**Bible Study- The Acts**

**September 25, 2024**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Introduction**
	1. **Over the course of the last few years many in here have read this book a few times. What do you think about the name of this book- The Acts of the Apostles? Does that seem right?**
		* + 1. **The Acts of the Apostles…really? Is this what the book is about?**
3. **Except for the listing of the 12 in the first chapter we only read about Peter and Paul.**
4. **So maybe an accounting of the actions of the Apostles is NOT its primary focus.**
	* + - 1. **Acts of the Holy Spirit?**
5. **The descent of the Spirit is certainly central to the book.**

 **The power of the Spirit descends on the 120 gathered in the upper room.**

**Peter’s sermon to the crowd in Jerusalem was certainly Spirit inspired and filled.**

**From there we see an ever expanding circle of those on whom the Spirit descends…**

**On Samaritans in Acts 8:17…**

**On Saul/Paul in Acts 9:17…o**

**On God-fearing Gentiles gathered at the house of Cornelius in Acts 10 and 11.**

**The Spirit makes the disciples bold to speak the Word of God in Acts 4.**

**The Spirit enables Agabus to foresee the coming famine in Acts 11**

**We see the Spirit providing divine instruction and direction from Acts 8 through Acts 21**

**The Spirit enables His disciples to perform miracles authenticating their ministry as being connected to Jesus’ (Acts 2-28)**

* + 1. **The descent, the filling and the work of the Spirit in the book of Acts is vital to this book…but is He the answer to the question? In a way…perhaps. But there is more…**
1. **Acts of the Preached Word?**
	* + 1. **When the Spirit works He works through the means of the preaching of the Word.**

**On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit gave His people the supernatural ability to announce the Gospel of Jesus Christ in languages they didn’t previously know.**

**Peter preached and those who heard the Word were cut to the heart… (more on this cutting later.)**

**The Spirit works through the Word to accomplish a work of new creation.**

* + - 1. **The Word seems to almost take on an identity of its own…imagine that…as it is spreading.**
1. ***Acts of the Enthroned Lord Jesus*- (See Richard Gaffin, Jr’s, In The Fullness of Time, 2022)**
2. **As we read through Acts our Lord is at the center of all the action.**

**He calls to Himself all *“…who are a far off”-* Acts 2:39**

**We will see Him adding new believers to the Church. Acts 2:47, 11:21**

**He sends His angels to open prison doors – Acts 5,12.**

**He gives directions to His disciples in chapter 8 and 9.**

**He will appear to Stephen and to Saul/Paul Acts 7 and 9.**

**He speaks directly to Saul/Paul- Acts 9, 18, and 23.**

**Jesus speaks to Cornelius and to Peter Acts 10:4, 14.**

**He is striking down those who persecute His people Acts 12:23**

**He opens the hearts of the hearers of God’s Word Acts 16:14.**

**He appoints ministers of the Word – Acts 20:24.**

1. **Luke may give us the actual clue we need. Acts 1:1-2- *“In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen.”***

**This is Luke saying that in his Gospel he was writing about the incarnation, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus.**

**But implied in that statement is that there is more to come…that is in this second book he is going to present what Jesus continues to do and teach.**

**This may mean (and I think it does) that the transition from Luke to Acts is not from what Jesus did to what the Apostles did, but rather the transition is from what Jesus did while on earth to what Jesus continued to do from heaven during the time Luke is writing.**

**This gives us pause to think if He was doing these things then…and He was…then He must be doing these things now to some extent…and He is.**

* + 1. **No other Gospel writer uses the word *“saved”* and it’s various Greek forms as much as Luke. In Acts Luke uses the word and its forms over 21 times.**
		2. **All of this so that salvation through Christ continues to go forth into the entire world! Maybe that should be the real title. Acts 2:21- *“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”***
		3. **We must always remember …no matter where we are in the Bible…that the Bible is the book that recounts the work of God accomplishing His great purpose for history: to save His people from their greatest enemies, sin and death, and deliver them into the safety and rest of His eternal presence.**
		4. **One author summarized the whole book of Acts this way: *“We see the enthroned Lord Jesus at work by His Spirit through His apostles who are preaching His Word, taking the gospel to every nation, and it is accomplishing its intended purpose: people are being saved in Christ alone”***
		5. **Luke does not pen for us His chosen name for the book that was added later.**
	1. **This letter/book was written by Luke, one of the companions of Paul and is his second book/letter after the Gospel of Luke.**
		+ - 1. **Luke was a physician, a journalist, historian and faithful Gentile follower of Christ, and he was a traveling companion of Paul at the time.**
				2. **He is often associated with coming from Syrian Antioch.**
				3. **Church Fathers, Irenaeus (AD 150) and Clement of Alexandria (AD 150) and then much later Eusebius (3rd Cent. AD) a Greek Historian, all credit Luke as the author of both books.**
				4. **There is no real discussion of authorship found in the writings on the discussions during the time of the formation of the Canon.**
				5. **Luke’s authorship has been accepted by all credible authorities.**
	2. **The book is dated somewhere between AD 60 and 64 since the book ends with Paul in prison waiting to appear before Caesar and this was around AD 64. Paul’s death was around AD 68.**
	3. **The Audience and Occasion**
		+ - 1. **Luke’s immediate audience is Theophilus…a high ranking Roman…hence the title *“most excellent”.* Luke 1:3**
1. **He may or may not have been a believer yet…but one to whom was a friend of Luke’s that Luke is sharing the truth of Jesus Christ with.**
2. **Theophilus’ contemporaries would have been opposed to this eastern cult and would have advised him against it…so Luke seeks to persuade against all of that influence.**
	* + - 1. **Theophilus then also represents all Gentiles who would read this account seeking truth.**
				2. **Luke seems to indicate that this was the time of the “Pax Romana”= “Roman Peace” which enabled the church to grow in some “peace” just before the persecutions began in earnest under Nero.**
		1. **Some peace because we will see Peter thrown into prison by the Jews and then miraculously released.**
		2. **We will also see Paul thrown into prison as well, because while there was a relative peace the more “celebrity” Apostles were consider seditious.**
			+ 1. **Luke seems to also be writing to people who are able to read and look forward to reading…middle to upper middle class types for:**
3. **His language and voice of Greek is Classic Greek which was only used at the time by the higher level of educated people.**
4. **This would be like him writing in the NASB- 12th grade and up as opposed to most everything else being written like the NIV- 4th-6th grade level.**
	1. **The Gospel of Luke was written to inform us of Jesus and what He did…His life and ministry. The Acts of the Apostles is written as a continuation of Jesus’ ministry, by the Spirit through His people.**
		* + 1. **It is not simply a history of the early church as many have said…but also a history of the mission of the early church…which then is an example for every generation of the Church afterwards.**
5. **He does not give us a complete description of all the dimensions of the life of the primitive church.**
6. **He is primarily interested in showing us the spread of Christianity — how it broke through barriers of all sorts to change lives, families, cities, peoples.**
7. **So Luke uses real history, to teach us about being men and women of the gospel.**
8. **Therefore, when we look at the introductory words of Acts, we should study these two issues:**

**Luke claims to be giving a historical account — not a fabricated or fanciful series of stories.**

**Luke immediately shows us how Jesus prepared the first disciples for mission before he sent them out.**

1. **No one credible, doubts that the *“former book”* of Acts 1:1 is the gospel according to Luke. They are so closely tied that some have called them “Luke-Acts”.**
	* + - 1. **What is recorded for us in the book of Acts concerns a unique period of redemptive history.**
2. **Just as we do not anticipate that the crucifixion or resurrection will be repeated, we do not anticipate the events of Pentecost will be repeated.**
	* 1. **In Acts, we’re given a record of a unique time in redemptive history when the Spirit was at work to establish Christ’s church throughout the world through the witness of the apostles.**
		2. **But the same Spirit that worked in and through them is still at work in us.**
		3. **The Spirit and the Word can and does empower us to change, empower us to pray, empower us to obey, empower us to proclaim to all who will listen, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved”* (Acts 16: 31).**
	1. **Why is the book of Acts still important to us today…? Because:**
		* + 1. **It is God’s Word to His Church,**
				2. **It is God’s account of how He empowered His church to spread the gospel…**
		1. **…not just proclaiming the truth but also living the truth before men in a multi-cultural society much like our own today…**
		2. **…where everything is acceptable and permissible…**
		3. **…an experiment that gave birth to the despotism of Nero and others who persecuted all non-Roman religions but specifically Christianity because of its allegiance to the One true God.**
		4. **An experiment that eventually led to the downfall of the Roman Empire.**
3. **The principles and commands herein will guide us today in how we are to spread and live out the gospel.**
4. **The book of the Acts of the Apostles is about God growing His church which will not end until Christ returns so the principles and commands found within apply in all generations.**
5. **We are not to want to go back to the 1st century but we are to glean the principles and commands and incorporate them into our daily lives today.**
6. **The Book of Acts does not present a pristine or pure church…rather the opposite.**
7. **But it does enable us to see how we can maneuver through such a culture as we have today that is not that much different from the one in which Luke wrote.**
8. **A couple of more opening…reflective questions:**
	1. **Since the Church is God’s community…His Word is given to all of us for the benefit of the whole. We are to look at ourselves in the context of that community not as individuals. So with this in mind what separates the Church from any human organization?**
		* + 1. **It is not a human organization;**
				2. **It is God’s chosen people…we didn’t chose it, He chose us…just as He chose His Apostles/disciples, revealed Himself to them/us; commissioned us as His witnesses; promised and gave us His Spirit.**
	2. **As we study this book it is important to personalize it. When you read this book in preparation for class read this with this church…Christ Presbyterian Church…in mind…as if Luke was writing this to us.**

* 1. **This question has been asked from many pulpits through the years, “*What is the glue that binds together Christ Presbyterian Church?”* How would you answer that question?**
		+ - 1. **The answer is the gospel plain and simple...the covenant truth that God promised to send a Savior and He did .**
				2. **The answer this book reiterates over and over again…we have a “common” bond, a “common” goal”, and a common Savior…Jesus our Immanuel.**
	2. **Let’s think a minute about the role of the church in society which we will see in this book as well. What is the difference between saying the Church is called to proclaim the gospel to impact society or saying the Church is called to change society?**
		+ - 1. ***“God does not send out his church to conquer. He sends us out in the name of the One who has already conquered. We go only because He reigns.”* — Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert**
				2. **The Christian Nationalist movement would say that we are called to change society…or to return it to an early state of virtue and faith.**
				3. **Then that begs the question …are we called to bring in the kingdom…or is the kingdom already here and we are called to help expand it?**
				4. **We are not called to change society that is God’s doing…and He will burn this up…all things of the earth will burn!**
	3. **Food for thought: Is there an event or a season in your life that you can look back on and say, *“That changed the course of my life”*?**
		+ - 1. **I can actually think of a number of those events or seasons in my own life.**
				2. **<PAUSE>**
				3. **The first chapter of Acts covers a period of fifty days—fifty days that changed the course of the lives of the 120 followers of Jesus who spent these days together. ..and up to 500 who saw and heard Jesus teaching before His ascension.**
1. **Most significantly, it changed the course of the lives of the twelve apostles of Jesus, who were among those 120 people.**
2. **And it is not an exaggeration to suggest that what took place in those fifty days also had a significant impact on the course of our life as are a follower of Christ.**

**The resurrection of Jesus, which happened on the first of those fifty days, is what gives us hope that this life is not all there is, and that we follow a living Savior.**

**The forty days Jesus spent with the apostles, opening their minds to understand how to rightly read the Old Testament and preparing them to explain it in the pages of the New Testament, is what provided the gospel witness that the Spirit used to draw us to Christ.**

**The fortieth day, when Jesus ascended to the right hand of God the Father in heaven, where He rules over all things, is what gives us confidence that everything that happens in our life is purposeful and working together for your good and for His glory.**

**His promise as He ascended that He will return the same way situates our life in a grand story of future glory.**

**The selection of a replacement for Judas so that there were twelve apostles provided continuity and foundation for the new community in which we find our home and identity as a partaker of the new covenant.**

1. **What took place during those fifty days is significant, not just for those we read about in the pages of Acts, but also for us.**
2. **Before we move into Acts let’s look at Luke 1:1-4.**
	1. **In the Luke 1 passage, how did Luke come to know the events to which he speaks?**
		* + 1. **Luke uses other resources, *“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us…”***
3. ***“eyewitnesses and ministers of the word”* that carefully guarded and delivered to us what they saw…**
4. **Luke ‘s own personal research and experience.**

**He claims that *“…it seemed good to me also,(that is to investigate and confirm every shred of evidence) having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account…”* (vs. 3-ESV).**

**Luke is here claiming that he did not rely only on one eyewitness (say, the account of one of the apostles), but that he compared all his sources and “carefully investigated” them.**

**This would have been quite possible for Luke, who personally knew many of the apostles, but also possibly Mary and hundreds of other eyewitnesses.**

**He would have been in a position to check the accounts through interviews with many others.**

**Luke here tells us his method. He used both historical accounts and eyewitness material, which he carefully compared with one another and investigated with his own personal research.**

* + - * 1. **His goal was so that readers, specifically Theophilus, and then the greater church would *“may have (know) the certainty the things you have been taught”* Luke 1:4...that his audience could know for certainty the truth!**
				2. **Luke is then making a very direct claim to painstaking historical accuracy in both his account of Jesus’ life, and of the early church.**
1. **This puts the reader in a very interesting bind. It means that we cannot read Luke or Acts and say, *“these are legends that grew up about Jesus and the apostles — some of them are true, but many of them are embellished.”***
2. **Luke’s claim means that we must either assume he is writing accurate history or that he is writing an extremely deliberate set of lies to promote this new religion.**
3. **Luke’s language is not that of a compiler of stories and myths. He most emphatically denies that he was doing that. He says he wrote nothing down unless it was historically checked and certain.**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**October 2, 2024**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
	1. **Why is the book of Acts still important to us today…? Because:**
		* + 1. **It is God’s Word to His Church,**
				2. **It is God’s account of how He empowered His church to spread the gospel…**
3. **The principles and commands herein will guide us today in how we are to spread and live out the gospel.**
4. **The book of the Acts of the Apostles is about God growing His church which will not end until Christ returns so the principles and commands found within apply in all generations.**
5. **The principles within will enable us to see how we can maneuver through such a culture as we have today that is not that much different from the one in which Luke wrote.**
6. **Let’s consider together Acts 1:1-5.**
	1. **So the Gospel of Luke is about all that Jesus began to do and teach leadng up to His death and resurrection. Then what must the bool of Acts be about according to this text? Acts 1:1-5. *“In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen. He presented Himself alive to them after His suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, ‘you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’”* Acts is about what Jesus continues to do and teach through His Apostles.**
		* + 1. **If this is true, and I am here to say it is, then how do these verses separate Christianity from all other religions?**
7. **Most religion speak of the founding and ending of their founders ministry as completed during his lifetime and they all died and were buried.**
8. **Luke says in his gospel what Jesus began to do and teach, and now in Acts he is telling us that after His resurrection, ascension, and gift of the Spirit He continued His work, first and foremost through the ministry of His chosen apostles and subsequently through the post-apostolic church of every period and place.**
9. **This Jesus we believe in…is both the historical Jesus who lived and the contemporary Jesus who lives, and directs His Kingdom through the Spirit.**
	* + - 1. **According to this passage, in what ways did Jesus prepare and equip His apostles to continue His Ministry and life on earth?**
10. **He chose them and then He commanded them many things before His death and resurrection.**
11. **He showed Himself to them “alive” after the Resurrection… walked among them for 40 days.**
12. **He further instructed them…through the Holy Spirit…seems to be a reference to commissioning them to preach the gospel…**
13. **He promised them the Holy Spirit…Jesus had already promised this now He is reminding them of His promise. *“He said, ‘you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”* (vs.5)**
	* + - 1. **How would you say that the Apostle’s ministry would be affected by the fact that Jesus chose, commissioned, instructed them and gave them the Holy Spirit to enable them?**
				2. **How does knowing that we have been chosen, commissioned, and instructed and have the Holy Spirit help us as we seek to do God’s will today?**
				3. **What was the significance of the fact that Jesus showed Himself alive to the apostles and gave many convincing proofs? *“He presented Himself alive to them after His suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.”* (vs. 3) How is this fact important to us today?**
14. **The Greek word “alive- Zwnta”- *“to be alive”…*real life not a ghost or a mythical person but real and alive …is very significant.**

