

Acts Chapter 13

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[0 : 00] We are concluding one of the most pivotal chapters in the book of Acts, and that is chapter 13, and I assume that all of you have what is needed, but I'm going to send these around in case you don't have it.

You can pick up one. You probably already have this in your notes, but it is the beginning of chapter 14.

It would probably be a good idea if I held on to one of those myself. Well, so we are just wrapping up chapter 13, and it is a very, very important chapter in the book of Acts.

In fact, let me remind you that it is the Acts of the Apostles that is the pivotal chapter, that is the pivotal book of the whole New Testament.

It is a book that is transitional, and this is the principal reason why it is so controversial and so difficult to understand.

[1 : 04] Because when we talk about it being transitional, we mean it is a book that records the program and plan of God moving from what began as exclusively Jewish, as evidenced on the day of Pentecost.

A Jewish feast in a Jewish temple attended by Jewish people. And the message from a Jew, that was Peter. So Pentecost is very significant, and it opens with a huge, exclusive Jewish emphasis. But as you move on through the book of Acts, especially when you come then to chapter 10, you find the introduction of a man who is not a Jew.

That is Cornelius. He is very pivotal. He is a Roman army officer who had embraced Judaism and was referred to as a God-fearer.

And this man was ministered to by Peter, who was a Jew, very reluctantly. You remember that account. Peter didn't want to go to him because he was not a Jew. So that was a significant breakthrough.

[2 : 18] And, fellas, this was several years after the Pentecost experience. Israel as a nation continues in the early chapters of the book of Acts in a rebellious mode against Jesus being their Messiah.

And they end up persecuting the apostles. That starts in chapter 4 and chapter 5. And Israel's seeming final answer to Jesus of Nazareth with the stoning of Stephen in chapter 7.

All these things are critically important. And remember, the book of Acts in its 28 chapters consumes 30 years of history. This is very important.

We move then on through Acts. And in chapter 13, at the beginning of chapter 13, the Holy Spirit said, Separate unto me Barnabas and Saul for the ministry whereunto I have called them.

And this launches Paul's first missionary journey. He is the only one who is labeled, dubbed, the apostle to the Gentiles.

[3 : 27] That was absolutely an unheard of concept. Because Christ chose his 12 apostles, they were all to go to the Israelites. Don't go to the Gentiles.

Don't go to the Samaritans. Confine your ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. That's Jews. And that's in Matthew chapter 10. But as the Jewish people, the Jewish nation, began to be more and more cemented in this anti-Christ mode, God is turning to the Gentiles.

And Paul's first missionary journey is found in Acts chapter 13, where he launches out 15 years after his conversion.

15 years after Paul's conversion, he launches this first ministry to the Gentiles. And that's what chapter 13 is all about. And as you move on through the book of Acts, it becomes less and less Jewish and more and more Gentile.

But the problem is, guys, and this is what makes it so difficult to understand. The problem is, you have both ministries occurring simultaneously on two tracks.

[4 : 40] The twelve continue to preach their message to the Israelites. And Paul, who is labeled the apostle to the Gentiles. And he's the only one given that title.

He is going to the non-Jews. But he does not exclude the Jews. Because where is the first place he always heads for when he gets into a new town?

The synagogue. The synagogue. He knows he's got an audience. And what that tells me, too, guys, what that tells me is that the opportunity for Israel nationally to come around and embrace their Messiah, Yeshua HaMashiach, is still a possibility.

That's why he continues going to the Jew. And the formula is to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. And it was very, very important that the Jew be given this message, even though they continue to reject it.

And the time is coming when the Jews will be given this message again, and they will not reject it. They will do the opposite of what their brethren did way back in the early chapters of the book of Acts.

[5 : 53] But now, this is the dispensation of the grace of God. This is the time of the Gentiles. And we are told that this will continue until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.

That means when the last non-Jew comes to faith in Christ, whoever that may be, wherever it may be in the world, then the body of Christ is complete. And it will be removed.

And the searchlight will once again go back on the Jew. And the church will be gone. It will have been raptured. And now it will be the Jew, front and center, once again, in the plan and program of God.

And that's the essence of the Great Tribulation period, is the persecution that will come upon the Jew. So, in chapter 13, we are closing out.

If I may read just these last few verses. And we already spent, I think, a significant amount of time as chapter 13 closes.

[6 : 56] And verse 49 of chapter 13 says, And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region. But the Jews aroused the devout women of prominence.

This is because women have influence. A lot of times they are regarded as second-class citizens in the Bible. God never regards them that way. But a lot of people did.

And yet, these women had a lot of influence, especially on their husbands. And we are told that they were devout women.

