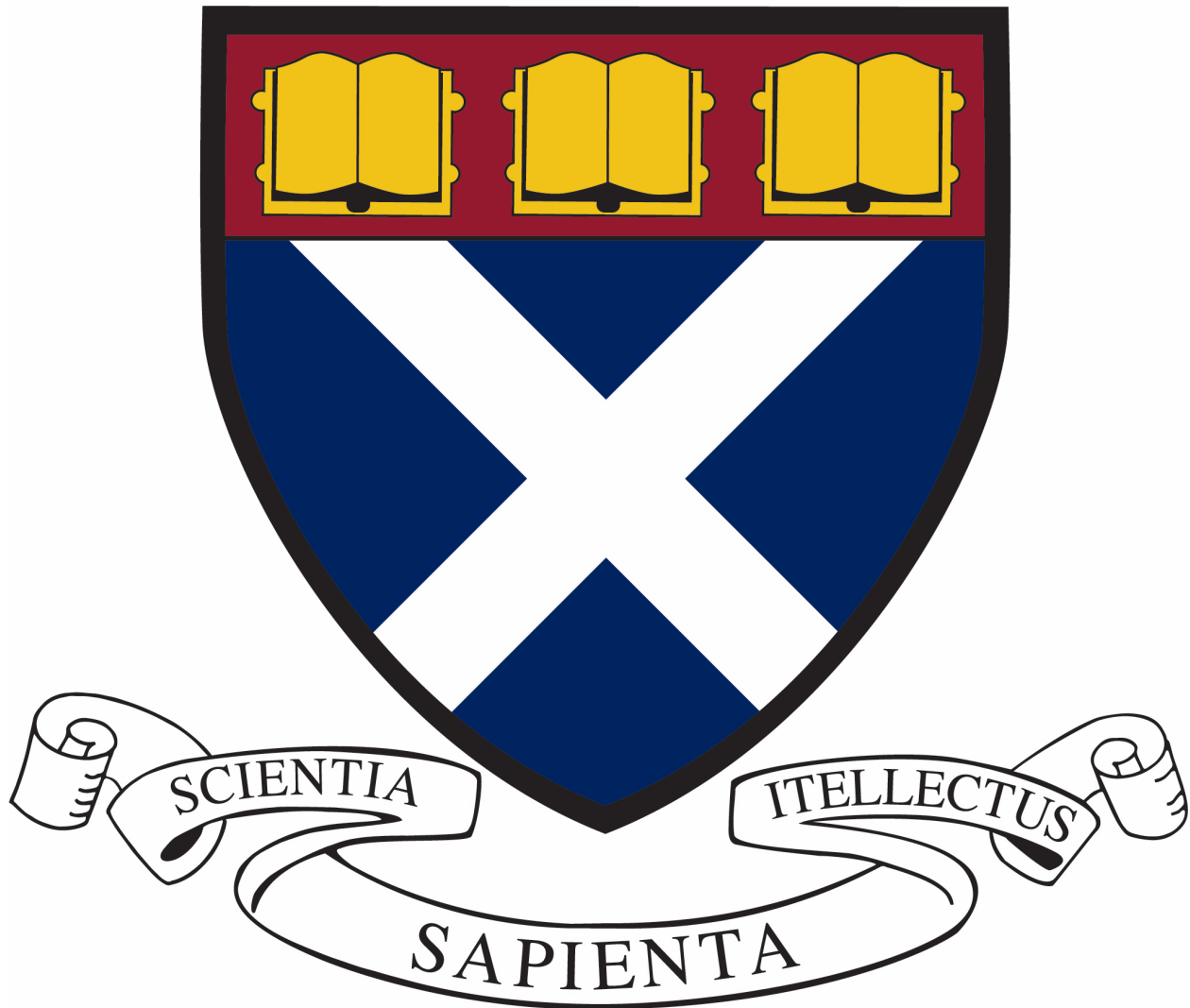


The St. Andrew School of Apologetics



The Motto of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics is, "Knowledge, Understanding & Wisdom." This Mission Statement comes from Colossians 1:9: "And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

“Devotional Textbook for Apologetics through the Book of Acts of 2021”
by J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrews School of Apologetics

Our dear beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this “Devotional Textbook” is being prepared for you over the course of this year to “build yourselves up in your most holy faith” (Jude 1:20b) in order for you to be “prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you, with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15b). We will be leading you through the historical book of Acts on a daily basis by sending you short “Lessons of the Day” on Facebook and then reviewing what we have learned in our periodic teaching sessions on (Kenya TV, Facebook, etc.) with Dr. Solomon Kendagor.

The daily lessons are being preserved in our Devotional Textbook below and will help you gain the knowledge, understanding and wisdom from God’s Word for you to speak with people about the historical proofs of the Gospel.

We will begin with basic knowledge and build you up to gain the understanding in the Lord because as it is written:

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, ¹³ for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” (Hebrews 5:12-14)

As you grow in the faith we will bring forth more apologetic and theological training, for as Paul told the Corinthians, “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.” (1 Corinthians 1:13)

As you begin to gain in knowledge and understanding, we will bring in more scripture verses from the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Letters of Paul and Peter. The goal will be to aid your growth in “wisdom” because, “For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6) and this is needed today because we are to “look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” (Ephesians 5:15 & 16)

We call this document a “Devotional Textbook” because we will be reaching out to you on a daily basis, encouraging your prayer life and discipleship, because we are called to “pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (Romans 14:19) and “equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:12)

May our journey together through the Book of Acts bless us all and may we “Do our best to present ourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” (1 Timothy 2:1)

The History of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics

The predecessor to the current St. Andrew School of Apologetics was the Christian Study Center of St. Louis and was acquired by J. A. Holtz, an ordained Deacon at the historic Central Presbyterian Church in Clayton, MO who later matriculated into the M. Div. program at Covenant Theological Seminary, The National Seminary of the PCA in St. Louis. J. A. Holtz continued to pray, study and participate in the life of the church, becoming a teacher of New Testament and Elder in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. In 2016, J. A. Holtz began a Doctor of Ministries in Apologetics program at Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, NC under Dr. David Geisler and Dr. Daniel Janosik with the purpose of creating a school of Apologetics as a viable business model and Doctoral thesis. J. A. Holtz is committed to endow the school with the majority of his income and estate, whereby after his death the school will have a completely sustainable organization with ample financial resources, in the Lord, to continue without ceasing until the Lord returns, amen.

In 2017, Holtz acquired the Christian Study Center of St. Louis from Memorial Presbyterian Church (PCA) and began to develop a teaching methodology called “devotional learning,” whereby the school uses social media to send devotional lessons on a daily or semi-daily basis, then the classes will use Zoom and Facebook to give presentations and have interaction with the students. This pedagogic methodology also uses email, FB Messenger and other internet tools to give and receive assignments.

The Christian Study Center of St. Louis officially changed its name to The St. Andrew School of Apologetics in 2018 and began to develop their ideas to reach the world with apologetics through the internet, and the class Apologetics through the Book of Acts is the first and foundational class to teach students the important historical facts of the New Testament, and edify our students equip them, through the Spirit, to defend the faith with God’s Word.

We believe that the Book of Acts is the greatest single source for Apologetics, and we integrate the entire New Testament canon to be our primary source for teaching believers to be an apologist or for encountering unbelievers in what we call “reasoning in the marketplace.”

J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics is an ordained Ruling Elder in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and has a B. S. in Economics, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, an MA in Theological Studies with a concentration in Christianity and Contemporary Culture, summa cum laude, Covenant Theological Seminary (the national seminary for the Presbyterian in America) and is a candidate for a Doctor of Ministries in Apologetics at Southern Evangelical Seminary.

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1. The 40+ Day Devotional Search for Knowledge, Understanding & Wisdom.

We begin our pedagogic journey of Christian Apologetics through the Book of Acts with a 40+ day period of reading, thinking, praying and renewing your mind (“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2), in the Spirit of God (“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift, Eph. 4:4-7).

Then a little vacation.

2. March 1, 2021-April 5, 2021 Review of the 40-Day Devotional Textbook: Acts 1-4.

We will review the 40+ Day reflexional period and get up to Acts Chapter 5
Assignment:

- A. March 1-4 2021, read Acts 1-4 and Devotional Textbook Draft 6.0 pages 1-11.
- B. March 5-7, 2021, read Acts 4-6 and Devotional Textbook Draft 6.0 pages 12-28.
- C. March 8-12, 2021, read Acts 1 & 2 with an eye of Apologetic points and Devotional Textbook Draft 6.0 28-40.

3. April 6-September 15, 2021 Apologetics through the Book of Acts.

4 September 15-20, 2021 Final Exams (online) and submission of edited papers.

5. September 25, 2021 Certificates are released.

Devotional Textbook: Apologetics through the Book of Acts.

Apologetics Thought of the Day for Dec. 30, 2020 by J. A. Holtz, Dean:

(Picture of Ephesian Library)

"The defense of the faith is not a luxury or intellectual vanity. It is a task appointed by God that you should be able to give a reason for the hope that is in you as you bear witness before the world." R. C. Sproul

The Biblical warrant for Apologetics comes from 1 Peter 3:15:

"But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."

The Greek word for "defense" is "apologia" from which we get the word "Apologetics" and the "application" that we learn from this important passage is for us to engage in the defense of our faith with "gentleness and respect."

Always be gentle and respectful because:

"We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." 2 Corinthians 5:20

Amen and Amen.

Apologetics Thought of the Day for Jan. 2, 2021 by J. A. Holtz, Dean:

(Picture of C.S. Lewis)

C.S. Lewis once wrote, "Human history is the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him joyful."

"Joy" is one of the nine fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22 & 23 and is easily within our reach, so close to us at all times, and yet, mankind is in constant search for "joy" in far off places and in self-destructive pursuits.

In many ways, "joy" is a form of "contentment" and the Apostle Paul gives us a clear message on the secret to attain this true "joy" in Philippians 4:11-13:

"Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

True "joy" does not come from material things, pleasures of the flesh or even personal relationships, but only through our Redeemer and His love and grace, which gives us the assurance of eternal joy with our Creator.