**The Apostles are not merely to be witnesses to His ministry, His teachings and His death.**

**He wants them and us to know…and Theophilus…that they actually saw Him alive after His death.**

**And He gave them enough appearances/proofs over the course of the 40 days to substantiate that He is truly alive.**

1. **Since the church’s identity and authenticity is built and depends on whether or not Jesus resurrected it was extremely significant that He did and gave proofs to that fact.**
2. **Jesus left no possible doubt that He resurrected, exactly as He promised and Luke writes down that as well. Only the fool doubts!**
3. **What proofs do you have of Jesus’ Resurrection?**
4. **How confident are you in communicating these truths? Why would you say, in your own words, that the resurrection is important? I Cor. 15- Without the resurrection our faith would be futile---useless.**
5. **So He kept teaching on the kingdom…it is what He had proclaimed, *“The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand…”* …what they didn’t get before now Jesus Resurrection causes them to sit up and take notice. Probably remembering what God had said to them… *“This is my Beloved Son; Listen to Him!”***
	* + - 1. **With all of this teaching, the Apostles probably would have been wondering, “What do we do now? How do we get started?” We would want to be doing something. And Jesus told them exactly what He wanted then to do. What was it? *“And while staying with them He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, ‘you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’”* (vs. 4-5)**
6. **He told them to wait in Jerusalem. What are they waiting for?**

**The *“promise of the Father…”*- The Holy Spirit. God had promised- Joel 2:28-29 *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.***

**God’s people had longed for the day of God’s promise. Numerous OT passages indicated that the Father’s gift of the Spirit would be an indication pf the arrival of a new era when God would establish His King and Kingdom.**

**Isaiah 59:20-21-*“And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,’ declares the LORD. ‘And as for me, this is my covenant with them,’ says the LORD: ‘My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children’s offspring,’ says the LORD, ‘from this time forth and forevermore.’”***

**Ezekiel 39:28-29 *“Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore. And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord God.”***

**The disciples had been told to count on Him coming to them- John 14:25-26 *– “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.***

* + 1. **Up to this time the Spirit’s work throughout the OT had been focused and specific but what was being promised in Joel and other places was for all His people to receive the Holy Spirit to enable us to believe*.***
		2. **So the 40 days was like a summary of all that He had taught them before as well as a mini seminary course….since it seems they had not paid particular attention to details before His death and resurrection.**
		3. ***“Baptized with the Holy Spirit”* The Greek word here for “with” speaks of instrumentality. The Spirit is the instrument God uses to circumcise our hearts so that we can believe.**
1. **What other names is the Spirit known by? Helper, Advocate, Paraclete, Comforter, Counselor, Seal, Guide, intercessor, witness…**
2. **Where do we see confirmation of the Trinity in these first 5 verses? Why is this important?**
	* + 1. **Acts 1:1-5**
			2. **We must believe in the Trinity…One God in 3 persons…otherwise we deny the person of God and the Scriptures.**
3. **Acts 1:6-11-*“So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’ And when He had said these things, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.’”***
	1. **They had spent the last 40 days in intense study time with Jesus what does the Apostles question in vs 6, about restoring the kingdom to Israel reveal about their understanding still of Jesus’ mission?**
		* + 1. **Word study:**
4. ***“Restore”* is the Greek word used when speaking of expecting a political and territorial kingdom, and then that is confirmed with the use of the next word…**
5. ***“Israel”-* by using this they had in mind a national kingdom, like King David’s, then…**
6. ***“at this time”* designates they were expecting an immediate establishment of this earthly kingdom.**
7. **They envisioned a territorial kingdom. What is wrong with that picture? God’s kingdom is not bound by human definition. Old habits and understandings die hard…. It is hard to change life long understandings and habits.**
	* + - 1. **They may have been asking …when are we gonna get rid of the Romans…Jewish autonomy over the Romans.**
				2. **They may be wondering when the Religious elites would be gone replace by true priests.**
				3. **Maybe they are asking from a Jewish perspective…when will the full new heavens and new earth arrive…the Golden Age? After all they were all looking for the reuniting of the 12 tribes to be regathered and restored to be a beacon of light to the nations.**
				4. **Or maybe it was Jesus’ telling them that the Holy Spirit, which he talked a lot about in the Upper Room before His death, would come *“not many days from now.”***
				5. **Or they may have been asking when is your full kingship going to be realized…since after hearing so much about it they long to live there…now!**
	1. **So how did Jesus answer the question? Or maybe better did He answer the question?**
		* + 1. **He doesn’t answer the kingdom question.**
8. **He shifts their orientation away from WHEN the kingdom will come toward HOW and WHERE it is going to come. Vs. 7**
9. **Rather than coming in an instant, which is what they had been taught and were hoping for, it would come over an undisclosed period of time.**
10. **In other words, as He had said in the Gospels, WHEN is not important. What is important is doing the will of the Father…extending the kingdom and living as Kingdom citizen to his glory.**
	* + - 1. **But His answer gives a clue that it is yet future…since He has already told them that the Spirit must come.**
				2. **And then He will tell them that they are to be His witnesses. So there IS a present component to this in that the Spirit will come and they together will be His witnesses by the power of the Spirit to extend the kingdom. Vs.8- *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses …”***
11. **Jesus meant something different than we usually think about being His witnesses:**

**A witness in a courtroom is one who testifies to what he has seen, heard and experienced firsthand.**

**Since we did not live back then and didn’t see with our own eyes our resurrected Lord…we can never be true witnesses to His resurrection the way He commanded these Apostles to be.**

**Jesus is actually not commanding us to be His witnesses ..rather Jesus is announcing that God has appointed the 11 (soon to be 12 again) apostles to witness to what they saw and heard**

* + 1. **Jesus does ask them to be His witness, He commands them to be His witnesses…they don’t have a choice because they were chosen by Him and empowered by the Spirit for this task. Much like the Priests and Levites… were chosen and appointed by God…He didn’t ask their permission.**
1. **And while they had been taught that this Golden Age was exclusively for Israel…Jesus confirms that His people will come from, *“…Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”***
2. **It is not like this was a “new idea”…there had been much said about other non-Jews coming into His kingdom.**
3. **But the rabbi’s had taught that they would be “less than” God chosen children…and the children would be a blessing to them as they ruled over them in peace.**
4. **So their concept of restoration needed to be expanded to include the whole world…something extremely hard for a Jew.**
5. **Vs. 8 is also a type of outline for the rest of the book.**
6. **In Chapter 2 they receive the Spirit and begin teaching in Jerusalem (Chapter 2-7)**
7. **Chapters 8-11 have them witnessing outside Jerusalem in Judea and Samaria.**
8. **Chapters 12 on we see Paul taking the gospel to the rest of the then known world.**
9. **They WILL be Hs witnesses.**
10. **Jesus had said *“I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* (Matt. 16:18) What we see in Acts is how that building of His Church is going to come about.**
11. **It will be built as the Holy Spirit comes upon the 12 Apostles (and later Paul) enabling and empowering them to witness to what they saw and heard and experienced from Jesus Himself.**
	1. **What does Jesus’ response to them especially in verses 1-8 tells us about our calling as Christians today?**
		* + 1. **We too be witnesses! But what does that mean for us …look like?**
				2. **Since we have the reliable witness …the Gospels and the Epistles…. we have the record of what these men saw, experienced and heard Jesus Teach and do.**
				3. **So our role is to proclaim what these witnesses handed down to us…firsthand accounts. We are to proclaim the Gospel according to the Apostles.**
				4. **We are to hold fast to that Gospel just as they proclaimed it…not changing it or embellishing it…or it no longer is their firsthand account.**
				5. **And we are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to make our “witness” effective.**
				6. **R.C. Sproul stated, *“The mission of the Church, the reason we exist, is to bear witness to the present reign and rule of Christ, who is at the right hand of the God.”***
				7. **Verse 8 always causes me pause…especially this part…*”…you will be my witnesses…”***
12. **This is first commanded of the disciples. It is a command and an expectation.**
13. **It is by virtue of our connection, as we have discussed, a command and an expectation for us as well.**
14. **This is what hits me whenever I read this…**

**The fact is, based on what Chris says, we will be His witnesses.**

**So do I even consider on a day to day basis …what does my witness communicate to those around me? Is my witness glorifying Him or myself?**

* 1. **How does the ascension of Jesus connect to His promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit? *“And when He had said these things, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.’”* (Acts 1:9-11)**
		+ - 1. **It answers His promise to send the Holy Spirit that he made to His disciples that last night…John 16:7- *“ Nevertheless, tell you the truth; it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him.”***
				2. **So the Spirit had to come to fulfill the work left to be done…and to that end He must leave.**
	2. **Why was it necessary for Him to ascend …that is, why not just disappear?**
	3. **How do you think you would handle watching Jesus ascend, especially after you have just been told that everything you have understood about God’s kingdom was wrong and even after Jesus’ extensive 40 day/seminar on the Spirit and the Kingdom you were still confused? What does this reveal to us about the nature of man…even believing men like the disciples?**
		+ - 1. **They needed the Holy Spirit’s power to fully understand.**
				2. **This does not speak of a 2nd baptism of the Spirit it speaks of what happened then to these men who would lead because the rest of the NT reveals to us that we receive the Spirit when we believe then we are empowered along the way to do the work that He sends us to do.**
				3. **But for the disciples they had had the Son personally with them…and now we have the Spirit personally with us.**
				4. **Just as the Spirit had come upon Jesus to equip Him for His public ministry (interesting thought don’t you think?), so now the Spirit was to come upon His people to equip them for their public ministry in growing the kingdom.**
	4. **What is the angel seeking to do by calling the apostles up short in staring up into the clouds? *“‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.’”* Is there a lesson there for us today?**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**October 16, 2024**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
	1. **What did Jesus mean by *“witness”* in vs. 8 as He spoke to His disciples and what does that mean for us today? *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”***
		* + 1. **They are to testify as eye-witnesses to what they saw and experienced.**
				2. **We too are be witnesses!**
3. **Since we have the reliable witness …the Gospels and the Epistles…. we have the record of what these men saw, experienced and heard Jesus Teach and do.**
4. **So our role is to proclaim what these witnesses handed down to us…firsthand accounts. We are to proclaim the Gospel according to the Apostles.**
5. **We are to hold fast to that Gospel just as they proclaimed it…not changing it or embellishing it…or it no longer is their firsthand account.**
6. **And we are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to make our “witness” effective.**
	* + - 1. **Verse 8 always causes me pause…especially this part…*”…you will be my witnesses…”***
7. **This is first commanded of the disciples. It is a command and an expectation.**
8. **It is by virtue of our connection, as we have discussed, a command and an expectation for us as well.**
9. **This is what hits me whenever I read this…**

**The fact is, based on what Chris says, we will be His witnesses.**

**So do I even consider on a day to day basis …what does my witness communicate to those around me? Is my witness glorifying Him or myself?**

* 1. **How does the description of Jesus’ ascension impact your understanding of Jesus’ divine nature?**
1. **Acts 1:12-26**
	1. **According to vss. 4-5, Jesus had told them to stay in Jerusalem and not begin their mission until they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. *“And while staying with them He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, ‘you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”***

* 1. **What were the characteristics of the early church since Christ’s ascension, as seen in vss. 12-14? *“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. 13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. 14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.”***
		+ - 1. ***“A Sabbath Day’s journey”-*usually less than a mile…it was to be a short journey otherwise it was considered work.**
				2. **They displayed obedience- they went to Jerusalem and did what Jesus had commanded**
				3. **They displayed togetherness- we grow together not separately.**
1. **We were not meant to be alone especially as God’s people.**
2. ***“with one accord”* speaks to what binds us together…being in Christ and seeking to do His will as He has commanded us.**
	* + - 1. **And they prayed together-**
3. **Corporately- *“all of these”* vs. 14- men and women…**

**Acts 2:41-42 sees 3000 people come into the Lord’s Church and then *“…devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to breaking of bread and the prayers.”* I think it would be wrong to assume that this was only 3000 men who came to faith and worshiped in the way described in vs. 42.**

**All prayed during this time…just like in Acts 12:12 where men and women had *“gathered together”* a phrase used for early worship.**

1. **United- *“with one accord”***
2. **Constant- *“devoting themselves to prayer”-***

**Persistent and diligent in prayer regularly.**

**It doesn’t say how often or for how long but the word indicates that it was happening with regularity and maybe even vast amounts of time.**

* + - * 1. **Prayer foster unity among God’s people…just like it does with couples who pray together.**
	1. **Speaking of prayer: Why was it so important that they are *“devoting themselves to prayer”*? I, mean, after all, Jesus said to wait and the Spirit would come. What did they need to be praying for?**
		+ - 1. **Jesus had established a pattern of regular and fervent prayer when He was with His disciples.**
				2. **Prayer is a means of grace…especially corporate prayer.**
				3. **Prayer is also an exercise of faith and they needed to be together, exercising their faith now maybe more than any other time for all they knew for sure was that the Spirit was coming.**
				4. **God’s promises do not remove the need for prayer.**
				5. **In fact, it is His promises which give us the reason to pray and the confidence that He will hear and answer.**
				6. **God has commanded His people to pray throughout Scripture saying how much He delights in our prayers.**
	2. **What would you have been praying for with your brothers and sisters who you had shared so much since Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension?**
	3. **We will see them pray again in verse 24-25. In fact we will see a lot pf prayer going on throughout the book. What does this tell us about the role of prayer in the early Church?**
	4. **Looking closer at verses 15-20- *“In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, 16 ‘Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.’ 18 (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. 19 And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 ‘For it is written in the Book of Psalms, ‘May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’; and ‘Let another take his office.’”***
		+ - 1. **According to what these verses say, why did Peter believe it necessary to replace Judas?**
1. **Evidently the 40 days of intensive teaching by Jesus opened their minds and hearts to long forgotten texts and their meaning in the future.**
2. **Peter will read or quote from memory all or parts of Ps. 69-*“May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it”…* and Ps. 109- *“Let another take his office.”* Luke may have chosen only to include the necessary texts referred too…which would point to the whole Psalm.**
3. **Peter’s words show this acquired wisdom even before the Spirit has come fully upon him.**

**He notes here that Judas didn’t spoil God’s plan but he actually fulfilled it… *“…the Scripture had to be fulfilled…”***

**So Peter concludes from the Psalter, *“For it is written in the Book of Psalms…”* that Judas needed to be replaced thus fulfilling prophecy.**

**He recognizes by the inspiration of the Spirit that these texts had more to them than simply David talking about his enemies…they spoke more profoundly about Jesus and His enemies…namely Judas.**

**Peter sees… in the way and the place… where Judas died that he died under God’s curse for His treason against God’s King, Jesus. Same thing with Ps. 109.**

* + - * 1. **Side note: It appears that Luke included the gory details of Judas’ death to connect more clearly with the curses spoken of in Ps. 69…an imprecatory Psalm that pronounces a curse on the life and the land of the evildoer who opposes God’s king.**
				2. **Interestingly, Peter has no interest in picking a replacement Apostle, but the knowledge of this Scripture led him to conclude the need for there to be 12 again before the Spirit comes.**
	1. **Looking closer at vs. 21-26. *“’So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when He was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to His resurrection.” And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, ‘You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.’ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”***
		+ - 1. **What were the criterions for one to become an Apostle according to these verses?**
1. **That Jesus would be the one choosing. Peter it seems has learned His place. He may be the lead Apostle on one hand but Christ is His head…he will not presume to take the Lord’s place here. (vs. 24-25-*“And they prayed and said, ‘You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.’”***
2. **He was to be male…**

***“one of the men…” vs. 21***

**by referring only to the brothers he was being exclusive as to the pool from which to choose…another reminder that church spiritual leadership is exclusively male.**

1. **He was to have been with them and witnessed all including Christ’s resurrection… *“men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when He was taken up from us…”***
2. **These are given to us here under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and**

**Then written down for us so that we would know that this was an office for this time and this place.**

**They knew what Jesus had meant by *“witness”* and they would work out the details for Judas’ successor accordingly.**

1. **One of the two…of the 120… who had been with them through everything with the Lord Jesus from His baptism by John the Baptist even up to His ascension so they could be a *“witness”* like the other Apostles. And only 2 fit that bill:**

**Joseph/Justus**

**Matthias**

1. ***“And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”***
	* + - 1. **Where have we seen believers casting lots before?How was this appropriate for picking an Apostle?**
2. **Overriding Scriptural authority- Prov. 16:33- *“The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.”***
3. **They also prayed expecting God to lead them before they cast lots and chose Matthias.**
4. **An old and accepted method of discerning the Lord’s will.**

**At the sacrifice- Lev. 16:6-10- *“Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. 7 Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 8 And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel. 9 And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD and use it as a sin offering, 10 but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.”***

**The Hebrew word Azazel’s meaning is uncertain but it is used as one separated from the other or scapegoat. In Islam it is another name for Satan.**

**Choosing the guilty-**

**Concerning Achan- Joshua 7:14-15- *“In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes. And the tribe that the LORD takes by lot shall come near by clans. And the clan that the LORD takes shall come near by households. And the household that the LORD takes shall come near man by man. 15 And he who is taken with the devoted things shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done an outrageous thing in Israel.”***

