

BIBLE STUDY
May 13, 2019

THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 14: 21-27

Revelation 21: 1-5a

John 13: 31-33a, 34-35

1. Acts 14: 21-27

- Barnabas had been sent by the apostles in Jerusalem to Antioch to investigate what was reported that Gentiles were becoming believers in Jesus. Barnabas recognized the work of the Holy Spirit in their conversions and encouraged them in their new found faith. Then he went to tarsus and found Saul and brought him to Antioch where they spent a year making many disciples and where they were first called Christians.
- Barnabas and Paul were entrusted with a relief mission to bring the donations of the churches to the believers in Judea who were suffering the effects of a famine. They returned to Jerusalem where they were commissioned to bring the word to the gentiles. The elders lay their hands on them as a sign of commissioning. John Mark is sent with them.
- They travel to Seleucia, Cyprus, Paphos, and Perga in Pamphylia, Antioch in Pisidia (where Paul gave a speech in the synagogue), Iconium, Lystra and Derbe in Lyconia, back to Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. They preached to both Jews and Gentiles. Some received their word and others rejected and persecuted them. They encouraged those who were already Christian and were being persecuted for their faith in Jesus.
- V. 21: This is the final leg of their first missionary journey. They make many converts.
- V. 22: They encourage those who already believe and who are being persecuted for their faith in Jesus, reminding them that Jesus told them that they would face persecution.
- V. 23: They appoint presbyters (leaders) in each of the local communities. They commended them to the Lord in whom they placed their faith. They probably commissioned them by laying hands on them. The roots of ordination. Presbyter is the forerunner of the word priest.
- When they arrive back in Antioch, they give a report to the church of what has been accomplished by the grace of God. They give credit to God's grace not themselves. The opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles is a major turn in the new Christian faith. They considerate it the work of the Holy Spirit that Gentiles are becoming Christians without first becoming Jews.

2. Revelation 21: 1-5a

- This is the final vision of the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is meant to give hope to a people who are suffering under a terrible persecution. Many are being killed. Others are renouncing their faith in order to save their

lives. This is a word of hope and encouragement through the symbol of a new heaven and a new earth.

- V. 1: There is a new heaven and a new earth. The old heaven and earth is where the persecuted Christians live now. This will pass away. Everything that distressed them will cease. The sea was thought to be where evil reside. It will end being a refuge for evil.
- V. 2: A totally new city—a holy city, a New Jerusalem—will come down from heaven from God. The earthly Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans—the new heavenly city will not just be a restoration or rebuilding of the old city but a totally new entity composed not of buildings but of people. It is people that are being fashioned. This people is as beautiful as a bride adorned for her husband. God is the groom. The people will be one with God just as bride and groom are one.
- V. 3: God will dwell with his people (like he did in the Garden of Eden.) They will be God's people and he will be their God.
- V. 4: He will remove everything that hurt or distressed them: tears, death, mourning, wailing, and pain. God is doing something radically new.
- V. 5: God pronounces from his throne that he will make all things new.

3. John 13: 31-33a, 34-35

- This is the Introduction to the Final Discourse
- There are two themes: Jesus is going away and the disciples must love one another as Jesus loved them.
- V 31: This happens right after Judas has left the upper room. This is the hour. Jesus has frequently spoken about his hour having not yet come. Now it has come; it is here. The hour is when he will be crucified or "lifted up." He, the Son of Man will be glorified and God the father will also be glorified. Glorify means to be revealed. God the Father will reveal himself as love when Jesus is crucified. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son..." Jesus is revealed as the one who hands himself over to the Father in obedience and love.
- V. 32: The glorification is mutual and happens all at once. The glorification encompasses the crucifixion, death, resurrection, return to the Father, and sending of the Spirit.
- V 33: My children—a term of endearment that intensified the pain at the loss of the presence of Jesus. The disciples are like little children losing their parents. Jesus will be leaving them. He will be arrested and put to death. He will be in the tomb three days. Ultimately, he is returning to the Father. They cannot come with him yet.
- V 34: In his absence Jesus gives a new commandment to govern how they are to act in his absence. They are to love one another with the same kind of self-sacrificing love that Jesus has shown to them and that was symbolized in the washing of the feet. The bond of love among them and for each other—even to the point of giving up their life for one another—will replace the love that Jesus had for them on earth.

- V 35: When the disciples manifest this kind of self-sacrificing love for one another, people will recognize that they are the disciples of Jesus who gave himself in love so totally and completely, even unto death.