Apologetics Thought of the Day for Jan. 3, 2021 by J. A. Holtz, Dean:

(Picture of R.C. Sproul)

RC Sproul once wrote, "Apologetics is not merely about winning an argument, but it is about winning souls."

This message is more important today than ever before because of the hostile nature of our discourse, particularly on social media. We seem to have lost the art of persuasion and our communications have devolved into tribal bullying that is littered with graphic hate speech and threatening emojis. Perhaps, we can begin this new year with kind words and affirmations of the dignity of others.

The Apostle Paul said:

"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." (Ephesians 4:29)

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience." (Colossians 3:12)

"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person." (Colossians 4:6)

As we answer people who may not know the Lord as Savior, do so with humble hearts and tender words because as the Proverb says:

"A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit." (Proverbs 15:4)

Apologetics Thought of the Day for Jan. 4, 2021 by J. A. Holtz, Dean:

(Icon of Luke)

"The Book of Acts is the Single Greatest Source for Christian Apologetics." J. A. Holtz, Dean.

Luke, the early church evangelist wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. He was a first-class historian who researched primary sources for his account by talking to eyewitnesses and he even traveled with the Apostle Paul on his final missionary journey.

Luke explains the purpose of Acts in the first three verses:

"In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."

The addressee of Luke's book, Theophilus means "friend of God" in Greek, and he may have been a real person or the name may have been a general title for all believers. Regardless, the important point of the preamble of the Book of Acts is that Luke reported the "fact" that the resurrected Jesus "presented himself alive" and His appearing was witnessed by many people.

The preamble to Acts should not be read without referencing the preamble to the Gospel of Luke. Luke 1:1-4:

"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us,² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us,³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught."

We will focus on this important passage later in the Class, but let us together acknowledge that Luke was completely thorough in his historical research and documentation, because the goal was "certainty," which is a high bar, indeed.

Paul also confirms the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead in 1 Corinthians 15:3-6:

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep."

The first and most important element of Christian Apologetics when giving others an "answer" for the hope within you is to show that Jesus was physically resurrected as proof of His divinity and the "first fruit" of the resurrection of all mankind. The resurrection is not a myth or a fairytale, but a historical fact in "time and space" that was witnessed by over 500 at one time and recorded by the reliable sources of Luke and Paul, among others.

Apologetics Thought in the Book of Acts for Jan. 7, 2021: "Wait for the Promise of the Father" J. A. Holtz, Dean

(Picture of Jerusalem.)

Luke reported that after the resurrection of Jesus, He spent 40-days with the disciples and in Acts 1:4 & 5, from the Mount of Olives (see picture):

"while [Jesus] staying with them He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

This report from eyewitnesses to Luke not only supports the historical basis for the Resurrection, but it also gives believers of today an important message, and that is to "wait for the promise of the Father."

What is the promise?

The "promise" is the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Jesus told His disciples in John 14:15-17:

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."

Most people today are impatient to wait for anything, just watch when there is a delay in someone's Latte at Starbuck's, which has little real value. But, Jesus has told us to be patient and "wait" for something of infinite value, the "Spirit of Truth."

Brothers and Sisters, be patient, wait for the Father, trust His eternal wisdom, for He knows what you truly need, and that is His Spirit of Truth in these days of chaos and deceit.

In Christ's Holy name, may it be so! Amen and amen!

Apologetic Thought in the Book of Acts for Jan. 8, 2021: "Be My Witnesses"
J. A. Holtz, Dean

(Diagram of Acts 1:8)

There was much confusion about the mission of Jesus as the Messiah, even by those who were closest to Him; the men who shared their lives with Him for 3-years. Christ's followers did not grasp the nature of the "Kingdom" that Jesus was bringing, because they were still focused on the "physical world" and not the "spiritual world." Jesus told them and us to be witnesses of the truth of his coming and the efficacy of his mission in Acts 1:5-8:

"So, when they [the disciples] had come together, they asked Him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The Greek word for "witness" is μάρτυρες (martures), which in this literary context means, "to serve him by testimony," and we are to serve Christ by giving "testimony" of how and what he has done for us. That is the Gospel, the good news that Christ's sacrifice on the Roman cross has paid the price for our sin.

Christ's finished work not only paved the way for our eternal bliss with God, but it also puts us on the path to righteousness in this world, "to do good works that have been prepared by God, beforehand." (Eph. 2:10b) Furthermore, Jesus gave us the "mission" as witnesses, which is to testify to those as close as your own household and to strangers who live in the furthest corners of the world (see the diagram below). The next time you see a family member who does not know Jesus as Lord, or make a post to a Facebook friend who lives 10,000-miles away, consider being a "witness" of what you have "seen and heard" about your loving Savior.

Apologetics Thought in the Book of Acts for Jan. 9, 2021: "The Ascension and Another Promise" by J. A. Holtz, Dean

(Painting of the Ascension.)

Brothers and Sisters, let us look at the Ascension as recorded by Luke.

Acts 1:9-11:

“And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

The Ascension is one of the most dramatic events recorded in the Book of Acts. Luke’s account of Jesus returning to the Father gives the world two promises:

1) the promise in the Ascension gives us the assurance that we have an advocate with the Father in Heaven. As it says in Hebrews 8:1, “Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven” and

2) the promise of the Second Coming gives us the assurance that Jesus will come back for us as Paul wrote in Colossians 3:4, “When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Luke’s account gives us historical evidence, in time and space, that we have a caring mediator, and as we live in the present, we have a loving Lord who will usher us into paradise in the future.

Theological Thought on the Present Political Tumult and a Proper Christian Response for Jan. 10, 2021: “Submit to Authorities” by J. A. Holtz, Dean

(See the picture: “Nero Torching Rome” by Henryk Siemiradzki)

Let us take a break from Acts today to discuss a Christian perspective of some current events in the context of 21st Century America. Let us take a look at 1 Peter 2:13-17:

“Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.”

This passage tells Christians to submit, even to an emperor as evil as Nero. But, is this requirement absolute? Obviously, the violence that we saw at the US Capitol was entirely unwarranted & unlawful, and quite frankly, embarrassing for those who have supported the President on many of his policies (pro-life, Israel, judicial nominations, immigration, etc.).

But, was something like the American Revolution biblically warranted?

Here is a line of scriptural reasoning that may give us all food for thought from Dr. Mark A. Noll:

“The colonists saw the war as a defensive action, not as an offensive war. And it is true that, in 1775 and 1776, the Americans had presented the king with formal appeals for reconciliation. These peaceful pleas were met with armed military force and several violations of British Common Law and the English Bill of Rights. In 1770, the British fired upon unarmed citizens in the Boston Massacre. At Lexington, the command was “Don’t fire unless fired upon.” The colonists, therefore, saw themselves as defending themselves after the conflict had been initiated by the British.”

Another example is Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer who participated in the plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler. He said, "When a man takes guilt upon himself in responsibility, he imputes his guilt to himself and no one else. He answers for it... Before other men he is justified by dire necessity; before himself he is acquitted by his conscience, but before God he hopes only for grace." Bonhoeffer knew that he was acting against the Word of God, but he believed that he was saving the lives of innocent people and threw himself on the mercy of God for forgiveness.

Christians should defend themselves from bodily harm, but when dealing with a government that is immoral, we should peacefully submit to authority, pray for our earthly leaders, exercise our civil rights to speak up against evil actions that are against God’s law and vote.

Theological Thought of the Day for Jan. 11, 2021: “How to Truly Heal a Nation” by J. A. Holtz, Dean

(Picture of bi-racial handshake.)

America is, perhaps, more divided along political and cultural lines than at any time since the Civil War. We have divided ourselves into “tribal” groups, losing our ability to communicate with one another with humility and kindness. We view others who have different perspectives as “enemies” to be conquered, rather than individuals with whom we can reason. Jesus addressed this human problem in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:43-46a:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?”

Christ’s words challenge us to go beyond being civil with those whom we disagree, but to “love” them in the midst of dissenting opinions. He commands us to love those outside our comfort zone, because that is the only way to achieve true unity. Once we recognize that we all have commonality, that we all face obstacles, that we all feel pain, then we can begin to heal.

The Apostle Paul faced opposition throughout his missionary journeys and was ultimately arrested and executed by the Roman authorities, but he always looked for ways to find common ground, as he wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22:

“To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹ To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.”

May we find peace in our nation through the love of Christ and with one another, may it be so in His Holy name. Amen and amen!

Biblical Thoughts on Godly Marriage: “Mutual Sacrificial Love” for Jan. 12, 2021 by J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics

(Picture of Wedding in the Philippines)

Recently, one of my beloved international students asked me for Biblical advice on marriage, both with regard to asking a Godly woman to be his bride, and how to best ask her father for his blessings to marry her.

This request for counsel places a great burden on the teacher because, “we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” (James 3:1b) So, I prayed for the Spirit of Truth to enlighten me and open my mind to share some wisdom of the Lord from His Holy Word,

Here are three thoughts on marriage that I pray will edify you or those you may know and love:

- 1) Tell your future bride how much you love her and that you feel “called” by the Lord to marry her and you pray that she feels the same way, for it says in Genesis 2:24: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”
- 2) Tell her father that you love his daughter with a sacrificial love, as Christ loved the church and you would lay down your life for her, for it says in Ephesians 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her.”
- 3) Tell them both that your love for her will be strengthen and enlightened by the Holy Spirit as long as we both shall live, as it is written in 1 Corinthians 13:4-5: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.”

Hence, humbly ask for the father’s blessings and lovingly ask the daughter for her hand in marriage, so that you will sacrificially love each other, honoring your families and honoring Christ in all that you do.

In Christ’s Holy name, may it be so. Amen and amen!

Apologetic Thought of the Day for Jan. 13, 2020: “The Gospel Brings Men and Women Together in Prayer”

(Picture of an “upper room” in Jerusalem.)

Brothers and Sisters, let us return to the Book of Acts to see how the saints came together in Kingdom Living after the Ascension and before the Pentecost.

