

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## The Function of the Book of Acts

By John C. Robertson

The function of the book of Acts is to reveal the establishment of the church and spread of the gospel that brings people to holiness. One must understand the gist of the Bible to understand the function of Acts. God created man in his own *“image”* (Greek LXX εἰκὼν) (Gen. 1:27). The Greek εἰκὼν means *“a likeness, image, portrait, an image in a mirror, a semblance, or a similitude”* (LS 228). Man is the mirror image of God not from a physical appearance perspective but by way of holiness and or righteousness.

The Apostle Paul explains what it means to be created in the image of God at 2 Corinthians Chapter 3. Paul, addressing the saints, said *“18 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit”* (2 Cor/ 3:18). God’s saints are his mirror image of holiness in word and deed (see Col. 3:17; Jas/ 2:12 and 1 Pet. 4:11).

The teaching, regarding being created in the image of God, is very clear. God made man to be his equal in holiness, righteousness, and or moral perfection (see Psa. 119:1 and 1 Jn. 4:17). The divine expectation of absolute holiness has not changed from Abraham to all today (see Gen. 17:1; Matt. 5:48 and 1 Pet. 1:15-17).

Mankind, however, has a problem. They fail to meet God’s high calling of holiness. Genesis chapter three record the fall of man through sin (see Gene. 3:1-6). Since that day, everyone has fallen through their choice of sin (Rom. 3:23 and 5:12). God gave the Mosaic Law to identify sin (Rom. 7:7) and to serve as a tutor to bring people to see Christ (Gal. 3:24). The Law of Moses demanded righteousness; however, it was not designed to make one righteous (Rom. 8:3-4 and Heb. 7:18-19).

God, through his mercy and grace, has provided a way for man to achieve his righteousness though they have sinned. God promised to save the world by the sacrifice of his sinless Son (see Gen. 3:15; 12:1-3; Gal. 3:10 and Rom. 3:21-26). Paul writes about Christ saying, *“21 Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him”* (2 Cor. 5:21). This is the process of redemption. The sinner regains the holiness he lost, when he chose to sin, by way of the blood sacrifice of Christ (Col. 1:13-14).

Fascinatingly, one finds similitude between the idea of salvation and righteousness (Rom. 10:10). In fact, one may say that the terms are equal (see Isa. 46:12-13; 61:10 and Acts 2:47 in its context of forgiveness). Those that are *“saved”* are those that have been justified of their sins and stand in the righteousness of God. Righteousness of sinners differs from God’s righteousness only in that he never sinned, that is, he represents absolute perfection (Heb. 4:10). Those that achieve the righteousness of God through faith are justified or forgiven sinners (Rom. 3:22-27). Such people are blessed, or forgiven, because they are deemed holy though they have sinned (Psa. 24:5 and Rom. 4:1-5).

If it is the case that God’s expectation of man is holiness has never changed, then it stands that gospel preaching must be directed in such a way (see Gen. 1:26; 17:1; Ex. 39:30; Lev. 11:44; Num. 15:37-40 and Deut. 18:13). The apostle Paul explains that he, and other faithful preachers, proclaim and teach Christ, *“28 that we may present ever man perfect in Christ; 29 whereunto I labor also, striving according to his working, which works in me mightily”* (Col. 1:28-29). If we compare Colossians 1:29 to Colossians 1:22 we shall see that the *“perfection”* under consideration is one’s holiness (one may do the same thing by comparing Matthew 5:48 to 1 Peter 1:15-16).

The question that everyone should be seeking an answer to comes down to righteousness. If God expects my holiness, yet I sin, how can I achieve his expectation? The apostle Peter tells us that the answer to this pressing question is baptism (1 Pet. 3:21). Baptism is for the forgiveness of sins. It is how one gains access to the blood sacrifice of Christ (compare Romans 5:1-2 to Ephesians 1:7 and Acts 2:38). Baptized people are added to the church,

the body of Christ, and are holy as he is holy.

If we step back and look at the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, it becomes glaringly obvious that God's promise to mankind was the forgiveness of sins, through the sacrifice of Christ, so that they may achieve his righteousness (compare Genesis 12:1-4 to Galatians 3:10 and Acts 2:39-39).

This is where the significance of the church comes into our discussion and why its establishment is so significant. The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). Christ's body is holy, righteous, and or without sin. Jesus said, **"46 Which of you convicts me of sin?"** (Jn. 8:46) Though Jesus was in the flesh he nonetheless never sinned as do we (2 Cor. 5:21). How then can one be in the holy body of Christ if they have and do sin? This is another question that everyone should be asking! Again, the answer is baptism. The baptize person has had all their sins washed away, and consequentially, achieve the righteousness of God (Acts 22:16). Baptized people are in the realm of holiness, the body of Christ, and or the kingdom of God (Eph. 2:6). One that lives in sin cannot be in the body of Christ due to his or her unholiness (see Isa. 59:1-2).

Consider the fact that Israel was not to come near (Josh. 3:3-4) or touch (Num. 4:6, 15) the ark of the covenant. Uzzah, for example, touched the ark of the covenant and was immediately killed (see 2 Sam. 6:6-7). If the ark (treasure box) of the covenant (testimony of truth) is a shadow of Christ, then it stands that the unholy may not come near the body of Christ (see Isa. 59:1-2 and Jn. 20:17). Once the gospel was preached, people had the opportunity to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins and added to the body of Christ. This salvation, or righteousness, is available to everyone (Rom. 10:13). ■

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## Two Looks at Judgment

By Ronnie Milliner

There have probably been parties or other social events which we all have had a desire to attend for enjoyment, renewal of old acquaintances, or various other reasons. On the other hand, there may have been times when we did not care so much about attending such occasions. When this occurred we would either go and probably not have a very good time, or stay at home.

One event is coming to which everyone's attendance will be required. No one will be able to stay at home at the coming of the Lord. **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"** (2 Cor. 5: 10). Just as one person happily anticipates a social gathering while another dreads it, so are there two views of the judgment.

Those who love God and are striving to keep His commandments should have a bold and eager desire for their Master's appearance (1 Jn. 4:17; 2 Pet. 3:12). Paul had a great love to see the coming of the Lord for he had a **"crown of righteousness"** prepared for him (2 Tim. 4:8). Thus, he had a problem of whether to die and be with Christ, or to live in the flesh in order to encourage and strengthen the brethren (Phil. 1:23, 24). For those abiding in Christ, there will be no need to be ashamed at His coming (1 Jn. 2:28).

Yet, those who are living in sin have a fear or dread of seeing the righteous Judge (Heb. 10:27). They are not looking for a **"crown of righteousness,"** but for a **"lake of fire,"** a place of outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Rev. 20:15; Matt. 8:12).

How are you looking forward to Christ's coming? Are you as Paul or are you looking toward the judgment in terror and horror? If you have a frightful looking at the second coming of Christ, then you need to search out the things causing that fear and correct them so that you may expect a **"crown of righteousness."**

**"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"** (Heb. 10:31). ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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