

HISTORY OF REDEMPTION

BY

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Lesson 9 The Gospel Is the “Good News”

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Let's pray.

Lord, we do pause and thank You that this is Your day and we just want to stop and say that we recognize that all through the day. Today as we continue to look at Your work, what You did, what You are still doing, and then the final completion of it on earth, show us. Just help us to see it because it is Your work and we want to appreciate it just like when someone else does a work of art or something, we look at it and hopefully if it is good, we appreciate it. Lord, we look at Your work and what You have done and it is good. We just want to see it, look at it, appreciate it, and also see where we fit in it. So just give us a perspective, Your perspective, of where we fit in these days we live, for Your glory. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

All right. Well, just to review Acts One, Two, and Three, there is an actual review in the Scripture itself in Matthew 1:17 that shows us the first three Acts. It says,

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the captivity in Babylon were fourteen generations; and from the Babylon deportation to Christ are fourteen generations.

So as Matthew is dividing up the book, in the beginning of Matthew as he is getting ready to proclaim from the Gospel of Matthew, “The Messiah has come.” It is interesting Matthew's history. He says, God chose Abraham and He took that one man and He built

a nation up until David the king.” And it was a glorious nation. God did that. That was fourteen generations.

Then he said, “From David until the time the nation began to fall apart, and decline, and be divided and all, until it fell into the Babylonian captivity, was also fourteen generations.” But then, of course, God took them out of the Babylonian captivity and restored them and then brought the Messiah—that was fourteen generations. So that was Matthew’s view of history and how it took place in the first three acts. And God is providing the Messiah.

The purpose for the gospels: obviously, they tell us the ultimate reason for making this nation is that this nation is the one God would send the Messiah through. He would provide salvation for the whole world and it would come through this particular nation (John 4:22). God promised it. But the gospels are also a faithful work and shows what God did, but also what He said at that time and the purpose for which Israel was first created. It begins a transition program of redemption from the nation Israel to worldwide evangelism. We see that in Acts 1:1-9.

So, when you compare the gospels you may think: “Were there four guys that just sort of collaborated, verbatim, their stories?” I do not think so. As a matter of fact if you have four people come in and they tell you the exact same story, verbatim, word for word, what do you know? You know that they have talked and they planned ahead and said, “This is our story. We are sticking to it.” But when four people come in and tell you basically the same story, with a bunch of difference and personal, you know, reflections and all, then you know you are getting a picture of what? The real story.

And that is what happened with the gospels. You have four different guys and they are giving you a picture. It is sort of like: you have got a publican, you have got a fisherman, you have a physician, and you have this guy that is pretty well-to-do. Mark 1:20 says that John was on the boat with his father Zebedee and the hired servants, at the time that he actually left and began to follow Jesus. So he was from a pretty well-to-do family to have

hired servants. You know, they were at least middle class or upper middle class or whatever. So you have four different guys from four different kinds of walks of life and they are giving you a picture of Jesus Christ.

And it kind of reminds you of Van Dyck’s painting that he painted of Charles I because they wanted to do a bust of Charles I. So they had Van Dyck paint three sides of Charles I. They painted his face. They painted the left side and the right side. They rolled it up. They sent it on a ship down to Rome. And they got Bernini, who was the renowned sculptor of that day, to sculpt a bust of Charles I. And it is in the London Gallery today. You can go look at it.

But with the gospels, we not only have the front view, the two side views, we also, with the gospel of John have a view from the top. So, we even have four views in order to get our picture of Jesus Christ and what He is doing. And so we see in Matthew that He is the King of the Jews. In Mark, He is the Servant of the Lord. In Luke, He is the Son of Man and in John, He is the Son of God. And of course in Acts, He is the ascended Lord of all.

The World Situation

- **World Centralization:** Rome ruled – *Pax Romana*
- **World Degeneration:** 2,000 Lords in Rome had 1,300,000 slaves. Thousands of lives were sacrificed in the arena for entertainment. Tacitus said, “the spirit of the times was to corrupt and be corrupted”
- **Mingling of World Religions:** a migration of gods and idols from the Orient, the Babylonian confusion of deities and religious cults, the State gods, Greek gods, and mystery cults blended together. Rome became a venerator of all deities, a cauldron of mixture.

