

LORD OF THE HARVEST
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Acts 16:1-40

1. In this chapter we see the Holy Spirit functioning as the Lord of the Harvest.
2. Jesus referenced the Lord of the Harvest in Matthew 9:36-38.
Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. 38 "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."
3. Throughout the Scriptures we see the three Persons of the Trinity working as one, but in the Old Testament God the Father is prominent, in the gospels God the Son is prominent, and in the book of Acts God the Spirit is prominent.
4. We are part of what is referred to as The Church Age, and during this dispensation the Holy Spirit is at work calling out and preparing the Bride of Christ for the Lord's soon return for His blood-bought Bride.
5. In verses 1-5 we see Paul:
 - a. Embarking on his second missionary journey in the company of Silas having had a falling out with Barnabas.
 - b. Enlisting Timothy to join him in the work.
 - c. Instructing and encouraging churches he had helped to establish on his first missionary journey.
6. In verses 6-10 we see the Holy Spirit functioning as the Lord of the Harvest in union with the Father and the Son.
 - a. Paul and his companions were forbidden by the **Holy Spirit** to continue their ministry in Asia Minor.
 - b. They were not permitted by the **Spirit of Jesus** to turn north into what would be new territory for them.
 - c. Finally they were called by **God** to leave Asia Minor and to "come over to Macedonia (Southeastern Europe)."
7. In obedience to the leadership of the Holy Spirit they crossed over into Macedonia and made their way to Philippi, the leading city of that Roman province.
8. For the remainder of this message I want to focus on how the Holy Spirit worked in this lives of three different people; the kinds of people you and I rub elbows with every day.

I. Lydia, a business woman and worshipper of God. 11-15

- A. There was no synagogue in Philippi so on the Sabbath Day Paul and his companions went outside the gate of the city to the riverside supposing that they would find a place of prayer where Jews might gather.

B. Finding a group of women they began to share the Gospel, and the Lord opened Lydia's heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

C. Lydia, a business woman from Thyatira, was a worshipper of God, but she was not saved.

D. She was, from a human standpoint, a good, moral, responsible person who was worshipping God based on her limited understanding.

NOTE: We encounter other honest worshippers of God in the book of Acts; people like the Ethiopian Eunuch and Cornelius the Roman centurion.

E. As we preach, teach, and try to reach people we must depend on the Holy Spirit to do what only He can do.

F. Having responded to the Gospel Lydia was baptized, and, being a woman of means, she provided Paul and his companions with food and housing while they were in Philippi.

G. There are many religious, honest, moral, god-fearing people like Lydia in our world today who are trusting in themselves rather embracing the Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

NOTE: They are trusting in their self-righteousness having never come to see themselves as unrighteous in God's sight and therefore ignorant of their need to repent. Only through repentance and faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice can such persons receive the gift of righteousness.

II. A slave-girl, a victim of her circumstances. 16-24

A. Here was a young woman who had no control over her life.

1. She was a slave.

2. She was a slave who was possessed by a spirit of divination.

3. She was bringing her owners much profit by fortune-telling.

NOTE: There are many people in this world, who for various reasons, are not in control of their own lives.

B. It happened, as Paul and his companions were on their way to the place of prayer they met this young woman who began to cry out, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation."

C. This went on for a number of days until Paul, being greatly annoyed (troubled, grieved, distressed, displeased), turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" and it came out of her that very moment.

D. The response of her masters was just as swift when they realized that she had lost her value.

1. They seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities.

2. The authorities brought them to the chief magistrates where they were accused, stripped of their outer garments, beaten with rods, and thrown into prison.

3. The jailor was commanded to guard them securely so he brought them into an even more secure area and fastened their feet in the stocks.

NOTE: Here we meet our next example.

III. The jailor, a man who did what was expected of him. 25-34

A. Here was a man who was just doing his job; trying to make a living for himself and his family.

B. More than likely he had become somewhat callous towards those who were placed in his charge.

C. But there was something different about the two prisoners who arrived beaten and bloodied.

D. They seemed to accept the situation with no animosity towards those who had mistreated them, or even towards him as he performed his duty by securing them in such a way that would absolutely prevent their escape.

E. Little did he know that he was about to come face to face with a Power that was far greater than that of those he answered to or the restraints he had available to him.

F. About midnight, while Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God (probably the Psalms), a great earthquake occurred, every door of the prison was opened, and every prisoner's chains were unfastened.

G. Realizing that he would be held responsible for all of his prisoners escaping the jailor was about to commit suicide when Paul cried out with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"

NOTE: That in itself was a notable miracle.

H. In fear he cried out, "What must I do to be saved?"

NOTE: God knows how to get our attention.

I. On hearing the Gospel his fear turned to faith, and his faith to fullness of joy.

1. He and his family were all baptized because of their repentance and faith.
2. His callousness turned to concern.
3. His life and his home were transformed.

APPLICATION

1. In the course of living our lives for Christ we are going to encounter many different kinds of people and experience various situations and circumstances-some good and some bad.

2. The Holy Spirit, the Lord of the Harvest, will allow and disallow, cause and prevent, and provide and withhold.

3. All will be done to advance God's purposes in our lives and through our lives.

4. May we live before God a life that He can use or abuse based on the need of the moment and the needs of those around us.

5. Let us speak to those who will listen, confront the evil that is at work in the lives of others, and learn to pray and praise when faced with trying and difficult times.

6. If we do we will see the Lord open hearts to respond to the Gospel, we will see victims become victors, and we will see pawns become servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.