

Acts of Jesus – part 24

1. Acts 13:1

--We have now reached a milestone and the final leg in a race that was started in Acts 1:8 (the essential outline for this book.)

--Acts moves rather rapidly through the Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria missions and spends the rest of its time occupied on the final frontier; a frontier and a mission that we are still involved in today—the “uttermost parts.”

--Acts 13:1a – We’ll stop with the word “Antioch” because with that word the Gospel has truly reached the final frontier.

--We’re not in Kansas anymore.

--The church at Antioch represents a beachhead for the Gospel on what is truly enemy territory.

Up until now the Gospel of Jesus has been preached to and has been saving the lost, but their degree of lostness wasn’t nearly as pronounced as those in Antioch.

(not say that there is really any greater or lesser degree of lostness because it doesn’t matter whether you miss Heaven by an inch or mile—you’ve still missed it!)

Up until now the Gospel had been preached to people with a certain degree of light: Jews, Samaritans, Cornelius == all believers in the one true God whose faith was completed in Jesus.

--But in Antioch there is nothing to complete because nothing has been started

a. It is place of absolute darkness.

b. The thought of there being only one God was laughable to them.

c. The city was named after Antiochus Epiphanes a king who believed he was the supreme God and who at one point went down to Jerusalem and slaughtered a pig on the altar and had the blood brought into the Holy of Holies.

--So this (i.e. The church in Antioch) answers some large questions:

--Can the church survive outside of the land of the Bible?

--Can a people who have no clue be clued in?

--Can a people who are totally messed up be fixed?

--What is the depth of the power of the Gospel?

--What we are going to see is that it is not until the truth of Jesus is thrown into the worst places where sin and depravity have gone unchecked that we really are able to see its actual power.

2. Acts 13:1-4

This is the beginning of what is called the missionary movement: the intentional sending out of people to spread the Gospel.

Up until now, the Gospel has spread almost by accident:

a. Pentecost and the upper room and by “accident” there gathered a crowd of people.

b. Peter and John heal a guy and by “accident” it draws large crowd.

c. By “accident” persecution sends Phillip to Samaria and the Samaritans are converted.

d. By “accident” Phillip catches a ride on a chariot.

e. By “accident” Peter preaches to Cornelius and family.

f. By “accident” Paul is struck down by a light on the road to Damascus.

--Not say that the early Jewish believers didn’t believe in outreach, but they were still trying to figure things out and these things more or less happened to them.

From now on outreach is going to be intentional.

3. There are some important characteristics to note about this church from which the missionary movement was started.

1. Not a “Nice” church

- One of the worst things that can be said about any particular church is that it is “nice”
- Can you imagine the church at Jerusalem or at Antioch being called a “nice” church.
- They were effectively changing their world: this caused conflict with local peoples and authorities as well as conflict in the homes and families. **Mt. 10:34-36**
- When you are turning your world upside down, people don’t call you nice!
- Oh, for the day that we cease trying to be nice and try to make a difference!

2. Diverse church

Diversity in leadership—notice: not just one person who had the say or who was at the helm of leadership.

- Proverbs says that in many counselors there is wisdom. (the opposite is also true!!)

Diversity among persons

a. Barnabas = Jew but foreign born, nevertheless, he is from the old school of Jerusalem church (he’s the guy who wants to sing only from the hymnal every Sunday)

b. Simeon = nickname = “niger” = black. Why do you suppose they called him that?

Because that’s what he was!

- Not just different backgrounds but different races.

- Because it takes all kinds to reach all kinds.

c. Lucius who is a Gentile from Cyrene--this guy would have brought a contemporary flavor to the leadership

d. Manaen who is an odd ball of sorts – remember the terrible Herods we talked about last week? Well, he was raised with Herod Agrippa – the guy who has James put to death and tries to kill Peter.

- He is a Gentile

- He is from the Aristocracy.

e. Oddest of all is Saul later to be called Paul—former persecutor of Christian now a pastor of a congregation.

- The healthiest church is the one in which there is the most diversity
Why?==Because our world is diverse.

3. A third thing we need to note about this church is the of Spirit’s control over it.

- Down in verse 9 it says Paul was filled the Spirit.

- Back in chapter 11 it characterizes Barnabas as a man full of the Holy Spirit.

- In verse 2 we see the Spirit has the freedom to speak to them.

- In verse 4 we see that they are sent out by the Holy Spirit.

- This church knew the meaning of “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses.”

- I wonder, do we know what it means?

Do we seek after His control in our lives?

Are we obeying His word so He can have freedom among us?

4. A 4th thing to take note of about this church is that it was located at a new address.

- This was a whole new venture -- the work of God outside the land of God.

- Sometimes God has to get outside of the boxes we make for Him to start something new.

- What a motley crew of leaders! – with exception of Barnabas, they’ve never heard of the box. (Paul had himself a cast iron box at one time but it got shredded on the road to Damascus.)

--The Gospel has got to be told in fresh and new ways by new people because every generation and group has its own unique questions.

- The Gospel has got to be constantly forwarded to a new address to reach a new people.

- This was essentially what took place in Antioch: a new address for a new mission

--None of the 12 were leading this church -- In Simeon, in Lucius, in Manaen, in Paul and Barnabas a new address.

--Every one of us represents a new address.