

To Europe!

Book of Acts – Week 4



Week 4 – The Gospel to Europe

Take a few minutes to write out a description of “the Gospel”.

13:32 “And now we are here to bring you this Good News. The promise was made to our ancestors,³³ and God has now fulfilled it for us, their descendants, by raising Jesus.”

Paul says that what his hearers longed for has now come true but in a very different way than the one they were expecting.

How might this idea change the way we speak to people about our faith?

And the task of the church, though it certainly goes much wider and deeper than this, at least includes the following: that we should, in prayer and with wisdom, be able to tell the story of our world, our increasingly neo-pagan society, in terms of the long history of promises we have clung onto and pledges we have made and broken. We should be prepared to think it all through so we can tell the story that people know is *their* story, the one they always knew they wanted to hear. And we have to tell it so that, like Paul telling the story of Israel, it ends with Jesus, not artificially or like a conjuror pulling a rabbit out of a hat, but so that he appears as what and who he is: the truly human one, the one in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, the living bread through whom all our hungers are satisfied.¹

How might we begin the story of God’s interaction with the world?

Back in Antioch

Acts 14:26-28

Many scholars would place this return by Paul and Barnabas to Antioch (Syrian) to be about the time that Paul wrote his letter to the Galatian churches, possibly (Pisidian) Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.



¹ Tom Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 13-28* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 26.

Perhaps this is why Luke emphasises the idea of ‘grace’ in verse 26. The controversy which led to Paul writing his letter to the Galatian churches was bound up in the idea of God’s grace – how do the Jews or the Gentiles become Christ followers?

Acts 15:19-21

And so James and the others work out the double principle of *no needful circumcision* on the one hand and *no needless offence* on the other.²

What might a statement of this kind sound like today in our culture?

Acts 17

The theme of suffering and then God’s rescue is a repeating theme throughout the Old Testament.

What are some of the stories of the OT that show this theme?

This is of course the story of Jesus. It is this that shows his as Messiah.

Paul continues to have a special place of encouragement for the church in Thessalonica – read 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 3:1–5.

Athens

Acts 17:10-31

Paul now goes up against the prevailing philosophical idea of his time, in Athens, the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.

Epicureans believed that the gods had nothing to do with the world of humans and so the goal in life was to gain maximum pleasure for a quiet and sedate existence.

Stoics believed that each person had within them a ‘divine’ spirit or force. This force could be discovered through thoughtful living and rationality.

² Tom Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 13-28* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 45.