

The Good News Goes All Over

CHRIST COLLEGE – Week 13
ACTS

ACTS

- Not primarily a “guide book”*, but a history book, charting the progress of the Gospel of the Kingdom, the work that the God of Israel has accomplished in Jesus
 - Messiah _____
 - Death _____
 - Resurrection _____
 - Spread to the Gentiles _____
 - “According to the Scriptures”
- * do you draw straws to determine your elders?

ACTS: Source of Growth

- “In my first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all the things that Jesus *began* to do and teach...”
- This appears to imply that Jesus is not done working!
- Paul persecutes JESUS; miracles are done and demons dealt with in his NAME; “Spirit of Jesus” poured out.

ACTS: Method of Growth

- “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Act 1:8 NRSV)
- Apostle-centered (not democratic)
- Blind see; lame walk; deaf hear; sick healed; dead raised; poor/ lost/ dirty are received and cared for; sinners forgiven; demons cast out; lives changed; prison doors opened; doors between races are obliterated; Babel reversed
- Signs of God’s kingdom and power, as a WITNESS; resurrection, Holy Spirit, nations as KEY.

ACTS: Map of Growth

- Aramaic-speaking Jews in Jerusalem
- (Post-Pentecost) Greek-speaking Jews
- Non-Jews
 - Samaritans
 - Ethiopian
 - Caesarea
- Gentile Lands
 - Antioch (“Syria”)
 - Cyprus
 - Galatia
 - Asia (“Turkey”)
 - Macedonia (“Greece”)
 - Achaia (Corinth)
 - ROME

ACTS: Obstacles (?) to Growth

Language barrier, small numbers, mono-racial, few resources. Racial tension, uneven distribution of assistance, cultural barriers (15:1-2). Lying to leaders (and to Holy Spirit!), no missionaries going out, theological problem of Gentile inclusion (Law-free?). Evil supernatural powers, Holy Spirit (16:6-7), in-fighting (15:35-41). Failure of Jews to believe in the Jewish Messiah, traditional Jewish rejection of leaders (Joseph, Moses, prophets . . . Jesus. . . now the apostles; chs. 7, 13, 22 and 28), Roman cultural, religious and political hostility. Riots, prison, shipwrecks, beatings, assassination attempts, assassinations, religious objections

ACTS: Obstacles to Growth

Oh, and your Messianic King has been executed in the worst way possible.

ACTS: Discussion Questions

- What gaps are present in this map of the Gospel expansion?
- How can we extend this map further? (Geographically? Culturally? As individuals, families and churches?)
- How are their obstacles like and unlike ours?
- What does Acts teach us about the obstacles we encounter as we participate in spreading the Good News?

ACTS: Our response

- Calls forth radical commitment, sacrifice, service, dedication to the Kingdom Mission (2:42-47, 4:32-37, 6:7, 9:31; 12:24; 14:19-23)
- Giving up rights (15:19-21) and some boundaries (10:9-16)
- Seeking others' welfare (6:1-6, 11:27-30, 20:33-35; 24:17)
- A cross-cultural enterprise (8:27, 10:44-45)

ACTS: Our message...

- ...is a counter-cultural message:
- God's message is too inclusive for some:
- 22:21-22, "to Gentiles" and note the response!
- And too supernatural for others:
- 17:30-32, 26:8 "Resurrection of Jesus," his Lordship and Judgment

ACTS: obstacles to message

- 2 Macc: "Pay back the Gentiles in full."
- Typical Roman funerary inscription: "I was not, I am not, I care not." So typical it could be abbreviated!
- "Caesar is Lord"

ACTS: A message for _____?

- If this is FOR EVERYBODY...what about other religions? Do we live and let live?
- Acts 17:17-34, to Gentiles
- Acts 26:4-8, to Jews
- 26:16-18: a _____ and a _____ to _____; that they may receive _____ and a place among those _____.

ACTS: The Future of Growth

- The last word (28:30-31)...
- Paul is in house arrest in Rome, living there “two years at his own expense, welcoming all who came to him, proclaiming the KINGDOM OF GOD and teaching about THE LORD JESUS CHRIST with all boldness and ***without hindrance****.”
- *last word of Greek, “unrestrained”

ACTS: Discussion Questions

- How are Christians supposed to relate to “other faiths”?
- In light of the descriptions in Acts of the early church and its beliefs and practices, what needs to be different about MY LIFE, my beliefs, my actions? (Go for details!)
- What needs to be different about MY CHURCH (if you spend more time on this question than the one before it, you may have problems...)?
- Who in my life needs to hear the message that spreads in Acts? How can I contribute to them hearing it?
