

Acts

The goal of this Bible Class is to give the students a working knowledge of the whole book of Acts. It is based on an expository approach to teaching the Bible, with an emphasis in preparing the students for the worship of our Savior. The various lessons are to be viewed by the teacher as thematic suggestions to help with preparation. While the lessons are not intended to be read to the class word for word, the main ideas should be the substance of what is taught. The teacher, in preparation for the class, should consider reading through the whole curriculum before beginning the class, as well as the book of Acts several times. This will provide the instructor with a broad and comprehensive understanding of Acts as it is being taught. At the end of the course, the class will be concluded with a Bible Knowledge Evaluation. The instructor should be sure to review the material sufficiently that the student is able to correctly answer the questions on the evaluation.

It is important that the instructor be not only knowledgeable about the material, but also able to teach it with enthusiasm and conviction. Students best learn from teachers that are themselves excited about the scriptures. The use of maps, diagrams, white boards etc. is extremely helpful. Some of these have been provided in the curriculum. It is suggested that the class be conducted in an interactive manner. This can be accomplished by having them read short portions of the scripture texts, asking them questions, and wholeheartedly encouraging them to ask questions. All students should be encouraged to bring a Bible to class.

The inclusion of the Westminster Shorter Catechism as part of the curriculum is designed to help the students acquire a broad understanding of Christian doctrine along with the specific Bible teaching. The Elders of the church will coordinate the specific questions and answers to be used in the class.

It will become evident to the teacher that this course curriculum, while not dealing with every verse and concept in the book of Acts, is comprehensive and deeply theological. It is designed to help the students understand the book of Acts in its wider biblical context, with emphasis on its place in the redemptive history of God's covenant people. The students will be confronted with and asked to understand and remember fairly difficult concepts. It should be remembered that children are able to comprehend much more than we often give them credit for. While this class will be a challenge for both the teacher and the students, the rewards for the efforts of those in the class will be surprising and exciting.

Week One – Acts: A Theological Introduction Acts 1

Objective – To introduce the setting of the Book of Acts; to show its connections to the books of Joshua and Luke. To portray the Apostles as faithful witnesses of the events which they saw.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.

- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability**
 - Introduce yourself
 - Introduce your substitute teacher
 - The teacher is asked to take attendance at the beginning of each class period in order to provide encouragement and extra help to students when they miss a class.
 - Make sure all class members know each other’s names.
 - Requirements – Writing utensils, Bibles, a good night’s sleep
 - There will be tests on the outlines of the books and some other material
 - Memory verses will be assigned
 - We will take attendance each week and have some accountability questions as well. For the next few weeks, the question will be, *“Have you gotten a good night’s sleep, brought your Bible and writing materials, worked on your memorization, and done any other assigned homework?”*

❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the questions and answers for this quarter

❖ **Scripture Memorization** – Have the students begin memorizing the following:

Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

[Teacher: Give the students the handout on the last four pages of this lesson.]

❖ **Setting**

Today we begin our study of the book of Acts. The Bible of the saints in the early Church (during the times of the New Testament) was the Old Testament. The writers of the New Testament used the material from the Old to communicate more

clearly. The problem for most of us is that we don't know the Old Testament very well, which means we will have some trouble understanding Acts if we don't keep in mind how the Old Testament is used in it. We have studied some significant Old Testament books together: Joshua and Judges. These are important for us as we study the book of Acts.

[Teacher should very briefly discuss this chart, along with the other handouts at the end of this lesson.]

Similarities between Joshua and Acts

Common Elements	Joshua	Acts
Death of the Covenant Leader	Moses died – Joshua called to conquer	Jesus died – Holy Spirit to conquer
Method of conquest	Sword of iron – Fire from altar as sacrifice	Sword of the Spirit – Word of God- Tongues of fire conquers
Command to servants	Ch. 1, Joshua – take the land according to law	Ch.1, Apostles, witness to earth (Lk. 24:44-53)
Leaders encouraged	Men of Israel (1:16ff), and Angel of the Lord 5:13f)	Angels (1:10-11)
Enter new land through baptism - cleansing	Ch. 3, Crossing the Jordan (baptism) and circumcision	Ch. 2, Baptism of Holy Spirit
Conquest of important city	Ch. 6, Jericho	Ch. 2-4, Jerusalem
Fear of the people in connection with baptism and conquest	Rehab tells of fear of Yahweh and Israel (2:9f; 5:1-2)	Fear on people (2:43, 5:5, 11; 9:31; 19:17)
Some people steal from God and are killed	Ch. 7, Achan	Ch. 5, Ananias & Sapphira
Further victories	Ch. 8, Ai defeated	5:12-32, Successful battles, Church grew
Problems with Gentiles	Ch. 9, Gibeonites included in covenant	Ch. 6, conflict in Church between Jew/Gentile believers
Gentiles attacked and defended	Ch. 10, five kings of Judea attack Gibeonites- saved in victory & conquest of land	Ch. 6-7, Stephan martyred (by 4 Hellenists and Saul) in Judea Church scattered to witness
Land is completely conquered	Ch. 10-12, Land conquered	Ch. 8:1-28:31 World Evangelized

There are also similarities between Judges and Acts. The Spirit-empowered deliverers in Judges are images of the fullest manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit seen in the book of Acts. The Holy Spirit empowers the whole Church to be witnesses, not just in Israel, but to the whole world. Peter and Paul are especially used by the Spirit as leaders of the Spirit empowered people, as well as others (2:4 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55f; 11:24; 13:4,9; 19:6; 20:28; 21:10-11). Just as the judges in the Old Testament did mighty deeds and miraculous works of salvation for the people of Israel, Peter and Paul also did miracles that were used by God to bring the gospel and salvation to the world. We even see Paul taking the Nazirite vow more than once, like Samson did.

In the book of Acts we see that the covenant promises made throughout the Old Testament are being fulfilled. What were the three promises made to Abraham (in Gen. 12:1-3)? [Land, Great Nation/Name, All families of Earth Blessed.] Acts shows us the way in which God had always intended these promises to be fulfilled:

Land, Promised Land, Palestine → Earth

Great Nation, Israel/Jews → Kingdom of God, Jews & Gentiles together

All Families of Earth Blessed → Evangelism and conquest of all the different peoples of the world

The Jews (even the disciples) during the ministry of Jesus had a limited view of what God intended to do through Israel. God had always planned to make His salvation known and to the ends of the earth. Now, in the book of Acts, we see God implementing His plan. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, His resurrection and ascension to heaven, Christ sent His Spirit to begin the final conquest of the world, using the sword that comes out of the mouth of Jesus, the Word of God. This word was to be proclaimed by the disciples, throughout the whole world.

❖ Lesson

I. Introduction to Acts [Turn to Acts 1]

The book of acts was written by Luke, and is the second of two books (the Gospel of Luke). The two go together, almost like two sections in one book (we will look to Luke often for information to help us understand Acts). Both are written to someone named Theophilus (“Friend of God”). Turn to Luke 1:1-4, which says:

*Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order **a narrative** of those things which have been fulfilled among us, ²just as those who from the beginning were **eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us**, ³it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, **to write to you an orderly account**, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴**that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.***

Luke is very concerned that we understand correctly what went on in the life of Jesus (Acts 1:1). The teaching of the Church must be correct, and based on a true witness (eyewitnesses), or the gospel will be perverted. The Gospel is concluded in Luke 24:50-53 this way:

⁵⁰*And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.*

⁵¹*Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried*

up into heaven. ⁵²And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.

The book of Acts takes up where Luke leaves off. Acts 1:1-3 says:

*¹The former account I made [Gospel of Luke], O Theophilus, of **all that Jesus began both to do and teach, ²until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, ³to whom He also **presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*****

Once again we see an emphasis on having an accurate account of what has gone on with Jesus. It must be accurate because the events of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension were the things that the disciples were commanded to tell the world about. For 40 days Jesus was with the disciples, showing Himself, and speaking to them about the Kingdom of God (Cf. 1 Cor. 15:5ff).

II. The Disciples Before Pentecost Acts 1:4-26

A. The Instructions of Christ to the Disciples (vv. 4-8)

Vv. 4-8 tells us a little of what Jesus taught them during this time:

1. He commanded them to **stay** in Jerusalem to **wait** for the Holy Spirit, whom He had promised would come after He ascended to heaven (Mt. 10:20; Lk. 11:13; 12:12; Jn. 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15; 20:22).
2. He taught them that the baptism of John was an image of the coming of the **Baptism of the Holy Spirit** (Mt. 3:11-12; Lk. 3:16-17; Jn. 31-34; 1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:1-4, 16-21; 10:45-48).
3. The disciples asked if it would be at that time He would restore the kingdom to Israel (showing that they did not understand the true nature of the kingdom of God). He said that it was not for them to know when things would be done (God will do things in His own way and in His own time. The reality was that God would surprise them with what the kingdom truly would be).
4. **KEY VERSE 1:8**
“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

This verse (which is your memory verse) tells us basically what happens throughout the rest of the book of Acts. After the Holy Spirit is given to the disciples (which we will see next week), they begin the work of being witnesses

for the Lord (2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39; 13:31; 22:15, etc.). What is a witness? Someone that speaks in court to tell what is known, like an eyewitness (v. 3). The Greek word used here for witness is the word from which we get our English word, “martyr.” In the book of Acts, we see that being a witness often means persecution and giving your life for the message of the gospel. This is very important. With the coming of the New Covenant, death is not a picture of defeat or failure, but as a means of conquest and victory. The opposition that we will see in Acts to the disciples and the gospel message will be a sign to us that the Word of God is changing the world.

As these self-sacrificing witnesses do their work, they will begin in Jerusalem, move on to the rest of Palestine, and then to the ends of the earth. The Book of Acts can be outlined in two major parts (with smaller parts we will learn later):

Chapters 1-12	The Witness in Palestine under Peter
Chapters 13-28	The Witness to the World under Paul

[Teacher: point the students to the outline on their handout. Go over the outline and diagrams briefly and tell the students to memorize these. Show the students where Palestine is on the Map, specifically, Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. Make note of the two-part outline and how it relates to Acts 1:8, Peter and Paul, Jerusalem and Antioch, and the places the gospel is preached.]

B. The Ascension of Christ & Disciples’ Joy (vv. 9-14)

After Jesus concluded His commandments to the disciples (and blessed them, Lk. 24:50), He was taken up and a cloud received Him. This is important because when we read about the cloud, we shouldn’t just think about going up into the sky. In Exodus 19:9 Yahweh spoke to Israel in a cloud, and the throne room of God is filled with smoke in Isaiah 6. The cloud reminds us of the glory-cloud, the Shekhinah Glory, that covered/filled the tabernacle, representing the presence of Yahweh (Ex. 40:34-38). (Cf. Mt. 16:28; 24:30-31; 26:64; Mk. 13:26; 14:62; Lk. 21:27; Rev. 1:7). Turn to Daniel 7:13 and following:

*“I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came **TO** the Ancient of Days, And they **BROUGHT HIM NEAR BEFORE HIM**. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.*

Jesus was received by the Father, and sat at His right-hand to begin His rule forever. The ascension of Jesus to the Father was His enthronement, which means that He will change the world as He rules all things. Jesus is the Christ, which means “anointed King”. He will send His Spirit to empower His disciples, that they might go out into the entire world to witness to His eternal reign. This is the good news that they preached – This is the gospel (which means “good news”) - that Jesus the Savior is on the throne!

Luke makes the point four times in these verses that they saw Him ascend into heaven. They will be able to be witnesses about things they actually saw. We can be witnesses also because God has recorded these things for us here. Two men (angels) appeared to the disciples and comforted them with the reminder that He would return in the same glorious way. This is important because we see several appearance of angels (“messengers”) in the book of Acts (2:10; 5:19; 8:26; 10:3, 7, 22; 11:13; 12:7-11, 15, 23; 27:23).

The disciples were together after the ascension in an upper room (maybe the same as the night of the betrayal). They understood the words of Jesus, and continued in prayer together (about 120 people, including Jesus’ mother, brothers and disciples).

C. Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas (vv. 15-26)

The chapter concludes with the selection of Matthias to replace Judas, the betrayer of Jesus. This was important for them to do because the Lord has chosen 12 Apostles (Mt. 12:2-4; Lk. 6:13-16; Jn. 6:70-71), and prepared them for the work of spreading the gospel and building the Church. The number twelve is important because it corresponds to the twelve tribes of Israel. The Apostles were representatives of the New Israel. Jesus had preached the coming of the Kingdom of God, and in Luke 22:29-30 we read,

“And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, “that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

The Apostles did the right thing by choosing a replacement for Judas. But they did not actually choose Matthias; God did! They prayed that God would show them whom they should choose and then they cast lots to see God’s answer. And so they waited for the baptism of the Holy Spirit!

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 2. Observe what happens after the disciples are baptized in the Holy Spirit. Memorize Acts 1:8 – Quiz in 2 weeks.
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

The Book of Acts

Outline

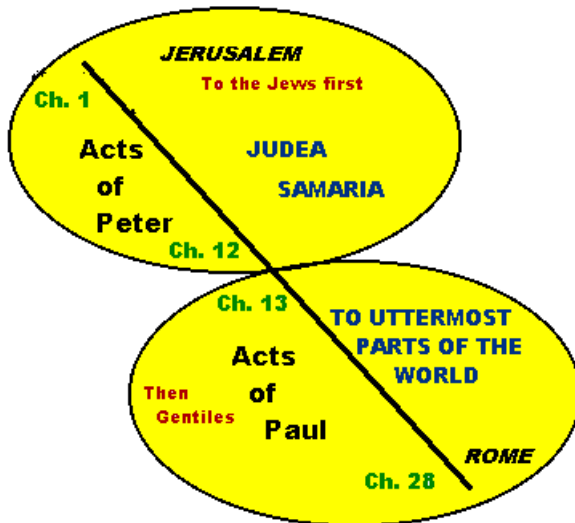
“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (1:8)

I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)

- A. Before Pentecost (1:1-26)
- B. Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)
 - 1. Pentecost (2)
 - 2. Growth of Church (3-4)
 - 3. Troubles in the church (5-7)
- C. Church in Judea and Samaria (8)
- D. Ends of the earth (9-12)

II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)

- A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)
- B. Jerusalem Council (15)
- C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
- D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)
- E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)
- F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)
- G. Paul in Rome (27-28)



PART 1 (Ch. 1-12)

JERUSALEM - the center
PETER - main character
GOSPEL - to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria

Peter Imprisoned

PART 2 (Ch. 13-28)

ANTIOCH - the center
PAUL - main character
GOSPEL - to "uttermost" parts of the world, Rome

Paul Imprisoned

Similarities between Joshua and Acts

Common Elements	Joshua	Acts
Death of the Covenant Leader	Moses died – Joshua called to conquer	Jesus died – Holy Spirit to conquer
Method of conquest	Sword of iron – Fire from altar as sacrifice	Sword of the Spirit – Word of God-Tongues of fire conquers
Command to servants	Ch. 1, Joshua – take the land according to law	Ch.1, Apostles, witness to earth (Lk. 24:44-53)
Leaders encouraged	Men of Israel (1:16ff), and Angel of the Lord 5:13f)	Angels (1:10-11)
Enter new land through baptism - cleansing	Ch. 3, Crossing the Jordan (baptism) and circumcision	Ch. 2, Baptism of Holy Spirit
Conquest of important city	Ch. 6, Jericho	Ch. 2-4, Jerusalem
Fear of the people in connec- tion w/ baptism and conquest	Rehab tells of fear of Yahweh and Israel (2:9f; 5:1-2)	Fear on people (2:43, 5:5, 11; 9:31; 19:17)
Some people steal from God and are killed	Ch. 7, Achan	Ch. 5, Ananias & Sapphira
Further victories	Ch. 8, Ai defeated	5:12-32, Successful battles, Church grew
Problems with Gentiles	Ch. 9, Gibeonites included in covenant	Ch. 6, conflict in Church between Jew/Gentile believers
Gentiles attacked and defended	Ch. 10, five kings of Judea attack Gibeonites- saved in victory & conquest of land	Ch. 6-7, Stephan martyred (by 4 Hellenists and Saul) in Judea Church scattered to witness
Land is completely conquered	Ch. 10-12, Land conquered	Ch. 8:1-28:31 World Evangelized

Week One – Acts: A Theological Introduction

Acts 1

Objective: To introduce the setting of the Book of Acts; to show its connections to the books of Joshua and Luke. To portray the Apostles as faithful witnesses of the events which they saw.

- ❖ **Prayer**
- ❖ **Greeting and attendance**
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism**
- ❖ **Scripture Memory – QUIZ IN 2 WEEKS**

Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

I. Introduction to Acts

A. Connections to Joshua

B. Connections to Luke

II. The Disciples Before Pentecost Acts 1:4-26

A. The Instructions of Christ to the Disciples (vv. 4-8)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

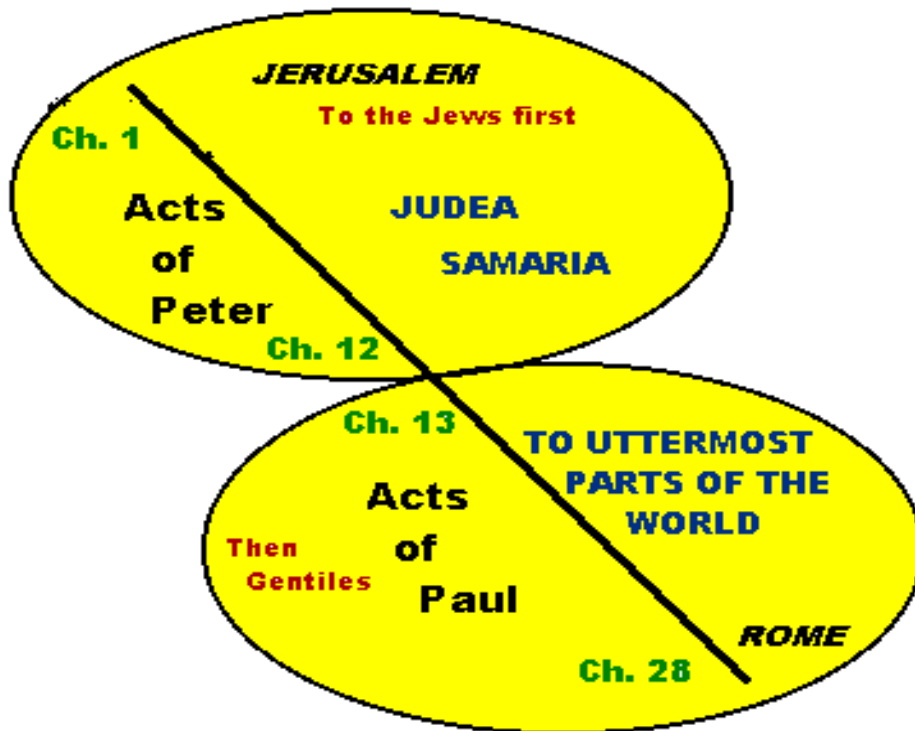
Chapters 1-12	The Witness in Palestine under Peter
Chapters 13-28	The Witness to the World under Paul

B. The Ascension of Christ & Disciples' Joy (vv. 9-11, 12-14)

C. Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas (vv. 15-26)

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 2. Observe what happens after the disciples are baptized in the Holy Spirit. Memorize Acts 1:8 – Quiz in 2 weeks.
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

**“But you shall receive power
when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;
and you shall be witnesses to Me in
Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,
and to the end of the earth.”**



PART 1 (Ch. 1-12)	PART 2 (Ch. 13-28)
<p>JERUSALEM - the center PETER - main character GOSPEL - to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria</p> <p>Peter Imprisoned</p>	<p>ANTIOCH - the center PAUL - main character GOSPEL - to "uttermost" parts of the world, Rome</p> <p>Paul Imprisoned</p>

Week Two – The Holy Spirit and Power to Witness
Acts 2:1-39

Objective – To explain the significance of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, symbolizing the newness of life through Christ. To encourage the students to be faithful witnesses of the gospel as Peter was.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.

- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability**
 - Take attendance
 - Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible and writing materials, work on your memorization, and read Acts 2?”

- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the questions and answers for this quarter

❖ **Scripture Memorization** – THERE WILL BE A QUIZ NEXT WEEK
Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

[Teacher: Give the students the handout on the last page of this lesson.]

❖ **Setting**

As we saw last week, the book of Acts can be divided into two main parts
[Teach highlighted parts today. The Students do not need to learn chapter numbers. Give the students the handout at the end of this lesson.]:

- I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)**
- A. **Before Pentecost (1:1-26)**
 - B. **Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)**
 - 1. Pentecost (2)**
 - 2. Growth of Church (3-4)
 - 3. Troubles in the church (5-7)
 - C. Church in Judea and Samaria (8)
 - D. Ends of the earth (9-12)

- II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)**
- A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)
 - B. Jerusalem Council (15)
 - C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
 - D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)
 - E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)
 - F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)
 - G. Paul in Rome (27-28)

We learned that Jesus met with His disciples (Ch. 1) to give them instructions [remind students of 1:8 and the structure it provides for the rest of Acts.] Then Jesus ascended to the throne at the right hand of the Father, and rules as King over the world. He reminded them that He would pour out His Spirit, who would empower them to do the work He commissioned them to do. He was with them for forty days after His resurrection.

❖ Lesson

I. The Old Testament Background to Pentecost in Acts 2

As we come to Acts 2, we have to look again to the Old Testament law to help us understand fully what is going on here. We begin with Passover, the first of the yearly feasts of the Jews. Passover was the meal that Yahweh commanded the Hebrews to eat to celebrate the salvation of His covenant people when they were delivered out of Egypt. They sacrificed the Passover lamb, and spread the blood over the doorposts of their houses and the angel of death “passed-over” them. It was an act of faith on the part of all that believed in Yahweh to save them. It is also known as the feast of Unleavened Bread, because they put away the leaven of Egypt, the way of living in the past. Jesus was offered as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for the sins of God’s people at Passover (the night in which He was betrayed and later killed). Passover reminded the people of God not only that their sins were forgiven, but that they were to put away the sinful ways of their past lives. Jesus was raised from the dead on the first day of the week, showing that He was the first-fruit, raised from the dead. Jesus appeared to His disciples on the day of the first sheaf offering, and imparted the Holy Spirit to them (Jn. 20:22), although the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit did come until seven weeks later.

The second major feast of the Jews was the feast of Weeks. It celebrated the coming of the new harvest of grain. In this celebration, they ate leavened bread to commemorate the new life they were given by God. It represented the fullness and newness of life God gave to His people. It is called the feast of Weeks because it occurred 7 weeks after Passover and feast of Unleavened Bread, 50 days later. Pentecost (“the fiftieth day”) is another name given to this feast, celebrated on the first day of the week, the same day as the resurrection of Jesus. What we have in Acts 2 is the true feast of Pentecost; the celebration that the work of Christ was completed, and from His throne He would send full harvest into the world through the Holy Spirit. It was a way of showing that the world would be given the full salvation and blessing of God. The coming of the Holy Spirit meant the beginning of the gathering of the nations into the full blessings of the Church.

Something else to understand about this celebration is that it was on the day of Pentecost (many centuries earlier) that God gave Israel His law. It was at Sinai that God made covenant with Israel, like a marriage ceremony where He took Israel to be His bride. Israel was formed as a nation in covenant relationship with God. Now, at Pentecost and with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we see the New Covenant people formed into the church, the new Israel.

II. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit Acts 2:1-13

Turn to Acts 2:1-13. Here we read that the disciples were all together, gathered as the church. While they were in a house waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit, a mighty wind came into the house suddenly with great noise. In the languages of the Bible, the word for wind and Spirit are the same. The sound of the wind was to make the disciples think that the Spirit had come. Vv. 3-4 says,

³Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The disciples not only heard the Spirit, but also saw the evidence of His presence by what looked like tongues made of fire. We do not know what this was or really looked like, but these tongues of fire sat on each person's head. Fire is often in the OT associated with the presence of God. John the Baptist said that

¹⁶“...I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷“His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.” (Lk. 3:16-17; Cf. Acts 1:5; 11:16; 13:24-25; 19:4-5; Matt. 3:11; Mk. 1:7-8; Jn. 1:26, 33; Mal. 3:2-4; Jer. 23:29)

Verse 4 says that by this they knew they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other languages. It seems that the disciples had gone out of the house when this happened, because in the following verses, other people see and hear them speaking in other languages. This is very important because people who loved God from all over the world had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, and heard in their own language the disciples speaking about the wonderful works of God (vv. 8-11). By the coming of the Holy Spirit, the disciples of Jesus are given the ability to be witnesses of the great things God had done through Jesus, just as Jesus had promised in 1:8. Remember, with the formation of the church through the Holy Spirit, the whole world would be

transformed by the preaching of the good news that Jesus the Savior was on His throne in heaven. They were really doing it!

