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Doctrinal Studies Bible Church

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Date: 7/5/15

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Text: Acts 4:9-12

Series: Ministering to a Spiritually Declining Nation

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### **MINISTERING TO A SPIRITUALLY DECLINING NATION (part four)**

This series of lessons came from a final warning given by Jesus to the Israel of the coming danger of the 5th cycle of divine discipline.

The 5<sup>th</sup> cycle had come to the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC by Assyria. It had come to the Southern Kingdom by Babylon in 586 BC. Then the Southern Kingdom was passed between conquering Gentile nations until they were back in the Land at the time of Rome's rule and Jesus.

This final warning by Jesus was given in the Parable of Tenants (Matt.21:33-46). In the doctrinal point of this parable, Jesus prophesied that the Divine Agency would be taken from the Priest-Nation of Israel and would be given to a people (ethnos) producing the fruit of the kingdom of God (Matt.21:42).

Because of the teaching of Peter and Paul, we understand that their reference to (people/ ethnos) referred to the Church of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:9-12; 1 Pet.2:4-10; Eph.2:20-22).

The Church of Jesus Christ would become the Divine Agency of the Word of God and Evangelism to the world through the Gospel of Grace Salvation (Col.1:24-29).

#### **This lesson will study four points of how to have a great Ministry to a Spiritually Declining Nation.**

The entire ministry of Jesus and His disciples occurred in this spiritual declining apostate nation.

#### **1. The first century church flourished in convert growth during this period of great spiritual apostasy.**

In the Parable of Tenants, Jesus explained that this would occur after the Priest-Nation had killed the only begotten Son of God (Matt.21:38-41). "They took Him and threw Him out of the vineyard and killed Him." (Matt.21:39)

This was the greatest period of spiritual darkness in the biblical history of the Jewish Age. Yet the Church of Jesus Christ grew in unbelievable numbers of converts.

#### **2. In the midst of this period of great spiritual darkness, the Church had unbelievable hope for life.**

Their hope came from the reality of the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ – followed by the Indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1-2). Their story is told in the Book of Acts and other NT books written from it.

Following Pentecost, 120 spiritually mature believers met in a rented room as disciples of Jesus Christ. (Acts 1:12-14).

- Where were the thousands who had gathered for the great miracle healings and feedings of fish and loaves? (Matt.14:13-21) Miracle fish became a flash in the pan.
- Where were the thousands who had lined the streets chanting, "Hosanna, Hosanna?" (Matt.21:8-11) They became Monday quarterbacks while the real players were on the practice field getting ready for the next big game.

**3. By (Acts 2:41), the 120 had grown to 3,120 believers.**

**How did this happen?** It occurred by evangelizing the community with the gospel of grace salvation of Jesus Christ. (Acts 1:8; 2:23-24) (1 Cor.15:3-4; Rom.1:16; Eph.2:8-9).

By Acts 2:47, they were adding believers DAILY to their number.

**4. By (Acts 4:4), this 120 had grown to 8,000 believers. This was during the darkest period of national history.**

**How did this happen?** Just in case we missed it. It happened by the believers evangelizing their community with the Gospel of Grace Salvation. It happened in spite of persecution because this evangelism (Acts 4:3-4)

(Phil.1:16) "I am appointed for the defense of the gospel."

(Rom.1:16) "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Church congregations sprang up in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of earth according to Acts 1:8.

**Know how this happened?**