

International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones

April 2025

GENERAL SUBJECT: ONE ACCORD AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

ONE ACCORD AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS (Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Four

The Resurrected, Ascended, and All-inclusive Christ

JL Hymns: 133, 124

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:8-11; 2:32-36; 3:13-15; 4:33;
5:30-32; 7:56; 20:28; 16:31

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 1:9 And when He had said these things, while they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him away from their sight.

Acts 1:10 And while they were looking intently into heaven as He went, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them,

Acts 1:11 Who also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you beheld Him going into heaven.

Acts 2:32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses.

Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.

Acts 2:34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand

Acts 2:35 Until I set Your enemies as a footstool for Your feet."

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.

Acts 3:14 But you denied the holy and righteous One and asked that a man who was a murderer be granted to you;

Acts 3:15 And the Author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles gave testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers has raised Jesus, whom you slew by hanging Him on a tree.

Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Acts 5:32 And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.

Acts 7:56 And he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand

of God.

Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.

Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.

I. The Christ revealed in Acts is in resurrection—1:3; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33:

Acts 1:3 To whom also He presented Himself alive after His suffering by many irrefutable proofs, appearing to them through a period of forty days and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Acts 2:32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses.

Acts 3:15 And the Author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles gave testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

A. Through death Christ entered into another realm, the realm of resurrection:

1. Because Christ is the living One with an indestructible life, death is not able to hold Him—Heb. 7:16; Acts 2:24.

Heb 7:16 Who has been appointed not according to the law of a fleshly commandment but according to the power of an indestructible life.

Acts 2:24 Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, since it was not possible for Him to be held by it.

2. He delivered Himself to death, but death had no way to retain Him; rather, death was defeated by Him, and He rose up from it.

B. We need to know Christ in the power, sphere, and element of His resurrection— Phil. 3:10-11.

Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

Phil 3:11 If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.

C. Christ's resurrection was the focus of the apostles' testimony—Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:13, 15, 26; 4:33; 10:39-40; 13:33; 17:3, 18:

Acts 1:22 Beginning from the baptism of John until the day on which He was taken up from us, one of these should become a witness of His resurrection with us.

Acts 2:32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses.

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.

Acts 3:15 And the Author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

Acts 3:26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant, has sent Him to bless you in turning each of you away from your wicked deeds.

Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles gave testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Acts 10:39 And we are witnesses of all the things which He did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom also they did away with by hanging Him on a tree.

Acts 10:40 This One, God raised on the third day; and He has made Him manifest,

Acts 13:33 That God has fully fulfilled this promise to us their children in raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, "You are My Son; today I have begotten You."

Acts 17:3 Opening and setting before them that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, and saying, This is the Christ, the Jesus whom I announce to you.

Acts 17:18 And some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also confronted him. And some said, What would this babbler wish to say? And others, He seems to be an announcer of foreign deities-because he was announcing Jesus and the resurrection as the gospel.

1. God glorified His Servant Jesus through His resurrection and in His ascension—Luke 24:26; Acts 3:13, 15, 26; 4:10, 33; 5:30-31.

Luke 24:26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into His glory?

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified

His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.

Acts 3:15 And the Author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

Acts 3:26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant, has sent Him to bless you in turning each of you away from your wicked deeds.

Acts 4:10 Let it be known to you all and to all the people of Israel that in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified and whom God has raised from the dead, in this name this man stands before you in good health.

Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles gave testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers has raised Jesus, whom you slew by hanging Him on a tree.

Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

2. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus points back to His incarnation, humanity, human living, and God-ordained death and points forward to His ascension, ministry and administration in heaven, and coming back—2:23; 1:9-11.

Acts 2:23 This man, delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you, through the hand of lawless men, nailed to a cross and killed;

Acts 1:9 And when He had said these things, while they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him away from their sight.

Acts 1:10 And while they were looking intently into heaven as He went, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them,

Acts 1:11 Who also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you beheld Him going into heaven.

II. The Christ revealed in Acts is in ascension—1:9-11; 2:32-36; 5:31:

Acts 1:9 And when He had said these things, while they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him away from their sight.

Acts 1:10 And while they were looking intently into heaven as He went, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them,

Acts 1:11 Who also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you beheld Him going into heaven.

Acts 2:32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses.

Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.

Acts 2:34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand

Acts 2:35 Until I set Your enemies as a footstool for Your feet."

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.

Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

A. Whereas resurrection is a matter of life, Christ's ascension is a matter of position, and position is a matter of authority.

B. The Lord's ascension was His initiation into His living and ministry in the heavens; this initiation brought Him into a new realm, that is, into the heavens where He now has His living and is ministering there.

C. The Lord's ascension brought Him into a new stage—the stage of a resurrected man living in the heavens as the center of God's administration—Rev. 5:6:

Rev 5:6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

1. This resurrected One is now sitting in the heavens to execute God's administration—

Heb. 12:2.

