

## Understanding Jesus' Resurrection through the Lens of the Book of Acts (#7)

By Bob Young

### To Whom Is God Sending You with the Story of Jesus?

We have been rethinking Acts, the gospel, the good news of Jesus. This sermon is conclusion. This series is a summary of what I saw when I studied Acts. Here are the principles we have identified: the story of Jesus is a life and death story (a death and life story); the story of Jesus is to be proclaimed; the story of Jesus is to be proclaimed even to the most unlikely; the story of Jesus is a forgiveness story; the story of Jesus changes everything, the first disciples were being prepared to be sent forth with the Holy Spirit to tell the story.

The Christian life is a life of responding to and living out the Easter story, the Jesus story. How? It is appropriate that we share post-Easter lessons as part of this series. The final lesson in the series, the story of Jesus, what does it mean today?

The last truth—really a question: to whom is God sending you with the story of Jesus?

- Acts: God sent the apostles to the multitudes of gathered Jews, 3000 responded.
- God sent the apostles to preach in the city of Jerusalem, many more responses, eventually 5000 counting only the men.
- God sent the church; Jewish priests became Christians.
- God sent Stephen, he died.
- God sent Philip to Samaria.
- God sent Philip to the desert, to an Ethiopian nobleman.
- God sent Ananias to Saul.
- God sent Peter to Cornelius, a Gentile, but was thereafter content to send Peter to the Jews.
- God sent Paul to the Gentiles. Acts is filled with specific names and places.

Paul tells about being sent to preach the gospel to the Gentiles three times in Acts: chapters 9, 22, and 26. He mentions his call and sending in Galatians 1. He was acutely aware of having been sent by God to preach. He felt he had no other option, 1 Corinthians 9. We can learn from all of Paul's accounts of his commissioning, but I especially like 26:15-20.

- Paul was a servant and witness
- Paul experienced God's rescue, and was promised continued rescue as he went to preach
- Paul was sent:
  - o to open eyes
  - o to turn people from darkness
  - o to turn people from Satan to God
  - o to offer forgiveness
  - o to show people the way of the sanctified life

Principles, Takeaways for your prayer life—

**PREPARE MY HEART TO WILLINGLY SACRIFICE FOR THE GOSPEL.** Ours is a world of opportunity, challenge, blessing. A poll found that most Christians are "satisfied" with our evangelism and our mission efforts. Wake up!

Our efforts are meager at best. A man who served many years as a missionary was asked, "Do you like the work?" He replied, "Do I like this work? No, I do not like dirt, dirt floors, rough concrete floors. I do not like walking into houses through goat refuse and chicken litter. I do not like people who live like the world—but they do not know any better, and someone has to tell them. Is a Christian to do nothing for Christ that is unpleasant? Liking or disliking has nothing to do with it. We have orders to 'go' and we go. Love constrains us."

**PREPARE MY LIFE AND LIPS TO DO WHAT I AM SENT BY GOD TO DO.** A missionary is one sent. Missions is inspired not by the needs of men but the command of Jesus. I go because he told me to go. The great danger in missions is that what God's eternal plan for his creation is overshadowed by the pressing needs of humanity. Sympathy overwhelms the sense of "sent-ness." Seeing such enormous needs, human powers fail.

We forget that we are not sent to elevate people, educate people, nor to ease the plight of needy people. We are sent with good news for eternity. Inspiration to preach the gospel is always first, never second. **PREPARE MY MIND SO I WILL NEVER FORGET THE URGENCY OF THE GOSPEL.** We do not make our lists, thinking and praying about those to whom God is sending us, because we do not grasp the urgency.

I read about a young missionary that went to a remote village to tell the gospel story. No one in that village of 231 people had ever once heard the gospel. The chief reluctantly let the missionary speak to the entire village. When the villagers were told about Jesus' life, arrest, crucifixion and resurrection, they were amazed. Some wept openly. They marveled that the Son of God loved them and died in their place so their many sins might be forgiven. They wanted to know more. An older man came to the young missionary immediately after the presentation and asked, "When did God give you this message? How long have you had it?" The missionary replied, "God gave this message to people long ago, but I only learned it a year ago." The obviously upset man grabbed the young missionary and through tears he cried out, 'God gave you this message last year and you did not come to tell us before my mother, father, and son died?"

All around us are people who have not heard the gospel and those who need to hear the old, old story. All around us are people with problems so severe that only the gospel can provide relief. The gospel is God's power for salvation. In our world are billions of people who have never heard the gospel once. They are waiting for someone to tell them the Truth. Why are we not going? Are we purposefully disobedient? Are we ignorantly disobedient?

This is not a mission sermon, although some will see that application. This is a gospel sermon, the evangelistic call and responsibility of every Christian. The Jesus story—lived out daily, changing who we are, changing others, changing our world. More Christians, new churches, new places, our communities, our cities, our country, our world.

**BE SPECIFIC.** To whom is God sending you with the story of Jesus?