**Also, they choose by lot Jonah as they were seeking the guilty party… Jonah 1:7**

**Choosing where tribes would go and what portion was theirs. Joshua 18**

**Selecting people for tasks for the Lord like here and Zachariah, John the Baptists father was chosen by lot to burn incense in the temple- Luke 1:8-9-*“Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, 9 according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.”***

* 1. **How might this exercise of choosing Matthias teach us about seeking God’s guidance when making decisions?**
	2. **Have you ever ask the question, whatever happened to Matthias? Do you know anything at all about Matthias? I mean, anything at all?**
		+ - 1. **Matthias is a shortened form of Mattathias. (gift of Yahweh)**
				2. **This extraordinary man was given the extraordinary office of the twelfth Apostle, and we hear absolutely nothing about him in the Bible afterwards.**
1. **Greek historians say that Matthias was part of the 70 or 72 that Christ sent out.**
2. **Clement of Alexandria believed his proper man may have been Zacchaeus…perhaps the Zacchaeus of tax collector fame.**
3. **Later Church traditions place him as a missionary to the Ethiopians.**
	* + - 1. **This act of choosing him was still important, not because of who Matthias was, and not because of what Matthias did, but because the overarching thing that Luke wants us to see here is that Jesus is building His church.**
				2. **And by the power of the Holy Spirit which will come not many days from now, He intends for the church to do what Peter has been doing here: searching wholeheartedly the Word of God and coming in the presence of His people and saying “Whatever it is the Bible says, that we will do, no matter how insignificant it may seem to be.”**
				3. **Oh, if we could learn just that lesson...just that lesson! *“Whatever the Bible says, that we will do”*, we will have learnt a lesson that will make the knees of Satan buckle. May God help us to learn it.**
	1. **How might the activity in prayer that we see here challenge us in our personal and corporate prayer time?**
	2. **What does the unity among the disciples throughout this chapter teach us about community in the church? An answer: *“Unity is in direct correlation to obedience. No obedience no unity no unity no desire for obedience.”***

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**October 23, 2024**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
	1. **According to chapter 1:15-20 why did Peter believe it necessary to replace Judas?**
		1. **Evidently the 40 days of intensive teaching by Jesus opened their minds and hearts to long forgotten texts and their meaning in the future.**
		2. **Peter will read or quote from memory all or parts of Ps. 69-*“May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it”…* and Ps. 109- *“Let another take his office.”* Luke may have chosen only to include the necessary texts referred too…which would point to the whole Psalm.**
		3. **Peter’s words show this acquired wisdom even before the Spirit has come fully upon him.**
		4. **He notes here that Judas didn’t spoil God’s plan but he actually fulfilled it… *“…the Scripture had to be fulfilled…”***
		5. **So Peter concludes from the Psalter, *“For it is written in the Book of Psalms…”* that Judas needed to be replaced thus fulfilling prophecy.**
		6. **He recognizes by the inspiration of the Spirit that these texts had more to them than simple David talking about his enemies…they spoke more profoundly about Jesus and His enemies…namely Judas.**
		7. **Peter sees in the way and the place where Judas died that he died under God’s curse for His treason against God’s King, Jesus. Same thing with Ps. 109.**
			* 1. **Side note: It appears that Luke included the gory details of Judas’ death to connect more clearly with the curses spoken of in Ps. 69…an imprecatory Psalm that pronounces a curse on the life and the land of the evildoer who opposes God’s king.**
				2. **Interestingly, Peter has no interest in picking a replacement Apostle, but the knowledge of this Scripture led him to conclude the need for there to be 12 again before the Spirit comes.**
	2. **How might this exercise of choosing Matthias teach us about seeking God’s guidance when making decisions?**
3. **Acts 2:1-13- The Coming of the Holy Spirit- *“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.’ 12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ 13 But others mocking said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’”***
	1. **Vs. 1 says, *“When the day of Pentecost arrived they were all together in one place.”* Why is it talking about this in a way that sounds like it has always existed?**
		1. **Because it HAS existed**
4. **Lev. 23:15-21- *“You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the LORD. You shall bring from your dwelling places two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour, and they shall be baked with leaven, as firstfruits to the LORD. And you shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, and one bull from the herd and two rams. They shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. And you shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of peace offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. And you shall make a proclamation on the same day. You shall hold a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. It is a statute forever in all your dwelling places throughout your generations.”***
5. **Deut. 16:9-10- *“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths.”***
	* 1. **Of all the feasts of the Jewish year, it was this one that attracted the largest number of pilgrims from distant lands.**
6. **The dangers of travel by sea or land in the early spring or late autumn (comp. Acts 27:9) prevented their coming in any large numbers to the Passover or the Feast of Tabernacles.**
7. **At no other feast would there have been representatives of so many nations….for it was the best attended.**
	* 1. **The feast had 2 meanings…one agricultural and one historical.**
8. **Originally it was the middle of the 3 annual Jewish harvest festivals and was called the Feast of Harvest…celebrated the completion of the grain harvest.**

**To give thanks for the provision of rain from God so that they could have a harvest.**

**The day of the firstfruits that would be offered to God as a thank offering.**

**This was the Jewish Thanksgiving , if you will.**

**It was also called the feast of Weeks (Deut. 16:9-12) because it is celebrated 7 weeks after the Passover week…Still called Pentecost in the NT era it took place 50 days (pentekostos= the 50th day) after the Sabbath of the Passover.**

1. **But also, historical…as many wished to celebrate the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai since it was taught that this happened 50 days after the Exodus. *“…zman matan torah”*= the season of the giving of the law.**
2. **On the Old Testament day of Pentecost Israel seems then to be celebrating both: the giving and receiving, with Thanksgiving to God, the Harvest and the giving and receiving of the Law…The New Testaments counterpart to these gifts from God is the giving and receiving of the Holy Spirit as a gift at Pentecost.**
	* 1. **And they were all together as they had been commanded to be.**
		2. **We must remember and not forget that this was a fulfillment of a promise of God. God makes many and keeps them all but sometime we can’t point to any…well here is one.**
		3. **So Pentecost is as old as the Law, then why do you suppose some churches teach this as a new event dealing with the emergence of the Church? …remember the uses of the term remnant= OT Church…**
	1. **In Verses 2-4 we see3 things happening to the believers. *“And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*  What were the three phenomenon that Luke says happened to these Christ’s followers?**
		* + 1. **As they were sitting waiting… *“Suddenly…”* it happened without warning …in an instant. This is like Mark’s *“immediately”* on one hand in that it meant to help us understand that when the time was right…it happened…as on believers at just the right time the Spirit fills us.**
				2. ***“…a sound like a mighty rushing wind…”* – was NOT wind as has often been talked about, but like the wind… *“…and divided tongues as of fire appeared…”* – was NOT fire but it resembled fire…**
				3. ***“filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”*- these were Not incomprehensible utterances but languages. that were not known to any of them in the sense of being able to speak them themselves like regular speech..**
	2. **What would you say each symbolized or stood for?**
		* + 1. **Wind is another way the Bible describes the Spirit and this sound is something like a hurricane force or tornadic wind. John 3:8-*“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”***
3. **The noise LIKE wind would stand for POWER since the sound is of something like a hurricane force or tornadic wind…the sound of something mighty, rushing and overwhelmingly filled the place.**
4. **Just as Jesus promised in Luke 24:49-*“And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”* and Acts 1:8- *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.”***
5. **Greek word *“pneuma”* means “spirit” but it also means *“wind and breath”***

**The same is true for the Hebrew word for spirit- *“ruah”* means *“wind, spirit, breath, and being.”* (also the same meanings in Latin)**

 **Gen. 2:7- *“then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed(ruah) into his nostrils the breath (ruah) of life, and the man became a living (ruah spirit/being) …creature.” ESV***

**Ezek. 37:9-10- *“Then he said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the LORD God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.”***

**The Spirit of God came from Heaven and He came suddenly in real time…like the wind…and is Mighty!**

* + - * 1. **The sight that appeared like *“…divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.”***
1. ***“divided tongues”* looks to the supernatural empowering miracle of speech…they will be consecrated to speak for the truth…but in languages not their own here in this place at this time.**

**Other languages speaks of the universality of the Christian Church…**

**These are previously unknown languages to these 120…this was a supernatural…one time event.**

1. **Fire stands for purification and or cleansing and judging…**

**Like the live coals of Is. 6:6-7- *“Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”***

**And to go along with John the Baptists prophecy in Luke 3:16- *“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”***

**The most common manifestation of God in the OT was through fire.**

1. **And the Spirit “*…rested on each one of them.”***

**The actual word translated *“rested”* is *“sat”* in the Greek*.***

**This word in the Greek NT carries the idea of a completed preparation and a certain permanence and condition*.***

**Once given…is NOT taken away.**

**In the OT the Spirit came upon the people collectively and individuals rarely for particular uses…here He comes upon us individually for the good of the whole.**

**Each of them…elect = each one of His elect receive the Spirit immediately at His direction.**

* + - * 1. ***“filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* –**
1. **The power of the Spirit in each of them to be God’s witnesses before the people at one time …an event never to be done again.**
2. ***“…as the Spirit gave utterance.”* –**

**This is simply the power needed to carry out the task in front of them.**

**Think *… “as the Spirit enabled them”.***

**The Greek word translated *“utterance”* by the ESV is normally translated *“enabled”* -As in ability**

**This word is not as some have tried to construe this word to mean… unknowable, unexplainable sounds or ecstatic utterances.**

1. **This is not part of the definition of the actual speaking in previously unknown (to the disciples) languages.**
	1. **What do we see is going on in vs. 5-8? *“Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?”***
		1. **The power to speak with such authority that people are amazed/bewildered as the 120 began speaking in the tongues of each people group who had come to celebrate Pentecost.**
			1. **Not just because they are Galileans, but that they are talking as those who know how to speak the individual languages**

**Speaking as if they had been using it all their lives and what they are saying is making sense to those hearing.**

**Galileans were known by the prejudice far and wide as being uncultured and poor speakers.**

**It is said that some had trouble with guttural sounds which is a large part of the Hebrew language and that they had a habit of swallowing syllables. Sound like Texans/Southerners.**

**But others as usual weren’t buying it. They were skeptical and slandered those with the Spirit.**

**The power to know what they are saying so they can speak the truth of the Gospel.**

* + 1. ***“…each one was hearing them speak in his own language.”***
			1. **Tongues/languages= *“Glossolalia”=* speaking in a known tongue that was formally unknown to the speaker…**

**Totally foreign to the speaker but a human language representative of the different people groups there in Jerusalem at the time.**

**The term is defined here and not anywhere else…so it the definitive text by which to define all the rest of the times the same word is used…**

**We are to interpret the unexplained in the light of the explained…not make up other definitions to fit our biases.**

**It shows that it is directly a miracle from the Holy Spirit.**

**Gets the people asking questions…they are so unsettled …God has come down and He has prepared many to receive Him in this way.**

* 1. **Why do you suppose that Luke spends so much time expressing the international makeup of the crowd in verses 9-10? *“Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—”***
		1. **Here is a fulfillment of this promise of their witness already. And they had all traveled for the feast of Weeks…to Pentecost. Acts 1:8- *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”***
		2. **They see immediately the effect of the Spirit enabling them to fulfill their mission.**
		3. **Universality of the proclamation the universal nature of God’s election from EVERY tribe, nation, and tongue.**
	2. **Now looking at verses 11-13.**
		1. **Vs. 11b- *“…we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”*  What do you suppose the disciples were specifically proclaiming?**

**This shows them declaring God’s glorious deeds of redemption as David does in the Psalms.**

**Salvation only in the name of Jesus.**

**Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus.**

 **They weren’t necessarily speaking TO the crowd…**

**The crowd *“…heard them telling in their own languages the mighty works of God”*…**

**So it seems that the disciples were so over joyed with being filled with the Spirit of God that they extemporaneously started praising God in these unknown to them languages by the power of the Spirit…**

**Being His witnesses in Jerusalem , just as Jesus said…but NOT in the way that they would have thought.**

* + 1. **So much so that it led some to wonder*… “What does this mean?”* vs. 12. This question opens the door for the Gospel to be clarified by Peter’s sermon.**
		2. **Side note on verse 13… the Greek word is “Gluecous”- which comes from the word Glucus for sweet…**
1. **So this is either sweet wine…which is stronger in alcohol content than the normal watered down- thin wines…**
2. **Or it is actually the *“new wine”* of the Bible which has little alcohol content...so they couldn’t be drunk on it either.**
3. **But Peter will speak more to this next week.**
	* 1. **This coming of the Spirit was so good and essential for the work to be done in the community of faith that Jesus actually said that it was better for us for Him to leave so He could send the Holy Spirit. John 16:7- *“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.”***
	1. **How might this one time miracle be a direct reversal of the curse of the Tower of Babel? (See Gen. 11:-1-9)**
		1. **This activity on this particular day symbolizes the beginning of a new unity in the Spirit that transcends race, nationality or even linguistic in some cases.**
		2. **At Babel human languages were confused and the nations were scattered; in Jerusalem the language barrier was supernaturally overcome as a sign that the nations would be gathered in Christ…prefiguring the,… from every nation, tribe, people and language…**
		3. **Also, at Babel earth sought proudly to ascend to heaven, whereas in Jerusalem heaven humbly came down to earth. On the day of Pentecost the Church becomes worldwide.**
			1. **Every nation was not there physically but that every nation was there representatively.**
			2. **Luke’s Table of Nations is comparable to the one in Gen. 10.**

 **Shemites or Semites are represented in the Elamites which head up both lists,**

**Egypt and Libya and Cretans represent Hamites and**

**The people of Rome represent Japheth….**

**The Parthians and Medes and Arabs wind out the rest of the known world….thus “representing” every nation.**

* 1. **So…thinking through this a bit…using this one…one-time event…how might this text help us to address the subject of the controversy about the use of tongues in worship and as a private prayer language?**
	2. **Wrapping this section up: What some things this event tells us about God? What does it signal to us generations later?**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**October 30, 2024**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **How might this miracle be a direct reversal of the curse of the Tower of Babel? (See Gen. 11:-1-9)**
	* + - 1. **This activity on this particular day symbolizes the beginning of a new unity in the Spirit that transcends race, nationality or even linguistic in some cases.**
				2. **At Babel human languages were confused and the nations were scattered; in Jerusalem the language barrier was supernaturally overcome as a sign that the nations would be gathered in Christ…prefiguring the,… from every nation, tribe, people and language…**
				3. **Also, at Babel, earth sought proudly to ascend to heaven, whereas in Jerusalem heaven humbly came down to earth. On the day of Pentecost the Church becomes worldwide.**
4. **Every nation was not there physically but that every nation was there representatively.**
5. **Luke’s Table of Nations is comparable to the one in Gen. 10.**

 **Shemites or Semites are represented in the Elamites which head up both lists,**

**Egypt and Libya represent Hamites and Cretans and**

**The people of Rome represent Japheth….**

**The Parthians and Medes and Arabs wind out the rest of the known world….thus “representing” every nation.**

* + - * 1. **R. B. Kuiper taught in his book Gospel Centered Evangelism; *Both at Babel and at Jerusalem God supernaturally caused men to speak in various tongues. But the consequences differed radically. At Babel there was confusion and division. Men were scattered abroad on all the face of the earth. That was the beginning of nationalism. At Jerusalem one message was proclaimed in many tongues. It was the evangel. By the Word of God, which is ‘quick and powerful’ (Heb 4:12), the Spirit of God drew men from every nation under heaven into the one church of Christ. Pentecost spells unity.***
1. **Wrapping this section up: Chapter 2:1-13. What are some things this event tells us about God? What does it signal to us generations later?**

1. **Peter’s Sermon at Pentecost Acts 2:14-36**
2. **The people had asked, *“What does this mean?”* and others well, they mocked saying, *“They are filled with new wine.”* So what we have before us is Peter’s answer to both. And believe it or not his sermon had 3 points!**
3. **What was happening was fulfilling the prophecy of Joel.**
4. **That this was what God planned.**
5. **This is what King David wrote about in the Psalms.**
6. **What is NOT happening now as Peter gets up to speak? Why? *“But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them…”***
7. **The Speaking in tongues stops.**
8. **For the Spirit was now working through the Word preached not against it.**
9. **No fear or trepidation of Peter’s part.**
10. **The Spirit had given him courage and strength and wisdom and a voice…the words… for he doesn’t have prior preparation.**
11. ***“He lifted up his voice…”* He obviously isn’t struggling with his past sins that Jesus absolved him of.**
12. **But first he speaks to the slander: *“Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. 15 For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.”***
13. **9:00 am… in that day it was unthinkable …Jews pious or not did not eat or drink until after the 3rd hour of the day for that was a time for prayer and they would do neither until after prayer was offered.**
14. **But listen up there is an explanation and it is from people you used to respect.**
15. **There are some in the church who like to speak of believers being drunk in the Spirit.**
16. **No biblical foundation.**
17. **Drunk usually speaking of the loss of control …and a fruit of the Spirit is self-control.**
18. **So let’s begin with Peter’s first point: What was happening was fulfilling the prophecy of Joel. What all can we gather from Vs.16-21- *“But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; 18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; 20 the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. 21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’*”**
19. **Who is the central figure in Peter’s message? Christ. Why then would he begin his sermon with the Joel passage?**
	1. **These were mostly Jews or proselytes to Judaism … the OT passages would set the stage for his argument of the One that fulfills the prophecy.**
	2. **Also, this reveals something particularly important for us on this Reformation weekend. The importance of Scripture. Peter shows a wonderful knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures of the OT.**
	3. **Not only a knowledge and understanding but he is treating them as authoritative...**

