

ACTS 13:1-3

Introduction:

1. For 12 chapters, the Jerusalem Church has been the main focus - the center of God's working. But beginning in chapter 13, we begin to see that the center has become Antioch - **out** of the land of Israel. Peter and the 12 have been the Messianic Church's leaders in Israel's Prophetic Program for most of the first 12 chapters of Acts. Now Paul and his helpers will take the **lead** in God's new Body of Christ Mystery Program, that is still going today.
 - a. This is **huge** for Christendom to understand. The great Jewish program that was inaugurated at Pentecost, the Kingdom program, all of a sudden hits a great **snag**. It came to a point of crisis where God intervened and **interrupted** Israel's program, as the result of the stoning of Stephen. In Acts, chapters 8-12, Luke paints the picture that the Pentecost program is **no longer** carrying on as it once did.
 - b. Instead of being a pattern for the Church **today**, Acts is actually the **explanation** of why Israel's fall/diminishing happened and why its program is no longer going on. Rather, it has been **replaced** by another program that we begin to read about in the last chapters of Acts and Paul's epistles. Saul/Paul, in Acts 9, is saved completely **contrary** to the program that had **previously** been in effect.
The Lord Jesus Christ personally comes back to save Saul, yet His coming back was **not His 2nd coming. His coming was not coming "in **wrath**" as the Jews looked for. Jesus did not come back to destroy His enemies, but to save **one** of them.

Saul was the epitomy, perfect example, of one's open rebellion against God, yet God saves Saul and does that **differently (totally of grace).
2. As we will see, Israel's leaders were against the Little Flock, and soon would be against Paul's conversion and the new Grace Program. The Jewish leaders will rise against Saul/Paul and his **new** message, the very thing that **staved** the hand of God from pouring out His judging wrath upon Israel!

*Our Mystery Program is what **prevented** God's wrath upon Israel's religious leaders!
3. Luke has shown these truths, so we can get a sense of where we are here in Acts 13. We now will begin with the Body Church that we can identify with - the Church at Antioch. Remember, the Body Church's **equal** footing:

Ephesians 2:11-16 - Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; Eph. 2:12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: Eph. 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Eph. 2:14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Eph. 2:15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; Eph. 2:16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

Galatians 3:28 - There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

I Corinthians 12:13 - For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

A. Saul and Barnabas are sent out to the heathen -

Acts 13:1-3 - Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Acts 13:3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

1. The Church at Antioch had become a powerful established church.

Acts 11:26 - And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

2. [certain prophets] These would be men who had **super**naturally gotten a word from God and then shared it with men. They were God's spokesmen - they spoke for God. When they spoke, it was "thus saith the Lord".
 - a. *It should be remembered that at this point in time, there were **no** Pauline epistles-scriptures written or in existence. Because of that, God gave certain men a special **gift** of prophecy in the local church to communicate God's will.
 - b. Since God has **completed** His Word, His will for us today has become permanently **found** in His written Word.
3. God also gave those [teachers] **super**natural understanding to help to establish the Word (O.T.-N.T.) into the hearts of His people. Here, a new word (Mystery Program) was being placed into the believer's mind - **grace!**

*As Saul/Paul taught God's new revealed truth to others, they in turn shared those truths. But never forget that it was Saul/Paul **first** with whom God began to progressively share the mystery and the Dispensation - Gospel of Grace.

Acts 20:24 - But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

I Timothy 1:15-16 - This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 1Tim. 1:16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Ephesians 3:2 - If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

II Timothy 2:2 - And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

4. Note two names:
 - a. [Simeon that was called Niger] The word Niger means **black**. This shows that the gospel is **inclusive** to all ethnic people in the early church.