**What a backdrop for the revelation
of the world Redeemer!**

And so this was the world situation at the time that Jesus came. The world was centralized. Rome ruled. They had the *Pax Romana* and there was peace all over the world. But Rome was the center. There was world cultural oneness. Rome was eclectic. It combined the best of the existing cultures into one. There was world trade and communication because the Greek language was the international language. It was the *lingua franca*. It was the language of everybody, you might say, and there was freedom to trade in every area.

There was world degeneration though—take Rome alone—Rome had 2000 lords in the city and those 2000 lords had 1,300,000 slaves. That’s a lot of slavery. And thousands of lives were being sacrificed in the arena for entertainment. It was a bloodthirsty place. Tacitus says, “The spirit of the times was to corrupt and to be corrupted.” It was just a horrible place. There were more divorces than there were marriages, a lot more. And it was just, when you read the records of Rome, it was just a horrible place at that time. They were degenerate.

But there was a mingling of world religions. You had a migration of gods and idols from the Orient. You had the Babylonian confusion of deities and religious cults. You had the state gods, the Greek gods, the mystery cults blending together, so Rome became like a venerator of all deities and a cauldron of mixtures.

What a backdrop for the revelation of the world Redeemer! He comes into this situation. That’s why it says in Galatians 4 that God’s timing was perfect. “When the time had fully come...” (cf. Galatians 4:4). And it is not talking about when Mary had reached her last trimester. But when the time had fully come historically, God sent forth His Son. At the right time, historically, “He was born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).

Now if it is so important to God to be right on time, historically. Does that tell you anything? Because we have a tendency to say, “What’s the big deal? History, history, history, history! Who cares?” Well, God cares. And He does things in perfect timing.

And that is what is neat about looking at history and getting a big picture of it and then stepping back, of course, and seeing how things fit and also where we fit. Jesus Christ came into this world context to work and teach, laying the foundation for the church of Jesus Christ.

And what did He do when He entered into the world? Well, He did three basic things. He did miracles. He trained twelve guys to go out. And of course His greatest work is He laid His life down as a sacrifice for the sin of the human race. But as He began to work, you can categorize the work of Jesus Christ first by His miracles.

What was He doing? He was proving that He was God and that was the purpose of the miracles. He was doing miracles in terms of physical healing. He was doing miracles over nature. He was doing miracles over the supernatural. He was doing miracles over death. And the signs and the reasons that Jesus did these things was to prove that He was God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I mean, that is why He would heal leprosy, so that they would go, “Whoa, nobody can do that! Only God can do that.” He would raise the dead. And He was proving all along—casting out demons—He was God.

But He also was preaching. And preaching was primary. It says in Mark 1:38, “Let us go that I may preach there also, for that is what I came out for.” And He went preaching and casting out demons. So Jesus was healing and doing things like miracles, but He was also preaching. And He went all through the regions preaching the kingdom of God that it had come unto us. So, that is what God was doing at that time.

Now, concerning His word, He wanted it to go out so He took twelve guys, He trained them, He selected them. He chose twelve. And He implemented that “with Him” principle. That is the way Jesus did discipleship. He appointed twelve to be with Him and then He sends them out to preach. And He would mentor them. He would give them an opportunity as He would guide them to go out. And He would let them fail. They would come back and He would say, “Well, okay. You made a few mistakes here but, okay. In that case right there, why couldn’t you do that? Well, I can tell you. You need a little

more faith for that one. You need to spend some time fasting and praying if you are going to handle that kind of thing. You can't just walk up there and do it.” And so, they would come back; He would instruct them. And finally there would come a time when He would give them independent practice. He would just send them out. And He had to commission them. And so He said, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

And so His work of redemption: securing the eternal redemption of all who will accept Him personally, the great substitutionary work of Jesus Christ on the cross, proving that He really is the Messiah.

