



The Acts of the Apostles

The Journey – 2020
Jim Hoffman

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42 AD	Peter Led from Prison by the Angel	Acts 12
44 AD	Herod Agrippa Dies	Acts 12:20
48 AD	Paul's First Missionary Journey	Acts 13
48 AD	Paul preaches in Pisidian Antioch	Acts 13:14
48 AD	Paul and Barnabas in Iconium	Acts 14
48 AD	Paul and Barnabas in Lystra and Derbe	Acts 14:8
48 AD	Paul and Barnabas Return to Syrian Antioch	Acts 14:21
48 AD	Return to Syrian Antioch	Acts 14:24
48 AD	The Council at Jerusalem	Acts 15
49 AD	Paul's Second Missionary Journey	Acts 15:36

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• Acts 13:1 Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called “the black man”), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul. 2 One day as these men were worshipping the Lord and fasting, **the Holy Spirit said**, “Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.” 3 **So after more fasting and prayer**, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way. 4 So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus. 5 **There, in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God.** John Mark went with them as their assistant NLT

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- **“the Holy Spirit said”** – this is not the first time we’ve seen this phrase in our study of this book.
- Clearly, he was speaking audibly to the Antioch church and the reason would seem to be that he is doing something new; calling missionaries.
- Texts like this one often lead to the question of “does God speak audibly today”- is it the norm for believers?

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- I can say with certainty that while he speaks regularly to me through his Word, he has never spoken to me in an audible voice.
- However, I have at least one close and trusted friend who has heard an audible voice from God, so I am convinced it does happen. (the Bible does not say he doesn’t, ☺)
- When he speaks, audible or otherwise, what he says will never disagree with the Bible and will never add to the written Word of God - no new revelation.

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- I raise this issue today because we hear many casual claims that begin with, **“the Lord told me”**.
- There is no New Testament evidence for God speaking audibly to his people **as a normal experience**.
- I think what most people mean is more like, “I needed to make a decision and this passed through my mind so I believe it was God speaking to me”.

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- What I have listed below are examples of expressions that should be common to us, but stop short of carrying the weight of, **“the Lord told me”**.
 - “I believe the Lord is saying.....”
 - “I think the Lord is leading me to.....”
 - “God has been speaking to me about.....”
 - “I feel led of the Lord to.....”

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- I am making a point about this because young Christians may hear us say **“the Lord told me”** and then wonder why they do not hear God speaking.
- I believe God can and does speak to Christians in an audible voice, but it is a very rare event.
- Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is**, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. NASB

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- When the Holy Spirit spoke and said, “separate Barnabas and Saul” he was revealing the will of God.
- Is that not why we would expect to hear from God?
- Today, because we have the completed Word of God, he speaks through his Word to “renewed” minds – so in a very real sense we can say he speaks to us every time we read our bibles.

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1st Corinthians 2:16 For, “Who can know the LORD’s thoughts? Who knows enough to teach him?” But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.
NLT

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- Hearing from God, audible or not, is a matter of walking in the light.
- Eph 4:17 With the Lord’s authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, **for they are hopelessly confused.** 18 **Their minds are full of darkness;** they wander far from the life God gives because **they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him.** NLT

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- And then for the Christian - Eph 5:8 For **once you were full of darkness**, but **now you have light from the Lord**. So live as people of light! 9 For **this light within you produces** only what is good and right and true. 10 **Carefully determine what pleases the Lord**. NLT
- “God can use the words of a teenager, the prayer of a senior citizen, or the candid remark of a child to convict you of the need to make changes in your life.” Henry T. Blackaby

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- It seems clear to me that God speaks to us through others at times via preaching, teaching, and counseling.
- How many times have you been sitting under the Word of God and just knew that God was speaking directly to you?
- Those are the times when the Holy Spirit was using others to take the Word of God and apply it directly to your life.

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- We know we are to “walk in the Spirit”, and that surely includes hearing from God but how can we know if what we are “hearing” is from God, ourselves, or the enemy?
- Even if you hear an audible voice you still need to know whose voice it is.
- Jesus told us we would know his voice and in John 10:27 the implied way is through familiarity. (sheep)

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- But if we've never heard his voice, not even once in an audible fashion, how can we know his voice?
- Back to the sheep – Jesus was not saying the sheep understood Aramaic, he was saying that they knew and understood the shepherd.
- As we get to know Jesus, we are able to quickly discern when he is speaking and not some "hireling".

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Do you want to hear from God? Then immerse your mind in his word and you will.

Be very careful about listening to voices in your head – thoughts that contradict the Word of God are not from God.

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- **"Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them"**
- Clearly God calls different people to different ministries based upon how he has equipped us - If God calls you to something, he has equipped you for it.
- At the Bema the only question that will be asked is, "what did you do with what you were given?".

