

The Acts of the Apostles

The Journey – 2020
Jim Hoffman

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 10, 11, and 12 will turn out to be a sort of parenthesis from Paul’s ministry for God to show us his monumental work of bringing the gentiles into the church.
- Acts 9 was Saul’s conversion and in Acts 10, 11, and 12 we are given the details of the work that made it clear that God’s redemptive plan was always for **all people**.
- The Jew was **central** to the plan, but the gentiles as well as the Jew were **essential** for the glorification of God.

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The Acts of the Apostles

• Acts 11:1 Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God. 2 But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers criticized him. 3 "You entered the home of Gentiles and even ate with them!" they said. 4 Then Peter told them exactly what had happened. 5 "I was in the town of Joppa," he said, "and while I was praying, I went into a trance and saw a vision. Something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners from the sky. And it came right down to me. 6 When I looked inside the sheet, I saw all sorts of tame and wild animals, reptiles, and birds. 7 And I heard a voice say, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.' 8 "No, Lord," I replied. 'I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure or unclean.' NLT

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The Acts of the Apostles

• Acts 11:9 "But the voice from heaven spoke again: 'Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.' 10 This happened three times before the sheet and all it contained was pulled back up to heaven. 11 "Just then three men who had been sent from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were staying. 12 The Holy Spirit told me to go with them and not to worry that they were Gentiles. These six brothers here accompanied me, and we soon entered the home of the man who had sent for us. 13 He told us how an angel had appeared to him in his home and had told him, 'Send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. 14 He will tell you how you and everyone in your household can be saved!' NLT

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The Acts of the Apostles

• Acts 11:15 "As I began to speak," Peter continued, "the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning. 16 **Then I thought of the Lord's words when he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'** 17 And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, **who was I to stand in God's way?"** 18 When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. **They said, "We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life."** NLT

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 11:1 Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God. 2 But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, **the Jewish believers** criticized him. NLT
- So who were “the Jewish believers” – it is clarifying the obvious and referring to Jews who had become Christians who also wanted to remain Jews. 😊
- It comes through in how they come down on Peter for daring to obey God regarding his plan.

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The Acts of the Apostles

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

11:1-18 The imperfect state of human nature strongly appears, when godly persons are displeas'd even to hear that the word of God has been received, because their own system has not been attended to. And we are too apt to despair of doing good to those who yet, when tried, prove very teachable. It is the bane and damage of the church, to shut out those from it, and from the benefit of the means of grace, who are not in every thing as we are. Peter stated the whole affair. We should at all times bear with the infirmities of our brethren; and instead of taking offence, or answering with warmth, we should explain our motives, and show the nature of our proceedings. That preaching is certainly right, with which the Holy Ghost is given. While men are very zealous for their own regulations, they should take care that they do not withstand God, and those who love the Lord will glorify him, when made sure that he has given repentance to life to any

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The Acts of the Apostles

- We will find in this text that there were some who wanted Christianity to be just another sect of Judaism.
- It is easy to understand why they would have thought in that way – much of their spiritual identity was tied to them being God's chosen people.
- But what the Jew seemed to have forgotten is that there were saints before there were Jews. 😊

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- Acts 11:16 Then I thought of the Lord's words when he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'
- Peter and all the Apostles for that matter, probably found themselves saying that same phrase repeatedly in their lives.
- "Then I thought of the Lord's words" – meaning that what was academic, now has direct meaning and application to them.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- I find myself thinking a similar thing when the light finally goes on for me when I recall a teacher in my past saying what I wasn't quite ready for at the time.
- It's usually around the "weight" or the importance I would assign to a biblical truth.
- I would never have said, "the glory of God is just not that important to me", but it wasn't.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 11:17 "And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, **who was I to stand in God's way?**"
- There is no way to tell for sure, but I suspect that Peter sounded a little apologetic when he said, "who was I to stand in God's way?"
- "Guys, I know this sounds crazy but God is including those detestable Gentiles in his redemption plan." Peter

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- This thinking, that surely Gentiles can't be saved and still be Gentiles goes on for awhile – years in fact.
- The early church dealt with it time and time again because the early leaders were all Jews and the shock of the gospel including Gentiles went down hard.
- They were so entrenched in Judaism that even though they were now Christians they still hung on to their old Jewish customs and wanted all others to do the same.

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What groups of Christians do we view as “Gentiles” who should conform to our ways today?”

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Doctrinal Lightweights

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- If you recall the story of Jonah – he had nearly the same issue as the early church was having.
- Jonah was far more open about his disdain for God showing mercy to Gentiles, but the early church was in a real struggle over the issue.
- They must have thought, “God, for thousands of years this was obscure, give us time to adjust”.

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- Please note that saving Gentiles really wasn't new in the bible – it was new to the Jews of the Apostles day.
- Nineveh is perhaps the largest and best example from the old testament that redemption, while being worked through the Jew, was always open to Gentiles.
- From the biblical record, there were not many Gentiles saved in the old testament because there was little to no effort to reach them.

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Jim, are you saying all (or mostly all) of the Old Testament gentiles were lost because they didn't hear the gospel?