Second Corinthians 5:21 says what? “He who knew no sin...” Literally, in the Greek it says, “He who knew no sin, sin was made, on our behalf so that we might be the righteousness of God.” So, this is the great work of Jesus, to take sin and remove it. Because we saw in the first two chapters of Genesis there is no sin, right? In the last two chapters of Revelation there is no sin. And the rest of the Bible is about sin and how God deals with sin. And so Jesus actually removed that sin, the eternal Word of God. And people have to decide to receive Him or reject Him. He makes God known. “He is the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form” (cf. Colossians 2:9). “He is the Lamb of God that is taking away the sin of the world,” John said (cf. John 1:29). We believe in Him for eternal life because He has eternal life in Himself. “He that hath the Son hath the life. He that hath not the Son hath not the life” (cf. 1 John 5:12). Eternal life is in His name.

Closing Scene of Act Three

The “Good News” is the Gospel

Now we are ready to go to the nations.
We have something to tell that can
reconcile man to God.

So, here He is in the world and He is redeeming the world and reconciling the world unto God. This is His great work. Now the message that He gave is called “Good News,” the gospel. And so, at this point we are ready to go out to the nations. We have something to tell them that can reconcile man to God. We have the gospel.

In 1 Corinthians 15: 3, “Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the gospel, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Do you see how amazing that is? Here is Paul, looking back from the very beginning. Paul says, “This is what God intended. This is what God planned.” God went all through the course of human history and now we have come to this pinnacle point where God is actually becoming incarnate and giving His Son. And now that His Son has died, buried, and rose again the third day, we have something to tell the world. Before this all they could say was, “Well, wait. Look forward. Someday God is going to redeem mankind.

You know, He has promised it.” And they just kept waiting for it and waiting for it. Then all of a sudden, there comes a time in history and Paul says, “We have got it! We have the thing that reconciles God to man. We have the gospel.” There is nothing more precious and more valuable than that. That is why Paul was able to totally give himself over and be eclipsed by the gospel. It was his life: “To live was Christ; to die was gain” (cf. Philippians 1:21). I mean, he knows that we now have that which can reconcile man to God.

So how important is it to get that gospel out? And part of it was because Paul understood—not just that he was spiritual, he was spiritual—but I think he really understood historically what had taken place to get to this point in history and say, “We got it! This is what God has been doing. This is His work. And we have the gospel. Let’s take it out.”

We have the gospel that is “of God.” Notice the prepositions: “of” God. It is “in” Christ. It is “by” the Spirit. And it is “through” grace. That is the gospel, but that is the gospel in Christ, by the Spirit, through grace. Those are the four aspects that stand out about the gospel. It is sourced in God. It comes in the person of Jesus Christ, is administered by the Spirit that raised Him from the dead. And it is through grace. It is a work of God. And it has one imperative—to make disciples—and three participles: going, baptizing, and teaching

Now, when you are going, baptizing, and teaching, in the New Testament there are these five Greek words that are used for taking the gospel out. Which I think is just interesting to note that God gave us such variety of expression when we get to go out and share the gospel. The first one, *anagellō*, means simply to make an announcement. It is sort of like what we do at devotions. Somebody will stand up and they will just say, “I will to inform you. I want to tell you we are doing this. We have got an ice cream social going on. We have a basketball game going on.” And they start telling you what is happening and they are just making an announcement. That is the word *anagellō*, to make an announcement. So you can go out and you can just announce the gospel. Sort of like, “Hey, I just want to

make an announcement. And the announcement is this: Man can be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.” And you make the announcement.

Euangelizō, which comes from the word *eu*, meaning well or good, pleasant, is the word to spread good news. It means or it carries with it emotion. You can get up and make an announcement and just kind of go, “Well, you know.” I mean, you can have emotion in your announcement, I am sure. It depends on who is doing it, doesn’t it? But you can just get up and make an announcement. But *euangelizō* has to have emotion with it. It cannot just be, “Well, I just want to tell you that I received a check for a million dollars in the mail [flat voice] from my grandmother who just left it to me.” That is not the way it would be announced. That is not the way you would tell your friends. That is not the way you tell your friends when you get a ring. “Well, you know, I got a ring, [flat voice]—just wanted you to know.” So, you know, you are thrilled. And so Good News means that when you go out, you announce it with great emotion. You are excited about what God has done. And this word we use a lot in the New Testament.

And I think that was one of the keys to the early church. When they went out, it was not to go out and argue with people. They went out to announce the Good News with great emotion. They were so excited about the resurrection of Jesus Christ out from among the dead, that He was the living God. And so they went out with tremendous emotion telling Good News.

