



The Early Church: Acts 1-12 Appendix 1. Participant Handouts

If you are working with a class or small group, feel free to duplicate the following handouts at no additional charge. If you'd like to print 8-1/2" x 11" or A4 size pages, you can download the free Participant Guide handout sheets at: www.jesuswalk.com/early-church/early-church-lesson-handouts.pdf

Discussion Questions

You'll typically find 4 or 5 questions for each lesson. Each question may include several sub-questions. These are designed to get group members engaged in discussion of the key points of the passage. If you're running short of time, feel free to skip questions or portions of questions.

Suggestions for Classes and Groups

Individuals who are studying online can probably complete one full lesson per week, though they'll need to be diligent to do so. But some of the chapters just have too much material for a one hour class discussion, especially Lesson 2. Feel free to arrange the lessons any way that works best for your group. Because of the length of these handouts – and to keep down the page count so we can keep the book price lower – they are being made available at no cost online.

www.jesuswalk.com/early-church/early-church-lesson-handouts.pdf

There are 9 Lessons in this series.

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|---|---|
| 1. The Promise of Power (Acts 1) | 6. Philip Evangelizes Samaria and Baptizes an Ethiopian (Acts 8) |
| 2. The Holy Spirit Comes (Acts 2) | 7. Saul's Conversion, Peter's Ministry (Acts 9). |
| 3. Powerful Healing, Bold Testimony (Acts 3:1-4:22) | 8. The Spirit Falls on Gentiles (Acts 10:1-11:18). |
| 4. Power and Fellowship in Jerusalem (Acts 4:23-5:42) | 9. Revival in Antioch, Persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 11:19-12:25). |
| 5. Stephen's Ministry and Martyrdom (Acts 6-7) | |

Not included in these notes but of interest is Appendix 3. Were the Early Christians Communists or Socialists? <http://www.jesuswalk.com/early-church/apx3-communists.htm>

Appendix 2. Chronology of the Early Church (Acts 1-12)

Dates are approximate, drawn from the work of evangelical Bible scholars.

Public Ministry of Jesus	ca. 28-30 AD
Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost	Apr-May 30
Martyrdom of Stephen in Jerusalem	30-31
Ministry of Philip in Samaria	30-31
Conversion of Saul/Paul	ca. 33
Saul's first post-conversion Visit to Jerusalem	35
Saul in Tarsus of Cilicia	35-45
Conversion of Centurion's Household in Caesarea	37
Martyrdom of the Apostle James by Herod Agrippa I	41
Death of Herod Agrippa I in Caesarea	44
Paul Joins Barnabas at Antioch	45
Famine-Relief Visit to Jerusalem	46
First Missionary Journey. Paul accompanies Barnabas to Cyprus and South Galatia	47-48
Execution of Peter and Paul	65
Roman-Jewish War	66-70
Death of Nero	68
Fall of Jerusalem	70

Drawn from F.F. Bruce, ISBE 3:709 (1979), *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (1977), p. 475. NT Wright, *Paul: A Biography* (2018), pp. 433-434; F.F. Bruce, "Acts of the Apostles: IX. Chronology of Acts" ISBE 1:42-43.

1. The Promise of Power (Acts 1)

1.1 Prologue to Acts (Acts 1:1-11)

- Passover (Day 0), Last Supper, Thursday
- Crucifixion (Day 1), Friday
- Resurrection (Day 3), Sunday
- Forty Days after the Resurrection (Days 3 to 43, Acts 1:3)
- Ascension (Day 43)
- Pentecost (Day 50)

This leaves about one week between Jesus' ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit. During this time Jesus appears to groups of disciples in Jerusalem (Luke 24; John 20:19-28) and Galilee (John 21; 1 Corinthians 15:5-7).

Promise of the Holy Spirit's Coming (Acts 1:4-5)

1. They are to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit is poured out.
2. Jesus describes the Spirit's coming with four analogies: gift, promise, baptism, clothing of power.
 - a. The Analogy of a Gift (Acts 1:4, NIV; Acts 2:38).
 - b. The Analogy of the Promise (Acts 1:4; 2:33; Luke 24:49; Galatians 3:14; Ephesians 1:13; Joel 2:28-29).
 - c. The Analogy of a Baptism (Acts 1:4-5). *Mikvah* – Jewish ritual bath or pool.
 - d. The Analogy of Clothing (Luke 24:49).

The Spirit Will Come upon You (Acts 1:8)

Q1. (Acts 1:4-8) Why aren't Jesus' disciples to leave Jerusalem and return to their homes? In what ways does the Spirit's coming represent a filling? A coming upon? A baptism?

The Purpose of the Spirit's Coming (Acts 1:8)

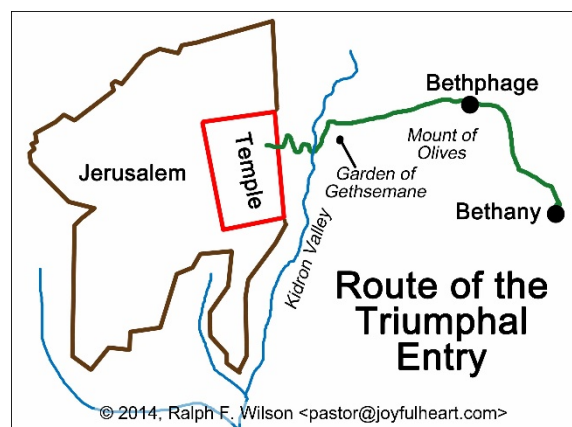
Q2. (Acts 1:8) What kinds of power does Jesus offer us in the Holy Spirit? In what ways does Acts 1:8 function as an outline or blueprint of the Book of Acts? Where do you and I fit in to fulfilling Acts 1:8?

The Ascension (Acts 1:9-12; Luke 24:50-53)

Blessing the Disciples (Luke 24:50)

Ascending into Heaven (Acts 1:9-11)

Jesus is taking up into a cloud (Acts 1:9), promise he will return in the clouds (Acts 1:11b; Luke 21:27; Daniel 7:13a; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 1:7)



The traditional site of the Ascension is between the East Gate of the Temple and Bethphage.

1.2 Choosing of a Twelfth Apostle (Acts 1:12-26)

Q3. (Acts 1:14) While we know that individual prayer is powerful (James 5:16b), Jesus indicates that group prayer is even more powerful (Matthew 18:19). How would you describe what was happening with this “Fellowship of the 120”? Have you ever been part of a group praying like this? Do you value prayer enough to gather with others to pray? How much of your church’s “prayer meeting” is spent in actual prayer?

A Replacement for Judas (Acts 1:15-17)

Judas’s Death (Acts 1:18-19; Matthew 27:3-10)

Qualifications for a Replacement Apostle (Acts 1:20-22)

Selection by Lot (Acts 1:23-26)

Lessons for Disciples

1. What “Jesus began to do and teach” is continued in the ministry of the early church and today (Acts 1:1).
2. Jesus impressed on his disciples the importance of waiting in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit – it was of prime importance. We believers have received the Spirit, but we would do well to open ourselves to the Lord, surrender our hearts, and receive a fresh “filling” of the Holy Spirit for today (Acts 1:4; Luke 24:49).
3. The power of the Holy Spirit is to make us effective witnesses to Jesus wherever we are. If we suppress witnessing, then we suppress God’s will for our lives (Acts 1:8)
4. God’s plan was to spread the good news in radiating circles from Jerusalem, then to Judea and Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth, the Gentiles. This forms the rough outline of the Book of Acts (Acts 1:8).
5. When Jesus returns in his Second Coming, he will return in the clouds (Acts 1:9-11; Matthew 24:30; 26:64; 1 Thessalonians 4:17).
6. One important characteristic of the early church was fervent, united prayer (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 4: 24-31).
7. Jesus deliberately chose twelve disciples to represent the 12 tribes of Israel – the new Israel. That is why the disciples felt it was important to replace Judas with Matthias (Acts 1:15-26; Matthew 19:28; Galatians 6:16).