Heb 12:2 Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.

2. The resurrected Christ ascended to the heavens to be exalted by God and to be given the kingship, the lordship, and the headship over all things—Phil. 2:9-11; Eph. 1:22.

Phil 2:9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

Phil 2:10 That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

Phil 2:11 And every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

D. The ascended Christ has also obtained the throne, the glory, and all the authority in the universe—Rev. 5:6; Heb. 1:3; 2:9; Matt. 28:18.

Rev 5:6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

Heb 1:3 Who, being the effulgence of His glory and the impress of His substance and upholding and bearing all things by the word of His power, having made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little inferior to the angels because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of everything.

Matt 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

E. The ascended Christ is the Lord of all to possess all—Acts 2:36:

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.

1. The lordship of Christ is one of the most important aspects of what He has obtained in His ascension—10:36.

Acts 10:36 The word which He sent to the sons of Israel in announcing the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ (this One is Lord of all)

2. Since the lordship of Christ was fully established in His ascension, we—the members of His Body—need to realize this heavenly fact—Eph. 1:20-21.

Eph 1:20 Which He caused to operate in Christ in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies,

Eph 1:21 Far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come;

F. The ascended Christ is God's Anointed to carry out God's commission to work out the spreading of the gospel and the building up of the church—Acts 1:8.

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

III. The Christ revealed in Acts is the all-inclusive Christ—3:14-15, 25-26; 5:30-32; 7:56; 10:36, 39-43; 16:31; 17:30-31; 20:28:

Acts 3:14 But you denied the holy and righteous One and asked that a man who was a murderer be granted to you;

Acts 3:15 And the Author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

Acts 3:25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God covenanted with your fathers, saying to Abraham, "And in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Acts 3:26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant, has sent Him to bless you in turning each

of you away from your wicked deeds.
 Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers has raised Jesus, whom you slew by hanging Him on a tree.
 Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
 Acts 5:32 And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.
 Acts 7:56 And he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.
 Acts 10:36 The word which He sent to the sons of Israel in announcing the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ (this One is Lord of all)
 Acts 10:39 And we are witnesses of all the things which He did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom also they did away with by hanging Him on a tree.
 Acts 10:40 This One, God raised on the third day; and He has made Him manifest,
 Acts 10:41 Not to all the people, but to witnesses appointed beforehand by God, to us, ones who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.
 Acts 10:42 And He has charged us to proclaim to the people and solemnly testify that this is the One who was designated by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead.
 Acts 10:43 To this One all the prophets testify that through His name everyone who believes into Him will receive forgiveness of sins.
 Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.
 Acts 17:30 Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now charges all men everywhere to repent,
 Acts 17:31 Because He has set a day in which He is to judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has designated, having furnished proof to all by raising Him from the dead.
 Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.

A. Christ is the Author of life—3:14-15:

Acts 3:14 But you denied the holy and righteous One and asked that a man who was a murderer be granted to you;
 Acts 3:15 And the Author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

1. As indicated by the Greek word rendered “Author,” Christ is the origin or Originator of life; He is the Author, the Chief Leader, in life—v. 15.

Acts 3:15 And the Author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

2. In Acts 3 we see the imparting of life into others, which is to propagate Christ; for such a propagation, we need the Lord as the Author of life, the source of life.

Acts 3 be omitted.

3. As the Author of life, Christ is the holy and righteous One—v. 14.

Acts 3:14 But you denied the holy and righteous One and asked that a man who was a murderer be granted to you;

B. Christ is God’s Servant—vv. 25-26:

Acts 3:25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God covenanted with your fathers, saying to Abraham, "And in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Acts 3:26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant, has sent Him to bless you in turning each of you away from your wicked deeds.

1. As the seed of Abraham and the Servant of God, Christ is the One in whom all the families of the earth—all the races, colors, and nationalities—will be blessed—vv. 25-26.

Acts 3:25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God covenanted with your fathers, saying to Abraham, "And in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Acts 3:26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant, has sent Him to bless you in turning each of you away from your wicked deeds.

2. God sent back the ascended Christ as a blessing by pouring out the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; hence, the Spirit whom God poured out was the Christ whom God raised

and exalted to the heavens—2:33; 3:13-15, 25-26.

Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.

Acts 3:14 But you denied the holy and righteous One and asked that a man who was a murderer be granted to you;

Acts 3:15 And the Author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

Acts 3:25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God covenanted with your fathers, saying to Abraham, "And in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Acts 3:26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant, has sent Him to bless you in turning each of you away from your wicked deeds.

C. Christ is the Leader and Savior—5:30-32:

Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers has raised Jesus, whom you slew by hanging Him on a tree.

Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Acts 5:32 And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.

