

Life Group/Personal Study

The Land Between • Week of June 28

The book of Acts is an eyewitness account of the birth and growth of the early church. This mighty movement of God was in God's heart from before the beginning of time. Jesus Himself declared that He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it (or conquer it). God's ways and truth stand firm, and yet He gives humanity many freedoms. For example, to either accept or reject God, to love or hate others. In our drive to survive the Land Between, what we often miss is that the LORD God Himself *is* our ultimate destination.

Just as God birthed His church at the right time, God birthed a mighty nation through the descendants of Jacob. Israel has been a miracle from very birth of Isaac. Think of it, Abraham and Sarah conceiving a son at 100 and 90 years of age – unheard of! The church has been a miracle from its very birth at Pentecost. Think of it, ordinary men and women receiving God's Spirit in weak vessels of clay – unheard of! Much like rushing water finds a way to shed during times of heavy rain, God's movement will prevail as He pours out His Spirit like a great flood.

Read Acts 11:19-26

Great opportunity lies before the early church as the apostles and disciples proclaim Christ's Message to all people. They rejoice over great wins, seeing many come to faith, while at the same time experience extreme challenges and persecution. Often, the more we want to be faithful, the fiercer the opposition – the larger the opportunity, the larger the obstacles.

1. Refer to a Bible map retracing the spread of the early church. (1) Locate Jerusalem (location of the birth of the church), and (2) Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch of Syria, and Cyrene. Notice that though believers scatter because of persecution, the church continues to prevail. Take a few moments and discuss verses 19-21.

Just as persecution forced the believers into other areas, the Lord often uses obstacles in our path to force us into a new place (maybe not geographically, but spiritually). How are we experiencing this as a church? How are you experiencing this in your life?

Read Acts 13:1-12, 44-52

In Acts 13:2-3, the Holy Spirit anoints Barnabas and Paul for the special work of taking the Gospel to the Gentile. God's desire has always been for the world to hear about Christ (i.e. Genesis 12:3, 2 Chronicles 6:32-33). Unless you were born Jewish, you are a Gentile. Praise God He has made a way for all to know Him!

2. The first missionary journey included the island of Cyprus, Perga of Pamphylia, Antioch of Pisidia, Lystra, Iconium, and Derbe. But as many Jews and Gentiles believe, there is and always was difficulty. Like Paul and Barnabas, how is it possible to press on in the face of extreme and severe obstacles?

Upon completing this first journey, Paul and Barnabas return to the church in Antioch of Syria (their headquarters). Refer to **Acts 14:26-28**. Why is it important for pastors and leaders to communicate clearly with the church about the progress of mission and give a 'full report' to fellow believers regarding strides in outreach and evangelism?

Although the local synagogues were often the venue for Paul and Barnabas to preach and teach while on mission, Paul more often seizes opportunity *outside the box* when he shares the Good News – on riverbanks, in homes, in the marketplace, in courts, in amphitheaters before kings and officials, in places of public gathering, even in prison. Many scholars believe Paul was one of the most brilliant minds of his time. The story of his conversion is nothing short of incredible.

Paul was on-mission most of his life. Although his second and third missionary journeys were accompanied by Silas, Barnabas was still an integral part of the picture. Disagreements arose in the early church, but these men (and women) did not allow differences in opinion over some things to ultimately divide them over superior things – i.e. reaching the world with the message of Christ. Just as Moses segued the Land Between Egypt and Canaan, Paul (and all the wonderful team of like-minded faith partners) bridged the Land Between the early church and the spread of Christianity. Both Moses and Paul learned what we must learn—

The Promised Land is a Person! The Lord Jesus is our ultimate destination.

3. Close by reading some of the beautiful words spoken by these men.

Moses—

Exodus 33:12-23

Deuteronomy 34:1-7

Psalms 90:1-2

The apostle Paul—

Galatians 1:11-24

Acts 20:22-27

2 Timothy 4:6-8

One Year Bible Readings

June 28: 2 Kings 13:1-14:29, Acts 18:23-19:12, Psalm 146:1-10, Prov. 18:2-3

June 29: 2 Kings 15:1-16:20, Acts 19:13-41, Psalm 147:1-20, Proverbs 18:4-5

June 30: 2 Kings 17:1-18:12, Acts 20:1-38, Psalm 148:1-14, Proverbs 18:6-7

July 1: 2 Kings 18:13-19:37, Acts 21:1-17, Psalm 149:1-9, Proverbs 18:8

July 2: 2 Kings 20:1-22:2, Acts 21:18-36, Psalm 150:1-6, Proverbs 18:9-10

July 3: 2 Kings 22:3-23:30, Acts 21:37-22:16, Psalm 1:1-6, Proverbs 18:11-12

July 4: 2 Kings 23:31-25:30, Acts 22:17-23:10, Psalm 2:1-12, Proverbs 18:13

The Land Between

Text: Acts 13:1-12, 44-52

Plain Truth:

Our promised land, destination, is
a _____.

June 27 & 28, 2020