**The OT IS the word of God for His people.**

**It is trustworthy to even explain such events as these…in fact, it is the only authority that can speak to these events.**

**What do these say to us as the Church today? That we are to have an equal understanding of it absolute authority and then secondly to have a good use of it.**

* 1. **Moses had prophesied something similar about 600 years before Joel, in Numbers 11:29- *“Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit on them!”***
	2. **Joel wrote that what Moses desired ...the outpouring of the Holy Spirit…would indeed happen in Joel’s future and then be fulfilled in our future…**
	3. **Joel 2:28-31- *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. ‘And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”***
	4. **Because this is what is going on now…that which Joel prophesied is happening…that is what this means…the Spirit has been poured out on ordinary believers and now dwells within each of us…and that is why also these folks are not drunk early in the morning.**
1. **Up until now the Spirit would come upon a person for a particular task.**
2. **Nowhere, I am aware of in the OT does the Spirt come and dwell permanently on ordinary believers.**
3. **But now the Spirt dwells IN all who are His and is always with us...in this life.**
4. **This is the answer to Joel saying that one day God would reveal Himself more fully to ALL His people.**
5. **Peter confirms in the first part of his sermon that day is that Day when this all begins.**
	1. **Ever since this Pentecost… things have been different for God’s church…with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit...this Day becomes a dividing line in history, if you will.**
6. **Ever since this Day people who believe in Christ… the Holy Spirit immediately comes upon them to dwell within them.**
7. **Once we have taken hold of Christ by His justifying us… the Spirit seals us to Him forever.**
	1. **According to this passage, what is the result of the Spirit’s outpouring on this day?**
8. **All God’s people will prophecy…as in proclaim the truth of God.**

 **Prophecies main function was to proclaim what has been set forth by God.**

**To foretell future events that will happen which is extra-revelation.**

**God’s people will not pour out more and new revelation…they will teach, exhort, and interpret it for people going forward as God’s representative and as we do this correctly we are prophesying for God through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

1. **In other words, the proclamation of the mighty works of God and the Good News of the Kingdom is not just for an elite few but for all who receive the Spirit.**
2. **Here in Acts is a loose usage of the title prophet is one who speaks, of *“the mighty works of God.”-***

**Telling what God has done and is doing in His world through Jesus Christ to accomplish so great a salvation.**

**But also telling what God will do based on His revealed will in His Word…not special revelation.**

1. **God’s Spirit was poured out on these 120 believers so that they were enabled to proclaim *the mighty works of God* along with the Gospel of the Kingdom in the language of the people gathered that day… for a personal touch from God.**
2. **What is the practical reality of this pouring out of the Spirit upon us 2000 years later?**
3. **The Spirit gives us power over timidity so we will do as we have been commanded and called to do.**
4. **The Spirit gives us the assurance we need to walk through this life so that we can glorify God.**
5. **The Spirit provides us with a voice to speak …to each other, to our family …to our friends and to nonbelievers about who Jesus is and what he has done.**
6. **What do you suppose Joel meant by see visions and dream dreams?**
7. **In the OT the Lord often spoke to His prophets through visions and dream, but Pentecost was a dividing line here as well.**

**God spoke to them without the indwelling of the Spirt…this was His method then.**

**We have had Christ incarnate and we have the Spirit…so He doesn’t work that way anymore…Heb. 1:1-2- *“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.”***

1. **We don’t need signs and wonders or visions and dreams…for as it says above we have Christ, His Word and His Spirit.**

**And being Spirit empowered we are to share the wonderful truth set before us, *“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”***

**Peter connects the outpouring of the Spirit with the call to believe…all those who are called by the name of the Lord.**

1. **So on this day there was such an out pouring of the Spirit when all sorts of things were happening but not afterwards to this scale until the END...So they are not normative for us any longer for we have the Spirit and the Lord’s Word.**
2. **Peter is still answering the question, *“What does this mean?”* with his second point in this sermon. This was all God’s plan! Acts 2: 22-24- *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”* Now Peter is connecting what was happening on the day of Pentecost with what happened just 50 days prior. None of it is by accident or the plans of men…it is the accomplishment of God’s plan all along.**

**What does Peter mean with this statement in vs. 22, *“Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know…”?***

1. **There is no doubt at least in the mind of most of Peter’s hearers that Jesus was a great teacher and that many signs and wonders were done through Him…the kind of thing they might expect from a great prophet…Messiah? Even today, people are very much in doubt as to whether Jesus did the miracles and made the claims that the Bible says he did.**
2. **But Peter’s crowd knew all this for themselves.**

**They had heard and some had seen Jesus do the things that could only have been attributed to the Messiah of God. This is one of the reasons the Reformation is still so pertinent today because of the evangelical worlds seemingly laziness concerning the Word of God.**

**The leadership for sure knew who He was/is…the Gospels attests to what they knew but refused to acknowledge/believe that Jesus is the Son of God.**

1. **The big question then was would they believe…it is the same question for us today…today is this …will they believe?**
2. **It seems that even us believers need to answer this question on a regular basis…Do believers really believe that the Bible is the Word of God?**
	* + - 1. **What is Peter specifically telling these people in vs. 23? *“…this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God…”* Interesting words used here:**
3. **All this was according to God’s “definite plan” (horizio).**

**What does this word sound like? What is seen on the horizon?**

**The Greek word literally means *“to mark out with a boundary”* or *“to determine beforehand”* similar meanings, huh?**

**This word signifies the destination at the end of the journey, one marked out beforehand. Sort of like going to Google Maps in your car and asking it to map out the best road to a particular destination and it gets you there, hopefully. The traveler would see his destination on the “horizon” of the screen before arriving there.**

**That is why many versions use the word “predestined”.**

1. ***“Foreknowledge”-* (prognosis). What does this word sound like?**

**Exactly the same thing…prognosis.**

* + - * **This word means much more than God knew something beforehand.**
			* **Louis Berkhof breaks down the definition of the word this way: *“The Greek word denotes a selective knowledge which regards one with favor and makes one the object of love.”***
			* **The prefix *“fore”* indicates that this love relationship was established beforehand.**
			* **The word points to a deep regard and loving favor by the Father for the Son before the foundation of the world.**

**In this context the Son was foreordained by the Father to die upon the cross to glorify the Father and to save lost sinners who had been chosen before the foundation of the earth as well. This was His plan from before the beginning.**

1. **Soooo… Jesus’ crucifixion was by the predetermined counsel and foreknowledge of God. It didn’t take God by surprise.**

**And for Peter, do you see, that’s the explanation of the horrendous day on which Jesus was crucified. It’s his understanding of history that events happen and terrible things happen, and awful things happen – like Hurricane Helene – and men and women lose everything.**

**He has a confidence, a certainty, a conviction not only about the Bible, but a conviction about providence, a conviction about history, a conviction about where he is at this moment in time on this Day of Pentecost, with all of what lies before him.**

1. **What has Peter justly done in the last half of verses 23, *“This Jesus… you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”***

**He has indicted and convicted them of Jesus’s murder.**

**Interesting that he doesn’t get any reaction to the indictment of murder that he levels against them!!!**

1. **What simple truths is Peter communicating in verse 24? *“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”***

**Again, it was the fulfillment of prophesy.**

**He has power over death…as they actually saw a couple times during His ministry…but as they know from His own resurrection…it is real and was part of the plan.**

**And as god He couldn’t be contained in a grave.**

* + - * **He was seen by over 500 people.**
			* **He ate with His disciples.**
			* **He showed all the marks of his crucifixion.**
			* **He did what he said He would do by the definite plan of God. Is. 53:10-11--*“*** ***Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him; He has put Him to grief; when His soul makes an offering for guilt, He shall see His offspring; He shall prolong His days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. Out of the anguish of His soul He shall see and be satisfied; by His knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and He shall bear their iniquities.”***
1. **Peter’s third point; this is what King David wrote about in the Psalms 16 and 110:1. Acts 2:25-35- *“For David says concerning him, ‘I saw the LORD always before me, for He is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’ Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that god has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus who you crucified.”***

**How does Peter’s reference to Psalm 16 in verses 25-28 help Peter to establish the truth of the Resurrection*? “For David says concerning Him, ‘I saw the LORD always before me, for He is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’”***

1. **He’s saying this could only be true of Jesus Christ. It couldn’t be true of David.**
2. **It can only be true of Jesus Christ, because you’ve seen Him raised from the dead, and ascended, and now sitting at God’s right hand; that what David had written had come true in Jesus.**
3. **Peter isn’t saying that what Psalm 16 is saying was once true of David, but has now become true of Jesus Christ.**

**No, he’s saying it was never true of David.**

**It never at any time applied to David.**

**It couldn’t possibly be applied to David.**

 **It was always, even when David wrote it, it was always about Jesus Christ.**

**And do you see what that says about the Old Testament?**

* + - * **That the Old Testament is about Christ!**
			* **It’s about the seed of the woman that God had promised in the Garden of Eden, that seed that will usurp and throw down the forces of darkness and of Satan.**
1. **And just in case we forget, peter the Apostle of God is speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit so if he says this text is about Christ…at least for us today…it is!**
2. **What importance do we place on the resurrection day to day? Can we defend it? Why is it necessary to defend it?**

**On what basis does Peter announce that God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ in verses 29-36? *“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus who you crucified.”***

1. **He appeals to Psalm 110:1**
2. **Once again, he has shown this through the Scriptures of the OT.**
3. **Peter uses all of this and Psalm 110 to show that Jesus ascended into heaven and is exalted to the right hand of God.**
4. **Psalm 110 pictures the divine ascending to the right Hand of God.**
5. **The other prophesy here has to do with the Return of Christ and His judgment… *“…until I make your enemies your footstool.”***
6. **And then the proclamation at the end of the sermon… *“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus who you crucified.”***

**This is him calling the people to believe…those who have ears to hear…those of the elect.**

**He is calling for a response to all that he has presented…again this is not an invitation… *“Let all the house of Israel…”* is a command.**

**And of course, the reality of the person of Jesus Christ always demands a response.**

**They are going to want to know how to respond to such a wonderful truth…**

1. **What elements in Peter’s sermon are essential for sharing the Gospel today?**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**November 6, 2024**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **How does Peter answer the question in Acts 2:12- *“What does this mean?”* in Acts 2:14-36**

**This event fulfills the prophecy of Joel.**

1. **Proving the authenticity of the Scriptures.**
2. **Things will never be the same for God’s people anymore…with the Spirits indwelling His people at conversion.**

**That this was all God’s plan. See Isaiah 52-53 as well.**

1. **None of it is accidental…all of it happens just as it had been prophesied just when it was supposed to happen.**
2. **This gives us confidence in all things God says He will do.**

**This is what King David wrote about in Ps. 69 and 110.**

1. **Again the 3rd time he speaks of the authentic and authoritative Word of God.**
2. **By always appealing to Scripture it cannot be said that this is simply his opinion.**
3. **Confidence in the Word promotes hope, peace and assurance.**
4. **What elements in Peter’s sermon are essential for sharing the Gospel today?**
5. **Acts 2:36-41-*“ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus who you crucified. Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ 38 And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’ 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’ 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”***
6. **How does the crowd respond to Peter’s sermon, and what does it reveal about the power of the Holy Spirit?**

**It is at this point, that Peter’s sermon’s affect is seen.**

1. **He has said, on the basis of the resurrection, ascension and enthronement of Jesus, there is something that all who have lived in anticipation of the promises of the prophets becoming a reality must do.**
2. ***“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus who you crucified.”***
3. **This is the only conclusion the “faithful” can come to.**

**This certainty leads us to a humble trust.**

**The kind of certainty that causes us to reevaluate what we have been putting our confidence in.**

**This certainty also should bolster confidence in the fact that Jesus is worthy of our trust.**

**This conclusion that Peter has directed them to shows us the sanctified minds ability to comprehend what is being preached.**

**But Peter wasn’t simply calling for intellectual assent but a personal response to the personal Lord and Savior.**

**The reality of the person of Jesus demands a response.**

* + - 1. **Luke says that response was pretty much immediate. *“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”***
1. **By way of a graphic description… *“they were cut/pierced to the heart.”***

**They were cut to the heart that the word of God had come.**

**And do you see, it had come in power – this word about Jesus had pierced their hearts.**

 **This is covenantal language… it means that they saw the deep personal relevance, and that they were convicted of their need.**

**It was like a dagger thrusting them in the side, and it had rendered them in such a state that they’re crying out now at the end of the sermon, *“What are we supposed to do?”* They want to know what to do about their sin.**

1. **What was Peter’s answer and what does it say to us today? And, of course, Peter is ready with an answer. *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’*” Vs. 38-39**
	* + - 1. **Repentance always has been always will be the way, by God’s grace, into a restored relationship with God and His people.**
2. **Repentance will be called for in 4 more times in this book.**
3. **Luke seems to indicate that repentance is the turning away from self, away from whomever or whatever we have given our absolute allegiance to and turning toward Christ.**

**So to them that would mean to turn from seeking to acquire righteousness through Law keeping or temple ritual.**

**And to turn to Christ, who gives His righteousness by His once –for –all- time sacrifice.**

**For us, in many ways, it is the same. We get tied up in our works...defining ourselves by them…or defining ourselves as someone else has defined us and then acting accordingly.**

**Rather than living with in the identity and purpose we have in Christ.**

1. **So we must change our attitude, we must change our stance, we must change our thinking about God, about ourselves, about sin, about Jesus Christ, about these fundamental things.**
2. **It’s of course the great theme of the preaching of the New Testament. Jesus came preaching, “Repent.” Necessarily involved in “repentance” is “faith”…for without faith there will be no repentance.**
	* + - 1. **But there also must be a public demonstration of our new allegiance to the Covenant and to Christ our King through water baptism.**
3. **Submitting to baptism would have been humbling for them since being of Jewish descent simply isn’t enough anymore.**
4. **Jews believed Gentile converts needed to be baptized, not them, because they saw the Gentiles as being spiritually unclean.**
5. **Now Peter says that everyone who wishes to be a Christian needs to be baptized — and to do it in the name of the one that previously had been rejected.**
6. **That would be a public sign in the strongest terms that they had repented — had completely changed their minds about who Jesus was.** .
7. **Baptized with a view to the forgiveness of sins; baptism which pictures what the forgiveness of sins as the washing away of our stain of our sin; the sign and seal of God’s covenant promise; the outward picture that we can trust what God says, and that His word is true…and this is through faith alone, by grace alone in Christ alone.**
8. **Submitting to Jesus says, I believe salvation comes from God alone as the OT Scriptures have said, which means I can only be saved by Jesus, the Son of God who sacrificed Himself to pay the cost of my sin…a debt I could never pay.**
	* + - 1. **What were the benefits described from repenting and being baptized?**
9. **Forgiveness and the Gift of the Holy Spirit.**
10. **Baptism symbolized the work of washing away of our sins accomplished by the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit on all those with faith…an outward expression of an inward reality.**
11. **And this self-same promise for all of the elect, *“for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’*” …is true for their children as well.**

**All the benefits promised to the believers and their children in the OT are for the children of believers today.**

**So this means based on the OT commands we are to place the sign and seal of the covenant upon our children so that they are not denied God’s blessings.**

**And that when they repent and believe it will be because of the work on the Holy Spirit to bring them to belief.**

**This is covenantal language that would have drawn them in…and how it is *for all whom* *the Lord our God calls to Himself?***

* + - * + **Peter is announcing here that only God calls individual sinners to Himself if they are to receive salvation and all who God calls do in fact receive salvation.**
				+ **The Greek word (*kaleo= to summon to appear*).**
				+ **All of us on one level or another hates to be summon to appear before the judge. I love this from F.F. Bruce, *“Those who call upon the name of the Lord are those whom the Lord Himself calls and called effectually.”***
				+ **In other words, Peter is clearly saying, no sinner seeks the Lord until he is called and all that are called will receive salvation.**
1. **Also, they are exhorted to stay true to their profession. *40 “And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”***

**We have the privilege now to hear the word with gladness.**

**The discipline of the Lord nets positive gain.**

1. **Then we really see the power of the Spirit of God. *“So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”***

