

Acts Chapter 13

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[0 : 00] Well, today is the 69th anniversary of D-Day. Sixty-nine years ago, 1944, June 6th, the most massive military assault in the history of the world took place as tens of thousands of troops stormed Omaha Beach, Gold, Juneau, and what was the other one?

What am I forgetting? Omaha, Juneau, Sword, still another. Utah.

Utah, Utah Beach. And I've got sand. Randy Ark was there several years ago and visited the Normandy Beach, and he brought me back two little vials of sand, one from Utah Beach and one from Omaha Beach, and I've got those in my office, and that's really neat.

So the face of the entire globe has been changed as a result of that invasion, and we are still seeing the effects of it even 69 years later.

So welcome to today's class. If you will take your sheet, we are in Acts Chapter 13, and what I have provided for you is a photocopy from the 26th Translation New Testament.

[1 : 24] And as you look it over, each verse you will see begins with bold print, bold dark print. That bold dark print, of course, is the King James Version.

And then below that you will see several other renditions from different versions that are mentioned there, and there is an abbreviation indicating what translation that is.

So all we hope to gain by that is to just get a little bit different rendering of some of these verses and the way they're translated. And it is amazing how a different rendering sometimes will really grab you, whereas perhaps the King James doesn't really connect.

So we make these available in an effort to get the broadest possible picture. And in our last session together, we left off with the challenge of the Apostle Paul confronting a local prophet who was a false prophet, and he summarily pronounced upon him, by the power of the Spirit of God, a blindness, a physical blindness.

I guess you could call this the impartation of blindness rather than the removal of blindness, which, of course, is something that our Lord frequently did.

[2 : 47] But the Apostle Paul here reversed this, and it was a kind of judgment that was pronounced upon this individual. And he was smitten with blindness. We read in verse 11 where Paul said, And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.

And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. And notice, if you will, verse 12, Then the deputy, and I think this was Sergius Paulus from the previous page, the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

I guess this is an excellent illustration of seeing is believing. This man was just a bystander. He obviously was considering what the Apostle Paul had to say, but apparently wasn't all that moved by it or persuaded by it.

But when he saw that this man who opposed Paul was smitten with blindness, he immediately made the connection, this man has to be connected with the power of God himself.

This is a non-human activity. Mere men just cannot go about pronouncing blindness upon another individual, and right before your eyes, his eyesight is gone.

[4 : 20] There is no human explanation for that. So it wasn't difficult for this Sergius Paulus to connect the dots and understand that something supernatural was taking place.

And the smart thing to do when you are persuaded that the supernatural is afoot, the smart thing to do is join the parade.

This is no time to be opposing it. And that's precisely what he did. Seeing is believing, and he immediately made the connection between what had happened to this man and the power with

which it came.

It had to come from God. And who in their right mind is going to oppose that power? So in his seeing what took place, he was led to believe just hands down.

And you know, this is the basis for belief for a lot of people, particularly in the Old Testament and in the Gospels. And it's a distinction that needs to be made. And let me remind you, when the Apostle Paul said, and this is a really important concept, guys.

[5 : 28] I know I've been over this before, but it bears repetition. When the Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, said, we walk by faith, not by sight.

What that means is precisely what it says. It means, when he talks about we walk, he's not talking about putting one leg in front of another, like you walk across the room.

He's talking about your lifestyle, your manner of life, how you conduct your life. That is your walk.

We call it a lifestyle. And when Paul said that, we walk by faith.

It means we live our lives on the basis of faith, not on the basis of sight. The distinction is very valid and very important, because there are a lot of people today who still insist on walking by sight.

Not by faith. How do we explain the difference? Just this way. The Jews require a sign.

[6 : 32] He also said that to the Corinthians. The Jews seek a sign. What that means is, the Jewish people, the Jewish nation, were accustomed to signs and miracles, which God did in their midst, making his presence very obvious to them.

You'll recall, this all started, this all started back in Egypt, actually even before Egypt, well, with Moses in the Sinai Desert.

Remember the burning bush that caught fire but was not consumed? That was a sign. That was a supernatural act. God was revealing himself to Moses through that burning bush.

And then, all of the plagues that God pronounced upon Egypt because of their holding the children of Israel in bondage, each one of those plagues was an obvious sign from God.