- b. [Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul] shows that the gospel also can penetrate into higher levels of society (not many are noble) and save **some** of them.
5. It is also important to remember and understand that these supernatural gifts of prophecy and **word** of knowledge have long since passed **away**. At this moment in history (the Church's) here in Acts 13, the Kingdom Program was quickly, but gradually, fading off the scene. As it faded, so did the **sign** gifts. Yet here in Acts 13, gifts and apostleship are **still** operative for a while longer.
- a. But Paul states that one day there would be something that would **replace** the need for miraculous signs and wonders.
- I Corinthians 13:8-10 - Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away. 1Cor. 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 1Cor. 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.
- b. So today, we have the "perfect" **Bible**. There is no need for partial knowledge (signs & gifts) since we have the **complete** absolute truth of the Bible.
- *Today we need to be aware of those who claim they have special, **extra**-biblical revelational truth they supposedly received from God. God does **not** speak to us audibly today, as some say.
- c. Today, it seems too many are gullible, because they mistake **emotions** for facts. This causes them to fall **prey** to those who say, "The Lord told me", or "God said to me to do this or that".
*Lestor Roloff - Kenneth Copeland
6. In verses 2-3, there are some terms to consider.
- a. [As they ministered to the Lord]
The word "ministered" simply means **service**. They served the Lord with the motivation of doing it for Christ (I Cor. 10:31; II Cor. 5:14).
- b. [when they had fasted and prayed]
- (1) Fasting was simply the burden of prayer for some **deep** need that caused the burdened one to neglect or even deliberately put off eating to pray.
- (2) No doubt, it is pleasing to God at anytime if believers were so concerned about **spiritual** things that they would forgo eating to give time to prayer and the study of Scriptures.
- Job 23:12 - Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.
- (3) No believer in our dispensation today who does a fast does anything to **increase** their spirituality or obtain a blessing from God. Actually, if not careful, one can make fasting some **ritual** legalistic event and believe it to have some special fleshly merit.
- Colossians 2:20-21 - Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, Col. 2:21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

c. [and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.]

(1) There is no indication this involved anything miraculous. Here, it was a specific **purpose** that the leadership at the Antioch Church was identifying and **partnering** itself publically with Saul and Barnabas in the ministry that they would be undertaking. The Antioch leaders recognized their position and were stating that they would stand behind them.

(2) Laying on of hands was the Church's official act in **end**orsing the ones they sent out.

I Timothy 5:22 - Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

II Timothy 1:6 - Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

I Timothy 4:14 - Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

(3) Although the special gifts have passed away, the hand is still recognized to have **special** meaning.

Examples: There is in court the raising of the right hand to **swear** to tell the truth; or the laying of the hand on the Bible to take an **oath** of office; or the shaking of hands; or the laying on of hands when ordaining a pastor after examination.

d. Acts 13 takes place some 10 to 16 years after Paul's conversion. The Church body is now ready to **form**ally begin its work among the Gentiles and Jews. (The **official** beginning of the Body Church began with Saul/Paul's salvation in Acts 9.) Saul is commissioned by God to proclaim the Gospel of Grace to the Gentiles because of Israel's **re**bellion.

Acts 13:45-47 - But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Acts 13:46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. Acts 13:47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

e. Also, it is important to remember that Saul/Paul was not separated here to **begin** his ministry to the Gentiles. Paul had **al**ready labored among the Gentiles for a considerable time, even in Antioch itself. Also a fact, this separation of Saul was not his call as an apostle or minister among the Gentiles. He had **al**ready been called to this ministry by the **per**sonal revelation of Jesus Christ.

Acts 26:15-18 - And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. Acts 26:16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Acts 26:17 Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Galatians 1:11-12, 16-17 - But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. Gal. 1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Gal. 1:16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Gal. 1:17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

- f. Even though Antioch was used as a **main** meeting place for new believers in this new dispensation, actually the Church Body does not need an **earthly** headquarters (missions proves that).

Judaism, under Law, had Jerusalem. In Genesis 1:1, it says [God created the heavens and the earth]. Likewise God's earthly people, Israel, under Law had Jerusalem as its center. God's Body Church are heavenly people, under grace citizenship in **heaven** and seated with/in Christ in Heaven. Between Israel and the Body Church, there is a chasm/wall that separates them.

To truly and clearly understand God's Word, we cannot **mix them!

The Two Ministries of Christ



Earthly Ministry of Christ (Prophecy)

1. Primary Scriptures—Four Gospels
2. Dispensation: Law (Matt. 5:17)
3. Christ is King (John 1:49)
4. Sent 12 to Israel (Matt. 10:5,6; 15:21-28)
5. Gospel of the kingdom proclaimed (Matt. 4:23; 10:7)
6. Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18)
7. Christ's Second Coming to earth (Matt. 24:29-31; Acts 1:9-11)



Heavenly Ministry of Christ (Mystery)

1. Exclusive Scriptures—Paul's Epistles
2. Dispensation: Grace (Eph. 3:1-9)
3. Christ is Head (Eph. 1:22,23)
4. Sent Paul to Gentiles (Rom. 11:13)
5. Gospel of the grace of God proclaimed (Acts 20:24)
6. Grace Commission (II Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 3:9)
7. Christ's Secret Coming in heaven—Rapture (I Cor. 15:51,52; I Thes. 4:13-18)