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LESSON NOTES (EXPLORE THE BIBLE SERIES)

STUDIES IN ACTS OF HOLY SPIRIT

(Acts 13, Lord's Day, December 3, 2017)

OVERVIEW

"Session 1" The Word Gets Out: The Word Became Flesh & Lived Among Us

As we embark on our study of the Acts of Holy Spirit, we see Luke's second volume of his amicus brief to Theophilus. It appears that Luke was moved by Holy Spirit to articulate His success in moving among and within us as

early believers. From the incarnation of Christ as Jesus of Nazareth, to be conceived by Holy Spirit with Mary's womb, Holy Spirit has, like the Son and the Father, submitted to the will of the other two persons within Trinity.

**A QUESTION TO GET YOU THINKING:
WHY DOES HOLY SPIRIT PUSH THE GLORIFICATION OF THE CHRIST AND THE FATHER AHEAD OF HIMSELF?**

Acts may be viewed as an amicus brief designed to show Christianity was a legitimately acceptable religion to Rome because it was a natural fulfillment of Judaism, a previously approved religion in the Empire. But now, in what we call "Acts:" the prequels are over, the trailers have been viewed, and the blockbuster begins ... God is among us, forever. Hallelujah¹⁰

As we return to the study of Acts (chapter 13), Peter has just escaped from the clutches of Herod¹ and Barnabas and Saul see Herod die from the hand of the Lord God Himself for blasphemy. You see, when Herod was giving a speech, the audience cried out—"Listen to the voice of god, this is no mere man." Because he failed to give God the glory, Herod was struck down immediately; worms had their way with him. Yet, the word of God persisted, and even spread further. Barnabas and Saul, along with John Mark returned to Antioch from their mission in Jerusalem. Holy Spirit had a plan for them, and us—as we study Acts of Holy Spirit.

A NOTE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

The success of any Bible study is entirely dependent upon three entities: you, your teacher and Holy Spirit. He therefore exhorts you to study—do your homework; encourage your teacher by prayer and active participation; most importantly, continually pray to Father God for Holy Spirit to guide us as we learn what He taught Luke 1900+ years ago.

¹Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great (see Matthew 2:1; 14:1) and son of Aristobulus. He was a nephew of Herod Antipas, who had beheaded John the Baptist (Matthew 14:3-12) and had tried Jesus (Luke 23:8-12). When Antipas was exiled, Agrippa received his tetrarchy as well as those of Philip and Lysanias (see Luke 3:1). In 41AD Judea and Samaria were added to his realm.

TEXTUAL ISSUES (ACTS OF HOLY SPIRIT, CHAPTER 13)

Acts 13:1-12. *Don't mess with the Lord our God.* Among the prophets and teachers in Antioch were Barnabas and Saul. During worship and fasting, Holy Spirit said: "Prepare for Me Barnabas and Saul for some work I have called them to." After fasting and more prayer, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

When they arrived in Cyprus, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues; John Mark was there as their helper. When traveling throughout the entire island, they came to Paphos and met a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet, named the Son of Jesus. It turns out Bar-Jesus was tight with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. Now Sergius was bright and sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. But there was a fly in the ointment—one Elymas ("the sorcerer") who opposed them and tried to turn Sergius away from the faith.

Not so fast, Elymas. Saul (who was also known for his Roman name Paul) looked Elymas in the eye, called him out, challenged his biological heritage (you devil's child), and his legitimacy as a human being ("you're an enemy of all that's good"). You've perverted the ways of the Lord, now the Lord is against you. Guess what? You're going to be blinded, and for a time you'll even be unable to see the sun. Sure enough, darkness came over him, and he groped around, seeking someone to lead him.

Sergius Paulus was impressed—he believed because he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

- Q Why do you suppose He chose Barnabas and Saul?
- Q What did the others do before Barnabas and Saul were sent off on their mission? Why?
- Q How would you contrast the work of Bar-Jesus and Elymas?
- Q Why was Saul so hard on Elymas?

ACTS 13:1-12

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ²While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

⁴The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. ⁵When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

⁶They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, ⁷who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God.

⁸But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. ⁹Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ¹⁰"You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun."

Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹²When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

Acts 13:13-25. *Saul's status changes and prepares believers in the synagogue to learn about Yeshua*. Paul sailed on to Perga where John Mark left them to return to Jerusalem. When at Pisidian Antioch, they observed Sabbath and entered the synagogue, and sat down. After reading from the Scriptures, the rulers invited them to speak—got a word of encouragement? Please tell us.

It was Paul ["little"] who stood up and gave his perspective on things:

1. Listen to me—men of Israel and Gentiles alike.
2. God chose our fathers, and made them prosper in Egypt.
3. He led them out with mighty power, and He endured their conduct, and cared for them for about 40 years in the desert.
4. He overthrew seven nations of Canaan and gave their land to His people as an inheritance.
5. After about 450 years, judges were given to lead them until we asked for a king; our first was Saul, a Benjamite, who ruled for 40 years.
6. After removing Saul, God made David the king—"I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after My own heart; he will do everything I want him to do."
7. From David's descendants God promised the Savior, Yeshua. Before the coming of Yeshua, John [the baptizer] had preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. As John was completing his ministry, he asked: "Do you think I am the Messiah? I am not. He is coming after me; I am not worthy even to untie His sandals."

