

"God's Love Story Sermon Outlines"

by Doug Hamilton

Section 33: God's Love Story is Worldwide! (The Book of Acts)

There is a tendency for the Christian community to view their faith from a regional or national point of view. God's Love Story has always and will always be a worldwide perspective. While Jesus was in His earthly ministry He communicated a worldwide presence of the gospel.

- In Matthew 5:13-14 Jesus proclaimed that we are the *"salt of the earth"* and the *"light of the world."*
- In John 8:12 Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world."*
- John 1:29 refers to Jesus as *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*

He always held WORLDWIDE perspective the Love Story of God. Before He ascended into heaven, He gave the apostles the Great Commission to take the gospel out to the world. He was reiterating a WORLDWIDE view.

- In Matthew 28:19 He said to *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..."*
- In Mark 16:15 He commanded them to *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel..."*
- In Luke 24:47 Jesus told the apostles that *"forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."*

These were the last earthly words which Jesus would speak with them, for He ascended up to heaven to be with God shortly thereafter. We know what was on His mind and it had to do with holding onto God's Love Story with a worldwide perspective. No one writing from the Bible confirms this better than the Book of Acts. It is in the Book of Acts we find the reiterated command of Jesus to His apostles that they were to wait in Jerusalem for the launch of the worldwide Gospel Love Story. He used a three-fold approach.

1. **Jerusalem**: This was the local work, the birthplace of Christ's church. This is where we find tens of thousands of Jews hearing the gospel for the first time. During the unveiling of God's Love Story on the Day of Pentecost there were 3,000 that converted to Jesus (Acts 2:41). They took the local mission very seriously and in just a couple months they were already over 5,000 converts (Acts 4:4). The enemies of God continued their local persecution, but the local mission kept sharing God's Gospel Love Story. *Acts 5:14* *"...all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number."*

We have an obligation, no...a privilege, to share Christ with our families, our neighbors, our friends, our co-workers and even our enemies. These are the people whom God has allowed in our direct circle of influence. There is a LOCAL mission to the spreading of God's Love Story, but it is only part of the worldwide perspective we are to hold.

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2. **Judea and Samaria**: In Acts 8:1 Saul was persecuting the church in Jerusalem because they were sharing the gospel, so “...*they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria...*” Judea and Samaria were regions, covering the nation with which Jerusalem represented. These two regions made up what is referred to as NATIONAL missions. Those Christians in the first-century had a heartfelt desire to take this gospel to their fellow citizens of the nation. This included people they did not yet know and were likely very different from their ordinary circle of relationships.

The rural folk of Judea were not as “sophisticated” and “cultured” as those in Jerusalem, but they needed Jesus just the same. The Samaritans were the half-breed cousins of the Jews and did not have any dealings with the Jerusalemites (John 4:9), but there was a sincere obligation to share God’s Love Story of the gospel with them. They were scattered through persecution, but still *went about preaching the word* (Acts 8:3). Philip went to Samaria and “*began proclaiming Christ to them*” (Acts 8:5) and the result, *they were being baptized, men and women alike* (Acts 8:12). The first-century church wanted and needed to share the gospel on a national level, just like Jesus commanded.

We also must have a national perspective when it comes to our possession of God’s Love Story. We need to be reaching out and working with the other congregations in our area. We need to be strengthening the kingdom in our state and in our region. We need to be involved in national missions like on the American Indian reservations, among our inner city poor, with our preaching schools and brotherhood colleges, with our Bible camps and other youth ministries. There is a NATIONAL perspective to God’s Love Story, but that is only part of the worldwide perspective we are to possess.

3. **The Uttermost Parts of the Earth**: In Acts 11:19 we find the gospel spreading beyond the region going INTERNATIONAL. God’s Love Story spread to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch. It was then the apostles saw the need to send Barnabas as a missionary to further the work and spread the gospel (Acts 11:22). The work was so great that he went to Tarsus to recruit Paul into the mission (11:25). By the time we get to Acts 13, there was an all-out organized mission put together which we call the First Missionary Journey. Paul, Barnabas and John Mark traveled to Cyprus and through Asia, spreading the gospel (Acts 13:4-14:26). There were many more thousands converted along the way. When the mission team finally returned to Antioch they “*gathered the church together...*” and “...*began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles*” (Acts 14:27). They were celebrating because they carried out the command of Jesus to take the gospel INTERNATIONALLY.

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In Acts 16:36 a new mission team was sent out on the Second Missionary Journey. They traveled back through the other international locations and beyond. By the time it was over, the church was strong in not only Asia, but also in Europe (16:36-18:22). When they returned to Antioch there was once again celebration because they fulfilled the international command of Jesus and the blessings were great!

From Acts 18:23 to 21:14 there was a Third Missionary Journey which reinforced the strength of the international churches and further spread the gospel Love Story. By the time they returned to Jerusalem there were tens of thousands of new and stronger converts. They had not diminished their international perspective of God's Love Story.

Before the Book of Acts was complete, Paul was being sent to Rome to be judged by Caesar in what we call the Fourth Missionary Journey. By the time he left the Roman prison there was already a plan to make a Fifth Missionary Journey which would hopefully take them further with the gospel, all the way to Spain (Romans 15:24-28). The first-century church took serious the INTERNATIONAL perspective in the approach to God's Love Story, but the INTERNATIONAL perspective alone is not a worldwide.

We also have an obligation to internationally reach out to the congregations of the Lord's church in the many nations of the world. There are some great works just waiting to be born if only the brotherhood would take notice. Some of the greatest mission work in the world is not here, but in the poor countries of the world where a small amount of money will go a long way. Every congregation in the brotherhood should strive INTERNATIONALLY in their evangelism efforts, for it is commanded by Jesus.

Conclusion:

We hear it said that we must focus locally before going to other mission fields. There is also a movement in congregations to focus on Bible camps and works of the nearby congregations, but ignoring the other two fronts. There are some out there that say our entire focus should be on overseas mission, ignoring local and national.

Who is right? Jesus is right, for He said to have a WORLDWIDE PERSPECTIVE to His sweet Love Story. We as Christians must always hold a WORLDWIDE perspective of a WORLDWIDE Savior with a WORLDWIDE hope of eternal life. If we ever fail to keep that in mind, then we shall be no better than localized idol worshippers from the Old Testament. God's Love Story is WORLDWIDE and we must never forget it.