They aroused the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas.

Well, if these women were devout, why would they do that? They were devout Jews. They were devout Jews. And they subscribed, of course, to the law of Moses.

[7 : 59] And they accused Paul of teaching against the law of Moses. Because he was saying things like, Was it necessary for Gentiles to be circumcised?

Was it necessary? And they regarded that as the utmost of heresy. And they, along with many other Jews, rose up against them, seeing them as heretics.

And they need to be silenced. And that's what this persecution is all about. They instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their district.

They hounded them. Made them leave town. They were just unmerciful in the way that they persecuted and pursued them. And, you know, Paul is in the unique position of knowing exactly where these people are coming from.

And why they hate him. And why they want to deny his message. Because he was one of them. He knows their thinking. And he can look upon these people who are castigating them, persecuting them, throwing things at them, hurling insults at them.

[9 : 07] And he is saying, boy, this is just like in the olden days. When I was on their side, I know exactly how they feel. I know how I hated Stephen when they stoned him.

I know how I persecuted these people who believed Jesus was the Messiah. I remember how I volunteered for extra duty to go all the way to Damascus and get those people and bring them back in chains.

And now, I'm on the receiving end. Now, I am receiving what I used to dish out. And this is what enabled him to keep his perspective.

Because he knew that when he was doing that, as he wrote to Timothy, I did it in ignorance and unbelief. And he was saying, I don't know how I could have been so blind. I don't know how I could have been so stupid. But I was. And it continued until that Damascus Road experience. Now, he's on the other side. So, they drove them out of their district.

[10:11] And look at their response. But they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.

That means that was their response to the response of these persecuting Jews. Now, this is a concept that we don't engage in because it's a cultural thing. And Christ told his disciples when he sent them out two by two, back in Matthew 10, he told them the same thing.

Go out there. Preach the gospel of the kingdom. Freely you've received. Freely give. And he gave them power. Christ gave them power to perform miracles and to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom.

And he told them, go everywhere in Israel and preach this message. And those who receive you well. And those who don't, shake off the dust of your feet against them.

And here you would have a crowd of people who were opposing you. They are driving you out of the city. They are literally jostling and forcing and pushing and shoving to get you out of their territory.

[11:30] And when you come up against a mob like that, you can't oppose them. You can't do anything. They're riding you out of town on a rail. And when you get out to the limits of their city and you're ready to depart, you stand there and you give them this witness.

And you take your shoes, your feet, and you do this. That's a symbolic thing. And what they're doing is shaking the dust of their feet off against that city.

That is another way of saying, I wash my hands of this whole thing. Your blood is on your own head.

That was their response to their rejection. They were saying, look, we did everything we could to deliver a message to you and you willfully rejected it.

We can't make you accept this. But we want you to know we are wiping our hands, shaking our feet, the dust of our feet off against your city.

[12:33] And we are leaving everything behind. It was another thing that kind of symbolized of delivering that area into judgment.

It was very closely akin to Pontius Pilate and what he did. Remember when he pronounced the death sentence upon Christ?

He asked for a bowl of water. And they brought him a bowl of water and towel. He dipped his hands in the water and took a towel and dried his hands. And what he was saying was, I washed my hands from this whole mess.

He was trying to say, I want nothing to do with this. They forced him into delivering an execution sentence upon Christ.

He didn't want to. But the Jews insisted. And Pilate as much as said, OK, have it your own way. But I want you to know I washed my hands of this whole mess. This thing is on you.

[13:35] Well, we know in reality it isn't that simple. You cannot divorce yourself from responsibility as easily as that. But he went through that symbol. And it is expressing the same thing, only here it is with the Jew and wiping the dust of your feet off against them.

And you leave and depart from that area. It's a very, very solemn thing. In other words, he is saying, all right, it's on you. We, Paul could say, Barnabas and I, we have delivered our soul by delivering the message.

And you've rejected it. Now, you will suffer the consequences. We are free of our obligation. It's on you. They shook off the dust of their feet against them.

And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost or the Holy Spirit. Why are they filled? You see, he left behind a mixed multitude.

He left behind a number of people who really believed and came to faith in Christ, most of whom were Gentiles.

[14:49] But that's okay. Because Paul is called to be the apostle to the Gentiles. And we dealt with that verse. As many as were predisposed to eternal life.

As many as were primed for that. As many as were ready. As many as were wondering about eternal life and how it was obtained. They believed. And there was a considerable number of them.

They are the ones who are filled with joy. Because when Jesus Christ comes in and saves the soul, there is always a cause for rejoicing.