And each one was directed at one of the Egyptian gods. They had God's many and Lord's many.

So the children of Israel, from their very inception, even before they were birthed as a nation and received the law from God and Moses and the Ten Commandments, even before that, they were a people who were accustomed to God doing mighty miracles in their midst.

[7 : 59] Things that you could see. Therefore, you were not in a position to deny them. Seeing is believing. And when you saw water come out of a rock because Moses smote it with a staff and here are people who are thirsty and waters come gushing out.

And when you see the manna from heaven miraculously provided and when you see the miraculous provision of quail, the parting of the Red Sea, the drowning of the Egyptians, what were all those things?

They were all miracles that you could see. You couldn't deny them. They were so obvious they were right there. That's what Paul means when he says Israel seeks after a sign.

The Jew seeks after a sign. And the reason he does is because he was taught to. God taught him that his presence would be vindicated and authenticated by miraculous signs that would make it very easy to believe.

And Israel was a nation that was born out of miracles and continued and continued out of miracles.

And you see that all the way through the Old Testament.

[9 : 13] So the people become conditioned to expect God to do something that you can see. That's what it means to walk by sight. You have visible evidence right in front of you.

And it makes it so easy to believe just like we have here in Acts 13 with the imposition of blindness upon this man. That would have been pretty powerful. I mean, you're going to say, wow, what is this?

It's just like the man who was healed back in chapter 3 who was born lame, never walked a day in his life, and he's over 40 years old, and now he's up jumping around. Those are visible miracles.

And they are part and parcel of the age and the dispensation of Israel. Some, in evangelical circles today, insist that this time of miracles and walking by sight continues or still exists.

And if you just have enough faith and believe, you can see all of the kind of miracles including the raising of the dead that you find in the Bible. Well, I am persuaded that that day has passed.

[10 : 26] We are not walking by sight today. I am not saying God can't do miracles today. God can do anything he wants to. He can heal anybody of anything he wants to.

He can cause blindness for anybody he wants to. He can cause anything he wants to do. I am not putting God in a box and saying God can't do miracles today. All I am saying is this.

The day and time of miracles was primarily something that God provided for Israel. When Christ came to his own and performed all of the miracles that he did that are evidenced in the four gospels that was on behalf of the nation of Israel.

And as you read the context in each of those miracles it becomes very, very obvious. And the reason he did that was because he knew that the people of Israel, the Jews, were accustomed to seeing God do miraculous things in their midst.

And he continued in that vein. Today, this is not the age of Israel. This is the church age. This is the dispensation of grace.

[11 : 36] Not the dispensation of Israel. The time is going to come when Israel will come back again and God will be dealing with them directly like he did before. And guess what?

When he does, the miracles are going to return. The time of tribulation, the time of Jacob's trouble, will be a time of the return of the miraculous.

And in the tribulation period, as you read in the book of Revelation, there's going to be all kinds of miraculous manifestations. And again, they will be primarily for the benefit of Israel. So when Paul says, we walk by faith, not by sight, that's another way of saying the age and the time of Israel has passed.

Now, we walk by faith. That means you believe God on the basis of what he says, not on the basis of what you see.

You do not have to have miraculous manifestations in order to believe what God has said. God just wants to be believed. And where do you start?

[12 : 44] You start with the word of God. Remember when Thomas who said, I couldn't believe, Thomas was just being a typical Jew.

Thomas said, unless I see the nail prints in his hand and put my hand into his side, I won't believe. And when the Lord appeared to him later, Thomas fell at his feet and said, my Lord and my God, he knew that it really was Christ back from the dead.

and the most significant thing that Jesus said to Thomas was, Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed.

Blessed are they who have not seen and yet shall believe. Have you seen the risen Lord? I haven't either.

[13 : 42] God's God's word says he has risen. He has risen from the dead. On what basis do you believe that?

On the basis that God said it. God said it, I believe it, that settles it. So we don't have to see the risen Lord, we walk by faith, we conduct our daily lives, our routine, our lifestyle simply on the basis of believing what God has said in his word.

Scott, you had a comment or question? I said on verse 12, the person who believed the deputy or governor, was that a Jew or a Gentile?

