



Message #60
“AN END AND A BEGINNING”
 (Philippians 3:7-14)

THE FINAL MESSAGE



We commenced our study of Acts the February 7th, 2021, and we’ve covered a lot of major themes since..... The church together...The centrality of Christ...The power of the Holy Spirit...Community life...Prayer... Teaching...The priority of evangelism/mission...Breaking human barriers and strongholds...The place of suffering...The sovereignty of God...The Jewish reaction to the Gospel...The legal status of Christianity, etc.

So let’s wrap up by looking at some of the questions left unanswered by Luke’s abrupt end to the narrative.

1. What happened to Luke, the writer?

Luke stuck close by Paul, right to the end. In **2 Timothy**, Paul states that only Luke was with him (in Rome, shortly before his execution). After Paul’s death, Luke left Rome and continued to minister for about 30 years after Paul’s death. He ended his days in Greece, opposing the worship of the Greek gods, proclaiming what he had recorded in Acts....that there is **salvation in no one else but Jesus**. Apparently, an angry mob hung him near the port city of Patras. He was 84 when he died (AD 93).

2. What happened to Paul?

Luke’s account in Acts ends with Paul in prison (house arrest for 2 years). He was most likely released from his imprisonment because the Jewish accusers did not pursue the case against him. Paul resumed his missionary efforts, possibly even reaching Spain (**Romans 15:24**) Paul was most likely arrested a second time, during which he wrote the Pastoral Letters (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus). Then, he was executed during a time of great persecution of the Christians (under Nero the mad emperor).

Paul was one of the greatest men who ever lived...not because of his learning, his brilliance, his oratory, his works....but because Jesus absolutely filled his life. Paul stated....**for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain**that’s a total commitment.

Do you think it is possible for someone to be as radically committed to Christ today as Paul was?

3. And what happened to the church?

In Acts we see the beginnings of the church, and its early development. We came across words like...
HOMOTHYADON - being of one heart and mind and accord...the church was, and still is, better together!
EKKLESIA (from which we get church) is mentioned for the first time in Acts 14
CHRISTIANOUS (GK for "belonging to Christ") was first used in Acts 11 to describe believers at Antioch.
And we saw how true believers have counted their lives worth nothing if they cannot serve Jesus.....Stephen and onwards. These followers of Jesus really did turn their world upside down.

How are you/we turning our world upside down for the Gospel?

The KEY VERSE of the book of Acts is ACTS 1:8. Is this still relevant for the church today?

4. And...what has happened to us through this series?

How would you compare the early church/early Christians with the church/believers today?

Is the church today focused on Christ, or on comfort, convenience, complacency & compromise?

If God has called us to be fishers of men, not just keepers of the aquarium...what does that mean for us?

In the first message back in February 2021, I said:

ACTS as a Radical Challenge to Today's Church:

- To a society where individualism reigns and where the church seems to have adopted a style of community that "guards the privacy of the individual" the early church presents a radical community where the members had all things in common.
- To a society where selfishness is sometimes admired and each one is left to fend to himself, ACTS represents a group of Christians who were so committed to Christ and the cause of the Gospel that they were willing to sacrifice their desires for the good of others.
- To a society where pluralism denies truth as something subjective and personal, ACTS presents a church that based life on certain objective facts about God and Christ...facts that were not only true personally, but also universally valid and, therefore, had to be presented to the world.
- To a society that denies "absolute truth" ACTS presents a church that was convinced and convicted and rejected wishy-washy compromise.
- In an age where specialization seems to be the norm, ACTS presents a church that ministered completely to everyone.
- In an age where great resources are focused inwardly, ACTS presents a church that released its best people and greatest resources outwardly in the cause of reaching the lost for Christ.
- In an age where many churches look to excellence in methods and techniques, ACTS presents a church that depends on the Holy Spirit and gave top priority to prayer.
- Instead of avoiding suffering and discomfort, ACTS presents a church that was willing to suffer discomfort, persecution, even death, for the cause of Christ and, indeed, even saw it as a basic cost of discipleship.

Which of the above points stands out to you as a problem for the contemporary Christian church?

What do you think God has been saying through the book of Acts to us at Church@TheGabba?

How can you/we better fulfil the challenge we have to...Love God, Love Life and Love People?

Please pray that God will continue to speak into the life and ministry of His church here at the Gabba!