To fully understand what is happening here, once again we need to remember what is in the Old Testament. Speaking in tongues in the Old Testament often was a judgement of God. First, this speaking in tongues should immediately remind us of the story in Genesis 10-12, and the Tower of Babel. In Genesis 10 we saw a list of the 70 nations of the world. Then in chapter 11, at the Tower of Babel, God confused the languages of the people, making it impossible for them to understand each other. This judgment of God was designed to humble the proud men of Babel, and send them out to all parts of the earth. In Genesis 12, God promised to bless all the nations through Abraham and His descendents. Here in Acts 2, we see the reversal of Babel where God used the gift of tongues to give understanding to the nations (vv. 9-11, another Table of Nations like in Gen. 10), in fulfillment of the promises to Abraham to bless the nations.

Secondly, when God judged Israel by sending her into exile for her disobedience and covenant unfaithfulness, Israel was forced to hear unknown tongues in Babylon. In the books of Daniel (Ch. 2:4-7) and Ezra (Ch. 4:8-6:18), we see parts of these books written in tongues (Aramaic) (See also Is. 28:11; 1 Cor. 14:21). In these sections of these books, the good news that God would bring salvation to them and the nations is proclaimed. They heard the gospel in tongues. It was a sign to the Jews that they were under the judgement of God, but the good news is that God would save them and the world.

Throughout the book of Acts we see people speaking in tongues as a sign to the Jews that God was saving the nations. It was a sign to Jews that the judgment of God is being reversed in the world, and the nations are being brought into the Church. This sounds like goodnews, doesn't it? It is! But the Jews needed this sign because they rejected Jesus, and throughout the book of Acts they are the ones that persecute the Church. It is often the nations (Romans) that are used by God to save the church from the Jews. By the use of tongues, the Lord is demonstrating that He is rejecting the rebellious Jews and saving the nations.

The people speaking in tongues are not drunk, as some said. They were preaching! Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is baptized in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), and empowered to witness. You too must be faithful to the Lord, and be a witness to the wonderful things God has done in your life.

III. The Beginning of the Church and Her Witness Acts 2:14-39

What follows this great outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the preaching of the first sermon of the church (in the book of Acts there are several sermons like this because the Church grows through witnessing and preaching). Peter, the leader of the disciples and the Jerusalem Church, preached a sermon that explained what had happened with the coming of the Holy Spirit. They were probably in the temple area at this time (Lk. 24:53), because we know that he spoke to all the people that had come to worship in Jerusalem, and the place needed to be large enough for more than 3,000 people.

In his sermon, Peter repeatedly uses the Word of God (OT Bible) to explain what God was doing. [Application: We should make sure that we always use the Bible in our witnessing to the unbelievers we speak to about the Lord.] He begins by explaining the baptism of the Holy Spirit from Joel 2. This passage speaks of God pouring out His Spirit on all flesh, meaning both Israel and the nations. The great work of Christ through the Holy Spirit is what will change the world. It will be a Day of Judgment that will destroy the works of the wicked; and a day of salvation for whoever calls upon the Lord in faith. Peter said that the day of Pentecost was the beginning of that day of change in the world. We do not have to wait until the end of the world to see the judgment and salvation of the world; it began here in Acts 2 and will continue until Jesus the King, who sits at the right-hand of the Father, conquers all of His enemies. Peter explained that by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (whom they, the Jews had killed), He was exalted as King of the world, and had sent His Spirit to transform the world.

Look at 2:37-39:

³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" ³⁸Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹"For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

The people listening to Peter became convicted of their sin (of killing Jesus) and failure to believe in Jesus, the Lord and Christ, the King of the world. They became fearful, and wanted to get their lives right with the Lord.

Peter told them that they too could be saved, and be given the gift of the Holy Spirit. They too could be made part of the church. Not only them, but also their children and whomever the Lord will call through preaching of the gospel and the

power of the Holy Spirit. They needed to repent (change their minds and ways of living) and be baptized (taking upon themselves the sign of being in the new covenant). In vv. 40-41 we see that about 3,000 people gladly believed the words of Peter and were baptized that very day. The Lord is gracious, full love and mercy to whoever believes in Him and calls upon His name. Let us too be witnesses of the works of the great King Jesus, and we too will be used by the Lord to add to His Church.

❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 3-4. Observe how the church grows. What are some of the problems the disciples face, and how does it affect the witness.
Memorize Acts 1:8 – QUIZ NEXT WEEK

❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Two – The Holy Spirit and Power to Witness Acts 2:1-39

Objective – To explain the significance of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, symbolizing the newness of life through Christ. To encourage you to be faithful witnesses of the gospel as Peter was.

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|---|---|
| <p>I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Before Pentecost (1:1-26)<u>B. Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)</u><ul style="list-style-type: none"><u>1. Pentecost (2)</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">2. Growth of Church (3-4)3. Troubles in the church (5-7)B. Church in Judea and Samaria (8) Ends of the earth (9-12) | <p>II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)B. Jerusalem Council (15)C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)G. Paul in Rome (27-28) |
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I. The Old Testament Background to Pentecost in Acts 2

II. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit Acts 2:1-13

III. The Beginning of the Church and Her Witness Acts 2:14-39

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 3-4. Observe how the church grows. What are some of the problems the disciples face, and how does it affect the witness. Memorize Acts 1:8 – QUIZ NEXT WEEK
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Three – The Lord Added to the Church in Jerusalem
Acts 2:40-4:37

Objective – To motivate students to become witnesses of the gospel which has been faithfully witnessed to them. To encourage them to rely on the Holy Spirit for boldness and courage in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability**
 - Take attendance
 - Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible and writing materials, work on your memorization, and read Acts 3-4?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the questions and answers for this quarter
- ❖ **Scripture Memory Quiz:** On a piece of paper, write out Acts 1:8.

- ❖ **Scripture Memorization** – *New Memory Verse:* QUIZ IN TWO WEEKS
Acts 4:12

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

[Teacher: Give the students the handout on the last page of this lesson.]

- ❖ **Setting**

As we have seen, the book of Acts follows a basic outline given in 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

[Teach highlighted parts today. Students do not need to learn chapter numbers.]

- I. **The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)**
 - A. **Before Pentecost (1:1-26)**
 - B. **Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)**
 - 1. Pentecost (2)
 - 2. Growth of Church (3-4)**
 - 3. Troubles in the church (5-7)
 - C. Church in Judea and Samaria (8)
 - D. Ends of the earth (9-12)

- II. **The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)**
 - A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)
 - B. Jerusalem Council (15)
 - C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
 - D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)
 - E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)
 - F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)
 - G. Paul in Rome (27-28)

Last week we saw that with the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Church of the risen and enthroned Jesus was established. Through the preaching of the word and baptism the Lord grew His church (2:41, 3000 added to the church on the day of Pentecost). [Read Acts 2:40-47] Once the Church is established, v. 43 says the people continued to learn from the Apostles as they taught them the Word of God, and fellowshiped with one another, and worshipped the Lord by the breaking of bread (which means, “The Lord’s Supper”) and prayers. They provided for each other as needs became known, and they were full of joy together. Joyful care for the poor and needy is an important part of being a Christian. Interestingly, vv. 46-47 says that they were praising God in the temple, and having favor with all the people, and the Lord continued to add to their number every day those who were being saved.

V. 43 says that “**fear**” came upon every soul as a result of the miracles done by the Apostles. The response of fear is found throughout the book of Acts (2:43; 5:5, 11; 9:31; 13:16, 26; 19:17). When God is at work in the world, people are often afraid because they see that He is changing things around them. Many are concerned that their way of life will be changed, and they don’t know what to do. Many are fearful because they do not want to change/repent and believe in Jesus. Others are fearful in the sense that they are impressed with what God is doing, and are in awe of God and His works of transforming the world. In both senses, fear is viewed as a good thing in Acts. As a result of the Lord working through the Apostles by the Holy Spirit, the church grew and spread first in Jerusalem (cf. 6:6; 9:31; 2:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28.:31-31). This theme of the growth of the church is very important to the book of Acts. It shows that the mission given to the disciples to be witnesses was accomplished by them through the power of the Holy Spirit. Turn to Acts 3 (where we see the things spoken of in 2:42-47 illustrated).

❖ Lesson

I. Witnessing in Jerusalem: Lame Man Healed Acts 3:1-26

In 2:44-45 we see that the believers understood the importance of sacrificially caring for the needs of the poor among them (cf. 4:32-37; 5:1-11). Jesus said that after He was glorified in heaven, the world would know that believers are His disciples by the way they love one another (Jn. 13:31-35). It is little wonder that they were finding favor with the people in Jerusalem (v. 47).

The Apostles Peter and John, leaders in the church in Jerusalem, went to the temple during the time when worshippers would gather for prayer. There were probably many people there at that time, and it would be a good opportunity to be

witnesses of the Lord Jesus. [When we try to be a witness for Jesus, we should seek the best opportunities to tell people about the Lord.] As they were coming into the temple, they came across a man that had been lame (he couldn't walk) since birth (4:22 tells us that he was over forty years old). As a beggar, he was clearly a needy person. Peter and John knew that he needed more than just money, food and clothing. He needed Jesus! Peter got his attention, and told him that he did not have money to give him, but he could give him something better. [When we spend time with people, we need to try to meet their real needs – their need for salvation.] Vv. 6-7 said:

⁶Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." ⁷And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

Peter spoke in the name of Jesus, which means that he spoke on behalf of, or representing Jesus. As a witness of Jesus, Peter spoke words that would bring health, fullness of life and salvation. As a result, the man also became a witness:

⁸So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. ⁹And all the people saw him walking and praising God. ¹⁰Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

When God uses us to bring the good news of Jesus to the world, those who become believers then become witnesses as well. And so the Kingdom grows little by little.

But healing the man was not enough to bear witness of Jesus. Peter went on to explain to the amazed crowd what had happened. Beginning in 3:12, Peter preached his second sermon (there are several sermons in the book of Acts, which we should learn so that we can be better preachers for the Lord). Peter began by making clear that the miracle of the lame man being healed was a work of God, not a work of Peter or John. We are never able to say that the good things we have done are because of our own power or godliness (v. 12) – rather all the good that we do is from God. He gets the glory! Much like the sermon in Acts 2, Peter began by showing the people their sin of having Jesus put to death. Again, Peter emphasized the fact that Jesus, whom the Jews had killed, was resurrected by God from the dead. He again used the Bible to give his message, and called upon those listening to him to **repent** and be **converted** – which means to change from being someone that rejected Jesus and changing to being someone that believes in Jesus (i.e. literally in the Gk. repent means to change direction). By being changed, Peter said that they would have their sins blotted out, and that Jesus would bless them (vv. 19-26). Peter also says this salvation he preached was a fulfillment of the

covenant promise to Abraham that through Jesus (the seed) all the families of the earth shall be blessed. *The gospel (which means “good news”) is that Jesus died for the sins of His people, has been raised from the dead, rules at the right hand of the Father, and is restoring/transforming all things according to His promises.* This is the message Peter preached, and the message we are to preach!

II. Witnessing in Jerusalem: Before Rulers of Israel Acts 4:1-21

This gospel is indeed good news to those who are being given the ability by God to hear and believe it (4:4 says that about 5,000 believed and became Christians that day). But to those who hate the Lord Jesus, the message of the gospel is not good news. In chapter 4 we read about *the beginning of the persecution of the church*. Remember: Being a witness may mean that you will suffer as a martyr. 4:1 says that the leaders of the Jews were greatly disturbed by the message preached about the resurrection, and they arrested Peter and John.

In Matthew 10:16-20 Jesus told his disciples that they would be persecuted because of Him:

¹⁶“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. ¹⁷“But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. ¹⁸“You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹“But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; ²⁰“for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

If Jesus is on the throne ruling all things, why do you think he allowed them to be arrested? So that they could be witnesses. Jesus uses the evil persecutions of men against his people to spread the gospel as *Spirit-empowered preachers*. This is the same thing that happened to Him, with the result being that His death brought salvation and forgiveness of sins. The next day Peter and John were questioned. And just like we read in Matthew 10, Acts 4:8 says that Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and answered them boldly. V. 13 says that the leaders saw that they were mostly uneducated and untrained men. When you and I are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses for Jesus, we do not have to be particularly knowledgeable and well trained in evangelism. We must merely be courageous and willing, bold and obedient. God will use us in His way!

The rulers of the Jews could not say anything against the fact that the man was healed. But they were still concerned that the preaching of Peter and John would

continue to spread among the people, so they severely threatened and commanded Peter and John not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. This was quite a command. Don't speak of Jesus privately or preach about Him publicly. Is this a command that should be obeyed? NO! V. 19 (see also 5:29) says, in effect, they should obey God and not the sinful commandments of men. We should obey our rulers, **UNLESS** they forbid us to do what we should, or command us to do what we should not. Clearly, Jesus commanded us to be witnesses of Him throughout the world. Do you have the kind of courage it takes to be Christ's witness?

III. Witnessing in Jerusalem: Praying for Boldness 4:23-31

And so the leaders of the people let Peter and John go after threatening to punish them. This first persecution of the Church must have been very frightening for them and the other believers. In 4:23-31 the believers heard the report of Peter and John, and began praying for boldness. They prayed with the understanding that God had delivered Jesus to death by His purposes. They prayed that God would give them boldness and courage to speak His word and that many miraculous signs would be done through them in the name of Jesus so that their message would be believed. After they had prayed this, God answered their prayer by causing an earthquake to show them that God would be powerfully with them. And they were filled with the spirit and they went out boldly and courageously speaking the word of God. When we are feeling fearful about anything, but especially about speaking to people about the Lord, we should pray for boldness to be His witnesses. Even if it may cause us some trouble, we should boldly speak, and God will send His Spirit to empower us as well.

Vv. 32-37 tells us that the Apostles were speaking powerfully as witnesses to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and the Church continued to grow (now several thousand), and were together with one heart and soul. They took care of each other, even by selling their property if necessary, and giving the money to the Apostles to distribute as need. They loved the Lord and one another. By their self-sacrificial love for one another, they met the needs of the poor. In this way, God began to raise up men of importance in the church, besides the Apostles. Vv. 36-37 Barnabas (whose name means, "Son of Encouragement") is mentioned for the first time. He is one from the Jerusalem church that would later accompany Paul.

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 5-6. What kinds of problems do the church have?
How are these problems handled? Memorize Acts 4:12 – QUIZ IN 2 WEEKS
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Three – The Lord Added to the Church in Jerusalem
Acts 2:40-4:37

Objective – To motivate you to become witnesses of the gospel which has been faithfully witnessed to you. To encourage you to rely on the Holy Spirit for boldness and courage in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

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|---|---|
| <p>I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Before Pentecost (1:1-26)B. Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Pentecost (2)<u>2. Growth of Church (3-4)</u>3. Troubles in the church (5-7)C. Church in Judea and Samaria (8)D. Ends of the earth (9-12) | <p>II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)B. Jerusalem Council (15)C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)G. Paul in Rome (27-28) |
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“Fear” and the Growth of the Church

I. Witnessing in Jerusalem: Lame Man Healed 3:1-26

II. Witnessing in Jerusalem: Before Rulers of Israel 4:1-21

III. Witnessing in Jerusalem: Praying for Boldness 4:23-31

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 5-6. What kinds of problems do the church have? How are these problems handled? Memorize Acts 4:12 – QUIZ IN 2 WEEKS
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Four – Conflict In The Church Acts 5-6

Objective – To encourage students to bolster their Christian witness to the world by performing acts of mercy and avoiding sin. To prepare them to face persecution for the gospel with courage and gratitude.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.

- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability**
 - Take attendance
 - Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible and writing materials, work on your memorization, and read Acts 5-6?”

- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the questions and answers for this quarter

- ❖ **Scripture Memorization** – QUIZ NEXT WEEK

Acts 4:12

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

[Teacher: Give the students the handout on the last page of this lesson.]

❖ **Setting**

As we have seen, the book of Acts follows a basic outline given in 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

[Teach highlighted parts today. The Students do not need to learn chapter numbers. Give the students the handout at the end of this lesson.]

I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)

- A. Before Pentecost (1:1-26)**
- B. Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)**
 - 1. Pentecost (2)**
 - 2. Growth of Church (3-4)**
 - 3. Troubles in the church (5-7)**
- C. Church in Judea and Samaria (8)**
- D. Ends of the earth (9-12)**

II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)

- A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)**
- B. Jerusalem Council (15)**
- C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)**
- D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)**
- E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)**
- F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)**
- G. Paul in Rome (27-28)**

❖ Lesson

I. The Holy Spirit Guarded the Witness of the Church Acts 4:32-5:11

As we have seen several times, the witness of the Church is closely tied to the loving acts of the Church to the poor and needy. [Turn to and read 2:44-45 and 4:32-37.] In these passages we see that the believers so loved each other that they sacrificially met the needs of those who were poor. Many of them sold property that they owned and gave the money to (laid it at the feet of) the Apostles, who distributed it to those who needed it. This became important because as the Church grew (now called a “multitude” in 4:32), the Christians were no longer went to the local Jewish synagogues for help. The Christians gladly helped one another. These were offerings made willingly by the people – they were not required. The people were free to keep the property or to sell it. Out of love, they sold their property and gave it freely as if everyone owned it. Love and care for the poor is an essential and important part of the witness of the Church. This is something that you will need to develop in your lives as well, as a Spirit-filled and empowered believer. [Lk. 12:30-34; Deut. 5:7-11; Matt. 5:42; 6:1-4; 2 Cor. 9:5-7; Gal. 2:10; 1 Tim. 6:18-19 Heb. 13:16; Rom. 12:8; 1 Jn. 3:17] God will use you to meet the needs of people, and cause your witness to be effective in the world.

As we read about people that sold lands or houses, we should know that in the Old Testament law in Leviticus 27, God gave rules about making vows to dedicate people and things to the Lord. Often when people receive good things from the Lord, they promise to give something back to the Lord in thanksgiving. When doing so, Leviticus teaches that it should be done righteously and according to God’s word. Leviticus 27:28 says,

*Nevertheless no devoted offering that a man may devote to the LORD of all that he has, both man and beast, or the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed; every **devoted offering is most holy to the LORD.***

Once the thing is dedicated or devoted to the Lord, it should be considered holy (lit. “set apart”) as the Lord’s. Once you have promised it to the Lord, it is His, and cannot be kept. You must be honest in your dealings with men and God; you must keep your word. [Remember also Jephthah’s daughter in Judges 11.]

Turn now to Acts 5. In vv. 1-11 we see that there was a problem that arose in the church in Jerusalem. In every church there are problems that arise because of sin. It should not surprise us when we see sin in the church, nor should it be ignored. We need to deal with sin biblically. As we remember from the story of Achan in Joshua 7, the sin of one person (even secret sin) can have an affect on the whole covenant community. It is interesting that in Joshua 7:1, we read, “*But **the***

children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things [Same word for “devoted” in Lev. 27:28], *for Achan...took of the accursed things; so the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel.*” Joshua 7:11 says Achan stole from God and lied (Lev. 27:28). When a person sins, that sin is associated with the covenant people he is attached to (family, work, church and country), and God judges not only the person but also the covenant people he is connected with. Thus, we need to be careful not to think that our sin is just our own. Not only so, we should be concerned about one another, and if we know about the sin of someone in our family, or our church, we need to go to that person and help them make it right. God is holy and righteous in His judgments, and requires us to be holy in our lives as His covenant people.

Read vv. 1-11. What is important in this passage is that we see the Holy Spirit leading the Apostles to deal effectively with sin. While we generally do not have the Holy Spirit directly dealing with sin in our church in this way, it was important as the church was being established, just as it was important for Israel to learn the way of holiness as they began to conquer the land in the book of Joshua.

What was the problem? Ananias and his wife Sapphira were free to do what they wanted with their land (i.e. they could keep it, sell it, or give some or part of it to the church). The problem was that they lied about it. They said they gave it all, but only gave part of it to the church. Why was this a problem? They wanted to look more generous than they actually were. God hates lying and hypocrisy in His people. Ananias and Sapphira lied to men, but Peter said that Satan inspired them to lie to God the Holy Spirit. When we sin before men, it is God (who knows all things and has a relationship to all things) that is primarily sinned against. Another thing to note is that Sapphira should not have agreed with the sin of her husband. She should have helped her husband to do the right thing, or talked to the Apostles honestly about it. By putting Ananias and Sapphira to death, the sin of stealing from God (Lev. 27:28) and lying (not fulfilling his word to dedicate the land) was cleansed from the church, and the church was caused to fear the Lord (vv. 5, 11). To be effect in our witness to the world, we need to be holy in our relationship to God and righteous in our daily lives. Godly fear moves us to love & obedience to God, and purifies our witness.

II. The Witness Continued Acts 5:12-42

The Apostles were not only promised the Holy Spirit by the Lord, but also power to be His witnesses. This power to witness included the power to do many signs and wonders that would lead people to believe the message of the Apostles. People were even healed by Peter’s shadow, which caused the people of Jerusalem to

esteem them (think) highly. Yet, because of these works and the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, many people were afraid to become believers and become associated with them. In short, the work of God was going forth powerfully in Jerusalem and the surrounding cities, and the Church continued to grow mightily.

But as with all mighty works of God in the Bible, there were those who resisted or opposed it. Some simply did not believe. Others, like the rulers and leaders of the Jews, were angry and sought to put a stop to the message. For a second time (cf. 4:1ff), the Apostles were arrested (5:17-21). The first time they were arrested the disciples were strictly commanded not to witness of Christ. But the disciples said that they must obey God rather than men. Now, in obedience to Christ, they continued their witnessing with power. God sent an angel to open the prison doors and told them to go back to the temple and continue to teach the people about the Christian life. While they did this, the leaders of the people found out that they were no longer in prison, and arrested them again. God again used this opportunity to make the Apostles witnesses to the enemies of Christ and the gospel. [Read Vv. 28-32.] The Apostles witnessed clearly, declaring to the leaders of Israel that Jesus, whom they murdered, was now the true Ruler and Savior of Israel. They said, in effect, God has turned away from the rulers of Israel, and sent His Spirit upon all who believe in and obey the Lord Jesus.

This witness to the truth made the rulers of Israel even angrier, for they knew that the message of Jesus was filling Jerusalem (v. 28), and that they would become even more unpopular with the people. They wanted to kill the Apostles right then. But one of the wise men of the council, Gamaliel, warned the other men on the council that if it were indeed a work of God, they would be fighting against God (vv. 33-40). The Jewish Council agreed with Gamaliel, and beat the Apostles and warned them not to preach about Jesus again. [Read vv. 41-41.] The disciples rejoiced that God counted them worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus, knowing that this persecution would cause the growth of the Kingdom of God. Matthew 5:10-12 says:

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Apostles did not stop teaching and preaching that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah of Israel. Jesus had empowered them by the Holy Spirit to witness!

III. The Unity and Work of the Church Guarded Acts 6:1-7

Now we come to Acts 6:1-7, and another problem in the church. The Church had become big enough that there were problems of organization. It became much harder to deal with all of the needs of the people. V. 1 says that there “arose a murmuring.” There were Hebrew believers and Hellenist (Greek speaking) believers that were arguing that some of the Hellenist widows were being neglected, and not being properly cared for. It was a sinful complaining that caused the work of the church to be troubled.

After the story of Achan in Joshua and the victory over Ai (similar to the story of Ananias and Sapphira and then the victory of the Apostles here in Acts), there was the story of the Gibeonites who were a trouble for Israel. Both in Joshua and Acts we have a problem with some Gentile believers. In both cases, these problems were resolved in a good way. Does this “murmuring” remind you of anything else in the Old Testament? [The murmuring of Israel in the wilderness.] It was a sinful complaining, whining and unwillingness to act in faith and love. In Numbers 11 we read of an incident similar to Acts 6. This is why the Apostles knew how to handle it well.

