

# TO THOSE "AFAR OFF" (Acts 2:39)

## INTRODUCTION

1. Ever wondered about the choices the HS made in telling the story of redemption?
2. WHY are some events recorded and **not** others?
3. HS inspired men to write, but certainly **MORE** happened than is recorded
4. Especially true of the book of Acts - **Acts is the central BOOK of the entire Bible**
5. Acts reveals establishment of church AND means of ENTRY into it
6. Everything **BEFORE** Acts reveals God's plan for *getting saved* (lineage of Christ)
7. Everything **AFTER** Acts reveals the plan for *staying saved* (epistles, instruction)
8. **In early pages of ACTS we are SELECTIVELY provided 5 stories of salvation**
9. Why did HS choose these **select** stories from 1000's that could have been told?

## LET ME SUGGEST ONE POSSIBILITY

10. In **Gen 12:1-3** a Promise is made to **ALL**
11. The Promise is repeated in **Acts 2:17, 21**

## NOW NOTE AN INTERESTING STATEMENT

12. IN **Acts 2:39** --The promise, we are told is for **ALL WHO ARE AFAR OFF**
13. That verse gives **clue** why HS chose to reveal the **5 salvation stories of Acts**
14. Thousands of conversion stories in early days of church --HS chose 5 to tell because they **CONFIRM THE PROMISE IS TO ALL – EVEN THOSE AFAR OFF**

## I. CONVERSION #1 - The Jews of Pentecost (Acts 2:22-38)

- A. Ever been in trouble? Done something bad and you are about to be caught?
- B. Remember how desperate and shaky you felt? Terrible sinking feeling?
- C. Now imagine having had a hand in **KILLING** the Son of God!
- D. You don't get any **further** from God than that -- these people **AFAR OFF**
- E. Yet through baptism even they were redeemed!
- F. HS chose this event so we'd know God can save those guilty of the worst of sin!

## II. CONVERSION #2 - The Samaritans (Acts 8:9-24)

- A. **John 4:9** -- Jews have no dealings with Samaritans – bypassed Samaria when traveling
- B. This was worst kind of discrimination - viewed as **DOGS**, scum of the earth
- C. Why? **2 Kings 17:23-24** -the Jews remaining in Israel intermarried foreigners
- D. They were half-breeds, impure stock, good only for **ridicule** and **scorn**
- E. The Samaritans were **AFAR OFF** in the minds of the Jews – deemed unworthy
- F. But through baptism the men and women of Samaria were redeemed!
- G. HS chose this story so we'd know even **outcasts from society** can be saved!
- H. And no surprise! Jesus had already in his ministry proved **ALL** can be saved
  1. Jesus did **NOT** bypass Samaria – **Jn 4:4** "passed through Samaria"
  2. It was in Samaria He gave hope to the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4)
  3. When Jesus saw a Samaritan He did not see a dog, he did not see an outcast
  4. In all his dealings Jesus never saw a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, a dog
- I. **STORY:** One day, in order to get a class discussion going, a religion professor asked his students what some of the world's great religious leaders might say to an adulterer. The discussion was lively and intense. He was setting up the class to make a point, and when he felt that the time was ripe, he asked what seemed to be the crucial question, "What do you suppose Jesus would have said to an adulterer?"

He was all primed to point out to the class the compassion and understanding which Jesus had for the fallen. He was all set to do his best to make Jesus look greater than all the great religious leaders put together. Once again he asked, "What do you think Jesus would have said to an adulterer?"

One of his students answered, "Jesus never met an adulterer." The professor jumped at the opening. He would show this guy a thing or two about Jesus and about the New Testament. "Yes he did," he responded. "I'll show you in my Bible where...."

The young man interrupted him. "You didn't hear me Doctor. I said Jesus never met an adulterer."

Once again the professor protested. Once again he reached for his New Testament. He started to leaf through its pages turning to the passages, which showed Jesus forgiving the woman taken in adultery. As he turned he also thought about the Samaritan woman at the well.

But before he could get to the verses, the student, spoke out again, this time with a touch of anger in his voice. "You're not listening to what I'm saying. I'm saying **Jesus never met an adulterer**. Do you think when he looked at the woman caught in adultery he saw an adulterer? Do you think he saw an adulterer when he spoke to the woman at the well? Doctor, listen to me! **Jesus never met an adulterer!**"

The professor fell silent. He was being corrected by a student who, in some ways, perhaps understood Jesus better than those who had studied the Bible all their lives.

This story reminds us that one of the most notable characteristics of Jesus was that he paid special attention to the outcasts of society. He identified someone not by their sin or their disease, but by their need.

A review of the NT shows Jesus, the Son of God, Jesus, God in the flesh, to be a GOD OF THE OUTCASTS – a God of all who are **afar off**

### III. CONVERSION #3 - A Foreigner (Acts 8:26-39)

- A. This Ethiopian eunuch was very likely a convert to Judaism -- not born a Jew
- B. I'm amazed at his **dedication** to the Lord - he traveled 1,000+ miles to worship
- C. He was literally **AFAR OFF** -- *geographically* far removed from Jerusalem
- D. Jesus with Samaritan woman at well - **John 4:19-24 – no longer Jerusalem**
- E. This story is provided to show **anyone ANYWHERE** can be saved
- F. Except to visit, Eunuch likely NEVER returned to Jerusalem.
- G. World would be safer place if people realized Jerusalem no longer a holy city.

### IV. CONVERSION #4 - A Persecutor (Acts 9:1-18)

- A. We noted Jews who crucified Christ were amongst those FURTHEST from GOD
- B. What about one who attempted to MURDER the **bride** of Christ?
- C. Jesus did not get married, but the Bible speaks of his bride - the church **Rev 21**
- D. You don't get much further than trying to murder Christ's church
- E. HS chose story - even **worst**, most **despicable** can be saved **Ax 22:12-16**
- F. Paul realized he was AFAR OFF
- G. **1 Tim 1:12-14**

### V. CONVERSION #5 - A Gentile (Acts 10:24-48)

- A. All of the previous conversions were Jews - God's chosen people
- B. Many of them, by their actions had gotten FAR from God -- they were AFAR off
- C. Finally we come to a man who is GOOD! He comes with best recommendation
- D. But still considered outcast by Jews AND Roman soldier – the enemy!
- E. Peter says he shouldn't associate with him
- F. Not only an outcast, but AFAR OFF - a sinner despite his good deeds
- G. HS chose this story so we would see no matter how good we are, we are LOST!
- H. We are afar off because of SIN – even good people are sinners and separated from God (**Isa. 59:2**)  
"Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God."

## **CONCLUSION**

1. Where are you this morning? AFAR OFF?
2. That's what SIN does! It distances us from God – it separates us from Him
3. Do you think you are too bad to serve God – not good enough
4. The beautiful story of Acts tells us NO MATTER how far we have gotten from God we are NOT so far we cannot be saved
5. God keeps his promises – the promise of salvation of for ALL – even you!
6. All you need do is come to Him, believe, repent, confess, be baptized as everyone of these did

Matt Hennecke  
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