**Spirits power to convict and to convert.**

**Spirit is in control from beginning to end.**

1. **They may not have fully realized it at the moment but they were receiving the sign and seal of the Covenant both males and females. A commanded blessing to be placed on all who believe.**
2. **Let’s think a bit doctrinally for a moment. What do phrases like *“…whom our Lord calls to Himself…”* and *“…And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved…”* tell us?**

**Only God adds to His church.**

**God sovereignly builds His church from those he chose before the foundations of the earth adding to its numbers as He sees fit.**

1. **How does “knowing” that God builds His church “free” us up to boldly proclaim the gospel?**

**We don’t save so we do have to worry about that with who we speak to…we don’t have to worry about doing it right, but we must try to be precise with the scriptures.**

**We don’t have to worry that we may have prevented someone from the kingdom because of our not so “perfect” presentation.**

**We then are free to proclaim the Gospel knowing God does the work and He gets all the credit for souls who come into His kingdom.**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**November 13, 2024**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **Let’s think a bit doctrinally for a moment. What do phrases like *“…whom our Lord calls to Himself…”* and *“…And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved…”* tell us?**
	1. **Only God adds to His church.**
	2. **God sovereignly builds His church from those He chose before the foundations of the earth adding to its numbers as and when He sees fit.**
4. **Why is it “hard” to proclaim Jesus to those around us?**
5. **How does “knowing” that God builds His church “free” us up to boldly proclaim the gospel?**

**We don’t save so we do have to worry about that with who we speak to…we don’t have to worry about doing it right, but we must try to be precise with the scriptures.**

**We don’t have to worry that we may have prevented someone from the kingdom because of our not so “perfect” presentation.**

**We then are free to proclaim the Gospel knowing God does the work and He gets all the credit for souls who come into His kingdom.**

1. **Acts 2:42-47- *“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”* So the Day of Pentecost is not only a dividing line in history but for these who have been added to the church that Day it is a dividing line in their lives as well.**
	1. **Make a list of the characteristics and functions of the early church which are evident in this passage. This list can be broken down in many ways. I will make a longer list here —**
		1. **The church trained and educated its members. (*”devoted themselves* *to the apostles’ teaching”* v.42a).**

**They were a Bible Studying Church!**

**They diligently and continuously applied themselves to the doctrine taught by the Apostles.**

**Everything thing that came from the Apostles…but also the OT as they saw the OT in all that Jesus and the apostles said.**

**The first sign of a Spirit-filled Church is one where the people rest and rely upon Scripture never re-defining or denying it in any part.**

* + 1. **The church spent much time in group prayer (*“devoted themselves…to prayer”* v.42d) which occurred, evidently in both homes and large public gatherings.**
		2. **The church was in awe and the apostles were substantiating the Word with many signs and wonders.**

**They were in awe because of what they were learning…what they were seeing for the first time…and the experience they were having.**

**They were in awe because the apostles were doing similar signs and wonders that Christ did when He was there.**

* + 1. **The church moved members into relationships of mutual support and fellowship (*“they were together”* v.44a; *“the fellowship”* v.42b).**
			- 1. **Chapter 1:14 speaks of them being together, being of one accord and devoting themselves in prayer, men and women.**
				2. **Chapter 2:1 speaks of them being together in one place.**
				3. **Also, 2:46 together in the temple and in their homes.**

**They saw the necessity of sharing worship and fellowship.**

**Interesting translation issue. ESV begins this verse with, *“And day by day/daily, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes…”* but a word/phrase is left out. To include all the words in the Greek it should read, *“Daily, with one accord, they were together in attending the temple and breaking bread in their homes…”***

**They were in total agreement that these things ought to be done together.**

**By the time of the writing of the Book to the Hebrews the author finds himself reminding the people of this simple characteristic for Christians. Heb. 10: 23-25- *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”***

* + - * 1. **This speaks of communion of the saints…fellowship= Koinonia- where we have all things in common and live accordingly.**
				2. **This has been a prominent theme for God’s people through out the Scriptures and it is reiterated early in the life of the NT Church and is to be a prominent theme in the Church today.**
		1. **The church practiced the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper regularly.**
			- 1. **The first usage of this term *“the breaking of bread”* in v.42 and v.46 is speaking of taking meals together in homes and at church. These people shared/ fellowshipped together. They liked being together.**
				2. **But, also, it is thought to be a description of a meal together at which the Lord’s Supper was observed.**
				3. **The key indicator that this is the meaning of the phrase is the word *“the”* before the *“breaking of bread”*.)**
		2. **The church practiced radical stewardship, economic sharing and “mercy ministry” at least within the community.**
			- 1. **The Jews had a tremendous custom concerning hospitality which had been commanded by God as a way to bless others.**

**Especially during the high feast days visitors were received into homes freely…everyone was forbidden to charge.**

**Also, the community was required to meet all their needs during their stay with no expectations of remunerations.**

**So, it seems after the 3000 joined the ranks of the 120 this practice continued even to the point of selling their goods to help pay these expenses during Pentecost for these new converts.**

