

God's Program for the Age

Acts 15:1-14 (text v. 14)

The book of Acts is a **transitional book** going from the dispensation of Law to Grace... from Peter to Paul... from Jew to Gentiles... A nation to the local church... from Jerusalem to the uttermost... (Acts 1:8).

1. In the first seven chapters of Acts, the message of Christ has been preached exclusively to Jews.
2. In Acts 8 the Samaritans (half Jew) hear the message.
3. In Acts 10 a Gentile hears the message and is saved (10:44-45).
4. In Acts 11:20-21, the first Gentile church is established in Antioch. The name *C* originated here (11:26).
5. The first “missionaries” sent out from the church at Antioch (13:2-5).
6. On their missionary journey there is a new direction in God’s program (read Acts 13:44-49).

➡ A controversy — Must the Gentiles keep the Law of Moses to be saved (read Acts 15:1-6). Peter described how he preached the gospel to the Gentiles and they were saved by grace through faith (vs. 7-11).

➡ In Acts 15:13-14, James sums up **God’s program for this age**.

What is a “program?” It is a plan to reach a desired end (an **agenda**):

- A program always indicates a starting point and a point of completion (i.e. radio/television program; exercise program).
- When you go to a stage performance you are usually given a “program.” It tells you what is going to happen next.
- A computer program is a set of coded instructions that tells a computer how to operate certain functions.

I. A VISITATION program— *G* *I I* *G*

➡ **God visited the Jews** through Christ and they missed Him (Luke 7:16; 19:41-44).

A. Since the Jews rejected God’s visitation, **God visited the Gentiles**— Cornelius (see Acts 10). Cornelius was...

1. A religious man (v. 2)
2. A God-fearing man (v. 2)

- 3. A unselfish m
- 4. A praying ma
- 5. A man who fa
- 6. A man who w (14).

B. **How did God visit** through His ambassador, Peter. That is how God visits today—Through His ambassadors, YOU and I. Every man is an ambassador for Christ—A missionary!

➡ *B*, *G* (2 Cor. 5:20). *EAD*, *G*

- 1. An "ambassador" is one who represents another in a foreign land.
- 2. He promotes the interests / views of the one he represents.
- 3. To reject an ambassador is to reject whom he represents.
- 4. He assists those who wish to emigrate to his country. He shows the candidate the requirements and how to apply.

C. Do you want God to visit your unsaved neighbor, co-worker, and loved ones? He will visit them as YOU visit them in Jesus' name. **That is God's program today.** Let's get out and VISIT the lost.

II. A SEPARATION program—AKE O

A. The **determination** of the program—It's a *AKE O* program (like at a restaurant)! God took Enoch out... Abraham out of Ur... Israel out Egypt... Elijah out in a fiery chariot... Jesus out.

- 1. When a Gentile is saved, he is **taken out** from among the Gentiles and placed IN CHRIST (1 Cor. 12:12-13)—He is no longer a Gentile—He is a NEW CREATURE (Gal. 3:28; 6:15)!
- 2. Obviously, if He "takes out" of the Gentiles, some will not be taken out. Not everyone will be saved. Some will go to hell (Mt. 7:21). Only those in the Lamb's Book of Life will be saved (Rev. 20:15).

B. The **termination** of the program (Rom. 11:25). When *G*, " we will be literally TAKEN OUT in

the rapture (1 Thess. 4:16-17). This will complete God's program for THIS AGE / dispensation.

III. An IDENTIFICATION program— *HI NAME.*

➤ Everything is *HI NAME* —Saved by His name (Acts 4:12)...
Preach His name... Pray in His name... Baptize in His name...
, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus (Col. 3:17).

A. His name becomes our name— *C -ian*" (Acts 11:26)

Adding the suffix "*ian*" to another name identifies the person to whatever his name is attached to = means belonging to the family of; belonging to the country of: Italian; Egyptian; Arabian; Indian; Hawaiian; Columbian; Russian.

B. Marks of identification:

1. How you talk. Galilean.
2. How you dress.
3. How you act.

C. Baptism is an outward expression of our identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection.

➤ In baptism we are saying, "I am not ashamed to be identified with Christ." We are baptized in His name!

SUMMATION: When we are saved, we are placed in His body. When God the Father sees us, He sees His Son. This is our only hope of entrance into heaven.

Barb and I visited my daughter Joyce when her husband was stationed at Mountain Home Air Force Base. After the four of us went shopping we returned to the base in Joyce's car. As we approached the gate to the base, we were waved right in past the gate without being stopped by the guard. I asked why we didn't have to stop. Joyce's husband pointed to a decal on the windshield of the car. "This decal lets me and my guests onto the base." Because I was with Aaron, who had previous clearance, I could get through the gate with no difficulty.

This made me think about getting [redacted] on my own, I wouldn't stand a chance of getting in. I do not [redacted] ht, and I could never earn it. But when I trusted Christ as [redacted] born again into His family—I became [redacted] with Him [redacted] 4 says His name shall be in their foreheads! Because [redacted] (Eph. 2:6), I have free access into God's heaven (v. 7).