

“JERUSALEM MEETS ROME AND FINDS BABYLON: A STUDY IN CHURCH PURITY”

FALL 2022-SPRING 2023

November 02, 2022

“BUILDING A MISSIONS TEAM TO EXPAND COVERAGE”

I. CREATING A MISSIONARY; CREATING THE NEED FOR ONE

A. Are missionaries born, made or called?

- 1. Witnessing is the responsibility of every believer*
- 2. Evangelism is the hoped-for result of our witnessing*
- 3. We are to show no partiality towards any human but instead witness to every human regardless of class, gender, greatness or lack thereof, or ethnicity etc.*
- 4. There are some believers who are called to be a powerful carrier of the Word of God to win souls and “plant” churches with whom God gives a good measure of fruitful success.*
- 5. In many ways we could say that a missionary is all three: born, made and called. It can be demonstrated that God does sovereignly choose people for His service. (Jeremiah, John the Baptist) It can also be shown that through various experiences God makes a missionary (Jonah). But it can be also demonstrated that missionaries have a divine call to service, sometimes even service to a specific location (Jonah) or specific people (Saul/Paul to the Gentiles). This latter calling is what separates him from those who simply want to serve God somewhere.*

B. It can also be demonstrated that God is always previous.

- 1. God works in the heart of a people to prepare them to be ready to hear the message of the missionary*
- 2. God even prepares hearts to make them want to hear the message of God’s saving grace through the Gospel.*

C. When God selects someone to be a missionary, He does not seem to follow a certain profile

- 1. When Jesus chose the disciples to be His emissaries they had come from a variety of backgrounds and personalities. Most were not from the inner circle of the Pharisees,*

Sadducees, the Sanhedrin or other bodies of Jewish organized religion.

- 2. When the Holy Spirit chose to use Stephen as His witness it appears only that he was available and listening. He clearly had a good understanding of the Tanak and how its history fits together*
- 3. When the Holy Spirit chose to use Philip it appears to be because he was available and humble enough to listen. He was familiar with the gospel well enough to articulate it. But the Holy Spirit gave him power to be persuasive*
- 4. And so it is with Barnabas, that we find him humble and not withholding anything that would help keep the brethren alive and thriving. He was working steadily, consistently and regularly in Jerusalem for the believers there. We also find in him a compassionate man who is going to believe the work of God on an individual like Saul*
- 5. While Saul was still breathing threats of persecution and on his way to Damascus to legally arrest believers of the Way, he encountered personally the risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ where he received a distinct call. It was affirmed in Damascus through Ananias. It was affirmed again in Antioch. All these confirmations were by God Himself and very directly.*
- 6. When Saul returned from His Damascus experience, he was ready to be just as tenacious FOR the gospel as he had been AGAINST it earlier. He must have encountered Jesus in the desert and was personally taught by him for 3 years. He had already been a Pharisee with strong studies in the Scriptures; he was familiar with the passages that spoke of the Messiah as well as Torah and God's righteousness by faith. But with Christ he was able to make new applications of what he knew, to the budding "Way" that would become Christianity; God had prepared, birthed, called and was preparing a world-wide missionary of the gospel. His tenacious and somewhat ferocious arguments for Jesus as the Christ got him moved out of Jerusalem as far away as they knew the had a church, in Antioch of Syria.*

II. AS CONDITIONS DEVELOPED, GOD MOVED BELIEVERS TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL (ACCORDING TO HIS ETERNAL PLAN!)

- A. Prior to His ascension, Jesus had already told the assembled believers, mostly His disciples, that they were going to be witnesses for Him and His resurrection AFTER they received power from the Holy Spirit. This **empowered** them Acts 1:8*
- B. Sometime prior to that He had already **authorized** them as His representatives to go into all the world to make disciples of every nation, teaching them to follow everything Jesus had taught the disciples and to baptize them into the Messianic community. This separated them from the rest of the world.*
- C. Earlier in Jesus' pre-resurrection ministry, He had told them NOT to go to the Gentiles but to Israel only. This is the foundation for the message of the gospel to go first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. The new authorization changed this guideline and made it broader in its application.*
- D. The believers in Jerusalem, where it all started, were continuing in Jerusalem and not moving out of the area. One noted exception to this would be the pilgrims who had come from distant lands and had trusted Jesus as the Messiah who now would go back home. They would be carrying that message back to their home countries and their family and friends there. This growing group of the followers of Jesus or the Way had been given by the Lord several years to become an established church. Now it was time to move them into completing Jesus' words to them in Acts 1:8.*
- E. He allowed the martyrdom of Stephen to be a catalyst to move the believers out into Judea and Samaria and then well into Syria. Tasting the success of killing Stephen as a tool against this "anti-Torah" new sect, persecution broke out and the believers left Jerusalem in big numbers to go back to regions where they had family and friends.*
- F. The gospel went many places after this. Many Bible scholars and church historians believe the gospel had made it to Babylon and perhaps much further. We have in the biblical account of its travels to Samaria through Philip and then on to the coastal towns of Israel and probably on to Ethiopia. We know it had gone to Phoenicia, Cyprus, Cyrene We also know it was thriving in parts of Syria such as Damascus and Antioch. It is in Antioch*

that our Lord chose to share with us how the gospel is going to go to Europe and the west.

III. GOD'S SOVEREIGN GRACE IN MISSIONS

A. SETTING THE FIELD FOR THE CALLING

- 1. The Antioch church is thriving Acts 11:19-30*
- 2. There are prophets and teachers there Acts 13:1*
- 3. They were heavily engaged in ministry together:
Ministering to the Lord, fasting and waiting on the Holy Spirit*

B. GETTING THE TEAM TOGETHER

- 1. The team is chosen by God's sovereign grace not simply by the desire of individual believers or a committee within the church*
- 2. The Holy Spirit chose Barnabas and Saul for a task; no one was told what the task was to be but the Holy Spirit says it was the work that God had called them to.*
 - a. How was this communicated?*
 - b. How did they know that was what God was calling them to do?*
 - c. Were Barnabas and Paul already aware of what the task was? Had they been told already? Was God simply working with their desire? Did their desire come from God?*
 - d. Note that the whole church was satisfied with the calling. No jealousy existed that anyone had been chosen over another*
 - e. The whole church or the prophets and teachers fasted and prayed for these called brothers*
 - f. The brothers laid hands on the called ones to indicate their unity with them and the Holy Spirit's plan*
 - g. The church is sending them away knowing they are doing the will of God but not knowing what is going to be the work they have been called to do.*
 - h. Whatever else they knew or did not know notice that it was the ministry of fasting, prayer, ministering to the Lord and waiting on the Holy Spirit that was the work of these prophets and teachers. They were not having a committee meeting to strategize on a new plan for what the church ought to do. The church had already be **authorized, empowered** and*

commissioned to do a specific task. As they were waiting for clear leading on the Lord they were engaged in the good works that they had been foreordained to do!

- i. Because it was the evident leading and calling of the Holy Spirit, the account contains no warnings from the rest of the team, no doubtful language, no uncertainties listed

C. APPLICATIONS TO THE CHURCH NOW

1. The church belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is its head
2. The prophets and teachers are only stewards of His church waiting for His clear leading
3. They are to be engaged in fasting, prayer, ministry of the Word, listening for the Holy Spirit
4. The whole church is to be engaged in the good works Jesus intended for us Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:13; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:42-48; 1 Thessalonians 5:14-19; Romans 12....
5. We must be in unity together whether we all understand what God is wanting done or not.
6. The Word of God is our instruction book, Jesus Christ is our Master and the Holy Spirit our Guide and Comforter