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The God of Missions
Acts 13-14

When one looks at the history of missions in the church and the various methods that man has resorted to, in order to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, one can only conclude that man is too often in control not God.

Man is forever attempting to do the work of God through the energies of the flesh and the model of the world, then he expects God to bless it and if He doesn't, man is surprised and asks why ?

* Missions as well as ministry is not having a plan and then asking God to bless it but obeying God's plan and watching Him bless it.

We want to look at Paul's first missionary journey, to learn what we can about missions because Acts is the only manual for missions that we have.

There are three things that we want to focus in our study of missions. Acts 13-14

- I. The plan of God for missions.
- II. The purpose of God for missions.
- III. The pattern of God for missions.

I The plan of God for missions.

* A plan is essential to be effective, without one you will not know where you are going , what progress you have made or know if you have arrived!

A. To call and save men and women out of the world.

* "We preach to you that you should turn from these vain things to the living God, who made heaven, the earth, the sea and all things that are in them". Acts 14:15d-h

1. The world is under the influence of Satan.

a. He is called the god of this world. 2Cor. 4:4

b. He is said to hold men captive at their will. 2Tim. 2:26

c. He has the entire world under his sway. 1Jn. 5:19

* Isaiah says he made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, and did not open the house of his prisoners. Is. 14:17

2. The world is spiritually dead.

a. Men are said to be "totally depraved" they have capacity for good but their bent is towards evil, yet none of their good works can earn them salvation before God. Gen. 6:5, Rom. 3:10-12

- b.** Men and women are said to be dead in trespasses and sins, meandering about in the world according to the course of this world and the prince of the power of the air, which now works in the children of disobedience by conducting themselves in the lust of their flesh and of their minds because they are children of wrath by nature. Eph. 2:1-3
 - c.** Man having his understanding darkened because he is alienated from the life of God, due to the fact that the ignorance that is in him is by the hardening of his heart, therefore he has given himself over to work all manner of uncleanness with greediness. Eph. 4:18-19
 - d.** Romans gives us an vivid picture of man's downward journey in the world with out God. Rom. 1:18-32
- B.** To call men out by the Spirit of God.
- * "The Holy Spirit said," Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them". Acts 13:2
 - 1.** The Holy Spirit spoke through one of the prophets in the church in the previous verse and He is still speaking today to men in the church.

- * The Holy Sprit said seven times to the churches in the book of Revelation," He who has an ear , let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches".
 - 2.** The Holy Spirit is the third member of the trinity, God .
 - * Peter has already told us that Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit and identified Him as God. Acts 5:3-4
 - 3.** The Holy Spirit gave birth to the church on the day of Pentecost and began to direct and guide the church and He has not delegated that job to anyone in the church to this day. Acts 1:8, 4:8, 6:10, 13:2, 15:28, 21:11
- C.** To call men out to the mission field.
- * "So being sent out by the Holy Spirit". Acts 13:4a-b
 - 1.** Philip was called out of Samaria despite the great revival, to preach the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch. Acts 8
 - a.** The Holy Spirit knows the people, time and place where the gospel will be received.
 - b.** The Holy Spirit works on both ends to tie them together!
 - 2.** Paul was called out of Judaism to be sent to the children of Israel, Gentiles and kings, a chosen vessel of God. Acts 9
 - a.** He preached at Jerusalem briefly.

- b. He preached at Tarsus for nine years.
- 3. Peter was called and sent from Joppa to Cornelius' house by the Holy Spirit. Acts 10
 - a. Peter was directed by the Holy Spirit one step at a time.
 - b. Peter saw the work of the Holy Spirit, saving Cornelius and his house.
- 4. Barnabas and Saul were called out to the missions from Antioch in Syria. Acts 13
 - a. The time was according to the Holy Spirit.
 - b. The location was by the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Illustration

In the preface Roland Allen says, "It is not easy for us today so to trust the Holy Ghost. We can more easily believe in His work in us and through us, than we can believe in His work in and through our covert to Him: we can not trust our converts to Him". (Allen: Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours: vii)

Application

- 1. The gospel stands in opposition to the belief of the world.
 - a. The world says man is good by nature.
 - b. The world says man is not a sinner.
 - c. The world says man is not lost and spiritually dead.