Acts 1:12-14:

“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.”

The disciples, women, Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers were gathered together after the Ascension in one accord in prayer. There are many important historical facts reported by Luke in this small section of scripture as follows:

- 1) Luke specifically names the “Mount of Olives” as the site of the Ascension of Jesus and the gathering of the disciples. He also names an “upper room” (see picture), both of these specific historical facts gives credibility to the account by Luke.
- 2) The disciples were named and documented, these were real men, ordinary men, whom our Lord called to be his witnesses from Jerusalem to the entire world. Again, these actual names gives credence to the narrative.
- 3) Those gathered in the upper room were of the same accord in “prayer.” Prayer binds the “church together” and unifies the body of Christ.
- 4) The men and the women were together in the upper room. This equality was something new, not only in 1st Century Palestine, but throughout the entire world during this era. Christ valued women in his earthly ministry, as can be seen with Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42) and the woman at the well (John 4:1-42), to name a few. It is important for men and women to pray and worship together, for we are all truly the “body of Christ.”

Apologetics Lesson of the Day for Jan. 14, 2021: “God Acts in Strong Ways” by J. A. Holtz, Dean

(See Picture of Apostles, disciples and the “company” of believers.)

Sometimes God acts with swift vengeance, as seen in Acts 1:15-20 below, but why? We know that “God is love” (1 John 4:8) and we also know that an eternal attribute of God is justice, “For the Lord is a God of justice” (Isaiah 30:18c), therefore, love and justice must be seen as connected in all of God’s Holy purposes.

Judas betrayed the Lord, even after seeing Jesus perform miracles; Judas walked with the Christ throughout his earthly ministry, hearing both the words of Godly living and eternal life. How could he still betray the sinless Savior? Let’s look closer at the Bible passage and see what we can glean.

Acts: 1:15-20:

“In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) “For it is written in the Book of Psalms, “‘May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’; and “‘Let another take his office.’”

1) Peter asserts his leadership over the community of 120+ disciples in the post-Ascension period. Luke describes historical details that give the text credibility by describing the number of witnesses, the scripture quoted by Peter, the name of the field in which Judas fell dead and the final prophesy from the Psalms about what was to come in the aftermath of Judas’ death. These specific facts by Luke give us confidence in the historical accuracy of the account, hence we can proceed with assurance with a theological analysis of the passage.

2) Judas did not just betray an ordinary person, he betrayed God Incarnate, therefore, it is a special justice that is required to adequately punish the offender. The demise of Judas was prophesied to be a public humiliation as a sign of the depth of his guilt.

3) Finally, Psalm 109:8 is the prophesy that the office vacancy in the twelve Apostles should be taken by another. It was David who wrote after his betrayal that the betrayer would be desolate and that another man shall fill his office. Jesus is the Son of David and David prefigured the Christ; hence, this prophecy was fulfilled. It is also notable that it was God’s will to replace Judas according to scripture, and the Apostles followed God’s Word because they believed they were being obedient to Christ.

God justly punished Judas in an open and public way, removing him from the office of Apostle and replaced him according to his Word. May we always fear the Lord and seek His wisdom and truth.

Apologetics Lesson for Jan. 16, 2021: “How Not to Select a Leader” (See Picture of a Matthias icon)

My Beloved, let us observe a historical event in Acts that is not “normative” regarding the selection of church leadership, or any leadership for that matter. Here the Apostles want to replace Judas to keep the number of Apostles at twelve. Let us look at Acts 1:21-26:

“So, one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

In Acts 1:21-26, we see that the Apostles in the early church were presented with a leadership problem because of the betrayal and death of Judas, and the number of Apostles was no longer the original twelve. They believed that, since Jesus selected twelve to be his Apostles, they needed to select a replacement who was an eyewitness to Christ’s ministry from the baptism of John to the Ascension in order to complete the number of Apostles. But, what was the actual method of selection, and what were the qualifications of the new Apostle beyond being a witness to Jesus in His earthly ministry?

What do we really know?

We know that the replacement was chosen by means of an act of “gambling” and was, perhaps, an error made by human beings in a moment of extreme stress that was historical, but not “normative.” This means that Luke reported a historical event of “casting lots,” but it was not “normative” for us in the church as a God-ordained method of selecting future “overseers.” Casting lots should not be repeated in local churches around the world to select leaders.

Let us see how the Apostle Paul instructed the first century church and us how to select our leaders in his letter to Timothy.

1 Timothy 3:1-5:

“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of Elder, he desires a noble task. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?”

1) We learn that an Elder or “overseer” is a noble task and each man who is called to this position must be “above” reproach, meaning that they have a “moral” character with many fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:21 & 22, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

2) An Elder must also be able to manage his own household; otherwise, how can he manage God's House? For it is written, "Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, And attend to your herds." Proverbs 27:23

3) Finally, if the Elder has children, he must be a Godly father, for it is written, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6)

Matthias may have been a good replacement for Judas, and qualified for the office, but his selection process was far from ideal. Apostles were witnesses in the early church of the earthly ministry of Christ, including His Resurrection and Ascension, but they were also gifted to teach and preach the Gospel.

Finally, Elders or "overseers" are called to be "shepherds" of God's people until the Lord Jesus returns in glory, and I pray that all of churches follow Paul's formula for selecting leaders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, that is good and fitting.

In Christ's Holy name, may it be so. Amen and amen!

Message from the Dean of the St. Andrew School of Apologetics for Jan. 18, 2021, "Our Calling and Our Mission is to Impart to You Knowledge & Understand so that You Can Gain Wisdom in the Lord." J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I invite you all to our online St. Andrew School of Apologetics.

Our Mission is to give you knowledge of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, to build you up in understanding of God's Word through the power of the Holy Spirit and to guide you in gaining Wisdom by the renewing of your mind in the fear of the Lord.

This Mission Statement comes from Colossians 1:9: "And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

We will be sending you a short Lesson five to six-days a week, and in the coming months we will partner with Dr. Solomon Kendagor of the "Voice of Wisdom and Truth" (voiceofwisdomandtruth.org) to begin a formal class called "Apologetics Through the Book of Acts" on Facebook, streaming TV and on Bishop Rop's TV network in Kenya.

Our weekly classes will review the daily Lessons and give you useful applications, which will edify you in your daily walk and prepare you:

"to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15b)

May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; may the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

In Christ's Holy Name, may it be so. Amen and amen!

Apologetics Lesson for Jan. 20, 2021: "The Holy Spirit is Poured Out on All Races, All Genders and All Nations" by J. A. Holtz, Dean The St. Andrew School of Apologetics

(Picture of Southern Black Ladies of the Pentecostal Church.)

Now, we see in Acts 2:5-12 a continuation of Luke's historical documentation of the Pentecost in Jerusalem and his description of one of the most important events in all of human history, the coming of the Holy Spirit and His indwelling indiscriminately upon all races, genders and nations as follows:

"Now, there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.' And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?'"

In the Old Testament, God's Spirit worked in limited circumstances and with specific people. His initial work was in creation in Genesis, as it is written in Genesis 1:1& 2:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

We also see God's Spirit working through His people such as can be seen in the last words of King David in 2 Samuel 23:2, *"The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue."*

Finally, God's Spirit spoke through the Prophets such as Zechariah, *"So he said to me, 'This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty.'"* (Zechariah 4:6)

However, God's Spirit has now been poured out on all believers who trust Christ, both in their daily walk and for their eternal salvation. The Pentecost truly brought people of all races, all genders and all nations together as one people. Perhaps, the racial justice movements, like "Black Lives Matter" can reflect on how God truly crossed the racial divide at the Pentecost. Perhaps, they can begin to see that secular remedies are strictly temporary and ineffective, but God's Spirit through Jesus Christ is eternal and effective.

Brothers and Sisters, the men and women in 1st Century Jerusalem were from many nations and many races, and yet their differences were bridged by the unity of the Spirit. May we all live together in peace and in one accord, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

“I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:1-6)

May it be so in Christ’s Holy name. Amen and amen!

Theological Lesson for President of the United States of America and his Administration for Jan. 22, 2021: “Mr. President, God Knew You before He Knit You Together in Your Mother’s Womb.” By J. A. Holtz, Dean of the St. Andrew School of Apologetics

(Picture of a young Black family.)

On Jan. 20, 2021 Joseph R. Biden, Jr. was sworn in as the 46th President of the United States. Prior to the swearing in ceremony, Mr. Biden attended Mass at St. Mary’s Cathedral in Washington, DC, a church that is home to the absolute protection of the unborn. Unfortunately, the new President supports abortion rights, and even supports ending the Hyde Amendment, which would allow federal funding of abortion procedures. President Biden says he is personally against abortion, but at the same time, he is ushering in the most radical pro-abortion policy in the nation’s history.

How is it possible, for a man who calls himself a Roman Catholic, to support ending the lives of innocent unborn babies in the womb that have a heartbeat and can feel pain?

How can a man who says he is “personally” against abortion, support the 1973 *Roe vs Wade* Supreme Court ruling that has ended the lives of 40 million American babies, 19 Million African-Americans alone?

The answer is simple, and can be seen in the words written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Colossae, and that is President Biden is “*captive to philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*” (Colossians 2:8)

Mr. President, hear the Word of God on Life:

It was King David who wrote in Psalm 139, “*For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made?*”

It was the Prophet Jeremiah who spoke for God, saying, “*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.*”

It says in the Book of Job, *“Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?”*

Finally, in the New Testament, Jesus gave all who call themselves Christians the most basic rule for faith and practice called the Golden Rule, *“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”* (Matt. 7:12) This foundational text is the cornerstone of civilized society. How can the President tell any expectant mother that it is consistent with the Golden Rule to abort her innocent unborn child?

How can a practicing Catholic advise a woman who is carrying life within her body not to preserve the same life that was granted unto her?

Mr. President, I know you partook of the Lord’s Supper yesterday and you examined your heart about any sin you may be harboring; please, Mr. President, repent and change your position from “death” to “life,” for you too were known by God before He knit you together in your mother’s womb, and you know in your heart that God is calling you to lead by protecting the weakest and most vulnerable of all.

