

GOD'S END-TIME STRATEGY

For years I've been dissatisfied with just asking God for revival. We've had those. And they've served a purpose, but I've been asking for a restoration of New Testament apostolic Christianity like in the book of Acts, which I believe will usher in His return. Because of this, it is important to carefully examine the book of Acts and take note of any patterns and insights into restoring ancient ruins. So we're going to dive into Acts starting with chapter 13. Why chapter 13?

I believe that from chapter 13 on, we see the best example of NT Christianity and apostolic building through the Apostle Paul and his missionary journeys. But here is something crucial to keep in mind as we go through our journey—the picture of the ekklesia in the book of Acts is showing their progression of revelation. One of the mistakes Christians make in studying the Bible is not understanding this and then proof texting to create doctrine.

For example, when the Lord was resurrected and ascended heaven, it hasn't even entered the apostles' minds that the way of salvation would be opened to non-Jews a.k.a. Gentiles. We see this revelation shifting the early ekklesia dramatically with the salvation and Spirit-baptism of Cornelius and his house. This plus Paul and Barnabas' work created a problem—did Gentile believers have to follow the Law. They convened a council and determined that was not the case based on the prophecies of David's tabernacle. But that one issue of the Law had to be fleshed out over decades. And we see in Paul's writings his stronger and stronger argument against it.

Remember, that even after Peter knew Gentiles were welcomed into the kingdom, he was playing a hypocrite in this area and Paul confronted him. According to Paul's record in Galatians, Peter was not practicing the Law when around Gentile believers, but when the brothers from Judea came, he'd quit even associating with them and go back to the Law. Paul called him out on it in front of everybody.

There are so many examples of continued revelation that we must discern whether what we're reading is the full revelation or only what that person has at that time. The entire book of Job is God confronting Job's wrong theology about Himself. Another example is, I believe, in Ecclesiastes that says that there's nothing new under the sun. But when God became Man, that was new. When He cast out demons, that was new. In the OT, they believed God made people sick. We find in the NT,

that Jesus came to take that away. And, even today, some Christians try to live under the OT mentality in a NT era.

You're going to see the same thing in Paul's life—an ongoing revelation of who he was in Christ that made him almost untouchable. And as you see this revelation, you will be blessed and walk away with a sense of incredible destiny and vision. So let's dive in!

SENT OUT

Acts 13:1–5 ESV

¹ Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.

I'm sure you can imagine the excitement and nothing can stop us mentality! We're anointed and called out to do this work! No demon and no human can stop us now! And things start off pretty good. They go through the entire island as far as Paphos. It's there that they encounter "a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus." He was the "spiritual advisor to the regional governor, Sergius Paulus, considered by many to be a wise and intelligent leader (TPT)." Sergius requested a meeting with Barnabas and Saul to hear the message of God's word, but Elymas, the sorcerer opposed them. Paul then spoke temporary blindness over the magician and they led him away. Sergius believed and was astonished at the teaching. We find out that John went back home in verse 13 (probably offended by Paul's heavy-handed style).

Acts 13:14–16 ESV

¹⁴ but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it." ¹⁶ So Paul stood up, and

motioning with his hand said:

“Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen.

As was Paul’s custom, they go to the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia where he delivers the good news. At first things seem great.

Acts 13:42–46 ESV

⁴² As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. ⁴³ And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.

⁴⁴ The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. ⁴⁶ And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

The “WHOLE CITY” came out to hear the word of the Lord, which sparked envy in the hearts of the Jewish leaders just like they crucified the Lord out of envy. It’s the same devil. Reviling means to blaspheme, revile, hurt the reputation with reports and words, speak evil of, slander, etc. toward God or even man. Paul and Barnabas soundly rebuked them and turned to the Gentiles.

Acts 13:48–52 ESV

⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. ⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. ⁵¹ But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. ⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Note, the Jews “incited the devout women of high standing and leading men of the city” and stirred up persecution again Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their district. Incited is “stir up hostility against” like

we've been seeing with mobs of rioters and thugs like Antifa and BLM. Note that they targeted the "devout women of high standing and leading men of the city." So Paul and Barnabas go to Iconium probably rejoicing at being persecuted for Christ. Their disciples were "filled with joy and the Holy Spirit."

Acts 14:1–7 ESV

¹ Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. ² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³ So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. ⁴ But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. ⁵ When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, ⁶ they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country, ⁷ and there they continued to preach the gospel.