I'm assuming that it was a Gentile. Excuse me. There's no reason to believe that he was a Jew. He had a Gentile name, Sergius Paulus. That is definitely a Gentile name.

We have every reason to believe that he was a Roman official, and therefore he would have been a Jew. But you see, what we've got here now, and this muddies the water, fellas, this really does complicate things, but I'm convinced that it's valid.

[14 : 58] The Apostle Paul, the Apostle Paul was a key individual in the plan and program of God, in that he operated under both dispensations.

He operated under the age of Israel, and also under the age of grace, because we have got the time of the Jew, the time of Israel fading out as Paul comes on the scene.

as far as we can determine, the Apostle Paul was the first individual to come to faith in Jesus Christ under the new dispensation.

And this is why he wrote to Timothy and he described himself as a pattern, as a model for those who would believe and come after. Paul was one who was the first individual into the spiritual body of Christ.

And that's why he refers to himself as a pattern for those who will follow. And everyone who came to faith in Jesus Christ after Paul was added to that body of Christ, not to be confused with the Jew or the dispensation of Israel that went before.

[16:19] So we've got a transition period that is taking place here, and fellas, this is why the book of Acts is so controversial among Christians.

Because in it, there is a transition that is taking place. And let me remind you, the Acts of the Apostles transpired over 30 years.

28 chapters in it, and you can read, you can read, if you're a fast reader, you can read the whole book of Acts in 30 minutes easily. But you've got to remember, it happened over 30 years, from the time it opens to the time it closes.

And during those 30 years, there was movement, there was development of revelation of doctrinal truth that does not exist in the Old Testament or in the Gospels at all.

It's just not there. And that's why this is referred to as a mystery. And Paul talks about that in Ephesians and in Colossians both, when he calls the body of Christ, the church, which is his body, Christ is the head, a mystery.

[17:26] That means it wasn't predicted in the Old Testament. It's just not there. It isn't predicted in the Gospels. It isn't there. Yes?

Mark, you're speaking on Paul, but the other apostles, when they went out, did they go to the Gentiles and they perform miracles? I don't know much about it. Well, in Matthew 10, and that's an excellent question, and it's very germane to what we're talking about.

In Matthew 10, when Christ called the apostles, and we're told that he gets all 12 of the names, including Judas Iscariot, and then the first thing he told them was, we're told that he gave them authority.

They didn't have it. They were just ordinary guys, just like us. Most of them were fishermen. It says, he gave them, Christ gave them authority over demons, over illness, over all kinds of things, and he told them to go forth, but he was very specific.

He said, do not go in the way of the Gentiles, neither go to the Samaritans. Confine your ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

[18:45] That's Jew. Jew only. Don't go to non-Jews. Confine your ministry to Jews only.

This is terribly misunderstood. It makes it look like Jesus didn't care about anybody but the Jews. That's not true. He loves everybody.

But you've got to understand that Jesus came to his own. John 1. his own was not the world. His own was his own people.

The Jewish nation in fulfillment of the promises. He came into his own but his own received him not. His own was the nation of Israel. So think of it this way.

Christ came to Israel but for the whole world. Just get your proposition straight. your preposition straight. He came to the nation of Israel but the reason he came to Israel was that Israel might be the catalyst for reaching the whole world.

[19:52] But it starts with Israel and the reason it does is because of Abraham Isaac and Jacob to whom God originally gave the promises going all the way back to Genesis 12. So all of these things come together and when you get this picture you get a coherence the scriptures really start to fit in a way that they cannot and will not fit otherwise.

So you've got these two dispensations these two central areas. This today is not the age of Israel. Israel is set aside in their unbelief and God will one day settle his score with Israel he will put them back on track again that's when the church is gone this is the church age or the dispensation of the grace of God and when it is concluded Christ will return for us and remove us from the earth then he takes up unfinished business with the nation of Israel.