2. The Holy Spirit Comes (Acts 2)

2.1 The Holy Spirit Falls on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13; Part I)

Pentecost (Greek *pentekoste*) means “fiftieth” and came to designate the fiftieth day after Passover (Deuteronomy 16:9-10). The Old Testament refers to it as the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22).

The Sounds and Sights of Pentecost (Acts 2:2-3)

Monologue, “I Was There at Pentecost” (www.joyfulheart.com/pentecost/pentecost-monologue.htm).

1. Sounds (verse 2) Greek *pneuma*, “breath” and “wind.” Also in Hebrew (Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4; John 3:8; 20:22)

2. Sights (verse 3).

3. Filling (verse 4a). Promised in John 14, 15, 16; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:6).

4. Prophetic Praise (verse 4b).

Speaking in Tongues (Acts 8:15-17; 10:44-47; 19:6).

Disciple’s Guide to the Holy Spirit, (www.jesuswalk.com/spirit/06_spirit_baptized.htm)

1 Corinthians: Discipleship Lessons from a Troubled Church.

(www.jesuswalk.com/1corinthians/13_prophecy.htm)

“Spirit Baptism, the New Birth, and Speaking in Tongues”

(www.joyfulheart.com/scholar/spirit-baptism.htm)

Old Testament: Numbers 11:24-29; 1 Samuel 10:6, 10; 19:20-21, 23-24.

New Testament: 1 Corinthians 14:15-18, 32.

Q1. (Acts 2:1-4) When the Holy Spirit falls on the Day of Pentecost, what is the significance of the sound of wind? Of the flames? Of the spontaneous speaking the praises of God in other languages? How does this filling conform to Old Testament patterns?

Jews Gathered from All Over the World (Acts 2:5, 9-11a)

“We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” (Acts 2:11b)

Greek *megaleios*, “magnificent, splendid, grand,” in the New Testament, “greatness, sublimity,” plural, “the mighty deeds.” (Deuteronomy 11:2; Psalm 71:19; Luke 1:48b-49)

Q2. (Acts 2:11-13) Why are these messages in tongues so convincing to the crowds? What is the content of the messages the believers are speaking out in these various languages? In what kind of Bible books do we see this kind of content?



2.2 Peter Addresses the Crowd (Acts 2:14-37)

1. Jesus Attested by Signs and Wonders (Acts 2:22)
2. Culpability for the Crucifixion (Acts 2:23)
3. Jesus' Resurrection Foretold by David (Acts 2:24-31; Psalm 16:8-11)
4. God Raised Jesus from the Dead (Acts 2:32-35; Psalm 110:1)
5. Deep Conviction (Acts 2:36)

Q3. (Acts 2:14-36) What part(s) of Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost was so convicting to those who heard it?

2.3 Peter Calls for Repentance (Acts 2:38-39; Part II)

[If you need to divide Acts 2 into two parts, here is a good place to begin part II.]

Repent, Be Baptized, and Receive the Spirit (Acts 2:38-39)

1. **Repent.** "Repent" is *metanoēō*, literally, "change one's mind." Here it has the sense, "feel remorse, repent, be converted." Repentance is more than feeling sorry for some past action – or for getting caught. It is sorrow combined with faith and a willingness to go a new direction. Our word "convert" carries a similar idea, from Latin *convertere*, "to turn around, transform" (Acts 3:19; 16:31).
2. **Be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.** Being baptized is an important act of faith for this church age.
3. **You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** Greek *dōrea*, "that which is given or transferred freely by one person to another, gift."
4. **The gift of the Holy Spirit will be given to Jews and Gentiles.**

Salvation from a Corrupt Generation (Acts 2:40)

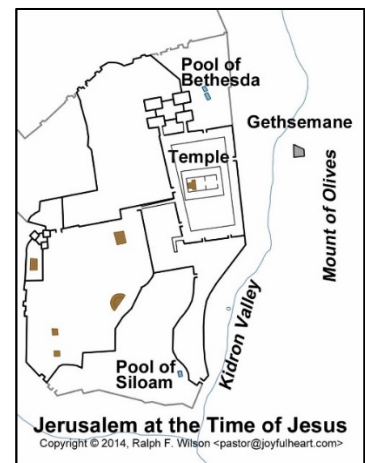
In the New Testament, the generation is described with different words.

- "Corrupt" (NIV, NRSV), "crooked" (ESV), "untoward" (KJV).
- "Perverse" (NIV, NRSV, KJV), "twisted" (ESV), "depraved" (NIV).
- "Wicked" (NIV, KJV), "evil" (ESV, NRSV).
- "Unbelieving" (NIV), "faithless" (ESV, NRSV, KJV).
- "Adulterous" (NIV, ESV, NRSV, KJV), "unfaithful" (NJB).
- "Sinful."

Q4. (Acts 2:38-40) What about repentance and baptism is vital for forgiveness? To whom is the Holy Spirit promised? What will save us from our corrupt cultures today?

2.4 The Sweet Fellowship of the Primitive Church (Acts 2:41-47)

1. They welcome the message (Acts 2:41).
2. People are constantly being added (Acts 2:40, 47)
3. They devote themselves to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42)
4. They devote themselves to the fellowship (Acts 2:42). *Koinonia* from Greek *koinos*, "common," that which concerns all in the group. The newly gathered church shares a "common faith" (Acts 2:44; 4:32; Ephesians 4:4-5; 2:14-22; 1 John 1:3) See also Lesson 4.2, Acts 4:32.
5. They devote themselves to the breaking of bread together (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 10:16; Luke 22:19; cf. Mark 14:22-24; Matthew 26:26-28; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2).



Pool of Bethesda in the north east corner of Jerusalem, and the pool of Siloam at the southwest corner.

6. They devote themselves to prayer (Acts 2:42, 46a; 3:1; 4:31; 6:4; 12:12; Ephesians 5:18b-20)
7. They care for the needy in their midst (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-5:11).

Q5. (Acts 2:42-47) What characteristics of the early church in Acts 2:42-47 are necessary for healthy congregations in our day? In which of these characteristics is your congregation most healthy? Most unhealthy?

