

Acts 10:1-11:18 The Word to the World

According to Acts 1:1 this book is the second volume written by Luke. Both volumes are written to give us 'certainty' about the gospel message (Luke 1:1-4). In Luke's Gospel we see the Kingdom established, then in Acts we see the Kingdom extended. Acts is the account of what Jesus continued to do in the world, after he was taken up to heaven (Acts 1:1-8). It tells the story of how the gospel message spread, extending the rule of Jesus from Jerusalem, to the surrounding areas and ultimately to Rome (See 1:8 & 28:30-31).

By chapter 9 the church has been established in Judea, Galilee and Samaria (9:31), and Saul/Paul is converted and identified as God's instrument to take the gospel to the gentiles. The scene is set for the first gentiles (non-Jews) to turn to Jesus and be included in God's people.

1. Prejudice can be a significant barrier to us sharing the gospel with some people. What groups of people are we most likely to regard as being unlikely (or unworthy) to hear and respond to the message about Jesus?

 2. **Read Acts 10:1-11:18.**
 - a. What are the main themes of this section? (ie. What does the author seem to particularly want us to see?)

 - b. In what ways do we see the hand of God in this?

 - c. Look closely at how Cornelius is described. What is significant about his conversion?
- Note: John Stott says "It is difficult for us to grasp the impassable gulf which yawned in those days between the Jews... and the Gentiles... The tragedy was that Israel twisted the doctrine of election into one of favouritism, became filled with racial pride and hatred, despised Gentiles as 'dogs', and developed traditions which kept them apart. No orthodox Jew would ever enter the home of a Gentile, or even a God-fearer, or invite such into his home." (See also Galatians 2:11-16)
- d.
 - e.
 - f.
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3. Although Cornelius and his household turn to Christ, much of this section is about the change God brought about in Peter. Look carefully at 10:34-43. What truths persuaded Peter that God doesn't show favouritism? Notice particularly v 36 (the summary of the gospel message), v 37-41 (the facts of the gospel), and v 42-43 (the divine interpretation/implication of the gospel).

 4. How did Peter and the Jews with him know that God had accepted the Gentiles? (See esp 10:44-48 & Acts 2:4). Do you think the sign of languages is something we should expect in every conversion? Why or why not?

 5. Why do you think it is important that it was Peter who was the first apostle to witness and accept the inclusion of Gentiles into Christ's kingdom, and not Paul?

 6. In what ways does this passage give us confidence to work for the progress of the gospel today?

 7. In what ways does this passage challenge our attitudes towards people of different race, nationality, social standing, religious background, sexual orientation, etc. (What kind of people do you think may find it difficult to 'fit in' here at Jannali Anglican?) What can we do to align ourselves with the God who doesn't show favouritism?

 8. Having heard the message of Acts 10 & 11, what would be good to pray about? Pray together.

Acts 11:19-12:25 Persecution and Progress

1. Read Acts 11:19-30.

- a. You saw that Christians from the church in Jerusalem were scattered by persecution (v19 & 8:1). How might you have felt about faith in God, and his work in the world?
- b. In what ways did the persecution lead to the progress of the gospel? To whom/what is this progress attributed?

2. Read Acts 12:1-25.

- a. James is dead. Peter is in prison. You're an ordinary Christian meeting in Mary's house. How would you feel?
- b. You're Peter. You've been chained between two soldiers, and suddenly you find yourself in the main street. What are you thinking?
- c. You're the ordinary Christian again and you've been praying in Mary's house. What is the content of your prayers? There's a knock on the door. Who do you expect it to be? Why? How do you feel when you realize that it is Peter?
- d. James dies. Peter lives. What do you think about this? What does this teach us about God, and our trust in him?
- e. Who is the real king in this story? And, according to v24, what is the real unstoppable force? (Compare Herod in 12:21-23 with Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:11-15).

3. What things limit our trust in God, and restrict our prayers?

4. How might this passage strengthen our faith, and therefore

- a) Our prayers
- b) Our evangelism
- c) Our giving to assist others in need?

5. In what ways might this passage be particularly important for our church at this time?

6. Pray together about what you have learnt or been reminded of from God's word.

Acts 13:1-41 The Word in Asia (Part 1)

1. If you were asked to give a summary of the gospel message, what would you say?
2. In Acts 13 and 14 Paul (with Barnabas) sets out on his first missionary Journey. Read these verses and trace where they went on the map. What did they do as they went? How was God involved? Acts 13:1-3, 13:4-6a, 13:13-14, 13:51, 14:1-7, 14:19-21 & 14:23-28.



3. In Acts 13:16-41 we have a record of Paul's sermon in the synagogue Antioch (the one in Pisidia). It was probably preached around AD46-48. This is the first recorded sermon of the apostle Paul, and the first recorded Christian sermon outside of Israel. Presumably it is recorded here to give us the content of the "message" Paul preached in synagogues throughout his missionary trip. **Read Acts 13:16-41.** Try and analyse the sermon...
 - a. What are the main themes/points made in each section?
 - b. Who is the sermon primarily about and what is said about him?
 - c. What is the application/implication of the sermon?
 - d. How would you summarize the message of the sermon?
4. (If time permits) Look at these 3 passages quoted by Paul in their original contexts. How does each confirm/add to/deepen Paul's message about Jesus? Psalm 2:7-9, Psalm 16:9-11 & Isaiah 55:1-7.
5. Why do you think Paul's sermon here draws so deeply from the Old Testament? Although we, and those around us, are (mostly) not Jews steeped in the Old Testament, how might Paul's sermon help us to better understand, summarize and explain the gospel today?
6. How might a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the Old Testament help us in the Christian life?

Acts 13:1-41 The Word in Asia (Part 2)

In the last study we began looking at Paul's (with Barnabas) first missionary trip, and we focused on the content of the message he preached. In this study we will think about what the text tells us about why and how the message spread so rapidly.

1. Read Acts 13:1-3. How was the first missionary journey initiated in (Syrian) Antioch?
2. Read what happened in each city and complete the table.

Passage	Place	What did P & B do	Problems Encountered	Who Believed	Outcome
Acts 13:4-12	Cyprus				
Acts 13:42-52	Antioch (Pisidian)				
Acts 14:1-7	Iconium				
Acts 14:8-20	Lystra				
Acts 14:21a	Derbe				

3. Now stand back and think about the patterns you have seen. Can you summarize the main themes of this section? I.e. How did the gospel spread? What happened as it did?

4. Read Acts 14:21b-28. Why do you think Paul and Barnabas returned the way they came, instead of taking the shortest way home (and through Tarsus – Paul's home town)?



5. What could we learn here about local & world mission and the role of local churches?

6. What implications might flow from this section for our church?

7. How might you respond to God in prayer as a result of reading Acts 13 & 14? Pray together.