I remember when I was sixteen years old my dad bought me an Austin Healey. As a matter of fact, two weeks ago I went over to Laguna to see that car show because they had about five or six Austin Healeys there and I just thought I would go over and feel the pain, because I sold it to go to college. But, you know, it was amazing. I had this little gunmetal blue sports car and I was sixteen years old—spoiled rotten, obviously—but, I mean, what did I do? I went to all my friends’ houses. I’d go by, pick up a friend, take them for a ride. Pick up another friend, take them for a ride. You know, I was so excited to have some wheels, you know, and some descent ones. I just wanted all my friends to

know. I can still remember doing that. And the gospel should go out with just tremendous emotion, in that sense, and excitement.

Then there is *katagellō*, which means to tell thoroughly, or to compare something down against. That is kind of the apologetics of the gospel, when you are comparing things thoroughly and you are comparing it down against a certain plumb line. And so, we can go out and give the gospel in a very thorough way, which includes those people that have that apologetic mindset.

Then there is *laleō*, which just simply means to talk. It is conversation. You just speak about something very simply. It is like friendship evangelism. You are just talking and you are telling them something.

But then there is *kēryssō*, which means to herald or to proclaim. That is what John the Baptist did, heralding Jesus. That is what Jesus did in John 7:37 when Jesus stood up on the day of the water feast. You know, He said, “Is anybody thirsty?” That means He yelled that out. He heralded out that message there on the steps. He did not just say, [quiet voice] “Anybody thirsty here? Is anybody thirsty here?” He stood up and He said, [loud voice] “Anybody thirsty out here!?” You know, He just began to yell it out and people probably thought, “Who is the weird guy?” So people are gathering around. And when they gather around, He starts telling them, “I am the water of life.” And some of them went, “Yeah, you are.” And others went, “This guy is just crazy, thinks He’s God.” So the gospel begins to come out.

Now, note how the book of Luke ends and the book of Acts begins with what event? What is the big event that Luke ends with and Acts begins with?—the ascension. Luke stops with the ascension and closes his book. The book of Acts begins with the ascension because Act Four is basically this—Act Four is: Jesus Christ now reigning in heaven. The Messiah has come! Okay, Act Three is complete. From Abraham to David, was fourteen generations, from David to Babylon was fourteen generations, and from Babylon to Christ was fourteen generations. The Messiah is here! But now, though the Messiah has

come, He has died on the cross, buried, rose again the third day, Christ has ascended. And Act Four begins from heaven. It starts in heaven. And Christ is reigning there and He is going to build His church as a channel for salvation for every nation. So, Christ's departure was not a sunset like some people think. It was a sunrise. It was the beginning of a new day.

There is a new channel and the new channel is the church. God said, “I will build My church.” And He did that. There was never any commission like that in the Old Testament, was there? There was nothing like that. He is going to build His church and He is going to work until the very end of this age and salvation is going to go out. But in the Old Testament the commission was not to go out and bring people in. It was like, stay separate from everybody and make sure that not too many people do get in association with you. But in the church, as it begins to build from heaven, He says, “I want you to go out to every tribe, every tongue, and every people” (cf. Matthew 28:19). So the old channel, Israel, is set aside.

Notice though, it does not say “cast away” does it? In Romans 9–11 what do we read? Particularly in Romans 11:1, Paul asks a question: “Has God cast away His people?” Remember that? And what is the answer? Well, depending on what translation you have, one of them says: “God forbid!” The other one says: “Certainly not!” The Greek word is *me genoito*. *Mē* is the strongest negative you can write. And *genoito* is from the word *ginomai* that means to come into existence. So put them together and it means: “may this thought never even come into existence in your brain.” Have you ever had thoughts in your brain that you wished would have never been there. “I wish that thought could have never been in my brain,” that is what Paul is saying. He is saying, “If you think that God has cast away His people Israel,” he said, “that is a thought that never should have gotten into your brains somehow.” He said, “I wished it never existed or had any kind of birth whatsoever.”

