was/is God’s foundation built?

Isaiah 28:9-11 “Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *them that are* weaned from the milk, *and* drawn from the breasts. (10) For **precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:** (11) For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.”

The Hebrew word for **PRECEPT** is ‘tsav’ which means commandment. It comes from the Hebrew word “tsâvâh” which means to enjoin or set in order. If one disregards God’s commandments it is impossible to be joined to Him.

The Hebrew word for **LINE** is ‘qav’ which means a cord (as connection). While no musician would attempt to play his instrument without all of its cords/strings there are many today who attempted to worship God with missing cords.

Secondary Memory Verses on the **Plan of Salvation**:

Isaiah 44:3, Isaiah 59:21, **Jeremiah 31:31, Ezekiel 36:26**

'C'ontext

Many people point to **Matthew 29:19** as a proof text which supports the triune formula for water baptism:

Matthew 28:19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in **the name** of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"

What is the 'name" (**singular**) of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?

Reading just this one verse could seem to indicate that there are three persons.

However, when you read verse eighteen it brings clear context to situation, "All power is given unto ME". So much for the power sharing idea!

It is noteworthy that in the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew this triune formula is nowhere to be found.

"Jesus drew near to them and said to them: To me has been given all power in heaven and earth, Go and (teach) them to carry out all the things which I have commanded you forever."

Primary Examples of what **they carried out**:

Acts 2:38, Acts 10:44-48, Acts 19:1-6

When witnessing to Christians with some degree of faith

- It is important to establish that the **New** (renewed) **Covenant** didn't begin until Acts Chapter two.

New (renewed) Covenant Promised:

Jeremiah 31:31, Ezekiel 36:26, Joel 2:28

New (renewed) Covenant Received:

Acts 2:1, Acts 2:4, Acts 2:38

The Hebrew word used for 'new' in Jeremiah 31:31 means fresh, or to rebuild, repair or RENEW.

Hebrews 8:6 "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a **better covenant**, which was established upon better promises."

The Greek word for 'better' in Hebrews 8:6 means stronger or nobler.

Hebrews 10:16 "This is the **covenant** that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;"

- In Hebrews 10:16 Paul is referencing Jeremiah 31:31

Hebrews 9:15-16 "And for this cause he is the mediator of the **new covenant**, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also be of necessity be the death of the testator."

It is important to establish that 'repentance' is required. Believing and accepting Jesus Christ alone is not enough to enter into the New (renewed) Covenant.

Luke 13:5 "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Acts 3:19 "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;"

Acts 17:30 "And the times of ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:"

It is true that the children of Israel were delivered from the Egyptians (a type of sin) by blood. However, the children of Israel were only freed from the pursuing Egyptian Army by water (Red Sea – Baptism). And most certainly the children of Israel were brought to Mt Sinai (the first Pentecost) for the purpose of receiving the Torah of God and would not be permitted entry into the 'promised land' until they had the Torah.

This plan of redemption has been patterned throughout Scripture by God in His dealings with His creation. We see this pattern quite clearly in the death, burial, and resurrection of Messiah Jesus (I Corinthians 15:1-8) and we experience redemption by obeying Acts 2:38.

(Repent = Death) (Baptism = Burial) (Holy Spirit = Resurrection)

BASICS OF TORAH (What God put in us – Jeremiah 31:31)

The English word law (and the Greek word - nomos) do no justice to the Hebrew word 'Torah'. The word Torah in the Hebrew means teachings or instructions. It comes from the Hebrew root word 'Yarah' which means 'to flow as water' (rain).

Jesus said it this way,

“In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. (38) He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (39) (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) John 7:37-39

Sounds like a perfect fulfillment and picture of Ezekiel 36:25-27

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. (26) A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. (27) And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.”

Most people when the word Torah is mentioned think of the Law or perhaps the Jewish Scriptures. While these descriptions apply the word Torah and indeed the Torah indicate much more than these two common descriptions.

Torah also comes from a word meaning to point out, to shoot an arrow; that is to hit the mark. Sin comes from word meaning to

miss; that is to miss the mark! They are in a sense opposites of each other.

Jesus certainly used the Torah!

“And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained what was said in all the scriptures concerning Himself.” Luke 24:27

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for misusing or misinterpreting the Torah!

“For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.” Mark 7:8

Jesus said, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me.”

We see a perfect picture of Moses in the Torah not just searching the Scriptures for the search's sake but searching the Scriptures for the Messiah.

Leviticus 10:16 “And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt: and he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron *which were left alive*, saying,”

What is Truth?

- Psalm 119:142 “Thy righteousness *is* an everlasting righteousness, **and thy law**^{H8451} (TORAH) *is* the truth.
- John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

What is Sin?

- 1John 3:4 KJV “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”

How do you get Blessed?

- Deuteronomy 28:1-2 “And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: (2) And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.”

How do you get Cursed?

Deuteronomy 28:15 “But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:”

How do you know God?

- 1John 2:3 “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”

How do you know if you don't know God?

- 1John 2:4 “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

What is love?

- John 14:15 “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

What is the **WHOLE** duty of man?

- Ecclesiastes 12:13 “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man.”