- d. The world says man is a product of evolution.
- e. The world is saying that Jesus is a liar and a fraud because He being God, became man, die and rose from the dead to save people from their sins. Matt. 1:21
 - * "Beware lest anyone cheat you through **philosophy** and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ." Col. 2:8
- 2. The calling of a man by God through the Holy Spirit of God is the only work that is effective to accomplish the plan.
 - a. The plans of God are directed and guided by God, one step at a time.
 - b. The plans of God are funded by God, where and when He guides, He provides.
 - c. The plans of God are not a burden on the people of God but a joy in God.
 - * "For the **joy** of the LORD is your strength." Neh. 8:10h

The plan of God for missions is to call men out of the world by the Holy Spirit and sent them out!

II. The purpose of God for missions.

* Behind a plan is a purpose or a goal!

- A. To reach man with the Gospel.

- * “They went 16 miles west to Seleucia, the port city of Antioch, 4-5 miles northeast of the mouth of the Orontes River and from there they sailed to Cyprus. And when they arrived at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews”. Acts 13:4c-5b
1. They went directed 130 miles to Cyprus by the Holy Spirit, to Salamis, the administrative center of the east side of the Island, the synagogue became the pattern and custom of Paul to preach, always going to the Jew first then the Gentile! Acts 13:4-12
 - a. They traversed the Island 90 miles to the west end, to the province capital, Paphos. vs. 5
 - b. But there was opposition by Elymas the sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew named Bar-Jesus, who was with Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man, called for Barnabas and Saul to hear the word of God. vs. 6-7
 - c. Saul being filled with the Holy Spirit called blindness to come upon him. vs. 8-12
 - 1) Saul called Elymas, “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease

- perverting the straight ways of the Lord? vs. 10
- 2) Satan will use any person, agency or government to stop the preaching of the gospel to the lost.
 - c. The proconsul, Sergius Paulus believed the gospel, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord. vs. 12
2. They sailed from Paphos to Perga in Pamphilia, on the southern coast of Asia Minor, modern day Turkey departing to Antioch in Pisidia, directly 100 miles north, through the Tarsus mountains and entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and Paul preached the gospel. Acts 13:13-52
 - a. Some think Paul contacted Malaria here and went north to higher ground to relieve it 3,600 feet above sea level.
 - b. Paul pointed out the promises of God in the Old Testament to send them a Savior through David. vs. 15-23
 - c. Paul pointed out Jesus as the promised Savior. vs. 24-41
 - 1) John the Baptist announced the Messiah. vs. 24-26
 - 2) Jesus died and rose from the dead, according to Scripture. vs. 27-37
 - 3) Jesus is the only one that can justify and forgive a person's sins, not the Law of Moses. vs. 38-39

- 4) They gave the warning of rejecting the gospel and remaining in unbelief. vs. 40-41
- c. The Gentiles desired to hear the word of God the next Sabbath and the devote proselytes were encouraged by Paul and Barnabas to continue in the grace of God. vs. 42-52
 - 1) The Gentiles heard, were glad and glorified the word of the Lord, as many as were appointed to eternal life, Moody said they are the “whosoever wills”. vs. 48
 - 2) The word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region. vs. 49
 - 3) But the Jews stirred up prominent men and women of the city to persecute Paul and Barnabas, expelling them from the city. vs. 50
 - 4) They shook the dust off their feet and were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. vs. 51-52
- 3. They moved on to Iconium on a high plateau, the capital of Lyconia, southeast of Antioch and entered the synagogue again. Acts 14:1-6
 - a. A great multitude of Jews and Gentiles believed. vs. 1

- * The same message was delivered, the Gospel!
- b. The unbelieving Jews once again stirred up the gentiles and poisoned their minds against Paul and Barnabas, nevertheless they remained for a long time, speaking boldly and witnessed to the word of His grace, the Lord granting signs and wonder through them. vs. 2-3
 - * They were not intimidated, so as to change the message, the word of His grace, the gospel!
- c. The city being divided, both Jews and gentiles attempted to abuse and stone them, finding out, they fled to Lystra, about 20 miles. vs. 4-6
 - * They did not believe in the diversity of cultures, excepting the teachings of their pagan practices or that they could learn something about salvation from them, like today’s “emerging church” teaches.
- 4. At Lystra, 20 mile SW of Iconium, a cripple man from his mother’s womb and they took Paul and Barnabas for gods and the priest of Zeus was going to make sacrifice. vs. 7-20a-c
 - a. They took Barnabas for Zeus, the national god of the Greeks or the Romans god Jupiter. vs. 12a

