

3 change agents of Acts – Aug 17, 2017

Stephen, Cornelius and Paul were three change agents of Acts

Jesus used them because the apostles had fallen into religiosity and the traditions of man. The gospel wasn't spreading as Jesus's intended.

The apostles didn't fully follow Jesus final Commandment of Acts 1:8. Jesus's commanded the apostles just prior to his ascension into heaven: "...you shall be my Witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the remotest part of the Earth."

Where did the verse say not to go to the Lost tribes of the House of Israel.

The apostles had become comfortable in Jerusalem with teaching/preaching/healing in the temple and the gospel was not being preached outside of the city to the non-Judeans.

Stephen was the first change agent. The Apostle/disciples stayed in Jerusalem and taught in the temple up until Acts 8. No indication showed they preached outside of Jerusalem. I have wondered if Jesus was crying out to them '*Get out of your comfort zone and spread the gospel to the world!*'

Jesus way of forcing them to spread the gospel outside of Jerusalem was the death of Steven and a great persecution of the Christians.

" ...And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." - Acts 8:1

The disciples fled to the same area that Jesus's had told them to go in Acts 1:8.

Cornelius was the second change agent that Jesus used to tear down the religiosity and traditions of man which had crept in.

The gospel was still being hindered in Judea and Samaria because the church defined who were *acceptable* to be eligible to hear the gospel of salvation.

What was the religiosity and traditions of man which had crept in?

- Peter said it was "...unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him" – Acts10:28
- "...speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone." – Acts11:19

The apostles and disciples considered all non-Judeans as unholy & unclean and avoided them. As a result the gospel wasn't getting preached.

Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, was considered "unclean" by the church. What was his sin?

- a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually. - Act10:2

- They said, "... a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews..." – Acts10:22
- Wasn't acting out his faith for gain but it was engrained in his way of life
- He evangelized to others: his household, the soldiers under him –Acts10:7, relatives and close friends –Acts10:24
- He was humble –Acts10:25

Jesus didn't think Cornelius was unclean. Jesus spoke and said to him "... Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God." – Acts10:4

Peter still held back the full gospel message even though Peter had a vision telling him that the Gentiles were not unclean. Peter, it appeared, was just going to speak about Jesus and he was not planning on baptizing them. Peter changed his mind when the Holy Spirit fell among all in Cornelius' house –Acts10:44

All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. – Acts10:45

Then Peter "... ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ .." –Acts10:48

Peter was called to the carpet by the Apostles/elders/disciples when he got back Jerusalem (Acts11:2-3) and Peter had to explain all what Jesus had revealed to him – Acts11:18.

Act 11:2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him,

Act 11:3 saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them."

Act 11:18 When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."

It wasn't long that Peter began to slide back to his old ways and it was Paul who publicly skewered him for being two-faced doubleminded hypocrite by acting one way when Jews were present and another way when they weren't – Gal2:11-13

Paul was the third change agent Paul knew all scriptures, he knew intimately what the Christians believed and he prosecuted them yet Paul wasn't humbled. He was proud and as a result Jesus had to pull him down from his high horse and humble him as Jesus's told Ananias in Acts 9:16 "for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

Paul suffered greatly but he spread the gospel to the "...Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" - Acts9:15. Paul covered more territory than all the other Apostles. His ministry extended to the British Isles.

What does it take to move you? What change agent does Jesus have to bring about in your life that you will finally obey his commands? The first change agent Stephen's death was a direct result of the Apostles not taking the next step in Jesus plan and persecution of Christians resulted to push the gospel further. The second change agent Cornelius was the ripping way of the religiosity and the traditions of man that had crept in. The third change agent was Paul's suffering as result of humbling to do God's will.

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. - Heb 10:31

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. - Joh 14:15

And double witness

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word... - Joh 14:23

Regards,
David