So Israel is not cast away. Israel is just set aside for a time. And Paul makes that clear in Romans 9–11. And God is righteous to bring them back. Because Romans is all about

what?—I mean, the big thing of Romans is what? The righteousness of God, isn't it? You go all the way through and God is righteous, righteous, righteous! It climaxes really in chapters 9–11 with the righteousness of God. God is right to bring those people back. He has every right to. He is right to forgive us because Jesus died and shed His blood. But we have been disobedient too, so He is right to show mercy on whomever He wants to show mercy. And if He wants to bring them back and graft them back in, that is His business. And He has every right to do it and He is righteous to do it. And nobody can say anything about it.

So, He sets them aside for a while. And notice the difference between the nation Israel and the church. The nation is exclusive but the church is universal. It is all-inclusive. It is everybody and anybody, “whosoever will.” The nation is national. It is Jewish. But the church is international. It does not matter what nation you are from. One particular location is where the Jews were. They were in Jerusalem. But the church is local and indigenous. It can be anywhere. You go and you establish a church in any town, any place on earth. The nation was political, but the church is non-political. That way we can go anywhere. We are not about politics. We are about the gospel. God dwelled in a temple building under the nation. But under the church God dwells in the believer. And so, there is a big difference between the nation Israel and the church.

So the question is: who is more suited for claiming the “whosoever” of John 3:16? Well, obviously the church is. What would happen if Israel had tried to do it? It would have been a mess, wouldn't it?

So the redemptive instrument is the church. And the Bible uses three basic figures to describe the church. The church is like a temple for God. It is like a body for Christ who is the head. And it is like a flock for the Shepherd who is the Holy Spirit. It is a temple, a body, and a flock. And it is being sent out into the world.

Well, what would have happened if Israel as a nation had tried to take the gospel to another nation? How would that be viewed? It would have been viewed as an invasion,

wouldn't it? Because essentially Israel was a passive witness for God, but once the political element is removed then the Lord's people can go to any nation as Christ's ambassador, while remaining politically neutral; hence, the good confession of 1 Timothy 6. So we have changed, or God has changed in the way He deals with the world. And the church is not to be exclusive. It is to involve “whosoever will, Jew, Gentile, bond, free, male, female, just whoever—every ethnic, every tongue, every tribe” (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13). So, there is quite a difference going on.

Act Four

God Establishes a New Channel for Redemption

**Jesus Christ, now reigning in Heaven,
builds His Church as the channel for
proclaiming salvation to every nation.**

Acts 1-7 To the Jews

Acts 8-12 To the Gentiles

Now, this is how Jesus builds His new channel. He builds it from the seeds of Israel. He starts with Jews. And you have seen it. Just look at the big picture. In Acts 1–7 where are they?—in Jerusalem. Who is there?—the Jews are. Who is the main leader there?—Peter. They say James was the pastor of the church but Peter is the guy that is doing everything. In Acts 8–12 what do you have? Where are they at? They are not in Jerusalem anymore. What city do they come from? The church is in Antioch and that is where they are called Christians. And there is transition going on because Barnabas is there, the son of consolation and comfort. But Peter and Paul are there too; so, you've got Peter and Paul but you've got Barnabas, who is like that oil that puts them together.

Then from chapter 13 on to the end of the book, the sight is set toward Rome. And it is focused on the Gentiles. Even though some Jews still accept the Lord, they have really gone out to the Gentiles and Paul is the key guy, as the Holy Spirit separated him and set him apart. Peter stayed ministering, you know, primarily to the Jews. So you have this transition from Jerusalem through Antioch, out finally to Rome. So, God is building His church but He is building His church from the seeds of Israel. And there is a similarity as to how He built His nation, isn't there? He chooses just a few guys and begins to work.

Now, when He chose those Jews, what was the first thing they asked Him in Acts 1? I mean, as He got this little group of Jews together and said, "I am doing something." They went, "Well, okay. Is this the time in history that You are going to restore the kingdom to us?" And Jesus said, "You know, you guys are really slow learners." He says, "I have been trying to tell you the whole time I was going to the cross. You didn't get that. I told you I was going to rise from the dead afterwards. You didn't get that. Now, I am trying to tell you the Holy Spirit is going to come and descend on you and you are going to take the gospel out to the world. It is not going to be a political deal. But you aren't getting that either." It is like, "No, this is not the time that I am going to restore the nation. What is going to happen is that you are going to receive the Holy Spirit and you are going to go out." But it was like that was their question. It would be a normal question for them because that is the way they looked at things.

