

EARLY IN HIS MINISTRY . . .

Jesus took his disciples to Samaria, a region and a people that Jews made every effort to avoid. Through his ministry to one scandalous woman, an entire town embraced him as the Savior of the world. To his disciples, Jesus said:

“Why would you say, ‘The harvest is another four months away’? Look at all the people coming—now is harvest time! For their hearts are like vast fields of ripened grain—ready for a spiritual harvest. And everyone who reaps these souls for eternal life will receive a reward.

LATER IN HIS MINISTRY . . .

Jesus traveled north to the Lebanese areas of Tyre and Sidon, where he encountered a Syrian-Lebanese woman who relentlessly pleaded with him to heal her daughter who was tormented by a demonic spirit.

The disciples found her annoying and wanted Jesus to send her away. Instead, in contrast to the attitude of his disciples, Jesus said to her:

“Dear woman, your faith is strong! What you desire will be done for you.”

Understand that Jesus never went anywhere or did anything without a specific purpose. Every destination and every encounter was specific of His mission. He knew who he would encounter, he knew their need, and he knew what he would need to say or do to meet each one's need. Such was the case when he planned his itinerary through Jericho because a wealthy chief tax collector (who was also unscrupulous and hated) resided in Jericho. Jesus declared:

*“Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.
For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

AS HE WENT ALONG . . .

Jesus saw a man who had been born blind. The disciples assumed that the man's condition was due to the sin of either this man or his parents. Jesus replied that they were wrong in their assumption. Then he told them:

“This happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of Him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”

ON THE EVENING OF HIS RESURRECTION . . .

Jesus appeared to his frightened disciples who had locked themselves in a room in Jerusalem. He said to them:

“Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

DURING THE DAYS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION . . .

Jesus met in Galilee with his disciples—a meeting that had been scheduled before his crucifixion. At this time, he told them:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

IN HIS LAST WORDS TO HIS DISCIPLES . . .

In a moment unexpected by the disciples, Jesus spoke his final words to them. His work on earth was finished and he was returning to the Father. All that he had been saying to them was now fully in effect; the mission of the Father was their responsibility. The last thing the disciples heard Jesus say—

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

STAGE 1: JERUSALEM

- ▶ On the Day of Pentecost, ten days after the ascension, the Holy Spirit birthed the church in Jerusalem with visible, supernatural power and ministry. The first stage of the “Acts 1.8 Commission” had begun. People of a Jewish heritage from 15 ethnicities experienced the power of the gospel that day and 3,000 were baptized as followers of Christ.

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

—Acts 5.42

STAGE 2: JUDEA AND SAMARIA

Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

—Acts 5.16

- ▶ Five years after the advent of Pentecost, following the killing of his colleague, Stephen, one of the deacons in the Jerusalem church, Philip, went down to Samaria. The power of the Holy Spirit was prolifically manifested in his ministry, and as a result of his witness, Samaria “accepted the word of God.”
- ▶ The apostles, Peter and John, subsequently traveled through the region, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

THE HOLY SPIRIT CONTINUES TO WORK . . .

- ▶ Down toward Gaza, Philip was led by the Holy Spirit into an encounter with an Ethiopian court official, whom he led to faith in Christ and baptized.
- ▶ Several years later, Peter found himself in a series of Holy Spirit orchestrated events that led to him sharing the gospel with a Roman army captain. Unexpectedly, the Holy Spirit came on all who were listening to Peter and they began speaking in tongues and praising God.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit had initiated Stage Three—the most extensive part of the Mission, one that was not regional but global.

MEANWHILE . . .

- ▶ Scattered by persecution, fugitive disciples (not apostles) traveled north, evangelizing in Lebanon.
- ▶ Some of these disciples came to Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman Empire, notoriously pagan and both ethnically and culturally diverse—Jews, Arabs, Syrians, Iranians, Turks, and Europeans. They began sharing the gospel with everyone in Antioch. The ministry of the Holy Spirit was evident and many believed and turned to the Lord.
- ▶ Encouraged by Barnabas—a man filled with the Holy Spirit—and Saul, the church at Antioch continued to develop into very recognizable followers of Christ.

THE MISSION UNTIL NOW . . .

- ▶ The Mission thus far, has moved forward through specific individuals who have been prompted by the Holy Spirit, and specific events initiated by the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ If the goal of the Mission—*“the ends of the earth”* and *“disciples of all nations”*—is going to be accomplished, the paradigm and the execution of the Mission needs to change.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit is again going to take action to initiate that change.

ACTS 13-14

MISSION CAPABLE PART 1



Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

—Acts 13.1-5

STAGE THREE OF THE MISSION

- ▶ A new paradigm: the local church. From this point on, the Mission will center around the planting of new churches and the effective involvement of those churches in the Mission.
- ▶ Effective execution of the Mission will require that leaders and disciples be a true *ekklesia* and be FMC— Fully Mission Capable.
- ▶ A true *ekklesia*: The word *ekklesia* means “an assembly, the character of which can only be known from the connection in which the word is used.” Therefore an *ekklesia* of Christ would require full association with Christ—a life lived *in* and *for* Christ—and a commitment to execute his mission as he did—with the highest priority.

TWO CATEGORIES OF MISSION CAPABLE

▶ Fully Mission Capable (FMC)

Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. Then they traveled back through Pisidia to Pamphylia. They preached the word in Perga, then went down to Attalia. Finally, they returned by ship to Antioch of Syria, where their journey had begun. The believers there had entrusted them to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed. Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported everything God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too.

—Acts 14.23-27

▶ Non-Mission Capable (NMC)

From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John . . . deserted them in Pamphylia, not continuing with them in the work.

—Acts 14.12; 15.38



Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

—John 15.4-8