Lessons for Disciples

1. When the Holy Spirit is poured out on the Day of Pentecost, the sound of wind represents the Holy Spirit (wind = spirit in both Hebrew and Greek). The tongues of fire represent the Shekinah glory of God touching each person (Acts 2:1-3).
2. A number of words are used interchangeably to describe the Spirit's coming – filled, baptized, come upon, receive, etc.
3. Spontaneous prophecy when the Spirit comes upon a person is seen in the Old Testament (Numbers 11:24-29; 1 Samuel 10:6, 10; 1 Samuel 19:20-21, 23-24).
4. Peter speaks to the crowd interpreting the coming of the Spirit and tongues as the outpouring prophesied by Joel (Acts 2:15-21; quoting Joel 2:28-32).
5. In response to the Spirit's coming, the believers speak of God's mighty deeds in languages they don't know, but that are known by the Jews gathered in Jerusalem for the festival (Acts 2:4-6, 11). Tongues here can be considered a subset of prophecy, especially since it is not gibberish, but telling the mighty deeds of God (Acts 2:11).
6. Repentance is a necessary precursor for forgiveness. Baptism is a sign of commitment and of washing away of sins – forgiveness (Acts 2:38).
7. Peter says the gift of the Spirit is for many, many people hereafter – even those who “afar off,” that is, the Gentiles (Acts 2:39).
8. It is necessary to repent to save ourselves from the corruption of our culture (Acts 2:40).
9. Characteristics of the early church include: (1) welcoming the message, (2) constant growth, (3) devotion to being taught, (4) commitment to fellowship, (5) frequent celebrations of the Lord's Supper, (6) much time in prayer, and (7) care for the needy among them.

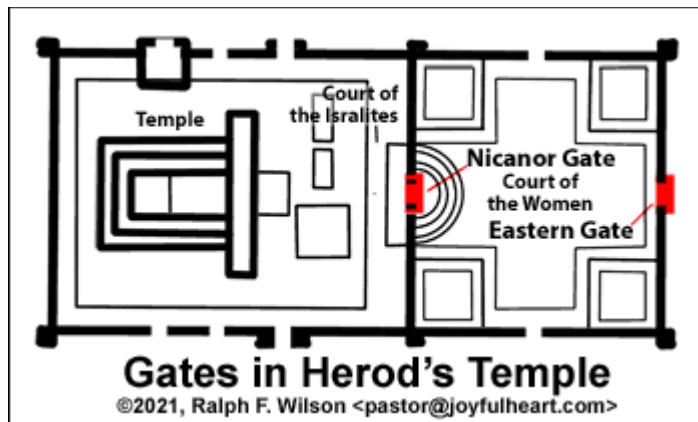
3. Powerful Healing, Bold Testimony (Acts 3:1-4:22)

Believers and Temple Worship (Acts 2:46-47)

3.1 Healing the Lame Beggar (Acts 3:1-10)

Power in the Name of Jesus (Acts 3:6, 16, 4:10)

“In the name of Jesus” is used a number of times in Acts and elsewhere (Acts 3:6, 16; 4:10, 30; 5:40; 8:16; 9:27; 10:48; 16:18; 19:5). In the Old Testament, “name” can be used as: (1) identifier, (2) reputation, (3) representing the person himself, (4) authority (Psalm 54:1; Acts 4:7; Deuteronomy 18:18-19). The idea is kind of like power of authority, “on my commission. “In the name of Jesus” indicates it is Jesus himself who heals, the authority of Jesus’ own Power and Presence.

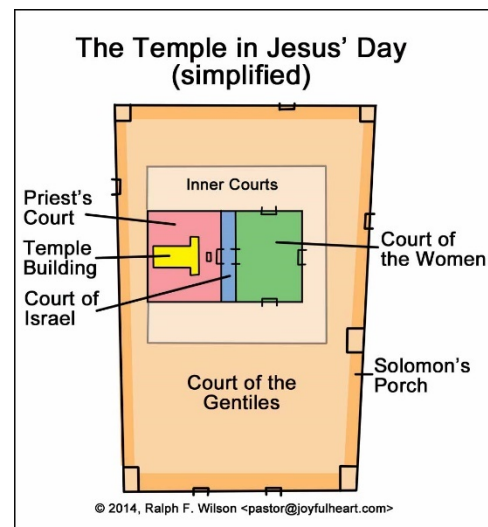


Q1. (Acts 3:6, 16; 4:10) What kind power do we possess in the name of Jesus? Why do many believers conclude their prayers, “in Jesus’ name, Amen”? (John 14:14) How does praying in Jesus’ name relate to praying in God’s will? Can we misuse praying in Jesus’ name? If so, how?

Walking, Leaping, and Praising God (Acts 3:7-10)

3.2 Peter’s Sermon in Solomon’s Porch (Acts 3:11-26)

1. We didn’t heal this man by our own power, rather in this healing God glorified his servant Jesus (verses 12-13a).
2. You are responsible for killing God’s Holy and Righteous one, the Author of Life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses to this fact (verses 13b-15).
3. Faith in Jesus’ name and power healed this man completely (verse 16).
4. You acted in ignorance; however, Christ’s sufferings were part of God’s plan (verses 17-18).
5. Nevertheless, now you must repent of your sins and be forgiven (verse 19a).
6. Until the right time, the Messiah will be in heaven; at that time God will send the Messiah to restore everything (verses 19b-21).
7. Jesus is the prophet whom Moses prophesied would come (verses 22-23).
8. All the prophets have foretold Messiah’s coming and you are heirs of this promise. In Jesus the Messiah, God fulfills his promise to Abraham to bless all peoples through his offspring (verses 24-25b).
9. Thus, the Messiah is sent first to you Jews to bless you by turning you from your wicked ways (verse 26).



Q2. (Acts 3:19-20) Why is repentance necessary to experience personal “times of refreshing,” peace, and renewal? According to Acts 3:19-20, when does the ultimate “time of refreshing” come?

Jesus Offers the Blessing of Abraham (Acts 3:22-26)

Jesus is the Prophet Moses predicted (Deuteronomy 8:15, 18, 19; John 1:21, 25). Peter also declares Jesus to be the Offspring of Abraham who is prophesied to bless all peoples (Genesis 22:18; 26:4; Galatians 3:16, 29).

3.3 Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1-22)

Rapid progression of the growth of Christian believers in Jerusalem:

- 120 (Acts 1:15),
- 3,000 (Acts 2:41),
- Daily additions (Acts 2:47),
- 5,000 males¹ (Acts 4:4),
- “Increasing in number” (Acts 6:1), and
- “A great many of the priests” (Acts 6:7).

Interrogation before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:5-7)

Peter’s Declaration before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8-12)

Peter declares their wicked action and then God’s response.

“You crucified”

“God raised from the dead.”

“You rejected”

“Has become the capstone/cornerstone”

Christ the Cornerstone (Acts 4:11; Psalm 118:21-22; Isaiah 28:16)

Salvation in No Other Name (Acts 4:12)

Various approaches to the eternal future of the unevangelized.

1. **Restrictivism.** All the unevangelized are damned (Augustine, Calvinism).
2. **Universalism.** All the unevangelized are saved (Origin, Unitarian-Universalism).
3. **Universal evangelization before death.**
4. **Eschatological evangelization** in the End Time (Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Dispensationalism, 1 Peter 3:18-20; 4:6).
5. **Inclusivism.** The unevangelized are saved or lost based on their commitment, or lack thereof, to the God who saves through the work of Jesus (John Wesley, C. S. Lewis, etc.; Romans 2:14-16.).

Q3. (Acts 4:12) What are the implications of believing that Jesus Christ is the exclusive way to God? How does this conviction energize evangelism? Why does our culture resist this belief so adamantly?

The Sanhedrin’s Response (Acts 4:13-22)

Obedying God Rather than Man (Acts 4:19-20)

Q4. (Acts 4:19-20) We are told to submit to the civil authorities God has placed over us (Romans 13:1). How are we to balance submission to God with submission to parents and government? How can we be faithful to God and still be humble?