And being assembled together, we read what? They were told to wait. And that is what they asked. They said, "Are You going to restore the kingdom?" And He says, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons. You are going to receive power when the Holy Spirit comes and you are going to be My witnesses everywhere" (cf. Acts 1:7-8). So He said that this is what is going to happen because He is doing a new thing through a new channel. It is called the church. It is not like it was before. And that is important.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

(Acts 2:1-21)

*“And they were filled with
the Holy Spirit..” (Acts 2:4)*

God reaches everyone in their own language.

So we get the gift of the Holy Spirit. He has been with us. He is in us now. But He also comes upon us and He constitutes the church on the Day of Pentecost. The church is a unique new thing. It is different. It is a different kind of channel that God used in the Old Testament. And that is important to see here because a lot of people don't pick up on that. And that is why they come up with some of these doctrines that get pretty weird. And the gift of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost constitutes what we call the church, the body of Christ.

So in Acts 2 what is going on? You know, they are all filled with the Spirit. And he says, “Everybody is hearing the gospel in their own language.” I mean, that is miraculous! Does that show God's intention of what He wants to do? Yeah. God says, “I want to reach everybody.” And so, there are all these people there on the feast day, everybody from all around the world. You got Parthians and Medes, and everybody is there. And the Holy Spirit comes down and they get to hear the gospel in their own language so that they can disperse out and begin carrying the gospel around the world. That should show you something about God's heart and how important it is to Him to get the gospel out. So He is just looking for people that are willing to be faithful to proclaim the gospel. And He

gives us all of these things that will take place even in the last days. And it will come to: “whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (cf. Acts 2:21).

So they continued in the temple, most of the guys, but God had to move them out into world evangelism. So the temple was just too spiritual, political for Israel. And if the church is going to be established in every culture and every nation, it has got to move out to other lands. And He uses persecution to move them out.

The First Progress Report

- **The word of God spreads**
 - **Their faith increases**
 - **The church grows**

Acts 6:7

And the church began to grow very rapidly, providing a strong base that is thrust into other areas. I mean, look how fast it went. One day you have 120 devoted to prayer. The next day you have 3000. Then you have 5000 and then we read more believers were added and then the disciples increased. And the church just keeps being multiplied. So this thing is growing. It is quite amazing. And you get that first progress report there in Acts 6:7. It says,

And the word of God kept on spreading. The number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem. And a

great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

That is just so cool to read. So right there in Jerusalem, God is working; priests are receiving Jesus and it is affecting everyone. The Jews are turned upside down because it is like, “whoa!”—you know. When a priest accepts Jesus it is like: “Oh, my goodness!” It has got to upset people. And everything was being mixed up.

So God moves them out to Judea and Samaria through persecution, and He promised that He would. He starts to go to the Gentiles and Paul is chosen. The door opens for Peter at Cornelius’s house to go to the Gentiles and then the Gentile church is established in Antioch. And this was the first great church and the first time they were called Christians. And they begin to send people out to other cultures. Before this, they were not going to other cultures. I mean, even with Judea and Samaria it is like, “okay, we are still pretty close.” But now, they are going to reach out way beyond any limit they ever dreamed was possible from Antioch.

So, Christ begins to go to all the nations through the new channel, the church, Acts 13–28. He begins in Jerusalem but He ends in Rome and heads to every nation. Acts 13:1 says that there were these guys, “certain prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon, called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted and the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now...’” In other words, now being what? Now being this time in history we are ready to go. We could not have sent you out before. The time is still full. God does things at a right time. I mean, it took years before these guys went out. I mean, I would have thought right at the Day of Pentecost everybody should just start heading out. You know, just find a place. Get on a boat and go somewhere. And I still tend to think that way. I am impromptu that way. But God has timing. He had timing then and He has timing now for your life. And if you want to go right now, but it is like God says, “No. I have a perfect time for this.”

And *now* separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them. And after fasting and praying and laying their hands on them they sent them away. (cf. Acts 13:2-3).

So, God is building the church from heaven. He is doing it through the Holy Spirit. So Jesus is in heaven. And as we saw, the scene starts in Acts with Jesus in heaven and He builds His church from heaven. Now that is still going on today. Jesus is still in heaven but what is He doing? He is building His church on earth by His Spirit. It is pretty exciting to think that you can be part of that.



