

Coronavirus Online Bible Study

Week Two- Scattered!

Introduction:

As we saw in our study of Jeremiah 29, sometimes God's will is far different than our desires, and we are forced to accept a situation we don't like and to trust God has a plan in the midst of the turmoil. In Jeremiah's day, the people of Judah were sent into exile because of their rebellion against God and His Word. It was to *discipline* His people. But what happens when our world is wrecked just when things seem to be going well, when in fact we are doing our best to live in obedience to God's Word and Will? Today we will study just such a period in church history. In the days after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, the Church was born. The Church in Jerusalem quickly grew over the coming months. Despite persecution from some of the authorities, the message of Jesus had a big impact on Jewish society, and the powerful teaching and miracles performed by the apostles displayed God's power.

Read Acts 4:32-35. How are things going in the early church in Jerusalem?

What challenges did the early church in Jerusalem face? What things might they have found "comfortable"?

Who were the primary people preaching and teaching according to this passage? Do you think there was anything wrong with that?

Read Acts 5:12-16. How would you describe the state of the church in this passage? What would it have been like to be a part of this church?

Read Acts 1:7-8. As good as things were going in Jerusalem, do you think the church was being at all disobedient to Christ's commands as it related to outreach? Why or why not?

Read Acts 8:1-3. What changed? What kind of effect do you think this had on relationships within the church? What would it have been like to be a member of the church at this time?

How do you think their worship changed during this period? What may have stayed consistent?

Read Acts 8:4-8. How did the scattering of believers from Jerusalem change ministry roles in the church?
What was Philip's role in the Jerusalem church?

Read Acts 8:25- Why might the location where Peter and John preached be significant?

How was Jesus' prophecy in Acts 1:7-8 fulfilled, through prosperity or through hardship?

What is the most important component of Jesus' words in **Acts 1:7-8**? (The power of the Holy Spirit)

We would like to think that the Gospel advances primarily through our planning and conscious efforts coming from a place of prosperity. But quite often God uses our trials to accomplish His purposes.

How might God use this crisis to accomplish His Will for your life? For His Church?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-9. Why does Paul compare God's glory in us to "treasure in jars of clay?"

What promise does Paul make us about the hardships we experience as believers, in verses 8-9? How have you seen this proved in your own life?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. What encouragement do you find in these verses?

Why does Paul refer to hardships as "light and momentary troubles?"

Why is it difficult to focus on "what is unseen"?

What does God want us to DO at this time?

Closing Thoughts:

Jesus promised that through the ministry of the apostles and the early church, the Gospel message would spread from “Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth.” What we’ve seen this week is that God accomplished that not through careful human planning in the midst of prosperity, but rather through persecution and hardship. As the disciples were prosecuted, they dispersed to other areas of the Roman world, and took the Gospel with them. Jesus promised that we would have trouble in this world, and what Scripture and experience proves is that God works His plan through the hardship of His people. While we would prefer to be free from pain and struggle, it is often those periods that God does His greatest work, both within our own hearts but also within His Church! Though the last few weeks have certainly not matched up with our desires, we can be assured that this period, as hard as it is, is a part of God’s plan, and that if we are faithful to seek Him and minister in His Name, He will work it all to His glory. We may not be able to imagine exactly how, just as the early Christians in Jerusalem may not have known how God would use their flight to expand His Kingdom. We live in daily obedience, and God accomplishes His work through us.