Continuing their custom, they go to the synagogue and spoke to both Jews and Greeks and many believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against them. But Paul and Barnabas were able to stay for a "sufficient time" (def. of phrase "long time") to get a work started. And we see in verse 5, "an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews WITH THEIR RULERS to mistreat and stone them..." and they fled to Lystra and Derbe. This is now the second city they were prematurely ran out of.

At Lystra, Paul healed a man crippled from birth. When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they believed Paul and Barnabas were gods in the "likeness of men." The priest of Zeus brought oxen and garlands to the gates to offer a sacrifice. Paul and Barnabas were able to calm the crowds down and deliver the good news of the kingdom, but "even with these words, they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them" ([Acts 14:8-18](#)). But then the same ole, same ole started again.

Acts 14:19–23 ESV

¹⁹ But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. ²⁰ But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹ When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made

many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³ And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Paul was dead. In fact, the passage in [2 Corinthians 12](#) where Paul wrote about a man who was caught up to the third heavens, that is referring to this incident here in [Acts 14:19](#). Paul was dead. Listen to TPT of this passage:

Acts 14:19–20 TPT

¹⁹ Some of the Jews who had opposed Paul and Barnabas in Antioch and Iconium arrived and stirred up the crowd against them. They stoned Paul and dragged his body outside the city and left him for dead.

²⁰ When the believers encircled Paul's body, he miraculously stood up! Paul stood and immediately went back into the city. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

The Greek word "rose up" is *anistemi* and is used 27 times to refer to raising the dead. Paul has now given his life for the gospel, but Jesus resurrected him. Things are not going that great. He's been ran out of every town. But they did manage to start some *ekklesias* and were able to strengthen them on the way back through.

After attending the Jerusalem Council to determine whether Gentiles had to follow the Law, Paul and Barnabas wanted to go visit the *ekklesias*, but Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them again. Paul was having none of it. John Mark abandoned them. It says that "there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other" ([Acts 15:39](#)). This was a "severe argument based on intense difference of opinion." That might surprise you that they had a knock-down drag-out fight as apostles, but it happens.

Paul and Silas head out where Paul picked up Timothy on the way. Paul was on his way to Asia, but he had a night vision of a man of Macedonia calling them to help them.

Acts 16:11–15 ESV

¹¹ So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is

a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

I hope you see from what we studied so far, the role women played in the early church and how many were prominent and business owners! Lydia was very important in the early church. She hosted the apostles when they traveled through and was personally disciplined by Paul. Things seemed to be changing and going really well until...

Acts 16:16–24 ESV

¹⁶ As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." ¹⁸ And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

¹⁹ But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. ²⁰ And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. ²¹ They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." ²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³ And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

Paul and Silas worshipped God in jail and so He sent an earthquake to get them out. The jailer and his household were born again. Things worked for good for sure. But Paul was starting to figure out that he didn't have to put up with this abuse and used his rights as a Roman citizen and then took his time leaving! Lol.

Acts 16:35–40 ESV

³⁵ But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, “Let those men go.” ³⁶ And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace.” ³⁷ But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out.” ³⁸ The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. ³⁹ So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. ⁴⁰ So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

Many Christians think that persecution is God’s will just because He said that you will be hated and by many tribulations, you enter the kingdom of heaven. Those are statements of fact not preference. There’s absolutely nothing wrong with using our rights as citizens to our benefit.

Acts 17:1–3 ESV

¹ Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”

Acts 17:4–9 ESV

⁴ And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. ⁵ But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. ⁶ And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, ⁷ and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” ⁸ And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. ⁹ And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

Here we have “wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar...” which sounds awfully familiar to our time in America with mobs burning down cities and attacking those who believe in conservative values.

Acts 17:10–15 ESV

¹⁰ The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹ Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. ¹² Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. ¹³ But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds. ¹⁴ Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. ¹⁵ Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

Now the Jews are following Paul from city to city. He can't get anything done. While waiting for his team in Athens, Paul delivered the most brilliant sermon ever to the stoics and philosophers (Athens was riddled with them). The results were dismal.

Acts 17:32–34 ESV

³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” ³³ So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

To many of them, Paul was a babbler. A babbler was “applied to a person who is an information scavenger one who is not able to say anything worthwhile.” But with the Athenians, specifically, they applied this name to “those who made their living by collecting and selling refuse they found in the market places. Therefore, they were men of no account, low and contemptible persons.”

