

The Acts of the Apostles

The Journey – 2020
Jim Hoffman

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 13:48 and **all who were chosen for eternal life** became believers.
- This is that “thing” again that causes some angst in many Christians – ELECTION.
- Try as we may to dismiss it or avoid it, if we are honest brokers of the truth, we have to admit that the bible teaches both predestination and election.

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- So how does this mesh with what we call “free will”?
- When one is sovereign, omniscient, and allows mortals to make decisions, that one can include in his plans all of the decisions that we **will** make.
- It is his will that we make decisions and because he allows for that, and knows our decisions in advance, he can roll all of those variables into his plans.

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- On the BIG question of election to salvation we can rest in this – **“no one who wants to be saved will ever be lost”!**
- No one will be in hell saying, “but you don’t understand, I really wanted to be saved, you must have misunderstood me.”
- They might have regrets about rejecting Jesus, but they did not want to be saved in their lifetimes **more than they wanted to be their own god.**

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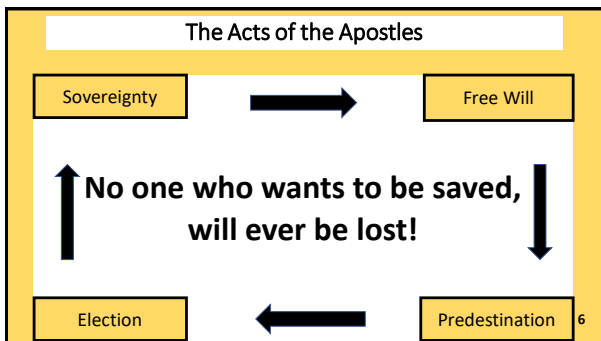
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- I am taking my kids to Disney World – I am driving, and I want them to see other things on the way **of their choosing.**
- Before we go, son #1 tells me he wants to stop in Nashville and son #2 wants to see Myrtle Beach.
- We are going to Disney World, we will get there, but when I take my sons decisions into account, I will be driving an extra 400 miles – no problem, their choices are added to my route and are my will! 😊

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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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- As we look at Paul's route on his 1st missionary journey we see that he could have taken a much shorter way back to Antioch in Syria.
- He could have gone back through his hometown of Tarsus, but instead he retraces his steps back through the same places he was beaten and rejected by some.
- Is his return route telling us something about making disciples?

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- Acts 14:1 The same thing happened in Iconium. Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue and preached with such power that a great number of both Jews and Greeks became believers. 2 Some of the Jews, however, spurned God's message and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas. 3 But the apostles stayed there a long time, preaching boldly about the grace of the Lord. And the Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders. 4 But the people of the town were divided in their opinion about them. Some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. NLT

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- Acts 14:1 The same thing happened in Iconium.
- I do not mean this to be funny, but even Luke seems to be getting a little bored with the routine of preach – some believe – some don't – some get angry – repeat.
- Sincere and reasonable people will debate and try to persuade those they disagree with – those who have no winning arguments get loud and often violent.

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• **“But the apostles”**

• Barnabas is demonstrating the legitimacy of his work by filling the office gift of “apostle”, but he is not an apostle in the same sense as Paul. (confirmed at AG.ORG)

• Paul was directly commissioned to his Apostleship by the risen Christ, Barnabas was not one of “the Apostles”, but operated as an apostle.

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• **“But the apostles stayed there a long time, preaching boldly about the grace of the Lord.”**

• If Paul would never have been known for anything else, even his opponents would have to admire his courage and persistence.

• He was evidently incapable of tiring out or giving up in his efforts to serve God.

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• 2nd Corinthians 11:23 I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. 24 Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. 26 I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. 27 I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. NLT

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Warning – Warning – Warning

In this next section I am going to try to convince you that the Word of God in you can be more powerful than the “signs and wonders” so many seek.

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- **“And the Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders.”**
- This is Luke’s commentary on what was going on – Paul and Barnabas were given power to do miracles.
- And the purpose behind the miracles is also noted by Luke – the Lord was authenticating the gospel they were preaching.

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- Why didn’t Luke tell us what “miraculous signs and wonders” they were doing?
- Could it be because he didn’t want the signs and wonders to overshadow the most powerful part of the scene he wanted to communicate - **the gospel**?
- In Pentecostal circles many long for “signs and wonders” because we want the world to know God has done them in the past and he still can and does.

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- But shouldn't we be just as, or even more amazed at the completed Word of God we hold in our hands?
- The early church needed the message confirmed – maybe "signs and wonders" are absent today in the west because they are not needed or even intended by God.
- Could our problem today be that we fail to plumb the depth of the Word in our preaching and teaching and therefore we miss out on the utter majesty of God?

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- **Actual sermon titles of our day's man-centered preaching.**
 - **Positioned for Increase** – easier times are ahead.
 - **Declare Favor** – how to receive God's favor.
 - **Payback Time** – get ready for your double dose of blessings.
 - **Your Time is Coming** – you're about to step into your time of blessing.
 - **Power Thinking** - When you think thoughts of power, you'll feel His strength empowering you to overcome any obstacle in your path.

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- Do you realize that everything we learn about God always makes Him more glorious?
- So isn't it possible that the full revelation we have of him is intended to replace "signs and wonders" because it is even more effective in manifesting him?
- "Signs and wonders" can be imitated as Jannes and Jambres did when they opposed Moses, but the Word of God cannot be credibly imitated!

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- Do you remember what Abraham told the “rich man”?
- Luke 16:31 “But Abraham said, ‘If they won’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they won’t be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’” NLT
- If the word of God did not impress them, the rich man’s brothers would not be sufficiently impressed to believe even with the “signs and wonders” of a resurrection.

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- You may recall that two weeks ago I said, “**today our changed lives are to be the authenticating miracles that illustrate the power of the gospel**”.
- So how do our lives get to be sufficiently changed so as to be an authenticating miracle of the word we carry?
- I believe it’s when we understand the glory and wonder of the God who saves.

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- There are 20 specific miracles noted in the book of Acts – the one that occurs in this chapter (verse #10) is #15.
- This means we will see less emphasis on miracles as the **new testament is written** and the **living letters from God walk about their communities**.
- I look at this and conclude again that when the word of God is proclaimed with depth that those glimpses of Him provide the same effect as “signs and wonders”.

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“When we see much of God, we will make much of God and our lives will be one continuous outpouring of our time, talent, and treasure to him, and for him.”
Unknown

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- Acts 14:4 But **the people of the town were divided** in their opinion about them. **Some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.** NLT
- Is it not interesting that these men who heard the gospel, even in the face of “signs and wonders” wrought by God, that still not all who saw and heard believed.
- This is a testimony to the hardness of the hearts of men.

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- Remember these are men who were gathered to supposedly hear from God – these men in the synagogue were not secular.
- They were supposed to be seekers of the truth, but when they hear truth they are unimpressed and become contrarians.
- And as we will see in the very next verse (Acts 14:5) these “religious” men become part of an angry and violent mob.

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