

Pastor's Bible Study
Mt. Zion United Methodist Church
October 29, 2009

Acts 13:1—15:41

More surprises: The role of the Jews and help for the Gentiles.

1. Throughout the texts we read for tonight's class, the term "the Jews" occurs often. From your reading, who do you think Luke refers to when he uses the term "the Jews"?
2. In Acts 13, Paul delivers a speech that is very similar to one Stephen did in Acts 7. The first part of Paul's speech (13:16-25) is one more telling of Israel vis-à-vis God's plan of salvation. However, unlike Stephen, who speaks of Jesus in terms of Moses, Paul speaks of Jesus' connection to King David. What is Paul's speech an example of? (HINT: the Greek word for *preaching* the story of Jesus, we talked about in the second class this semester)
3. The second part of Paul's speech (13:26-41) is a retelling of the failure of many Jews to look to Jesus as Messiah. This sets up the hearers for what happens next . . .
4. READ 13:44-47. At the next Sabbath, both Paul and Barnabas speak boldly in the synagogue. Their words seem particularly poignant, as they charge the Jews with rejecting the word of the Lord. In vs. 47, Paul and Barnabas quote Isaiah 49:6, which states,
I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles,
so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

What does this quote from the Book of Isaiah tell us about God's plan for the Jews? Knowing that many Jews accepted Jesus as Messiah, what may the original hearers have thought when they heard this quote?

Chapter 15 perfectly illustrates the "jewishness" of First-Century Christianity. The disciples wanted to be sure that Gentiles who trusted Jesus were really "saved." NOTE: These were Jews who saw salvation from God as a community of faithful followers of YHWH. Thus, they wanted to be sure that Gentile believers were faithfully following God.

5. Acts 15:16-17 is a quote from Amos the prophet. The context of this quote is Amos speaking about the "last days." Do you think this is why the Council of Jerusalem placed such simple demands on Gentile Christians?