So what you've got in the book of Acts during Paul's ministry at least during the first part of it is you've got both dispensations and that's what makes it so confusing the church age and they are overlapping it isn't that the church or that Israel was just chopped off twelve midnight on a certain date whack and that's it and everything from there on is the church no no you've got a gradual progression where the dispensation of Israel is fading out and the dispensation of the grace of God is fading in and today we have a full blown dispensation of the grace of God the age of Israel is set aside so walking by sight responds to the age of Israel walking by faith responds to the church age and they are different and must be kept separate did you have a question a good term for dispensation is administration administration when you dispense something you give it out when you go to a dispensary they administer medications it's a dispensing a giving out or an administering it's an administration this is not the administration of

Israel this is the administration of the church age and that distinction has to be maintained if you try to mix them it's impossible and this fellas this this is what a lot of people do who insist on performing miracles and they say well God hasn't changed no God hasn't changed and God is still able to perform any miracle that he wants but this is not the day and age of miracles that's the reason that we don't see very many but the point is during Christ's ministry and the ministry of the apostles miracles were commonplace they were standard operating procedure they're not today today when you see a miracle happen and I can't honestly say that I've ever really witnessed a bona fide miracle but if you see one happen if you actually witness a miracle I'll promise you that it is out of the ordinary it is not business as usual but back then it was and

Christ performed numerous miracles almost to the place where they expected to see them and he accommodated them and it's it's an entirely different thing and this is a principal reason why there are so many differences and divisions among Christians as to what our modus operandi is to be you've got our Pentecostal friends who say well we ought to be speaking in tongues because they did in the book of Acts and if you have the faith that they have you'll speak in tongues too and you'll perform miracles too and then you've got others who say no that time has passed so you can see why and how these diversities have occurred all among Christian people and you know as well as I do that there are great differences among sincere well-meaning Christians and the positions they hold and you know every one of them says

[24 : 41] I got mine from the Bible got it right out of the Bible there it is black and white and you know what there it is in black and white and that's the basis but when you don't see the transition the movement of doctrine taking place in the book of Acts then you've got to try to cobble all of these things together and it just won't work you've got to keep things that differ separated and when you do the Bible comes together and fits like a hand in a glove and when you don't you've got unending contradictions that you can't make jibe and the reason is what I've just stated were there other questions Raj yeah absolutely absolutely absolutely and the reason fellas as you move through the book of

Acts when you get to chapter 15 where Peter has just a few words you see the emphasis and the importance of Peter fading and after Acts 15 you don't even find him anymore Peter is off the scene but coming into a position of prominence is Paul and Paul is not please hear me Paul is not the 13th apostle Paul refers to himself as one born out of due time he is not to be confused with the twelve because the twelve were called upon to minister to Israel but who was Paul called upon to minister to what did God designate him as the apostle to the Gentiles can't escape that he has a different apostleship it is not one that includes the law of

Moses and this is why he said we are not under law we are under grace well the Jew wouldn't know how to handle that because the law was all he was familiar with but Paul says now by grace by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God the law is gone we are not under the law except the law of liberty with which Christ Jesus has set us free in Acts chapter 8 that's the law that believers are under who was under the law as it was originally given the Jew it was given to Israel and for a particular people in a particular land in a particular time and this is what Paul meant when he said we are not under law but under grace so the distinction is valid and it becomes even more clear as you move on through the book of Acts and we'll see that when we come sorry we didn't get any further with our text today any other questions before we have breakfast

Dick Paul actually did what the Jews were supposed to do right yeah yeah you're right absolutely absolutely several places Old and New Testament God makes it clear that to the Jew he says I have raised you up to be a light to the Gentiles because the Jew was the only one in the whole world that was really connected with God Babylonians weren't Egyptians weren't Syrians weren't all these people were pagans and they were all into idolatry but the Jew really had a handle on God they were God's chosen people and he said I raised you up to be a light to the Gentiles the problem was they weren't interested Jonah is a perfect example of that I'm not going to Nineveh those are a bunch of heathen a bunch of pagans I'm not going there and God showed him the advantages of obeying him all the great fish so these are really important concepts and what I'm sharing with you now

I did not see nor appreciate for about the first twelve or fifteen years of my Christian life but when I came to see these truths man I'm telling you the Bible became a new book to me I mean things started falling into place and I don't know how many aha moments there were of things that started

clicking and coming together that just didn't make sense before so we'll continue on through this in the book of Acts and we're in chapter 13 so Paul is about to go into the synagogue and we're going to see some fireworks come out of that it's going to be interesting