



# God's church reaches the nations

**Aim: to challenge Christians today to see the NT church as a model for our involvement in God's Mission Action Plan.**

## **Bible focus: Acts 1:7-8**

- **Additional:** Is 49:6, Mt 28:16, Mk 16:15, Lk 24, Lk 24:47, Jn 15, Acts 2:5, 8:1-4, 8:26-7, 10:1-2, 10:20, 11:19-20, 13:13, 13:46-7, 16:10, 28:14, Rom 10:17, 1 Cor 2:1-5, Eph 4:11-13, 2 Tim 2:10, Rev 7:9
- Second part of NT, after Jesus returned to heaven. NT Christians responded personally to Christ (*It was for the sake of the Name that they went out*, 3 Jn 7)
- God's commission (explain this means: charge, related to 'mission') was to Jesus' disciples as representatives of his church (Acts 1:7-8)

## **How the commission is given**

- **Jesus' last words** (v8). Luke sees this as the last significant thing Jesus said. In Jesus' absence, they are to witness about him, his reality, his saving work, his resurrection life and his hope for the future. Jesus talks about the three stages:
  - **Jerusalem:** why there? their first duty is locally, where they are
  - **all Judea and Samaria:** wider area, within their knowledge
  - **ends of earth:** remote parts, outside their present knowledge, why included?
- **The Gospels say the same.** Slightly different terms are used (Mk 16:15; Lk 24:47; Mt 28:16). Balance of local priority to the Jews and the worldwide scope to reach all the other nations. Both are important. God's MAP for 2000 years so far.
- **The power is promised.** The Holy Spirit and his power are mentioned before the call to be witnesses (see Jn 15; Lk 24). Jesus never asks anything of us without promising the help to do it

## **How the response explodes** - It happens almost immediately!

### **The church expands in Acts** [within a period of about 30 years]

- Jerusalem, but includes God-fearing Jews from every nation (2:5)
- Judea and Samaria (8:1-4): Ethiopian civil servant from North Africa (8:26-7)
- Cornelius, an Italian convert to Jewish faith (10:1-2), but Peter needed special revelation to convince him (10:20)!
- Jews and Greeks also (11:19-20)
- first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch in Turkey (13:13)
- decision to turn to Gentiles, based on Is 49:6 (13:46-7)
- first outreach to Europe in Macedonia (16:10)
- Rome, the capital of the Empire (28:14)

### The role of Holy Spirit

- power gives boldness and authority to convince hearers
- men *filled with the HS*, he is essential in every member and for every task
- initiative and direction about whom to set apart
- sustaining them with persistence in face of opposition, and remain so
- our challenge: are you born by Holy Spirit to a new life of faith in Jesus?

### How the pattern is set

During the years covered by Acts, some NT letters were written and these provide our pattern for mission today.

- **The role of preaching.** The Bible is the ordained means of God speaking to the heart, so it must be explained and applied by preaching (Rom 10:17). So crucial that NT refuses ways based on man's wisdom (1 Cor 2:1–5). Spreading the Bible remains vital.
- **The role of training.** God gifts leaders to prepare disciples (Eph 4:11–13). Illustration of 'the body' demonstrates interdependence. We need each other in training, in showing mutual care for outreach, at home and overseas.
- **The role of vision.** Throughout NT, God shows he is working to a plan that will be fulfilled, whatever the setbacks (Rev 7:9). This draws out confidence and reassurance when we need it, e.g. little fruit locally or persecution overseas

### How the challenge is faced

Where we will find those taking up this challenge today:

- **Where Christians know what Jesus knows.**  
Jesus knows God's purpose will be achieved, but that God uses people. Plan made before creation, but he still had to come, suffer, die, rise and rule for us (2 Tim 2:10)
- **Where Christians love what Jesus loves.**  
Jesus eternally loves his Father and his Father's will to reach the lost. Positive motivation, *Christ's love compels us*. As we reflect on all he did for us, we are motivated
- **Where Christians do what Jesus did.**  
Jesus knew his Father's plan, he loved his Father's heart, so he was *ready to do his Father's will*, despite the huge personal challenge – it cost him his life. Nothing less awaits us but a life of unselfish sacrifice, as His Spirit motivates and enables us

### What is our response?

The Bible is a missionary book because God is a missionary God, Jesus a missionary Saviour and his church a missionary church. We cannot relegate world mission or local evangelism to a few specialists

- There is a spiritual battle that needs fighting – can you pray?
- There are people and projects that need funding – can you give?
- There are people to witness to and much work to be done both at home and overseas – can you go?