

The Acts of the Apostles

Sermon Number: 21

Acts 13:1 – 52

October 9, 2011

Go Tell the World

It has been five Sunday's since we last visited the Book of Acts. So for the purpose of continuity of thought I hope that you have recently read this part of the history of the early church; the Acts of the Apostles.

Acts 1:1-3

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, ² until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, ³ to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

In our previous study in Acts 12 we saw how God used an angel to rescue Peter from prison and then when King Herod accepted the worship of the people; they shouted: "The voice of a god, not of a man!" an angel of the Lord struck Herod down and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. [12:22-23]

Then there is an encouraging word in the next verse:

But the word of God increased and multiplied. [12:24]

No matter how much the haters of God try, the word of God cannot be extinguished; the more the truth of God is attacked the more it is multiplied.

The truth of God is often attacked by men trying to kill the witness.

Up to this place in the Acts of the Apostles the emphasis has been on Peter. Now the attention is turned to the ministry of Paul, to his missionary journeys, and to the circumstances that moved him to write thirteen books of the New Testament.

Yes, I believe that Paul is the writer of the Book of Hebrews. I am not so sophisticated and learned to believe otherwise.

Peter's work was mainly in Jerusalem. It has now been 17 years since the Day of Pentecost was fully come; when Peter declared that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel.

The “mother church” was at Jerusalem: “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.” [Acts 1:8]

Now the church at Antioch in Pisidia becomes a second center of evangelism; “Go Tell the World” that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah!

And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark. [Acts 12:25]

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven He commanded his disciples to be witnesses to who He is and what He has done for sinners.

Acts 1:6-9

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ 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." ESV

But what were the disciples most interested in?

"Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

The disciples still believed the teachings of the Jewish rabbis that national Israel would be restored as it was in the days of David. Many good people in our day still yearn for national Israel to be restored as they too follow the teachings of the Jewish rabbis.

How did Jesus answer this question; and how does Paul explain what the Old Testament prophets meant? Jesus told His disciples it was none of their business to know the times and the seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority.

Their purpose and mission was to be His witnesses everywhere they went.

That goes for modern Bible predictors like Harold Camping, Hal Lindsey, Tim La Hay and other purveyors of fiction parading as truth.

Pay close attention to Acts 13 and see how Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, explains what the law and the prophets meant.

“In the Old Testament God meant what He said; in the New Testament God says what He meant.” John Wilmot

A careful and meditative reading of Acts 13 will open up one of the clearest statements of the Gospel anywhere in the Bible. The Gospel is based on the Old Testament; the Law and the Prophets. If you miss this basic truth you will never understand what the Bible is really about.

Bible prophecy is not focused on national Israel; it is about Jesus Christ and His present reign as King Jesus!

The apostle John close to the end of the inspired Scriptures writes:

Rev 19:9-10

⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." ¹⁰ Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God."

For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Find Jesus in the prophets!

The apostle Paul says the same thing in the beginning and at the end of his letter to the church at Rome.

Paul's opening words in Romans:

Rom 1:1-7

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's closing words in Romans:

Rom 16:25-27

²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Then following Jesus' command, the disciples evangelized Jerusalem, they moved out into Judea and into Samaria and now the apostle Paul is going to be sent by the Holy Spirit into all the world; to the end of the earth.

Go Tell the World

An apostle is a “sent one,” a “missionary.”

Missionaries are Called

Acts 13:1-3

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

As already mentioned, the church at Antioch in Pisidia has become a second center of Christianity; what began at Jerusalem is expanded at this Antioch.

You might take this as a homework assignment at do a Bible study on the two Antioch's; Pisidia and Syria.

After the “witness” the martyrdom, of Stephen and the persecution of the church that followed, a church was founded at Antioch in Pisidia. Barnabus was the leader and he sought and found Saul of Tarsus / Paul to help him. [Acts 11:19-26]

It is interesting and instructive that the church sent out the very ones who you would think were necessary to “keep things going.” If the Lord has established a true and faithful church its survival does not depend on any particular man or men. If the Lord is in it, He will raise up elders to serve the church.