May it be so, in Christ’s Holy Name! Amen and amen!

An Apologetics Lesson from the Book of Acts for Sunday, Jan. 24, 2021 on the New Big Tech Virtual Censorship of Christian Free Speech:

“I Cannot but Speak of What I Have Seen and Heard; The Third Great Awakening is Coming!” By J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics

(See painting of Peter as a Prisoner in Rome)

On January 22, 2021, I wrote a Lesson for the President of the USA concerning the protection of the unborn, and I was immediately shut down on this site for potentially violating “Community Standards.” This Lesson continues to be available on my public page for anyone to view, and I stand by my biblical analysis of the rights of the unborn to be protected. It is clear that this display of Big Tech “censorship” of free speech regarding matters of faith violates the 1st Amendment of the US Constitution, but more importantly, this silencing of God’s Word is an overt demonstration of the new “Big Tech virtual censorship” of God’s people on social media. But, let us see how the censoring of God’s people in the past actually had the opposite effect by helping the Gospel grow and bear fruit.

It is abundantly clear that the attempted silencing of the 1st Century church by the authorities of their era was the seed of future “Great Awakening-like” expansions and growth. We can see evidence of this type of growth in Acts 4:4:

“But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.”

This historical event recorded by Luke of 5,000 souls being saved at one time, and in such a small nation is the equivalent of an American Great Awakening, and a model for a Christian Renewal starting in this nation and going to the four corners of the world with The Third Great Awakening to start in America today.

It is also abundantly clear that the new Big Tech censorship of today contains the seeds of the, *“unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (Eph. 4:3b) that shall create the “good soil,” because *“they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience”* (Luke 8:15) in The Third Great Awakening to burst forth in the power of the Spirit.

Now, we live in a different era of persecution than in 1st Palestine. Today, in America, we may not be in fear of physical harm, but we are at the mercy of Big Tech, Big Government, Academia, Hollywood and the Media silencing those who stand for biblical principles against the secular humanism that these powerful forces seek to impose on the people of God.

The Book of Acts shows us another dramatic interaction in chapter four between the Apostles Peter and John and the rulers, elders and scribes of the Temple in Jerusalem. This biblio-historical event illustrates the same type of attempted “silencing” by the powerful forces of their day, which has strong parallels to our 21st Century condition as Christians today. Let us see how these brave believers dealt with the authorities in the 1st Century as a lesson for us today.

Acts 4:1,2:

“And as [Peter & John] were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees (authorities) came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”

Acts 4:17-20:

“But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us (authorities) warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.” So, they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”

Brothers and Sisters, we see in this important historical event recorded by Luke, that the rulers and authorities in Jerusalem could not silence Peter and John for proclaiming what “they have seen and heard” about Jesus Christ.

I ask you; how can we do any less, when being silenced by the rulers and authorities of this day?

How can we not speak biblical truth to secular power?

How can the darkness of humanism overcome the light of God’s Word?

Today, we live in an ever-growing hostile environment for Christians, but we know that, *“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it,”* (John 1:5) and that Jesus *“will build His church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against Her* (Matthew 16:18).”

In the wake of Big Tech’s virtual censorship and the threat of further persecution, may we see in the coming days the beginning of The Third Great Awakening, starting in America and stretching across the globe, using the same virtual highway that is attempting to stop the Word from spreading. May we use all technological means to proclaim the Gospel by, *“lifting up Christ from the earth, and drawing all people to Himself.”* (John 12:32)

I bid you knowledge, understanding and wisdom through God’s Word.

May we walk in the power of the Spirit of God, knowing that we have the victory in Christ, may it be so, in the Holy Name of Jesus. Amen and amen!

Theological Lesson to the Nations from Luke 15:20 for Jan. 26, 2021: “The Father Saw Us, Felt Compassion for Us, Ran to Us, Embraced Us and Kissed Us.” By J. A. Holtz, Dean of the St. Andrew School of Apologetics.

(See The Return of the Prodigal Son by Pompeo Batoni, 1773)

We all know the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32, and many times preachers focus their sermons on the profligate younger brother who wastes his inheritance on sinful living, and other times they focus on the jealous older brother who grumbles when his younger brother is received with honor and forgiven by the Father. But today, we will focus our attention on the Father and how he is not passive. On the contrary, God the Father is actively waiting for us [and the nations] to return to Him.

See how he pensively is waiting for his son’s return in Luke 15:20-24:

“And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.”

First, the Father saw his son when he was “a long way off.” The only way this can happen is that the Father was anticipating the son’s return and was watching for him. (Luke 15:20)

Second, the son confesses his sinfulness and honestly asks for forgiveness, not expecting to be restored to “sonship” in his Father’s house. (Luke 15:21)

Finally, the Father welcomes his son back and forgives him by celebrating and throwing a party because the son journeyed from death to life. (Luke 15:22-24)

Brothers and Sisters, the son was redeemed because he returned to the Father who is eternally forgiving. The son's sins were forgotten by the Father through His unmerited grace and by His loving mercy that God the Father bestowed upon the son.

Perhaps, this same restoration can be applied to the nations that have forsaken God and His righteousness. Please see the official statement from President Biden and Vice President Harris on the 48th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade:

"Today (Jan. 22, 2021) marks the 48th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark ruling in Roe v. Wade. In the past four years, reproductive health, including the right to choose, has been under relentless and extreme attack. We are deeply committed to making sure everyone has access to care – including reproductive health care – regardless of income, race, zip code, health insurance status, or immigration status."

America has become a "prodigal" nation by calling the "right to choose" a form of "reproductive health." It is quite the opposite; it is death; it is a lie! The unborn who have died because of a "choice" are crying out like those murdered by King Herod in 1st Century Palestine, as prophesied in the Old Testament:

"A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." (Jerimiah 31:15)

President Biden and Vice President Harris, it is now time to return America back to the Father in repentance. Otherwise, from whom do you seek approval? As the Apostle Paul wrote:

"For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ." (Galatians 1:10)

Like the Father in the parable of the Prodigal Son, the Lord is patiently waiting for you to bring America home and to ask for forgiveness, and He will welcome us with open arms because I tell you the truth, *"there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner [or one nation] who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."* (Luke 15:7)

May it be so in Christ's Holy name.

Amen and amen.

Apologetics Lesson on Acts 2:14-21 for Jan. 29, 2021: "Strong Leadership begins by Speaking for God not Man" by J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics.

(Please see the painting of Peter Preaching at the Pentecost)

We began our study of apologetics in Chapter Two of the Book of Acts by showing how the Holy Spirit poured out on all people of every race and nation. Indeed, it is not government that can provide the means for “diversity, equity and inclusion” (a mandate of current US policy). The only way people can have true unity is through “the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3b). Complete diversity and unity cannot spring from secular-humanism, which is artificial and temporal, but it can only spring from eternal knowledge, understanding and wisdom from God’s Word with God’s people.

Now, let us take a look at the dialogue in this section of scripture of Acts 2:14-21 and how the people of God were beginning to be “led” by and “listen” to a leader selected by Christ. We can also see how Peter grew in knowledge, understanding and wisdom (and perhaps courage, too) as he spoke to the throng gathered in Jerusalem in the wake of the Ascension (Acts 1:9) and the outpouring of the Spirit of God (Acts 2:1-13).

But, why Peter?

Why did God choose him?

Was not Peter the man who denied that he “even” knew Jesus three times after His arrest (Luke 22:54-62)?

Well, the answer is simple, Peter was “called” to a position of leadership, and the Lord, through His Spirit empowered him to lead. See how Jesus called Peter in John 21:15-17:

“When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?’ Peter said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ “He said to him a second time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’ Peter said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ He said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’ “Jesus said to Peter the third time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’ Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ and he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep.’”

Brothers and Sisters, Peter denied Jesus three times earlier in the text, but now Jesus lovingly restored Peter three times by asking him to be a “shepherd leader” of God’s people. Peter also knew in his heart that the Spirit of God was going to be with him, as promised by Christ (John 14:16) and Peter could, indeed, trust Christ Jesus in all matters.

As the Book of Acts continues in Chapter 2, Peter stands up to preach and open the Word of God to those gathered in the name of the risen Christ Jesus. Peter has received the Spirit, and now he is growing into the “witness” that Jesus commanded him to be on the Mount of Olives.

Brothers and Sisters, please observe how Peter grew from being the fearful follower of the arrested Jesus, when he denied Christ three times; and, now Peter has become empowered by the Spirit of God to give a sermon of the ages, beginning in Acts 2:14-21:

“But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ ‘‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy ¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; ²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. ²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’’”

Let us briefly look at three important themes until the next time we meet?

1) The twelve Apostles were present together in one place. This marks a unique moment of unity in the Spirit of the entire Church of Christ, and it marks authority in what is about to be said.

2) Peter’s audience had two distinct groups: 1) “men of Judea” (Apostles, Elders, disciples, those who saw Jesus, others called to be there who were Jews) and 2) to those who “dwell in Jerusalem,” which refers to all God-fearers, Proselytes, Hellenists and others who were in Jerusalem for Hebrew religious holidays, sacrifices or rights. These people were “called” and gathered together from across the entire Roman world, by ship and by the Roman system of roads to the center of Hebrew life. Hebrew influence was strong among those in the Middle Eastern who held to a monotheistic religious traditions or active participation, and they were also among the people who were drawn to repentance by John the Baptist’s ministry and of Jesus of Nazareth.

3) In this passage, the Spirit of God’s indwelling is completely diverse in gender, age, and class. It is remarkable that “race” was not mentioned in the prophecy, in contrast to today’s standards of multiple neo-race critical theories. However, the true people of God of this era “assumed” the indiscriminate pouring of God’s Spirit upon all the “nations,” which directly means all races under the sun. The changing of hearts and minds by God’s Spirit and God’s Word is the only lasting means to authentic diversity throughout the world.

Brothers and Sisters, let’s stop here and pick up with the same sermon by Peter in a couple of days, with a little more insight and study.