* + - * 1. **People gave practical financial and material help for their needs (*“And they were selling their possessions* *and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all. As had any need.”* v.45).**
				2. **The power of God is evident in sacrificial giving where Jesus becomes more important and caring for our family than our possessions.**
				3. **While the practice of hospitality and giving are to be on-going marks of the Christian, this selling everything like this seems to be a one-time thing to meet this particular need. For the Church in Jerusalem will eventually fall on hard times and need to be supported by the outlying churches.**
				4. **I heard of a ministry once that asked all their people to commit to bringing in all the “junk” gold to cash it in and set up a fund for the needy in the church and the community. Out of 300 people they raised $150,000.00 for such a fund.**
		1. **The church brought its members together constantly for worship and fellowship — *“Day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received food with glad and generous hearts”*(v.46)! They couldn’t stay away from each other.**
		2. **There was a general spirit of joy (*“glad and generous hearts”* v.46) and praise (*“praising God”* v.47a) which permeated every meeting at every level.**
		3. **This community life was extraordinarily attractive to outsiders(*“..and having favor with all the people”* v.47).**
		4. **Many would say that “The church was evangelistically effective in the extreme, with new conversions everyday. (*“The Lord added… daily those who were being saved.”* v.47)**
		5. **Conversions were not seen individualistically. When a person was saved, they were *“added to their number”* (v.47) — they were incorporated into a deep relationship to the church body, not just to the Lord.**
	1. **What type of evangelism do we see here in practice? Is this the only type we are to use? Why or why not?**
		1. **Bringing people to church to SEE and experience what a true church… a believing family should be.**
		2. **Personal evangelism…I am sure this happened to the degree that it could under suspicion of arrest and such…but it is what probably build trust enough to bring people to church.**
		3. **And the mercy ministries concerning how well they took care of themselves would have been noticed by others.**
		4. **Then they would have the opportunity to share the hope that is within them through Christ Jesus.**
		5. **On one hand the church and its work is mundane.**
			+ 1. **It basically does the same thing every day.**
				2. **There is no Flash to bring people in…no gimmicks.**
				3. **It is all about worship from beginning to end giving praise to God…Worship netted from a study of God’s Word together which resulted in prayer and more fellowship so that they can be like minded in the Lord and then that spills out to their neighbors.**
	2. **Re-read vss. 42-47. Considering all that we said about this text how does it correspond and compliment Acts 1:8?**
	3. **How do you personally respond to the work of the Spirit as you see it in this chapter? How will it affect your thinking going forward?**
1. **Acts 3:1-10- *“Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, ‘Look at us.’ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, ‘I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!’ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”***
2. **Describe, in your own words, as if you were there, what has happened in these first 10 verses.**
3. **Why does Luke tell us of this event so soon after 2:42-47?**
	1. **To give us an example of what he had just said in Acts 2:43.**
		* 1. **Peter and John were among the 12 who had been commissioned by Jesus as Apostles.**
			2. **These men were also recognized by the Church to be such, as well.**
	2. **To set up Peter’s next sermon.**
	3. **They weren’t going into the temple for sacrifice, for they were going at the hour of prayer…so they went into the temple for the same reason Jesus had gone into the temple…to proclaim the Kingdom as had commanded. Acts 1:8**
	4. **And almost as an aside to show us why these earliest Christians were persecuted, since this is what this story will lead to as we progress.**
4. **What, if anything, is striking to you about the healing of the crippled man? What does it tell us about how God works in our lives?**
	1. **Luke wrote that many signs and wonders were being done by the apostles in chapter 2:43, and now he provides an example. Some things to notice about the incident:**
		* 1. **It demonstrates the historicity of what happened.**
				+ **The comment *“at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour…at three in the afternoon”* (v.2) is a detail that is the mark of an eyewitnessaccount.**
				+ **Did they go into the temple at the ninth hour because it was also the time that Jesus had cried out, *“It is finished”?***
				+ **Legends and myths do not contain such unnecessary details.**
				+ **This was the time of prayer and was observed by all pious Jew…the reason the crippled man was there …to beg when the crowd was there.**
			2. **It demonstrates the power of God.**
				+ **Luke’s medical expertise comes out here for the physical ailment was not a passing injury, but was congenital, severe and permanent *“a man* *lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.”.* (v.2)**
				+ **He emphasizes the fact the man could not walk before healing by making reference to it 4 times in this text.**
			3. **It demonstrates a first principle of God’s work —**
				+ **Divine power has come through Jesus to undo the curse for His own.**
				+ **Divine power comes to re-create/restore.**
			4. **It demonstrates a second principle of God’s work — and one about us**
				+ **That we usually begin by seeking far less than God wants to give us. All the man wanted was money (v.3), but he got physical healing (v.8).**
				+ **Even so, a person ordinarily goes to God just for help with a problem or strength in time of need or forgiveness for a particular sin, because we are so short-sighted — but often God He ends up making far greater changes in our lives than we ever envisioned.**
				+ **For our God listens and answers based on His will in His time for His own glory.**
			5. **It demonstrates that God uses changed lives to draw others to hear the gospel. It was because of the clear change in the man’s life(v.10) that a crowd gathered and was open to hearing the gospel (v.11-12).**
	2. **What’s the point of Peter and John directing the lame man’s gaze? God expects we will “LOOK” to Him just as Peter told the man to look at him and John for the purpose of “seeing” the power of God.**
		* 1. **Maybe he had become so complacent that he no longer looked into people’s eyes just waited to hear the ring of coin.**
			2. **Maybe he was ashamed.**
			3. **Maybe he didn’t look at the people because it made them feel bad.**
			4. **But Peter isn’t having any of it, *“And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, ‘Look at us.’ And he fixed his attention on them…”* (vs. 4-5)**
5. **What is Peter communicating to the man in verses 6? *“But Peter said, ‘I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!’”***
	1. **The lame man could have said, *“If you don’t have money…move on for those who do.” “You don’t really care about me since you aren’t willing to give me what I want or am asking for!”***
		* 1. **Probably what would happen in many cases today.**
			2. **But Peter and John knew that supporting his condition was not going to be helpful so they transformed his life instead…giving him something he had no hope in himself to ever get!**
	2. **The Beautiful Gate:**
		* 1. **An expansive entrance to the temple complex made of Corinthian brass 75 feet high and was a double door.**
			2. **It was inlaid with silver and Gold.**
			3. **John Stott speaking of the door *“it greatly excelled those that were only covered with silver and gold.”***
			4. **A look of prestige and power…a door made for the Kings grand arrival!**
	3. **It is almost as if, taking a page from Jesus’ ledger, that Peter may be pointing at the gate saying to the lame man, I have something to give you that the temple system will never be able to give.**
	4. **Peter and John will give this man something more powerful and of greater worth than silver and gold which were highly prized especially among the “normal” people and the impoverished.**
	5. **They will give him health in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.**
	6. **One of the charges placed on Jesus was that He had blasphemed the temple. Belief in the temple was a thing then to the Jews, because that is where God dwelt after all.**
6. **What is the effect of Peter’s statement?**
	1. **The man believed Peter. He doesn’t seem to hesitate when Peter goes to lift him up.**
		* 1. **By this time, physically speaking, there would not have been any muscle left in his legs. Remember *“lame from birth.”* So he could have simply said yeah sure…is that all you got?**
			2. **Emotionally it would have been natural to pull back…there had probably been many who had promised healing in some incantation or some other name.**
			3. **But He had faith and allowed Peter to take him by the right hand…not both hands as if lifting someone that needed a lot of help to stand.**
	2. ***“…and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.”***
		* 1. **Immediately upon Peter saying that, or…**
			2. **Immediately upon Peter helping Him up, or…**
			3. **Immediately… both happened simultaneously.**
			4. **Feet and ankles that had never been walked on…never held up the body are immediately strong.**
	3. ***“And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.”*  This demonstrates that the Messiah has come… a fulfillment of prophecy…In His name the lame are healed.**
		* 1. **This is a fulfilled prophecy.**
				+ **Isaiah said that when the Messiah came *“Then will the lame* *leap like a deer”* (Is.35:6), and that is what this man does —“*walking* *and leaping”* v.8.**
				+ **Here *“leaping”* is a vivid, wonderful picture, and it is another mark of an eyewitness account detail.**
			2. **These miracles reveal that God’s promises have become true and at the same time… becoming reality.**
			3. **The people had seen and heard of Jesus doing this and now they begin to see His commissioned leaders doing the same thing to authenticate the message of Christ.**
	4. **The people’s response. *“And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”***
		* 1. **Their own testimony of this being the same man who had been lame from birth substantiates the miracle.**
			2. **Walking is one thing…people would understand that…needing to get his “sea legs” if you will since he had never walked before…**
				+ **But he is leaping. How does someone go from atrophied legs to leaping/dancing as if he had always been able to walk? The power of Jesus Name!**
				+ **Leaping like a deer…just like Isaiah prophesied. It says this twice in vs.8**
	5. **His response seems to be of a man who also became a believer as well…**
		* 1. **Probably unto salvation. Leaping and praising God. Luke repeats this twice for emphasis.**
			2. **Acts 4:14 indicates that the man now took up with the company of Apostles.**
7. **What can this man’s faith teach us for today?**
	1. **Do we really believe God and His promises?**
	2. **Are we there yet where we expect to receive from God?**
	3. **Do we know what the right things are that will bring God glory?**
	4. **Are we prepared to respond to God when His will is evident?**
8. **What do you think was the purpose of signs and wonders in the New Testament especially since these don’t appear to be repeated in every age of the church?**
	1. **They proclaim Jesus as Lord and Savior, for these are done in His name.**
	2. **They confirm that He is still involved with His people.**
	3. **They affirm that His message is still going out and is confirmed by these signs and wonders. Acts 2:42-47 and here 3:1-10**
9. **So if all of this is true why do we not see them today, even toward the end of the first Century?**
	1. **First, miracles still do happen but they are not the normal way to reveal God’s Work anymore.**
		* 1. **Christ has come and He is the Word.**
			2. **His Word is complete so we don’t need these to occur anymore to *“prove the power and effectiveness”* of the Word.**
			3. **When and where they do seem to occur they are still for the same reason as always to point people to God and to His Word which will either confirm or deny it.**
	2. **But we must remember:**
		* 1. **Jesus didn’t come to heal people physically…or He would have healed everyone.**
			2. **Second, this wasn’t the Apostles purpose either…or they would have been more healings…Paul would have healed himself.**
			3. **So it is not our purpose either.**
	3. **Jesus came to restore…build the Kingdom…the Apostles…us.**
	4. **In the early stages of growing His church these were necessary…**
		* 1. **Commanding people to do things they couldn’t do…like walk or see when they were blind…fulfilling Scripture that pointed to Christ.**
			2. **These represent spiritual blindness and lameness something we can’t fix on our own…but the Word of God through the Holy Spirit can and will for His people.**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**November 20, 2024**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **What is the point of Luke telling this story of the lame man healed so soon after talking about the church and its growth 3:1-10?**
4. **What can this man’s faith teach us for today?**
	1. **Do we really believe God and His promises?**
	2. **Are we there yet where we expect to receive from God?**
	3. **Do we know what the right things are that will bring God glory?**
	4. **Are we prepared to respond to God when His will is evident?**
5. **Acts 3:11- 16**
6. **Let’s consider for the moment Acts 3:11-16- *“While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon’s. 12 And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: ‘Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? 13 The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. 14 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. 16 And His name—by faith in His name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.”***
7. **What are some of the reasons for the people’s amazement over this miracle? *“9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. 11 While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon’s.”***
8. **The words *“wonder and amazement”*…and… “*utterly astounded”* speak to a life altering event. This is a traumatic event for them.**
9. **They are so moved they are in disbelief …**
10. **They mobbed him and the disciples and the lame man that was healed…so *he clung to Peter and John..***
11. **Seems as though there may be hundreds of people crowding around if not thousands that were moved by this one event.**
12. **Just as the Pentecost event had been the text for His first sermon, so the cripple’s healing is the text for the second.**
13. **Both were mighty acts that exalted Christ and proclaimed Him to be Lord and Savior.**
14. **Both diverted the people’s attention away from the actual events to the One who was responsible for the events.**
15. **BUT…how does the reaction of the crowd to the healing of the lame beggar reflect their understanding of God’s power? (Try to keep your answers to looking at verses 9-11)**
16. **What is the point (s) of Peter beginning with the question he does in verse 12? *“Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?”***
17. **They may be greatly amazed but they aren’t changed yet in their hearts.**
18. **To show that there is continuity with the OT writings concerning the person and actions of the Messiah and Jesus.**
19. **The OT stated that the Messiah would do these things…and here Peter in Jesus’ name is doing these things… just as Jesus had done them before.**
20. **To build a contrast between the fathers and the people of the day. As he says in vs. 13-15- *“The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. 14 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. “***
* **By opening with this reference to God there will be no question of what God Peter speaks…the God of Israel…the God of the Holy Scriptures.**
* **By asserting the names of the Patriarchs and fathers he is saying to them a couple of things:**
1. **They should be familiar with this power since they knew God worked in the midst of the patriarchs and fathers in similar ways.**
2. **But also, if they truly are in a spiritual relationship with the fathers they should KNOW they are witnessing the fulfillment of God’s purposes for His people, Jew and Gentile.**
* **The purpose that He had in mind and confirmed to Abraham when He called Abraham to leave his country…a plan and purpose that has been working out through the true descendants of Abraham ever since.**
* **These men looked forward and spoke of this Messiah…God’s servant Jesus spoken of in the Scriptures and the glorified Him in their lives. Jesus had said, *“Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.”***
* **The Fathers knew the messiah would be the exalted servant of God who had been prophesied centuries before …but in these men’s estimation Jesus was only worthy to be tortured and crucified. They denied, *“…denied the Holy and Righteous One…”***
1. **Holy One is used more than 40 times in the OT as a title for Yahweh.**
2. **Righteous One was reserved for God above. …The Covenant God of Israel.**
3. **So these are titles and names that they would know well…which Help Peter to make his point as to the person of Jesus the Christ.**
* **The concept of the servant of the Lord was well –known in Israel because of Isaiah 53 and other texts.**
1. **To drive home the point that it was NOT by their power that this man was healed but , *“And His name—by faith in His name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.”***
* **The power is in Jesus’s name. The apostles were not under any delusion that they had anything to do with this…it iis all of Jesus.**
* **The “perfect health” has been restored in His name, by His authority and by His power alone. The Apostles are simply vessels to His work.**
* **Peter makes the clear that the power that raised Jesus from the grave is the same power and same One that healed this lame man.**
* **The power of the Gospel is what substantiates the power of the Gospel.**
1. **Now let’s consider Acts3:17-26- *“And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets long ago. 22 Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to Him in whatever He tells you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ 24 And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. 25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ 26 God, having raised up His servant, sent Him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”***
	1. **What is the point of Peter’s statement in verse 17 and 18? *“And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He thus fulfilled.”***
2. **First, he calls them *“brothers”* because in one sense we are all brothers in our sins.**
* **Brothers hold one another accountable for their sins.**
* **Remember Peter had pointed out 2 times in verses 13-14 how they had denied Jesus…but he would clearly remember that he had done the same thing.**
1. **He gives them a nod towards understanding their ignorance and the ignorance of the rulers, for they did not KNOW WHO Jesus was.**
* **In their rush for themselves they we ignorant of their sins**
* **In their sincere defense of their laws and traditions they could not see who Jesus was...thus ignorant of their sin.**
1. **He understands that they were ignorant because of their sin to the eternal plan and purposes of God.**
* **But they were no way innocent in this ignorance.**
* **When we sin in ignorance, it is still sin.**
1. **But just because they were ignorant in their sin, they are still accountable and responsible for their sin for they had been told who He was/is and what He had come to do.**
* **God had told them throughout the OT starting at Gen. 3:15 to be ready for Him to send the Deliverer…the Messiah.**
* **Through His prophets He told them what this Messiah would look like by what He would say and do.**
* **So there ignorance was that they were blinded in their sin…for all the evidence pointed to Jesus being the Messiah. So they were without excuse.**
1. **Peter also wants them to know something else. Their ignorant actions did not derail any of God’s pre-ordained plans. *“But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He thus fulfilled.”***
* **God had prophesied this evil and it was all for His glory and for the good of His elect.**
* **You know the text, *“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”* (Gen. 50:20)**
* **This same principle was at work in the crucifixion of Jesus and is at work in our lives. Rom. 8:28- *“…we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.”***
	1. **After calling them out…after letting them know the truth what must Peter do now and why? *“Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets long ago.”* (vs. 19-21)**
1. **What does Peter’s call to repentance tell us about the nature of God and His desire for His elect humanity?**
2. **The goal was always to bring them to repentance.**
* **This harsh truth was never given to people to make them feel bad about themselves.**
* **The goal, if they are being led by the Spirit, is to show them who they are and their need for a Savior.**
* **The goal is to encourage those who have been given ears to hear that they now need to repent and believe in the gospel. Of Jesus Christ as the One who came to save His own from their sins.**
* **Just like in Peter’s first sermon he calls those who have ears to hear to repentance. A recognition that no sin is beyond the forgiveness of God if one truly repents and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ.**
* **So while they may have been feeling beat up it was so the ones who could…would… hear the “GOOD NEWS”.**
1. **Repentance doesn’t really describe one being sorry.**
* **It is actually an act of contrition…**
	+ - **truly understanding the depth of our sin…**
		- **turning completely away for that sin…**
		- **and looking toward Christ’s forgiveness.**
		- **This may take a while to re-learn what you have always done…but there must be continual motion of leaving behind the bad behavior and this is best checked by the elders of the church and those closest to you.**
* **So this word becomes a word of Hope to all who have ears to hear.**
* **He speaks of repentance and then says, *“…and turn back…”* to emphasize the action in repentance.**
	+ - **Some have said this is better translated *“flee to God”.***
		- **They connect this with the imagery of the cities of refuge so Peter would be telling them to flee to Jesus your only refuge**
* **We must always remember becoming a Christian is not “turning over a new lease on life”…it is being a new creation in Christ Jesus. II Cor. 5:17- *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God…”***
1. **With true repentance…which is a turning away from this life and our sin to Jesus…comes the reward of our sins being blotted out and refreshment from the Lord.**
* **Peter seeks to let them in on this blessing from Christ.**
* **Once one truly repents they/we are forgiven and our record is erased and made clean.**
* **The assurance of our forgiveness gives comfort, hope and rest/ refreshment. We can pray for and receive times of rest and refreshment from the Lord today…BUT…**
* **This rest and refreshment will be fully given when Jesus returns at His 2nd advent at the end of things. *“…until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets long ago.”***
* **He has said at the end of verse 18, *‘…He thus fulfilled.”* This last statement could easily be His saying “Thus He will fulfill.”**
1. **The Reformers and Puritans talked much about repentance. Matthew Henry (1662-1714) highlighted a particular characteristic for Christians, *“It is good to be speedy in renewing our repentance; before the heart be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Delays are dangerous; green wounds may soon be cured, if taken in time, but if they stink and are corrupt, as the Psalmist complains, PS 38:5- ‘My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness..’ ,it is our fault and folly, and the cure will be difficult.”***
	1. **What is Peter doing here in verses 22-26 that affirms all that He has said up to this point? *“Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to Him in whatever He tells you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ 24 And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. 25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ 26 God, having raised up His servant, sent Him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”***
2. **He is reiterating that the Scriptures support all that has happened.**
* **Moses their revered prophet pointed to Christ’s coming from Duet. 18: 15-18. As well as the call for the people to believe because if they don’t severe judgment awaits them.**
	+ - **Remember the parable of the rich man and Lazarus? Luke 16:19-31**
		- **After asking Abraham to help his brothers not suffer as he is, the rich man seeks for Abraham to send his brothers to his father that they might be told a subtle truth. The conversation ends this way, *“They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”***
* **The prophets from Samuel on proclaimed these days.**
* **And father Abraham, it is interesting that he uses him last to make his point.**
	+ - **You call your selves the sons of the prophets and the covenant by traditions and ethnicity.**
		- **But you have missed the point… the OT Scriptures don’t say Abraham’s offsprings shall bless all the families of the earth …but he says *“offspring”* which is Jesus who will be a blessing to all the elect from every nation, tongue and tribe.**
		- **Paul explains, Gal. 3:16- *“Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, ‘And to offsprings,’ referring to many, but referring to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ who is Christ.”*  In Christ we take on this role as well…but here we are talking about neither ethnicity nor nationalism but Christ Himself...Abraham’s offspring who will come and be a blessing.**
* **The offspring is *“His servant”* as well…who came first to His own but His own did not receive Him as their own…except those who had ears to hear. To those who were called by His name, just as it had been prophesied.**
1. **Jesus has come for every one of His own…turning all of them from their wickedness.**
2. **Just to re-cap this …How does the message of the prophets concerning the Messiah apply to us today?**
3. **Considering all the times Peter uses the word *“you”* (7 times, at least in verses 11-16)*;* and then again here in verses 17-18, what can we learn from Peter’s boldness in confronting the crowd about their role in Jesus’ death?**
4. **It has only been a few weeks since some of these people were in another crowd, demanding Jesus’ crucifixion.**
5. **So Peter is not letting any of them off the hook…Jew or Gentile.**
6. **How does this help us to boldly confront sin in your own life and the lives of others?**
7. **How do these sermons reflect a proper approach to calling people to repentance?**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**January 15, 2025**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **What do these passages have in common? Gen. 12:1-3; Matthew 28:18-19; John 17:18; Acts 1:8**
4. **In Acts 1:8-*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*, Jesus tells the Apostles that they will be *“His witnesses”.* What does He mean for them and how does this apply to us today? Also… Look up Isaiah 43:10- *“You are my witnesses, declares the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed,nor shall there be any after me.”*  Similarities? What has God communicated before that is still true for His people today? What does that mean in your day to day?**
	1. **This phrase establishes the identity and role of the Israelites as God's chosen people.**
	2. **The Hebrew word for "witnesses" is "עֵדִים" (edim), which implies not only observing but also testifying to the truth.**
	3. **In the historical context, Israel is called to testify to the world about the one true God, contrasting with the surrounding nations' idolatry.**
	4. **This role is both a privilege and a responsibility, as they are to reflect God's character and works**
5. **What does Peter’s use of the OT Scriptures to prove who Jesus is and what He came to do communicate to them and then to us 2000 years later?**
6. **How do these 2 sermons of Peter (Acts 2:14-36 and Acts 3:12-26) reflect a proper approach to calling people to repentance?**
7. **In chapter 3:25, what blessings does he speak of and how will they come to God’s people according to these last verses? *“You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’***
	1. **Gen. 12:1-3- *“Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”***
		1. **The people of Israel thought of themselves as the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham, the nation through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12: 3).**
		2. **But Peter says no, this blessing comes through Jesus, the true Israelite. Yes, you had first access to it, but His blessing comes to all who will turn away from the wickedness of rejecting Him and toward Him in dependence.**
		3. **Peter is saying, you don’t get this blessing of Abraham simply by being Jewish. You get this blessing by being IN this one offspring of Abraham…in Jesus.”**
	2. **By reiterating the covenantal promise of God…he is confirming that the blessing is not simply forgiveness of their sinfulness but also the gift of righteousness for them and their children…see verse 26.- *“God, having raised up His servant, sent Him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”***
	3. **Peter had said a similar thing in Chapter 2:39- *“For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”***
	4. **Why is this still important for us today in the 21st Century? In other words, upon reading these 3 chapters how might they affect your day to day walk with Christ?**
8. **Acts 4:1-22**
	1. **Acts 4:1-12- *“And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. 5 On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, ‘By what power or by what name did you do this?’ 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing before you well. 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’”* What roles have the priests, the captain of the temple, the Sadducees, and the Sanhedrin played before in the NT?**
		1. **They were to lead the people spiritually.**
		2. **To teach**
		3. **To judge religiously and civilly as the law directed.**
		4. **The captain’s job was to keep order in the Temple.**
		5. **The Sadducees had a problem…more than the rest for they didn’t believe in the resurrection.**
		6. **But an even bigger problem was that none of them had been called into their positions.**
	2. **What do we learn about unbelief from the reaction of the Sadducees, rulers, elders, and teachers of the law in contrast to the reaction of the people in verses 1-12?**
		1. **Why would the preaching, the healing and the resulting ministry especially disturb them… *“greatly annoyed”*?**
			1. **I find it interesting that the answer given from them has to do with their perception of these men preaching about the resurrection and that this healing somehow substantiates that.**
			2. **All of this was done in the name of the Resurrected Lord…which would openly irritate the Sadducees.**
			3. **Their teaching is a seismic shift from what the leaders of the temple taught.**
			4. **Like Peter says, *“let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing before you well.”***
				* **This would greatly annoy them…because they thought they had gotten rid of this Jesus only to have His disciples say He is risen which they knew…**
				* **But also pointing out that they crucified an innocent man.**
			5. **They are both also saying that all the blessings present and future promised to God’s people… the curse eradicated, creation renewed and restored and a face-to-face relationship with the true God being experienced by all His people can only be experienced if one is in Jesus.**
				* **They had taught it is all about being Jewish and following the Law…**
				* **The laws they had changed and modified …and yet, they themselves nor the people kept them…for there can be no salvation through the law.**
			6. **The people would be looking to others rather than them…a problem they had with Jesus for that matter.**
		2. **What was the physical response of these temple leaders and why?**
			1. **Vs 3- *“And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.”* They believed they could exercise their power to stop these men…**
			2. **But look at the response from the people… *“But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.”* Can you image…I can’t!**
		3. **What was it that caused many to believe according to these first few verses?**
			1. **The power of proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.**
			2. **The answer to the covenantal promises of God.**
			3. **Causes them to repent and turn to Jesus like in Acts 2:41, 47.**
		4. **How would that one doctrine have moved people and cause many to believe? What can that teach us for today?**
			1. **1st, there are many things that people know instinctively to be true about God…**
				* **Believers and non-believers believe in some type of higher power…call Him God….**
				* **All people at their core know they have a need to be “forgiven” and restored though they may not have a clue what that restoration is and unless they have their hearts changed they will not ever understand…**

**Remember the consequence of the Fall was for all mankind.**

**The best novels have a sort of creation…of character or situation, then a falling away and then some sort of Redemption…or the idea of the underdog winning always inspires us especially when great obstacles are overcome…**

* + - 1. **2ndly, understanding this about all people we are then better able to listen to them…**
			2. **3rdly… we know by the Holy Spirit each person NEEDS to hear the truth, whether they can accept it or not, is up to the Holy Spirit… it is one reason why someone who claims to be an atheist can respect a Christian when they are authentic and consistent in their faith.**
			3. **God moves and has compassion on whom He will have compassion…He will save His elect and nothing with stand in the way of His work! When the Word is given they/we will respond.**
		1. **Look at verses 5- 7. *“On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, ‘By what power or by what name did you do this?’”* Why is the issue of power and authority so important to these religious leaders again?**
			1. **This is the same question that they asked Jesus over and over again…and the answer given confounded them because they were kept from hearing…call it hardened hearts or simply being of the non-elect.**
			2. **This is the same court that Jesus had stood before just a few weeks before. In this case this is an “executive or investigative committee” of the Sanhedrin.**
			3. **They wanted to hear their testimony so that they could do to them what they had done to Jesus…silence them!**
			4. **Peter doesn’t answer until vs 10-**
		2. **Let’s look again at verses 8-12? *“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing before you well. 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* Knowing what we know about the religious leaders and the times…it hadn’t been that long since they had crucified Jesus…what are some things you find extraordinary about Peter’s speech?**
			1. **Peter breaks out another Psalm…Psalm 118…This psalm speaks of … *vs. 11- “This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.”***
				- **Interesting…Peter and Jesus and Paul like to use the Psalms…shouldn’t we?**
				- **Peter makes clear that God Himself, by raising Jesus from the dead and seating Him at His right hand has placed Jesus as the foundation stone for this NEW Building…the new people of God…the new temple in which God dwells by His Spirit.**
				- **“New” as in the sense of fuller people…they are the remnant of the Old Testament…the elect before time and yet “new” as followers of Jesus the Son of God grow until His return.**
			2. **Though he starts out respectful he does not hold back with the accusations.**
			3. **Maybe they could handle those but what about the truth claim of vs. 12? *“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’”***
				- **When Jesus even hinted at this He was crucified.**
				- **The Greek word used back in verse 9- *“healed”* is the same word used in vs 12- but translated as *“saved”.* Not rocket science here to be saved is to be healed, made whole, restored…done only in Jesus Christ.**
				- **That healing begins the moment we respond in faith and we are joined to Christ…like Blind Bartimaeus…his faith was evident before He was healed physically.**
				- **His resurrection power goes to work on our hearts… making hearts of stone…dead and cold…into a heart alive!**
	1. **Now let’s consider 4:13-22. *“Now when they saw /discerned the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. 14 But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. 15 But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, 16 saying, ‘What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.’ 18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.’ 21 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. 22 For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.”***
		1. **What was the response of the counsel towards Peter and John? Why?**
			1. **The religious leaders were actually impressed and astonished with these *“uneducated, common men.”…*not like them at all.**
				+ **This, of course, revealed their natural prejudice in class structure…Peter was Galilean after all…but Peter and John were business men so they were NOT in anyway uneducated.**
				+ **But they saw that Peter and John connected the dots of the OT theology like one who had been trained.**
				+ **They saw that their doctrine while different was thoroughly grounded in the OT… which they had taught not just anyone could understand God’s mind.**
				+ **So they obviously knew the Scriptures and *“…they had been with Jesus.”***

