

The Discipline of Disciple-Making: What Was the Gospel that Turned the World Upside Down?

Acts 14-17

We each are part of the miracle of God called salvation that from the start began to turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

SALVATION: THE MIRACLE FROM GOD

Salvation is also the most amazing miracle that we get to see up close throughout our lives as believers. That we were even saved is in itself is a miracle of God's grace; and those around us who are saved are also part of a constant stream of miracle we get to see and touch personally through life. Getting to disciple a miraculously saved individual is such an encouragement for our faith and walk.

From God's perspective all humans are born into this world infected with a blinding, crippling virus that left alone: *leads to eternal death in darkness and endless pain*. So as God looks down He sees us all sitting blindly in the dark on the edge of a deadly chasm. Salvation is when He opens our eyes and turns us from sinful darkness lovers: to God loving and following saints.

God Himself has come down to this Earth from the start seeking out Adam and Eve in their sin. Then He sent a series of prophets and preachers, calling blind sinners to come to the light of God, who stretched from the Pre-Flood world through the birth of Christ.

Followers of God always upset the followers of the darkness of sin and spiritual blindness. God's salvation bringing to life the spiritually blind and dead always:

TRAUMATIZES THE UNSAVED

When the light of the Gospel shines into the hearts and minds on the blind and paralyzed lost sinners: *they come alive, being released from both their paralysis and blindness*. This is unsettling and shocking to all the blind and paralyzed sinners around them. We see this most clearly in Christ's ministry.

At the perfect moment, God Himself stepped into this world again as God the Son, Jesus Christ. He came as the Light of the World. He healed, raised, fed, liberated, cleaned, and calmed multitudes of people.

But, this astounding event of life, light, and love flooding into the land of Israel was so

unsettling to the spiritually blind and paralyzed leaders: *that they did everything they could to end Christ's work by murdering Him.*

In the end, after His resurrection, Jesus Christ met with about 500: which may have been the bulk of the true converts from His ministry. They were to continue the spread of the light of Christ's Gospel, which had begun in Israel: *and take it into every corner of the sin-darkened world.* That is what we call:

THE GREAT COMMISSION

At the end of the Gospels we find God the Son commissioning those who were His followers. They were all to go in His power and seek to share the **life-transforming, sin-removing, blindness-ending Gospel of salvation** to every person in the world. That moment is when God left us with work to do for Him.

From that mountain in Galilee Christ launched the Gospel. There He promised to be going out with each who witnessed, and to empower and accompany them in this mission.

That mission is what we have been tracing across the pages of Acts. First Peter proclaims the Gospel 4x in Jerusalem, then Peter & Phillip in Samaria, then Phillip to the Ethiopian (chapter 8), then Jesus Himself to Paul (chapter 9).

Then the Gospel leaps the Jewish realm and Peter proclaims the Gospel to Gentiles (chapter 10), and believers fan out to share (chapter 11). The Gospel goes global with Paul in Acts 13 and never stops spreading.

But the Gospel not only spread, in its wake so did the trauma, and the push back. In the wake of the Gospel we see the growing confusions of those who couldn't understand what happened to their friends. To a lost sinner, blinded and paralyzed by sin, to see a friend or relative start wanting to follow Christ, *instead of what everyone else is wanting to do*, is very upsetting.

Please open with me to Acts 14:15 in your Bibles. We have arrived now at a juncture. Paul returns to Antioch after his 1st Missionary Journey (Acts 13:4-14:27), and reports. The amazing reports get back to Jerusalem and it raises questions, so a report in Jerusalem is needed after this report is given to the church at Antioch in Acts 14. What he reports is that:

THE GOSPEL WENT GLOBAL

As we read these verses we see the launch of where we find ourselves today: *the global spread of the Gospel through transformed former blind and paralyzed sinners, now saved and seeking to share the glorious Gospel with others.*

For those of you tracking with us through Acts this is Gospel Presentations:

MESSAGE ELEVEN (Paul): The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 14:15, 21, 27 where salvation is described by Paul after his journey through Asia Minor as: *turning to God who opens the door of faith.*

Please stand with me and read this report:

Acts 14:15, 21, 27 (NKJV) and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and **preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God**, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, 21 And when they had **preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples**, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 27 Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they **reported all that God had done with them**, and that **He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles**.

THE TRAUMATIC IMPACT OF THE GOSPEL UPON PAGAN CULTURE

Now look at the wider passage with me, and see how traumatic, unsettling, and disruptive the Gospel really can be as it enters people’s sin-darkened lives.

Acts 14:15-28 (NKJV) and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and **preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God**, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, 16 who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Nevertheless **He did not leave Himself without witness**, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” 18 And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them. 19 Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, **they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead**. 20 However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. 21 And when they had **preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples**, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, **exhorting them to continue in the faith**, and saying, “We must through many tribulations **enter the kingdom of God**.” 23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they **commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed**. 24 And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. 25 Now when they had **preached the word** in Perga, they went down to Attalia. 26 From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been **commended to the grace of God for the work** which they had completed. 27 Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they **reported all that God had done with them**, and that **He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles**. 28 So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

So the Antioch report prompts a repeat to the mother church, the First Church in Jerusalem. Listen as that unfolds and there we get to hear the next explanation of the Gospel by Peter 7 James.

TURNING TO GOD & AWAY FROM WHAT OFFENDS HIM

MESSAGE TWELVE (Peter & James): The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 15:7-9, 19-20 where salvation is described as *turning to God and away from what offends God's Word and people.*

Acts 15:7-9 (NKJV) And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the **Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.** 8 So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by **giving them the Holy Spirit**, just as He did to us, 9 and made no distinction between us and them, **purifying their hearts by faith.**

Acts 15:19-20 (NKJV) Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles **who are turning to God**, 20 but that we write to them **to abstain from things** polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.