Until next time, may God bless you and keep you and may His face shine upon you and your family.

In Christ Jesus’ Holy name. Amen and amen.

Apologetics Lesson in the Book of Acts: “Christ Builds His Church through the Power of the Spirit,” “Flow of Thought” in Luke 24-Acts 2 for Feb. 3, 2021 by J. A. Holtz, Dean of the St. Andrews School of Apologetics

(See Painting of the Holy Spirit Filling 3,000 at the Pentecost)

Recently, we began teaching lessons on the Book of Acts and how the of Spirit of God was poured out across ethnic, racial and gender lines on believers as promised by Jesus. This “indiscriminate” activity of the Spirit was in contrast to the “selective” activity God’s Spirit in the Old Testament. Several readers disagreed with our view on the power and activity of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-13, and we would like to clarify our understanding in the greater context of Luke 24-Acts 2. Perhaps, our differences can be alleviated by evaluating a wider literary context.

The author of Luke-Acts reveals the context of the Pentecost, beginning in Luke 24 and ending at Acts 2:47 in a seamless way, and we can use the methodology called “Flow of Thought” developed by Dr. Hans Bayer, Professor of New Testament Emeritus at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, MO to see the movement of the Spirit of God as He begins to work building the church of Jesus Christ through God’s people. Let us see how we go from the “promise” of the Spirit by Jesus in Luke 24 to the pouring of the Spirit on the believers in Jerusalem during the Jewish Holiday of Pentecost in Acts 2.

Let us first look at the trajectory of church “growth” in Luke 24, where we see Jesus walking with several “unnamed disciples” on the road to Emmaus, sharing the scriptural prophecies about Himself as the Messiah, entering a home and even eating with the disciples (more than the eleven remaining Apostles). We see in this short passage specifically how the church grew beyond the original twelve Apostles before the Pentecost by making three points using the “flow of thought” method:

(A) “And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together” (Luke 24:33). This small number of believers (“those gathered”), mostly from Galilee, grew into the first church and were believers in every sense of the meaning of being saved.

The embryonic “company” of believers and followers of Jesus started like a “mustard seed” (Matt. 17:20) and grew to at least 120-members (Acts 1:15) before the Pentecost. This growth is not surprising because we know, according to Paul, that at least 500-people saw Jesus alive after his Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Now let us read Acts 1:12-19 below to see how the Spirit manifested Himself in ever-growing concentric circles away from Christ as the witnesses, empowered by the Spirit of God spread the Gospel, and how the “company” of saints was more than the Apostles:

“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. 13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. 14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. 15 In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, 16 “Brothers, the Scripture

had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” 18 (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)”

The Book of Acts is very specific about people and places, in fact, this is the best history record extant of any book of antiquity. Please notice the travel direction, the departure site, the destination, time of travel, location within the house, the named Apostles, etc.

(Please write a 2- page “paperette” on the different data points in the text of Acts 1:12-14) and their Apologetic meaning to you and those you know and love.

(B) Acts 1: 15, “Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120).” This short verse in the context of the ever-growing, never ceasing growth of the Gospel through the Spirit of truth and wisdom in Christ shows the Spirit already poured out upon some in the “company,” as they lived in the “new covenant” of grace and adoption with the twelve Apostles:

1) The faith of the “company” between the Ascension and the Pentecost would have produced the same pouring of the Spirit that came upon the twelve Apostles, otherwise why mention Mary and the brothers of Jesus? This faith is what Paul wrote of, “You have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10) and

2) The early believers were adopted as children of God, *“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God”* (John 1:9-13). Again, the true believers of the “company” received some pouring of the Spirit as was promised to the Apostles upon their regeneration. Hence, the company of 120-Galileans who were the first “company,” “community” or “church” had received the Holy Spirit as prophesied in Joel and preached by Peter in Acts 2, whereby all those in attendance and all in their household were eligible.

(C) Finally, the “flow of thought” of the Spirit of God shows a steadfast movement to all people groups with the empowering of the Spirit to “help” you: study, pray, witness, be in unity, partake of the sacraments, fellowship and be at peace in Christ Jesus, etc. Let us reread Acts 2:1-21 below:

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” 12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” 13 But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. 15 For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

*17 “‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;*

*18 even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.*

*19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;*

*20 the sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.*

21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’”

Through our “flow of thought” method, we see that the Spirit of God was promised to the Apostles and to all believers by Jesus, that the church began to immediately grow into a community of at least 120 saints and the Holy Spirit was manifested on Pentecost in the presence of at least 3,000 saved souls (Acts 2:41). These elements of the text show that many of the “company” must have received the Spirit of God either before the Pentecost (after the Ascension) or at the same time that the Apostles spoke in tongues of fire at the Pentecost. These members of the “company” met all the requirements that Peter articulated in Acts 2:38, 39 to have already received the Spirit of God:

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Based upon our hermeneutic reading of Luke 24-Acts 2, we continue to believe that the Apostles had the prominent role in leadership, but that the whole point of the “company,” “church” or “community” was that the Holy Spirit was to be “poured out” on all flesh to fulfill the prophesy in Joel that was repeated in Acts 2:17-21 by Peter, the new leader of the “company,” “church” or “community.”

The Spirit possesses all the divine attributes of the Father, and has His own ways to fill His people with wisdom and truth according to His own timing, therefore, we cannot limit Him because, *“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit (John 3:8).”*

May all of you receive the Spirit in a powerful way, in Christ Jesus’ Holy name.

May it be so. Amen and amen!

Apologetics Lesson from the Book of Acts for Feb. 5, 2021, “To this we are witnesses,” by J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics

(Picture of Francis Schaeffer, Pastor, Apologist, Evangelist, Author and Founder of L’Bri)

The wise Francis Schaeffer seemed to predict some of the social upheaval that we are experiencing today and how the “church” should respond when he said:

“Christians can affirm certain ideals, and work alongside others to see them realized, without aligning with any one political camp. If there is social injustice, say there is social injustice. If we need order, say we need order.” In our day, this point still applies. The church must retain the ability to articulate kingdom values and still confront the values, judgments, and actions of any earthly kingdom.”

You see, our society is much more complex than when Dr. Schaeffer wrote those words, and much more complex than when Luke wrote the Book of Acts. However, we can learn from the nascent church of 1st century Jerusalem in how the Apostles and the “company” began to formalize the “church” of Jesus Christ in one accord. This rare unified condition of the early church can teach us much regarding how to build a more unified church today within our current divisive culture.

We know that there will always be differing opinions, and “parties” or “camps” will “evolve” as a result of events in “space and time” and because we are sinful and tend to “devolve” into serious “tribalism” in the world, and even, in the church. However, the true blessing of Acts 3:1-16 is in its lesson on how 21st Century Christians can learn to stand for biblical truth in the power of the Spirit and stand against worldly powers and authorities.

Brothers and Sisters, please read Acts 3:1-16 with the quotation of Dr. Schaeffer in mind, and in the context of our 2021 world of technology, politics, powerful economic forces, spiritual warfare, and universal truths:

“Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. 2 And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. 3 Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. 4 And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.” 5 And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. 6 But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” 7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. 8 And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

11 While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. 12 And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? 13 The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. 14 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. 16 And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.”

Peter and John were confronted by the Temple authorities in much the same way that Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees in Mark 3:1-6, and like Jesus, Peter and John had courage, as they were empowered by the Spirit of God, as they preached the Gospel with boldness. It was the powerful actions and words of leaders like Peter that led the church from a point of the despair in the wake of the Crucifixion to become an emboldened church that could stand up to the Temple hierarchy.

The scene at the Temple in Acts 3:1-16 has immense value in apologetics and here are three points that we see in the text. There are others, so please record those for future discussion in our class (another assignment).

1) Notice the detail of the physical context in the narrative, such as: the time of day, description of the beggar who was joined to the special gate that was specifically named “Beautiful” and the special “Solomon’s portico” being named, all of these specific details give the text credibility. Also, please note that the description of the physical context are consistent with Luke’s methodology as a historian who documented his multiple interviews with “eyewitnesses” (Luke 1:2) before finalizing his account.

2) Notice that even the Temple authorities were “amazed” (Acts 3:10) because the miracle of healing the lame man was authentic. The Priests, Scribes, Elders, etc. all knew the man and knew, in their heart, that it was the power of the Spirit of God in the name of Jesus that manifested the “sign” that they could not produce. It is sometimes hard to imagine that the people in-charge of God’s Temple; a people of the Abrahamic Covenant and the keepers of the Law of Moses could see proof with their own eyes of the power of God’s Spirit, and yet work against the church of Christ because of their pride, economics and their desire for earthly power without regard for the consequences in the next world.

3) Notice that Peter takes charge and preaches with boldness, but begins his address with humility by taking no personal credit for the miracle. Peter then shifted to the covenant of Abraham in his sermon with a recounting of the Patriarchs and how their heirs (Temple authorities) not only denied Christ, but killed Him. Finally, Peter ended this portion of the discourse with the most important application for Apologetics, and that is the essence of the Great Commission, “To this we are witnesses” (Acts 3:15b). Peter and John were being obedient to Christ’s command in Acts 1:8 to be “witnesses,” and this command is still valid for all members of the Body of Christ.

If we begin our work of the church in wisdom and truth, then we can stand against the evil world, just as Francis Schaeffer and Peter did. We can then engage society and boldly “confront the values, judgments, and actions of any earthly kingdom” by being witnesses to what “we have seen and heard” (Acts 22:15).

Brothers and Sisters, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Romans 15:13).

Amen and amen. May it be so!

Apologetics Lesson from the Book of Acts for Feb. 8, 2021, “Fellowship of the Believers in the Early Church” by J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrews School of Apologetics.

(See early New Testament scroll below.)

My Beloved,

What is the church?

How do “many members” from diverse backgrounds unify into one “Body of Christ” in a time of heightened racial “sensitivity” and “victimhood?” Racism in the United States of America has declined in every objective statistical measure over the last 50-years since the days of Jim Crow. And yet, racial division is being used more and more as an emotional political tool to wield secular power over individuals and institutions. Today, worldly powers fan the flames of racial division and grievance to attain desired secular humanistic social and economic agendas, many of which are against God’s eternal law.