**And as much as they would have like to discount Jesus’ training… He had proven Himself a formidable teacher of the Word of God…and even of their own laws of tradition.**

**That is why, they *“took note…they recognized fully…or they had to acknowledge” –* Greek meaning *epeginoskon …*that this boldness was a result of their time with Jesus.**

* + - 1. **AND…then there was the Boldness that they saw…**
				* ***“boldness”- parresia-* in the Greek means lucid and daring statements...telling it all as it really is no matter the consequences. Other words for this would be “blunt, frank, assured”!**
				* **They spoke boldly with conviction.**
				* **They spoke freely as a result of the Holy Spirit’s empowerment.**
				* **This was not a passing thing…not a preference but they were committed to this Jesus…impressed with the level of commitment and knowledge …that they would have gotten by only being eyewitnesses to Jesus’ ministry.**
				* **Jesus Himself taught with the type of boldness that caused many to marvel. They knew this and so they could easily know that these men had been with Jesus.**
			2. **And then there was the actual healed man which no one could dispute had been lame for over 40 years and a beggar because of it.**
				* **He had been truly healed.**
				* **The people were not praising Peter and John …but God… another way of substantiating the healing was from God.**
				* **They couldn’t say these men were trying to take credit themselves.**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**January 29, 2025**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review- Acts 4:1-12- *“And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. 5 On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, ‘By what power or by what name did you do this?’ 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing before you well. 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’”***
	1. **Why would the preaching, the healing and the resulting ministry especially disturb them… *“greatly annoyed”*?**
		* 1. **I find it interesting that the answer given from them has to do with their perception of these men preaching about the resurrection and that this healing somehow substantiates that.**
			2. **All of this was done in the name of the Resurrected Lord…which would openly irritate the Sadducees.**
			3. **Their teaching is a seismic shift from what the leaders of the temple taught…which would openly irritate the Sadducees.**
			4. **Like Peter says, *“let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing before you well.”***
			5. **This would also, greatly annoy them…because they thought they had gotten rid of this Jesus only to have His disciples say He is risen which they knew.**
			6. **But also pointing out that they crucified an innocent man.**
	2. **What was it that caused so many to believe according to these first few verses?**
		* 1. **The power of proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.**
			2. **The answer to the covenantal promises of God.**
			3. **Causes them to repent and turn to Jesus like in Acts 2:41, 47.**
	3. **How would that one doctrine have moved people and cause many to believe? What can that teach us for today?**
		* 1. **Also we know by the Holy Spirit each person NEEDS to hear the truth, whether they can accept it or not, is up to the Holy Spirit… it is one reason why someone who claims to be an atheist can respect a Christian when they are authentic and consistent in their faith.**
			2. **God moves and has compassion on whom He will have compassion…He will save His elect and nothing with stand in the way of His work! When the Word is given they/we will respond.**
			3. **Let’s look again at verses 8-12? *“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing before you well. 11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* At this point what are some things you find extraordinary about Peter’s speech?**
3. **Now let’s again consider 4:13-22. *“Now when they saw /discerned the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. 14 But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. 15 But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, 16 saying, ‘What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.’ 18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.’ 21 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. 22 For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.”***
4. **What does this passage tell us about the religious leaders? About John and Peter?**
	* + - 1. **The Leaders are impressed, irritated, fearful of the people, and a bit convicted that Jesus’ influence is so evident.**
				2. **Their questions and assumptions reveal their natural prejudice in class structure…Peter was Galilean after all…but Peter and John were business men so they were NOT in any way uneducated.**
				3. **But they did see that Peter and John connected the dots of the OT theology like one who had been trained.**
				4. **So they obviously knew the Scriptures and *“…they had been with Jesus.”***
				5. **And as much as they would have like to discount Jesus’ training… He had proven Himself a formidable teacher of the Word of God…and even of their own laws of tradition.**
				6. **That is why, they *“took note…they recognized fully…or they had to acknowledge” –* Greek meaning *epeginoskon …*that this boldness was a result of their time with Jesus.**
				7. **But even with all of this “positive” they also know that they are undermining their positions and teaching and must charge them…that is *“threaten them*” not to teach this “stuff” about Jesus any more. BUT… *“…they let them go, finding no way to punish them…”***
				8. **But then there was Peter and John’s Boldness-**
				9. ***Boldness-parresia-* in the Greek means lucid and daring statements...telling it all as it really is no matter the consequences. Other words for this would be “blunt, frank, assured”!**

**They spoke boldly with conviction.**

**They spoke freely as a result of the Holy Spirit’s empowerment.**

 **This was not a passing thing…not a preference but they were committed to this Jesus…impressed with the level of commitment and knowledge …that they would have gotten by only being eyewitnesses to Jesus’ ministry.**

**They challenged the “committee” of dignitaries that would have possibly caused others to slink away… *“But Peter and John answered them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”***

* + - * 1. **Jesus Himself lf taught with this type of boldness that caused many to marvel. They knew this and so they could easily know that these men had been with Jesus.**
1. **What would it mean for us to be known as people who… *“…they had been with Jesus.”***
	* + 1. **Oh, to be known as people who have been with Jesus!**
			2. **So reflecting Him that people would think we physically hung out all the time.**
			3. **We like quoting our favorite theologian even if we have never met them…in fact, we can quote them so much people would begin to wonder if we had.**
			4. **Those with spend the most time with are the Ones that will influence us the most…and this is especially true with Jesus.**
2. **What kind of threats do we come up against in our on day and age? How do we deal with those?**
3. **Now let’s consider- The Prayer- Acts 4:23-31- *“When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, ‘Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, 25 who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed—for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. 29 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’ 31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”***
	* 1. **Given all that we have seen from the beginning of this book …How important is the role of prayer in the life of these believers? What is the evidence of its importance in this text?**
			1. **It has been foundational to everything that they are and do up to this point.**

**On their release they went straight to the other believers and told them what had been said…**

**And immediately they began to pray together to God.**

* + - 1. **How should their example motivate us in our prayer life?**
		1. **What are some interesting characteristics of this prayer? How might it be a bit different than you would expect given all that Peter and John have been through?**
			1. **It is clear that they actually believe in Christ resurrected and ascended ..and so they believe that they too will be resurrected so they can and will be bold!**
			2. **It is based in the Scriptures themselves. *“…who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit”***
				1. **Since Jesus ascension, His Word had become the most important thing to them…**
				2. **They understood that this Word is given under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to David…for them and then for us.**
			3. **It is corporate in nature.**
			4. **They filled their minds with thoughts of God’s divine sovereignty before making a request…**
				1. **God is the God of creation vs. 24;**
				2. **He is the God of revelation, who spoke through the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David (vs. 25-26; Psalm 2);**
				3. **He is the God of history …who caused even His enemies to do what His power and will had decided beforehand would happen (vs. 27-28)**
			5. **It is not spoken in a defeatist way…of *“woe is us they are on to us”,* on the contrary…**
				1. **It exhibits the boldness they are praying for…**
				2. **It is short…long prayers may have their place…but this one gets to the point of the matter.**
				3. **They don’t see the opposition spoken of in vs. 25-28 as God’s plan spinning out of control but rather as God’s plan continuing as it has from the beginning. And they want to be a part of it.**
				4. **They are all in…some will die and some will be imprisoned and some will be persecuted…but they are all in…for they believe in a Savior that gave all!**
				5. **God’s sovereignty can be summed up in 3 words according to this prayer... *made, spoke and decided*…**
				6. **Their world revolved around the characteristics of the One True God…His creation , His revelation and His history…**
		2. **Many have said that this prayer is modeled after Hezekiah’s prayer in Is. 37:16-20- *“O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were no gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the LORD.”* This can lead us to conclude that one of the reasons God placed these prayers in the Bible is in fact as examples for us to emulate and use.**
		3. **Where do you suppose they learn to pray like this?**
			1. **Jesus had taught His disciple…to be clear and even short. Think the Lord’s Model Prayer in the gospels.**
			2. **He taught them to use the Scriptures in their prayers, as well.**
			3. **There wasn’t a beginner’s class that we know of…or even a topical sermon series on how to pray, the need to pray together, or simply just the need to pray.**
			4. **It is in and of itself a sign of the Spirit working in His people to drive them to prayer as if it was second nature… many of whom were brand new believers.**
			5. **And not just driving them to prayer but driving them to prayer corporately. (See 2:42-47…the crucible of learning… how to do Christianity and be a Christian.)**
		4. **How do these people address God in the beginning of their prayer?**
			1. **Sovereign- “*Despotes”* translated here as Sovereign Lord…is a Greek term used of a slave owner or a ruler of unchallengeable power…**
			2. **What are we most often called in the NT besides “in Christ”?...servants…which is actually bond-servant. Difference?**
			3. **Creator*… “who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,…”* that is, *“you who created…”***
			4. **The God of revelation... who spoke to David by His Spirit…the God of revelation…the intimate God who loves His own and wants to make sure we are kept in the loop on all that we can be.**

* + 1. **What does verse 28 tell us about the nature of God?**
			1. **He predestined these events to occur just as they did…He is sovereign over all!**
			2. **Christ’s death was not an afterthought.**
			3. **To believe in the sovereignty of God one MUST believe that these actions were predetermined before the foundations of the world… part of the eternal plan of God.**
			4. **These words do not even hint at the possibility that God was waiting for us:**
				1. **To see if we would need to be saved before He determined to send the Savior…**
				2. **Or… that God merely looked down the proverbial tunnel of time and passively saw Jesus crucified for “all” people….which opens the door to some not “choosing” to be saved…hence saying that Christ’s death and resurrection only makes it Possible for those who chose to be Christians to become Christians.**
				3. **Saying that His death is sufficient for all to believe even waters down this doctrine which emphatically states that Christ’s death and resurrection SECURED life for ALL who are His….all His elect before time…alone.**
		2. **How did they come by this knowledge of God’s complete sovereignty?**
			1. **Sovereignty was not a foreign concept to the Jew…but it was wrongly defined and taught for so many years. Plus since they do not believe in a triune Godhead they can never have a correct view of Sovereignty.**
			2. **The presence of the Spirit, again made it clear to those who are His.**
			3. **And the clear teaching of God’s Word/that is the OT and then the Words of Jesus, by Peter and the other Apostles.**
		3. **If it was so easy for them to see this doctrine why do you suppose it is so hard for many in the Church to see it today?**
			1. **A practical answer to this could be that they had such a “high” view of God already.**
				1. **They had an understanding as Jews that they had been brought up to believe in the absolute authority of God…**
				2. **Or in the case of the pagans…their gods…with a little “g”.**
			2. **Sounds nice but probably not true for the vast majority:**
				1. **Jews saw their place before God as a birthright and didn’t give their faith a lot of thought…or they listened too much to the false teachers.**
				2. **Pagans…only looked to their gods when they were in need for the most part…the gods were there for their convenience at best.**
				3. **For us…well how much does God…even for those of us who profess faith, matter in our day to day?**
				- **Many Christians are illiterate of the Bible so they are extremely weak in their faith.**
				- **Many Christians do not have a vital prayer life so many do NOT experience connection to God through Christ.**
				- **By lacking assurance because we are not proficient in the first 2 we look to others things…idols of the heart…to bring us hope and comfort which actually do neither in the end.**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**February 12, 2025**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review- The Prayer- Acts 4:23-31- *“When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, ‘Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, 25 who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed—for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. 29 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’ 31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”***
3. **What did we say last time were some interesting characteristics of this prayer?**
	* 1. **It is clear that they actually believe in Christ resurrected and ascended ..and so they believe that they too will be resurrected so they can and will be bold!**
		2. **It is based in the Scriptures themselves. *“…who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit”***
			1. **Since Jesus ascension, His Word had become the most important thing to them.**
			2. **They understood that this Word is given under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to David…for them and then for us.**
		3. **It is corporate in nature. And possibly in unison.**
		4. **They filled their minds with thoughts of God’s divine sovereignty before making a request…**
4. **God is the God of creation vs. 24;**
5. **He is the God of revelation, who spoke through the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David (vs. 25-26; Psalm 2);**
6. **He is the God of history …who caused even His enemies to do what His power and will had decided beforehand would happen (vs. 27-28)**
	* 1. **It is not spoken in a defeatist way…of *“woe is us they are on to us”,* on the contrary…**
			1. **It exhibits the boldness they are praying for…**
			2. **It is short…long prayers may have their place…but this one gets to the point of the matter.**
			3. **They don’t see the opposition spoken of in vs. 25-28 as God’s plan spinning out of control but rather as God’s plan continuing as it has from the beginning. And they want to be a part of it.**
			4. **They are all in…some will die and some will be imprisoned and some will be persecuted…but they are all in…for they believe in a Savior that gave all!**
			5. **God’s sovereignty can be summed up in 3 words according to this prayer... *made, spoke and decided*…**
			6. **Their world revolved around the characteristics of the One True God…His creation , His revelation and His history…**
7. **What does verse 28 tell us about the nature of God?**
	* 1. **He predestined these events to occur just as they did…He is sovereign over all!**
		2. **Christ’s death was not an afterthought.**
		3. **To believe in the sovereignty of God one MUST believe that these actions were predetermined before the foundations of the world… part of the eternal plan of God.**
		4. **These words do not even hint at the possibility that God was waiting for us:**
			1. **To see if we would need to be saved before He determined to send the Savior…**
			2. **Or… that God merely looked down the proverbial tunnel of time and passively saw Jesus crucified for “all” people….which opens the door to some not “choosing” to be saved…hence saying that Christ’s death and resurrection only makes it Possible for those who chose to be Christians to become Christians.**
			3. **Saying that His death is sufficient for all to believe even waters down this doctrine which emphatically states that Christ’s death and resurrection SECURED life for ALL who are His….all His elect before time…alone.**
8. **How did they come by this knowledge of God’s complete sovereignty?**
	* 1. **A practical answer to this could be that they had such a “high” view of God already.**
			1. **Sovereignty was not a foreign concept to the Jew…but it was wrongly defined and taught for so many years.**
9. **Sounds nice but probably not true for the vast majority:**
	* **Jews saw their place before God as a birthright and didn’t give their faith a lot of thought…or they listened too much to the false teachers.**
	* **Pagans…only looked to their gods when they were in need for the most part…the gods were there for their convenience at best.**
	* **For us…well how much does God…even for those of us who profess faith…matter in our day to day?**

**Many Christians are simply illiterate concerning the Bible so they are extremely weak in their faith.**

**Many Christians do not have a vital prayer life so many do NOT experience connection to God through Christ.**

**By lacking assurance because we are not proficient in the first 2 we look to others things…idols of the heart…to bring us hope and comfort which actually do neither in the end.**

