

PLOT TWIST

When God Surprises His People

Part 8: Sects in the Cities

INTRODUCTION — Surely You Can't Be Serious

Romans 2:28-29

DINE IN – Urban Missions Gone Wrong (and Right)

Acts 14:1-20

The word of grace... Acts 13:43; 20:24, 32

God has done for us through Christ what no one can do for themselves and what no religious observance, ritual, or routine can offer – he has saved us from sin and set up his kingdom in our hearts.

APOSTLES = SENT ONES

Type 1

- Commissioned directly by Christ
- Unique apostolic authority and ability (2 Corinthians 12:12)
- Foundational teaching (Ephesians 2:20)
- Irreplaceable

Type 2

- Commissioned by the local church (2 Corinthians 8:23)
- Submitted to the shared authority of fellow believers
- Carry apostolic teaching to others
- Ongoing (e.g., missionaries)

Ephesians 4:11-12

TAKE OUT – I'll Have That to Go Please

TAKE OUT #1 – Starting Where They Live

To Jews, Paul starts his communication of the gospel with their Scripture (Acts 13). To philosophers Paul starts with the truth in their philosophy (Acts 17). With religious people, Paul starts with the truth in their religion (Acts 17). And with unsophisticated, uneducated people in Acts 14 Paul starts with nature and their own inner experience. Obviously, before we speak, we need to listen. Before we become teachers, we need to become students – not only of Jesus, but of those we wish to love in his name.

TAKE OUT #2 – A Christo-centric Message

No matter how Paul adjusts the style and approach of his message, the content remains focused on the unique power of Jesus to save. He calls his audience away from an incomplete worldview and toward Jesus as the fulfillment of their own beliefs. Likewise, he is never afraid to point out the inadequacy of their own beliefs in light of the truth of Christ. Simply put, as the book of Acts makes abundantly clear, *if a non-Christian can agree with every aspect of our message, we are not preaching the gospel.*

TAKE OUT #3 – Say No To Emotional Manipulation

Unlike many modern evangelists, notice Paul doesn't manipulate this audience in order to cause synthetic feelings of guilt and shame. Instead he points to the inadequacy of their worldview, offers them something better, and affirms even their joy as evidence of God at work in their lives already. It is the Holy Spirit's job to convict and create thirst for the gospel. Our job is to offer the living water to quench that thirst.

John 16:8; Psalm 104

CONCLUSION – Pick Up Your Sword

Matthew 10:34; Galatians 6:17

Q & Eh? Text 647.330.2789 or email ask@themeetinghouse.ca

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS

Warming Up...

1. In The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Robert W. Wall writes, "Paul is an urban missionary. According to Acts, the church's mission is primarily concentrated in important cities." What could be the strengths of this approach today?

Look to the Book...

2. Read this week's main text, Acts 14:1-20. A) What verse or idea stands out to you the most? Why? B) Notice that Paul's calling to be a missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15) didn't mean he gave up on sharing the gospel with Jews. What specific challenges exist in evangelizing Jews today? C) Wherever the "word of grace" was preached, the people of the cities were divided because of it. How would you respond to someone who objected that it would be better to leave people in peace and unity rather than offer them a new choice that could disturb their homogeneity? How is grace a religiously divisive concept? D) It wasn't politically correct to call the pagans' religious icons "worthless things", but neither the gospel nor its proclamation is ever portrayed as politically correct. What are some potential points of offense in the gospel message and its proclamation today? List as many as you can.

So What?...

3. Review the TAKE OUTs and talk about them.
4. Paul and Barnabas confirmed their message with miracles. If we don't have that spiritual gift, what are some ways we can confirm the reality of the gospel of Jesus today? What would that look like this week in your life?

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