¹ “Men” is specific, “males” (*anēr*).

Lessons for Disciples

1. Peter and John are sensitive to the Holy Spirit concerning healing, and when the Spirit shows them, they are bold to proclaim healing in Jesus' name (Acts 3:1-6). We should become bold also!
2. The phrase "in the name of Jesus" means "with the authority given to us by Jesus," a kind of power of attorney. It is effective so long as we discern that a particular action is God's plan for a particular situation; it does not function as personal authority to command anything we want on our own.
3. Peter answers the Sanhedrin by the Holy Spirit, that the miracle was performed in Jesus' name, whom the Sanhedrin members crucified. That Jesus is the "stone you builders rejected," fulfilling Psalm 118:22 (Acts 4:10-11). The Holy Spirit gives us the words when called before such courts and monarchs (Mark 13:11).
4. Peter declares that the name of Jesus the Messiah is the only name by which people may find salvation – a very bold statement (Acts 4:12). Christianity is an exclusive faith that centers on Jesus and him alone as the source of salvation.
5. Peter and John are commanded not to speak or teach in Jesus' name, to which they say they must obey God rather than men (Acts 4:18-20). Our first allegiance is to God, not to men, our culture, or government who would suppress Christianity.

4. Power and Fellowship in Jerusalem (Acts 4:23-5:42)

4.1 A Prayer for Boldness (Acts 4:23-31)

homothumadon, “with one mind, purpose, impulse” (Acts 1:14; 4:24, 32)

Fulfilling Psalm 2:1-2

Q1. (Acts 4:23-31) Why do the believers pray for boldness? Why do they need boldness in this circumstance? What does this tell us about their faith? Their character?

Filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:31)

pimplēmi, “to cause to be completely full, fill, fulfill” (2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9)

Q2. (Acts 4:31) What does it mean, “The were all filled with the Holy Spirit”? Weren’t they already filled with the Spirit?

4.2 Sharing Possessions (Acts 4:32-5:11)

Great Grace (Acts 4:33)

Sharing Everything (Acts 4:32)

“Had everything in common” (*koinos*, “common” as opposed to private, “pertaining to being of mutual interest or shared collectively, communal, common.”) See Appendix 3: Were the Early Christians Communists or Socialists? (www.jesuswalk.com/early-church/apx3-communists.htm)

The church expects people who can to work and earn their own living (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15), but has generosity in supporting the destitute (Acts 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:3-10). This sharing is part of the essence of what “fellowship” means, since “fellowship” translates *koinōnia*, “fellowship, sharing,” from *koinos*, “common.” *Deep love lies at the very foundation of fellowship* (John 13:35).

Q3. (Acts 4:32) Why is “having everything in common” at the root of true Christian fellowship? Of koinonia? What does this have to do with the mark of disciples who are known for deep love for one another (John 13:34-35)? To what degree does the church fall short of this? What are we going to do about it?

No Needy Persons (Acts 4:34-37)

Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)

Note carefully several things this passage teaches us.

1. **Private ownership** is quite permissible in the early church (Acts 5:4a).
2. **Partial giving.** Giving a portion of the proceeds of the sale is quite alright (Acts 5:4b).
3. **Lying.** Ananias and Sapphira lie about the gift to gain favorable impression of church. (Matthew 6:1-4).
4. **Unbelief.** Thinks he can lie and God won’t call him to account, “testing” God.
5. **Disdain for the holiness of Christ’s Church.** Lie is to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4). 1 Corinthians 3:9, 16-17.
6. **Disdain for church leaders.** “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give account” (Hebrews 13:17).

Q4. (Acts 5:1-11) What is the central sin Ananias and Sapphira are guilty of? Why is lying to Peter the same as “lying to the Holy Spirit” (verse 3), “lying to God” (verse 4)? How can acting toward the church as a mere human institution put us under God’s judgment? What does it mean to “test the Spirit of the Lord” in verse 9. Why was that wrong?

4.3 Apostolic Ministry and Persecution (Acts 5:12-42)

The Apostles’ Arrest (Acts 5:17-29)

Peter’s Clear Testimony (Acts 5:30-32)

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| 1. Israel’s God, “the God of our fathers” has acted. | 5. Jesus is Israel’s Savior from sin. |
| 2. Jesus is raised from the dead. | 6. The apostles claim to be eyewitnesses to these things. |
| 3. The Jewish leaders condemned Jesus to death. | 7. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is an additional testimony. |
| 4. God has exalted Jesus to the place of honor as Prince (Psalm 110:1) | |

Gamaliel’s Counsel (Acts 5:33-42)

Persecution Doesn’t Stop the Apostles (Acts 5:41-42)

Q5. (Acts 5:17-42) Why do you think Luke includes this long section about the apostles’ imprisonment, trial before the Sanhedrin, and flogging? In your culture, what does it take to keep Christians from sharing their faith openly? Do you share your faith openly?

Lessons for Disciples

There are a number of lessons we can draw from this passage.

1. The early church reacts to persecution with praise and a prayer for boldness, and are “filled with the Holy Spirit” in such a way that their meeting place is shaken (Acts 4:23-31).
2. The “filling” of the Holy Spirit is not just an initial experience, but occurs at various points in the believers’ lives, especially at times when they are filled with a special faith or awareness of God’s presence (Acts 4:31; also Acts 4:8; 9:17; 13:19; etc.).
3. The church experienced “great power” in the apostles’ preaching and “much grace” rested upon the church. They were experiencing God’s favor in a great way (Acts 4:33)
4. The early Christians shared their possessions with members of the fellowship who were needy (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32). This is part of the essence of what “fellowship” means, since “fellowship” translates *koinōnia*, “fellowship, sharing,” from *koinos*, “common.”
5. Providing for the poor and those in need has become a valuable pattern for the Christian church throughout its history, in charitable projects and missions. It arises from an awareness of our common humanity, and extends now even to those who are not yet believers. Examples: Mother Theresa, World Vision, Salvation Army, Oxfam, etc.
6. Some members sold property to provide money for this effort (Acts 4:34-37). The sharing was voluntary, not forced, so that private property was respected, not done away with (Acts 5:4).
7. Ananias and Sapphira sold property and gave some of the proceeds to help the poor. Their sin arose from pride and the desire to be honored, so they lied and claimed that they gave the entire proceeds to the church (Acts 5:1-11).
8. Lying to a church leader, and thus to the church, is interpreted as “lying to the Holy Spirit” (Acts 5:3), “lying to God” (Acts 5:4), and “testing the Spirit” (Acts 5:9). Thus, we see that the church is holy, not a mere human institution but a divine one. We must reverence the church

since it is God's, and submit to church leaders because they serve God (Hebrews 13:17).

9. In the early church days, the apostles (and others such as Stephen and Philip) were commonly performing signs and wonders that brought great attention from the populace (Acts 5:12-16; 6:8; 8:6). We should not discount signs and wonders for today. There have been many reports of signs and wonders in our lifetimes, especially in areas where powerful evangelism is taking place. These miracles function as signs of God's presence and power.
10. The disciples continue their ministry and don't stop teaching that "Jesus is the Messiah" (Acts 5:41-42). Their ministry continues in both the temple and in house churches. Today, we must regain the same enthusiasm to preach Christ, and not be silenced by the intolerant unbelievers around us.