- b. They took Paul for Hermes, for he was the speaker, another Greek god or Mercury of the Romans, meaning the herald of the gods. vs. 12b-d
 - * We get our word Hermeneutics, the science of interpretation from it!.
- c. The apostles tore their clothes, saying they were men like they, rebuked them for their pagan practices and that they should “turn from these useless things to the living God, who created the heaven, the earth, the sea and all in them, providing rain and seasons for harvest. vs. 14-18
 - 1) They were not religiously tolerant of other beliefs or thought them equal with the gospel, nor were their gods equal to Jesus!
 - 2) The Jew were addressed from “special revelation”, the Old Testament.
 - 3) The gentiles were addressed from “general revelation”, creation, conscious and history.
- d. The Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrived and persuaded the multitudes to persecuted the apostles. vs. 19-20a
 - 1) They stone Paul and dragged him outside the city, dead. vs. 19

- * Paul tells how he was caught up to the third heaven, Paradise. 2Cor. 12:2-4
- 2) The disciples, those who had believed in Jesus gathered around his body, he arose and went back into the city. vs. 20a-c
 - * Possibly Timothy could have been one of the disciples, whose grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice lived at Lystra. 2Tim. 2:5
- 5. The next day they departed to Derbe, southeast of Lystra and made many disciples. 14:20d-21a 27
 - a. They preached the gospel only. Gaius came from Derbe. Acts 20:4
 - b. They considered all men and women lost, separated from God and under His wrath. Jn. 3:36
- B. To responsibly provide man with growth and development in the faith.
 - 1. They returned the same way they had come, a complete circuit. Acts 14:21b-22
 - a. They returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. vs. 21b-d
 - b. They were not only interested in making converts but cared about strengthening the souls of the disciples. vs. 22a

- 1) As new born babes they need to be nourished the unadulterated word of God. 1Pet. 2:2
- 2) As new born babes they would have to grow to full maturity in Christ in order to not be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine and be effective and productive. Eph. 4:11-16
- c. They exhorted them to continue in the faith by telling them that they must enter the Kingdom of God through much tribulation. vs. 22b-d
 - 1) They gave to the new converts a straight forward message of their need to continue and abide in Christ, they could not return or integrate any of their old religious beliefs and call themselves Christians. Jn. 15:4-6
 - 2) They gave to the new converts a true message that through many tribulations they must enter the Kingdom of God. 2Tim. 3:12
2. They appointed elders at every church. Acts 14:23a
 - a. Elders are for the oversight of the body to care for and protect through the teaching of the word of God. 1Pet. 5:1-4

- b. Elders must meet certain qualifications. 1Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5-9
3. They through prayer and fasting commended them to the Lord, in whom they had believed. Acts 14:23b-c
 - a. They first gave themselves to the Lord in prayer and fasted to show their own dependency on the Lord being mere men. 2Cor. 3:5
 - b. They gave the new converts to the Lord to whom they belong to, who is able to care for them, He alone is the chief shepherd. Acts 20:32, 1Pet. 5:4
4. They continued on to complete the circuit. Acts 14:24-27
 - a. They passed through Pisidia to Pamphylia. vs. 24
 - b. They preached the word in Perga, went on down to Attalia. vs. 25
 - c. They sailed back to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. vs. 26
 - d. They gathered the church at Antioch and told them all things. vs. 27
 - 1) They reported **all that God had done** with them. vs. 27b
 - 2) They reported that **God had opened the door of faith** to the Gentiles. vs. 27c

Illustration

The purpose of missions is clearly stated! Jn. 3:16
 * How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Rom. 10:14

Application

1. There has been an attempt and some still continue to preach a gospel that integrates "Christian Psychology", which is an oxymoron and spiritual deception.
 - a. The foundations and teachings of psychology are secular and humanistic, not biblically based.
 - b. The teachers are all anti-religion and certainly anti-Christian, Freud, Maslow, Rogers, etc.
 - c. The thought that there is such a thing as "Christian Psychology" is like believing that there are "Christian Gentlemen's Clubs" or a "Christian evolutionist", a contradiction!
2. There is a new gospel being preached from the pulpits of America, through the "Seeker Friendly Church movement".
 - a. A sterilized and non-threatening gospel that offends no one, making everyone feel good.
 - b. There is a very deliberate design to not mention sin, repentance and turning from sin, everything is real positive.

