

(2 Tim. 2:15). Many will not accurately handle (rightly divide) the Word, leaving them wrestling with unnecessary doubts.

Today, non-Israelite Gentiles are on an equal plane with Israel. **“To be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel”** (Eph. 3:6). Paul speaks of the Gentiles as joint (fellow) heirs, joint members and joint partakers. Everything about this passage screams joint and equal. The Gentiles are painted in a totally different light than they were previously. In Acts, the Gentile believers were brought into Israel’s blessings and promises. They were supported by Israel. Paul was given sole authority to evangelize to the Gentiles. However, he stated his reason for doing so was, **“If somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them”** (Rom. 11:13-14). This passage hardly screams equal. Paul would give Israel’s blessings/promises to the Gentiles to make Israelites jealous, jumpstarting them to belief in Jesus. Paul compares this to grafting a wild olive branch into Israel’s olive tree. Some of Israel’s branches were not producing. The branches (unbelieving Israelites) were broken off, and wild olive branches (believing Gentiles) were grafted in and partook of the rich root of Israel’s olive tree (Rom. 11:17). **“Do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you”** (Rom. 11:18). Gentiles were supported by Israel, brought into their promises, and partook of their tree. Something had drastically changed between the times of Romans 11 and Ephesians 3.

There are more points that reveal the difference between Acts and post-Acts books. We could compare the plethora of Old Testament quotes in Acts books to a lack in post-Acts books, the focus on gifts of the Spirit, and Israel as the audience in Acts, compared to afterwards; or the Philippian epistle focusing on the loss of the miraculous gifts. These are more details to be gleaned after one recognizes the enormous amount of evidence that God shut down His power grid and then tied up His loose ends before going completely silent. The Silence of God is not proof that He does not exist! His current work has changed. But with the almost 2000 years of silence that have passed without anyone seeing “electricity,” many conclude God’s “magical electric grid” of Scripture is a legend and the Bible in error. Agnostics and atheists grow louder in ignorance of knowing God “shut down the grid.” Christians still have access to a caring and gracious God. Our prayers, hopes and dreams are not falling on the deaf ears of a mute idol, even if His answers are less easily traced. Accurately evaluating the character of our times will only strengthen our conviction that we serve the Living God.

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God’s Silence and His Power Grid

By Andrew Brown

I recently saw a survey that revealed what Christians found to be the hardest thing to handle regarding their beliefs. Could you guess? It was God’s silence! Understanding the actions of God’s work today and His present purpose would help in strengthening faith and overcoming this mental wrestling. When opening the Bible, we encounter an actively-working God miraculously altering history. God often contrasts Himself to the dumb idols in Scripture, **They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see...They cannot make a sound with their throat** (Ps. 115:5-7, NASB 1995 unless noted). God has, for the most part of history, acted differently. It was a testimony that the nations’ idols were silent, and the God of Israel was actively speaking. **Why should the nations say, “Where, now, is their God?”** (Ps. 115:2) God established that testimony and it stands. Now, God, still present and working, is establishing another aspect of His testimony. This truth of the silence of God today can be a stumbling block to many Christians. Therefore, we should be even bolder to proclaim this truth and prevent our friends and family from slipping. The verse comes to mind: **My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge** (Hos. 4:6).

God has surely given a revelation of His current method of dealing to those who are actively looking to Him for insight. **Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets** (Amos 3:7). He must have revealed clues to His current silence and lack of obvious miracles. Let us review the information. Acts 2 highlights the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was unleashed looking like “tongues of fire” resting on the apostles. **Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles** (Acts 2:43). This time fulfilled the commission of Mark 16, **“These signs will accompany those who have believed”** (Mark 16:17). The believer of today would be ill-advised to follow any of the listed signs: pick up serpents or drink any deadly poison (Mark 16:18). This was part of God’s plan for that time, but we should understand it is obviously not true now. The apostles **went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed** (Mark 16:20). The Lord worked and confirmed His word. There were no secret believers. Miraculous signs accompanied all. Consider that the passage is all past-tense words: went out...preached...worked...

and confirmed. God finished the work and is now on to another work. No believer today has signs following them like Peter's miraculous healing shadow that followed him in Acts 5:15. Today, believers are hidden and secret. **"For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory"** (Col. 3:3-4). Evidence of belief today includes an inner change and is not as provable and obvious.