Paul is at a low place. His work is frustrated at every turn. He has asked God to remove the “thorn in his side, the messenger of Satan sent to buffet him” three times. The Lord assured him that His grace was sufficient for him. But don't take that response as Paul having to stay in

this place in ministry. The grace was needed for his current level of revelation. But he was about to get a strategy that would change things!

THE STRATEGY

Acts 18:1–3 ESV

¹ After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ² And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, ³ and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.

Paul strikes up a business partnership with Aquila and Priscilla making tents. Even though he still “reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath (v. 4),” he was now actively engaged in the marketplace. And who needs a lot of tents? The Roman Army. Of course, we can’t know for sure that was one of their clients, but it wouldn’t surprise me. Now watch what happened next.

Acts 18:5–11 ESV

⁵ When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. ⁶ And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” ⁷ And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸ Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. ⁹ And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” ¹¹ And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Paul’s ministry team finally arrived and found Paul as usual occupied with the word. And, as usual, the Jews opposed and reviled him. And, as usual, Paul shook out his garments and went to the Gentiles. He then left and went next door. LOL! This is the same Titus that Paul wrote a letter to later when Titus was the overseer of churches in Crete. He died there when he was 92-years-old! Paul also led the synagogue ruler, Crispus and his household to the Lord along with “many of the Corinthians.”

I want to read between the lines a bit on what the Lord told Paul in a vision. It's obvious that Paul was afraid that the same thing was going to happen again—Jews stir up trouble, he gets imprisoned or killed, and the work is hindered. But this time, He tells him not to be afraid “for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you.” Wasn't God with Paul before? What's changed? We could say that God already had many in the city who were His people, but He had people in other cities. And that really didn't matter because it was the leading men and women along with government officials that mattered. Sure enough, what Paul feared happened.

Acts 18:12–17 ESV

¹² But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, ¹³ saying, “This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.” ¹⁴ But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. ¹⁵ But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things.” ¹⁶ And he drove them from the tribunal. ¹⁷ And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.

Wait, what?! THIS time the proconsul (like a governor today) shut the Jews down immediately before Paul could even open his mouth! He refused to judge the matter and drove them out of his courtroom. And then the Jews attacked Sosthenes, the new synagogue ruler, and beat in in the courtroom! I love the last phrase, “But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.” LOL LOL! Again, what changed? What made it where Paul stayed 18 months in Corinth? **I believe that Paul became a businessman who was valuable and relevant to the city he was in.** He was no longer “rabble.” He was a respected businessman who provided a valuable service. And if the Roman Army was his biggest client, you can bet there was no way Gallio was going to touch this one!

We see the same pattern everywhere Paul went.

Acts 19:8–12 ESV

⁸ And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the

disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

¹¹ And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.

Once Paul became a businessman, he started operating in “extraordinary miracles” using the TOOLS OF HIS TRADE—his work apron and sweat rags. Even more extraordinary is the impact in the spirit realm. In vv. 13-17, we read the story of the Seven Sons of Sceva who tried to cast out a demon in the name of Jesus. The demon finally tired of the efforts and beat the you know what out of them driving them out of the house. But listen to this statement:

Acts 19:15 ESV

¹⁵ But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?”

Rick Renner, a Greek scholar, says that the “Jesus I know” means that the demon knew of Jesus by acquaintance (the Greek definition) and the “Paul I recognize” means that this spirit had INVESTIGATED Paul and knew him by reputation! I find it very interesting that all of this happened after Paul became a business owner.

Later when Demetrius tried to start a riot and get Paul ran out of town, the town clerk put an end to it.

Acts 19:35–41 ESV

³⁵ And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, “Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? ³⁶ Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. ³⁷ For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. ³⁸ If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. ³⁹ But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. ⁴⁰ For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give

to justify this commotion.”⁴¹ And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

From this point on, Paul was protected until it was time for him to go to Rome where he knew jail and possibly even death awaited him. But that was his choice and in his power. There wasn't anymore nonsense of riots and being ran out of town.

I hope you see that Paul had to learn these things and his authority. But he also had to get a strategy in place, which was in the marketplace for where God's grace was sufficient for him, the strategy God gave him to him to a place of treading all opposition.