How can the church unify during these times? How can the church change the hearts and minds of the people of the world to bring them back into the unity of the Spirit of God in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3) to counter the world as did Francis Schaeffer in our era or Peter in his era?

Please see how Paul later encouraged the Corinthian church to unify when they experienced division in both the secular world and the church:

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:12, 13)

Today, it seems almost impossible for people to come together in “one accord” (Acts 1:14) as they did in 1st Century Jerusalem, and yet the Book of Acts gives us a lesson in how diverse people, in the wake of the Pentecost came together in unity to obey Christ’s command to fulfill the “love one another” (John 13:34,35) and Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 1:8).

Let us return to Acts Chapter 2:42-47 to see how the early church began to formalize its activities and build “fellowship” among the saints in Acts 2:42-47:

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

Brothers and Sisters, our lesson on “flow of thought” earlier in our class gave us a good start on seeing the “progression” of the church from the Crucifixion through the Pentecost, where we see over 3,000 people in Jerusalem join the church. But, what does it mean to be in the “church?” This is the point in our class where the guidance from Luke gives us a clear picture about how a “unified” church functions, and how we can exercise this biblical wisdom to make a deeply honest evaluation of your own church.

The passage above in Acts gives us the four-fold activities of the church: teaching/preaching the Word of God and of the Apostles (New Testament is now added to the OT), fellowship or “koinonia” (the brotherly love of the church), Lord’s Supper and prayers (the prayers, including worship).

In the remainder of our Lesson, let us focus on the foundational attribute of “fellowship,” which is “κοινωνία” or “koinonia” in the Koine Greek NT, and is the embodiment of the “Golden Rule” (Matthew 7:12) in action, which is necessary for all the other activities of the church to operate in Christian love.

In the shadow of the cross, koinonia is a new type of love with its roots in the Old Testament (Lev. 19:18), but its life in the New Testament, with the Spirit of transformation blessing every heart in an entirely unique fashion. Now, the people of the New Covenant can be self-sacrificial (Philippians 2:1-4) with the fruit of the Spirit underlying all relationships (Galatians 5:22,23) to create the church's special bond.

The Body of Christ, the church can have the "koinonia" by faithfully following Christ as the head of the church, by the power of the Spirit of God, doing the work of the church and then coming together in the bond of the Spirit of love, in complete fellowship, as Paul later wrote in Ephesians 4:12, 13:

"to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

I pray you all contemplate this lesson and pray for "koinonia" to spread throughout your congregations and throughout the world, truly bringing diverse people together in authentic fellowship.

In Christ's Holy name, may it be so. Amen and amen!

Apologetics Lesson from the Book of Acts for Feb. 11, "Peter Preaches the Gospel: God Sent Jesus First to the Sons of the Prophets and the Covenant" by J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics.

(Picture of Peter Preaching in the Temple)

Brothers and Sisters, let us go back to the Pentecost and see how Peter continues to preach in Jerusalem to many gathered for the Pentecost or "first fruits" (at least $3,000 + 120 + 12 = 3,132$). The people assembled were completely diverse and at the same time completely unified; they were diverse in every physical sense, and yet unified in every Spiritual sense.

Please notice how Peter recounts the Gospel of Jesus and the atonement of the long-anticipated Christ being prophesied and crucified in accordance with the promise by "Yahweh" God to Abraham through the covenant to bless all nations. It is the Christ who blesses the "nations" or the ethnos, who by their very nature, are "diverse," but one in the Spirit of God.

Peter calls everyone in the throng of international believers, "Brothers!" This is the essence of "unity" with "diversity" in Christ, and anything else is vanity.

Please read and reread this part of the discourse by Peter and imagine an assembly as depicted in the picture.

Acts 3:17-26:

17 “And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. 22 Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ 24 And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. 25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ 26 God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”

My Beloved, please pray in the Spirit on this passage and how Peter explained the Gospel by writing on 8-10 “points” in the text that are significant in a: 1) historical, 2) theological or 3) apologetical manner.

May the Lord bless you with the words of Paul in Colossians 1:9:

“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual knowledge, understanding and wisdom.”

Until our next lesson, God bless you and your families, in Christ’s Holy name.

Amen and amen.

St. Andrew School Commentary on 21st Century Culture for Feb. 15, 2021: “Words Matters: A Christian Response” by J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics

(Painting of Nero’s Fire of Rome by Robert Hubert)

My Beloved,

Today, it seems like we cannot turn on our computer, TV, radio or new media source without hearing some apology for severe “racism” in America or an appeal for the punishment of past sins with no hope of redemption. In fact, “Critical Theory” offers only an endless set of “statist” policies without the hope of redemption that demand economic redress and political power. Many Christians are fearful of this new McCarthyism of unlimited White Privilege shaming and name calling, such as, “Fascist!”

Worse yet, the “cancel culture” by the Big-Tech hegemony of virtually all modes of communications has silenced opposing views, and this marginalizing of an entire segment of society is unfair and violates the core values of the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12) and specific

elements of the Bill of Rights. Christians must respond biblically to these attacks on personal freedoms as did Francis Schaeffer:

“By articulating kingdom values to confront the values, judgments, and actions of any earthly kingdom [that are contrary of God’s Law].”

But, what is a real “Fascist” in or society? Actually, the only thing that matters is truth, and the current drumbeat of the charges of “Fascism” or being a “Fascist” has been completely misrepresented and weaponized against Christians by the true Fascists in American culture to make “strawman arguments” and mislead the public.

Let us make a simple logical proof to prove that Christianity in America is not “Fascist”:

1. An adequate definition of “Fascism” is: “a governmental system led by a dictator having complete power, forcibly suppressing opposition and criticism, regimenting all industry, commerce, media and culture while emphasizing an aggressive nationalism and often racism.”
2. The two greatest commandments of Christianity commanded by Christ are: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27)
3. The Law of non-contradiction states that contradictory propositions cannot both be true in the same sense and at the same time, hence two propositions such as “*A is B*” and “*A is not B*” cannot both be true. Therefore, Christianity in the context of a free society with a codified Bill of Rights cannot both love your neighbor as yourself and at the same time “forcibly suppress opposition.”
4. Therefore Christianity in America is not “Fascist.”

More on “Words” in later postings, but I leave you with this thought until next time:

“The Emperor Nero burned down part of the City of Rome to distract the public from current events and to carry out a supreme act of “central planning,” regardless of how many Roman citizens and slaves were killed or hurt in the fallout. Christian Americans of today have the same Constitutional rights of past generations, and yet, popular culture has targeted Christians as the “enemy,” and Christians must assert their “civil rights” under the Constitution before the neo-Fascists of the Left “cancel” them while they implement their “statist” policies of centralized control.”

We know why this happens in the world, and it was the Apostle Paul who explained why earthly powers gain control of people’s hearts and minds to accumulate power:

“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.”

Brothers and Sisters, notice how it is Christ who is “head of all rule and authority,” not the State or any political party.

May it be so, in Christ’s Holy name. Amen and amen!

Apologetics Lesson from the Book of Acts for Feb. 18, 2021, “The Apologetics in Peter and John before the Council in Jerusalem as They become ‘Ambassadors of Boldness’” by J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics

(Recreated Peter and John photo.)

Brothers and Sisters,

In a prior lesson we looked at the repetition of the pattern where the early “Way” or Christianity received opposition, and then grew. Earlier in Acts 4, the opposition was by the “priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees” (Acts 4:1) and again this triggered tremendous growth of the church, with 5,000 becoming believers in Jerusalem (Acts 4:4). This cycle of opposition-growth should give Christians of today encouragement when we are shamed, silenced or cancelled. The 21st Century church is under attack, and it may seem like physical forces of totalitarian influenced political and governmental entities, but the truth of the matter is that these opponents of evangelical Christianity are spiritual as Paul wrote:

“the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:11b-12).

We see the next opposition-growth cycle in the interchange between Peter and John with the Temple rulers who were told by those Temple staff in Acts 4:1-4. Please notice the detail in which Luke documents his account with the names of the officials: Annas, Caiaphas, John and Alexander. These names give credibility in the historical accuracy in the text, and in apologetics this is “pure gold” in its authenticity and truthfulness.

Let us read and re-read the text below, Acts 4:1-12:

“And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. 5 On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a

crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Please notice the context of the scene in the 1st Century Jerusalem Temple, whereby the Temple employees tipped-off the Levites in-charge, and at the same time, the church grew by an astounding 5,000 souls (Acts 4:1-4).

Next, in Acts 4:5-12 Peter and John are drawn into a new conflict and receive opposition from the ruling authorities of the entire Hebrew religion, the heirs of the Aaronic Priesthood and the Covenant of Abraham. At this point, Peter once again preaches the Gospel by the power of the Spirit of God and testifies that the healing of the man was by Jesus Christ, who was crucified at their hands and that the Jewish leadership rejected the “exclusive” means to redemption and salvation.

My Beloved, Peter did not back down against the authorities who denied their own Messiah, Peter “stepped up” and proclaimed the truth of the Gospel in the power of the Spirit of God with “boldness.” May we all have the opportunity to be “Ambassadors” of “Boldness” 2 Corinthians 5:20 & Acts 28:31) and speak truth to power, knowing that, *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:10).

Until next time, may the Lord bless and keep you in Christ’s Holy name.

Amen and amen!

**Apologetics Lesson for Feb. 19, 2021 “Why Did We Name Our School after St. Andrew?”
By J. A. Holtz, Dean**

(Painting of St. Andrew by Artus Wolffort)

Brother and Sister,

We would like to share with you why we named our school of apologetics after the Apostle St. Andrew and use the symbol of the St. Andrew’s cross in our logo.

