

## OPEN DOOR Acts 14-15

### TESTIMONY TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH 13-28

As a result of the confirmation of God's plan to accept Gentiles into the new people of God, when the church is spread throughout the world by the persecution, they preach the gospel everywhere. This movement leads to the missionary journeys to new frontiers.

Paul moves to the front as one of the main participants in the spread of the gospel to these new areas (13:1-28:31).

#### First Missionary Journey 13-14

The first missionary journey is made by Paul and Barnabas into nearby islands and Asia Minor

Organized geographically and chronologically, around the cities visited.

Essentially an evangelistic effort.

Summary: 14:27-28

This journey is most significant because of the pattern established of rejection by the Jews and acceptance by Gentiles.

#### Call of Saul and Barnabas 13:1-3

#### Encounter with a false prophet 13:4-12

Their encounter with Bar-Jesus presents a significant development in God's program. *A pattern established:*

Bar-Jesus, the Jew, is involved in sorcery.

He opposes Paul and Barnabas.

The pagan centurion wants to hear God's Word.

The Gentile, who wouldn't be expected to show interest in God's Word, wants to know about Jesus.

This reversal of expected roles between Jews and Gentiles is seen throughout the remainder of Acts.

The fate of the two men is also a warning.

The Jew, who claims to see, becomes blind for opposing God's Word.

The pagan Gentile receives spiritual sight to see the truth.

### **Testimony in Antioch 13:13-52**

John's departure 13:13

Jewish invitation 13:14-15

Paul's message in the synagogue 13:16-41 [Summary statement: **13:38-39**]

Paul traces Israel's history up to David (13:16-21).

God has been gracious but they resist Him.

David, in contrast, sought to do God's will (13:22).

When David's Son tries to do the same, He's rejected and crucified (13:23-29).

Yet God demonstrates through the resurrection that He approves of Him (13:30-37).

Forgiveness of sins is now being offered to those who trust Him (13:38-39).

Justification through faith in Him

This One Whom God approved is the way to forgiveness of sins

If they don't trust Him, they are in danger of being judged by a pagan nation that God will send up against them (13:40-41). <= Hab. 1:5

Hearers' response 13:42-43

Those who hear the message want to hear more the next week

### **Jewish opposition 13:44-52**

*Pattern set:*

13:4-12 *Jewish rejection* 44-45

13:13-52 *Gentile responsiveness* 46-47 => 48-49

14:1-6, 6-20 *Jewish opposition* 50-51

("God-fearing" women)

When the whole town comes to hear Paul, the Jews are jealous and oppose Paul (44-46)

The pagan Gentiles want to hear God's Word (48).

Therefore, Paul turns to the Gentiles with the offer of salvation (46-47).

They rejoice at the opportunity they've been given (48-49), while the Jews continue to oppose them (50-51).

They're finally driven out of the city. (52)

Jews drive them out!

### **Opposition in Iconium 14:1-6a**

The opposition continues when they move on to Iconium also.

Again there they begin the testimony in the synagogue.

When the Jews reject the message, Paul turns to pagan Gentiles.

While many of the city accept Christ, the Jews stir up others.

Due to a plot to stone them they leave town.

### **Testimony in Lystra 14:6b-20**

#### **Healing of a cripple 14:6b-10**

At Lystra, the ministry begins with the healing of a cripple

#### **Popular interpretation 14:11-13**

The local people consider them to be gods.

They want to fit them into *their* system.

They didn't want to change their system.

Common cause with the Jewish leaders who had the same thought!

#### **Response of the messengers 14:14-18**

Paul and Barnabas try to direct their attention to the true God

#### **Opposition from the Jews 14:19 [Significance of Jewish response]**

When the Jews arrive, they make an alliance with the pagans to kill Paul rather than accept the word of the God they claim to worship.

#### **Deliverance by God 14:20**

God intervenes to spare Paul's life.

#### **Return to Antioch 14:21-28**

Following this incident, they head back to Antioch.

After the experiences they had, they encourage those who trust Christ to remain firm, but warn them that they're going to suffer for their faith.

They name elders for each church.

When they arrive in Antioch, they report what God has done among pagan Gentiles.

### **LESSONS FOR US:**

People can respond to emotions of the moment without truly turning to God.

Those same emotions may turn against God's messengers in a moment.

Those who are faithful in proclaiming the good news may suffer persecution for their faith, and for their faithfulness in serving God.

*What great debate develops out of this first missionary journey (15:1-2)?*

### **Council at Jerusalem 15:1-35**

*What problem confronts the church in Acts 15?*

*In what ways is it different from the problem in Acts 10-11?*

*In what ways is it the same?*

Although the issue of salvation for the Gentiles had been settled by the revelation to Peter, the Jewish background of many in the church continues to raise problems.

At first the salvation of Gentiles provokes a debate about how they can be saved.

If pagan Gentiles no longer have to become Jewish proselytes, what *are* the conditions?

Some Jews demand that they be circumcised and follow the law of Moses. The Jerusalem council is convened to resolve this issue (15:1-35)

**The issue raised 15:1**

**The journey to Jerusalem 15:2-3**

When the issue is raised in Antioch, the church sends Paul and Barnabas, along with some others, to discuss the matter with the apostles.

**The confrontation before the apostles 15:4-5**

When they report what God has done, some Pharisees oppose their practice of not requiring the Gentiles to be circumcised and to live by the law of Moses

**The council convened 15:6-29**

**Peter's report 15:6-11**

*What is Peter's main point concerning this issue (15:7-11)?*

Peter reminds them of how God approved the salvation of Gentiles by faith alone.

Why should they add another requirement now?

He reminds them that the salvation of all men is by faith alone, even theirs!

**Barnabas and Paul's report 15:12**

*What is Barnabas and Paul's point (15:12)?*

Paul and Barnabas add their report of what God has done through them.

God has given evidence of His blessing on their work without requiring obedience to the law

**James' conclusion 15:13-21**

*What is James' conclusion (15:13-21)?*

James concludes the discussion by reviewing Peter's report and relating the message of the prophets that Gentiles would be saved and be called by God's name.

Therefore, he proposes that they leave the Gentiles alone.

They should not be restricted by the church in a way that God Himself has not required (15:13-19).

James recommends that they write to the Gentiles, asking them not to conduct themselves in a way that would be offensive to Jews (15:20-21).

Specific suggestions are mentioned.

**Council's action 15:22-29**

The council accepts James' suggestion and sends a letter to the churches

Messengers are named to accompany Paul and Barnabas with the letter.

**The response in Antioch 15:30-35**

The people were grateful for the answer they received

The work continues through the wise leadership God has given to His church.

*What lessons do we learn from this discussion?*

*About salvation? (Compare Acts 16:30-31)*

*About the church?*

*About offensive conduct? (Compare Acts 16:2-3)*

**WHAT LESSONS ARE THERE FOR US?**

Tendency to return to legalism—even among God's people.

Importance of not creating a cause for stumbling by using our liberty.