1. God exalted the man Jesus as the highest Leader, the Prince, the Ruler of the kings to rule over the world, and the Savior to save God's chosen people — Rev. 1:5; 19:16; Acts 5:31.

Rev 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood

Rev 19:16 And He has on His garment and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

2. *Leader* is related to His authority, and *Savior* is related to His salvation; He rules sovereignly over the earth with His authority so that the environment might be fit for God's chosen people to receive His salvation—cf. 17:26-27.

Acts 17:26 And He made from one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, determining beforehand their appointed seasons and the boundaries of their dwelling,

Acts 17:27 That they might seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, even though He is not far from each one of us;

D. Christ is the Son of Man—7:56:

Acts 7:56 And he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

1. Acts 7:56 reveals that Christ is the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God to be the comfort, encouragement, and strength to the one martyred for Him.

Acts 7:56 And he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

2. Stephen saw the ascended Christ as the Son of Man; this indicates that the Christ who is in the heavens still has His humanity; He still possesses His human nature.

E. Christ is God—20:28:

Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.

1. Christ as our God is the Purchaser of the church, having obtained the church with His own blood—v. 28.

Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has

placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.

2. God secured, purchased, and redeemed the church with “His own blood” (v. 28), “the blood of Jesus His Son” (1 John 1:7).

Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.
3. Christ died on the cross as the God-man, and the blood that He shed there for our redemption was not only the blood of the man Jesus but also the blood of the God-man.
4. The blood through which God obtained the church is God’s own blood.

F. Christ is the Lord of all—Acts 10:36:

Acts 10:36 The word which He sent to the sons of Israel in announcing the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ (this One is Lord of all)

1. *All* in Acts 10:36 refers to all peoples—1 Tim. 2:4.

Acts 10:36 The word which He sent to the sons of Israel in announcing the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ (this One is Lord of all)

1 Tim 2:4 Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth.
2. The ascended Christ is the Lord of all the different races and peoples on earth; with Him, there is no respect of persons—Rev. 5:9.

Rev 5:9 And they sing a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain and have purchased for God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

G. Christ is the Judge—Acts 10:39-43:

Acts 10:39 And we are witnesses of all the things which He did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom also they did away with by hanging Him on a tree.

Acts 10:40 This One, God raised on the third day; and He has made Him manifest,

Acts 10:41 Not to all the people, but to witnesses appointed beforehand by God, to us, ones who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.

Acts 10:42 And He has charged us to proclaim to the people and solemnly testify that this is the One who was designated by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead.

Acts 10:43 To this One all the prophets testify that through His name everyone who believes into Him will receive forgiveness of sins.

1. Christ has been designated by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead—v. 42.

Acts 10:42 And He has charged us to proclaim to the people and solemnly testify that this is the One who was designated by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead.
2. Christ is a man to judge the world, designated by God in righteousness and proved by God’s raising Him from the dead—17:30-31.

Acts 17:30 Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now charges all men everywhere to repent,

Acts 17:31 Because He has set a day in which He is to judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has designated, having furnished proof to all by raising Him from the dead.

H. Christ is the Lord Jesus, the object of the believers’ faith—16:31:

Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.

1. To believe in the gospel is mainly to believe in Jesus Christ—v. 31.

Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.
2. To believe in the Lord Jesus is to stand on the person of Christ and all that He has accomplished, both of which constitute the belief, the faith, of God’s New Testament economy—1 Tim. 1:4.

1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

PREACHING CHRIST

Centered on Christ

We have seen that Paul's preaching and teaching were based on the Old Testament. The Old Testament, however, contains many things: history, the law, types, and prophecies. The Jews studied the Old Testament week by week, but they did not pay attention to Christ. They had some thought concerning the Messiah, but they did not have any understanding of Christ. When Paul went into the synagogues to preach and teach, he did not care for anything other than Christ.

When some hear that Paul preached Christ and Christ alone, they may say, "Did Paul not begin his preaching with an account of the history in the Old Testament? Did he not speak of God's bringing His people out of Egypt and about Saul and David?" Yes, Paul spoke about those things, but he did so in order to prepare the way to preach Christ. In Acts 13:22 Paul quoted the word about David being a man according to God's heart. Then in verse 23 he went on to say, "From this man's seed, God, according to promise, brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus." Here we see that after a short introduction he came to his crucial message, which was altogether centered on Christ. After beginning with the history until the time of David, Paul went on to point out that from David's seed God brought forth a Savior, Jesus Christ. With Him there is salvation.

In 13:24 and 25 Paul referred to John the Baptist: "After John had proclaimed, prior to His public entrance, a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. Now as John was completing his course, he said, What do you suppose that I am? I am not the Christ. But behold, One is coming after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie." Literally, the Greek words rendered "prior to His public entrance" mean "before the face of His entrance." Here Paul pointed out that prior to Christ's public entrance, John proclaimed a baptism of repentance. Repentance is to change one's mind, and baptism is to bury the repentant ones, terminating them, so that the Savior may germinate them by regeneration (John 3:3, 5-6).

