

Why Do We Need the Black Church?

Theme: Acts 13:1-12 – Our Church vs. The Church

This study draws on Acts 13:1-12 to explore the biblical and historical necessity of the Black Church in America. By examining relevant scripture, key moments in American history, and the writings of influential scholars, we aim to understand the unique role of the Black Church in addressing spiritual, cultural, and social needs.

I. Why This Study?

A. Objective:

1. To explore the biblical foundation of the Church's _____ and _____ in Acts 13:1-12.
2. To understand the historical and ongoing need for the _____ Church within the larger framework of the _____ Church.

B. Relevance:

1. Acts 13 presents the Church in Antioch as a diverse, _____ body that reflects God's kingdom. This diversity is _____ in the Black Church, which emerged to meet specific needs in the face of systemic oppression.
2. The Black Church continues to play a pivotal role in empowering communities and serving as a _____ and _____ force in America.

II. Context of Acts 13:1-12

A. The Church in Antioch:

1. A diverse church with leaders like _____ (a Cypriot Jew), _____ called Niger (likely of African descent), and _____ of Cyrene (North African).
2. This church was intentional about _____, _____, and _____, sending Paul and Barnabas to spread the gospel.

B. Historical Insight:

1. Antioch was a multicultural city and a hub for early Christianity, showing that God's Church transcends _____ and _____ boundaries.
2. Simeon called Niger reflects the presence of Africans in _____ roles from the Church's earliest days.

C. Key Takeaway:

1. Just as God raised up diverse leaders in the Church at Antioch, He has used the Black Church in America to address specific challenges and lead in unique ways.

III. Why Do We Need the Black Church?

A. Historical Role of the Black Church in America:

1. _____: During slavery, the Black Church was a safe haven for enslaved people to worship God, drawing on biblical themes of liberation and hope.
2. _____: The Black Church established schools and colleges, including Howard University, Morehouse College, and Spelman College, to educate freedmen and women.
3. _____: It was the backbone of the Civil Rights Movement, led by figures like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and organizations such as the SCLC.
4. _____: The Black Church has preserved African traditions, music (e.g., gospel), and communal values, blending them with Christian theology.

B. Biblical Perspective:

1. Acts 13 shows that God calls leaders to specific missions. The Black Church mirrors this by addressing _____, _____, and _____ while proclaiming the gospel.

C. American History Insight:

1. In the face of segregation, Black Christians created independent congregations like the _____ (AME) Church, founded by Richard Allen in 1816, to worship freely.
2. During Reconstruction, the Black Church became a center for _____, with many pastors serving as community leaders.
3. The Civil Rights Movement was rooted in Black Churches, exemplified by events like the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which began in _____ Baptist Church.

IV. Our Church vs. The Church

A. Tension Between Local and Universal Church:

1. The Black Church (Our Church) serves the unique needs of _____ communities while contributing to the _____ Church (The Church).

2. Local churches _____ cultural and communal needs, while the universal Church _____ all believers under Christ.
- B. Case Study: Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2-3):
1. The Holy Spirit called Paul and Barnabas for a _____, emphasizing God's intentionality in assigning roles.
 2. Similarly, the Black Church's mission to address racial injustice and community empowerment _____ the broader Church's mission.

V. The Role of the Black Church Today

- A. _____:
1. Continue to disciple believers, proclaim the gospel, and provide a foundation of hope and resilience.
- B. _____:
1. Lead efforts to address systemic issues like poverty, housing inequality, and education reform.
- C. _____:
1. Celebrate the richness of Black worship traditions while fostering unity with the broader Church.

VI. Relevant Scholars

- A. _____: Explored the spiritual resilience of the Black Church in his book *Jesus and the Disinherited*.
- B. _____: Father of Black Liberation Theology, wrote *A Black Theology of Liberation*.
- C. _____: Authored *Righteous Discontent*, examining Black women's role in the Black Church.
- D. _____: Wrote *Slave Religion*, tracing the origins of Black spirituality.
- E. _____: Co-authors of *The Black Church in the African American Experience*.
- F. _____: Examined the history and legacy of the Black Church in *The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song*.
- G. _____: Discusses the Black Church's role in fostering justice and hope in *Prophecy Deliverance!*.
- H. _____: Explores the Black Church's contemporary challenges in *Democracy in Black*.

- I. _____: Early writings on the founding of the AME Church highlight its necessity.
- J. _____: Examines the prophetic voice of the Black Church in his works, including Tears We Cannot Stop.

VII. Prayer Focus:

1. Thank God for the legacy of the Black Church and its leaders.
2. Ask for wisdom to embrace its role within the global Church.
3. Pray for strength to continue addressing injustice while proclaiming the gospel.

Conclusion

The Black Church remains vital because it stands at the intersection of faith, justice, and community. Like the Church in Antioch, it has a distinct mission that complements the global Church, reflecting God's heart for diversity, justice, and hope. Let us honor its legacy while advancing its mission for God's glory.

Discussion Question:

- Why do you think the Black Church emerged as a distinct institution in American history?

Reflection Question:

- What specific ways can our church contribute to both our community and the broader Body of Christ?

Reflection Question:

- How can the Black Church balance its unique mission with its role in the global Church?

Reflection Question:

- How has the Black Church embodied the mission of the Church in Acts 13?