Sins are forgiven. A new life is imparted. A new destiny is realized. They had every reason in the world for rejoicing. And these disciples, in verse 32, were brand new believers.

Those who just came to faith by embracing the message they were given regarding the person of Jesus Christ. Now that brings us to a new chapter. And that is chapter 14.

[15:49] Any questions or comments anybody wants to inject here? Before we go on. Richard, what? If this is not the right time to ask this, if I just go on. Maybe we can talk about it later.

As I understand your teaching, you believe in a free tribulation rapture. Yes. And I respect you tremendously.

But I also have friends that I respect tremendously. They're all male-type people. Yeah. But I don't know what their argument is against a free tribulation rapture. Would you know?

What the origin is? No. What they are against. Why aren't they all male? What is the teaching?

Well, Richard, that is a very long story.

And suffice it to say, there are diverse opinions held on this. And they are all held by good men who know and love the Lord.

[16:47] It has nothing to do with anybody's salvation. It's just the manner in which the Scriptures are interpreted. There is premill, which simply believes that Christ will return before the kingdom is established.

And their thinking, and I belong to this group, their thinking is, it is the return of Christ that makes the establishment of the kingdom possible.

In fact, that guarantees it. And then there is the awe mill that spiritualizes much of this that says the kingdom is already here. This is it.

And we are now in it. And most of them believe that the second coming of Christ actually occurred on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came.

And they believe that to have been the coming of Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit. And that the kingdom was established and is established. But Revelation talks about it being a thousand-year kingdom.

[17:51] Well, we've already ended 2,000 years. But then they say, well, that doesn't mean literally. It just means figurative. And there isn't going to be any literal kingdom on earth at all.

It is strictly a spiritual kingdom. And it exists in the hearts of men. Because our Lord said in Matthew that the kingdom of heaven is within you.

And some believe that means that when Christ is ruling and reigning in the heart of the individual, that is the coming of the kingdom in that person's life. The only problem is when you translate that preposition that way, they seem to have a case.

And you've got to be careful about building doctrine on prepositions. But I think the context for that passage is very obvious. And Christ isn't saying the kingdom of heaven is within you.

He is saying the kingdom of heaven is among you. How so? In his own person. Because when the kingdom is established, ideal conditions will prevail.

[18:51] Death and sickness as we know it will be virtually obliterated. And when Christ came, he authenticated his personhood and his mission by bringing with him the kingdom of heaven in miniature form.

That's why he healed the sick. That's a picture of the kingdom. That's why he gave sight to the blind. That's a picture of the kingdom. And what people were saying, what the Jews were saying is, Alright, you're the king of Israel.

You're the Messiah. You're the promised one. Show us. Prove it. That's the purpose for the miracles. To authenticate his message and his person. But we know they still rejected it.

So, I don't want to get too far afield. But your question is very involved. I've got literature that will point out the differences between those and I will bring them. Okay? I will bring that item. So, if we stop there, we're done.

Let's get into chapter 14. And it came to pass in Iconium. This is in Asia Minor. What is today known as Turkey.

[20:00] Came to pass in Iconium that they went both together. Well, look at where they're going. Into the synagogue of the Jews. And so spake.

Now, in virtually all of these areas where when they hit town they look up the local synagogue. You've got to remember that the Jew all throughout the Mediterranean world. Then as today. Wherever he lived. Was always in an extreme minority. Jewish people today represent less than 1% of the world's population. It's always been that way. It was that way back in this time. Less than 1% of the world's population is Jewish. And when they go together into the synagogue of the Jews. You know they are going to find the majority of the local Jewish population there. Because in contrast to today.

[21 : 06] When most Jews. Don't even go to the synagogue. Back in this day. Just about every Jew. Would visit and frequent the synagogue.

Because there was social pressure to do so. Peer pressure to do so. Economic pressure to do so. Educational pressure to do so. In these ancient communities.

The Jewish synagogue was the very nerve center of Judaism. In fact. If you weren't in the synagogue. You were a Jew. And you weren't regularly in the synagogue.

You were disconnected. It would be difficult for you to function. Remember back in John 9. When the man was born blind. And Christ healed him. And the explanation was given.

That he was healed by Jesus the Messiah. And the Jews. The text says there in chapter 9. I don't remember what verse it was. But it says that. That. When.

[22 : 06] The Pharisees. Asked this blind man's parents. Is this your son? Was he really born blind? And the parents. They were scared.

They backed off. And they said. Well. Well. He is of age. He is of age. Ask him. Don't ask us. He is the one.

And then the text goes on to say. The reason. The parents. Were not forthcoming. Was because. The Jews. Had already decided. That if anyone.

