

STUDY 10



The transforming touch of Heaven

Sunday 24th June 2018

Reading – Acts 11.19-30

10. THE SPREAD OF THE KINGDOM

The Acts of the Apostles presents the remarkable growth of the transforming message of Jesus that went out into the whole world.

Within a decade of Jesus' death – the good news of Jesus had reached the strategic cities of Alexandria (Africa) and Antioch (Asia). Maybe your Bible has maps that indicate the spread of Christianity.

Within 100 years the gospel had come to the shores of Britain. The most crucial invasion of our land was not through the Celts, Saxons, Danes but the soldiers of Christ, driven by a compelling whole hearted faith and courage.

- What challenges are there in sharing the transforming message of Jesus today in what is often described as a post Christian society?

At a recent National Prayer Breakfast in Parliament attended by the PM, MPs and key leaders, **Tim Keller** (US pastor & writer) 'Here's what British society can do to get the most benefit out of Christians,' he said. 'Don't demand that they become like everyone else. Modern society says we believe and respect difference but here's what you should do: tell Christians to be true to their ideals but then critique them on those ideals not on someone else's.'

Acts, helps us see the remarkable spread of Christianity. Luke opens with Jesus teaching the Kingdom of God to his disciples (1.3) and the book closes with Paul in Rome, preaching the kingdom of God (28.30-31).

We are looking at three themes woven together – the unrivalled Christ, the unrelenting Spirit and the unstoppable Word. As we look at each point, keep coming back to the CHURCH AT ANTIOCH and see how this church illustrates these points as the Kingdom expands in Antioch.

1. KINGDOM COME, THE UNRIVALLED CHRIST

The followers of Jesus were gripped by the supremacy of Christ – the unrivalled, unsurpassed Christ.

When Jesus ascended, the disciples were unphased by 'losing' Jesus for in fact, they were gaining the living presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost.

- Take **Hebrews 1.1-4** and list the indications of Christ's supremacy, he is greater than, and exalted over all others.
- Take one of the occasions when the early Christians were threatened, beaten or imprisoned (4.19ff, 5.18, 5.40) – how did they respond? They paid the price for their allegiance to Jesus.

Why do we become so fearful of what people will think of us? How do we find NT faith and courage?

In the persecution, we see the clash of kingdoms – the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. It was Stephen who saw the risen exalted Christ (7.55) and Paul whose conversion was a result of that dramatic encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road, (9.4).

2. KINGDOM COME, THE UNRELENTING SPIRIT

The disciples were assured that when Christ ascended they would not be depleted by his bodily absence.

The outcome of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was that 3,000 (2.41) were born anew of the Spirit and were baptised. Here were the believers being 'clothed with power from on high', Luke 24.49.

- Note how Paul describes the gospel coming to Thessalonica (1 Thess 1.5) *in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction*. How does this challenge us at WBC?
- In what ways do you see the early church equipped by the unrelenting Spirit? Give some observations that you have from Acts that highlights the sense of dependency upon the Spirit and the supremacy of the Spirit in equipping the believers.

3. KINGDOM COME, THE UNSTOPPABLE WORD

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached powerfully regarding Jesus and how he is the fulfilling of all OT scripture. Equally Stephen in Acts 7 presents a power packed message that was based on the promises of God in the OT being gloriously fulfilled in Jesus.

- In Acts 4 when Peter and John were arrested and released, we find the church praying not for a quiet life but (4.29)...*enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness*.

There are a number of brief progress reports in Acts 6.7; 9.31; 12.24;16.5; 19.20; 28.30-31.

- See how these brief reports make reference to the unstoppable word being declared and taking root in the lives of countless people.

FOR YOUR NOTES