They “laid hands” on them AFTER the Holy Spirit had set them apart.

Ordination of elders and deacons is meaningless apart from God's choosing. All ordination can do is to recognize what God has already done. Ordination is simply the church's recognition and support of the man so chosen by God.

Barnabus and Saul at Cyprus

Acts 13:4-12

Acts 13:4-12

⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. ⁶ When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. ⁷ He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? ¹¹ And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. ¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

Barnabus is sent to his own home in Cyprus. Cf. Acts 4:36

Sergius Paulus is the proconsul, he is like the "mayor," and he sends for the missionaries to hear the word of God

But a false prophet named Bar-Jesus [son of Joshua], his title is Elymas which means magician, didn't want his boss, the proconsul to become a Christian.

Why do you suppose this false prophet was opposed to the Christians?

Christians don't have any use for magicians or sorcerers.

Saul who was also called Paul, temporarily blinds Bar-Jesus and he is never heard from again. But the proconsul is saved.

From verse 9 on, Saul is called Paul. Saul is his Hebrew name and Paul is his Roman name. As Paul turns to the Gentiles he uses his Roman name.

A Change in Leadership

Acts 13:13

¹³ Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem,

We will say more about John's departure in a few minutes.

Paul now becomes the leader. Up to now it has been "Barnabus and Saul" and now it is "Paul and his companions."

Barnabus was a truly humble man who was always encouraging others and was content to being a helper. I really appreciate Brother Gables' pointing out how Joseph in the Old Testament was always under some other man's authority. As great as Joseph was, he was always a servant. Joseph served his father Jacob; he served Potiphar; he served the jailer; and he served the Pharaoh.

***It takes more grace than I can tell;
to play the second fiddle well.***

And John left them and returned to Jerusalem

John Mark goes home to Jerusalem and there seems to be some dissention on his part. We are not told what exactly happened but whatever it was Paul had a problem with it and considered John Mark to be a deserter.

Acts 15:36-41

³⁶ And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." ³⁷ Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸ But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹ And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

The Ministry in Galatia

Acts 13:14-15

¹⁴ but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it."

The cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe comprise the region known as Southern Galatia. The churches in this region were addressed in Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Verses 14 & 15 introduce Paul's first recorded sermon. Paul's method was to go to the Jewish synagogues. Paul went first to the Jews with the Gospel.

The custom among the Jews was to invite a visiting rabbi to say whatever was on his heart. Paul's method was to read from the "Law and the Prophets," what we now call the Old Testament, and prove from the OT Scriptures that the law and the prophets all pointed to the Messiah and that Jesus of Nazareth is Messiah!

The Gospel

Acts 13:16-41

In my introduction I said: "A careful and meditative reading of Acts 13 will open up one of the clearest statements of the Gospel anywhere in the Bible. The Gospel is based on the Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets. If you miss this basic truth you will never understand what the Bible is really about."

Paul had the God-given wisdom to know his audience. To the Jews Paul preached from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus is Messiah. That message would require a lot of background information to a pagan Gentile audience, so in Acts 17 in Athens, to Gentiles, Paul preaches that God is the Creator and that all men are responsible to God and that Judgment was certain.

This text, verses 16-41, almost preaches itself and I won't expound on it very much.

Here is the Gospel!

¹⁶ So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said:

"Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. ¹⁷ The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. ¹⁸ And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. ¹⁹ And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. ²⁰ All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. ²¹ Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. ²² And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' ²³ Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴ Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'

²⁶ "Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. ²⁷ For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. ²⁸ And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹ And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised him from the dead, ³¹ and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. ³² And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³ this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm,

"You are my Son,
today I have begotten you.'

³⁴ And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,

"I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'

³⁵ Therefore he says also in another psalm,

"You will not let your Holy One see corruption.'

³⁶ For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, ³⁷ but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. ³⁸ Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed [justified] from everything ³⁹ from which you could not be freed [justified] by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰ Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about:

41 "Look, you scoffers,
be astounded and perish;
for I am doing a work in your days,
a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you."