Historically, the Church has viewed Acts 6:1-6 as the appointment of the first Deacons in the Church. It is interesting to note the obvious parallel between this passage and Numbers 11. In the context of contention and frustration over the daily

Common Elements	Numbers 11	Acts 6
Murmuring & Complaints	General complaining and murmuring over food vv. 1, 4-6	Murmuring over distribution to widows (food) v. 1
Mixed Multitude	Mixed Multitude v. 4	Believing Hebrews and Hellenists v. 1
Problem for Israel/Church	Fiery anger of Yahweh v. 1	Church work troubled/ disunity in the Church v.1
Trouble for leaders	Moses troubled & work too hard for him vv. 10-15	Apostles trouble & work of ministry disrupted v. 2
Solution	Appointment of 70 leaders to help vv. 16-25	Appointment of 7 Ministers to serve vv. 3-6
Approval of God	Spirit of God with the men v. 25	Apostles laid hands on Spirit filled men vv. 3, 6
Ministry Blessed	Spirit-filled men prophesied vv. 25-30	Word of God spread v 7

distribution (of food or money), the Apostles, the leaders of the Church, appointed men to take responsibility for the administration of this necessary work. What is important to note about this passage is that the *reason* this became necessary was because the Apostles were being distracted from their primary ministry of the Word of God and prayer (vv. 2, 4). The Apostles (like Moses in Numbers 11) had the burden of responsibility to oversee the whole ministry of the Church, including meeting the needs of the poor. Wisely and biblically, the Apostles appointed men to the work of administering part of the ministry that was their responsibility. This appointment enabled the Apostles to give themselves continually to the things they understood to be necessary for the proper outworking of the ministry.

What we learn from this is that Deacons are assistants to the Elders of the church (who replaced the Apostles), allowing them to focus on matters of first priority to them in the ministry without distraction. The Elders, having general oversight of the church, are unable by themselves to properly deal with everything that pertains to the ministry of the church. Thus, Deacons are to assist the Elders in whatever matters the Elders consider useful to church. During the early days of the church this assistance was primarily in the area of helping the Elders by administering to the needs of the poor, the fatherless and the widows. As the church has grown to possess buildings and have coordinated ministries throughout the world, the ministry of the Diaconate necessarily includes many other responsibilities

The Old Testament was written for our example that we may be able to overcome the temptations and difficulties in our lives. There will always be difficulties that we will encounter in the Church. But God has given us His word to help us know how to deal with them in righteousness.

❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 7-8. Remembering that the Greek word for witness is the same as our word for “martyr,” how does Stephen witness? What happens with the gospel? Memorize Acts 4:12 – QUIZ NEXT WEEK

❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Four – Conflict In The Church **Acts 5-6**

Objective – To encourage you to bolster your Christian witness to the world by performing acts of mercy and avoiding sin. To prepare you to face persecution for the gospel with courage and gratitude.

I. The Holy Spirit Guarded the Witness of the Church 4:32-5:11

II. The Witness Continued 5:12-42

III. The Unity and Work of the Church Guarded 6:1-7

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 7-8. Remembering that the Greek word for witness is the same as our word for “martyr,” how does Stephen witness? What happens with the gospel?
Memorize Acts 4:12 – QUIZ NEXT WEEK
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Common Elements	Numbers 11	Acts 6
Murmuring & Complaints	General complaining and murmuring over food vv. 1, 4-6	Murmuring over distribution to widows (food) v. 1
Mixed Multitude	Mixed Multitude v. 4	Believing Hebrews and Hellenists (Greek Speaking Jews) v. 1
Problem for Israel/Church	Fiery anger of Yahweh v. 1	Church work troubled/disunity in the Church v.1
Trouble for leaders	Moses troubled & work too hard for him vv. 10-15	Apostles trouble & work of ministry disrupted v. 2
Solution	Appointment of 70 leaders to help vv. 16-25	Appointment of 7 Ministers to serve vv. 3-6
Approval of God	Spirit of God with the men v. 25	Apostles prayed/laid on hands of Spirit filled men vv. 3, 6
Ministry Blessed	Spirit-filled men prophesied vv. 25-30	Word of God spread v 7

Week Five – Persecution and Evangelism
Acts 6:8-8:40

Objective – To show students how God often uses the persecution of His people for good, in order to accomplish His will.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.

- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability**
 - Take attendance
 - Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible and writing materials, work on your memorization, and read Acts 7-8?”

- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the questions and answers for this quarter

- ❖ **Scripture Memory Quiz:** On a piece of paper, write out Acts 4:12.

- ❖ **Scripture Memorization** – *New Memory Verse:* QUIZ IN TWO WEEKS
Acts 5:41
So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

- ❖ **Setting**

As we have seen, the book of Acts follows a basic outline given in 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

[Teach highlighted parts today. The Students do not need to learn chapter numbers. Give the students the two page handout at the end of this lesson.]

- I. **The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)**
 - A. **Before Pentecost (1:1-26)**
 - B. **Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)**
 - 1. **Pentecost (2)**
 - 2. **Growth of Church (3-4)**
 - 3. **Troubles in the church (5-7)**
 - C. **Church in Judea and Samaria (8)**
 - D. **Ends of the earth (9-12)**

- II. **The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)**
 - A. **1st Missionary Journey (13-14)**
 - B. **Jerusalem Council (15)**
 - C. **2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)**
 - D. **3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)**
 - E. **Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)**
 - F. **Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)**
 - G. **Paul in Rome (27-28)**

As we have seen so far in the book of Acts, as the Church faithfully witnesses to the world, She will be persecuted and oppressed. Throughout the book of Acts this troubling of the Church happens most often by the Jews and those in the Church who are on the side of the Jews. We have repeatedly seen the Apostles arrested and commanded not to be witnesses. The message of the gospel is good news to those whom God is calling to salvation, but bad news to those who hate Jesus.

John 15:26-16:4 says:

²⁶“*But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the **Spirit of truth** who proceeds from the Father, **He will testify of Me.***

²⁷“*And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.* ¹“*These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be*

made to stumble. ²“*They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.*

³“*And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.* ⁴“*But these things I have told you, that **when the time***

comes, you may remember that I told you of them.

The Holy Spirit was given to the disciples as a witness *to them*, so that *they* could be witnesses of Jesus. In this passage in the Gospel of John, Jesus told the disciples that they would be made to suffer for Him, even unto death, by men who think they are really serving God. As we will see, Saul (later called Paul) persecuted the Church thinking that he was serving God. But these persecutors did not really know or love God. Nevertheless, the disciples were warned about the persecution so that they would be able to keep the faith and not stumble because of it.

❖ Lesson

I. The Witness of Stephen Acts 6:8-7:60

We learned last week that the Apostles were able to perform their ministry of prayer and preaching of the Word by appointing seven men to help them attend to the needs of the widows (and others). Read 6:8. Stephen was one of the seven men chosen in Acts 6:3-6 to assist the Apostles. As we have seen in Acts, the Spirit of God confirms the preaching of the gospel (“good news”) by the signs and wonders performed by the Apostles. Here we see that Stephen also performed these (although he was not an Apostle).

Stephen preached in the synagogues of Jerusalem. Apparently he had some arguments with some men and was able to argue effectively because he was wise and full of the Holy Spirit (cf. 6:3 and 6:10). The men he argued with did not like his preaching and wickedly convinced some other men to bear false witness about what he said, and had him arrested and brought before the leaders of Israel (Read

vv. 11-14). They asked Stephen if the charges were true. This is the same thing that they did with Jesus. Jesus did not answer the charges against Him because He was to go to the cross for the sins of the world. But Stephen answered them fully and clearly from the word of God by preaching to the leaders a great sermon. Stephen was a faithful witness, just as we are to be. He used the word of God, laying before them the history of God's salvation of His people. He pointed out that the leaders of Israel had killed Jesus, whom the Old Testament prophets had said would come.

The response of the council was not faith, but anger. Read 7:54-60. Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit looked up into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right-hand of the Father (which means that he saw Jesus ruling). When he spoke of this, they took him out of the city and stoned him to death. What did we say the Greek word for being a "witness" is? A *martyr*. Stephen was the first Christian witness to be martyred for the faith. As they were stoning him to death, Stephen said two things, 1) "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," 2) "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." (Both similar to what Jesus had said on the cross).

Notice in v. 58, Saul was present at the death of this first martyr (witness) as a witness of his death. We see in 8:1,3 that Saul unleashed a great persecution against the church, going from house to house arresting men and women that believed in Jesus.

II. The Scattering of the Church and the Witness of Philip Acts 8 [Turn to Acts 8.]

A. Persecution and Scattering of the Church Acts 8:1-4

This persecution was so great that the church was scattered. In the Old Testament, when the people of God were scattered it was generally a judgment upon them. At the Tower of Babel God scattered the rebellious and proud men in to all the earth. God scattered Israel among the nations because they did not keep covenant. While in Babylon and Persia, God used His people as witnesses. So too, being scattered abroad is a good thing. It is God's way of sending the believers into the world to be His witnesses. Remember Acts 1:8:

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Now read 8:1, which says, "*and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.*" The Apostles stayed in Jerusalem to direct the work of witnessing (Jerusalem was like a headquarters for the ministry). But many of the believers were scattered to be witnesses. God did not want them to become

comfortable in Jerusalem and neglect what He had commanded. By the Holy Spirit, the Christians were sent out to preach the gospel. 8:4 says, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”

B. Philip in Samaria Acts 8:5-13

One of the scattered believers was Philip, also one of the seven men chosen in Acts 6 to assist the Apostles. He is often referred to as “Philip the Evangelist” to distinguish him from Philip the Apostle. [Pass out copies of the map below entitled, “Philip’s Witness.”]

What is significant about this section is the place he went: Samaria. The Jews hated the Samaritans (and the Samaritans hated the Jews), even though the two were related to one another. The Samaritans were mixed-Jews that no longer worshipped God at the temple in Jerusalem because of a division of the people and land several hundred years earlier (The Divided Kingdom of Israel: the southern part of the land called Judah/Judea and the north part called Israel/Samaria). By going to Samaria in obedience to Jesus’ command (1:8), God was bringing Israel together into one body of believers. Jesus Himself had preached in Samaria (Jn. 4). Now Philip effectively preached to the Samaritans, who believed the message because of the many miracles he did (casting out of demons and healing the lame). And there was great joy where he preached (8:5-9). One of those who believed with the people was a great sorcerer/magician named Simon (vv. 9-13).

C. The Holy Spirit in Samaria through the Apostles Acts 8:14-40

The Apostles, as the leaders of the Christian Church, stayed in Jerusalem where most of the believers remained. They were responsible to make sure that the Church was functioning well. It was based on their teaching and by their authority that the Church was established. When they heard that Samaria had received the Word of God through the work of Philip, they sent Peter and John to help in the ministry. Remember that Peter is the main leader of the Church in Jerusalem, and he was present whenever the Holy Spirit was given to a new group of people. The Samaritans had not received the Holy Spirit at that time, but had only been baptized with water. When Peter and John laid hands on them (as representatives of Jesus), they were baptized in the Holy Spirit (probably the Samaritans spoke in tongues). This was necessary as a sign to the Jews to show that God had begun to save even the Samaritans.

Peter and John were not only in Samaria to pray that they receive the Holy Spirit, but to also make sure that there were no problems. The great man and ex-sorcerer Simon saw the power of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles and wanted the same

power. He sought to buy that power for himself. Peter corrected the misunderstanding of Simon (which would have become a problem in the church because he was so influential in Samaria, (cf. 8:9-11). This story is important because the leaders of the church must always deal with error and false teaching in the church. Afterward they taught in many villages in Samaria, and returned to the work in Jerusalem.

D. Philip in the wilderness of Judea

In the last section of Acts 8, we see that Philip was sent to the southern part of Judea. There he met a man of great authority in the royal court of Candace, the Queen of Ethiopia (northern Africa). This man had been in Jerusalem to worship Yahweh (he was a Gentile God-fearer) and was on his way back to Ethiopia. When Philip found the man he was reading from Isaiah 53. Philip wisely asked what he was reading, and began to explain to him that Jesus had died for the sins of the world. The man immediately believed the words of Philip and was baptized as a believer in Jesus (vv. 37-38). Philip was miraculously taken away to preach elsewhere. The Ethiopian went on his way with joy. And so we see that the disciples were faithful witnesses of the gospel of Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and were to continue witnessing to people in the uttermost parts of the earth.

❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 9. Why do you think Saul was converted and commissioned by the Lord in the way that he was? What is Saul other name?
Memorize Acts 5:41 – QUIZ IN TWO WEEKS

❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Five – Persecution and Evangelism **Acts 6:8-8:40**

Objective – To show you how God often uses the persecution of His people for good, in order to accomplish His will.

I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)

- A. **Before Pentecost (1:1-26)**
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 - 3. **Troubles in the church (5-7)**
- C. **Church in Judea and Samaria (8)**
- D. **Ends of the earth (9-12)**

II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)

- A. **1st Missionary Journey (13-14)**
- B. **Jerusalem Council (15)**
- C. **2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)**
- D. **3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)**
- E. **Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)**
- F. **Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)**
- G. **Paul in Rome (27-28)**

I. The Witness of Stephen Acts 6:8-7:60

II. The Scattering of the Church and the Witness of Philip Acts 8

A. Persecution and Scattering of the Church 8:1-4

B. Philip in Samaria 8:5-13

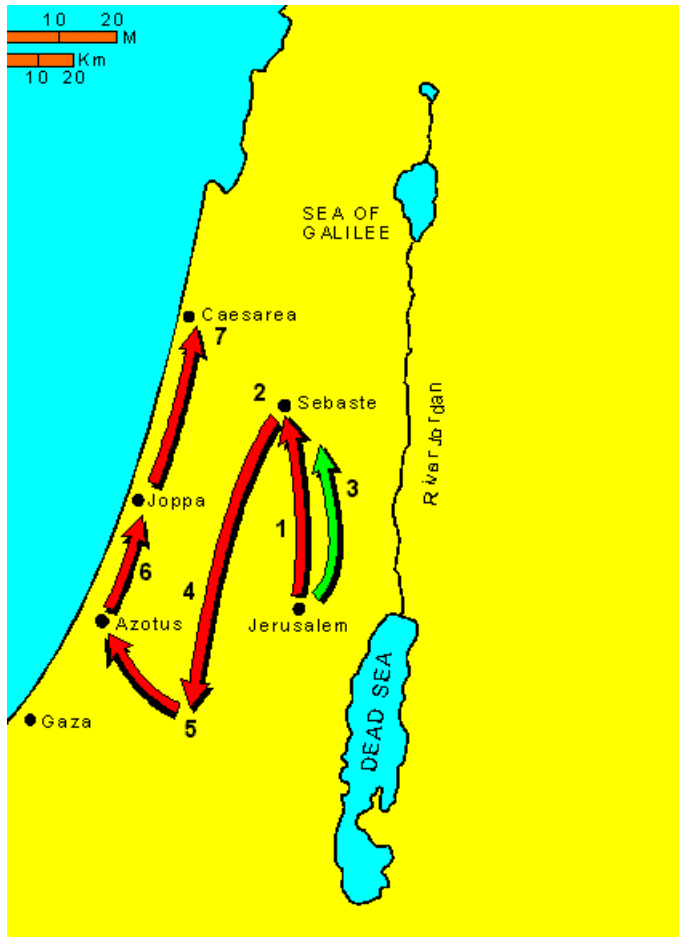
C. The Holy Spirit in Samaria through the Apostles 8:14-40

D. Philip in the wilderness of Judea

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 9. Why do you think Saul was converted and commissioned by the Lord in the way that he was? What is Saul other name? Memorize Acts 5:41 – QUIZ IN TWO WEEKS
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Philip's Witness

After the stoning of Stephen, the believers in Jerusalem were scattered (8:1-3). Philip's story is one example of the way they took the good news with them.



- 1 Philip, one of the seven helpers of the Jerusalem church (6:5), went to the capital of Samaria (8:5).
- 2 Many people were healed and he preached about Jesus. Simon, a famous magician, was converted (8:6-13).
- 3 Amazed that Samaritans (Jews of mixed descent) had become Christians, Peter and John were sent to Samaria to investigate. Samaritan believers received the Holy Spirit. Peter and John returned (8:14-25).
- 4 Philip was sent to the Jerusalem-Gaza road (8:26-29).
- 5 There he met the treasurer to the queen of Ethiopia returning home after a pilgrimage in Jerusalem. Philip explained the good news to him and he was

baptized.

- 6 Philip traveled north, preaching in every town (8:40).
- 7 He reached Caesarea, where he later settled with his wife and daughters (Acts 21:8-9).

Week Six – Conversion of Saul Acts 9:1-30

Objective – To show students that in order to be an effective witness they must walk in the fear of the Lord and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability**
 - Take attendance
 - Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible and writing materials, work on your memorization, and read Acts 9?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the questions and answers for this quarter
- ❖ **Scripture Memorization** – QUIZ NEXT WEEK

Acts 5:41

So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

❖ **Setting**

As we have seen, the book of Acts follows a basic outline given in 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

[Teach highlighted parts today. The Students do not need to learn chapter numbers. Give the students the two page handout at the end of this lesson.]

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- B. Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)**
 - 1. Pentecost (2)
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- C. Church in Judea and Samaria (8)**
- D. Ends of the earth (9-12)**

II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)

- A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)
- B. Jerusalem Council (15)
- C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
- D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)
- E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)
- F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)
- G. Paul in Rome (27-28)

As we saw last week, the command of Jesus to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria was being mightily accomplished. The persecution of the Church scattered the believers and caused them to spread the gospel. The Witness under

Peter from his headquarters in Jerusalem was progressing (see outline, chapters 1-12). All of the events up to this point happened in the first year after the death of Jesus, AD 30 (*Ano Domini*, “In the year of our Lord”).¹

❖ Lesson

I. The Conversion of Saul Acts 9:1-30

What was the name of the man that led the persecution of the church? *Saul* (7:58; 8:1, 3). In Acts 9 Luke introduces Paul (who would be the leader of the witness to the Gentiles in ch. 13-28), known at that time as Saul (until 13:9). Paul later described himself and his persecution of the church in Acts 26:11 as being, “exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.” As a persecutor of the believers, Paul was an exceedingly wicked man. Read Acts 9:1-2. V. 1 says Saul was “breathing threats and murder” against the disciples. The word for “breathing” is the same basic word used for the Spirit who is the breath of God to save and to judge. Saul was given letters from the leaders of the Jews in Jerusalem giving him authority to arrest and bring believing men and women (cf. 22:4) to Jerusalem for trial.

The church in v. 2 is described as “the Way,” which was a means of describing the Church and the “way” that the believers lived their lives (19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). The name Saul means “Desired,” and Saul desired to please God by persecuting Jesus and the Church. But it was a false service of God. Much evil has been done in the world in the name of God. We should be careful that all that we do for God is according to His word, and not just those things that we think are right.

But God, who is great in love and mercy for those he chooses, saved Paul in a miraculous and wonderful way. Turn to Acts 9:3-9. While Saul was journeying to Damascus with men to persecute the believers there, Jesus appeared to him in a very bright light. Jesus said, “‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’”⁵ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.’” This is an interesting statement from Jesus. Nowhere do we read that Saul was persecuting Jesus, just the Church. When men persecute and fight against God’s people, they are really fighting against God. We are the body of

¹ Gal. 1:16-2:3 – Spiritual autobiography. Gal. 1:16-17, Paul didn’t go to Jerusalem at first. Gal. 1:18 says 3 years later (after Paul’s conversion in AD 30) he went to Jerusalem for 15 days in AD 33. Gal. 2:1 says 14 years later (after Paul’s conversion in AD 30) he went to Jerusalem (Acts 11:30, 12:25). While Paul was in Jerusalem, Herod died in AD 44. If Paul went to Jerusalem in AD 44, which was after 14 years he was converted, it was the same year Jesus was killed, resurrected, ascended, Pentecost, etc.]

Christ. When people strike out against us, they are actually showing their hatred for Jesus.

At this point, it looks like Saul understood what Jesus was saying, and was saved. He responded properly to the words of Jesus by asking in v. 6, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” As Jesus progressively makes Himself known to us, we too should be asking, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Saul was blinded by the vision (maybe to show that he had been blind to the truth before, and that Jesus would make him see for the first time), and was commanded to go on to Damascus. Saul went, but was fasting and praying (vv. 9, 11). [Cf. Is. 6:1-8; 1 Sam. 3.]

In Damascus there was a disciple of Jesus named Ananias, who was commanded by the Lord to go to a certain house and lay his hands on Saul to heal him of his blindness. Ananias had heard of the evil that Saul had been doing and was afraid. But the Lord told him about what He intended to do through Saul, making him a witness to the name of Jesus to both the Gentiles and the Jews, and that Saul would greatly suffer for His name’s sake. Read vv. 17-19. Ananias laid his hands on him, and Paul was healed and was filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 17). When he received his sight, he was baptized for the washing away of his sins by calling on the name of the Lord (cf. 22:12-16). Now, the man who was breathing out threats against Jesus, was filled with the breath (Spirit) of Jesus to preach effectively about Jesus.

Years later Paul gave his testimony, witnessing to how Jesus had saved him and made him a minister and a witness. Read Acts 26:9-18. Go over (briefly) the material at the end of the lesson called “Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles,” showing the students how to read the map in connection with the explanations.

What follows in vv. 20-25 is what happened in the next three years following the conversion of Saul. V. 20, “*Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.*” Saul had been a Pharisee, and knew the Old Testament very well. After His salvation, Saul did not wait to begin his ministry, but began as soon as possible. This amazed the people that knew who he was and how he had persecuted the Church. He was so effective in his ministry that the Jews plotted to kill him. But Saul found out about the plot and he was let down through the wall in a large basket. [This reminds us of the story of Moses who was saved by being placed in a basket. It also reminds us of the story in Joshua 2:15 where Rahab hid the spies and let them down the wall of Jericho by a

rope. Saul was being revealed as a new Moses and a greater Joshua, leading the Church into victory in the world through the preaching of the Word of God.]

Acts 9:26-30 says that Saul went to Jerusalem. We know from Galatians 1:17-19 that Paul did not go to Jerusalem until three years after his conversion. This would be AD 33. During this time Saul went to Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Still three years after his salvation, the Christians in Jerusalem were afraid of Saul because of his murderous reputation. We all should be careful to develop a good reputation. Once you have a bad reputation, a bad name, it is very hard to get people to think well of you. But God was with Saul. V. 27 says that Barnabas took Saul to the apostles. Barnabas was known to have a good name (called “son of encouragement” by the Apostles) because of his great works of mercy in Acts 4:36f. After Saul spent time in Jerusalem (only fifteen days), Saul was taken to Caesarea and then to his hometown of Tarsus [see map below].

Turn to Acts 9:31. Here we see a change in the story. Luke told us about the story of Saul’s salvation here in chapter 9 because it would be another 11 years before he comes back into the story. Here in v. 31 and following, Luke returned to what was going on with Peter, the leader of the Church.

II. Continued Progress of the Churches Acts 9:31

V. 31 says,

Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

What is important to note today is that following the conversion of Saul, the Lord was giving the areas around Jerusalem peace. As we shall see next week, Jerusalem was still under great persecution. But in the surrounding areas, He was building up and strengthening the Church for its mission of witnessing to the person and works of Jesus. And the churches continued to grow. Once again we see that the disciples were walking in the fear of the Lord. Remember that it is important to fear the Lord and to walk according to His word. As we do, He will bless us with the ability to be witnesses for Him and to see growth in the Church. Do you want our Church to grow? Fear the Lord and walk by the power and comfort of the Spirit. Be a witness for Jesus whenever you have opportunity. You do not have to wait until you are older or smarter somehow. Saul began immediately to preach. You can too. Just be faithful to the Lord in all things.

❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 10-12. Why was it important for Peter to go to the Gentiles? Memorize Acts 5:41 – QUIZ NEXT WEEK

❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Six – Conversion of Saul Acts 9:1-30

Objective – To show you that in order to be an effective witness you must walk in the fear of the Lord and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)

- A. Before Pentecost (1:1-26)
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II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)

- A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)
- B. Jerusalem Council (15)
- C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
- D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)
- E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)
- F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)
- G. Paul in Rome (27-28)

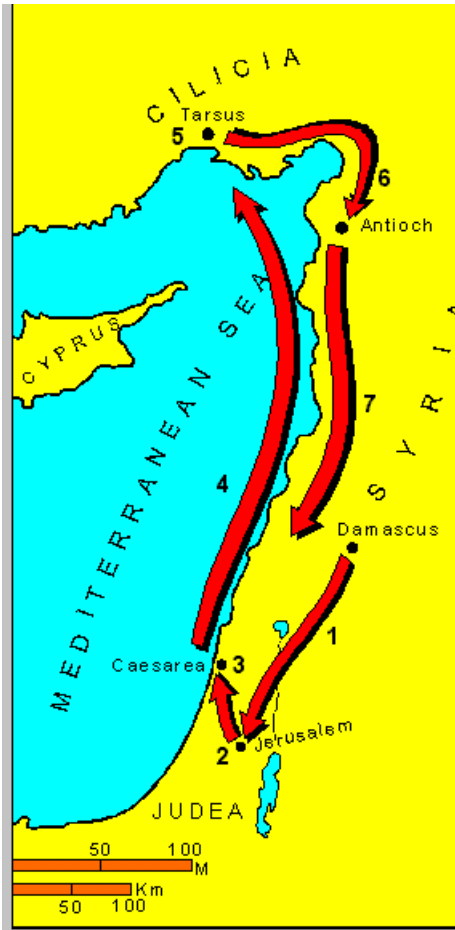
I. The Conversion of Saul 9:1-30

II. Continued Progress of the Churches 9:31

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 10-12. Why was it important for Peter to go to the Gentiles?
Memorize Acts 5:41 – QUIZ NEXT WEEK
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles

Saul was converted in AD 30, the same year that all of Acts 1-8 took place.



1 During the three years after his conversion (AD 30), Saul preached Christ in Damascus, and was forced to escape from the Jews of Damascus in a basket (Acts 9:20-25).

2 After three years (AD 33), Saul went to Jerusalem to see Peter. The believers still suspected him, but Barnabas introduced him to them. He talked with Peter and met James. But after only 2 weeks he has to be smuggled out because of opposition from some Jews (Acts 9:26-30; Galatians 1:18-20).

3 Saul was taken to Caesarea.

4 From there he left for his home city of Tarsus (Acts 9:30).

5 He spent 10 years in Tarsus. During this time he visited places in Cilicia and Syria. He was still unknown personally to believers in Judea

(Galatians 1:21-24).

6 Barnabas (who had been sent to work in the church in Antioch) went to find Saul in Tarsus. He brought him back to Antioch (AD 43-44), and they taught together for 1 year (Acts 11:25-26).

7 Saul, Barnabas, and Titus went to Jerusalem with famine relief money for Judea (AD 44). They met privately with the church leaders. Despite some disagreements, the leaders recognized Saul's ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 11:27-30; 12:25; Galatians 2:1-10).

Week Seven – Peter and the Gentiles
Acts 9:31-12:24

Objective – To show students how God blessed Peter, who faithfully obeyed and listened to God, but cursed Herod, who sought to take glory for himself rather than give it to God.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability**
 - Take attendance
 - Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible and writing materials, work on your memorization, and read Acts 10-12?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the questions and answers for this quarter
- ❖ **Scripture Memory Quiz:** On a piece of paper, write out Acts 5:41.
- ❖ **Scripture Memorization** – *New Memory Verse:* QUIZ IN TWO WEEKS
Acts 9:4
Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

❖ **Setting**

As we have seen, the book of Acts follows a basic outline given in 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

[Teach highlighted parts today. The Students do not need to learn chapter numbers. Give the students the two page handout at the end of this lesson.]

I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)

- A. **Before Pentecost (1:1-26)**
- B. **Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)**
 - 1. Pentecost (2)
 - 2. Growth of Church (3-4)
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- C. **Church in Judea and Samaria (8)**
- D. **Ends of the earth (9-12)**

II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)

- A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)
- B. Jerusalem Council (15)
- C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
- D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)
- E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)
- F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)
- G. Paul in Rome (27-28)

❖ Lesson

I. The Ongoing Ministry of Peter Acts 9:32-43 *[Keep this section short]*

Review with the students what has happened in the book of Acts with Peter by using the maps and explanations on the handout entitled, “Peter’s Journeys” (points 1-5). The last time we saw Peter was in Ch. 8 when he went to Samaria with John to pray that the Samaritans would receive the Holy Spirit, and to help establish the churches there. Now at the end of Ch. 9 we see that Peter continued this work of ministering to the Churches throughout the country. In vv. 32-35, Peter went to Lydda, to the west of Jerusalem (in Judea) and healed Aeneas, who had been paralyzed for eight years. This miracle was so amazing to the people of that area that all who lived there turned to the Lord in faith.

Next, in vv. 36-43, Peter went to Joppa, near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea (not far from Lydda). There, one of the notable Christian women, Tabitha (also known as Dorcas) became ill and died. She had a good reputation in the church because of her good works and the charitable/loving deeds she had done, particularly sewing clothing for the widows in need. The widows whom she had served wept sorrowfully, but Peter sent them away. Peter knelt down in prayer, and then spoke to her,

“Tabitha, arise.” And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. ⁴¹Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. ⁴²And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.

Once again, God used the Apostles to do signs and wonders that confirmed to people that what the Apostles said about Jesus was indeed true, and many believed their witness. The church continued to grow.

II. Peter and the Gentiles Acts 10:1-11:30

A. Peter and Cornelius 10:1-48

As we have said repeatedly, Peter was the head of the Church in Jerusalem and led the witness of the Church in Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. As the witness of the gospel went to all these different places and all kinds of people (Jews, Samaritan, and Gentiles), it was necessary for him to be present when the Holy Spirit came upon them. This way, he could help the Church understand what God was doing.

In 10:1-48 we have the story of a Gentile God-fearer (a Roman Centurion) that gave money (alms) to the poor and prayed to God always. He lived in Caesarea. One day while he was praying, God gave him a vision that he should send for Peter in Joppa, who would tell him more about God that he needed to know (10:3-6, 30-32). [This vision was in the “ninth hour,” about 3pm, the same hour that Jesus died. It was at that time a Centurion, seeing all that happened, said, “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matt. 27:45-54; Mk. 15:33-39; Lk. 24:44-47).]

In this story we see that Peter and the other disciples still did not understand the way in which the gospel would go out to the ends of the earth. They most likely thought that the good news of Jesus was to be preached *to the Jews* scattered throughout the world. They still did not at all understand that the gospel was for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. At this time, the Jews (including in the Apostles), thought that the Gentiles were to be avoided as sinful and unclean. They thought that the only way for Gentiles to be saved was for them to be converted into a Jew. But we see in this story that Peter learned the truth.

The day after Cornelius was given his vision to send men for Peter, Peter had a vision. Read vv. 10-14.

¹⁰Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance ¹¹and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. ¹²In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. ¹³And a voice came to him, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” ¹⁴But Peter said, “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.”

In order to understand this vision we need to understand a little about the Old Testament food laws. Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 explain to the people of Israel the kinds of animals that they could eat and the animals that they could not eat, calling them clean and unclean. In these passages, Yahweh says that He gave these laws to teach the people to be holy and without sin. They were to be a special holy people unto God. They were to be “set apart” from the unbelievers in the world. What they ate was a symbol of holiness. The distinction between clean and unclean animals was a symbol of the distinction between the holy people and the sinful nations around Israel (Lev. 11:44; 20:24-26; Deut. 14:21). They were to be different (holy) than the Gentiles who were sinful and worshipped false Gods. The Jews of that day believed that just to be *with* a Gentile made them unclean (Acts 11:3). But, nowhere in the Old Testament were the people of God commanded to

stay away from Gentiles, or told that Gentiles would make them unclean. This was just a Jewish tradition added to the law of God (Acts 10:28).

When God commanded Peter to kill and eat of “all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air,” Peter refused because he thought he would be made unclean by doing so. He thought that the unclean animals polluted the clean animals on the sheet by being together, which in his mind was like a Jew being made unclean by being with a Gentile (Acts 10:28). God was telling Peter that He was going to make the Gentiles clean through the gospel, just as He had cleansed the Jews through the gospel. By refusing to accept that God had made clean all of the animals on the sheet, and that God was cleansing the Gentiles, Peter was defiling or making unclean what God had made clean. V. 15, “*What God has cleansed you must not **call** common.*” The Lord was preparing Peter to go and preach to the Gentiles the cleansing from sin that comes from the gospel. In vv. 17-23 we see that the Spirit directed Peter to go with the men to Cornelius.

What follows in vv. 24-48 is the salvation of Cornelius and his household. Peter showed that he understood the vision that God had given him in vv. 34-35,

*Then Peter opened his mouth and said: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. “But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is **accepted by Him.**”*

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the gospel, and the Christian Jews were amazed but understood that God was saving the Gentiles.

B. Peter Argued for the inclusion of the Gentiles Acts 11:1-18

When Peter returned to Jerusalem, many of those who thought that Gentiles first had to become Jews to be saved argued with Peter. But Peter explained what had happened, and that the Holy Spirit had been given to the Gentiles in the same way that they had at Pentecost. V. 18 says, *When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”* As we will see in a few weeks, this did not end the argument about the Gentiles.

III. Antioch Acts 11:19-30

In the years that followed the scattering of the believers into the various parts of the world, they preached to the Jews wherever they went. Eventually a church was established in Antioch [show the students on the map handed out earlier]. The Church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas (see 4:36f; 9:27, the “son of encouragement”)

to Antioch (just as they sent Peter to Samaria, cf. 8:14ff) to preach and encourage the church there. Barnabas took Saul from Tarsus to Antioch, now 13 years after his conversion. They worked together in the Antioch church and effectively taught the people for one year. V. 26 says that this is the place where the disciples were first called Christians. As we will see, Antioch became one of the main centers for evangelism.

Vv. 27-30 tells us that at that time prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch and one named Agabus said that a famine would spread throughout the Roman world. The Christians around the world determined to send help to the brethren in Judea, which they did through Barnabas and Saul. Once again we see the loving care that Christians have always given to the poor and needy. [cf. Acts 12:25; 24:17; Rom. 15:25-27; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:1-7; 9:1f]

IV. The Persecution of Peter and the Church by Herod Acts 12:1-24

In this final section, we learn that Herod, the King of Judea, began to persecute the Church. What is significant about this is that we learn that it was not only the Jewish leaders that persecuted the Church, but also the civil rulers. He had the Apostle James put to death. Because this pleased the Jews, Herod decided to also arrest Peter, but waited until after Passover to kill him. Remember that Jesus was put on trial before Herod as well. Many of the things that happened to Jesus also were experienced by the disciples as well. But the disciples were usually protected so that they could be witnesses. Peter was well guarded by four squads of soldiers (16 men). While the church prayed for Peter the night before Herod planned to have him killed, an angel of the Lord delivered him from the prison. Peter went to the house of Mary, the mother of a disciple named John Mark, where many of the Christians had gathered to pray. Peter knocked on the gate, and Rhoda answered the door. She recognized the voice of Peter, but in her excitement and desire to tell the others, she forgot to let him in. When he was finally let in, the believers were amazed how God had so wonderfully saved them from persecution again (4:1-21; 5:17-21). After this story, we see very little of Peter again. God had mightily used the Apostle Peter to lead the Church in Jerusalem.

This section ends with the death of Herod (12:20-23). Herod was in Caesarea and, dressed in fine royal clothes, gave a speech to people that desired to make peace with him. They kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" Because he did not give glory to God, an angel of the Lord struck him, and he was eaten by worms and died [This story reminds us a great deal of how God dealt Nebuchadnezzar's sin of pride in Daniel 4]. We are taught by this story that God uses His angels to protect His Church and to judge the enemies of God. The last

verse of this section says, “But the word of God grew and multiplied” (v. 24). Nothing can stop the word of God being preached by His faithful witnesses. As you grow in your ability as a witness for Christ, trust God who will protect you and use you to spread the gospel.

❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 13-14. Observe how important the city of Antioch is in the preaching of the gospel. Also see how Paul becomes the leader of the witness to the world. This is his first missionary journey. Memorize Acts 9:4 – QUIZ IN TWO WEEKS

❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Seven – Peter and the Gentiles Acts 9:31-12:24

Objective – To show you how God blessed Peter, who faithfully obeyed and listened to God, but cursed Herod, who sought to take glory for himself rather than give it to God.

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I. The Ongoing Ministry of Peter 9:32-43

II. Peter and the Gentiles 10:1-11:30

- A. Peter and Cornelius 10:1-48
Lev. 11:44; 20:24-26; Deut. 14:21

B. Peter Argued for the inclusion of the Gentiles 11:1-18

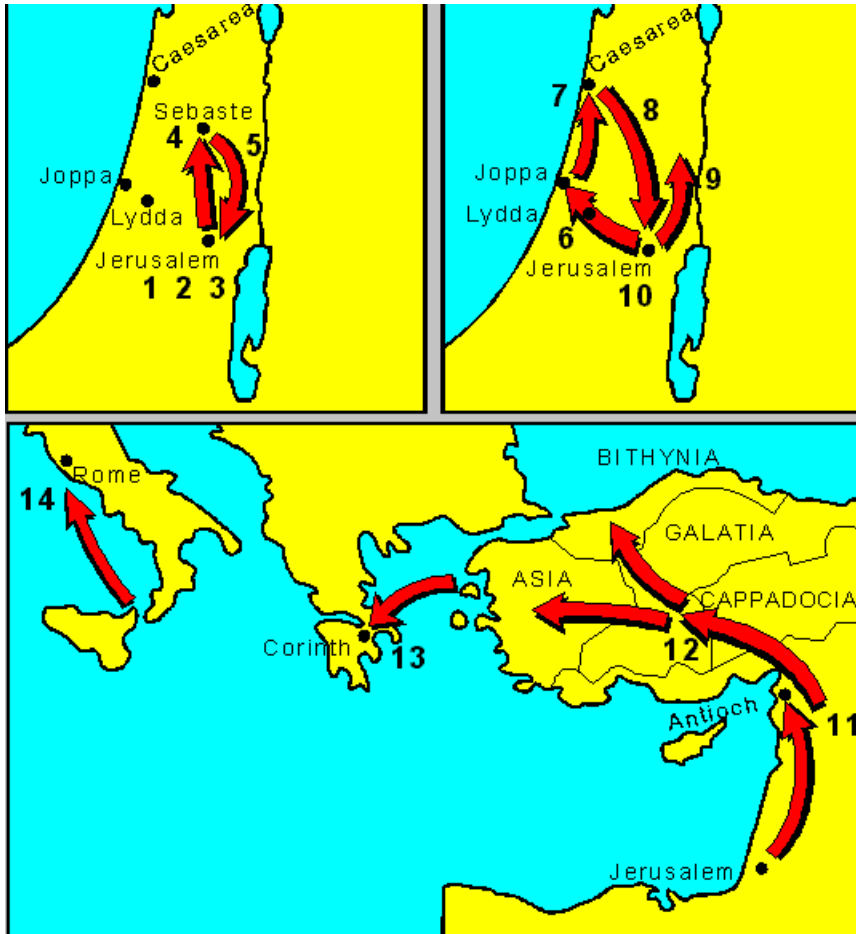
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- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Peter's Journeys

- 1 On the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached, and many believed (Acts 2:14-42).
- 2 Peter healed a lame man. He was arrested with John and warned not to preach (Acts 3:1-4:22).
- 3 At this stage Peter is leader of the church in Jerusalem.
- 4 Peter and John followed Philip into Samaria. Samaritans became believers (Acts 8:4-24).



- 5 They returned, preaching in Samaritan villages (Acts 8:25).

- 6 Peter went to Lydda and on to Joppa to raise Dorcas from death. He stayed for some time (Acts 9:32-43).
- 7 Cornelius in Caesarea had a vision to send for Peter. Peter had a vision in Joppa. Peter went to Caesarea and Gentiles became believers (Acts 10:1-48).
- 8 Peter reported to the Jerusalem church who accept that the gospel is for Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18).

9 Peter was arrested, but miraculously released. He fled Jerusalem (Acts 12:1-19).

10 Peter spoke at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1-21). James now appears to head the Jerusalem church.

There is very little information about the rest of Peter's life and ministry.

11 Peter met Paul in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14).

12 Peter visited the churches in north Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1).

13 Evidence of Peter in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:12).

14 Peter was martyred in Rome.

Week Eight – Paul’s First Missionary Journey Acts 13-14

Objective – To encourage students to prepare themselves for the ministry God has called them to. To teach them to not despair over those unwilling to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability**
 - Take attendance
 - Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible and writing materials, work on your memorization, and read Acts 13-14?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the questions and answers for this quarter
- ❖ **Scripture Memorization** – QUIZ NEXT WEEK

Acts 9:4

Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

❖ **Setting**

As we have seen, the book of Acts follows a basic outline given in 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

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- G. Paul in Rome (27-28)**

Acts 12:25 says, “*And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.*” Why were Barnabas and Saul in Jerusalem, and what was their ministry? [Acts 11:27-30 says that because of a famine in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Saul were sent by the church in Antioch to take relief money.] This happened in AD 44. How many years had Paul been a Christian? [14 years. He was converted in AD 30, in the same year that Jesus was crucified.] Last week we studied the conversion of the first Gentiles. Why was this hard for Peter and the other disciples in Jerusalem? [The Jewish Christians at that time thought that Gentiles needed to become Jews in order to be Christians.] How did God demonstrate to Peter that the Gentiles were to be received as Christians if they believed in Jesus? [God gave Peter the vision of the animals (clean and unclean) being lowered down from heaven, and Cornelius and those with him were given the Holy Spirit.]

❖ Lesson

I. Antioch: A Center for Gentile Missions Acts 13:1-3

Read Acts 13:1-3. [Show the students where Antioch (in Syria) is on the map.] As we saw last week, after Saul had persecuted the church in Jerusalem and Judea and following the death of the first Christian “martyr” (witness), Stephen, many of the disciples were scattered to various parts of the world, including to **Antioch** (11:19-26). They preached to the Jews only there, and “the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” Both Barnabas and Saul were greatly used by the Lord in Antioch, and an important church was established. This is the first place that the disciples of Jesus were known as “**Christians**.” Just as Jerusalem was the center of the ministry to the Jews under Peter, so now, Antioch became the center of Gentile Mission work under Paul. He is first referred to as Paul in 13:9. His name means “small” or “little.” After 14 years of learning to be a faithful Christian, Paul was now a humble man. No longer breathing out threats and violence against the believers (9:1), he is now filled with the Holy Spirit and humbly does the work Christ called him to. Barnabas, known as the “son of encouragement,” had been used by the Lord to encourage Paul and disciple him in the faith.

II. The 1st Missionary Journey of Paul Acts 13:4-14:28

A. On the Island of Cyprus Acts 13:4-12

Paul and Barnabas took John Mark as their assistant or helper (whom they brought with them from Jerusalem), and went from Antioch and sailed to the **island of Cyprus**. They first preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews in

Salamis. They went on from there to the city of **Paphos**. Read vv. 6-8. While in Paphos they found a false prophet, and magician or sorcerer named Bar-Jesus (“son of Jesus,” not the son of Jesus Christ). Bar-Jesus was with (or was associated with) the proconsul, Roman ruler of the area, Sergius Paulus. Sergius Paulus was an intelligent man and wanted to hear the gospel from Paul and Barnabas. But the sorcerer Bar-Jesus tried to keep the Roman ruler from believing the word of God. He was blind to the truth of God, even though he thought himself wise (his name was also Elymas, which means “wise man”), and was fighting against the Lord and His messengers. Read vv. 9-11. The Lord fought back against this false prophet and made him blind for a time. When the proconsul saw what had been done, he was amazed at the teaching of the Lord and became a believer. Here we see the Lord mightily saving more Gentiles – even a Gentile ruler!

B. Galatia Acts 13:13-14:25

The New Testament book of Galatians was written to the churches in the area known as **Galatia**. These churches were first established on this first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas.

1. Perga and Antioch Pisidia Acts 13:13-51

Paul, Barnabas and John Mark sailed from Paphos to a city named **Perga** in Galatia. [Show students on the handout.] John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. We do not know why he left. We do know from Acts 15:36-40 that Paul was not pleased with John Mark for leaving.

The custom of Paul was to take the gospel to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:16). As Jesus said in Luke 24,

*⁴⁶Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷“and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to **all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.** ⁴⁸“And you are witnesses of these things.*

The witness was to go from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. The Jews were given the first opportunities to hear the gospel preached to them.

Acts 13:14 says, “they came to **Antioch in Pisidia**, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.” This Antioch is in Galatia, not Antioch in Syria. [See map.] Paul preached a great sermon in the synagogue on the Jewish Sabbath, calling upon the people of the Jews and as many as feared God to believe in Jesus and have their sins forgiven. He also warned them not to be like the Jews in Jerusalem that rejected Jesus (13:15-41). Many of the people, both Jews and

Gentiles, believed the message (13:42-43). The next Sabbath day they preached again, this time almost the whole city came out to hear them (13:44-49). Many of the Gentiles believed the word of the Lord and glorified God. The Jews were filled with envy (wanting the people of the city to be Jews, not Christians) and opposed them and stirred up the city against them (vv. 45, 50). The Jews raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and kicked them out of the city (v. 50).

Turn to and read 13:51: “*But they shook off the dust from their feet against them...*” What do you think this means to shake off the dust from their feet? In order for us to understand what is going on here, we need to be aware of the teaching and commandment of Jesus concerning how the disciples were to respond when they were persecuted for preaching the gospel (see Matt. 10:11f; Mk. 6:1; Lk. 9:5). Matthew 10:11-23:

¹¹“*Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out.*” ¹²“*And when you go into a household, greet it.*” ¹³“*If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.*” ¹⁴“*And **whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet.***” ¹⁵“*Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!*” ¹⁶“*Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.*” ¹⁷“*But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues.*” ¹⁸“*You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.*” ¹⁹“*But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak;*” ²⁰“*for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.*” ²¹“*Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.*” ²²“*And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.*” ²³“***When they persecute you in this city, flee to another...***”

Jesus said that when a city or group of people refuses to receive you or hear your message, leave them in their unbelief. Do not stay with that city and be persecuted, but flee to another city and preach the word. Shaking the dust from your feet means that you are leaving them (like the dust) and taking with you the message of the gospel. They left Antioch in Pisidia to God, and went on to Iconium to preach some more.

2. Iconium, Lystra and Derbe Acts 13:51-14:21

Once again they preached in the synagogue of the Jews in **Iconium** and a great multitude of both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) believed. They continued to stay in Iconium for a long time and boldly preached, but unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles against the Christians that were now in the city (14:1-5). The city became divided over what they taught, and eventually there was a conspiracy to try to stone Paul and Barnabas. They heard about the plot and fled again, this time to Lystra and Derbe. [See the handout.]

The people of **Lystra** [*loos'-trah*] were pagan worshippers of the Greek gods. Paul healed a man that was born crippled. When the people of Lystra saw what he had done, they thought he was a god. The priest of the temple of Zeus brought oxen to make sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas, who they thought were Hermes and Zeus (14:8-17). When Paul and Barnabas saw this, they ran out and told them that they were mere men and had come to preach about the One True God. [Remember the Catechism question: Are there more Gods than one? There is but one only, the living and true God. WSC #5] Even preaching in this way, they could barely keep the people from sacrificing to them. Not long after this, Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and persuaded the multitudes of the people to persecute Paul and Barnabas, and they stoned Paul and dragged his body out of the city. When the Christians gathered around him, Paul rose up and went into the city (vv. 18-20). The next day they went to **Derbe** [*der-bay*] and preached the gospel to that city (v. 21).

3. Revisiting the Churches Acts 14:21-25

From Derbe they returned again to all of the cities they had preached in. They encouraged the believers to remain faithful to the word of the Lord, and they appointed Elders with prayer and fasting in every church in these cities.

C. The Report to the Church in Antioch Acts 14:26-28

Finally, they returned to the church in Antioch of Syria and made a full report to the believers there of what God had done through them on their Missionary Journey. They told them about how God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, even though the Jews had bitterly persecuted them.

III. Character Lessons

- 1) It is important to make yourself ready for the ministry that God is calling you to. Although Paul was well trained in the scriptures as a Jewish Pharisee, he spent 14 years learning and growing as Christian before the Holy Spirit sent him on his first missionary journey.