So we look at Paul's first missionary journey. Paul and Barnabas are called, they are sent out and they go to the Jews first. And Paul's zeal, of course, is to establish the believers. They get to Iconium and there is great persecution. God gives them a great burden. They are going to go out and you can see how they began there in Antioch. They just began to move out from Antioch and they just began to take off. They sailed to Paphos and they went on up to these areas of Iconium and Lystra. Then they doubled back and they came

back to Antioch. And that was the first time they ever went out. They were so excited about it and God was doing great things, in spite of the persecution.

Then they came back and said, "Let's go on another missionary journey." And Paul selects Timothy and he says, "We are going to go out and we are going to strengthen those churches that we went out to." And they even meet the Bereans. And so, you see a second journey. They start back again. And they are going to head out. And they were going to go out this way, by Tarsus, because that was Paul's home. And they head on and they just go way on out to visit a few churches that they strengthen. And they just go all the way out, sail back around Corinth, Ephesus, and come back to Caesarea, to Jerusalem, and then back on up to Antioch again. So their second journey was quite comprehensive as they are going out. And the Holy Spirit is directing and leading and motivating them to go out because it is Jesus in them, from heaven, building His church by the power of the Holy Spirit. And it is just really neat.



So then they say, “Let’s go on a third journey and strengthen disciples. And let’s head out to Asia.” And they do the third and the fourth journeys. And you can see again the third journey—because they begin down here in Jerusalem, in Antioch and they head out again. And they go back to strengthen the churches and then they come back to Jerusalem.

Then on the fourth journey they take off and they go way on out, they start heading towards Rome. So, I mean, Paul just would not stop. And you cannot stop a called man or a called woman. When God is moving in them this way, and this is just a drive that he had. He is arrested. He is tried. He is put in prison. And he is preaching the kingdom of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The 6 Progress Reports of Acts

- 1:1 – 6:7 The word spreads & disciples increase**
- 6:8 – 9:31 The church builds in Judea, Galilee, & Samaria**
- 9:32 – 12:24 Herod dies. The word continues to multiply**
- 13:1 – 16:5 Paul and Barnabas separate but the Church grows**
- 16:6 – 19:20 Church overcomes magic practices and cultic literature—the Word of the Lord grows mightily**
- 19:21 – 28:31 Paul takes the gospel to Rome
His preaching & teaching is open & unhindered**

So we see the six progress reports in the book of Acts. They are simply this in Acts 6:7, “the word kept spreading; disciples and priests in Jerusalem; many people were becoming obedient to the faith.” We get a second progress report in Acts 9:31. It says, “The church throughout Judea, Galilee, Samaria, are being built up and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. And you go: “Wow, things are happening!”

Then you get another progress report in Acts 12:24. It says that “Herod the political leader dies, but the word of the Lord continued to grow and be multiplied.” So the political leaders go by the wayside, but the word of God is just growing and multiplying everywhere. And you get another progress report in Acts 16:5, that says, “after the first missionary journey and the council at Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas separate.” But we read: “the churches were being strengthened in the faith and increasing in numbers daily.” And so the reports just kept coming in. God is working in a mighty way.

In Acts 19:20, we get the next progress report. The church is overcoming magic practices. And there were books that were worth 50,000 pieces of silver that were burned. So the word of the Lord was growing mightily. And now it says it is prevailing over all these false cults, these false religions, all these sorcerers and magicians. And the word of God is just completely prevailing. And then finally, you get the last progress report of the book of Acts in Acts 28:31. Paul carries the gospel to Rome and he is “preaching and teaching Jesus with all openness, unhindered” (NASB). And even though he might be chained to a soldier, the word of God is not bound. He is unhindered because God is taking the gospel out. The Lord is so committed to build His church.

The Missionary Value of the book of Acts

- **The Church was a missionary society**
- **Paul chose strategic centers like Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Athens, and Rome**
- **The churches were self-governed, self-supported, and self-perpetuated in order to spread the gospel**

Now what is the missionary value of the book of Acts? I see three specific things that stand out. First is this: When you read the book of Acts you find out that the church as a whole was a missionary society. It was not just a few guys. The thing that was so unique about the church in the book of Acts was that they were all going out with that *euangelizo*. They were going out with Good News, spreading the Good News to their neighbors and their friends. They were telling it thoroughly. They were announcing it. They were heralding it. They were proclaiming it. And it was not like it was some evangelist's job to do it. In the book of Acts they understood it was everybody's job to do it. The church as a whole was a missionary society.

