



St James Woodley - Resources for Journey through Acts (Part 2)

Chapters 13-21

May – July 2020



Week 1: Island in the sun



SETTLING

Think about an island you have visited, or know, and then, just reflect upon some of your memories, good or not so good, experiences, nightmares, things of interest?

FOCUSING

Listen to the song “I am a rock” by Simon and Garfunkel (Youtube or Spotify etc)

Spend some time reflecting on the mindset of the song writer.

I am a rock (Simon and Garfunkel)

*A winter's day, in a deep and dark December
I am alone
Gazing from my window to the streets below
On a freshly fallen silent shroud of snow
I am a rock I am an island*

*I've built walls. A fortress deep and mighty
That none may penetrate
I have no need of friendship, friendship causes pain
It's laughter and it's loving I disdain
I am a rock
I am an island*

*Don't talk of love. But I've heard the words before
It's sleeping in my memory
I won't disturb the slumber of feelings that have died
If I never loved I never would have cried
I am a rock I am an island*

*I have my books. And my poetry to protect me
I am shielded in my armour
Hiding in my room, safe within my womb
I touch no one and no one touches me
I am a rock I am an island
And a rock feels no pain. And an island never cries*

Read and consider the following quotation:

*No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man
is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if
a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is
the less, as well as if a promontory were, as
well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own
were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; And therefore never send to know
for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee. (John Donne, Meditation XVII, English clergyman & poet (1572 - 1631))*

What is it that Donne is saying in this famous quote? What implications might this have for us as Christians and how do we respond?

Reflect quietly on John 3 vs 16 and then pray with thanksgiving for God's embracing love and with resolve to seek to see the world around us, and its people, through His eyes.



At the start of the book of Acts, Luke quotes the words of the resurrected Jesus:

“...when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world.”

The first 12 chapters of Acts cover the early witness and ministry of the Jerusalem church, where they managed the ***“Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria”*** bit, but it fell to the church in Antioch for the ***“to the ends of the world”*** vision to be fully realised.

Acts Chapters 13 and 14 – The First Missionary Journey.

Read Acts 13 vs 1-3: this is where we left things at the end of part one.

What clues are there here about the nature and character of the Antioch church and the way it functioned? (Hint: Spiritual giftings, Worship, Fasting, Holy Spirit, Calling, Prayer, commissioning by laying on hands)

The Antioch church was well established, keen to work with God’s Spirit and be attentive to His guidance. There were some really good people there and it was clear that Barnabas and Saul were called to take on a specific mission. It had taken quite a long time, but the gospel of Jesus had been clarified and through the experiences of Philip, Peter and Saul it was agreed that both Jews and Gentiles were to be included in Jesus saving work. This was seriously radical thinking for those who had become Christians from a Jewish background and would prove an on-going issue for Paul and others as the Good News of Jesus spread.

So, Barnabas and Saul were ***“set apart for the work to which I have called them.”*** And then packed off on their way.

An out-take from Luke’s account, found in his office bin, that didn’t make it to the final version:

So, the Holy Spirit said “Ok lads here is the itinerary for your first expedition! Take a boat over to Cyprus and cut straight through the island to the other side. Then nip back to the mainland and wiggle your way from Perga up to Antioch (the other one) and then take in Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Then, well I’ve run out of ideas, so, just make your way back.”

All that we do know is that Barnabas and Saul had been called by the Spirit and commissioned by the church and that there was a clear understanding that the gospel was for both gentiles and Jews. Now **they** had to decide where to go. So, where to go to find some gentiles to convert? Saul’s early life was spent just around the corner in Tarsus but since perhaps Saul had never been “abroad”, or perhaps Barnabas suggested that Cyprus was nice and he knew his way around there (check Acts 4 vs 36). Maybe? so why not? And so, to Cyprus!

There are no clues to suggest that the team had a clearly mapped out plan of places to visit or a defined itinerary of their proposed journey. Give some thought to how then they might have gone about deciding where to go.

Read verses 4-5

Barnabas and Saul, with John Mark in tow, cross over to Salamis on the east side of Cyprus. A sea journey of about 70 miles. Why, do you imagine was their first port of call the Jewish synagogues? Then . . .

Read vs 6-8 – they make the 90 miles long journey through the island to Paphos.

What do we learn about Cyprus from these two verses? (Proconsul = Roman administrative top bod. Cyprus was a Roman occupied country. Sergius Paulus, a gentile, intelligent and keen to learn. A jealous Jewish magician is part of the household, the first taste of opposition occurs)

Read vs 9-10 – Name change? Why?

Read vs 11- Paul in the power of the Spirit pronounces blindness upon Elymas. Does this sound familiar? (Road to Damascus)

Read vs 12 – A gentile comes to faith through the witness of words and actions. Again - sound familiar? The mission is underway!



Perhaps spend some time praying about your own need of guidance and ask if God is asking you to be involved in the decision making.

Use the opportunity to pray for whatever needs you are aware of in your family, community, church or nation.