- 2) As the Lord brings you opportunities to speak for Him, you should trust the Lord to give you the Holy Spirit to speak just the right things as the right time.
- 3) When someone or a group of people do not welcome you as a servant of Christ and refuse to hear the word of the Lord, leave them in their unbelief. Go on to speak to people that are willing to hear the gospel. Do not waste your time on people who hate the Lord and hate to hear the word of the Lord.
- 4) When people see the good works of the Lord in your life, be careful to give God the glory. Do not take the glory yourself, or allow people to think that it was anyone but God that has made you what you are. Certainly our parents and our church can help us be godly, but it is God working through them to make us godly.
- 5) Be willing to share with people the ways in which God uses you. It helps the church to hear the good works of God in our lives.

❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 15 about the Jerusalem Council. Why did the leaders of the church meet? Was it helpful? Memorize Acts 9:4 – QUIZ NEXT WEEK

❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Eight – Paul’s First Missionary Journey Acts 13-14

Objective – To encourage you to prepare yourselves for the ministry God has called you to. To teach you to not despair over those unwilling to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

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| <p>I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Before Pentecost (1:1-26)B. Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Pentecost (2)2. Growth of Church (3-4)3. Troubles in the church (5-7)C. Church in Judea and Samaria (8)D. Ends of the earth (9-12) | <p>II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. <u>1st Missionary Journey (13-14)</u>B. Jerusalem Council (15)C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)G. Paul in Rome (27-28) |
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I. Antioch: A Center for Gentile Missions

II. The 1st Missionary Journey of Paul Acts 13:4-14:28

A. On the Island of Cyprus Acts 13:4-12

B. Galatia Acts 13:13-14:25

1. Perga and Antioch Pisidia Acts 13:13-51

2. Iconium, Lystra and Derbe Acts 13:51-14:21

3. Revisiting of the Churches Acts 14:21-25

C. The Report to the Church in Antioch Acts 14:26-28

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 15 about the Jerusalem Council. Why did the leaders of the church meet? Was it helpful? Memorize Acts 9:4 – QUIZ NEXT WEEK
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Paul's 1st Missionary Journey

- 1 The church in **Antioch (Syria)** sent out Paul and Barnabas, with John Mark (Acts 13:1-3, 5).
- 2 They sailed to the island of **Cyprus** and preached to the Jews in **Salamis**. In the city of **Paphos** they encountered Bar-Jesus, false prophet and friend of the governor. Bar-Jesus was struck blind, and the governor believed (Acts 13:4-12).



- 3 They sailed to **Perga** and John Mark left to go back to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13).
- 4 Paul preached to Jews and Gentiles in **Antioch Pisidia**. The Jews were jealous and stirred up opposition (Acts 13:14-50).
- 5 They went to **Iconium** and stayed a long time. Many Jews and Gentiles became believers. Both Jews and Gentiles plotted to stone them, and they fled on to **Lystra** and **Derbe** (Acts 13:50-14:7).
- 6 In **Lystra** Paul healed a cripple. They were hailed as gods. Jews arrived from **Antioch Pisidia** and **Iconium** and stoned Paul (Acts 14:8-20).

- 7 Many more disciples were made in **Derbe**. They returned to **Antioch** the way they came, encouraging the young churches and appointing Elders to lead the churches (Acts 14:21-26).
- 8 They reported everything to the church in **Antioch**, and how God had “opened the door of faith to the Gentiles”(Acts 14:27-28).

Week Nine – The Jerusalem Council
Acts 15:1-35

Objective – To encourage students to imitate the Apostles by resolving their disputes peacefully, appealing to higher authorities if necessary, and respecting the decisions of those authorities.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability**
 - Take attendance
 - Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible and writing materials, work on your memorization, and read Acts 15?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the questions and answers for this quarter
- ❖ **Scripture Memory Quiz:** On a piece of paper, write out Acts 9:4.
- ❖ **Scripture Memorization** – *New Memory Verse:* QUIZ IN TWO WEEKS
Acts 16:31
So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

❖ **Setting**

The book of Acts follows a basic outline given in 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

[Teach highlighted parts today. The Students do not need to learn chapter numbers. Give the students the handout at the end of this lesson.]

- I. **The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)**
 - A. **Before Pentecost (1:1-26)**
 - B. **Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)**
 - 1. Pentecost (2)
 - 2. Growth of Church (3-4)
 - 3. Troubles in the church (5-7)
 - C. **Church in Judea and Samaria (8)**
 - D. **Ends of the earth (9-12)**

- II. **The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)**
 - A. **1st Missionary Journey (13-14)**
 - B. **Jerusalem Council (15)**
 - C. **2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)**
 - D. **3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)**
 - E. **Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)**
 - F. **Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)**
 - G. **Paul in Rome (27-28)**

Review briefly with students the progress of the gospel from Jerusalem, to Samaria, (Ethiopian Man) and Peter with Cornelius and the Gentiles (Ch. 10-11:18).

❖ Lesson

I. The Defense of the Gospel IN the Church Acts 15:1-5

What was the name of the city that sent Paul and Barnabas out on their first missionary journey? [Antioch in Syria.] This city became an important center for the witness to the Gentiles under Paul. When Paul and Barnabas returned from their journey they stayed in Antioch for a long time with the disciples.

In 15:1, we read that some men that came up to Antioch from Jerusalem and disturbed the peace of this church. These men came as teachers and taught the church in Antioch, “*Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.*” What these men taught was that you must keep the Jewish rituals and ceremonies if you wanted to be a Christian. What this means is that if you wanted to be saved, you had to do certain things – you earn our salvation by works. It was adding things to faith as the means of being saved.

Faith + Works of the law = Salvation. Is this what Jesus taught? NO! Jn. 3:16, “Whosoever believes in Me shall have everlasting life.” We are saved by grace (the gift of God) through faith (which is a gift of God), not by works, unless someone would be proud that they had earned their salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). The gospel is not salvation by works of the law, but by the grace of God. To say anything else is a change of the gospel that cannot be permitted. [See Galatians 5:1-6 for Paul’s argument about this.]

Because the nature of the gospel was at stake, Paul and Barnabas stood against these false teachers and argued against them in no small way. It became a very large argument in the church in Antioch. This was important for them to do to protect the gospel from false teaching. Over and over again in the New Testament we see the commandment to keep the teaching of the Church pure from false teaching.

The church in Antioch determined to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to settle the question. Paul and Barnabas were sent not to learn the truth, but because they knew the truth of God and that the Apostles in Jerusalem would declare the same things as them. When there are troubles in the church over the teaching in the church, we must be careful to submit to the Elders of the church. While it is

important to read and study the Bible ourselves, we need to trust God to teach us what the Bible says through the Elders of the Church.

After they left, they traveled south and told the people in the churches what God had done through them and described the conversion/salvation of the Gentiles. It gave all the brethren great joy to hear that the gospel was preached to the Gentiles (15:3). When they arrived at Jerusalem they were received by the apostles and elders, and reported to them also what God had done with them.

But not everyone in Jerusalem received their testimony of God's work through them. V. 5 says that some of the men of the sect of the Pharisees (a group of men in the Christian church who had been Pharisees, just as Paul had been) argued and said the same thing that the false teachers in Antioch said. They claimed that the Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved.

II. The Jerusalem Council Acts 15:6-29

Consider how difficult and troubling it would be if there was a big fight in our church about some teaching in the church. Imagine 4-5 men of the church beginning to believe something different than the rest of the congregation and teaching it to others in the church. And there were several meetings with angry words, and every Sunday after the service the men of the church were arguing about this problem. It would be very hard for us wouldn't it? We would want to have it resolved and finished according to the Bible, wouldn't we?

This has happened several times in history. In the early church some people believed that Jesus wasn't really God, because God is a spirit and could not have a body like men. Others believed that He wasn't really a man, but just looked like a man. Another problem in the Church was the question of the Trinity. The church held what is known as Church councils, or meetings of the leaders of many churches, and decided the answers to these questions once and for all. Disagreement and arguments are not always bad. When these times of disputing happen in the church, if the men involved are able to come together and search the scriptures for the answer, it can be determined what is truth and what is error. The end result of such times is the assurance of truth in the church, and the ability to be at peace with one another.

Acts 15 is often thought of as the passage that records the meeting of the "Jerusalem Council." V. 6 says, "*Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.*" This is the record of the first such council, and the peace it brought in the church. When this meeting of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem

and Antioch was finished, they were in unity together and believed the same thing. It did not make all of the false teachers stop spreading their errors, but the church after the Jerusalem Council was in agreement that their teachings were in error and could oppose them strongly knowing the truth of God.

A. The Witness of Peter, and Paul and Barnabas Acts 15:7-12

In vv. 7-12 we read that Peter (the leader of the Jerusalem Church) and Paul (the leader of the witness to the Gentiles from Antioch) were given opportunity to explain what God had done through them. Peter began by saying that God had used him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10-11:18), and that God had saved them by faith apart from circumcision, and that God sent upon them the Holy Spirit, just as He had done with the Jews at Pentecost. The coming of the Holy Spirit and the speaking in tongues was a sign to the Jews that God was saving the Gentiles by faith. Peter said in v. 9 that God, “*made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.*” Then, in v. 10 he said that the Gentiles should not be placed under the bondage of the law that even the Jews could not keep. Peter said that by doing so, the Jews were testing God. He said this because God had revealed that both the Gentiles and the Jews would be saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, not by works. To insist upon works would be teaching against the grace of Jesus. [This is the last we see of Peter in Acts] When he spoke these words, the whole multitude at the Council were silent, and also listened to Paul and Barnabas as they explained how God had used them in the same way among the Gentiles. V. 13 says that the people were silent.

B. The Decision of the Council Acts 15:13-29

In vv. 13-29 we see how the Jerusalem Council solved the problem. James (not the apostle who was killed by Herod in 12:2, but the brother of Jesus, who was now an elder in the church) was apparently the leader to the Jerusalem Council. He spoke in agreement with Peter, and quoted from the Old Testament (Amos 9:11-12), which says that the Gentiles would be saved, and that this salvation would be a proof that the Messiah was on the throne of David (which we saw happened at the ascension). James gave his opinion, which pleased the council (vv. 19-21, 22). The decision was to not trouble the Gentiles who are turning to God in faith, and write a letter to the churches about their decision. They wanted to make it clear to all that they rejoiced in the work of God in their lives. In this letter, they instructed the Gentiles to avoid four things that would make it hard for the Jews to receive them as true believers. These four things were things found in Leviticus 17 & 18.

1. Avoid eating things sacrificed to idols

Being believers in the one true God, Christians were to leave idol worship and be a true and faithful Bride to Christ. In Ex. 20:3-5, 23 God commanded His people not to make or worship idols. Ex. 34:15-16 they were to avoid making covenants with the inhabitants of the land which would lead the people away from the Lord by inviting the people of God to eat with them the meat of animals sacrificed to idols. The decision was to tell the Gentiles to avoid things sacrifice to idols as a way of protecting them from fellowship with the world and those who are idol worshippers.

2. Do not engage in sexual immorality

The people of God are to be holy. They are not to commit adultery against God by being associated with idols. This holiness also meant that they should avoid sinfully engaged in sexual immorality. Christian sex is reserved for marriage, and it shows the faithfulness of a husband and wife, just as the Church is to be faithful to Christ her Husband.

3. Avoid eating blood, and

4. Avoid eating meat from strangled animals

Genesis 9:4 says to all men after the flood that the blood of an animal should not be eaten, because the blood symbolizes the life of an animal. Leviticus 17:10-14 (cf. 3:17; 7:23-27; Deut. 12:16; 23-25; 14:21; 15:23) also says that both Jews and Gentiles must not eat blood. The blood represents the life, and blood was used as a means of teaching the people that their sins are forgiven by the shedding of blood. Thus, it was not to be eaten.

To follow these instructions, the Gentiles would make it easier for the Jews to accept them as true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. By doing what the Jerusalem Council said, the Gentiles would be showing love to the Jews (see Rom. 14-15:6). Eventually, with the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem a few years later, these issues became less of a problem because the Jews no longer had the temple as their central place of worship and the sacrificial system was done away with. The Christian Church replaced, once and for all, the Jewish worship of God.

C. The Joy and Encouragement of the Council Act 15:20-34

The Jerusalem Council concluded with the writing of the letter, and Paul and Barnabas were sent off with other men to Antioch. The Church gathered and heard the letter and were joyful in the encouragement that it brought. Judas and Silas also spoke to the people in Antioch and strengthened them with the word of the Lord. From this story we learn the way that we should resolve problems in the church.

We should not put up with teaching different than what our elders teach us. But if the problem becomes too great for an individual church to deal with, it is good to go to the other churches (like our own denomination) to get help. And when the broader Church declares what the scriptures teach, we should rejoice that God uses the leaders of His church to teach us to the truth and guard us from error. It is good to put such decisions in writing, as the church has often done in the Creeds and Confessions of the Church.

❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 16-18. How successful was Paul’s second missionary journey? Memorize Acts 16:31 – QUIZ IN TWO WEEKS

❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Nine – The Jerusalem Council Acts 15:1-35

Objective – To encourage you to imitate the Apostles by resolving your disputes peacefully, appealing to higher authorities if necessary, and respecting the decisions of those authorities.

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|---|--|
| <p>I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Before Pentecost (1:1-26)B. Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Pentecost (2)2. Growth of Church (3-4)3. Troubles in the church (5-7)C. Church in Judea and Samaria (8)D. Ends of the earth (9-12) | <p>II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)B. <u>Jerusalem Council (15)</u>C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)G. Paul in Rome (27-28) |
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- I. The Defense of the Gospel IN the Church Acts 15:1-5**

- II. The Jerusalem Council Acts 15:6-29**
- A. The Witness of Peter, and Paul and Barnabas Acts 15:7-12

 - B. The Decision of the Council Acts 15:13-29
 - 1. Avoid eating things sacrificed to idols

 - 2. Do not engage in sexual immorality

3. **Avoid eating blood**
4. **4. Eating meat from strangled animals**

C. The Joy and Encouragement of the Council Act 15:20-34

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 16-18. How successful was Paul’s second missionary journey?
Memorize Acts 16:31 – QUIZ IN TWO WEEKS
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Ten – Paul’s Second Missionary Journey
Acts 15:36-18:22

Objective – To encourage students to put their confidence in the truth of the gospel rather than the wisdom of this world, and to see God’s goodness in extending His blessings to the Gentiles.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability**
 - Take attendance
 - Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible and writing materials, work on your memorization, and read Acts 16-18?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the questions and answers for this quarter
- ❖ **Scripture Memorization** – QUIZ NEXT WEEK

Acts 16:31

So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

❖ **Setting**

The book of Acts follows a basic outline given in 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

[Teach highlighted parts today. The Students do not need to learn chapter numbers. Give the students the handout at the end of this lesson.]

I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)

- A. Before Pentecost (1:1-26)
- B. Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)
 - 1. Pentecost (2)
 - 2. Growth of Church (3-4)
 - 3. Troubles in the church (5-7)
- C. Church in Judea and Samaria (8)
- D. Ends of the earth (9-12)

II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)

- A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)
- B. Jerusalem Council (15)
- C. **2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)**
- D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)
- E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)
- F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)
- G. Paul in Rome (27-28)

What was the name of the city that sent Paul and Barnabas out on their first missionary journey? [Antioch in Syria.] This city became an important center for

the witness to the Gentiles under Paul. It was from the church in Antioch once again that they went on a second missionary journey. 15:36 says, “*Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.”*” This time, they took with them the letter from the Jerusalem Council (16:4).

❖ Lesson

I. Paul and Barnabas Separated Acts 15:36-41

There are times in our lives, even as Christians in the church when we will not agree with other believers about things. As we saw with the problems with the sect of the Pharisees (also known as “the Circumcision”) there are times that it is important to dispute and argue for the truth. In such times it is good to let the Elders deal with the problem and resolve the difficulty for you. Other times, it is good to find a way to get along with our brothers in Christ, even if we disagree. In doing so we trust God to help us deal with our disagreements, hoping and working toward finding a way to eventually agree in unity.

In 15:37-41 we see that Paul and Barnabas sharply disagreed about taking John Mark with them on their 2nd missionary journey. Remember that John Mark left them in the middle of their 1st journey (13:13). While we are not told why he left, apparently Paul was not happy about it. Paul did not trust John Mark, but Barnabas (the “son of encouragement”) did. Paul and Barnabas settled the dispute by going out from Antioch separately, Barnabas with John Mark to Cyprus, and Paul with Silas (who had come up from the Jerusalem Council) to Galatia. This is the last we see of Barnabas in the book of Acts.

II. Paul and Silas on the 2nd Missionary Journey Acts 16:1-18:22

A. Timothy Acts 16:1-5

Paul went (with Silas) by land from Antioch to Derbe and Lystra (places they established churches earlier, cf. 14:6-21). In Lystra a young man named Timothy joined them in the ministry. This is the same Timothy that Paul wrote two letters to (1 & 2 Timothy). Timothy became very important to the church as the gospel went out to the Gentiles.

As Paul, Silas and Timothy went through the cities encouraging the churches in Galatia, they delivered the decision of the Apostles and Elders in Jerusalem (from the Jerusalem Council, Ch. 15). It is interesting that because the Jews of that region may not have been willing to hear the gospel from Timothy without being circum-

cised, Paul circumcised him. He did not do this because he had to, but because he thought was wise to do for the sake of the gospel. We too should be sensitive to the way people live so that we can effectively preach the gospel to them.

Acts 6:5 says that “*the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.*” The ministry of Paul was being used by God and the churches grew in faith and numbers.

TIMOTHY, called also TIMOTHEUS, the companion of Paul. Parentage of, Acts 16:1. Reputation and Christian faith of, Acts 16:2; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15. Circumcised; becomes Paul’s companion, Acts 16:3; 1 Thes. 3:2. Left by Paul at Berea, Acts 17:14. Rejoins Paul at Corinth, Acts 17:15; 18:5. Sent into Macedonia, Acts 19:22. Rejoined by Paul; accompanies Paul to Asia, Acts 20:1-4. Sends salutation to the Romans, Rom. 16:21. Sent to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10,11; see postscript to 1 Corinthians. Preaches to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. 1:19. Sent to the Philippians, Phil. 2:19,23. Sent to the Thessalonians, 1 Thes. 3:2,6. Left by Paul in Ephesus, 1 Tim. 1:3. Confined with Paul in Rome, Phil. 2:19-23; Philemon. 1; Heb. 13:23; with the postscripts to Philippians, Philemon, and Hebrews. Ordained bishop of the Ephesians, see postscript to 2 Timothy. Joins Paul in the Epistle to the Philippians, Phil. 1:1; to the Colossians, Col. 1:1,2; to the Thessalonians, 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1; to Philemon, Philemon. 1. Acts as Paul’s amanuensis in writing the first letter to the Corinthians, see postscript to 1 Corinthians; in writing the letter to the Hebrews, see postscript to Hebrews. Zeal of, Phil. 2:19-22; 1 Tim. 6:12. Power of, 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6. Paul’s love for, 1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:22; 1 Tim. 1:2,18; 2 Tim. 1:2-4. Paul writes to, 1 Tim. 1:1,2; 2 Tim. 1:1,2. [From the *New Nave’s Topical Bible*]
FOR THE TEACHER

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B. Onward to Macedonia Acts 16:6-40

[Show the students on the map that Paul wanted to go to Asia to the west and then to Bithynia to the north, but the Spirit did not permit them to go.]

Paul wanted to continue on his journey to Asia in the west but the Holy Spirit forbade him. Then they tried to go up to Bithynia in the north, but again the Holy Spirit did not permit them. We do not know how the Spirit communicated this to them (Silas was a prophet, cf. 15:31). While Paul was at Troas, he had a vision of a man calling/pleading for him to “*Come over to Macedonia and help us*”(v. 9). What we learn from this is that Jesus was directing the progress of His Kingdom through His Spirit, and continues to do so today.

1. In Philippi Acts 16:11-30

a. Lydia Acts 16:11-15

Paul went by ship from Troas to Philippi, which was a major city of Macedonia [It was at this time that Luke joined him. The personal pronoun “we” is used.] When they arrived they stayed several days and spoke to some women by a river. A business woman that worshipped God, named Lydia, heard the message of Paul and the Lord opened her heart to believe. The only way anyone believes the message is by the gift of the Lord (Eph. 2:8-9). She and her household were baptized. Remember that Peter said in Acts 2:38-39 that the promise of salvation is

to those who believe and to their children, and to as many as the Lord our God will call. This household baptism is an important verse to show that God loves and receives the children of believers. Paul stayed with Lydia for a while.

Philippi A Roman colony, the variety of Philippi's religious life suggests that its inhabitants, noncitizens included, were more mixed in their backgrounds. Roman gods such as Jupiter and Mars had their cults, but the Thracian goddess Bendis remained very popular, and sanctuaries to gods from Egypt and to Cybele, a Phrygian goddess, are also known. A Jewish synagogue was apparently located just outside the city walls (Acts 16:13). The apostle Paul came to Philippi ca. A.D. 50 and founded here his first European Christian community (Acts 16:12-40; 1 Thess. 2:2). This church, always one of Paul's favorites, received his Letter to the Philippians ca. A.D. 54 and one or more further visits from him ca. A.D. 55 (1 Cor. 16:5-6; 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:5; Acts 20:1-6). A letter of Polycarp of Smyrna written to the Philippian Christians ca. A.D. 125 still survives, and Philippi enjoyed considerable ecclesiastical prominence even in medieval times. [Harper's Bible Dictionary]

FOR THE TEACHER

b. The Philippian Jailer 16:16-34 (35-40)

As time went on in Philippi, there was a slave girl that was possessed by a demon (evil spirit) that made money for her masters by telling people's fortunes. She followed Paul around and said, "*These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.*" This annoyed Paul because he did not want the gospel proclaimed by a demon, so he commanded the demon to come out of her. We do not know if she became a believer, but she no longer was a fortune-teller, which made her masters angry because they could no longer get money from using her. They had Paul and Silas arrested, beaten with rods, and put in the inner prison. The charge against them was that they were Jews that caused trouble in the city by teaching things not lawful for Romans, which was not true (v. 20-21). While in prison, at midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing and the prisoners were listening to them. Even in their persecution, they were

witnessing. Suddenly there was a great earthquake and all the doors of the prison were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. When the jailer/guard saw this, he was afraid that everyone had escaped and began to try to kill himself (thinking he would be held responsible). Paul stopped the man from killing himself by showing that everyone was still there, and the man asked how he could be saved (seeing all that God had done). V. 31 says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.*" And they spoke/witnessed the word of the Lord to him and his household and they believed and were baptized. Once again we see whole households believing and being baptized and received into the church.

The next day, Paul and Silas were to be released. But Paul said that since he was a Roman citizen (being born in a Roman province) and that he had not been given a trial and properly convicted of a crime, they should not have treated him the way

they had. Paul used the laws of the land to his advantage. Paul and Silas were released and they stayed with Lydia for a while and then left.

2. Thessalonica Acts 17:1-9

They continued on their journey to Thessalonica, and as was his custom, Paul went to the synagogue of the Jews and talked with them from the scriptures. Some of the people of the Jews and a great many of the Gentiles and important women of the city became believers.

But once again (like Antioch Pisidia, 13:13-51), many of the Jews that rejected the message stirred up persecution against them. They did this because they were envious (cf. 17:5 & 13:45 & 14:1-6), and didn't want people to leave Judaism for Christianity. Throughout the book of Acts we continue to see that it was mostly the Jews that persecuted the Christians for their witness. It is often the case in the Bible and in history that the believing and faithful church is troubled and persecuted by the unbelieving and unfaithful church. Read 17:5-7. The mob did not find Paul and Silas, but took Jason and some of the believers claiming

that they were bad citizens of the city (a lie). Speaking of Paul and Silas they said, "*These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.*" The gospel was having such an impact on the world that it was being recognized as changing everything. As Jesus had commanded, they went into all the world making disciples, even as their witness was persecuted. But the persecution did not mean that they were not effective in their efforts. Thessalonica became an important church, which Paul loved and wrote at least two letters to.