- Q To whom did Paul address his remarks of encouragement? Why them? Why were they there?
- Q What was his reason for sharing all the history that most already knew? Why did he note Saul was a Benjamite?
- Q Did David do in fact everything the Lord God Yahweh wanted him to do? So?
- Q Why did Paul distinguish Yeshua from John the baptizer?

ACTS 13:13-25

From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. ¹⁴From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak."

¹⁶Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! ¹⁷The God of the people of Israel chose our fathers; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt, with mighty power he led them out of that country, ¹⁸he endured their conduct [some mss read "and cared for them"] for about forty years in the desert, ¹⁹he overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to his people as their inheritance. ²⁰All this took about 450 years.

"After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. ²¹Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. ²²After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'

²³"From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. ²⁵As John was completing his work, he said: 'Who do you think I am? I am not that one. No, but he is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

Acts 13:26-39. *Yeshua lives up to His name*. So, children of Abraham and God-fearing Gentiles—we have received this message of salvation. As you may know, the folks in Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize Yeshua, yet by condemning Him they inadvertently fulfilled the prophecy in Scripture, Scripture read every Sabbath.

Though they had no proper grounds for the death penalty, they asked Pilate to execute Him nonetheless. When all was accomplished by them, all that was written in Scripture about Him was fulfilled. After taking Him “down from the tree,” they laid His body in a tomb. BUT, God raised Him from the dead. God raised Him from the dead; yes, God raised Him from the dead. He was seen for many days by those who had traveled with Him, from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now witnesses to and for Him to us.

So, we tell you the good news—what the Lord God promised our ancestors, He has done it—for us by raising up Yeshua. Consider the Psalm which reads:

“You are My Son;
today I have become your Father.”

Remember God raised Him from the dead, never to decay, just as Isaiah said: “I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.” And the Psalmist who wrote, “You will not let your Holy One see decay.”

After David had served God’s purpose in his own time, David died, his body was buried with his ancestors, and his body decayed. BUT the One who God raised from the dead did not see decay.

So what? I want you to know that the forgiveness of sins, is through Yeshua—I proclaim that to you, here and now. Yes, my friends, everyone, everyone, everyone who believes is justified to God from everything you could not be justified by the Law of Moses.

- Q Why was the Christ, as Yeshua of Nazareth, son of Joseph and Mary, executed to die?
- Q What is the primary evidence that Yeshua was indeed the Christ, God Himself? Witnesses, witnesses, witnesses. Scripture fulfilled; covenants completed, promises kept.
- Q On what basis was Paul arguing Yeshua was the One spoken of in Psalms and Isaiah?
- Q Why was the last part of verse 39 so insightfully dramatic, if not downright scary? What is it about the Law that prevents our being justified by knowing and following it?

ACTS 13:26-39

"Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. ²⁷The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. ²⁸Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead, ³¹and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

³²"We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers ³³he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:

" `You are my Son; today I have become your Father.[Psalm 2:7]' ³⁴The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words:

" I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.[Isaiah 55:3]

³⁵So it is stated elsewhere:

" `You will not let your Holy One see decay.'
[Psalm 16:10]

³⁶"For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. ³⁷But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

³⁸"Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

13:1 *prophets*. See note on 11:27. The special gift of inspiration experienced by prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures (Dt 18:18-20; 2Pe 1:21) was known in the NT as well (2:17-18; 1Co 14:29-32; Eph 3:5). The prophets are second to the apostles in Paul's lists (1Co 12:28-29; Eph 2:20; 4:11; but cf. Lk 11:49; Ro 12:6; 1Co 12:10). *teachers*. See 11:26; 15:35; 18:11; 20:20; 28:31; 1Co 12:28-29; Eph 4:11. *Barnabas . . . Saul*. The church leaders at Antioch, perhaps listed in the order of their importance. *Barnabas*. See note on 4:36. He was sent originally to Antioch by the church in Jerusalem (11:22), had recently returned from taking alms to Jerusalem (12:25) and was a recognized leader in the church at Antioch. *Simeon called Niger*. "Simeon" suggests Jewish background; in that case, Niger (Latin for "black") may indicate his dark complexion. *Lucius of Cyrene*. Lucius is a Latin name. In the second group of preachers coming to Antioch, some were from Cyrene (11:20), capital of Libya (see 6:9). *Manaen*. In Hebrew, Menahem. Since he was the foster brother of Herod Antipas, he would be able to tell of the thoughts and actions of Herod (see Luke 9:7-9).

13:2 *worshipping the Lord and fasting*. Paul's first missionary journey did not result from a planning session but from the Spirit's initiative as the leaders worshiped (see v. 4). The communication from Holy Spirit may have come through the prophets.

13:3 *placed their hands on them*. For the purpose of separating the two for the designated work (see 14:26 for the completion of the mission). Fasting and prayer accompany this appointment (see 14:23; cf. Lk 2:37).