5. Stephen's Ministry and Martyrdom (Acts 6-7)

5.1 Growth Pains in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1-7)

Complaints Mar Church Unity (Acts 6:1)

Selecting the Seven (Acts 6:2-4)

Notice that the words found in "serve tables" (verse 2) and "ministry of the word" (verse 4) are both from the same root *diakoneō* (from we get our word "deacon), "to serve."

Q1. (Acts 6:1-2) What is the *root problem* in the Jerusalem church that shows up in food distribution?

How could such a root problem retard growth and erode spiritual life? How do the apostles deal with it? Is there a root problem in your congregation that leaders need to deal with that threatens the health of the church? Why do leaders sometimes avoid dealing with church problems?

Qualifications of the Seven (Acts 6:3)

Later, the early church choses two classes of workers for their congregations: elders (or overseers) and deacons or servants (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Philippians 1:1).

Qualifications of the Seven. (1) males, (2) reputable, (3) full of the Holy Spirit, (4) wise.

The Names of the Seven (Acts 6:4b)

5.2 Stephen's Powerful Ministry (Acts 6:8-14)

Q2. (Acts 6:3, 8) What list of qualities do you see in Stephen when you combine the apostles' list of qualifications (verse 3) with the description of Stephen's character (verse 8)? Why is a ministry that combines the word with miracles so powerful?

The Synagogue of the Freedmen (Acts 6:9)

Concerted Opposition (Acts 6:9-12)

- Vocal opposition (verses 9-10).
- False accusations of heresy (verse 11).
- Arrest and charges before the Sanhedrin (verses 12).

False Accusations (Acts 6:13-14)

The accusations of Stephen's teaching concerning (1) the temple and (2) the Mosaic law.

"Like the face of an angel" (Exodus 34:29-34).

5.3 Stephen's Speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:1-53)

Traditional rehearsal of Israel's history (Acts 13:16-41; Psalm 78; Psalm 105-106).

1. Patriarchal period (Acts 7:2-16)
2. Moses and the Law (Acts 7:17-43)
3. The Tabernacle and the Temple (Acts 7:44-50)

Stephen's Indictment of the Jewish Leaders (Acts 7:51-53)

- **Stiff-necked**, that is, stubborn (Isaiah 48:4),
- **Uncircumcised hearts and ears.**
- **Resistant.** "to fall upon, run against," then, "to be adverse, oppose, strive against."

Q3. (Acts 7:51) Stephen accuses the Jewish leaders of stubbornness, hard-heartedness, and resistance to God. Have you ever noticed these tendencies in your own heart? What must you do if you see such things in yourself?

The Righteous One (Acts 7:52)

(1 John 2:1; Psalm 45:6-7; Isaiah 11:4; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Acts 3:14; 22:14; Zechariah 9:9)

Q4. (Acts 7:52) In what senses is Jesus “the Righteous One”? How should his righteousness challenge our sinfulness? In 1 John 2:1-2, why is the Righteous One our Advocate before the Father? How does Jesus deal with the great gap caused by our unrighteousness?

The Stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:54-8:1)

Intentional Spirit-Deafness (Acts 7:57; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Timothy 2:25–26; 1 Timothy 1:13–14)

Christ-likeness in Death (Acts 7:59-60: 8:2; Luke 23:46, 34)

Lessons for Disciples

1. Church growth is in cycles. At times, the number swells. At other times it levels off, such as in times of persecution. We should look seriously at the causes when growth plateaus for any length of time, unless the local population is declining or the community is over-saturated with churches (Acts 6:1, 7; 8:1).
2. Some tension is normal in a church. We are humans, after all. But when strife erupts it can endanger the health of the church. Leaders must take wise action to deal with the root causes, such as dealing with fair distribution of food to widows (Acts 6:1-4)
3. Leaders must delegate tasks to others, so they can remain focused on their primary responsibilities and giftings (Acts 6:2-4).
4. Those charged with responsible positions in the church need to meet clear spiritual criteria, such as being reputable, wise, and full of the Holy Spirit. Character and integrity are so important in a leader (Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).
5. Preaching combined with miracles is extremely powerful in winning people to Christ. That is one reason Stephen was so strongly opposed (Acts 6:8-9).
6. Stephen characterizes the Jewish leaders as stubborn, lacking a soft heart towards God, and resistant to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes these very qualities can infect our spirits and those of church leaders, requiring heart repentance (Acts 7:51-53).
7. Jesus is the Righteous One, the Righteous Judge. Yet, he comes showing mercy, and appears as the Advocate when God’s children sin, since he is the Atoning Sacrifice for our sins (Acts 7:52; 1 John 2:1-2).
8. God’s grace is required to overcome “Spirit deafness” in our opponents. Only the Holy Spirit can change such hearts (Acts 7:57; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Timothy 2:25-26; 1 Timothy 1:13-14).

6. Philip Evangelizes Samaria and Baptizes an Ethiopian (Acts 8)

6.1 Intense Persecution (Acts 8:1-4)

“Persecution” (*diōgmos*) refers to “a program or process designed to harass and oppress someone, persecution” for reasons of belief.

Formal Punishments in New Testament Times

1. **Fines** of various kinds.
2. **Scourging.** The Romans allowed the Jews 40 lashes less one, lest they might kill the prisoner.
3. **Excommunication.** Expulsion from the synagogue and Jewish community.
4. **Death** (Acts 7:57-60).

Spreading the Message of Jesus (Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19)

Stumbling blocks into stepping stone (Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20). We don't praise God *for* evil, but we can and should praise God *in* all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 3:17; Psalm 34:1).

Q1. (Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19) What enables us to give thanks in all circumstances? What was the short-term effect of Saul's persecution? What was the longer-term effect?

6.2 Philip Evangelizes Samaria (Acts 8:5-25)

Proclaiming Christ in Samaria (Acts 8:5-25)

Signs of the Kingdom here:

1. Exorcism.
2. Paralytics healed.
3. Cripples restored.

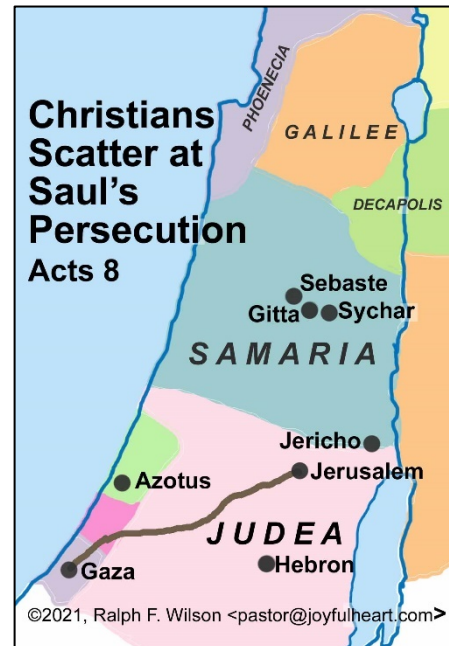
The Descent of the Holy Spirit by the Hands of the Apostles (Acts 8:12-17)

Signs of the Spirit's Coming in Samaria

Metaphors here for the coming of the Spirit:

- “**Receive**” suggests taking possession of a gift or something offered by another (Acts 2:38; Acts 8:15, 17; 10:47; 19:2).
- “**Come upon**” or “**fallen upon**” suggests a power overcoming or overwhelming a person from above. (Acts 1:8; 8:16; 10:44; 19:6).
- “**Was given**” emphasizes the gift element of the Holy Spirit's coming (Acts 5:32; 8:18; 15:8).

