

ACTS: The Story Thus Far

The Story of Jesus

- Acts is the continuation of the Gospel of Luke (Acts 1:1-3)
- It is the story of Jesus continuing His ministry through the Holy Spirit working in the early Church (Acts 1:8)
 - The Church is commanded to stay in Jerusalem until the coming of the Holy Spirit, which happens at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4)

Jerusalem

- Through the work of the Spirit and the preaching of the Apostles, the Church grows constantly
 - With a commitment to learning, praying, sharing & fellowship (Acts 2:42-47)
- Signs & wonders mark the Apostles' ministry, which is often met with hostility by religious leaders (Acts 3 & 4)
 - And the Lord shows His protection of the Church through the killing of Ananias & Sapphira
- As more ministry grew, more leaders are added (Acts 6)
 - One of whom, Stephen, is then martyred for preaching in the name of Jesus (Acts 7)
 - Which causes persecution to break out and scatter believers beyond Jerusalem
 - One of the persecutors of the Church is Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:1-3)

Judea & Samaria

- The Gospel begins to spread to surrounding areas through the ministry of the Apostles and other believers
- Philip preaches in Samaria & to an Ethiopian eunuch who returns to his homeland transformed by Jesus (Acts 8:4-40)
- Saul, in his zeal to persecute the Church has a vision of Christ on his way to Damascus (Acts 9:1-31)
 - He puts his faith in Jesus and begins ministering in His name
- Peter begins ministering in Judea mostly to fellow Jews (Acts 9:32-43)
 - Until the Spirit leads him to a Roman Centurion named Cornelius (Acts 10)
 - Gentiles begin putting their faith in Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit
 - As Peter & others struggle with their inclusion in God's kingdom (Acts 11:1-18)

To the Ends of the Earth, part 1

- Syrian Antioch becomes a new hub for the Church (Acts 12)
 - With exponential growth & missionaries using it as a base of operations
 - Including Barnabus & Saul
- Meanwhile, greater persecution hits the Church in Jerusalem through Herod (Acts 12)
 - James is martyred
 - Peter is imprisoned & then saved through divine intervention
 - God brings judgment on Herod, resulting in his death

- Barnabus & Saul go on their first missionary journey (Acts 13-14)
 - To Cyprus
 - Where Saul begins to be called Paul
 - To Pisidian Antioch
 - To Iconium
 - To Lystra
 - Where Paul is stoned and left for dead
 - And then return to Syrian Antioch
- Because of the influx of so many Gentiles into the Church, Paul & Barnabus are summoned to Jerusalem to a counsel of the Church leaders (Acts 15:1-34)
 - The consensus is that Gentiles who put their trust in Jesus are equally part of the Church
 - And they should NOT be made to follow the Jewish Law or customs
- Paul & Barnabus then part ways over whether to bring Barnabus' cousin John Mark with them (Acts 15:35-41)
 - Barnabus & John Mark return to Cyprus
 - Paul & Silas head back to Syria & Cilicia

So What?

- The story of Acts, and the Church throughout history, is the story of the Holy Spirit continuing the work of Jesus through His people
- We can be part of that work even now
 - Are we ready to be on mission for Jesus like the early Church?

Meditation Verse: *Acts 1:8*