Thessalonica

Founded after the triumph of Macedonia to grace her new position in world affairs, the city rapidly outstripped its older neighbors and became the principal metropolis of Macedonia. Her position under the Romans was assured, and she has remained a major city to this day. Thessalonica was the first place where Paul's preaching achieved a numerous and socially prominent following (Acts 17:4). His opponents, lacking their hitherto customary influence in high places, resorted to mob agitation to force the government's hand. The authorities, neatly trapped by the imputation of disloyalty towards the imperial power, took the minimum action to move Paul on without hardship to him. In spite of his success, Paul made a point of not placing himself in debt to his followers (Phil. 4:16f.; 1 Thes. 2:9). Not that they were themselves without generosity (1 Thes. 4:10); Paul was apparently afraid that the flourishing condition of the church would encourage parasites unless he himself set the strictest example of self-support (2 Thes. 3:8-12). The two Epistles to the Thessalonians, written soon after his departure, reflect also his anxiety to conserve his gains from rival teachers (2 Thes. 2:2) and from disillusionment in the face of further agitation (1 Thes. 3:3). He need not have feared. Thessalonica remained a triumphant crown to his efforts (1 Thes. 1:8). [The New Bible Dictionary]

FOR THE TEACHER

3. Berea Acts 17:10-15

After this they went on to Berea. 17:11-12 says,

“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.”

Even today we remember the Bereans as noble and good because they studied the Bible (the Old Testament) to make sure that what Paul said was correct. We should be like these noble Bereans. But once again, trouble followed them (cf. 17:13f & 14:19). The Jews from Thessalonica went to Berea and stirred up the crowds against them. When this happened, Paul left Silas and Timothy there to help the Christians in Berea, but Paul went on to Athens.

4. Athens Acts 17:16-34

Athens was the capitol city of Greece, and an ancient city famous for great philosophy (thinking about the meaning of life and how men should live). It was a center for worshipping the Greek gods, and development of Greek culture based on the philosophy of these gods. 17:16 says that Paul saw the many idols of the city and was stirred up in his spirit to preach to them. Every day he preached to the Jews and the Gentile worshippers of Yahweh God. Some of the philosophers thought he was just a babbler and others thought he had some interesting things to say. The men considered wise in the eyes of the world love to talk and think about things, always learning but never coming to really know the truth. The Bible tells us that to the unbelieving world, Christianity will seem like foolishness. But we should not be ashamed of the wisdom of God or the gospel, because by witnessing and speaking the truth God saves people and changes their lives. Paul was invited to speak to the great philosophers of Athens at the great building called the Areopagus, and he preached a great sermon to them. He referred to one of their objects of worship, which had written on it, “To the unknown God.” Paul told them about the Lord Jesus, who was the God they did not know about, and called them to believe in Him. Some of them believed, but most thought that the message of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was foolishness. The miracle of the resurrection is a wonderful and important truth that we must proclaim and which will be received by those whom the Lord will call and save. Just as Jesus was leading Paul by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel, so too, He will use us as we witness to confound the wisdom of the world and bring forth believers in Christ. Don’t be afraid to speak what the Bible says, even if unbelievers seem smarter or wiser because it is through the scriptures that God changes people’s minds and hearts.

5. Corinth and Ephesus Acts 18:1-21

After this, Paul went on to Corinth. There he met a Jewish man named Aquila and

Corinth From the late 4th century until 196 BC Corinth was held mainly by the Macedonians; but in that year it was liberated, with the rest of Greece, by T. Quinctius Flaminius, and joined the Achaean League. After a period of opposition to Rome, and social revolution under the dictator Critolaus, the city was, in 146 BC, razed to the ground by the consul L. Mummius, and its inhabitants sold into slavery.

In 46 BC Corinth was rebuilt by Caesar and began to recover its prosperity. Augustus made it the capital of the new province of Achaea, now detached from Macedonia and ruled by a separate proconsular governor. [The New Bible Dictionary]. Jewish communities were well established in the Hellenistic world and throughout the Roman Empire by the first century A.D., and, according to Acts 18:1-3, Paul encountered the Christians Aquila and Priscilla (Prisca) on his first visit to Corinth A.D. 50. Paul remained there, preaching in the synagogue, in spite of a suit brought against him by some Jews before the proconsul Gallio, probably in the fall of A.D. 51 or the spring of A.D. 52 (Acts 18:4-18). Apollos also visited Corinth (Acts 18:27-19:1; 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4-9; 4:6), possibly contributing to the factionalism and difficulties Paul addresses in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Paul's Letter to the Romans was probably written from Corinth (Rom. 15:25-27; cf. Acts 20:3). [Harper's Bible Dictionary]

FOR THE TEACHER

his wife Priscilla (who we will learn more about next week, v. 26). Paul preached in the synagogue every Sabbath day that Jesus was the Christ (the anointed Messiah, the King). But the Jews so opposed him that he shook his garments against the Jews and said that he would mostly preach to the Gentiles, similar to what he had done earlier (cf. 18:6 & 13:51). The leader of the synagogue and his household believed and was baptized, along with many other people of the city of Corinth. The Lord spoke to Paul and commanded him to stay in Corinth because many would believe, which he did for a year and a half. Eventually, the Jews stirred up trouble again and took him to the judgment seat of the Roman proconsul (governor) saying in v. 13, "*This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.*" But the governor didn't want to have anything to do with the charge made by the Jews and released Paul. Repeatedly, Gentiles were used by God to protect the Christians from the Jews. God was turning away from the Jews, and saving the Gentiles. God used the Gentiles not only to protect the Christians, but then to drive away the influence of the Jews (they beat the ruler of the Jewish synagogue). After this, Paul remained in Corinth for awhile.

Paul took a Nazirite vow in 18:18. He became a holy warrior (like Samson) for the Lord to preach the gospel. In v. 19 we see that Paul went to Ephesus, which was in Asia (where the Spirit had before forbidden them to go, but now permitted him, cf. 16:6). He reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue. But when they wanted him to stay with them for awhile, he told them he needed to go to Jerusalem to keep a feast of the Jews (probably in connection with his vow), but desired to return.

D. The Report to the Church in Antioch Acts 18:21-23

Paul returned to Antioch in Syria and reported to the church, then went again to Galatia to strengthen the churches there.

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 19-21. What problems did Paul have on his third missionary journey? Memorize Acts 16:31 – QUIZ NEXT WEEK
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Ten – Paul’s Second Missionary Journey **Acts 15:36-18:22**

Objective – To encourage you to put your confidence in the truth of the gospel rather than the wisdom of this world, and to see God’s goodness in extending His blessings to the Gentiles.

- | | |
|---|--|
| I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12) <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Before Pentecost (1:1-26)B. Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Pentecost (2)2. Growth of Church (3-4)3. Troubles in the church (5-7)C. Church in Judea and Samaria (8)D. Ends of the earth (9-12) | II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28) <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)B. Jerusalem Council (15)C. <u>2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)</u>D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)G. Paul in Rome (27-28) |
|---|--|

I. Paul and Barnabas Separated 15:36-41

II. Paul and Silas on the 2nd Missionary Journey Acts 16:1-18:22

A. Timothy Acts 16:1-5

B. Onward to Macedonia Acts 16:6-40

- 1. In Philippi**
 - a. Lydia** Acts 16:11-30
Acts 16:11-15

b. The Philippian Jailer 16:16-34 (35-40)

2. **Thessalonica Acts 17:1-9**

3. **Berea Acts 17:10-15**

4. **Athens Acts 17:16-34**

5. **Corinth and Ephesus Acts 18:1-21**

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 19-21. What problems did Paul have on his third missionary journey? Memorize Acts 16:31 – QUIZ NEXT WEEK
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey

- 1 Paul and Barnabas agreed to revisit the churches in **Galatia**. But they disagree about taking John Mark who had left them on their earlier mission (Acts 15:36-38).
- 2 After an argument, Barnabas took John Mark to Cyprus (Acts 15:39).
- 3 Paul took Silas. At **Lystra** Paul asked Timothy to join them (Acts 16:1-3).
- 4 They revisit the towns, telling the believers the decisions of the Jerusalem Council about Gentile converts (Acts 16:4-5).
- 5 Paul tried to go into **Bithynia**, but is blocked by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6-7).
- 6 At night, Paul has a vision. A Macedonian urges him to come across to help. They decide to sail for **Macedonia** (Acts 16:8-10). At this point Luke (author of Acts) joins them.
- 7 In **Philippi** Paul delivered a slave girl fortune-teller from an evil spirit. The girl's owners protest and a crowd attacks Paul and Silas. Flogged and imprisoned, they are freed by an earthquake. Their jailer believes (Acts 16:11-40).



- 8 Paul convinces both Jews and Greeks in **Thessalonica**. Some Jews stir up a riot—Paul leaves secretly (Acts 17:1-9).

- 9 Paul receives a better reception in **Berea**, but people from Thessalonica stir up a mob. Paul leaves, but Silas and Timothy stay behind (Acts 17:10-15).
- 10 Paul went to **Athens, Greece** and spoke to the court of the Areopagus which met to consider new religions. His mention of the resurrection divides his audience: some mocked and some believed (Acts 17:16-34).
- 11 Paul went on to **Corinth**. Silas and Timothy arrive with news of Thessalonica. Paul writes 1 and 2 Thessalonians, encouraging that church in its difficulties. They spend almost 2 years here, building up the church. Despite Jewish opposition, they are able to stay (Acts 18:1-17).
- 12 They stop briefly in **Ephesus**—Paul had been forbidden earlier by the Spirit to preach in Asia. He debates with the Jews who want him to stay longer (Acts 18:18-21).
- 13 They travel back to **Antioch**, via Caesarea and Jerusalem (Acts 18:22).

Week Eleven – Paul’s Third Missionary Journey
Acts 18:24-21:14

Objective – To encourage students to do the will of God no matter the cost, trusting God in faith.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability**
 - Take attendance
 - Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible and writing materials, work on your memorization, and read Acts 19-21?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the questions and answers for this quarter
- ❖ **Scripture Memory Quiz:** On a piece of paper, write out Acts 16:31.
- ❖ **Scripture Memorization** – *New Memory Verse:*

Acts 20:24

But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

❖ **Setting**

The book of Acts follows a basic outline given in 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

[Teach highlighted parts today. The Students do not need to learn chapter numbers. Give the students the handout at the end of this lesson.]

- I. **The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)**
 - A. **Before Pentecost (1:1-26)**
 - B. **Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)**
 - 1. Pentecost (2)
 - 2. Growth of Church (3-4)
 - 3. Troubles in the church (5-7)
 - C. **Church in Judea and Samaria (8)**
 - D. **Ends of the earth (9-12)**

- II. **The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)**
 - A. **1st Missionary Journey (13-14)**
 - B. **Jerusalem Council (15)**
 - C. **2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)**
 - D. **3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)**
 - E. **Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)**
 - F. **Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)**
 - G. **Paul in Rome (27-28)**

What we have seen throughout this second section of the book of Acts is Jesus, who rules the world from His throne at the right hand of the Father in heaven, moving the church by His Spirit to witness effectively to the world. The gospel was preached first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. Over and over again the unbelieving Jews, the unfaithful church, persecuted the true believers. This was often because of jealousy because so many people were becoming Christians in the cities where the gospel was preached. Eventually this problem would be solved with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and the Christian Church would be established as the true Church of God in the world.

Through the ministry of Paul we see the kingdom of God growing to include both the Gentiles as well as the Jews. But this growth of the kingdom necessarily included opposition from those who refused to believe the message of the gospel, and did not want to submit to the rule of King Jesus. The demonic forces (evil spirits) had a powerful hold on the people who were idol worshippers in the cities where Paul went. As the gospel was progressively changing the cities where it was preached, the idol worshippers and those who made money from the idolatry persecuted the church as well. As you read the book of Acts it appears that a spiritual war is going on with both Jewish and Gentile unbelievers fighting against the Church of Christ. Acts shows that “the kingdoms of this world were becoming the Kingdom of Christ” (Rev. 11:15). The Jews had nothing to offer the world from God, and the idolatrous cultures of the Gentiles are shown to be nothing but demonic, confused, selfish and foolish. Only Jesus Christ can offer the world peace, hope and love. God used all of these things to build His Church.

❖ Lesson

I. The Ministry of Apollos in Ephesus Acts 18:24-28

When Paul first went to Ephesus in 18:18-21 he left Aquila and Priscilla. He returned to Antioch and spent some time there before leaving again to return to the churches he had helped to plant in his first missionary journeys (in Galatia and Phrygia). 18:24-28 tells us that Aquila and Priscilla, still in Ephesus, met a Jewish Christian named Apollos. Although we do not know how he came to be a Christian, he had been taught about the Christian faith. The word used for “taught” is *catechized*, which is where we get our word *catechism*, “to be well taught”). He had only been instructed in the baptism of John (v. 25), which probably means that he had not been told about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the teachings of the Apostles (see Acts 2:42). Apollos was a man that was a great teacher, and preached boldly about Jesus in the synagogue in Ephesus. Aquila and Priscilla gave him a

fuller understanding of the Christian faith. V. 27 says Apollos went to Achaia, and ministered in Corinth, and was powerfully used by the Lord there. While in Corinth, he became acquainted with Paul. When divisions arose in the church at Corinth, Apollos was admired by some Christians as having greater authority than Paul, perhaps because of his reputation as a preacher (1 Cor. 1:11-4:6). Apollos apparently did not encourage this sentiment: after going back to Ephesus, he resisted Paul's invitation to pay another visit to Corinth (1 Cor. 16:12).

II. Paul's Third Missionary Journey Acts 19:1-21:14

[Use the handout "Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey" & "To Jerusalem." as an outline to help the students understand what is going on throughout the lesson.]

A. Ephesus Acts 19:1-41

While Apollos was ministering in Corinth, Paul returned to Ephesus, as he had hoped to do (cf. 18:21). He met about 12 believers that had been taught by Apollos (v. 7). Paul discovered that they did not have a knowledge of the faith beyond the preaching of John the Baptist (as had been the case with Apollos before Aquila and Priscilla had further instructed him). Paul instructed them more fully in the faith, and they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Paul preached boldly to the Jews in the synagogue in Ephesus for three months. He taught them persuasively about the Kingdom of God, but some were hardened in their hearts and did not believe. They

Ephesus: The most important city in the Roman province of Asia. It then occupied a vast area, and its population may have numbered a third of a million. Ephesus also maintained its religious importance under Roman rule. It became a center of the emperor cult, and eventually possessed three official temples, thus qualifying thrice over for the proud title *neōkoros* ('temple-warden') of the emperors, as well as being *neōkoros* of Artemis (Acts 19:35). It is remarkable that Paul had friends among the Asiarchs (Asiarchai, Acts 19:31), who were officers of the 'commune' of Asia, whose primary function was actually to foster the imperial cult. There was a large colony of Jews at Ephesus, and they had long enjoyed a privileged position under Roman rule. The earliest reference to the coming of Christianity there is in c. AD 52, when Paul made a short visit and left Aquila and Priscilla there (Acts 18:18-21). Paul's third missionary journey had Ephesus as its goal, and he stayed there for over 2 years (Acts 19:8, 10), attracted, no doubt, by its strategic importance as a commercial, political and religious center. His work was at first based on the synagogue: later he debated in the lecture-hall of Tyrannus, making of Ephesus a base for the evangelization of the whole province of Asia. The spread of Christianity, which refused syncretism, began to incur the hostility of vested religious interests. It affected not only the magic cults which flourished there (Acts 19:13ff) but also the worship of Artemis (Acts 19:27), causing damage to the trade in cult objects which was one source of the prosperity of Ephesus. There followed the celebrated riot described in Acts 19. Inscriptions show that the *grammateus* ('town clerk') who gained control of the assembly on this occasion was the leading civic official, directly responsible to the Romans for such breaches of the peace as illicit assembly (Acts 19:40). Christianity evidently spread to Colossae and the other cities of the Lycus valley at the period of Paul's stay in Ephesus (cf. Col. 1:6-7; 2:1). It was Paul's headquarters for most of the time of the Corinthian controversy and correspondence (1 Cor. 16:8), and the experience which he describes as 'fighting with wild beasts' happened there (1 Cor. 15:32). This seems to be a metaphorical allusion to something already known to the Corinthians, perhaps mob violence. After Paul's departure Timothy was left at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3). The Pastoral Epistles give a glimpse of the period of consolidation there. 2 Tim. 1:18 refers to service rendered by Onesiphorus at Ephesus, and 4:12 to the sending there of Tychicus. The church of Ephesus is the first of the seven churches of Revelation (1:11; 2:1-7). According to Irenaeus and Eusebius, Ephesus became the home of John the apostle. A generation after his time Ignatius wrote of the continuing fame and faithfulness of the Ephesian church. The third General Council took place here in AD 431 to condemn Nestorian Christology. [Harper's Bible Dictionary & The New Bible Dictionary]

FOR THE TEACHER

spoke evil about “the Way” and the Christian faith, and so Paul left teaching the Jews in the synagogue and began teaching the disciples in the school of Tyrannus. For two years he faithfully taught them the word, building up the church in Ephesus and the surrounding area (vv. 8-10). Acts 19:11-20 says that God worked many unusual miracles by the hands of Paul. Even pieces of cloth that Paul had touched were used to heal the sick and cast out demons.

During the ministry of Jesus the casting out of demons was an important part of the preparation and development of the kingdom of God. Because Satan was defeated at the cross, his head being crushed by the Christ (Gen. 3), it is part of the work of the gospel to clean out the household of God’s kingdom. The rolling back of the demonic activity by casting out demons and diminishing the influence of idolatry are all part of what happens when the gospel comes in and begins to transform a culture. During the ministry of the Apostles this work continued as the kingdom grew throughout the world (Mk. 16:15-18). The Satanic influence is much diminished as the gospel has gone forth into the world. This work of making manifest Christ’s victory over Satan continues today as the gospel is spread into the world, and societies are being impacted by the gospel. The Devil lies and seeks to establish a kingdom of deception to destroy the truth and holiness of God in the world. But Christ is at the right hand of the Father and is progressively putting all his enemies, including the demonic forces, under his feet (ruling over them, Eph. 1:20-23; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rom. 16:20).

Acts 19:11-20 demonstrates how He is doing this. There was in Ephesus a group of traveling Jewish men that went around trying to cast out demons. Read vv. 13-14. The evil spirit that possessed one man recognized the authority and power of Jesus and Paul (probably in fear), but declared that the unbelieving Jews were no cause for fear for the evil spirit. The demon possessed man jumped on the men and beat them up and they escaped, but were naked and wounded.

After people heard about this, many people feared the Lord and praised the name of Jesus. Having believed in Jesus, they turned away from the magic practices that the Ephesians were famous for. They took their books of magic and burned them, and confessed the secrets of their magic, showing that they were now followers of Jesus (apparently it was believed that the power of the magic was in the ability to keep the spells a secret). V. 20 says the word of the Lord grew mightily - and prevailed (the gospel won over, or was victorious over the demons, magic and the idols). As the word goes forth into society today, people will be won to Christ and they will destroy and turn away from their former ways of thinking and living.

They will destroy their former books, tapes, movies, magazines and ways of thinking and living, beginning to love and fear the Lord.

In vv. 23-41 Luke presents a story that illustrated that pagan society is basically one of violence and confusion foolishness, which becomes evident to everyone when the gospel is preached. What happened is that, Demetrius, a wealthy and powerful silversmith who made idols for the shrines of the goddess Diana, called together other men of the same occupation to discuss the problems that the preaching of Paul had caused them as people became believers in Christ. The Christians rejected the goddess Diana because she is of course no god at all, being made with human hands. As these men talked about the problem (as they saw it), they began shouting, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." V. 29ff says that the whole city became filled with confusion and seized two of Paul's Christian traveling companions and rushed into the large theatre in Ephesus to have a city meeting. Paul heard about it and wanted to go and help his friends, but he was kept from doing so. V. 32 says that these people did not even know why they were there, and some said one thing and some another. It was like a riot, out of control and serving no good purpose. Eventually the leader of the city calmed the crowd down and convinced the people to leave.

A lesson for us in this is to clearly understand that it is only through the Church of Christ that the Kingdom of God will be manifest in the world. All other societies of men produce confusion, difficulty and violence. Remember in Acts 15 at the Jerusalem Council how the Spirit directed the Church to deal with her problems in peace, order and for the good of the church. This story in Acts 19 shows us that the Gentile pagan society cannot do so. Next we will see in Ch. 21 that a similar incident took place in Jerusalem with the Jews. Neither the Gentiles nor the Jews could produce the kingdom order of God, nor the blessings which flow from it.

B. Further Ministry on the way to Jerusalem Acts 20:1-21:14

1. Ministry through Macedonia, Greece and Asia 20:1-16

During the time that Paul was in Ephesus he was also writing letters to some of the other churches that he had been to. The church in Corinth had a number of problems, which Paul helped them with by writing letters to them (see 1 & 2 Corinthians). [The handout provided gives information on Paul's work with the Corinthian church while he was on this journey.] He also went to several other places during this time. He went to these various cities to encourage the churches, but he had plans to go to Jerusalem to be at the Feast of Pentecost.

Seven weeks before Pentecost, Paul arrived at Troas. Although he was anxious to get to Jerusalem, Paul stayed an additional seven days to worship with the Church on the first day of the week, the Christian Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath (20:6-7). Paul preached late into the night (midnight) and a young man went to sleep and fell from the window in the upper room they were meeting in (preachers like to preach long sermons still today – falling asleep can be dangerous ☺). The disciples all thought he was dead (he may have been), but Paul fell down on him and held him and raised him up to life and health.

2. Ephesian Elders Acts 20:17-38

Paul went on from Troas to Miletus, where he sent word to the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him there. Before he went on to Jerusalem, Paul wanted to encourage the elders of the important Ephesian church to shepherd and take care of the flock of God. He reminded them about his own ministry among them, and encouraged them to be faithful to continue the ministry. When Paul told them that they would never see them again (Paul must have been given prophetic messages, cf. 20:22-23), they were filled with love for him and sorrow, and wept and hugged and kissed him, and he departed to go to Jerusalem.

3. On to Jerusalem Acts 21:1-14

Paul went on his way to Jerusalem because the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would be put in chains and suffer tribulations for Christ there (20:23). When he arrived in Tyre (see map), some of the disciples had been given word by the Holy Spirit that Paul would be persecuted in Jerusalem (21:4). They tried to persuade Paul not to go, but Paul, full of faith and dedicated to the work that Christ had called him to, determined to go on. He went to Caesarea and visited with Philip the Evangelist (cf. Acts 6:5; 8:5, 26, 40), who had four daughters that were prophetesses (probably prophesying about Paul, 21:8-9). Then they saw the prophet Agabus (cf. 11:28), who also prophesied concerning Paul in Jerusalem. When Luke and the other people heard these prophesies they tried to convince Paul not to go to Jerusalem. But when he could not be persuaded not to go, they all stopped trying, saying, “The will of the Lord be done.” (21:10-14). Just as Jesus knew what He would suffer and die in Jerusalem and said, “...not My will, but Yours, be done” (Lk. 22:42); so too Paul and his friends trusted in the will and plan of God.

When things get difficult for us in life, we must go to the Bible, from which the Holy Spirit will reveal the will of God for us. As we trust God in faith, He will take care of us according to His will. Sometimes things do not go the way we want

them to (or the way others think it should go for us), but God is worthy to be trusted.

❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 22-23. Why did Paul return to Jerusalem? Begin memorizing Acts 20:24.

❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Eleven – Paul’s Third Missionary Journey
Acts 18:24-21:14

Objective – To encourage you to do the will of God no matter the cost, trusting God in faith.