First, our faith tradition comes out of the Reformation of the 16th Century that went through Scotland by the great Reformer John Knox who studied under John Calvin in Zurich, Switzerland and established the Presbyterian Church throughout Scotland. This church then came to America early in its history and built Princeton Seminary and University and became a driving force for independence from the British Empire when the pastor, patriot and President (of Princeton), John Witherspoon traveled the 13-Colonies to support the Declaration of Independence.

Second, prior to becoming the Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics, I was the President of the Scottish cultural organization called The St. Andrew Society of Greater St. Louis. This organization is not religious, but it helped me understand my Scottish roots and its history of standing up to religious persecution of Mary Queen of Scots who tried to end religious freedom and impose Roman Catholicism on the entire country.

Finally, the most important reason comes from the Gospel of John (John 1:35-42) and the unique role of Andrew being the first “witness” to the divinity of Christ. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist and was present when the “voice crying in the wilderness” declared Jesus as the Messiah. Andrew then went to Peter and “testified” that “We have found the Messiah,” thus becoming an “apologist” to his brother by communicating the fact that Jesus was the Messiah who is the “Lamb of God!”

John 1:35-42:

“The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹ He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So, they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). ⁴² He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).”

My Beloved, we aim to edify you and enable you to be like Andrew and tell them “We have found the Messiah.”

May it be so in Christ's Holy name. Amen and amen!

Apologetics Lesson on Acts 4:13-22 for Feb. 20, 2021: “Perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished,’ the Folly of Pride” by J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics.

(Recreation of the Temple in Jerusalem.)

Brothers and Sisters,

Let us look at the next segment of Acts 4 (verses 13-22) with an eye for how to behave as a witness to opposing forces to Christ and His church. Both Peter and John were “common” men, not educated by the greatest Rabbis in Jerusalem, unlike Paul who studied under the wise Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). But, they were taught for 3-years by the greatest teacher who ever walked the earth, Jesus. These poor fishermen were judged to be lacking by the prideful priests and Levites who, for hundreds of years, controlled the Temple and religious life of the Jewish people,

and now they sought to control these two “lesser” men who performed a miracle before their own eyes. The power structure of Jerusalem could not allow the followers of Christ to grow and they threaten their “status quo.” Please read and reread Acts 4:13-22:

“¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. ¹⁵ But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, ¹⁶ saying, “What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.” ¹⁸ So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” ²¹ And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. ²² For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.”

The authorities tried to silence Peter and John much like powerful Big Tech, media and government try to silence Christians today, and praise God, these contemporary forces are no more successful than their 1st Century predecessors. The priests and Temple officials “warned” Peter and John, however, they could not speak in “opposition” to the miracle, because this was a bona fide healing of a man who was well-known in the community to be crippled. Please notice how Luke recorded his age of 40-years (Acts 4:22) to give the text historical credibility.

But, the most important lesson from this pericope of scripture is that Peter and John knew that they had a “higher calling” to obey God, rather than man. They told the priests that they “cannot but speak of what [they] have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20b). This is apologetics, being witnesses to the truth and standing up to earthly power in the face of threats of punishment.

My Beloved, when we are encountering opposition, please know we are not alone. Paul encourages us about this very thing in his letter to the Ephesians by telling us:

“Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm” (Eph. 6:13).

Peter and John were able to stand “firm” in the face of the most powerful forces in Jerusalem because they had the Spirit of God to give them the strength. Their witness and the “sign” in Christ’s name drove the people to “praise God,” and to look to Jesus for redemption and salvation.

Until next time, may the Spirit of God give you the strength to stand firm for Jesus.

Amen and amen!

Apologetics Lesson Acts 4:23-31 for Feb. 23, 2021 “The Believers Pray for Boldness” by J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics.

(Peter Praying “for Boldness”)

My Beloved,

In our last Lesson we saw Peter and John before the Chief Priests and Elders of Jerusalem and how they were perceived as “uneducated” men, but ironically they received the greatest education ever from the “Savior of the World.” These two underestimated men stood up to the authorities, and were “witnesses” to what they have seen and heard (Acts 4:20b). May their example, empowered by the Holy Spirit be instructional to us all as we are opposed because of our faith.

In this next segment of Acts Chapter 4 we see how Peter and John reacted among the entire nascent Christian community after their encounter with the Chief Priests and Elders, and what they said in the wake of the warning to be silent about Jesus by the Council, which had the power to severely punish or even execute perceived heretics from Jewish orthodoxy. Please read and reread Acts 4:23-31:

“²³ When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, “‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? ²⁶ The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’—²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. ²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”

Brothers and Sisters, please note three important points, among many:

1) The unified community of believers in Jerusalem were together, and by the power of the Spirit of God they “lifted their voices” in unison together (Acts 4:24) and confessed that God is “Sovereign” and the creator of all things (Acts 4:24). Please note that Jesus (the “Son”) mediated creation, as Paul wrote to the Colossians:

“For, by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him” (Col. 1:16).

2) Secondly, this group of early Christians were empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:25) and He gave them the “sword” of the Spirit of God, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17) to further enlighten those assembled with wisdom from the mouth of David in Psalm 2:1-2. This scripture verse points directly at the power of God and His Messiah verses the power of man who is Satan’s tool to pursue opposition to the Lord in the city of Jerusalem-God’s own city. Peter names all the forces of evil aligned against Jesus: Herod, Pontius Pilate, Gentiles (Rome) and the Jews, but these “pawns” were predestined to perform the crucifixion to accomplish the propitiation of God (Romans 3:25) and pay the price mortal man could never do himself. In the end, Jesus is victorious.

3) Thirdly, please see how “boldness” becomes a mark of the evangelism and apologetics of the early church. We already saw Peter preaching with boldness during the Pentecost (Acts 2), in the Temple at Jerusalem to its authorities (Acts 3:11-26) and again in the Jerusalem at a religious court where all the Chief Priests, Elders and staff witnessed Peter’s “boldness” with some awe (Acts 4:13). The word, “boldness” was used two more times in less than 17-verses in Acts 4:29 & Acts 4:31.

Whenever you observe an important word used three times in one short chapter, then you must investigate its significance. The Koine Greek word is *παρρησίαν* (“parresia”) and it means “to speak boldly or confidently in public, religiously or in a court of law,” which once again brings us back, full-circle, to apologetics. This third great lesson in Acts 4:23-31 is that we are to be “bold” in Christ through the Spirit of God when we testify, preach or teach the Gospel. As Jesus said, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” (John 12:32).

Brothers and Sisters, your assignment for the next two-days is to reread this short lesson, see what other biblical truths you can find, please write in a “journal” (Word Document) on each of your additional points for your “journal” that you shall keep for the Class, and finally, pray in the Spirit for “parresia” in your apologetics, evangelism, teaching, preaching and kingdom leaving.

Until next time, may the Lord bless and keep you and your families, in Christ’s Holy name.

Amen and amen!

Apologetics Lesson for Feb. 25, 2021: “Proclaiming the Word Breeds Persecution and Brings Growth” by J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics.

(Our Lady of Chartres Cathedral in France-a metaphor for church growth.)

Before we finish the final segment of Acts 4, let us take a look at the growth dynamic of the early church from the beginning at “1” when Christ’s starts His earthly ministry through Acts 4:4 where the church grew to 5,000:

- 1) Luke 4:14-15 Jesus begins His earthly ministry = 1.
- 2) Luke 5:13-16 Jesus calls 12-Apostles (out of more disciples) $1 + 12 = 13$.
- 3) Acts 1:15 the “company” of believers was “about 120” = 120.
- 4) Acts 2:41 “that day [the Pentecost] there were 3,000 souls added = $120 + 3,000 = 3,120$.
- 5) Acts 4: 4 about 5,000 “heard the word and believed” = 5,000.

The church saw astounding growth as the number of believers continued to build after the death and resurrection of Jesus, and in the face of opposition. Later in Acts, we even see severe persecution that would start in Jerusalem with the seizing and martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 6:8-Acts 7:59) and the scattering of the early Christian community into Samaria (Acts 8:1-4).

The formula of proclaiming the Word and then receiving opposition or persecution, and then experiencing numerical growth in the community of believers and internal growth of the believers in knowledge, understanding and wisdom of God is the same formula that exists today. All Christians should take heart when they are being opposed or silenced for their strongly held beliefs. Like the Apostles, we should “rejoice” for the privilege of experiencing persecution for Christ’s sake and claiming Christ’s reward in Matthew 5:10-12:

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
¹¹ “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

Let us all rejoice as new powerful forces in opposition to the Gospel attempt to silence our Christian voices who are “witnesses” to what we have seen and heard, and to what Christ has done for us on a Roman cross 2000-years ago.

These efforts of opposition shall will fail and the church shall prevail.

May it be so, in Christ’s Holy name.

Amen and amen!

Apologetics Lesson in the Book of Acts 4:32-37 for Mar. 3, 2021, “Everything in Common was Philanthropy not Socialism” by J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics.

(Painting of Barnabas)

My Beloved,

Let us finish our study of Acts 4 with the final segment that has many controversial interpretations. Acts 4:32-37 has been quoted by some in socialist circles as a proof text for “collectivism” as a core value of Christianity, which is completely false. Earlier in our study of Acts we addressed the difference between a “historical” event that is merely a recounting of the story in time and space, and an event that is “normative,” hence a scriptural mandate for kingdom living, church government or doctrine with eternal implications.

Let us closely read Acts 4:32-37:

“³² Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. ³³ And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴ There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵ and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. ³⁶ Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, ³⁷ sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.”

Please notice the situation of the church at this moment in time and space. The believers were all together, unified and completely generous with their earthly possessions (Acts 4:32). The Holy Spirit has just poured out on the small body of believers, and they were beginning to organize themselves apart from their prior associations within the Jewish community. They began a new life of faith in Christ under the leadership of the Apostles, who were “testifying” to the resurrection of Christ (Acts 4:33). This testimony is very important because the new church was spawned by the reality of the resurrection as a historical event. The Apostles were the first “apologists” because they gave eye-witness testimony of the divinity of Christ and proclaimed the Gospel as the exclusive means by which man can be saved.