- c. They establish their churches based on "church Growth principles" and "marketing".
 - d. They canvas their neighborhood with questionnaires to see what kind of church they would feel comfortable in and what kind of things would they be looking for.
 - e. So, once they tally up all the information, they give the people the kind of church they would like, one that would not mention that fornication, adultery, drunkenness, etc.
 - f. One that would not look or feel like you are in church, so many of them do not carry bibles, to so called church but depend on the Pastors notes, nothing wrong with notes, except when you do not have a Bible to check.
2. There is the "Emerging Church movement".
 - a. They undermines the authority of the word of God, as being untrustworthy regarding it's accuracy.
 - b. They believer that we can learn from other religions to get closer to God, such as Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, etc.
 - c. They believe that Christianity, as it has been known, does not have all the truth about God and spiritual truth.
 - d. They believer that people can be spiritual and experience God without having to be born again, preaching a cosmic Christ, not

- the Savior Christ, much like the false teachers at Colosse.
- e. They interpret the Bible subjectively, out of context and with equal authority of other religions.
 - f. They believe that a person through special mystical knowledge to experience God, this is Gnosticism of First John.
 - g. Listen to Brian McLaren of the “emerging Church”, “I must add, though, that I don’t believe making disciples must equal making adherents to the Christian religion. It may be advisable in many (not all) circumstances to help people become followers of Jesus and remain within their Buddhist, Hindu, or Jewish contexts.” (Faith Undone:173)
 - h. In May/June 2000 issue of Watchman’s Trumpet Magazine explains what this new Missiology really entails. “Several international missions organizations, including Youth With a Mission (WYAM) are testing a new approach to missionary work in areas where Christianity is unwelcome. A March 24, 2000, Charisma New Service report said some missionaries are now making converts but are allowing them to “hold on to many of their traditional religious beliefs and practices” so as to refrain from offending others within their culture”. (Faith Undone:175)

- i. All of these “Emerging Church” practices and teaching are making the way much broader than Jesus ever allowed and clearly contradict the Scriptures. No wonder they call it a “new reformation”. Jn. 14:6, Acts 4:12, 1Tim. 2:5, 2Cor. 5:17
- j. When you speak the truth and expose false teaching and teachers, people get upset, revealing they are following men, not Jesus.
 - a. Jeremiah was told not to preach the word and cast into a cistern and prison!
 - b. Then Amaziah said to Amos: “Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, And there prophesy. But never again prophesy at Bethel, For it is the king’s sanctuary, And it is the royal residence.” Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: “I was no prophet, Nor was I a son of a prophet, But I was a sheep breeder And a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock, And the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel.” Amos 7:12-14

The purpose of God for missions is to reach man with the Gospel and to responsibly provide for their growth and development in the faith!

III. The pattern of God for missions.

* The pattern of God for missions must not be mistaken for a formula that will guarantee numerical success but an understanding about God!

A. God initiates always.

1. God calls man, man does not choose God nor the work, yet man must exercise his free will for the saving relationship to be meaningful and the work effective.
 - a. “ Whosoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”. Mk. 8:34
 - b. “You did not choose Me but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you”. Jn. 15:16
2. God anoints and equips men and women.
 - a. By the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:3, 4:3, 10:44, 13:9, 19:6
 - b. By the gifts of the Spirit. Rom. 12, 1Cor. 12, Eph. 4:11, 1Pet. 4:10
 - c. By having His mind and putting it on. 1Cor. 2:16b, Phil. 2:5

B. God is the one who opens doors.

- 1 The apostles reported to the church at Antioch “all that God had done”. Acts 14:27b

2. The Lord Jesus told Paul in the second missionary journey, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city”. Acts 18:9-10
 3. The Apostle Paul declared to the Corinthians that “a great effective door had opened to him at Ephesus, and that there were many adversaries”. 1Cor. 16:8-9
 4. To the church of Philadelphia Jesus says that He is the one who has the key on David and the one who opens and no one shuts, see I have set before you an open door and no one can shut it. Rev. 3:7-8
- C. God does the work through man.**
1. He does it through the process of time. Acts 14:3a
 2. He gives man boldness. Acts 14:3b
 3. He bears witness to His word of grace. Acts 14:3c
 4. He grants signs and wonders through the hands of men. Acts 14:3d
 5. He divides man , for Him or against Him. Acts 14:4
- D. God allows no absolute pattern for success except total and complete dependence on Him.**