I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)

- A. Before Pentecost (1:1-26)
- B. Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)
 - 1. Pentecost (2)
 - 2. Growth of Church (3-4)
 - 3. Troubles in the church (5-7)
- C. Church in Judea and Samaria (8)
- D. Ends of the earth (9-12)

II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)

- A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)
- B. Jerusalem Council (15)
- C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
- D. **3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)**
- E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)
- F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)
- G. Paul in Rome (27-28)

I. The Ministry of Apollos in Ephesus

Acts 18:24-28

II. Paul’s Third Missionary Journey

Acts 19:1-21:14

A. Ephesus Acts 19:1-41

B. Further Ministry on the way to Jerusalem Acts 20:1-21:14

1. Ministry through Macedonia, Greece and Asia 20:1-16

2. Ephesian Elders Acts 20:17-38

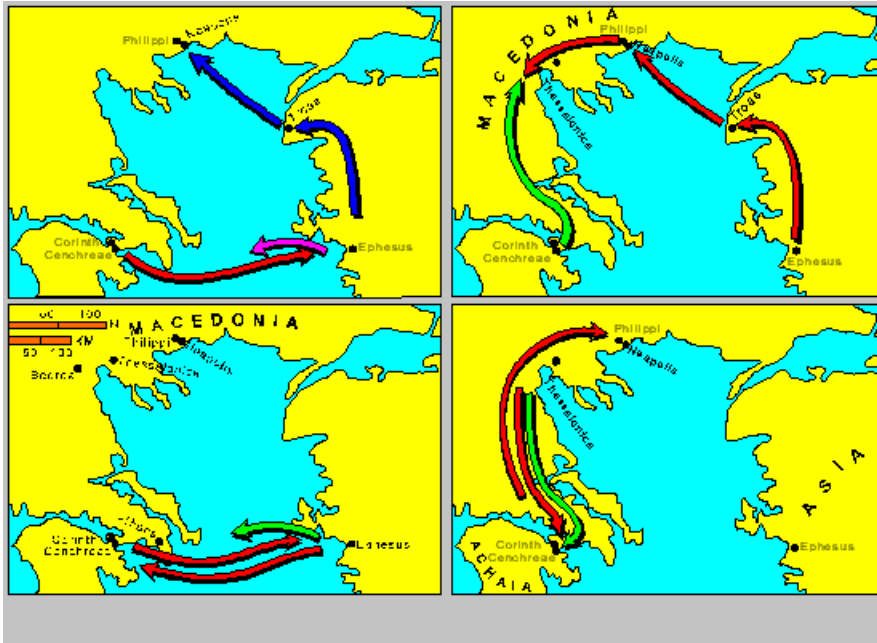
3. On to Jerusalem Acts 21:1-14

❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 22-23. Why did Paul return to Jerusalem? Begin memorizing Acts 20:24.

❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Paul's Third Missionary Journey

- 1 Paul made **Ephesus** the base for his mission work for 3 years. Disciples of Apollos received the Holy Spirit and a church was founded (Acts 19:1-7). The gospel spread in Asia (Acts 19:8-20).
- 2 Paul planned to go to **Macedonia**. He sent Timothy and Erastus ahead (Acts 19:21-22). They also visited **Corinth** (1 Corinthians 16:10-11). Paul was worried about immorality at the church there.
- 3 Three members of the Corinthian church brought a letter to Paul (1 Corinthians 16:17-18). It was full of questions that revealed the problems to be far greater than Paul had thought.

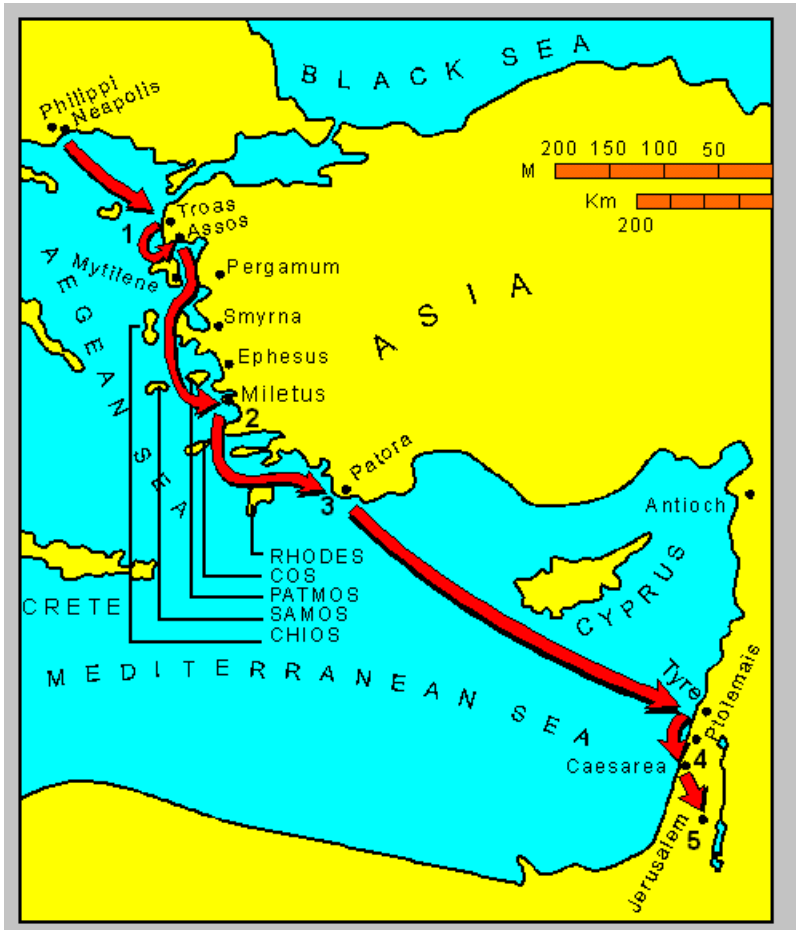


- 4 Paul wrote and sent 1 Corinthians, dealing with the problems.
- 5 Paul heard bad news about the church in Corinth, possibly from Timothy.
- 6 He hurried to Corinth (implied by the intended *third* visit of (2 Corinthians 12:14). The visit was extremely painful for everyone. Paul had to be severe.
- 7 He returned to **Ephesus**. Here he wrote a 'painful letter' to them (2 Corinthians 2:4). Titus took the letter to Corinth. Paul

- arranged to meet Titus again at Troas urgently, to get news of the situation.
- 8 Paul was the center of a riot in Ephesus. His message threatened the sale of statues of the Ephesian goddess (Acts 19:23-41).
- 9 Paul went to **Troas**. The work went well, but Paul was worried about his 'painful letter.' Was it too harsh? Titus did not appear as planned (2 Corinthians 2:12-13).
- 10 Paul entered **Macedonia** in search of Titus. By doing this he broke an arrangement he made with the Corinthians—he was going to go to them by sea before visiting Macedonia, which he explained in 2 Corinthians 1:15 (He didn't want another painful visit).
- 11 He encouraged the churches (Acts 20:1-2) and collected money for the Jerusalem church (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).
- 12 Paul and Titus finally met. Titus brought good news—the 'painful letter' was received as Paul intended (2 Corinthians 7:5-16).
- 13 Paul wrote 2 Corinthians—full of joy. He encouraged them to complete their promised giving for the Jerusalem church (2 Corinthians 8:10-15).
- 14 Titus took the letter ahead of Paul to prepare the church for Paul's third visit (2 Corinthians 8:16-24).
- 15 Paul stayed in Achaia 3 months, probably in Corinth. Here he wrote the letter to the Romans.
- 16 He planned to travel to Jerusalem by sea via Syria. A plot by his enemies forced him to return through Macedonia (Acts 20:2-6).

To Jerusalem

Paul was anxious to be in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost, 7 weeks away (Acts 20:6, Feast of Unleavened bread 7 weeks previous to Pentecost).



- 1 Paul arrived at **Troas** from **Philippi**. While he preached on till midnight, Eutychus went to sleep and fell out of a 3 story window. Paul raised him from death (Acts 20:7-12).
- 2 Elders from the church in **Ephesus** met Paul in Miletus, who gave a farewell speech. He said they would never see him again. Paul left with great emotion (Acts 20:17-38).
- 3 At **Patara** they changed ships (Acts 21:1-3).
- 4 They stayed at Philip the Evangelist's house in Caesarea. Agabus the prophet told Paul he would be bound by Jews in Jerusalem and handed over to Gentiles. Paul was determined to go on, despite warnings and

pleas (Acts 21:4-14).

- 5 At **Jerusalem** Paul was welcomed by the church.

Week Twelve – Paul In Jerusalem Acts 21:15-23:22

Objective – To encourage students to read Bible stories with faith, looking for the faithfulness of God as He builds up His Church, and trusting that He will continue to do so.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability**
 - Take attendance
 - Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible and writing materials, work on your memorization, and read Acts 22-23?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the questions and answers for this quarter
- ❖ **Scripture Memorization** – QUIZ IN TWO WEEKS

Acts 20:24

But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

❖ **Setting**

The book of Acts follows a basic outline given in 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

[Teach highlighted parts today. The Students do not need to learn chapter numbers. Give the students the handout at the end of this lesson.]

- I. **The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)**
 - A. **Before Pentecost (1:1-26)**
 - B. **Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)**
 - 1. Pentecost (2)
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 - D. **Ends of the earth (9-12)**

- II. **The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)**
 - A. **1st Missionary Journey (13-14)**
 - B. **Jerusalem Council (15)**
 - C. **2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)**
 - D. **3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)**
 - E. **Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)**
 - F. **Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)**
 - G. **Paul in Rome (27-28)**

As we have progressed through the book of Acts we have seen the "gospel" (which means "good news") go out powerfully into many parts of the world. The disciples were faithful witnesses and often suffered persecution for the name of Jesus. A great deal of the persecution came from the Jews, and sometimes from the pagan idol worshippers. Persecution even came sometimes from those inside of the Christian church that believed that the Gentile Christians must become Jews and keep the ceremonial laws in order to be saved. Following Paul's first missionary journey to Galatia, do you remember how the Church handled this problem? [At the Jerusalem Council in Ch. 15 the Apostles and Elders decided by the Holy Spirit that salvation was by faith alone, and that the Gentiles should not be burdened with the law. They wrote a letter to the Gentile believers that commanded them not to eat things sacrificed to idols, or blood or things strangled, and to avoid sexual immorality.]

After several years of journeying (3 missionary journeys) through various parts of Asia, Macedonia, Greece and other places, Paul returned to Jerusalem. Several prophets had revealed that Paul would suffer many things by going to Jerusalem, and many people tried to get him not to go. But Paul knew that the Lord Jesus wanted to use him in many important ways in Jerusalem, even if it meant his suffering and death (21:13).

❖ Lesson

I. Paul and the Law Acts 21:15-25

After leaving Caesarea, where he visited with Philip the evangelist and his family, Paul went on to Jerusalem. When he arrived with Luke and his other companions, Paul was gladly received by the Christians there. Paul told them all about what God had done through his ministry, and the brethren glorified the Lord (vv. 15-20).

James and the elders explained (vv. 20-25) that many Jews had believed in Jesus (tens of thousands) and were zealous for the law. What does it mean to be "zealous"? [To be zealous is to believe and hold to something strongly. Titus 2:14 commands us to be zealous for good works. We are to be zealous for God, but our zeal must be according to the scriptures, or it will offend God and be unloving towards others.] These Jewish converts were told (by false rumor) that Paul had been teaching the Jews who lived in foreign lands among Gentiles to forsake the law of Moses, and not to be circumcised and that they should forsake the Jewish customs. James and the elders apparently did not believe these rumors (there is no evidence for their truth), and it would take more to convince these thousands of "zealots for the law" that Paul did not teach these things than just telling them. It

was important for the truth about Paul's teaching to be made clear because it would not be good for the Church in Jerusalem have such serious doubts about Paul's preaching. James and the elders suggested that Paul should demonstrate that he still believes that it was good and proper to keep the law and the Jewish customs that were biblical. There were four men that took a vow (Just as Paul had done earlier, as we saw in Acts 18:18). They suggested (v. 24) that Paul should take a vow as well, and go through the ritual of purification with the four men (paying their expenses) so that all the Jewish Christians would know that he kept the law as well (see Numbers 6:1-21). At the same time the elders of the Jerusalem Church repeated the decision of the Jerusalem Council concerning the Gentiles.

There is a lesson for us in this. We should do whatever we can to keep the peace of the church according to the scriptures. Sometimes it means doing things for other people that we would not normally do, and it may cost us something (i.e. money, time, etc.). But if we love one another we will do whatever we can to keep the peace of the Church of Christ and assure that the truth of the scriptures is properly proclaimed.

II. Persecution of Paul by the Jews Acts 21:26-23:10

When Paul went into the temple to perform the services of purification according to the law, some of the Jews that had seen him in Asia stirred up the crowd of people in the temple and laid hands on him. They thought Paul had brought a Gentile into the temple, which they thought would defile the temple. They accused Paul of preaching against the Jews and the law and the temple. Read vv. 30-31.

Paul was in real danger of being killed because they were beating him. But the Roman soldiers stopped the beating and asked the crowd what was going on. Read vv. 34-36. This reminds us of what had happened at the riot in Ephesus (see 19:21ff). The society that is developed by the pagan idol worshippers in the world is only able to produce confusion and violence, as seen in Ephesus. So too, here, we see that the unbelieving Jews are no more effective in establishing an orderly and godly society than the pagan idol worshippers. The unbelieving Jews are confused and disorderly and violent (21:30-34), as opposed to Paul who sought to demonstrate that he lives an orderly and lawful life (on the advice of the elders of the true church). At this point in the story we see the Roman unbelieving soldiers used by God to rescue Paul from the unbelieving Jews. Although he was arrested, they rescued him.

Paul was given an opportunity to speak to the crowd to defend himself from the false charges that were being made against him. After he spoke to them, the crowd

again became angry and called for him to be killed (21:37-22:23). When the Roman centurion brought him into the barracks (like a police station), he ordered that Paul should be scourged (beaten) and questioned to find out why the people were so upset with him. As Paul was about to be beaten, he asked if it was lawful for a Roman citizen to be scourged without having had a trial. It was not legal according to Roman law to punish a Roman citizen without a trial. The commander of the soldiers could have been in real trouble for having Paul scourged (having assumed that Paul was not a Roman citizen just because he was a Jew).

The next day the commander of the Roman soldiers, wanting to know why Paul was accused by the Jews, called together the chief priests and the Jewish Council and brought Paul to them (22:30-23:1). In 23:1 Paul said that he had lived his life properly before God. The words of Paul were immediately not well received, and an argument developed. Paul raised the issue of the resurrection of the dead, which caused a great disagreement between the leaders of the Jews (because the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, and the Sadducees did not). Because the argument became so strong, the Roman commander removed Paul to the barracks again, fearing for his safety.

III. Paul to bear witness to Jesus in Rome

Acts 23:11-22

Read 23:11:

“But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.”

This is similar to a vision Paul had where Jesus encouraged him to stay in Corinth because the Lord intended to use him there (18:9). We will also see another time where the Lord encouraged Paul by special revelation about what is ahead for him (27:23-24). It is interesting that Jesus said, “Be of good cheer.” Paul was in a fight for his life. But knowing the will of the Lord, hearing Him speak was enough for Paul to be able to serve the Lord joyfully. Jesus told Paul that he would go on to Rome to preach the gospel as well. When we encounter trials of various kinds, we need to count it all joy because we know that the Lord uses these trials in our lives to make us stronger in faith and more usable in His kingdom (James 1:2).

The next day more than 40 of the Jews banded together to make a plot with the chief priests and elders of the Jews to have Paul killed (swearing an oath not to eat or drink until they had, see 23:12-15). They planned to ask the Roman commander to let them talk to Paul again, and would kill him then. The plot became known to Paul through his nephew. Paul sent his nephew to the Roman commander. The

commander arranged for 200 foot soldiers, 70 horses and 200 spearmen to take Paul safely to Caesarea at 9:00 at night. The commander was delivering Paul to Felix, the Governor, and sent a letter explaining why Paul was being sent. Once again, Jesus had delivered Paul from the hands of wicked men by the unbelieving Roman Gentiles.

As young people it is hard to see beyond the stories that we read in the book of Acts and apply them to your life. What these stories do is help us to strengthen our faith in the Lord Jesus, who is building His kingdom even now through the Holy Spirit. One of the things that you should learn from these stories is that Christ is ruling everything for the sake of His Church. He uses everything and every situation for His glory and for the sake of His kingdom.

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 24-26. How did God protect Paul for the spread of the gospel? Memorize Acts 20:24 – QUIZ IN TWO WEEKS

- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Twelve – Paul In Jerusalem Acts 21:15-23:22

Objective – To encourage you to read Bible stories with faith, looking for the faithfulness of God as He builds up His Church, and trusting that He will continue to do so.

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- F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)
- G. Paul in Rome (27-28)

I. Paul and the law

II. Persecution of Paul by the Jews

III. Paul to bear witness to Jesus in Rome

Acts 23:11-22

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Memorize Acts 20:24 – QUIZ IN TWO WEEKS
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Paul in Jerusalem and Caesarea

- 1 Paul was recognized by Jews from Asia in the **Jerusalem** temple. A mob dragged him outside and tried to kill him (Acts 21:15-25; 26-31).
- 2 Roman troops arrested (and rescued) Paul. He was allowed to speak to the rioters. His words incited them to more violence (Acts 21:31-22:23).
- 3 Paul was taken into the Roman Fortress (Acts 22:24-29).
- 4 Next day, Paul defends himself before the Jewish Council. Again the arguments turn to violence. Paul is taken back to the Fortress (Acts 22:30-23:10).
- 5 Over forty men plot to kill Paul (Acts 23:11-15).
- 6 The Roman commander heard of the plot. That night he sent Paul under armed escort to the governor Felix in **Caesarea** (Acts 23:16-24).



- 7 Paul's case was heard by Felix, but he deferred a decision. Two years later Festus replaces Felix. Paul still imprisoned (Acts 23:25-24:27).
- 8 Festus heard Paul's case. He seemed unfavorable, so Paul appealed to have his case heard by the emperor. He waited to go to Rome and presented his story to King Agrippa II (25:1-26:32).
- 9 Paul and companions (including Luke) leave for **Rome**, Paul under armed guard (Acts 27-28).

Week Thirteen – Paul In Caesarea
Acts 23:23-26:32

Objective – To teach students how God used the trials and persecutions of Paul to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to unbelieving men in positions of great power and authority.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.
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 - G. **Paul in Rome (27-28)**

In the last two weeks we saw that the Lord, with prophecies and visions, was leading Paul to Jerusalem first and then on to Rome. Although the Jews beat Paul, the Romans did not beat him because he was a Roman citizen. Although the Jews plotted to kill Paul, the Romans guarded him and took him to Caesarea with a very large armed guard. The commander in Jerusalem sent a letter to Felix the Governor, who was in Caesarea. When Felix read the letter and found out that Paul was from Cilicia he said that he would hear the case against Paul when his accusers arrived (Acts 23:33-35).

❖ Lesson

I. The trial of Paul before Felix Acts 24

Five days after Paul arrived at Caesarea, Ananias the high priest, the elders of the Jews, and a man who spoke very well (i.e. an orator) named Tertullus, testified against Paul to Felix. Tertullus began with flattering words, praising Felix for his rulership over the area (but of course the Jews were never very happy to be under Roman rule, cf. vv. 2-4). They accused Paul of being a leader of the Christians (the sect of the Nazarenes) and causing dissention/disagreements among the Jews throughout the world (which was true enough). It is true that the gospel causes people to leave their former ways of thinking and living (i.e. the false religions of Judaism and idolatry) as they come into the kingdom of God. They even said that he tried to profane or defile the temple (which was not true), and the Jews wanted to judge him according to the law of the Jews (which was not true because they had no intention of giving him a trial, but just murder him). Then they blamed the Roman commander for taking Paul out of their hands, and making the Jews come all the way to Caesarea to bother poor Felix (as if being left alone they could have taken care of the problem themselves).

When Paul was given an opportunity to respond to the charges against him, he answered each of the things he was accused of. Paul testified that in the twelve days that he was in Jerusalem he did not argue with any of the Jews in the temple, or the synagogues or the city. He simply said that none of the charges against him could be proven. Read about Paul's witness to Felix in vv. 14-21.

After Paul had testified, Felix had a better understanding about the Way (Christianity) than the Jewish leaders thought he had. Felix determined to wait to hear from Lysias, the Roman commander in Jerusalem. Felix, although on the Jews side of the matter, did not give them what they wanted. Felix determined to try to find out the truth of the matter and not just accept the charges (without proof) against Paul. Felix commanded that Paul be kept secure, but be given freedom to

have his friends provide for his needs and to visit him. After some days, Felix and his wife Drusilla sent for Paul to hear more about faith in Christ (vv. 22-24). Read vv.25-27. The message of the gospel and the Christian life caused Felix to be afraid and sent Paul away (the gospel probably caused him concern about his own soul after death). Felix often had him back and had conversations with him. For 2 years this went on until finally Felix was replaced by Festus. Festus left Paul in prison because he wanted to do a favor for the Jews, making them happy with him. Why do you think Festus wanted to do the Jews a favor? [Because he did not want to have any problem with the Jews during his rule over them. He thought that if he made them happy, they would help him keep the peace in Palestine.]

II. The Trial of Paul before Festus Acts 25:1-12

In Ch. 25 we learn that Festus came to Palestine and went from Caesarea to Jerusalem. While he was there the Jews spoke against Paul, and appealed to Festus to allow them to kill Paul while bringing him from Caesarea to Jerusalem. But Festus determined that Paul should remain at Caesarea, and the Jews could go down to Caesarea and accuse him again at another trial so that Festus could determine if there was any fault in Paul. When Festus had gone back to Caesarea (and the Jews also), he heard many serious complaints against Paul which they could not prove. Paul defended himself by denying all the things they said against him. Read 25:8. Festus still wanted to do a favor for the Jews and asked Paul if he was willing to go back to Jerusalem to be tried again by Festus. Paul responded by appealing to Caesar. Read vv. 10-12. Paul asserted that he had done no wrong, and nothing deserving death, which Festus well knew. Festus ruled as a Governor under the authority of the Roman Caesar. Thus, Paul appealed to Caesar as a way of taking the trial out of the courts of the Jews and of Palestine and into a fairer place for a trial for him. Festus understood what Paul wanted, and said that Paul would indeed go to Caesar. What is important about this is that Paul used his Roman citizenship as a means of protecting his own life and being more available to preach the gospel. Remember that Jesus spoke to Paul in the night and Paul knew that he would be going to Rome as a witness for Christ (23:11). We too should use whatever laws we live under as a means for witnessing to Christ.

III. The trial of Paul before Agrippa Acts 25:13-26:32

In 25:13-27 we learn that the King of Palestine, Agrippa, had come to Caesarea to visit Festus. This king is the son of King Herod Agrippa that killed the Apostle James, and was eaten by worms because of his pride. This king Agrippa was the great-grandson of King Herod, who had persecuted Jesus when he was born. The whole family line had a long history with Israel. Agrippa and the other Herods were descendents of Esau, the son of Isaac and the brother of Jacob. Throughout

Old Testament history Esau's descendents, the Edomites, caused trouble with Israel. After the exile, when the Greek and then the Romans conquered the land of Israel, they gave power to their family to rule in Palestine. They pretended to be friends with Israel, but were generally cruel and wicked.

The Herodian King of Israel, Agrippa, came with his sister Bernice to Caesarea to visit Festus. When he arrived, Festus explained in detail what had happened with Paul since the time of Felix more than 2 years previously (Acts 25:13-21). King Agrippa said that he would also like to "hear" Paul speak about the charges against him. The next day King Agrippa and Bernice came in great pomp and showiness (like his brother had as we saw in Acts 12:21) to the auditorium with all of the important men of the city. Festus had Paul brought in and presented him to Agrippa by saying that he had found nothing worthy of death in Paul and that because Paul had appealed to Caesar Augustus he had determined to send Paul to Rome. Festus said that he wanted Agrippa's help to write a letter concerning Paul that would specifically state the charges brought against him (25:22-27).

In Acts 26:1-23 Paul was given opportunity to defend himself before the assembly. Paul witnessed to Agrippa and all those assembled there by giving a testimony of his life as a Jewish Pharisee that persecuted the Church of Jesus (26:1-11), his conversion as a Christian when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus (vv. 12-18) [read vv. 17-18]. He concluded in vv. 19-23 [read]. In this witness Paul declared that Jesus appointed him to preach to the Jews and Gentiles the gospel for the forgiveness of sins, to those whom God would make holy (sanctified) through faith. He said that he was faithful to preach both to the Jews and the Gentiles that they should repent (turn from sin to God) and do works that demonstrate repentance.

When Paul had finished making his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!" But Paul responded in conversation with King Agrippa vv. 25-32:

*25 But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. 26 For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. 27 **King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.**" 28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "**You almost persuade me to become a Christian.**" 29 And Paul said, "**I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.**" 30 When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well*

*as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; 31 and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, “**This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.**” 32 Then Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”*

Paul had appealed to Caesar because he knew that Jesus wanted him to go to Rome to preach the gospel (19:21; 23:11). The Lord had protected Paul throughout his journeys, persecutions, imprisonments and court trials so that Paul could continue to be a Spirit empowered witness.