13:4 *Seleucia*. The seaport of Antioch (16 miles to the west, and 5 miles upstream from the mouth of the Orontes River). *Cyprus*. Many Jews lived there, and the gospel had already been preached there (11:19-20; see note on 11:19).

13:5 *Salamis*. A town on the east coast of the central plain of Cyprus, near modern Famagusta. *John*. John Mark, a cousin of Barnabas (see Col 4:10); see also 12:25.

13:6 *Paphos*. At the western end of Cyprus, nearly 100 miles from Salamis. It was the headquarters for Roman rule. *Bar-Jesus*. "Bar" is Aramaic for "son of;" "Jesus" is derived from the Greek for "Joshua." Yeshua was the earthly name of the Christ, not "Jesus."

13:7 *proconsul*. Since Cyprus was a Roman senatorial province, a proconsul was assigned to it.

13:8 *Elymas*. A Semitic name meaning "sorcerer" or "magician" or "wise man" (probably a self-assumed designation).

13:9 *Saul . . . called Paul*. The names mean "asked [of God]" and "little" respectively. It was customary to have a given name, in this case Saul (Hebrew, Jewish ethnicity), and a later name, in this case Paul (Roman, Hellenistic ethnicity). From now on Saul is called Paul in Acts. This may be due to Saul's success in preaching to Paulus or to the fact that he is now entering the Gentile phase of his ministry. The order in which they are mentioned now changes from "Barnabas and Saul" to "Paul and Barnabas." Upon their return to the Jerusalem church, however, the order reverts to "Barnabas and Paul" (15:12).

13:13 *Perga in Pamphylia*. Perga was the capital of Pamphylia, a coastal province of Asia Minor between the provinces of Lycia and Cilicia, and was 5 miles inland and 12 miles east of the important seaport Attalia. *John left them*. Homesickness to get back to Jerusalem, an illness of Paul necessitating a change in plans and a trip to Galatia, and a change in leadership from Barnabas to Paul have all been suggested as reasons for John Mark's return. Paul's dissatisfaction with his departure is noted later (15:37-39).

13:14 *Pisidian*. See note on 14:24. *Antioch*. Named after Antiochus, king of Syria after the death of Alexander the Great. It was 110 miles from Perga and was at the hub of good roads and trade. The city had a large Jewish

²Adapted, corrected, and revised by D. Thomas Porter from Compton's Interactive NIV © 1996.

population. It was a Roman colony, which meant that a contingent of retired military men was settled there. They were given free land and were made citizens of the city of Rome, with all the accompanying privileges.

synagogue. Paul's regular practice was to begin his preaching in the synagogue as long as the Jews would allow it (see v. 5; 14:1; 17:1,10,17; 18:4,19; 19:8). His reason for doing so was grounded in his understanding of God's redemptive plan (see v. 46; Ro 1:16; 2:9-10; see also Ro 9-11). He was not neglecting his Gentile mission, for the God-fearers (Gentiles committed to worshiping the one true God) were part of the audience. Moreover, the synagogue provided a ready-made preaching situation with a building, regularly scheduled meetings and a people who knew the Hebrew Scriptures. It was customary to invite visitors, and especially visiting rabbis (such as Paul), to address the gathering.

13:15 *the Law and the Prophets.* Sections from the Hebrew Scriptures were read, followed by exposition and exhortation. *rulers.* Those who were responsible for calling readers and preachers, arranging the service and maintaining order.

13:16 *Gentiles who worship God.* See 10:2.

13:20 *about 450 years.* The 400 years of the "stay in Egypt" (v. 17; see note on 7:6) plus the 40 years in the desert & the time between the crossing of the Jordan & the distribution of the land (see Joshua 14-19).

13:23 *as he promised.* See, e.g., Isa 11:1-16.

13:29-31 *tree . . . tomb . . . God raised . . . witnesses.* See note on 3:14.

13:31 *many days.* Forty days (see 1:3).

13:33 *today I have become your Father.* Here refers to the resurrection of Jesus (see NIV text note here and note on Ps 2:7-9; cf. Ro 1:4).

13:35 *not let your Holy One see decay.* Quoted also in Peter's sermon at Pentecost (see note on 2:27).

13:39 *justified from.* Justification combines two aspects: (1) the forgiveness of sins (here); (2) the gift of righteousness (Ro 3:21-22).

13:46 *had to speak . . . to you first.* Since the gospel came from and was for the Jews first and since Paul was himself a Jew with great compassion for his people (Ro 9:1-5; 10:1-3). See note on v. 14.

13:48 *all who were appointed for eternal life believed.* Possession of eternal life involves both human faith and divine appointment.

13:51 *shook the dust.* To show the severance of responsibility and the repudiation of those who had rejected their message and had brought suffering to the servants of the Lord (see Luke 9:5). *Iconium.* Modern Konya; it was an important crossroads and agricultural center in the central plain of the province of Galatia.

13:52 *filled . . . with the Holy Spirit.* See 2:4.