

Prompt:

I want you to find the seven strongest scriptural arguments against the mid-acts dispensational position. Identify the staunchest, most vocal, most often cited opponents of mid-acts and review everything that they have published or posted. Based upon your review of everything that they have written, make a list of the seven strongest scriptural arguments against the mid-acts view. Your list should include (1) a one sentence statement of each argument, (2) the scriptures cited in support of each argument, and (3) a 100 word summary of each argument. Present these seven arguments in the strongest, most logically coherent steelman form, using the best available evidence and reasoning.

Claude.AI response:

I'll research the most prominent critics of mid-Acts dispensationalism and their published arguments. Now I have substantial research material. Let me compile the seven strongest arguments from the most prominent critics. The key critics identified include Charles Ryrie, George Zeller/Middletown Bible Church, Renald Showers, H.A. Ironside, GotQuestions.org, and various classic dispensationalist scholars. Let me now synthesize the seven strongest scriptural arguments.

Based on my extensive review of the published works and arguments of the most prominent opponents of mid-Acts dispensationalism — including Charles C. Ryrie (*Dispensationalism*), George Zeller (Middletown Bible Church), Renald Showers (*There Really Is a Difference*), H.A. Ironside (*Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*), and the Dallas Theological Seminary tradition (Walvoord, Chafer, Pentecost) — here are the seven strongest scriptural arguments against the mid-Acts position, presented in steelman form:

**1. Paul Persecuted "the Church of God" Before Acts 9**

**Scriptures cited:** Galatians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 15:9; Philippians 3:6; Acts 8:1–3

Paul himself testified repeatedly that before his conversion in Acts 9, he persecuted "the church of God." If the Body of Christ did not exist until Paul's conversion or later (Acts 13), then what was Paul persecuting? He does not call it "the synagogue" or "the kingdom assembly" — he uses the specific phrase "the church of God," the identical term he later uses for the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:32; 1 Tim. 3:15). Mid-Acts advocates must either argue Paul was persecuting a different entity that merely shares the same name, or concede the church already existed. No passage in Paul's writings ever distinguishes a pre-Pauline "church of God" from the Body of Christ. Paul's own testimony places the church's existence prior to his conversion, fatally undermining the Acts 9 or Acts 13 starting point.

**2. Spirit Baptism at Pentecost Is the Same Baptism That Forms the Body of Christ**

**Scriptures cited:** 1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:15–16; Matthew 3:11

The Greek construction of 1 Corinthians 12:13 ("en henī pneumati ... ebaptisthēmen eis hen soma") is grammatically parallel to Acts 1:5 and Matthew 3:11. Peter explicitly identifies the Pentecost event with the baptism Jesus predicted in Acts 1:5 by saying, "the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning ... ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 11:15–16). Since 1 Corinthians 12:13 defines Spirit baptism as placement into one Body, and Peter declares this baptism first occurred at Pentecost, the Body of Christ was formed at Pentecost — not in Acts 9 or 13. Mid-Acts advocates must argue for two separate Spirit baptisms in the New Testament, but there is no contextual or lexical basis for this distinction. All four passages use the same Greek preposition (*en*) with the same dative construction, indicating one baptism, not two.

**3. Galatians 1:6–9 Forbids Multiple Gospels and Pronounces a Curse on Any "Other Gospel"**

**Scriptures cited:** Galatians 1:6–9; Galatians 2:7–9; Acts 15:7–11; 1 Corinthians 15:1–5, 11

Paul declared "though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). If Peter and Paul preached fundamentally different

gospels — as the mid-Acts position requires — then either Peter's gospel is accursed, or Paul's warning is incoherent. Yet Paul himself says in Galatians 2:7–9 that the Jerusalem apostles recognized they preached the same gospel to different audiences ("the gospel of the uncircumcision ... the gospel of the circumcision"), not different gospels in substance. Peter confirms this at the Jerusalem Council: "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15:11). Paul explicitly states in 1 Corinthians 15:11, "Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed." The pronoun "they" refers to the Twelve. One message, one gospel, different audiences.

#### **4. Cornelius and the Gentiles Received the Identical Spirit Before Paul's Ministry Began in Earnest** **Scriptures cited:** Acts 10:43–47; Acts 11:15–18; Acts 15:7–9

In Acts 10, Peter preached to Cornelius and his household — uncircumcised Gentiles — and they received the Holy Ghost identically to the Jewish believers at Pentecost. Peter testified: "God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8–9). The phrase "put no difference" demolishes the mid-Acts claim that a fundamentally different program was operating pre-Paul. These Gentiles were not proselytes. They were not circumcised. They received the Spirit by faith alone through Peter's preaching of Christ's death and resurrection (Acts 10:43), the identical soteriological mechanism Paul later describes. If this was a different dispensation or a different gospel, God Himself failed to mark the distinction — He gave the same Spirit, the same way, to the same kind of people, through the same message.

#### **5. The "Mystery" Was Hidden in God, Not Absent from Pre-Pauline Believers**

**Scriptures cited:** Ephesians 3:3–9; Colossians 1:25–27; Romans 16:25–26; Ephesians 2:11–22

Mid-Acts proponents argue that the "mystery" revealed to Paul — Jew and Gentile united in one Body — proves the Body of Christ could not have existed at Pentecost. However, Paul says the mystery was "kept secret since the world began" and "hid in God" (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:9). The mystery's concealment was a matter of revelation, not of non-existence. God did not reveal the full significance of what He was doing until He revealed it to Paul, but that does not mean the reality was not already in effect. Many divine acts precede their doctrinal explanation (e.g., the Abrahamic covenant preceded its full theological exposition by centuries). Ephesians 2:11–22 describes Jew and Gentile as "one new man" — but Peter already witnessed this reality in Acts 10. The mystery pertains to the progressive disclosure of doctrine, not to the temporal origin of the Body itself.

#### **6. Matthew 16:18 Places the Church's Foundation in Christ's Ministry, Not Paul's**

**Scriptures cited:** Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:41–47; Ephesians 2:19–22; 1 Corinthians 3:11

Jesus declared, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). The future tense ("I will build") indicates the church had not yet begun during Christ's earthly ministry — but it also indicates Christ Himself is the builder, not Paul. Paul confirms this: "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Ephesians 2:20 says the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" — apostles plural, not Paul alone. By Acts 2:47, "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," using the term *ekklesia* in a context that includes Spirit baptism, apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and communal life — all marks of the Body of Christ. Mid-Acts must explain why Luke applies the word "church" to this assembly if it is not the same entity Paul later describes.

#### **7. The Ascension Gifts of Ephesians 4:8–12 Were Given Before Paul's Conversion**

**Scriptures cited:** Ephesians 4:7–12; Acts 1:9–11; Acts 2:33; 1 Corinthians 12:28

Paul teaches in Ephesians 4:8–11 that when Christ "ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave

gifts unto men," and that these gifts include "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers" for the edifying of the Body of Christ. Christ ascended in Acts 1, ten days before Pentecost and years before Paul's conversion. The apostles, functioning as gifted men given to the church, were already active from Acts 2 onward. If the Body of Christ did not exist until Acts 9 or later, then these ascension gifts had no Body to edify, and Christ gave gifts to a non-existent entity. The chronological sequence is clear: Christ ascended, gave gifts, the Spirit came, and the church began to function with those gifts — all before Saul of Tarsus ever set foot on the Damascus road.