God was empowering all His people. This could be compared to an electrical grid. God was the power source which could be tapped into and used with different circuits flowing for different purposes. This power source was always turned on. **"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you"** (Matt. 7:7). This was happening in the Acts Period. An ignorant outsider would view this power as mysterious. **Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money** (Acts 8:18). Simon saw the power of the Spirit and wanted the greater ability to distribute this power. This miraculous ability is the reason why the apostles were worshiped! **"The gods have become like men and have come down to us"** (Acts 14:11). **They changed their minds and began to say that [Paul] was a god** (Acts 28:6). God was electrically powering His people to such an extent that ignorant outsiders worshiped them, and insiders experienced the empowerment. Paul's **"message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power"** (1 Cor. 2:4). Paul did not have to rely on cunning words to convince someone; he could miraculously display what he said. Today, we have none of this power; we must rely on our own words. This is because God shut down this power grid at the end of Acts, which changed everything!

Paul, possibly the greatest miracle-worker of all time, lost his power. Jesus had spoken about those who would do greater works, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do"** (John 14:12). Paul was one who did greater works: **God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out** (Acts 19:11-12). As demonstrated by the text above, he was so powerful he was thought to be a god. Some imagine this is happening today, but minimize the details of the Biblical record in an attempt to bring current happenings up to the same level. In minimizing these recorded acts, we stultify God's Word, and erase the clues God gave that these miracles were shut down when God shut off the grid after Acts. We have three definitive cases that Paul could not heal after Acts: Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-27), Timothy (1 Tim. 5:23), Trophimus (2 Tim. 4:20), and ZERO miraculous healings from anyone in post-Acts books.

This truth does not stand alone. God through Paul told Timothy, **"There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"** (1 Tim. 2:5). A mediator is a go-between of two

parties. Moses was God's mediator for the nation of Israel in giving God's law to Israel (Gal. 3:19-20). The declaration of 1 Timothy 2:5 reveals a new truth different from all other times. In it, God was proclaiming that the mediatorial work was ceasing. Since any prophet (one who speaks God's word) was a mediator, a word from God is absent in our time. Prior to this, a mediator could also forgive sins if this was God's desire. The apostles had this ability: **"If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained"** (John 20:23). Acts abound in the "ACTS of the Apostles" wherein Paul himself was a key mediator. **"For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe"** (1 Thess. 2:13). The apostle gave God's words, not words of his own contriving. How could he have said it any clearer? **"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God"** (2 Cor. 5:20). God was revealing Himself. But all this changed when God decided to shut down His previous work and instructed Paul to reveal the truth that the time of the mediator was over and believers must go to God directly. This was such a shocking statement, Paul had to reiterate, **"I am telling the truth, I am not lying"** (1 Tim. 2:7).

If the electrical grid we use failed it would drastically change our lives. In fact, it's estimated that a grid-down scenario would send us back a hundred years and cause the deaths of millions. This is why Acts 28:28 is such an impactful statement that needs to be understood and proclaimed. **"Let it then be known unto you, that the salvation-bringing message of God has been authorized to the nations, and they will hear it"** (Acts 28:28, Resultant Version). This shift changed everything! For since the call of Abraham, the salvation-bringing message centered around Israel, but after this declaration it was commissioned out to the nations, suspending God's Kingdom work.

As Acts was ending, Paul summed up his message to King Agrippa as **"I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place"** (Acts 26:22). Towards the end, Paul still spoke what was said in Moses and the Prophets. However, shortly after Acts, Paul wrote in the Ephesian epistle: **"By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men"** (Eph. 3:4-5). Paul's message that was once secret (unknown) has now been made known to all readers. This is what Paul refers to as the "dispensation (Gk.-*Oikonomia*) of grace" or House-Law, the secret working of God. Lacking a detailed understanding of this truth has shipwrecked the faith of some and led others not to believe. **"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth"**