Q2. (Acts 8:4-17) What convinced the Samaritans to believe in Jesus? In your opinion, why didn't the Holy Spirit fall on them at the time of their baptism? Why did Peter and John have to come first?



Judea and Samaria at the time of Saul's persecution. Larger map.

Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9-11, 18-24)

“Practiced sorcery” (NIV, cf. KJV), “practiced magic” (ESV, NRSV) is the verb *mageuō*, “practice magic” -- kind of a cross between folk Judaism, magic healing remedies, wearing amulets, casting spells, and reliance on special incantations (Acts 13:6-12).

- Simon Magus in Samaria (Acts 8:9-24)
- Bar-Jesus in Paphos, Crete (Acts 13:6-12)
- Seven sons of Sceva and those who had valuable magic scrolls in Ephesus (Acts 19:13-19).

Simon Magus Rebuked (Acts 8:18-24)

Simon’s condition is:

- **Wickedness**, depravity and wickedness, the opposite of any virtue.
- **Bitterness**. “Full of bitterness” (NIV) or “gall of bitterness” (ESV, NRSV, KJV), perhaps “bitter poison” or “bitter envy.”
- **Captive to sin** (NIV) or perhaps “chains of wickedness” (NRSV).

Q3. (Acts 8:9-25) What is at the root of Simon Magus’s sin? Why is using money to buy spiritual influence and power and salvation so deeply offensive to God? How is it opposite to God’s way? Where do you see this sin in the modern church?

Ethiopia (Cush)

Go to the Road, Catch Up with the Chariot (Acts 8:26-29)

Q4. (Acts 8:26-29). Notice how Philip learns what to do – from an angel (verse 26) and from the Spirit (verse 29). Can God speak to us today by his Spirit, or was this just for the first century?

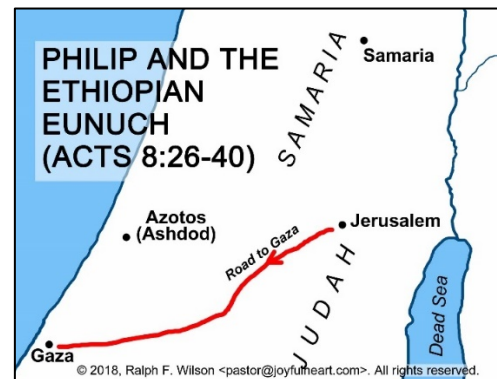
Jesus, the Suffering Servant (Acts 8:30-35)

Baptism along the Road (Acts 8:36, 38)

Philip Is “Transported” to Azatos (Acts 8:39-40)

Lessons for Disciples

1. God can use persecutions and evil against us to fulfill his own purposes. He is at work even in evil times (Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19).
2. God uses preaching combined with signs and wonders to attract attention and stimulate faith in Christ. Healing evangelism is powerful and follows the pattern of Jesus (Acts 8:6-7).
3. God delays the coming of the Spirit upon the Samaritans, probably so the Jerusalem church will send representatives and thus embrace the conversion of the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17).
4. Seeking to use spiritual gifts for personal gain is at the root of Simon Magus’ sin, as well as jealousy. Using money to obtain a spiritual power or to purchase influence in the church or in heaven



Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40).

is deeply offensive to God.

5. We can become “slaves” to sin, needing Jesus to set us free through repentance and his grace (Acts 8:23; cf. John 8:34; Proverbs 5:22; Romans 6:17-22; Titus 3:3; 2 Peter 2:19).
6. If we’re listening, God’s voice will sometimes give us directions on where to go, what to do (Acts 8:26, 29). It takes practice to learn to discern God’s voice, but as we are quiet before the Lord, we can learn and then be more usable in the Lord’s hands.
7. It is appropriate for new believers to be baptized soon after conversion, so long as they understand the basics of the gospel (Acts 8:36-39).

7. Saul's Conversion, Peter's Ministry (Acts 9)

7.1 The Conversion of Saul (Acts 9:1-31)

Saul of Tarsus

Damascus, Syria

Q1. (Acts 9:4-5) Why is persecuting the Church the same as persecuting Jesus himself? What is the bond between Jesus and his Church? Why must we show reverence toward Christ's Church and not disparage it?

Ananias, the Obedient Servant (Acts 9:10-16)

Ananias Ministers to Saul (Acts 9:17-19a)

Q2. (Acts 9:9-19) God seemed to initiate Saul's conversion. How did God use Ananias in ministry to Saul? How important is listening and obedience in ministry – even when we don't understand? Are you prepared if God were to call you to minister to a high-profile person in his Kingdom?

Saul in Damascus and Jerusalem (Acts 9:19b-25)

Saul's Sojourn in Arabia (Galatians 1:15-17, 33-35 AD)

Paul's Visit to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18-24; Acts 9:26-30, 35 AD)

Paul Debates the Greek-Speaking Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 9:28-29)

1. **Speaking boldly**, expressing oneself freely, speaking openly, boldly, fearlessly.
2. **Talking**.
3. **Debating**, *syzēteō*, generally, "to carry on a discussion, to contend with persistence for a point of view, dispute, debate, argue." (Acts 17:2-3; 18:4; 19:8)

Q3. (Acts 9:28-29) We are not to be quarrelsome we know (2 Timothy 2:24-26), but what is the role of debate and argument in evangelism? What is the value of studying the Scriptures and the arguments for the divinity of Jesus for leading people to Christ? Have you prepared yourself in this way?

Saul Travels Home to Tarsus (Acts 9:29-30)

Peace in the Church (Acts 9:31)

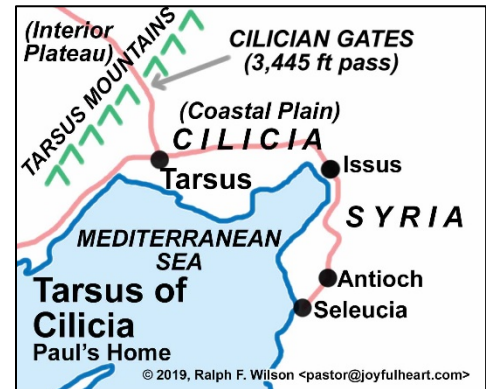
1. **Strengthening**, "house construction," repair, strengthening, rebuilding.
2. **Encouragement by the Holy Spirit**.
3. **Growth in numbers**.
4. **Humble piety**

7.2 The Ministry of Peter on the Plain of Sharon (Acts 9:32-43)

Healing of Aeneas (Acts 9:32-35)

Dorcas the Giver (Acts 9:36, 39)

Tabitha (Aramaic *T'bhîta*) means "gazelle." In Greek it is Dorcas (*Dorkas*).

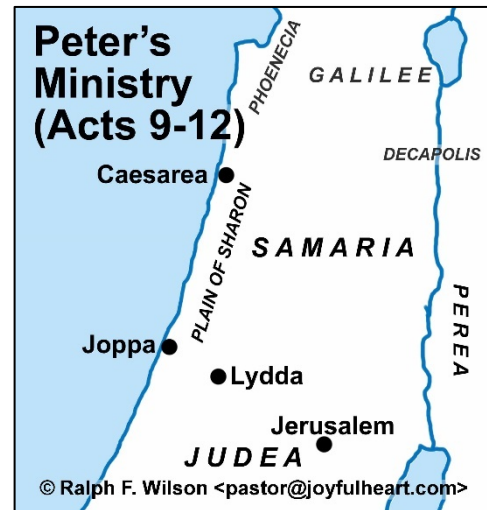


The Raising of Dorcas (Acts 9:37-42)

Q4. (Acts 9:32-43) How did God use healing and raising from the dead in order to begin a mighty regional revival? If you recognize that you have a spiritual gift of healing, are you willing to be obedient and let God use you in ministry?