I am going to read you a book in one minute. It is called “The Autobiography in Five Short Chapters” by Portia Nelson.

Listen closely:

Chapter 1 – I walk down the street. There’s a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I’m lost. I’m helpless. It isn’t my fault. It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter 2 – I walk down the same street. There’s a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don’t see it. I fall in again. I can’t believe I’m in the same place. It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter 3 – I walk down the same street. There’s a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see that it is there. I still fall in. It’s become a habit. My eyes are open. I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.

Chapter 4 – I walk down the same street. There’s a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it.

Chapter 5 – I walk down another street.

You don’t have to continue to walk down the street of tradition!

Scriptures to commit to memory:

Baptism:

Acts 2:38 Titus 3:5 John 3:5 I Corinthians 6:11

Galatians 3:27 Mark 16:16 Romans 6:3-4 I Peter 3:21

Colossians 2:12

Holy Spirit:

Romans 8:9 “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

Ephesians 1:13-14 “In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

John 14:15-16 “If ye love me, keep my commandments. (16) And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;”

The Way of God

John 14:6 “Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way**, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Psalms 103:6-8 “The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. (7) He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. (8) The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.”

Psalms 95:7-11 “For he *is* our God; and we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, (8) Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, *and as in* the day of temptation in the wilderness: (9) When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. (10) Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation, and said, It *is* a people that do err in their heart, **and they have not known my ways**: (11) Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.”

The Hebrew word for way is ‘derek’ which means ‘a course of life or mode of action, a road trodden, to walk, to string a bow by bending’.

We are a blessed people to know THE WAY but will we choose like Moses of old to WALK in the WAY?

Some will argue that this 'Way' is **too difficult** and the very reason that Jesus dies on the cross. However, that is not God's opinion in the matter:

Deuteronomy 30:11 Complete Jewish Bible

"For this mitzvah which I am giving you today is not too hard for you, it is not beyond your reach."

Deuteronomy 30:10-14 "If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, *and* if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. (11) For this commandment which I command thee this day, *it is* not hidden from thee, neither *is* it far off. (12) *It is* not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? (13) Neither *is* it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? (14) But the word *is* very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

1John 5:3 "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

We are not able to **KEEP** the commandments!

The Hebrew word KEEP is 'shamar' and means to hedge about (as with thorns), that is guard, generally to protect, attend to, etc.

It is the same Hebrew word used in Genesis 2:15, "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to **keep** it."-

From this perspective God's Word is 'keepable'!

Was there a prophecy which foretold of a coming day where the Torah would be done away with?

I have yet to find such a prophecy in Scripture. What I have found supports the fact that God's commandments are everlasting.

Leviticus 16:34 "And this shall be an **everlasting statute** unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses."

Numbers 25:13 "And he shall have it, and his seed after him, *even* the covenant of an **everlasting priesthood**; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel."

Exodus 12:17 "And ye shall observe *the feast of unleavened bread*; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an **ordinance for ever**."

You see it is not as much about what change in the renewed covenant (Jeremiah 31:31) as **WHO changed!**

The Book of Hebrews is just that, a book written to HEBREWS. So the **CULTURE** of the book is HEBREW. You can't read this book from a 20th century Christian mindset and get the full meaning.

The **CONTEXT** of the Book of Hebrews is mostly all about THE HIGH PRIEST. Paul is writing about a change but it's **not WHAT** change **but WHO** changed. JESUS is our HIGH PRIEST not after the order of the LEVITES but rather after the order of **Melchisedec**.

Look at the amount of references to this in the Book of Hebrews:

HIGH PRIEST references

Hebrews 2:17 “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”

Hebrews 3:1 “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;”

Hebrews 4:14 “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.”

Hebrews 4:15 “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin.

Hebrews 5:1 “For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:”

Hebrews 5:5 “So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.”

Hebrews 5:10 “Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.”

Hebrews 6:20 “Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Hebrews 7:26 “For such an high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;”

Hebrews 8:1 “Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;”

Hebrews 8:3 “For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore *it is* of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.”

Hebrews 9:7 “But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of the people:”

Hebrews 9:11 “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;”

Hebrews 9:25 “Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;”

Hebrews 10:21 “And *having* an high priest over the house of God;”

Hebrews 13:11 “For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.”

Psalms 110:4 “The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Zechariah 6:12-13 “And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name *is* **The BRANCH**; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: (13) Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”

Five hundred years after David wrote that Psalm the Lord spoke through Zechariah the prophet and proclaimed that His (living) Temple was going to be made by a man that He called “Branch,” and that this man would be both King of Israel (‘sit and rule on His Throne’) and High Priest of Israel (‘shall be a priest on His Throne’).

Branch is a prominent title for the Messiah in the TaNaKh (Old Testament), having had its beginning as the staff of Moses in the Wilderness when God called him (Exodus 3:1). It would be used to perform the plagues against Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea, as well as to quench the rebellious hearts of Israel in relation to her first high priest, Aaron.

As Torah (Law of Moses) also extends to all the Old Testament because it literally means ‘to teach’ or ‘to instruct,’ the Torah had within it this ‘change’ in the Law that Hebrews 7:12 is speaking of.