1. In the call to service and to be called out. Acts 13:2
2. In the sending out through prayer and the Holy Spirit, for the right time and place is vital to the work. Acts 13:3-4
3. In the ongoing process to be guided and redirected. Acts 13:13-14, 16:6-10
4. In recognizing that every work is unique and should not be depended on as a formula or pattern for the next one. Acts 13-14
* All were different, the only common denominator we can always count on is: the preaching of God's word, the conviction of the Holy Spirit and that God will save people!
5. Success should not be viewed according to the mind and eyes of man, for God in one situation may do a tremendous work yet it does not guarantee the same or identical result the second time, yet if it is in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit, then it will be successful according to God. Acts 14:19-20
* ***Success is measured by our obedience to God and His word!***

E. God delivers from every situation and circumstance.

* Paul told Timothy that God had delivered him out of all his persecutions, afflictions

which had occurred to him in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. 2Tim. 3:10-11

1. At Perga no preaching took place at their arrival but was passed by until their return, perhaps there was some danger awaiting them, only God knows! Acts 13:13, 14:25
* Again, many think that at this point Paul caught malaria and had to go to the higher plateau regions?
2. At Antioch they were able to leave on their own to Iconium. Acts 13:51-52,3
3. At Iconium plans to abuse and stone them were allowed by God to be known and they left to Lystra. Acts 14:6
4. At Lystra the violence became intense, Paul was stoned but God delivered him by not allowing him to die. Acts 14:19
5. At Derbe they made many disciples and God allowed them to backtrack to all the cities they had visited. Acts 14:21
6. At Perga they preached and God gave them a safe journey home. Acts 14:25-28
 - a. The journey is believed to have taken one year or two, 49-51 A.D.
 - b. The second and third journey also reveals the Holy Spirit was in control!

Illustration

It is quite impossible to maintain that St. Paul deliberately planned his journeys beforehand,

selected certain strategic points at which to establish his churches and then actually carried out his designs. (Roland Allen:10)

Application

- 1.** Modern Christianity had corrupted the gospel and missions by Westernizing it.
 - a.** We sent men that are not called of God.
 - b.** We cripple those men by looking to us for all their needs, not having them depend on the Lord, who sent them.
 - c.** They become deaf, blind and dumb.
 - d.** They become a bad example to those they are evangelizing by telling them to depend on God in faith, yet they are dependent on the home front, not faith.
 - e.** I know that there are faithful, Godly and committed missionaries out there and God knows who they are, but it is not all of them.
 - f.** I think this the reason why so much of missions is so ineffective in the long run.
- 2.** There is a book Missionary Methods, Paul's or ours? by Roland Allen, which points out some of these failures and I fully agree with his observations. (Chapter 6 on finances)
 - a.** Paul did not seek financial help, yet he had the right but worked with his own hands, making tents. 1Cor. 9:12, 1Thess. 2:7-9
 - b.** Paul did receive gifts, like the Philippians. Phil. 4:16

- c.** Paul apologized to the Corinthians that he never took money from them. 2Cor. 11:8
- d.** Paul did not receive financial support from his converts and he did not take financial support to his converts, every church was financially independent, through the weekly offering. Gal. 6:6, 1Cor. 8-9, 1Tim. 5:14
 - * The only offering Paul took was for the poor saints at Jerusalem, never for missions, they were self supported!!!
- 4.** We make the converts in the mission field to be financially dependent on us for their existence and we take the place of Christ.
 - * Allen says, "Day by day and year by year there comes to us an unceasing appeal for men and money for the same missions to which we have been supplying men and money for the last fifty or sixty years, and there seems at present little hope that that demand will change its character." (141)
- 5.** We attempt to control the mission church by western pastors, provide all the western comforts rather than allowing indigenous pastors to run the church on the level of the people and have autonomous rule without our western control.
- 6.** This mentality is due to believing we are superior and the sense that we have invested great amounts of money in the work!
- 7.** God saves people, He is sufficient for His church, through His word, the Holy Spirit and through prayer!

* “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” Acts 20:28

The pattern of God for missions is that He always initiates, opens doors, works through men, allows no patterns and He always delivers his servants!

Conclusion

If you want to learn about missions read and study the Bible, where God reveals:

- I.** The plan of God for missions save sinners and send some out!
- II.** The purpose of God for missions reach man with the gospel and teach them the gospel!
- III.** The pattern of God for missions is none except complete dependency on Him!