This section of scripture continues to describe the voluntary contributions of many in the small “company” of believers, as they were willing to sell assets for the benefit of the early Christian community (Acts 4:34-35). These gifts were not imposed upon them by the Apostles or by any church governing body of Elders, but as a matter of generosity and stewardship for those within their company who were needy. It is entirely possible that the break or separation of the new group of believers from their kin or tribe may have resulted in economic disruption, and these people needed to be helped as they began a new life in Christ. The wealthier Christians, who had “lands or houses” felt the spirit of giving at a unique time in the life of the church, and they blessed the church with love offerings in a time of need.

Finally, the chapter ends with the introduction of Barnabas of Cyprus who specifically sold a field and made a gift of the proceeds to the body of believers (Acts 4:36-37). This act of philanthropy was made from the heart and foreshadowed Barnabas’ future in a life of missions, as Jesus told the Apostles in Matthew 16:24-26:

“Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”

The sale of the land did not signal a new socialistic economic structure being introduced in Christianity, but it was an act of obedience by Barnabas to Christ, as he was preparing to “pick up his cross” and become a missionary because Barnabas no longer needed the land in his new identity in Christ as he would become an ambassador of the Gospel to the nations.

Brothers and Sisters, Christ does not impose economic hardships on his children, nor does the church preach “socialism” as a regular element of church government or kingdom living. But rather, Acts 4:32-37 shows us that we are all to be stewards of what God has granted us, and we are to prayerfully commit our possessions to kingdom building as the Spirit of God leads us.

Please read and reread Acts Chapter 1-4 for our review of the beginning of the Book of Acts for our Class and continue to check in with our Facebook public page for assignments, announcements and the beginning of our TV Lessons with Dr. Solomon Kendagor.

May the Lord richly bless each and every one of you, in Christ’s Holy name.

Amen and amen!

Apologetics through the Book of Acts for March 9, 2021, “Reasoning in the Marketplace” by J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics

(Picture of the modern-day Agora and Acropolis)

Welcome to our 31-students in the class called “Apologetics through the Book of Acts” and to all of our followers who read our lessons and postings. While the official beginning of the class starts on March 15, 2021, we would like to share with you the purpose of Apologetics and our goal for you as “Christ’s ambassadors” (1 Corinthians 5:20) as we journey through the Book of Acts together.

Jesus gave all disciples a mandate to “make disciples” in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), and He reiterated this command at the Ascension to be “witnesses” to the world (Acts 1:8). Our role in Apologetics is to “defend the faith” (1 Peter 3:15), and that means that we must become “a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:6).

Today, we want to focus our attention on a historical example of Paul being an Apologist and role-model for us in the Book of Acts. During Paul’s Second Missionary Journey he traveled “through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica” (Acts 17:1), then on to “Berea” (Acts 17:10) and finally to the world’s center for culture and learning in “Athens” (17:14). As was his habit, Paul first went to his brethren, the Jews to proclaim the Gospel in the synagogue, because Paul was,

“not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). However, after his encounter with his fellow Hebrews, Paul “reasoned” in the “marketplace” with the public. It is the “reasoning in the marketplace” that we shall explore as your model for the class.

Paul was a highly educated Pharisee in both the law and the prophets; hence he was quite able to “reason” using logic and rhetoric, based upon his knowledge of scripture. We must become like the “noble Bereans” (17:11) and be able to proficiently “examine the scriptures” when performing Apologetics. The word for “reasoning” in this passage in the Koine Greek is διελέγετο or “dielegeto,” which in this context means a “public discourse or exhortation,” whereby the speaker makes an “intelligent argument.” This definition is our “charge” to be willing to publicly exhort the truth claims of the Gospel with intelligent arguments.

In Acts 17 we can see our role, and perhaps, our challenge in Apologetics within a hostile world to Christianity, therefore, we must gain the knowledge beyond “milk” and begin to consume “real food” in our study of scriptural arguments for the Gospel (1 Corinthians 3:2), and we must gain the confidence to engage non-Christians in what is called the “marketplace” (Acts 17:17). The Koine Greek word for “marketplace” is ἀγορᾶ or “agora” (please see the picture of the actual Agora below the Parthenon), and this was the historic place in Athens where Paul went to engage the public. The Agora was a public space in the city, where the populous would gather to conduct democratic activities and listen to philosophers and intellectuals within a sacred environment.

Today, this “agora” can be found in coffee shops, city centers or college student centers, but mostly, in our technologically driven culture, we communicate online using social media. This transition to electronic modes of communications is unfortunate, but it is the reality of the times. We must utilize whatever means we can to perform Apologetics in our era, as did Paul in his era, because as we “reason” in our own “marketplace” we follow Paul’s advice to the fractious Christian community in the Greek city of Corinth:

“To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.” (Corinthians 9:20-22)

My prayer for you is to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:18a) and “stand firm in the faith; being courageous and strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13b) in Christ’s Holy name, may it be so.

Amen and amen!

Announcement from The St. Andrew School of Apologetics by J. A. Holtz, CPA March 17, 2021.

Our Beloved Students,

We are arranging our first video class (a little late), which will be via Zoom, which will allow more interaction. These classes shall be recorded and posted on the Facebook public page for Jeffrey Holtz, which is the same place the daily Lessons are posted. We will send out a schedule and instructions for our video classes in the days ahead. Please finish-up reading Acts Chapters 1-4 and add Chapter 5. Also, please read the Devotional Textbook through the Lesson on Acts 4:32-37.

We apologize for the late start, just pretend that this was a little extra vacation time. We have debated the best way to proceed in reaching and teaching you, who live all over the world. Thank you for your patience in getting started. We know if you have read and reflected on our Devotional Textbook posts and the Book of Acts Chapter 1-4, you will be ready to move forward with “boldness.”

God Bless you and your families in the name of Jesus. Amen and amen.

(Below is the handout for Class One on TV with Dr. Solomon Kendagor.)

The Book of Acts: Class 1 Handout

1. Purpose from Luke

1:14 _____

_____.

2. Author and

methodology _____.

3. Date of the Gospel of Luke _____, Book of
Acts _____.

4. Definition of “discourse”

_____.

5. Definition of “narrative discourse”

_____.

6. Definition of “argumentative discourse” _____

7. The Book of Acts is _____% narrative and _____% argumentative.

8. Flow of thought is a device where the reader asks _____ of the text.
The reader asks _____ something placed in the text.

9. Whom gives you the power for witness in Acts 1:8 _____.

10. What is prophesied in Acts 1:11
_____.

11. Who was in the Upper Room in Acts 1:12-14

_____.

12. Who was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot and by what means _____

_____.

13. What are some things that are Biblically significant about the number 12

_____.

14. In the Hebrew tradition what is Pentecost _____,
and when is it
celebrated _____.

15. What are some important signs that accompanied the Pentecost in the Upper Room

_____.

16. What came as a result of the pouring of the Holy Spirit at the Pentecost _____

how many people came to Christ that day _____.

17. After the Pentecost, what activities did the believers do as disciples of Christ

Apologetics Lesson in the Book of Acts for April 5, 2021, “The Story of Ananias and Sapphira” by J. A. Holtz, Dean of The St. Andrew School of Apologetics.

(See the painting of The Death of Ananias by Raphael in 1515)

(Please note that our first class will be tomorrow at 12:00 pm on Zoom and Facebook)

My Beloved Students, we are now reading Chapter 5 in the Book of Acts with a very disturbing story of the married couple named Ananias and Sapphira who were the first and two of three people slain by God through the power of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. It is plain by the text that the lethal and public action by the Divine was meant by God to stop a grave sin of corruption and deceit at the very beginning of the Gospel Age, whereby any impurity of the early church would have destroyed its credibility at its inception.

Let's read Acts 5:1-11:

“But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, ² and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³ But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴ While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.” ⁵ When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. ⁶ The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. ⁷ After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ And Peter said to her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.” And she said, “Yes, for so much.” ⁹ But Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” ¹⁰ Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they

carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things. ”

Many theologians and Bible scholars dismiss this part of Luke’s account as a retelling of other fatal legends of antiquity or a retelling of the Old Testament wrath of YAWHEH God. However, Luke is a historian and a scientist who only transcribed eyewitness accounts or reliable testimony of Apostles, disciples, ministers and other firsthand source for his two-volume set. Therefore, Luke was reporting actual events in space and time, hence the Book of Acts is highly reliable in its preservation of the historicity of these events.

As Apologists, our task is to explore the text with all of our tools and disciplines with respect to exegesis, hermeneutics, logic, reason and rhetoric to bring God’s Word to His whole creation. Apologetics offers a complete forum for the determination and dissemination of Biblical truth and good doctrine in the real world.

In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, we see a blasphemy of the Holy Spirit by both the husband and the wife in a conspiracy to withhold the full “promised” gift to the early church. There are multiple sins of: pride, greed and false witness, and the Lord struck down the offenders in a violent and public manner. This demonstration of Divine retribution or justice produced “fear” among the small “company” of believers and the greater Jerusalem community. This fearful reaction was recorded twice in Acts 5 after each spouse met their individual demises, which indicates the importance of this event in the nascent life of the church. It was God’s divine judgment that caused the end of two lives as a warning to others, who may not lose their earthly lives, but shall surely lose their eternal souls by living a life of hypocrisy and blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

Brothers and Sisters, here are a few discussion questions on the text:

1) The Lord of Host has been merciful to us all; with this in mind, what does this lesson from Ananias and Sapphira mean to you as a guidepost in your own life?

2) Do you think Ananias and Sapphira would have lived had they been honest about holding back money to the early church? Why?

3) If you are a Pastor, and you know of congregants who typically promise more to the church than they deliver, and yet they are good members, how do you deal with them? How might you deal with them going forward in light of Acts 5:1-11?

Finally, my fellow co-workers in the Lord, always be mindful of the great sin that was reported by Luke to us all, and that is the sin of “pride” that Satan tempts us to place ourselves and our “works” ahead of Christ’s, whereby we become in league with the “serpent in the garden” and deny the supremacy of Christ.

The Lord used Luke to warn us all, may we heed it with fear and trembling!

Amen and amen!