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- When we think of God’s calling and his equipping we tend to think about spiritual gifts, training, and maybe some natural talents.
- Some callings require special courage and even mental toughness to be up to the task assigned by God.
- Our spiritual leaders need such intangibles in order to stay in the fight day after day – such were Paul and Barnabas and this is why we pray for our pastors.

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- **“So after more fasting and prayer”**
- Perhaps here is an example of how the Holy Spirit “speaks” to us today – 3 times in the past 2 weeks someone has talked “fasting” to me.
- Given that it is an odd topic it has my attention and I am praying about what to do – how should I fast in order to be the most useful to God?

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- The Bible does not command or require that Christians fast.
- However the Bible almost always shows fasting to be a good thing to do, has benefits for us, and is usually associated with prayer.
- Fasting, whether from food or other things that distract us, is intended to shift our focus from “things” to God.

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- The missionary call happened in this context, **“One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting”**
- From this verse and others we can conclude that fasting might not cause God to act differently, but more likely fasting causes us to listen more closely.
- A good question to ask might be, “what have I missed from God because I wasn’t listening to God?”

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- **“they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God”**
- Look at the message they preached, the Word of God, which is to say they were not preaching what they wished or thought, but what God said.
- When we read about “milk” and “meat” in Hebrews we are to understand the Word of God is the food for our soul that **causes** growth.

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- I do not believe that we have to go down the “Romans Road” or read John 3:16 to preach or teach evangelistically.
- Rather everywhere we go in His book is “his story” and whatever exposes him will draw people to Christ.
- John 6:44 “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.”⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets: **‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me’.** NIV

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- Of course there are times to preach the “Romans Road” and John 3:16, but sometimes it is the glory and splendor of God that causes faith to rise up.
- John 17:17 **You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free.**
- When one knows who God is and wants him, there are no words I can speak to keep that person from God.

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- Acts 13:6 Afterward they traveled from town to town across the entire island until finally they reached Paphos, **where they met a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus. 7 He had attached himself to the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man.** The governor invited Barnabas and Saul to visit him, **for he wanted to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas, the sorcerer (as his name means in Greek), interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said. He was trying to keep the governor from believing.** 9 Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked the sorcerer in the eye. 10 Then he said, **“You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, and enemy of all that is good! Will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord? 11 Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind. You will not see the sunlight for some time.”** Instantly mist and darkness came over the man’s eyes, and he began groping around begging for someone to take his hand and lead him. 12 **When the governor saw what had happened, he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.** NLT

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- **“where they met a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus. He had attached himself to the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man.**
- This sorcerer has an interesting name, “Bar-Jesus” – which means “son of salvation”. Talk about deception!
- Notice that Bar-Jesus had “attached” himself to the governor of Paphos – just like Pilate was in charge of the Roman territory of Palestine, Sergius Paulus was in charge of Paphos.

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- Bar-Jesus was close to the governor – it seems that demons often seek to attach themselves to powerful unsaved people.
- It also seems that Bar-Jesus’ assignment was to keep Sergius Paulus in the dark and from Jesus because we are told in the text that he hindered the governor so he would not believe.
- **“He was trying to keep the governor from believing”** because when the politicians are the puppets of Satan they are effective for the counter kingdom.

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- **“for he wanted to hear the word of God.** But Elymas, the sorcerer (as his name means in Greek), interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said. He was trying to keep the governor from believing”
- Earlier today we looked at how God speaks and found that he speaks primarily through his word to a renewed mind, and sometimes through others.
- Here we have the enemy speaking through the person of Bar-Jesus who was possessed by a demon and being used by that demon to accomplish the work of the devil.

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“It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by keeping things out.”

Screwtape

“The game is to have them all running about with fire extinguishers when there is a flood, and all crowding to that side of the boat which is already nearly under water.”

Screwtape

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• **“Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked the sorcerer in the eye. 10 Then he said, “You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, and enemy of all that is good! Will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord? 11 Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind.”**

• The pattern continues – Paul is filled with the Spirit and he speaks boldly for God.

• Acts 2:4 (tongues), Acts 4:8 (a bold retort), 4:31 (preached boldly), and here we see Paul filled and staring down a demon. 31

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• God was using Paul to disarm the demon in the sorcerer and as a result Bar-Jesus was struck blind as a punishment to the human housing and to deprive the demon of his tool.

• From this we learn that for demon possession to happen there must be human cooperation (or at least no resistance) and therefore human accountability.

• The cooperation could be drugs, interactions with the occult, and sometimes a blatant desire to serve the devil’s agenda. 32

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• **“When the governor saw what had happened, he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord”**

• We see it again, one of the purposes of the miracles done by the apostles was to authenticate their message that **Jesus is the Christ.**

• Saul and Barnabas preached to the governor, but he was not convinced until he saw Bar-Jesus struck with blindness. 33

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“Today, our changed lives are to be the authenticating miracles that validate the gospel.”
Unknown

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Questions

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