GOD OPENS HEARTS TO HEED HIS WORD

MESSAGE THIRTEEN (Paul): The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 16:14 where salvation is described as *the Lord opening a person's heart to heed His Word.*

Acts 16:14-15 (NKJV) Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who **worshiped God.** The **Lord opened her heart to heed** the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and **her household were baptized**, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be **faithful to the Lord**, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

We need to pause for a moment and see what Paul taught about this event that just took place in their lives. When Lydia believed, and others of her family also believed, the Scriptures say that they were baptized.

Have you ever wondered what Paul told them about baptism?
What did baptism mean to Paul as he administered it?
What did Paul tell them had happened to them when they got saved; and what did Paul say that baptism was for?

Those are perhaps the most powerful and impactful truths of the Book of Acts. If we can just allow God to fill in the pieces of what is going on here, we can see why the Gospel had such an impact upon every place it came. To help with that, we actually have the private lessons that Paul taught to those who came to Christ, they are recorded for us in the Book of Colossians. So in every baptism event recorded in the Book of Acts we can see belief in the Gospel, followed by the outward sign of that belief in believer's baptism.

PAUL TAUGHT WHAT BAPTISM DECLARES IN COLOSSIANS

In Colossians 2:6-15, Paul wrote to the church at Colosse what he taught in other places where he had visited. Baptism portrays the wonders of what Christ did for us in salvation.

Here is what He said in Colossians 2:6-15.

Colossians 2:6-15 (NKJV) As you therefore **have received Christ Jesus the Lord**, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For **in Him** dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and **you are complete in Him**, who is the head of all principality and power. 11 **In Him you were also circumcised** with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 **buried with Him in baptism**, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the un-circumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, **having forgiven** you all trespasses, 14 **having wiped out** the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, **having nailed** it to the cross. 15 **Having disarmed** principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Here is what made those early believers so powerful: they knew the miracle of salvation. They experienced it, and were taught about it, and understood what God wanted to do and did to them.

Truth # 1: Baptism Is My Declaration That I Have A Heart That Is New

Colossians 2:6-11 (NKJV) As you therefore **have received Christ Jesus the Lord**, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For **in Him** dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and **you are complete in Him**, who is the head of all principality and power. 11 **In Him you were also circumcised** with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

Their new heart spoke of spiritual heart circumcision (Ezekiel 36:26-27), which was the work of salvation as Christ is putting off our old person. Do you know the personal reality of having a miraculous new heart, implanted within by God?

That is what these early believers were told; and they believed God. That is the miracle of salvation.

Truth # 2: Baptism Is My Declaration That I Have a Past That Is Buried And Forever Gone

Colossians 2:12 (NKJV) **buried with Him in baptism**, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Do you know the personal reality of having the miraculous work by God of burying your entire past in the sea of His forgetfulness? Do you know the relief that He will remember your sins no more?

That is what these early believers were told; and they believed God. That is the miracle of salvation.

Truth # 3: Baptism Is My Declaration That I Have A Fresh, New Beginning

Colossians 2:13 (NKJV) And you, being dead in your trespasses and the un-circumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, **having forgiven** you all trespasses,

Do you know the personal reality of having a fresh new beginning in life? Born again believers have only a future, their past is gone. We live a life of new beginnings in Christ alone.

That is what these early believers were told; and they believed God. That is the miracle of salvation.

Truth # 4: Baptism Is My Declaration That I Have An End To All Guilt, Because All My Sins Are On Jesus

Colossians 2:14 (NKJV) **having wiped out** the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, **having nailed** it to the cross.

Do you know the personal reality of having all guilt taken away by Christ? Do you know the assurance that your sins are on Jesus?

That is what these early believers were told; and they believed God. That is the miracle of salvation.

Truth # 5: Baptism Is My Declaration That I Have Nothing Left to Fear

Colossians 2:15 (NKJV) **Having disarmed** principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Do you know the personal reality of nothing left to fear? There is no condemnation, no separation, and nothing left to fear because of Christ's work in us and for us.

That is what these early believers were told; and they believed God. That is the miracle of salvation.

EARLY BELIEVERS UNDERSTOOD SALVATION

Today we have the same Gospel, the same miraculous work of Christ. Do you understand how great this salvation really is that God has done in you?

In Christ each of us His followers have:

A heart that is new;
A past that is forever gone;
A fresh new beginning;
An end to all guilt;
And nothing left to fear!

When new believers experienced this, and then were taught what had happened to them, then declared those miraculous events by the waters of baptism: they were experiencing the power of the Gospel! Now do you see what a huge statement it was to be:

BELIEVING & BAPTIZED

That is what we see as we move on to:

MESSAGE FOURTEEN (Paul): The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 16:25-34 where salvation is described as *believing*.

Acts 16:25-34 (NKJV) But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. 28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." 29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 So they said, "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved**, you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were **baptized**. 34 Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, **having believed in God with all his household**.

We now come to the most amazing of the Gospel descriptions because it is the clearest statement of what happens to those who get saved from the perspective of those who do not.

GETTING A NEW KING OF YOUR LIFE

MESSAGE FIFTEEN (Pagan description): The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 17:1-7, where salvation is described by pagans, who observed the process they saw happening as lost people believed and received Christ, as: *getting a new King of your life*.

Acts 17:1-7 (NKJV) Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." 4 And **some of them were persuaded**; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. 5 But the Jews **who were not persuaded, becoming envious**, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have **turned the world upside down** have come here too. 7 Jason has harbored them, **and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus.**"

Today, has the miracle of salvation turned your world upside down?
Do you have a new King?

That is the powerful Gospel.
When we hear it and believe, God becomes our King and everything changes.
As the Thessalonians said, our world turns upside down.