Secondly, the thing we notice in the book of Acts is that Paul chose strategic places as centers to get the gospel out, like Corinth. Antioch is where he started, then Corinth, Ephesus, Athens, and Rome. He went to strategic places, which is very important.

That was one of the unique things about being in London was it was so strategic in the sense that the whole commonwealth was there. And you could go out in the streets and parks of London and the church at Westminster was always having people from every

country (just about) coming in, and they would hear the gospel. These people eventually move on and go some place else. Sometimes they go back to their countries. They go other places. And it was a very strategic place to have a church. International, universal cities like this are great places. I mean, you take what has happened even at Costa Mesa here in LA and other churches, people that come from all over.

One of the most strategic places in our day is what? What is probably the newest, most strategic place?—the Internet. You think about these guys and think about where they were able to go to find strategic places to get the gospel out. Think how strategic the Internet is now. And the more we can put emphasis on getting the gospel presented the more it can be hit on all around the world because everybody is getting it. And it is like even out in the remotest places, you would be surprised. You go to some of these little churches setting up and a guy is out there with a laptop and a satellite dish. It happens.

And then thirdly, one of the things that I noticed that was of missionary value to me in the book of Acts was that the churches were established to be self-governing, self-supporting and self-perpetuating in order to extend out the gospel. They said, “Look, you become indigenous. You support yourself. You govern yourself. And it is your job to plant other churches and get it out.” So even the church that was planted had to grow up and become a church planting church. And so, like you say, they started with Jerusalem but they said, “Now this is your Jerusalem. Now you start and you go out to the world.” And I see those as three extremely important values in the book of Acts concerning missions.

Now what is the sign of the end of Act Four? Well, the Great Commission continues until Jesus Christ says stop. I believe He is going to say that dramatically by way of the Rapture of His church. And when He says that dramatically by way of the Rapture of the church—as the salt comes out, the light, in many ways, comes out. But that is not the end because that introduces a transition. We have had a transition from the nation, didn’t we? And it was through the seeds of Israel to the building of the church.

We are going to get another transition at the close of Act Four, the church. The Rapture will take place and this will introduce the transition to the kingdom age that we call the Millennial Reign. The transition phase is called the Great Tribulation. God is moving all over the world, and when it is reached, then comes the end of Act Four. And then God will set up a new channel in Act Five. But we will have about seven years there of transition, as the church is taken and there begins to be a new kind of work on earth during that time, because He is preparing the Jews. Again, I said, they were not cast away, they were set aside. Set aside for a time in history.

But can you see God is a historical God and that He does things on time, in time, every time, at the right time. And that is what is going on now. And we know we are getting to the end of the church age. And soon the church will be taken out and there will begin to be that other transition back to where He receives Israel back to Himself. Because they were not cast away, they were just set aside. But God will do a new thing and He is righteous to do it.

Let's pray.

Lord, we thank You for what we see in Act Four, that You are the one building Your church. You are doing it from heaven by the ministry of the Holy Spirit because You sent Him here to do it. And You sent Him here to reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. And You sent Him here to woo people to You. You sent Him here to take away the blindness that is caused by the god of this world and to give the light of the revelation, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. And we believe that, as You said, You would be with us to the end by Your Spirit. And that the Holy Spirit will affect and accomplish the proclamation of the gospel all over this world, to every ethnic people, every tribe, every tongue,

every nation. We just want to be directed by Your Spirit and sent where You want us to go. So Lord, we want to do first our part and that is just submit ourselves to You, present our bodies to You and say, here we are. If we can be used in this time of history that I believe is soon coming to a close, take us and use us, Lord, for Your glory. Let us be part and experience that joy of a soul winner's crown when Paul said, at the coming of Christ you are our joy. You are our crown. It is going to be quite exciting. There is no reward that we could enjoy more than being in the presence of the Lord and knowing that we had a part in other people being in the presence of the Lord. So use us, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

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