Should confess. Jesus of Nazareth. As the Messiah. He should be put out. Of the synagogue. Wow. If you were a Jew. To be put out. Of the synagogue. Meant. You were. Ostracized. You were shunned.

[23 : 03] You were as good as dead. If you had children. They weren't going to be married. In the synagogue. If you had children. They weren't going to be educated. In the synagogue. If you were looking for.

Business opportunities. You weren't going to make those connections. In the synagogue. You were ostracized. And put out. That was like a death sentence. Socially. And.

That's what is involved. In. The Jewish synagogue. And all they needed. You see. They were always in a minority. Wherever they go. They're always in a minority. But all you need. To establish a synagogue.

A new synagogue. Is ten. Male. Jews. At least. Thirteen years of age. Because.

When a Jewish boy. When a Jewish boy. Becomes thirteen. He is bar mitzvahed. That means. He goes through. The ritual.

[23 : 57] The rite. Of passage. Of adulthood. They do not have. Adolescence. They don't acknowledge. Adolescence. They don't have such a thing. As tweens. Or teenagers. When you are a Jewish boy.

And you reach the age of thirteen. You're a man. That means. You are responsible. For your own actions. Your parents are no longer. Responsible for you. You are responsible. For your own actions.

So if you're thirteen. You can be involved. In starting a synagogue. And it only takes ten. To do so. Many of these synagogues. Existed. With a very few number. You know. Ten. Twenty. Thirty people.

Plus the women. And children. So the synagogue. Would grow and increase. We don't know how many there were. But they were always in a minority. So they go together. Into the synagogue of the Jews.

And so speak. And they spoke. Goodspeed says. They spoke with such power. They preached in such a way. They spoke with such conviction. They spoke to such purpose.

[24 : 53] And they spoke in such a manner. That means. That they went into this Jewish synagogue. And they didn't hem haul around. They didn't beat around the bushes. And they didn't throw out.

A bunch of speculation. Or different ideas. Or different philosophies. They got right down to business. Right down to brass tacks. And they spoke. With conviction. These guys. Sound like. They really know. What they're talking about. Man. They're not quoting. A bunch of Jewish rabbis.

Who've been dead. For a couple of hundred years. They are speaking. With authority. And conviction. Like they really know. What they're talking about. And people. Listen. They. They've picked up on that. And we're told that. A great multitude. Both. Of the Jews. And also. Of the Greeks. Believed.

[25 : 48] The word multitude. Is used throughout the Bible. Old Testament. And New Testament. But it's never defined. We don't know. How many people. Constitute a multitude. What's a multitude.

In the Bible. Is it fifty. A hundred. Five hundred. We don't know. We're simply not told. We're just told. All it means is. Multiple number of people. So. It's kind of a.

An open question. As to how many there were. But sometimes. It's translated. A large number. A great number. A great body. A great crowd. God. But. The unbelieving Jews.

The unbelieving Jews. Stirred up the Gentiles. And made their minds. Evil. Affected. Against. The brethren. This is.

This is. They were bad mouthing them. They were talking about them. Behind their backs. They were trying to influence them. Saying. These guys don't know what they're talking about. This is ridiculous. I never heard such a stupid message in my whole life.

[26 : 47] That God became man. And dwelt among us. You don't believe that baloney do you. And all of this was rattled about. From the unbelieving Jews. To influence the Gentiles.

And fellas. We find here a principle involved. As they preached. In these synagogues. You may be sure. They always gave out. The word of God. But it was the word of God.

As it was in the Old Testament. Because the new didn't even exist. And. Today is no different.

When the word of God is given out. Rather than.

Accept it at face value. And take it as the gospel truth. Rather than being. Rather than man being impressed. With what God has said. Man has always been more impressed.

With what man says. Than with what God says. And nothing has changed. We find that today. Well. Creation. That's religion.

[27 : 47] But. But. But. Evolution. That's science. And you would be surprised. How many people. Buy into that. And it's a deadly thing.

Richard. I just want to ask. Do you think that was because. They didn't have the Holy Spirit. That they didn't accept. Well. Certainly. The Holy Spirit hasn't come yet. Right.

Well. The Holy Spirit came. Of course. On the day of Pentecost. And what was available. To these people. Upon believing. Was. The entrance of the Spirit of God.

Because. The Spirit of God. Comes in and dwells those. Who are believers. And. And unbelievers. Of course. Do not have that. But. The power. Of the word of God. Is such.

That it enlightens those. And those who have a positive orientation. To truth. Will embrace that. Those who don't. Won't. But sometimes. They do. After a while.

[28 : 40] You know. It takes. It often takes time. There is a gestation process. That I refer to. In people coming to faith in Christ.