Lessons for Disciples

1. There is a strong bond between Jesus and his Church. To attack the Church is to attack Christ; to build up the Church is to do Christ's work (Acts 9:4-5).
2. Jesus can convert the most antagonistic people. We should continue to pray for their conversion as long as God allows. Nothing is impossible with God! (Acts 9:3-6).
3. Ananias is told by the Lord to minister to Saul, but feels obliged to inform God what a bad and dangerous man Saul is – as if he didn't know. We shouldn't argue with God; he knows much more than we do! (Acts 9:10-16). Trust and obey (Acts 9:17-19).
4. God is able to use Saul's rabbinical training, received before his conversion, in his later ministry of proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah (Acts 9:22). God can use your pre-conversion background for his glory also.
5. God uses Barnabas as an intermediary to introduce Saul to the apostles. In our churches we can find the new people and introduce them around so they feel accepted. As intermediaries, we can also introduce people to Jesus (Acts 9:27).
6. Saul uses debate to seek to win his Greek-speaking friends in Jerusalem to Christ. This is called "apologetics," used by Paul and others in the early church to win Jews and pagans to Christ.
7. Churches commonly go through different phases -- growth, persecution, consolidation, then renewed growth. The goal is to keep the church healthy throughout its life (Acts 9:31).
8. Peter commands Aeneas to get up, no doubt having heard a whisper from God to speak those words (Acts 9:34; John 5:19, cf. 5:30). Peter doesn't heal everyone, only those whom God shows him to.
9. Peter prays before commanding Dorcas to rise, sensing God's will before he speaks (Acts 9:40). We should not presume to commit God to actions without discerning his will. Once that is done, we must be bold.
10. God uses the healing of Aeneas and the raising of Dorcas to stimulate a mass revival in the Plain of Sharon (Acts 9:35, 42). The gift of miracles is given by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:9-10, 29) for a good reason. There is no indication in Scripture not to expect miracles today.



Peter's ministry in the Plain of Sharon. [Larger map.](#)

8. The Spirit Falls on Gentiles (Acts 10:1-11:18)

8.1 A Devout Centurion in Caesarea (Acts 10:1-8)

Caesarea Maritima

Cornelius the Centurion (Acts 10:1-2)

Cornelius is:

1. **Devout**, that is, reverent, godly, pious in a good sense.
2. **Fears God**, deeply reverent.
3. **Gives generously to the poor.**
4. **Prays continually.**
5. **Righteous.**
6. **Respected by the Jewish people.**

Q1. (Acts 10:2, 22) What do we learn about Cornelius' character. Why do you think God chose to reveal himself to Cornelius, rather than the average pagan? Is he more worthy of salvation?

Sweet-Smelling Incense before the Lord (Acts 10:4)

(Psalm 141:2; Philippians 4:18; Revelation 5:8; cf. 8:3-4)

Q2. (Acts 10:4) Why do you think your prayers and your obedient life are like incense that gives God pleasure? Do you think you can actually bring pleasure to God?

Cornelius's Vision (Acts 10:3-8)

8.2 Peter's Rooftop Vision (Acts 10:9-16)

Q3. (Acts 10:9-16) Why does God have to bring this noon-time vision to Peter? What prejudices did Peter have against Gentiles? How did his religion prevent him from reaching out to Gentiles? What specifically did God tell him about "common and unclean"? How does this revelation affect his attitude towards Jewish dietary laws?

8.3 Peter Meets with the Gentiles

Peter Addresses Cornelius's Friends (Acts 10:27-29)

Call No One Common and Unclean (Acts 10:28)

Cornelius's Story (Acts 10:29b-33)

God Doesn't Show Favoritism (Acts 10:34-43)

(Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25; James 2:1; Matthew 5:44-45)

Peter Preaches Jesus (Acts 10:36-43)

Anointed with the Holy Spirit and Power (Acts 10:38)

Two results of this anointing Peter gives are:

1. **Doing good.** Jesus brings good and *shalom* to people wherever he goes.
2. **Healing** those under the devil's power (Luke 13:16; Mark 9:20-22; etc.).

Anointing with the Spirit (1 Samuel 10:1, 6; 16:12-13; Isaiah 61:1a, quoted by Jesus in Luke 4:18; 2 Corinthians 1:21b-22; 1 John 2:20, 27)

1. Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit and always has the Spirit. But when he is baptized by John, the Holy Spirit comes upon him in a special way; he is “anointed” or “filled” with the Spirit for his ministry (Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18; etc.).
2. Jesus ministers by the power of the Holy Spirit. His miracles are not the result of who he is – the Son of God. He has “emptied himself” (Philippians 2:7, ESV, NRSV) of many of his divine prerogatives to become a human being. Rather, his power comes from the Father and the Spirit (John 5:19, 30). Thus he can be an exemplar for us, who can do nothing by ourselves.
3. We follow the example Jesus set for us. We are effective when we learn to minister by the Spirit. Attempts to ministry in our own strength have little power and effectiveness by comparison. “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you...” (Acts 1:8).
4. The Scripture uses a number of synonyms to describe the Spirit coming upon or into someone: being anointed, being clothed, being filled, being baptized, receiving, etc. To try to differentiate these into separate experiences of the Spirit is likely to lead down misleading doctrinal paths.

Q4. (Acts 10:38) Since Jesus is God, why is he dependent upon the Spirit’s anointing? Are we dependent upon the Spirit’s empowerment in a similar way, or is it different for us?

Jesus’ Crucifixion and Resurrection (Acts 10:39-43)

1. We are eyewitnesses of what Jesus did (verse 39a).
2. The Jews crucified him but God raised him from the dead (verses 39b-40).
3. He was seen after his resurrection by specific witnesses (verse 41)
4. We are told to preach that Jesus is the One whom God appoints as Judge of all (verse 42), implying the need for us to repent.
5. Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins (verse 43).

8.4 The Holy Spirit Comes upon the Gentiles (Acts 10:44-46)

Tongues as a Sign of Receiving the Spirit

In brief, this are my conclusions.

1. Clearly, speaking in tongues is an irrefutable sign to the Jews that the Spirit has fallen upon the Gentiles in Acts 10 and 11.
2. I believe that speaking in tongues is a common experience among believers today, but to generalize that tongues is the “necessary sign” of the Spirit’s coming, goes beyond Scripture. Isn’t supported in Paul’s epistles, leads to confusion about the Spirit’s ministry, and is damaging to the unity of the body of Christ.

Q5. (Acts 10:44-48) Clearly tongues were a sign to Peter that Cornelius’s household had been baptized with the Spirit. Does the Scripture support a doctrine that speaking in tongues is a “necessary sign” of the baptism of the Holy Spirit? If so, how? (Christians disagree on these matters, so be gentle as you share your thoughts with one another.)

