

The Root of Jewish Rebellion and Rejection.

Acts 13:42-47.

Sunday morning, December 5, 2010.

I. Events as they unfolded in Antioch.

A. The initial response.

Verse 43 gives us the initial Jewish response to the preaching of the gospel. It was on the whole a positive response: “Many of the Jews and devout proselytes (converts to Judaism) followed Paul and Barnabas who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.” A good number responded positively and became disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. What changed all that?

The answer unfolds before our eyes when we look at what happened the next Sabbath day.

1. Verse 44, and 45 tell us that on the next Sabbath just about the whole city came together to hear the word of God.
2. When the Jews saw the Gentile multitudes they were filled with envy or jealousy. (The Greek indicates a negative emotional zeal here.)
Jealousy is the better translation here:
 - Envy is the desire to have what others have, but it does not mind others having them.
 - Jealousy is the desire to have what others have because we believe that we should have it and others should not, as happens when another man steals the affections of your wife, or when the world walks away with the affections of the Lord’s children. (Webster’s Dictionary.)
3. This negative emotional zeal vented itself in “contradicting and blaspheming and opposing the things spoken by Paul.”
Why this fierce reaction? Why the jealousy?

II. The bigger picture of the gospel.

A. Redemptive history is the story of two “covenant heads,” each having his own household and legacy following him:

1. The first man or first Adam, who by his fall into sin subjected his posterity to a legacy of death, destruction and disintegration. 1 Corinthians 15:45-49
2. The second man or second Adam who by His righteous life and substitutionary death left His posterity a legacy, or inheritance, of forgiveness, reconciliation and everlasting life.
3. The promise of the coming of the second Adam was given at the time of the fall as “the seed of the woman” who would crush the serpent’s head. Genesis 3:15.

B. The period leading to the coming of the second Adam. (Old Testament history).

1. This involved the calling, preserving and uniting into a nation, a people through which the second Adam would come into the world.
 - At first these were just individual families; Adam – Noach – Abraham.
 - Then it was the posterity of Abraham to whom God promised that in His seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Genesis 12:1-3.

2. This also involved creating a temporary home for Abraham's descendants so that they might have a cohesive existence until the second Adam would come.
 - This the Lord did when He delivered His people out of Egypt and He brought them into their own temporary home of Canaan. Once the second Adam came, He would bring them to the better city and country. Hebrews 11:15,16. Canaan was only a type and figure of this better and heavenly country.
 - The Lord also gave them a specific lifestyle meant to keep them separate from the nations around them until the second Adam would come. (Clean and unclean foods and objects and means of purification.)
 - The Lord gave them a specific place where He would dwell in their midst; He gave them specific rituals; ways in which they could draw near to Him and worship Him. These rituals indicated His willingness to forgive them and to restore them to the place of fellowship and blessing with Himself.
 - The Lord gave them a sign that they belonged to Him, which was circumcision, indicating that through them the promised Seed would come into the world.
3. What must be stressed is the provisional or temporary nature of all these things until the promised Seed, the second Adam, would come. And with His coming the provisional things would all fall away, like so much scaffolding falls away from a newly constructed building. From the land to the people to the way of life to the way of worship, it would all be absorbed and fulfilled in the reality of the life and ministry and the legacy of the second Adam.

III. The implications of this for the Jews.

- A. The Jews saw themselves as God's special people, and because of this superior to the Gentile nations around them who did not know God.
- B. With the coming of the second Adam anything that had set the Jews apart as special (Circumcision, Temple, City, Land and life-style) suddenly became meaningless and it fell away.
- C. Christ totally did away with the special-ness of the Jew. He leveled the playing field. Suddenly the Gentile was as loveable to God as any Jew had ever been. God had concluded all under sin that He might have mercy on all. Rom. 11:32.
- D. With that the quality of jealousy was aroused in the hearts of the Jews. The Gentiles now had favor with God without ever taking the trouble of becoming Jews first. Jealousy, because that favor and special-ness, so they thought, should rightfully belong to them alone.
- E. So they rejected the gospel, and judged themselves unworthy, of eternal life.

IV. Jealousy and you.

What if the Lord gives more brains, more brawn, more beauty or more blessings to someone else, and seems to pass you by, will you give place to the spirit of jealousy? Remember that the blessedness of your soul does not consist in any of these things, but only in the presence of the Lord himself; fellowship with Him; therefore aim no higher than to humbly take your station in life before Him.