As Paul went on to speak concerning "the word of this salvation" (Acts 13:26), he emphasized Christ's crucifixion. He pointed out that the people of Israel had Him put to death. In verse 27 he said, "Those dwelling in Jerusalem and their rulers, being ignorant of this One and of the words of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by judging Him." They judged the Lord Jesus by sentencing Him to death (Luke 24:20). "When they had accomplished all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb" (Acts 13:29).

Raised from the Dead

Beginning with verse 30, Paul went on to speak of Christ's resurrection: "But God raised Him from the dead." We have seen that Acts tells us both that God raised up Jesus (2:24, 32) and that He rose from the dead (10:40-41). Regarding the Lord as a man, the New Testament says that God raised Him from the dead (Rom. 8:11). But considering Him as God, it tells us that He Himself rose from the dead (14:9).

The Firstborn Son of God in Resurrection

After pointing out that the resurrected Christ "appeared to those who had come up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now His witnesses to the people" (Acts 13:31), Paul went on to say, "We announce to you the gospel of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fully fulfilled this promise to us their children in raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; this day have I begotten You'" (vv. 32-33). Resurrection was a birth to the man Jesus. He was begotten by God in His resurrection to be the firstborn Son of God among many brothers (Rom. 8:29). He was the

only begotten Son of God from eternity (John 1:18; 3:16). After incarnation, through resurrection, He was begotten by God in His humanity to be God's firstborn Son.

If it were not for Paul, I do not think that we would be able to see that Psalm 2 speaks of the resurrection of Christ. Paul was able to see the Lord's resurrection in the word, "You are My Son; / Today I have begotten You." Paul applied the word *today* to the day of the Lord's resurrection (cf. Acts 13:33). This means that Christ's resurrection was His birth as the firstborn Son of God. Jesus, the Son of Man, was born to be the Son of God through being raised up from the dead. Therefore, God's raising up of Jesus from the dead was His begetting of Him to be His firstborn Son. We need to realize that the Lord's resurrection was His birth. This is a crucial matter.

The Lord's Two Births

The Lord Jesus has had two births. First, He was born of Mary to be the Son of Man. Then thirty-three and a half years later, He was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. Through resurrection He had a second birth, for as a man, He was born in His resurrection to be the Son of God. Therefore, in His first birth He was born of Mary to be the Son of Man, and in His second birth He was born in resurrection to be the Son of God.

The Only Begotten Son and the Firstborn Son

When some hear that Christ was born to be the Son of God in resurrection, they may have a problem and say, "Was not our Lord the Son of God from eternity?" Yes, from eternity He was the Son of God. Before His first birth, that is, before He was born of Mary to be the Son of Man, He was already the Son of God. The Gospel of John emphasizes the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and He is the Son of God eternally. Since He was already the Son of God before His incarnation, why was it necessary for Him to be born the Son of God in His resurrection? If we would answer this question, we need to study the Bible carefully.

Romans 8:29 and Hebrews 1:6 both speak of Christ as the Firstborn. In His second birth the Lord Jesus was born to be the firstborn Son of God. According to the New Testament, He is the Son of God in two aspects. First, He was God's only begotten Son; second, He is now God's firstborn Son. The words *only begotten* indicate that God has only one Son. John 1:18 and 3:16 speak of the only begotten Son of God. Eternally speaking, Christ was the only begotten Son of God. This was His eternal status. But through resurrection He, as a man, was born to be the firstborn Son of God. The word *firstborn* indicates that God now has many sons (Heb. 2:10). We who believe in Christ are the many sons of God and the many brothers of the Lord, the many brothers of the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29).

The Embodiment of Life and the Propagation of Life

As the only begotten Son of God, the Lord is the embodiment of the divine life. The Gospel of John emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and as the Son of God, He is the very embodiment of the divine life (1:4). Through resurrection Christ became the firstborn Son of God as the life-dispenser for the propagation of life. First, He was the only begotten Son as the embodiment of life; now He is the firstborn Son for the propagation of life. Through His becoming the firstborn Son of God in resurrection, the divine life has been dispensed into all His believers to bring forth the propagation of the very life that is embodied in Him. We all need to see this.

Here in Acts 13 Paul was not preaching Christ as the only begotten Son of God, as the Gospel of John does. Rather, here Paul was preaching Christ as the firstborn Son of God for propagation. For this reason he preached the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as His second birth. Through His second birth, His birth in resurrection, Christ became the firstborn Son of God for the propagation of the divine life. (*Life-study of Acts*, pp. 310-314)