Peter Baptizes the Gentiles in Cornelius’s Household (Acts 10:47-48)

8.5 Criticism from the Jewish Believers in Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-18)

How Soon We Forget (Galatians 2:11-13)

Lessons for Disciples

1. Many non-Christians are well prepared by God to receive the Gospel and immediately believe, as was Cornelius (Acts 10:1-2, 22).
2. Our prayers and righteous deeds come up to God as if they were sweet-smelling incense. They please him greatly! (Acts 10:4).
3. Peter's pattern was to pray at noon – perhaps morning, noon, and evening (Acts 10:9). A good example for us!
4. The Lord teaches Peter in a vision that he is not to consider any food unclean that God has made clean. It applies to food as well as people, even to classes of people (Acts 10:9-16; 28-29).
5. God does not show favoritism to one people or another. Rather he sees their heart and actions (Acts 10:34-35). Neither should we show favoritism or discriminate against any race or ethnic group.
6. God can speak to both Christians and non-believers at will. He is Lord! (Acts 10:22-23)
7. By means of his death on the cross, Jesus establishes a relationship peace with God of peace and forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:36a).
8. Jesus is Lord of all creation and all people. All owe him allegiance whether they realize it or not (Acts 10:36b).
9. Being anointed with the Spirit is another synonym for being filled with the Spirit or having the Spirit come upon a person (Acts 10:38).
10. Jesus power to do signs and wonders comes from the anointing of the Spirit that came upon him at his baptism (Acts 10:38). The Spirit is also the source of any miracles that believers might see come to pass. The Spirit is the power-source of all spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12).
11. God is not bound by any order of events. At Caesarea, the Holy Spirit falls on people before they are baptized (Acts 10:44-46).
12. Tongues was a sign to Peter that the Holy Spirit is fallen on the Gentiles at Caesarea (Acts 10:44-46). However, to generalize and make tongues the necessary sign of the Spirit baptism today goes beyond Scripture. It builds a doctrine on a partial pattern in Acts that is not supported by Paul's teaching in the Epistles.

9. Revival in Antioch, Persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 11:19-12:25)

9.1 Ministry in Antioch (Acts 11:19-30, 45-48 AD)

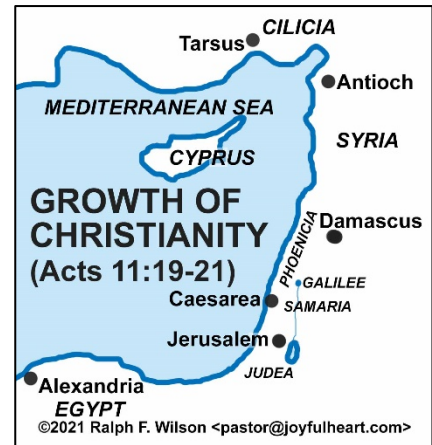
The Gospel Explodes among the Gentiles in Antioch (Acts 11:19-21)

Q1. (Acts 11:19-21) Why do you think it took so long for the gospel to jump over from the Jewish “fishing pond” into the vast ocean of Gentiles who need Christ? What kind of preparation did God have to do among the Jewish Christians to get them ready for this?

Barnabas Is Sent to the Gentile Believers in Antioch (Acts 11:22-24)

Barnabas Seeks Out Saul in Tarsus (Acts 11:25-26)

Q2. (Acts 11:22-26) What qualifications did Barnabas have that made him an ideal missionary to the new Gentile believers in Antioch? What qualifications did Saul of Tarsus have that caused Barnabas to seek him out and enlist him to help in Antioch? Why do you think it took so long for Saul to get into active ministry in Antioch?



Expansion of the Church to Antioch. Larger map.

9.2 Needs in the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:27-30)

Paul and Barnabas Carry a Gift to Jerusalem (Acts 11:29-30, 46 AD)

Q3. (Acts 11:29-30) In what way does the monetary gift from the Antioch believers to the Judean believers exemplify the most basic directive of Jesus (John 13:35)? Why do you think that ministry to the poor and needy has become a hallmark of the Church down through the ages to our own day? What happens when we deemphasize this? What happens when we over-emphasize this?

Meeting with Leaders of the Jerusalem church (Galatians 2:1-5)

9.3 Herod’s Persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 12:1-25)

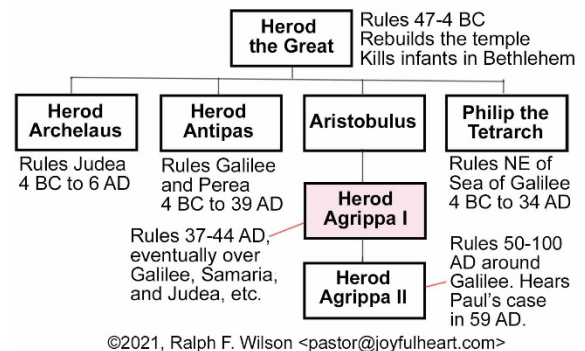
Herod Agrippa (ruled 37 to 44 AD)

Herod Kills James (Acts 12:1-2)

Three prominent men named James in the New Testament –

1. The Apostle James, one of the sons of Zebedee (killed by Herod);
2. James the half-brother of Jesus, who assumes leadership in the Jerusalem church and wrote the Letter of James in our New Testament; and
3. James the son of Alphaeus, another of the original 12 apostles.

The Herodian Dynasty (much abbreviated)



Where Herod Agrippa I fits in with the rest of the Herodian Dynasty. Larger chart.

Herod Arrests Peter (Acts 12:3-5)**Peter's Escape from Prison (Acts 12:6-17)**

Q4. (Acts 12:6-17) Why do you think the Christians don't believe their own prayers for Peter's release? Don't they believe in miracles any longer? Why don't we pray with greater faith to the God who can do anything? How can we grow our faith in God so we can pray better?

Herod's Death in Caesarea (Acts 12:19b-23)**The Word of God Continues to Increase and Spread (Acts 12:24)****Lessons for Disciples**

There aren't a lot of doctrinal insights in this section, more practical insights of how God was working.

1. Barnabas goes to Tarsus and enlists Saul to help him with the mighty work in Antioch. This has been a "quiet" period; perhaps Saul wondered if God would ever use him. But now and for the rest of his life he is involved in non-stop ministry. Don't despair. God is preparing you to use you. Be patient, trust him, and obey (Acts 11:25).
2. God uses prophets in the early church, here Agabus to prophesy a famine, later prophets to send out Paul and Barnabas (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1-3).
3. When the Antioch church becomes aware of the famine-stricken saints in Jerusalem, they give an offering to help. Part of being a Christian is sensitivity to the hurting and needy, and generosity "each according to his ability" (Acts 11:29).
4. Herod Agrippa begins to persecute the Church, teaching us that persecution often goes in cycles. We must be ready when our time comes (Acts 12:1).
5. One of Jesus' inner circle disciples, the Apostle James, is martyred. We learn that none of us is indispensable, God can call any of us at any time. We often don't understand God's timing from our side of heaven (Acts 12:2).
6. Peter's deliverance from jail is amazing, miraculous. But the believers – who are praying for just this thing – can't believe that Peter actually been set free! God, deliver us from our unbelieving prayers! (Acts 12:5-17)
7. Herod Agrippa, a cruel tyrant, meets his just due by being struck down by God in public. Justice may seem delayed, but God will judge in the end (Acts 12:19-23).
8. In spite of persecution, "the word of God continued to increase and spread" (Acts 12:24). Man can persecute and kill Jesus and his servants, but ultimately the gospel will prevail. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."