

033 - After Many Days - Acts 9:23; Galatians 1:11-17 GRBC 2012-08-12

Scripture Reading: Exodus 2:23-3:10 Sermon: "After Many Days" Acts 9:23; Galatians 1:11-17

Benediction: Revelation 22:20-21

Acts 9:23 "Now after many days were past . . ."

For the purposes that the Holy Spirit gave to Luke in writing the book of Acts, we can see that these many days are just something to be passed over. The history of where exactly Saul was during this time is just not part of this story.

But because of a certain problem that arose in the church, it became very important to Paul for people to know where he was during this time period of "many days." That problem is still with us today, in various forms (that problem is always a threat to God's church), so it is important to us, also, to know where Paul was during these "many days."

Why was it important to Paul that people know where he was during those many days?

- In a few minutes we'll read the answer to this in our main bible text for today, in Galatians chapter 1, but first, we'll get the background from a few spots in the book of Acts
- The gospel had been preached mostly to Jews at first; there were Jews who thought that this good news of salvation in Jesus the Christ was for Jews only, not for gentiles; but their ideas did not cause any trouble, because all of the believers around them were Jews
- When the church scattered, as Saul was persecuting them in Jerusalem, the preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to Jews only (Acts 11:19)
- But some believers, when they came to the city of Antioch, in Syria, preached to gentiles, also, and a great number of them believed (Acts 11:20-21)
- The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas there to help them, and many more people believed; Barnabas needed more workers with him to help all these new believers, so he found Saul and brought him to Antioch to work with him (Acts 11:25-26)
- This large number of new Christians, most gentiles, were not circumcised, as the Jews were. Circumcision had long been the distinguishing mark between God's people and the rest of the world, but in these days of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, circumcision has lost all of its religious importance. Some of these Jewish disciples in Jerusalem, however, did not accept this, and were repulsed at the idea of uncircumcised men being part of God's church with them!
- So some of these Jews who thought the gentiles believers would have to be circumcised came down from Judea to Antioch and taught these gentile disciples that unless they were circumcised, they could not be saved. (Acts 15:1) Paul and Barnabas argued against this. The two parties went up to Jerusalem to ask the apostles and elders there.
- The one party argued that circumcision and keeping the law of Moses was necessary for the gentiles Christians to be saved (Acts 15:5)
- This idea was overruled by the church, including the church's apostles and elders. They sent a letter to the gentiles in Antioch, refuting the idea that gentiles believers have to be circumcised and obey the Old Covenant laws of Moses to be saved (Acts 15:22-24)
- When Paul and Barnabas delivered the letter to Antioch, the church there rejoiced (Acts 15:31)

-Paul traveled with Silas and Timothy, telling the churches what the apostles in Jerusalem had said, that the gentiles do not need to be circumcised to be saved (Acts 16:4-5)

-They went further than they had before, into Galatia (Acts 16:6). So, on the heels of this conflict, over whether the gentiles had to be circumcised, knowing what the apostles and elders and the church in Jerusalem had written, that the gentiles did not have to be circumcised, Paul had preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Galatians

-Up until now, we can see no importance to Paul that anyone know where he was during those many days after he was converted to Christ at Damascus, right?

-But now we come to it. Very soon after Paul had been to the Galatians preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Jews came along---the same party that had come to Antioch teaching the gentile believers that they had to be circumcised to be saved, and that they had to observe Jewish holidays and abstain from certain foods---these Judaizers came to the Galatians Christians. And amazingly, many of the Galatian Christians believed this doctrine. So Paul wrote a letter to the Galatians to address this problem.

Read the text: Galatians 1:6-18

The Galatians are listening to a gospel different from what Paul had preached to them 6

-not really another gospel 7a

-delivered by some who trouble them 7b

-a perversion of the gospel of Christ 7c

-It is that those who believe in Jesus Christ must be circumcised and required to follow the Old Covenant laws.

Paul is writing to warn them that preaching this perverted gospel is a serious offense 8, 9 Paul refutes his critics, who have been saying that he adjusts the gospel to make people happy; depending on whether he is with Jews or gentiles, he changes his gospel message;

-[expound their criticisms of Paul]

Paul states that the gospel he preached to the Galatians he received straight from God, not from the apostles at Jerusalem (11-12); not that there is anything wrong with learning the gospel from the apostles at Jerusalem! But Paul wants to dispel the notion that he has been going back and forth to Jerusalem, learning various points of the gospel, but not getting the whole thing right. He then goes on to prove this by recounting the historical facts:

-He had been the church's persecutor (13-14)

-When it pleased God, He called Paul through His grace, to preach the Son of God to the Gentiles (15-16)

-When God so called him, Paul did not ask other men what the gospel of Jesus Christ was, nor did he go up to Jerusalem to learn the gospel from the other apostles (16-17a)

-Instead, he went to Arabia (17b)

-we are not told what exactly he did there

-did he preach the gospel there?

-did he seek solitude, to pray and study the scriptures in the light of Jesus Christ?

-was it a combination of these things?

-we just don't know, because what he was doing in Arabia is not Paul's point; his point is that he did not go up to Jerusalem and learn the gospel badly from the apostles there

Since Paul's gospel came to him straight from Jesus Christ, the Galatians should not think that Paul has received the gospel piecemeal from the apostles in Jerusalem, and has told them only parts of it, and so should abandon the gospel he preached to them in favor of this perverted gospel of the Judaizers, which, of course, is no gospel at all

Now that we have seen why it was so important to Paul that people know he was in Arabia during these "many days," we would like to know

Why is this important to us?

We can better know the grace of God in our salvation

-In order for us to be saved from our sins, the Lord Jesus Christ took an arch-Jew, turned him inside out, delivered the gospel directly to him, and sent him off to Europe, to take the good news to us, the gentiles

We can avoid the threat of outright Judaizing, as with the Galatians

We can avoid the threat of latent Judaizing

We can avoid the threat of other perverted Gospels

-of the Campbellites

-of the Pentecostals

-of the fundamentalists

-of the revivalists

-of our own movement!

-the gentiles must be required to . . .

-the gentiles girls must be required to . . .

-the gentile boys must be required to . . .

-Why was it so important to Paul that people knew that during these many days he was in Arabia? Because he preached the pure gospel of Jesus Christ, and he didn't want anyone to get away with perverting it in Christ's churches.

-Why is it so important to us that we know that during these many days Paul was in Arabia? Because we want to believe and preach the pure gospel of Jesus Christ, delivered by the Lord Himself to Paul directly, and preached by Paul to us gentiles for our salvation!