Now I said that I would not expound on this text very much but there is something that must be made very clear. Over and over I have stressed the point that the Old Testament promises were never about a restoration of national Israel; they were about Jesus: who He is; what He did; and why He did it!

Feast your eyes and your mind on verses 32 & 33:

32 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, **33** this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus,

It is a continuing puzzle to me how those who can find all the promises made to Israel after the flesh and insist on their future fulfillment cannot also find that every such promise as to its carnal fulfillment was contingent on their obedience.

Can anyone argue successfully that the Jews were ever an obedient people?

“Sometime around 50 A.D. a little group of Jews were huddled together on the Sabbath in a strange city. They were still waiting for God to fulfill His promise [or promises] which He had made to their fathers. They were not a great people. They had not had victory over their foes, for the heel of Rome was heavy upon them. They had no peace. They had no king or kingdom. They had none of the things that the Scriptures promised God would do for them.

“There were a couple of visitors in the synagogue that day, apparently visitors from the home country who might bring them some encouraging news. When invited to speak, Paul stood up and said.... [Pay attention to this! The news that Paul brought to these people must have been the most astounding thing any congregation had ever heard. Listen!]

Acts 13:26-33

26 "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. 27 For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. 28 And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. 29 Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. 30 But God raised Him from the dead. 31 He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. 32 And we declare to you glad tidings — that promise which was made to the fathers. 33 God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus....

“The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was declared to be the fulfillment of what God had promised to Abraham, Israel, and David. Here we have these people still waiting for the fulfillment of what God had promised Israel, and the apostle came and told them the absolutely startling news that it had already been fulfilled.

“Did God promise Israel victory over all her foes? The good news is that Jesus had obtained the victory for them. Did God promise He would give them peace...and wisdom? Jesus was their peace [Ephesians 2:15] and their wisdom [1 Cor 1:30].

“Did God promise to make Israel great? All power in heaven had been given to the King of the Jews, Jesus Christ [Matt 28:18]. Did God promise them land – an inheritance? Christ had been resurrected and on their behalf had become “heir of the world” and “heir of all things.” [Romans 4:13; Hebrews 1:2] God, who fulfills His word in surprising ways, had fulfilled what He had promised to the fathers far abundantly above what any Jew had ever asked or thought.

“If those Jews are to be considered backward for not realizing this about twenty years after Calvary, what might be said of Christians today who are still waiting for God to fulfill His promises to Israel two thousand years later? Yes, Christians who say they meet once a week in honor of the resurrection are denying what God really did when He raised Jesus from the dead – namely He fulfilled what He had promised to Israel. It took the Holy Spirit’s illumination to see it when Paul preached to the gathering at Antioch; it takes the Holy Spirit’s illumination to see it now! The gift of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead was a finished work. In it God fulfilled what He had promised to the fathers. More than that, Christ was heaven’s gift to the Gentiles – to the whole human race.

“In Christ, God answered every prayer, every worthy aspiration of every heart, as it is written, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ....”
[Ephesians 1:3]

Fulfillment Only in Christ

The blessings which God had promised to Israel were all given on condition – the condition of obedience:

Exodus 19:5

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.

From Present Truth, October – December 2004 [Author Unknown]”

How Do People Respond to the Gospel? Acts 13:42-52

Some were glad and some were angry; nothing has changed in nearly 2000 years!

⁴² As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. ⁴³ And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and^c devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.

⁴⁴ The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. ⁴⁶ And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

"I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."

⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. ⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. ⁵¹ But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. ⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

These hearers were Gentile proselytes to Judaism and they were eager to hear more about the grace of God. But Satan already had his dupes at Antioch [44-45].

⁴⁴ The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.

Verses 46 - 47 is the turning point in Paul's ministry.

⁴⁶ And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

"I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."

Who will hear and believe the Gospel?

⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

Some were glad to hear the Gospel of grace and some were angry.

The Gospel is a divider. To some the Gospel is an aroma of life and to some it is an aroma of death; how is it with you?

Are you a guilty sinner?

Do you need a sufficient Substitute?

Jesus Christ died for such as you!

Repent and believe in the Gospel.