

Acts # 54 “How Big is Your Church?” Acts 11:19-30

From God’s perspective, His revelation reveals His unfolding dispensational plan from His infinite wisdom, righteousness, justice and grace, emphasizing His glory as He provides eternal happiness for His creation.

And man’s history is the biography of the human race, with its gradual development of normal and abnormal, physical, intellectual and moral characteristics in which he is evolving into a supper-race for which he ultimately, can take credit.

A view of history which overlooks or undervalues God’s influence, began with the concept of deism and morphed into atheism; both designed to overlook the free-will of man and his moral responsibility to his Creator.

God is not a responder but an initiator.

As a result of the persecution, the church continued to expand because as the resistance grew in Jerusalem, new believers left and went to Samaria and beyond seeking safety where they wouldn’t be persecuted.

At that time, we saw God the Holy Spirit working through Philip the evangelist by bringing the Gospel to the Samaritans and an Ethiopian VIP.

Then Peter and John were used by God the Holy Spirit to present their business card of wonderful miraculous signs which validated their message, also expanding the church.

Then it was God's crisis evangelism in the salvation of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus preparing the way for further expansion of the church by bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles in the known world.

So, God the Holy Spirit is once again going to expand the church in His way by His power.

Man’s way is deceptive advertising, consumer manipulation and telemarketing lies, to fool people into buying things they don’t need.

But Christianity is not a business run by marketing techniques; it’s a living organism promoted by God the Holy Spirit through evangelism for Jesus Christ.

Certainly, the key to the outline of the book of Acts is based on the death of Stephen.

But here is a group of Jewish businessmen who’ve accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and learned biblical truth and therefore oriented to the plan of God.

And having oriented to the plan of God, when they go into a new place, they do not simply limit themselves to witnessing to the Jews, they start talking to Gentiles about Jesus Christ.

So, the Gospel began to infiltrate the Gentile world very quickly and the amazing thing is that it was proclaimed by unknown men and women like you and me.

We don’t know their names but we do know that when the persecution arose after Stephen’s death, these Jews who had been converted to Christianity were scattered abroad.

Give me a church where people are excited about the Word of God any day!

It’s not about trying to make the church grow, it’s about learning biblical truth.

These people wanted to share the Gospel and this church will be first to send missionaries to the world.

God blesses on the basis of His character, not because of these or any other people.

Barnabas was a grace man and he was sent out to go to Antioch.

Legalism expelled a grace man but God had a place for this grace man and Antioch is going to become headquarters for grace men and women.

Notice what Barnabas saw; it takes a grace man to recognize grace.

Barnabas sees a grace operation based on biblical truth and when he does he has a deep response of rejoicing to it in his soul.

Barnabas encouraged these people on the basis of biblical truth; He wasn't really a preacher but he could encourage by communicating the Word.

Notice the difference between the Jerusalem church and the church at Antioch: it's legalism and human good vs grace and divine good by means of the filling of the Holy Spirit and so, Antioch is alive and dynamic while Jerusalem is dead and emaciated.

Grace causes growth; while legalism causes decomposition.

The local church has to expand before its missionary activity can expand and Antioch is going to be the great headquarters for the missionary effort.

—