

Acts of Jesus, Lesson 26: Signs from the Heavens

1. We're going to take a look at what I am calling "Signs from the Heavens": understanding God's leading as we reach out to a lost world.

- We saw last time here in Chapter 13 the spread of the gospel changed from a "accidental" mode to an intentional mode in which God specifically calls out and leads out in reaching our world for Christ.
- But how do you know what God is leading you to do and where HE's leading you to do it.??

2. What I'm going to do is make several observations about God's leadership that come out of this first segment of the first missionary journey. Acts 13:1-4

1. The first observation to make here is one that I made in the previous sermon on God's guidance: God's guidance comes to those who are really seeking it. Verse 2
 - This brings us back to the operative question: **Do we really want His guidance?**
 - Like last time, we don't seek this Spirit's voice often because we don't like what He says.
 - The starting point of God's guidance is a passionate commitment to do whatever he says.
 - You sign a blank check and you allow God to fill in all the details.
 - **Which is why so few do great things for His kingdom.**
2. This second observation: God doesn't give us all the details, but He leads us through our desires.
 - **VV.3-5** – First there is clear guidance but no details.
 - How did they decide to go to Cyprus?
 - Doesn't take much detective work to put two and two together here: Barnabas is from Cyprus and John Mark is his nephew.
 - We want this to say that God specifically directs them to Cyprus, but it doesn't say that.
 - We want it to say that because we want God to direct our lives that way and the fact is He doesn't always.
 - Let's consider 2 verses: one for the O.T. and the other from the N.T.:
 - **Ps. 37:4** – This is not a recipe for getting what I want but for getting what God wants!
 - **Jn. 15:7** – Again, this is not a recipe for getting what you want!!!
 - God's Word changes my desires to fit His!!
 - God's purpose in our lives as we live them down here is two-fold:
 - One, to reach a world that does not know Him.
 - Two, to draw us into a devoted love relationship with Him that is based on trust.
 - If He gives us all the details, then we won't rely on Him but instead will rely on the directions.

God leads them out by their desires...having delighted themselves in the Lord.

3. Our third observation gives a second way God leads: through the confirmation of other believers.

- **VV. 2-3** -- not to say that God had not already been moving the hearts of Paul and Barnabas but notice that their decision was not made in a vacuum just between them and God.

Acts of Jesus, Lesson 26: Signs from the Heavens

- The church was also involved in their decision.
- Interesting that when Paul received his original call at his conversion God intentionally involved another believer = Ananias.
- Why? Because Christians are not independent but interdependent – the Body of Christ.
- In the Body of Christ, the foot does have mind of its own and is in its own personal relationship with God, but it is not independent of the Body.
- We have a strong tendency to bring our American, independent, “I can go it alone” mentality into our Christian walk.
- “Just me and God is all I need to make any and all my decisions” says Who? Not God or His Word.
- An independent Christian is like an independent body part == a freak of nature.
- Though I can think for myself and though I ultimately answer only to God, I need to be in submission to other believers **Eph. 5:21.**

4. A third way God leads is through our experiences.

- What had Paul and Barnabas been doing prior to this?? **Acts 11:26, 12:25**
- There is a pattern there:
 1. Helped start a church,
 2. Sent out as a representative of a church.
 3. You also have Paul’s call in Damascus. (callings and gifts of God are without repentance)
 4. They are also both born in Gentile lands
- These were not random experiences...they were preparing them.
- What is God preparing you for?
- Make a list of your experiences with God from the time you were saved till now.
- Listing every time God either used (and how He used you) you or spoke you clearly or delivered you powerfully...He’s preparing you for something.

5. A fourth way God leads that we can observe from our text is that He leads through our circumstances.

- Having delighted themselves in God, He leads them out by their desires to Cyprus and first to Jews. **VV. 5-7**
- I think it’s safe to say that they had not gone out targeting political rulers.
- Sergius Paulus was not a part of their schedule, but he was a part of God’s schedule.
- He was hard to miss, but there are other interruptions to our schedule that may be.
- Remember:
 1. You don’t have the whole picture...God will not give it all to you.
 2. Changes, interruptions, opportunities may just be God filling in more of the picture.
 3. Maybe, it’s something you don’t want to do or a direction you don’t want to go but it keeps coming at you...It just may be God!
- In the midst of you being faithful to what you feel God has called you to do, don’t be surprised when you get surprised by what may seem like deviation.
- It just might not be a deviation; it just might be God’s continued direction for our lives bumping up against what we have decided we want to do.