No, but I would say, “The Judge of all the earth will do right”. 😊

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• Acts 11:19 **Meanwhile**, the believers who had been scattered during the persecution after Stephen's death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. They preached the word of God, but only to Jews. ²⁰However, some of the believers who went to Antioch from Cyprus and Cyrene began preaching to the Gentiles about the Lord Jesus. ²¹The power of the Lord was with them, and a large number of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord. ²²**When the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch.** ²³When he arrived and saw this evidence of God's blessing, he was filled with joy, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord. ²⁴**Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith.** And many people were brought to the Lord. ²⁵**Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul.** ²⁶When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. **Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching large crowds of people.** (It was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.) ²⁷During this time some prophets traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them named Agabus stood up in one of the meetings and predicted by the Spirit that a great famine was coming upon the entire Roman world. (This was fulfilled during the reign of Claudius.) ²⁹So the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters in Judea, everyone giving as much as they could. ³⁰This they did, entrusting their gifts to Barnabas and Saul to take to the elders of the church in Jerusalem. NLT

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ACTS TIMELINE

29 AD	ASCENSION	ACTS 1:9-11
29 AD	PENTECOST	ACTS 2
36 AD	STONING OF STEPHEN	ACTS 7
37 AD	SAUL'S CONVERSION	ACTS 9
37-40 AD	PAUL in the DESERT 3 yrs	ACTS 9:25 & GAL 1:18
38 AD	PETER to CORNELIUS	ACTS 10
41 AD	SAUL/PAUL BEGINS MINISTRY at ANTIOCH	ACTS 11:25-26

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- Verse 19 (the meanwhile statement below) picks up right where chapter 8 verse 4 left off.
- Acts 8:4 But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went.
- **“Meanwhile, the believers who had been scattered during the persecution after Stephen's death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria.”**

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- It is believed that 7-12 years passed from Pentecost to the founding of the church at Antioch.
- A substantial part of the that period passed between Pentecost and the stoning of Stephen **AND** then another chunk between Cornelius and the founding of the church at Antioch.
- Why so long? Probably to allow for the preparation of hearts and minds for the gospel.

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- First it was “Jesus is the Messiah” we’ve all been waiting for and then, wonder of wonders, God wants to save Gentiles too!
- The entrenched establishment Jews were always opposed to the gospel, but it took a while before their anger reached out and killed Stephen.
- Now, the very ones who turned from Judaism to Christ are having trouble with the next frontier, Gentiles!

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- Acts 11:20 However, some of the believers who went to Antioch from Cyprus and Cyrene began preaching to the Gentiles about the Lord Jesus. ²¹**The power of the Lord was with them**, and a large number of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord.
- This evangelism may have been happening concurrently with the work God was doing with Peter and Cornelius.
- God prepared Cornelius and he was evidently doing the same for the gentiles at Antioch. (just as he did for all of us)

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- Acts 11:21 **The power of the Lord was with them**, and a large number of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord.
- Exodus 14:29 But the people of Israel had walked through the middle of the sea on dry ground, as the water stood up like a wall on both sides. 30 That is how the Lord rescued Israel from the hand of the Egyptians that day. And the Israelites saw the bodies of the Egyptians washed up on the seashore. 31 **When the people of Israel saw the mighty power that the Lord had unleashed against the Egyptians, they were filled with awe before him. They put their faith in the Lord and in his servant Moses.** NLT

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- While we are given no details of what the people of Antioch saw, **it would seem that God was accompanying the preaching of the gospel with miracles.**
- Remember, this is what God was doing on a regular basis in the early church – the message was new and needed to be authenticated.
- **Today, the authentication of the gospel in our western world is to be the evidence seen in our lives.**

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- Now notice this from verse #20 – “some of the believers who went to Antioch from Cyprus and Cyrene began preaching to the Gentiles about the Lord Jesus”.
- While some in the early church are household names like Peter, John, and Paul – here we have some believers doing a great work who have no fame.
- Have you ever felt like that? That your faithfulness is not recognized like that of others?

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- Verse #22 – “When the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch.”
- Barnabas actually means, “encourager” so he was sent to verify what they heard in Jerusalem and possibly to encourage these new believers.
- Look what else we read about Barnabas – “Barnabas was **a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith.**” (perfect qualifications for every ministry)

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- And then we read this – “Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul”. I wonder why.
- Because it was Saul, not Barnabas, that spent three years being tutored by Jesus – Saul knew his O.T. cold.
- And he also knew the “Apostles” doctrine – justification, sanctification, redemption, forgiveness, resurrection, glorification and the list would go on.

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- Barnabas had the wisdom to send for a teacher because if you want to build a strong church you have to teach sound doctrine.
- We live in a day when doctrine is considered non-essential even in the evangelical church.
- No wonder the church seems to live so loosely – right doctrine should always lead to right living.

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- Ever heard someone say, “Oh I don’t need doctrine, all I need is Jesus”?
- Do you know how stupid that sounds to those who know that Jesus spent three years teaching doctrine to his disciples and another three years teaching Paul?
- I do not care if you go to Bible School or are self-taught, but by all means know what you believe.

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- Isaiah 28:9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. 10 **For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.** KJV
- I am never hesitant to repeat myself because it is apparent to me that that is how we learn – hearing something once is rarely enough.

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Sound doctrine will reflect God's intent for his Word. It will judge the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12); be useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16); thoroughly equip us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17); be a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (Psalm 119:105); keep us on the path of purity (Psalm 119:9); give understanding to the simple (Psalm 119:130); and grow our salvation (1 Peter 2:2).

Meredith Hodge

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Questions

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