Something that we should take careful note of is that from the time Paul returned to Jerusalem following his 3rd missionary journey to this point, he had been on trial in the Jewish court, the Roman court and the court of the Herodian King Agrippa. These are the same three courts that Jesus was tried in. After He was betrayed, Jesus was taken before the Jews, and then to the Roman Governor, Pilate. Because Pilate could find no guilt in Jesus, he was sent to King Herod to be tried. After questioning Jesus, Herod sent Him back to Pilate. When Jesus was on trial, he did not speak much, nor did He give a defense of Himself. The reason is that Jesus was to die on the cross for our sins. Paul on the other hand gave a defense because he was not to die, but to continue to be a witness.

Jesus said to His disciples that they would be “...brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles” (Matt. 10:16-26; Mk. 13:9-13; Lk. 21:16-19). During all of these trials the Lord preserved Paul as His witness throughout the world. He sent him to Rome (as we will see next week), where he was able to continue his ministry. Later (after the book of Acts) Paul was arrested and put on trial again in Rome. In 2 Timothy 4:16-18 we read how the Lord stood with Paul and strengthened him even when no one else stood with him.

16 At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!

May the Lord stand with all of you, to strengthen you to be His witnesses!

❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 27-28. Why was it important for Paul to go to Rome? Memorize Acts 20:24 – QUIZ NEXT WEEK

❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Thirteen – Paul In Caesarea Acts 23:23-26:32

Objective – To teach you how God used the trials and persecutions of Paul to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to unbelieving men in positions of great power and authority.

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I. The trial of Paul before Felix

Acts 24

II. The Trial of Paul before Festus

Acts 25:1-12

III. The trial of Paul before Agrippa

Acts 25:13-26:32

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Acts 27-28. Why was it important for Paul to go to Rome? Memorize Acts 20:24 – QUIZ NEXT WEEK
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Fourteen – Paul In Rome Acts 27-28

Objective – To encourage students to be faithful witnesses like Paul, trusting that God will empower them and use them to build His kingdom.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.

- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability**
 - Take attendance
 - Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible and writing materials, work on your memorization, and read Acts 27-28?”

- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the questions and answers for this quarter

- ❖ **Scripture Memory Quiz:** On a piece of paper, write out Acts 20:24.

- ❖ **Setting**

The book of Acts follows a basic outline given in 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

[Teach highlighted parts today. The Students do not need to learn chapter numbers. Give the students the handout at the end of this lesson.]

- I. **The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)**
 - A. **Before Pentecost (1:1-26)**
 - B. **Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)**
 - 1. Pentecost (2)
 - 2. Growth of Church (3-4)
 - 3. Troubles in the church (5-7)
 - C. **Church in Judea and Samaria (8)**
 - D. **Ends of the earth (9-12)**

- II. **The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)**
 - A. **1st Missionary Journey (13-14)**
 - B. **Jerusalem Council (15)**
 - C. **2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)**
 - D. **3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)**
 - E. **Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)**
 - F. **Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)**
 - G. **Paul in Rome (27-28)**

We have seen throughout the book of Acts how the Holy Spirit empowered the Apostles and other believers to be witnesses to Christ. The witness began well and was fairly easy at the beginning. In a short amount of time several thousand people became believers in Jesus as the Apostles preached the good news and did many signs and wonders. As the church came into confrontation with the Jewish leaders the believers began to be persecuted. Eventually Stephan was martyred as he

witnessed, and the church was scattered throughout Judea and Samaria and eventually to the ends of the known world. We generally think of a kingdom being established in the world through great power and influence, through military and political power. But what we learn in the book of Acts is that Jesus built his Kingdom through the suffering of His people, and their self-sacrificing love. Wherever the gospel went there was persecution and suffering, but this did not stop the preaching of the gospel and the loving service of the church to the poor and needy. Rather, Jesus used this kind of witness to expand and grow the Kingdom. By the difficulty and suffering endured by the church, Peter, Stephen, James and Paul were given opportunity to preach and spread the gospel not only in Palestine, but even to Rome. As we have seen in the last three weeks, Paul was sustained by the Lord and kept alive through beatings, years of imprisonment, and several court trials. This was done so that he could be taken to Rome for further ministry. In fact, in most cases, it was the Gentile Roman government that was used by the Lord to protect Paul. Last week we saw that the Roman Governor Festus and King Agrippa found no fault in Paul and would have released him if he had not appealed to Caesar. But to Caesar Paul must be taken because of the Roman law, and because Jesus had determined to use him in Rome.

❖ Lesson

I. The long and difficult trip to Rome Acts 27:1-28:14

After his final trial before Festus and King Agrippa (26:1-32) Paul began what could be called his fourth missionary journey. Although he was a prisoner, he still had great opportunity to preach the gospel and be a witness for Christ, all paid for by the Roman government.

Read Acts 27:1. Paul and other prisoners were put under the care of Julius, a Roman centurion. They set sail and stopped at Sidon (not far north from where they had departed), and Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him freedom to see his friends. They sailed west along the Asian coast and v. 4 tells us that they had some bad weather (which would be a continual problem for them), and eventually they came to Myra and changed ships. After more bad weather they finally arrived on the Island of Crete at the city of Fair Havens. [See map below.]

In v. 9 Paul advised Julius not to continue the journey at that time because it was very dangerous at that time of year to sail, saying: “this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives.” But Julius was persuaded by the sailors to continue. What do you think happened? They had much trouble and were driven by a great northeastern wind out to sea.

When the ship was tossed around in the wind and sea they threw the cargo overboard. The day after that (now three days) they threw the ship's equipment overboard. The storm continued for many days and v. 20 says that they lost all hope of being saved. Paul stood in the midst of them and said in v. 21-26,

“Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. ²²“And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³“For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, ²⁴“saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ ²⁵“Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. ²⁶“However, we must run aground on a certain island.”

Paul was not being a know-it-all, but was trying to get the men on the ship to trust the Lord whom Paul served. By reminding them that the Lord had spoken to him before and had promised to bring him safely to Rome, the men of the ship would be saved so long as they did as Paul said. The Lord was with Paul, and they would be safe so long as they remained with Paul.

They continued be blown around the Adriatic Sea until they drew near land. They threw down four anchors and prayed for daybreak. The sailors wanted to escape in a small boat but Paul warned Julius the centurion not to let them or they would die. As day was about to dawn, Paul strongly encouraged them all to eat, since they had not eaten much in the past 14 days, saying in vv. 34-35,

“Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you.” And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat.

There were in all 276 people on board. When they finished eating, they threw the rest of the cargo overboard in hopes of making the ship lighter. When it was day, they released the anchors and ran the ship aground very near the Island of Malta. [See map]. The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners because they did not want them to escape. But because Julius did not want any harm to come to Paul, he commanded that everyone be allowed to swim or float to shore. And so everyone aboard escaped safely to land. The Lord had delivered them just as he had promised.

Having been delivered by the Lord, Paul began ministering again. The people of the Island of Malta showed them unusual kindness by making a fire. When Paul had gathered some wood for the fire a poisonous viper (snake) came out because of

the heat and bit him and hung on his hand. The people of the island that saw the snake were sure that Paul would surely die. But when he did not die, they thought he was a god. Certainly he used this as an opportunity to preach to them (as he had done when the people of Lystra thought he was a god in Acts 14:11-18). Paul was eventually taken to the home of Publius, a leading citizen on the island and shown great hospitality. When the father of Publius became very ill, Paul prayed and healed him. After this happened, people from all over the island came and were healed by him as well. The people honored them in many ways and gave them gifts to provide for them as they went on to Rome.

After being on Malta for three months they sailed on to Syracuse (on the Island of Sicily, see map), and then on to Italy. When they arrived at Puteoli they found some Christian brethren and stayed 7 days and they went on toward Rome. Paul must have been feeling worried about getting to Rome because as they came to two cities near Rome some Christian brothers came and met Paul and encouraged him. He thanked God for these brothers and took courage. Certainly God sent these beloved Christian friends to minister to Paul. We should also look for ways to encourage our Christian brothers. Finally, Paul arrived in Rome, and he was allowed to live in a house with a soldier to guard him.

[If there is time, it may be useful to read 2 Cor. 11:25-27 in connection with Acts 9:16. Paul had indeed suffered many things for the name of Jesus, & was faithful.]

II. Paul's Ministry in Rome Acts 28:15-31

After Paul had been in Rome 3 days, he called the leaders of the Jews together and explained to them that he had been falsely accused in Jerusalem. The Jews had heard nothing about Paul (although they had heard much about the Christian sect), but were anxious to hear what Paul had to say. So he preached to them the kingdom of God, and used the Old Testament law and prophets explain to them about Jesus. Some of them believed the message of Paul, but others did not. He went on to quote from the prophet Isaiah and apply it to them. Read vv. 26-28.

God had indeed opened the way of the Gentiles to salvation. Throughout the known world Gentiles were becoming believers by the thousands. Although the Jews had mostly been unwilling to hear the good news that the Savior King was on His throne in heaven, the gospel of the Kingdom of God was still going forth. Of course this statement by Paul caused no small argument among the Jews he was talking to. They left him and disputed amongst themselves (v. 29).

Read vv. 30-31. The book of Acts concludes with Paul being allowed to continue his ministry in Rome for two years without anyone hindering or forbidding him. Why did he go to Rome? To be a witness in Rome to Caesar. Apparently Caesar was very busy and did not have time for at least two years to hear him. If Paul's hearing before Caesar had happened before the end of the writing of the book of Acts, most certainly Luke would have written about it. Some scholars believe that the book of Acts was written to provide a written record for his trial. We do know that Paul was later released and had further ministry outside of Rome (some even think that he was able to travel to Spain to preach the gospel). At the end of Acts we see very little persecution of Christians by the Romans. As time went on, the Romans also became persecutors of the Church as well. Many scholars believe that Paul was arrested again in about 67 AD and, according to tradition, was beheaded by Nero.

The account of Paul's missionary work to the Gentiles and faithful witness to the ends of the earth demonstrates that Christ empowered him to suffer/witness to Him and that through this mighty man of faith the Kingdom was built and established. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised for his mighty works through Paul. May God make you all faithful witnesses to Jesus through the years of your life.

❖ **Homework** – Review the outline of the book of Acts. Do the student evaluation and return to class next week.

❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

Week Fourteen – Paul In Rome Acts 27-28

Objective – To encourage you to be faithful witnesses like Paul, trusting that God will empower you and use you to build His kingdom.

I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12)

- A. Before Pentecost (1:1-26)
- B. Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)
 - 1. Pentecost (2)
 - 2. Growth of Church (3-4)
 - 3. Troubles in the church (5-7)
- C. Church in Judea and Samaria (8)
- D. Ends of the earth (9-12)

II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28)

- A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)
- B. Jerusalem Council (15)
- C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
- D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)
- E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)
- F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)
- G. Paul in Rome (27-28)

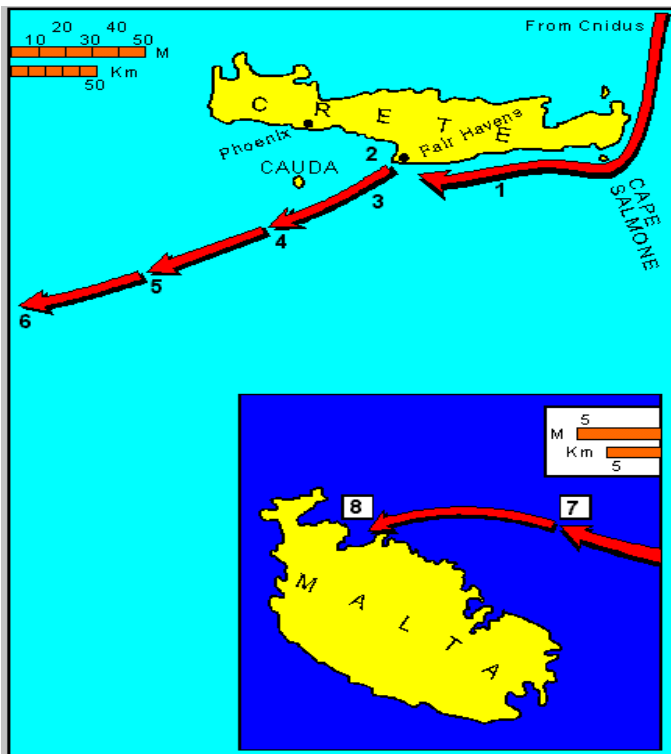
I. The long and difficult trip to Rome

Acts 27:1-28:14

II. Paul's Ministry in Rome Acts 28:15-31

- ❖ **Homework** – Review the outline of the book of Acts. Do the student evaluation and return to class next week.
- ❖ **Prayer (Prep for worship)**

On the Way To Rome



1 In bad weather Paul's ship reached **Fair Havens on the Island of Crete.**

2 They sheltered there until early October — the end of the safe sailing season. They decide to winter in the better harbor at Phoenix.

3 On route to Phoenix they were blown out to sea.

4 South of Cauda they pull the boat on board, lower the sail, and let the ship run.

5 The next day they threw the ship's cargo overboard.

6 The next day they threw the ship's equipment overboard.

7 Inset: Night 14 of the storm, the island of **Malta** is near. Sailors tried to escape but failed. After eating, they lightened the ship.

8 The ship hit a sandbank in a bay and began to break up. All hands were saved.

1 On **Malta**, Paul recovered from a snake bite and healed many other sick people. They stayed months, until the bad weather has passed.

2 At **Syracuse** they stopped for 3 days.

3 They reach **Puteoli**, one of the great ports of the empire. Paul and friends stayed with the local believers for a week.

4 Then they set out on the 100 mile journey to Rome. Paul was worried and apprehensive, but was encouraged when believers from **Rome** come out to welcome him.

5 Paul was kept under house arrest in Rome, awaiting his trial. For 2 years he rented a house and had considerable freedom to preach.



Week Fifteen – Summary of Acts

Objective – To help students see how the Kingdom-building work in Acts fits into the larger picture of God’s work in history. To emphasize the importance of the good news going forth to the entire world.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class.
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability**
 - Take attendance
 - Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible and writing materials, and do the student evaluation?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the questions and answers for this quarter
- ❖ **Setting**

The book of Acts follows a basic outline given in 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

- | | |
|--|--|
| I. The Witness in Palestine under Peter (1-12) <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Before Pentecost (1:1-26)B. Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Pentecost (2)2. Growth of Church (3-4)3. Troubles in the church (5-7)C. Church in Judea and Samaria (8)D. Ends of the earth (9-12) | II. The Witness to the World under Paul (13-28) <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)B. Jerusalem Council (15)C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)E. Paul in Jerusalem (21:15-23:22)F. Paul in Caesarea (23:23-36:32)G. Paul in Rome (27-28) |
|--|--|

❖ **Lesson**

Who wrote the book of Acts? [Luke]

What other book of the Bible did Luke write? [Luke]

It has been said that the two books are two volumes of the same book. Between these two books written by Luke it takes up 28% of the New Testament. Understanding the works of Luke is essential if we are to understand how the good news of the gospel will impact the world.

Turn to Acts 1:3. What did Jesus talk with the disciples about? “Things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” Luke is telling us that the book of Acts is about the growth of the Kingdom of God. It is not a kingdom up in heaven. It is a kingdom that can be seen, touched, heard and experienced in this world. V. 3 says that he is reporting things that can be proven and witnessed to. That is why Luke began by writing the Gospel of Luke. Jesus was a real person that was born in history, lived and did things in various places in Palestine. He spoke words and did many amazing things in his life. He had relationships with people, including his disciples and the Pharisees, the rich and the poor, the righteous and the sinners. He ate and drank with people. He gave sermons and had private times of conversation with people. He suffered temptation and persecution (even people in his own town hated him and wanted to kill him (Luke 4:28-29). He defeated the Devil and cast out demons. He healed the sick and raised the dead. He loved children and treated women with great respect and made them some of His close friends and disciples. He suffered and died with His physical body, and after being buried for three days He was raised to life again. After 40 days He ascended with His body into heaven to rule at the right hand of the Father in heaven. All of these things were done so that people could see and be witness to Jesus and the Kingdom of God. He rules His kingdom on earth even now from heaven.

The book of Acts was written to not only explain all of these things to the people the Church came in contact with in Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth, but to do the same kinds of things that the Lord Jesus did. The only way for the Apostles and other believers could be like Jesus is for them to have been given the Holy Spirit, as they were on the Day of Pentecost. After Jesus was raised to be enthroned at the right hand of the Father, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to give the disciples power to be His witnesses. On that day Peter preached his great sermon and 3000 people were added to their number that day and were baptized into the Church. The kingdom was established and began with power and glory. The kingdom of Jesus immediately began to do the works of Jesus. Read Acts 2:42-47. Throughout the book of Acts we see that the Church witnessed to Jesus, both by words and deeds, building the Kingdom of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus commanded the disciples to be His witnesses. [Recite together Acts 1:8.] Clearly, the book of Acts demonstrates a movement from one place to another; a transition from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. The kingdom was not just for the Jews, not to remain in Jerusalem, but was to extend to the whole earth. In order to understand what was going on we need to remember and understand what God had been doing in the world throughout human history.

God created mankind in Genesis and placed him in the Garden of Eden. But Adam and the rest of mankind were not to stay in the Garden. Man was to take dominion over all of the earth for God. Man was to see the kingdom of God established in the world. But because of sin, man would have difficulty and trouble in doing so. In fact, the kingdom of God would not be established in the world until the New and greater Adam, Jesus, came to build the Kingdom of God. God made covenants with Noah, and with Abraham that included blessings to the whole world.

Centuries later God made a new covenant with Israel, and established His special covenant people at Mount Sinai. From the time of Adam to David the people of God were **tribes** that were organized around the word of God and the worship of God in the tabernacle. During the time of the kings, from David to the time they were exiled was the period of the formation of Israel as a **nation** or **kingdom**. God made a covenant with David as a promise that the Messiah would sit as a king on David's throne. During this time the temple was built to replace the tabernacle. But because of their sin, God split the kingdom and eventually He sent them out into the world **empires** of Assyria, Babylon, the Medes and Persians, Greeks and Romans. The kingdom of God was never intended to be just for the Jews in Palestine. God sent the nation of Israel into the world to be His witnesses. Eventually He brought the Jews back into the land, making a New covenant, promising to give them the Messiah who would be the King over all the earth. During this time the temple was rebuilt. These three periods of Israel's history (tribe, kingdom and empire) were the work of God to build a people that are the foundation of His Kingdom in the world.

Thus, when Jesus came into the world, He came as the fulfillment of all of God's work in the world to save it. Jesus came as the New Adam, the New Abraham, the New Moses, the New David and the promised Messiah, the King of the world. He is also the new temple. After the coming of Jesus, the temple in Jerusalem was no longer a necessary part of the Kingdom of God. In fact, as we have seen, the temple became a problem for the Christians. Because the Jews preferred the temple and their traditions to the word of Jesus and His reign as the King, they persecuted the Church. The Jews continually accused the Christians of preaching against the temple and the traditions and teachings of the Jews. While the Christians never preached against the temple, they knew that Jesus had told them that the temple would be destroyed, just as it had been by Babylon.

The book of Luke begins in the temple (see Luke 1:10). When Jesus was twelve He taught in the temple (Luke 2:42). Throughout His life Jesus went to the temple

to worship His Father according to the Law. But because of the hardness of the hearts of the Jews, Jesus predicted that the temple would be destroyed (Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-28). Jesus cleansed the temple because it had become a place for thieves instead of a house of worship and prayer (Luke 19:45-48). After His death and resurrection, the book of Luke ends with the disciples in the temple (Luke 24:53). As the book of Acts opens, the disciples were in Jerusalem (as they were commanded by Jesus) and in the temple (Acts 2:46). But the book of Acts ends somewhere else: Rome. Read Acts 28:28-31. The kingdom had now gone out of Jerusalem, through all Judea and Samaria, and into the ends of the earth. Salvation was given to the Jews first, but had now reached the Gentiles even in Rome. Jesus, the King of the world, was establishing His kingdom throughout the world, even as God had intended from the time of the creation of man in the Garden of Eden. The Kingdom of God was not just a tribe, nor just the nation of Israel, but is the Church throughout the world. Jesus is the true emperor of the world, not Caesar. Jesus formed the true temple in His people the Church, not in Jerusalem, but in the whole World.

This is the message of the book of Acts. Luke shows us that the Kingdom of God, the Church, was being established in a fairly short amount of time. What year was Jesus killed, resurrected and ascended to His throne in heaven? AD 30. The events of the first few chapters all happened in the first year. In the next 40 years the kingdom was established. When the temple was destroyed in AD 70, the persecution of the Church by the Jews was all but finished. At that time it was the Roman Empire that began to persecute the Church. Rome persecuted the Church after AD 70 for many of the same reasons that the Jews had. If Jesus is the King, then the Christians would seek to make the Roman empire Christian. Indeed, the Romans were not ready to become Christians, and persecuted the Church for her witness in the world. But just as the Jews were judged by God for their rejection of Jesus the King, so too the Roman empire fell.

The book of Acts is an explanation of how the kingdom of God grows in the world. As we, the Church, faithfully witness of Jesus, even if we are persecuted, Jesus will cause His Kingdom to grow and fill the world. We are to teach the nations about Christ. As people believe in the message of the gospel they are brought into the Kingdom through baptism and taught to live as Christians. We are to do the works of Jesus by loving each other, and showing the grace and kindness of God to the world. As we do, God will use us.

Although you are children right now, God is preparing you to work like Peter and Paul. You should make every effort to learn your Bibles. Learn how to love people

and do the works of Jesus. Learn and prepare yourself to teach the people around you and the nations that Jesus is the King and Savior of the world. If you are faithful today, God will use you powerfully by the Holy Spirit to build His kingdom.

God bless you to be like Jesus, Peter and Paul.

Acts: Student Evaluation

Name _____ Date _____

- (1) The Key Verse for outlining the book of Acts is _____ : _____
(2) Write out this verse. _____

- (3) The word “witness” in the book of Acts means in the Greek language to be:
a) a Mariner b) a Martyr c) a Musician

- (4) How much of the outline of the book of Acts do you remember?

I. The Witness in _____ under Peter (1-12)

- A. Before _____ (1:1-26)
B. Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)
 1. Pentecost (2)
 2. _____ of Church (3-4)
 3. Troubles in the church (5-7)
C. Church in Judea and _____ (8)
D. _____ of the earth (9-12)

II. The Witness to the World under _____ (13-28)

- A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)
B. Jerusalem _____ (15)
C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)
E. Paul in _____ (21:15-23:22)
F. Paul in _____ (23:23-36:32)
G. Paul in _____ (27-28)

- (5) What was the purpose of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15? _____

- (6) When Paul went to a city to preach the gospel he went first the _____ and then to the Gentiles.

- (7) The main group of people that persecuted Paul were the:
a) Jews b) Romans

- (8) Why did Paul go to Rome? _____

Acts: Student Evaluation Answer Key

- (1) The Key Verse for outlining the book of Acts is: 1 : 8
- (2) The keys verse written out is. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
- (3) The word "witness" in the book of Acts means in the Greek language to be:
B) A MARTYR
- (4) How much of the outline of the book of Acts do you remember?

I. The Witness in PALESTINE under Peter (1-12)

- A. Before PENTECOST (1:1-26)
- B. Church in Jerusalem-Judea (2-7)
 1. Pentecost (2)
 2. GROWTH of Church (3-4)
 3. Troubles in the church (5-7)
- H. Church in Judea and SAMARIA
- I. ENDS of the earth (9-12)

II. The Witness to the World under PAUL (13-28)

- A. 1st Missionary Journey (13-14)
- B. Jerusalem COUNCIL (15)
- C. 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
- D. 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:14)
- E. Paul in JERUSALEM (21:15-23:22)
- F. Paul in CAESAREA (23:23-36:32)
- G. Paul in ROME (27-28)

- (5) What was the purpose of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15? The Jerusalem Council met to determine whether Gentile believers had to become Jews in order to be baptized. The Elders wrote a letter to the Gentiles and sent it with Paul and Barnabas.
- (6) When Paul went to a city to preach the gospel he went first the JEWS and then to the Gentiles.
- (7) The main group of people that persecuted Paul were the:
a) **JEWS**
- (8) Why did Paul go to Rome? Paul was sent by Christ to be a witness before the kings and rulers of the world. He had preached to Felix, Festus, King Agrippa and to Caesar.