1. **Plus since they do not believe in a triune Godhead they can never have a correct view of Sovereignty.**
2. **But the presence of the Spirit, again made this clear to those who are His.**
3. **And the clear teaching of God’s Word/that is the OT and then the Words of Jesus, by Peter and the other Apostles.**
4. **Let’s look closer, a minute at verse 29-31 : *“And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’ 31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”***
5. **What specifically do they ask God for to enable them to stand against the coming persecution in verse 29-30? What do you find interesting with this(these) request? They make 3 requests of God:**
	1. **That God would “consider” the threats…**
* **This is not a prayer that these threats or the ones making them would fall under some divine judgment.**
* **Nor even that the threats would go unaccomplished, so that the church could be safe,**
* **But only that God would consider them… *“…look upon their threats …”* the Greek word for *“look upon”* means *“that God would bear them in His mind*… consider them” -that He be mindful of them…making sure that God is aware even though He is.**
* **They never ask for vengeance or for the destruction of their enemies…who are God’s enemies.**
	1. ***“grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness…”* …**
* **They were undeterred by the Council’s threats or prohibition…**
* **When the Lord grants this gift to His people they are able to speak eloquently and effectively in a hostile environment**
	1. **That God would reveal Himself in healing and in signs and wonders through the Name of Jesus. *“while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”***
* **They ask for mercy…knowing that the Word and the signs would go together…**
* **Knowing that the signs only serving to confirm the Word.**
1. **What answer does God give to them that He has heard their prayers in verse 31?**
2. **The place was shaken…their place of worship was shaken…shaking of the place would be a confirmation from God using something familiar to confirm His presence like on the Day of Pentecost.**
3. **God sends a new outpouring of the Spirit something that happened then each time believers were being called upon to do something specific for God…**
* **A mission, if you will...in this case a confirmation and a strengthening to keep doing what they had been doing so effectively by the power of the Spirit.**
* **A new filling afresh would be revealed in their witness of word and deed or the Sanhedrin wouldn’t have been so upset.**
* **Having been filled at Pentecost…the Spirit now fills them/us… refreshes us to be able to do the task at hand…something that happened a lot more then as things were being established that happens today.**
* **But we are still filled afresh each time we repent and get back on track to glorifying the Lord.**
1. **So it is an answer to prayer …but they are first and foremost signs of what God had already confirmed in sending His Spirit into these people.**
* **What I mean by this is that we have to put the first thing first….or… it may appear that we are saying that God does what He does because we prayed…is what it always sounds like when Christian say God answered my prayers because I prayed.**
* **He does answer our prayers and He does it from our perspective “when” we pray.**
* **But…When we are in prayer…the Spirit is already revealing Himself because we went there…to prayer…in the first place.**
1. **We see the Spirit at work here in the boldness He had originally given before they ever prayed for it and then afterwards as they continued to boldly proclaim the gospel.**
2. **For they/we have been empowered by the Spirit to answer the questions with boldness that so many have:**
* **What is this world coming to?**
* **What is my purpose?**
* **What about my identity?**
* **What is life for?**
1. **So with all that we have seen, why do we need to pray?**
2. **The big reason is this: He commands…He expects, but even more than these He desires for us to pray to stay in relationship with Him.**
3. **But, it is also the methodology that God uses to reveal to us His grace.**
* **When we pray we are of a mind to see and experience God’s answers in this temporal world.**
* **When we don’t seek Him through His Word and prayer we will never fully experience His presence and we will always question what God is doing…never being able to fully trust Him.**
1. **Prayer along with studying and implementing His Word along with the sacraments and church discipline are ALL the building blocks of the faith. Neglecting any of these puts the others in jeopardy of being shallow at best and non-existent at worst.**
2. **Why wouldn’t we want to pray, since God hears our prayers? Ps. 116:1-2- *“I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. Because He inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.”***
3. **Richard Sibbes said, *“Seeing, then, God hears our prayers, let us think of this glorious privilege, that we have liberty to go to the throne of grace in all our wants. The whole world is not worthy of this one privilege.”***
4. **What truths from this passage equip you to face the resistance that will come against the Gospel and the Church?**
5. **Read Acts 4:32-37- *“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35 and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. 36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.”***
6. **How are verses 32-37 an answer to their prayer of 4:24-30? What is happening that is a clear sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit?**
7. **The full number…everyone who believed were of one heart and soul.**
* **This unity is a wonderful evidence of the work of God Spirit among them.**
* **Because of their unity in Christ they regarded people as more important than things.**
1. **They saw themselves as family everything could and should be shared…**
* **They saw it as their calling to help one another in their times of need…physically and spiritually was a sign of that love.**
* **They was no class structure in this family…everyone had everything in common.**
* **This statement… *“…they had everything in common”* recognizes among them all that what they have came to them from God…it all belong to Him.**
* **Because God had touched their lives so deeply, they found it easy to shall all these things in common.**
* **This is true *koinonia-* fellowship-unity- oneness!**
* **No one waited for someone else to step up…a need was related and it was all hands on deck. No one had to be told what to do.**
* **No one superior to the other…even if some had more than others.**
* **Historically, many who became believers in that day and age would lose everything they had especially if they were Jews. So the church is hit with its first crisis, if you will, and it comes away with flying colors for…Subsequently there were no needy among them.**
* **Historically to own property in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was to have a stake in God and all his promises to bless His people.**
* **This is why there were certain laws in the OT applying to land and why the land would be returned to its original owner in the year of jubilee.**
* **But even more than a stake in the Promised Land they began to realize that it was just land that symbolized the stake they had in Jesus which brought with IT all the blessings by faith in Christ.**
* **All that matter was the inheritance that they/we have in Christ Jesus….**
* **So with this in mind they were finding their cultural grip on their things loosening … the temporal no longer held grip because it wasn’t about being a good Jew that would get them their true inheritance but by being in Christ.**
* **So now they want to meet the needs of their new family.**
* **Luke wants us to see a particular person who sold off land to meet the needs of others. We see Barnabas (Son of Encouragement)…**
* **He is selling one of his fields to help with the ability to take care of the needs of the others.**
* **He sold off some of the family land and gave it to the Apostles with no strings attached.**
* **So possession of things still went on …no socialism here.**
* **For that is what family does… *“…and great grace was upon them all.”* The Greek could easily read “Mega Grace”-Not MAGA Grace……Abundant grace!**
1. **They immediately are speaking the Word of God boldly…**
* **The Apostles with great power (think boldness) were fulfilling their apostolic responsibilities to be His witnesses of Christ’s resurrection.**
* **The central part of their message was the resurrection of Christ.**
* **This was the message they had been commissioned to preach and teach and is the message we are to as well.**
* **They opposed the Sanhedrin’s command for they feared God and chose to listen to Him rather than men.**
1. **It has been often stated, falsely to be sure, that these verses along with the verses in Acts 2:42-47 make it clear that Christians are NOT to own property. How would you refute that claim from the text itself?**
2. ***“…no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own…”***
* **Obviously they own things…**
* **We will see this also confirm in the next chapter where Peter affirms Ananias “right” to own property.**
1. ***“…from time to time those who own lands or houses sold them…”***
* **This was done when needed to be able to contribute to the need... this was a sacrificial act on their part.**
* **Was this an early form of spreading the wealth making everyone equal…kind of thing? Show me from the text.**
* **The text clearly reflects distribution of such moneys were to be proportionate to true need…it had nothing to do with everyone being economically equal….vs.35 clarifies this.**
* **The Greek here does not mean that everyone sold all their property at once. Instead, from time to time, as need arose this was done to take care of the needs of the family.**
1. **John Calvin wrote these contemporary words in 1555 or so. *“We must have hearts that are harder than iron if we are not moved by the reading of this narrative. In those days the believers gave abundantly of what was their own; we in our day are content not just jealously to retain what we possess, but callously to rob others… They sold their own possessions in those days; in our day it is the lust to purchase that reigns supreme. At that time love made each man’s own possessions common property for those in need; in our day such is the inhumanity of many, that they begrudge to the poor a common dwelling upon the earth, the common use of water, air and sky.”* (Calvin’s Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. 1)**
2. **So what is Luke saying according to this text are signs that someone is filled with the Holy Spirit?**
3. **There was a fundamental solidarity of love which the believers enjoyed through the indwelling of the Spirit…their economic sharing was simply one expression of the union of their hearts and minds through the filling of the Spirit.**
4. **We are unified in Word and deed.**
5. **So what are we to take from these verses for use in our day and age?**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**February 26, 2025**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **In verse 29-30, what 3 requests of God did we see they made and what, if anything, stands out to you about these requests? *“And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”***
4. **That God would “consider” the threats…**
	1. **This is not a prayer that these threats or the ones making them would fall under some divine judgment.**
	2. **Nor even that the threats would go unaccomplished, so that the church could be safe,**
	3. **But only that God would consider them… *“…look upon their threats …”* the Greek word for *“look upon”* means *“that God would bear them in His mind*… *consider them*” -that He be mindful of them…making sure that God is aware even though He is.**
	4. **They never ask for vengeance or for the destruction of their enemies…who are God’s enemies.**
5. ***“grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness…”* …**
	1. **They were undeterred by the Council’s threats or prohibition…**
	2. **When the Lord grants this gift to His people they are able to speak eloquently and effectively in a hostile environment**
6. **That God would reveal Himself in healing and in signs and wonders through the Name of Jesus. *“while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”***
	1. **They ask to see God work…knowing that the Word and the signs would go together…**
	2. **Knowing that the signs only serving to confirm the Word.**
7. **Acts 4:32-37- *“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35 and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. 36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.”* What characteristics do we see of believers filled with the Holy Spirit in the text?**
8. **The full number…everyone who believed were of one heart and soul.**
9. **This unity is a wonderful evidence of the work of God Spirit among them. Unity is on display out of desire and necessity.**
10. **Because of their unity in Christ they regarded people as more important than things.**
11. **They saw themselves as family everything could and should be shared.**
12. **They saw it as their calling to help one another in their times of need…physically and spiritually was a sign of that love.**

**They was no class structure in this family…everyone had everything in common.**

1. **Luke wants us to see a particular person who sold off land to meet the needs of others. We see Barnabas (Son of Encouragement)…**
	* + 1. **He is selling one of his fields to help with the ability to take care of the needs of the others.**
			2. **He sold off some of the family land and gave it to the Apostles with no strings attached.**
			3. **So possession of things still went on …no socialism here.**
			4. **For this is what family does… *“…and great grace was upon them all.”* Abundant grace.**
2. **They immediately are speaking the Word of God boldly…**
3. **The Apostles with great power (think boldness) were fulfilling their apostolic responsibilities to be His witnesses of Christ’s resurrection.**
	* + 1. **The central part of their message was the resurrection of Christ.**
			2. **This was the message they had been commissioned to preach and teach and is the message we are to as well.**
4. **They opposed the Sanhedrin’s command for they feared God and chose to listen to Him rather than men.**
5. **Acts 5:1-11- *“But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and with his wife’s knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles’ feet. 3 But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.’ 5 When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. 6 The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. 7 After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter said to her, ‘Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.’ And she said, ‘Yes, for so much.’ 9 But Peter said to her, ‘How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.’ 10 Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.”***
	* + 1. **Did you notice that “But” is the first word of chapter 5? What does that normally indicate?**
6. **We are going to read an account of a couple that does many of the same things Barnabas did …BUT …there is a key difference.**
7. **There was a protocol that at least implied a complete giving of the gift …*“Barnabas (which means son of encouragement)… sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.”* (Acts. 4:37)**
	* + 1. **Generally speaking, why do you think Ananias and Sapphira’s offenses were so grave?**
8. **Generally speaking, it went against everything that was just displayed in verses 32-37.**
9. **Not just a NT principle- Prov. 14:2*-“Whoever walks in uprightness fears the LORD, but he who is devious in his ways despises Him.”***
10. **I find it interesting that Luke and the Church does not hold back concerning the sin within its ranks*.***
11. **This is done in the infancy of the Church to show they aren’t withholding anything of importance.**
12. **Revival/Reformation does not guarantee the absence of sin in the community. Even with so many rallying to Christ in true faith there will always be posers who want to look hole but aren’t really…their fruit will exposes them eventually.**
13. **Their compromise and personal corruption could affect the unity that God had put into place.**
	* + 1. **But let’s consider this a bit more closely…were Ananias and Sapphira required to sell the land and lay all the money at the apostle’s feet?** **Why or why not?**
14. **No there was no mandate…but if the piece of property was sold based on verses 32-37 the whole amount was to be delivered.**
15. **It wasn’t even wrong for them to keep some back.**
16. **There was sense of trust…in this that people actually did what they said they would do.**
	* + 1. **What then was their sin?**
				1. **Their lying-duplicity, hypocrisy -self-exaltation=wanting to look good in the eyes of others =idolatry which threatened the purity and integrity of the Church.**
17. **This was their sin…wanting to be seen as generous like everyone else …looking pious…when they were not.**
18. **When all along they had conspired to sin against the brothers and God Himself.**
	* + 1. **But the lie, either verbally or implied, was that they had given the whole proceeds just as Barnabas and others to help with the needs of the needy.**
			2. **They presented their gift as IF they were giving the whole of the proceeds of the sale of their land.**
	1. **It shows, also, how one sinner can pull in another sinner (5:2). They shared commitment to deceive other believers and the God they professed. Lies seem to multiply!**
		* 1. **Interesting, don’t you think, already in this young church people are only thinking of themselves.**
			2. **Conspiracy= division=rejection of God’s law and God’s chosen authority over us.**
			3. **Which ultimately comes to a rejection of the love we are supposed to have for one another in Christ.**
	2. **What would they gain by lying about the money they received?**
		* 1. **They would look generous in front of the Apostles and the others.**
			2. **They would look sacrificial when in fact they weren’t.**
			3. **They would look like they cared for the needs of others when they were more interested in themselves.**
	3. **These were all things they determined to do. So what was Satan’s role in this? *“Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?”*  How was he trying to destroy the church?**
		* 1. **Peter knew:**
				1. **Luke doesn’t tell us how he knew.**
				2. **Could have been the nature of these 2 simply manifesting itself with an uncertainty of actions.**
				3. **Could have been the Spirit worked through extraordinary means.**
				4. **Moral compromise and corruption from within the church.**
				5. **He sees where this type of deceit comes from…Satan.**
			2. **If this could happen to people in our midst it could happen to us all thus seeking to cause paralysis within the body.**
			3. **God nipped this in the bud early but it would always be a way that Satan would seek to divide believers.**
			4. **Think the Garden and Adam and Eve…**
				1. **Satan makes a “credible” argument when one is bent on doing things their own way. *“Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit.”***
				2. **And then we give in…thinking no one will get hurt…after all the needy get something and we don’t lose as much…a win- win right?**
			5. **Jesus said that He would build His Church and that hell will not prevail against it which means that the powers of hell are going to come against it….and Satan isn’t wasting anytime.**
			6. **Satan may be at work to threaten the integrity and purity of this new community…BUT GOD…will preserve it even from itself.**
19. **Nothing has hurt the witness and work of the church more than hypocrisy…a lack of authenticity.**
	1. **G.K. Chesterton once said, *“The greatest argument against the truth of Christianity is the lives of Christians.”***
	2. **There is a story told of Henry VII King of England’s personal physician/chaplain. It is said that one day this man was talking with his priest, and the priest knowing this chaplain to be a man who could read multiple languages as well as Greek, gave him his Greek copies of the Gospels to read. After reading them he brought them back to his priest with a concerned look on his forehead. The priest inquired as to the problem with the man, his student, and the chaplain/physician to King Henry said, *“Either these are NOT the gospels or I am not a Christian.”***
		* 1. **Luke clearly intends for us to see the death of Ananias and Sapphira as a work of divine judgment. Why was the punishment so severe?**
20. **This type of thing is not new…while not common it is not new…when God’s holiness has been disregarded among his people.**
21. **Think Nadab and Abihu who *“offered unauthorized fire before the LORD.”***
22. **Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and was immediately struck down in II Sam. 6.**
23. **We have a tendency to be shocked by these another similar occurrences when God chose to act without impunity and swiftly…but we should be more shocked that it doesn’t happen more often!**
24. **I wonder sometimes if these instances of instantaneous judgment are there so that we will know that we dare not presume upon His mercy…**
25. **The gravity of their sin.**
26. **They had lied not just against Peter as they had presumed which in their mind was acceptable…sin does that…justifies itself.**
27. **But more importantly against the Holy Spirit.**
28. **Peter stressed this by repeatedly saying that their lie was not directed against him, but against God.**
29. **God hates liars and hypocrites.**
30. **Interesting, when Sapphira is confronted and she lies, Peter says to her, *“How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?”***
31. **Testing the Spirit or the Lord depending upon the context is never a good idea.**
	* + 1. **When the children of Israel complained that God had led them out to die of thirst in the desert, Moses describes this as putting the Lord to the test.**
				1. **They were putting His patience with them to the test.**
				2. **They were grumbling and murmuring and in so doing they were questioning God and His promises …His very nature.**
				3. **They were saying…they knew best.**
			2. **When Satan tempted Jesus to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple to prove that God would save Him, Jesus answered with Moses’ words, *“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”***
	1. **In their deceit they were testing the Spirit and the leadership to know if they were lying.**
	2. **But also, they were testing to see if the Lord would actually tolerate being lied to.**
	3. **In this case His judgment came swiftly…there was a lot at stake in this new church.**
	4. **His judgments are sometimes slow, but they are always certain and correct.**
	5. **The author of Hebrews says it best, *“The Lord will judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of the living God.”* Heb. 10:31**
32. **They also sought to break down the unity they were all exhibiting.**
33. **The witness was that they were to act one way as a people and Ananias and Sapphira were duplicitous.**
34. **God’s people are to live transparent lives before one another.**
35. **We are not to place anything between one another.**
36. **It shows the need for church leadership and church discipline.**
37. **Church discipline is done not so much because of the sin committed but because of the lack of repentance.**
38. **But let us notice that "church discipline" does not mean that we confront every Christian about ever sin. Since we are all sinners — that would leave no time for anything else in the church.**
39. **Rather, we are to confront people who are refusing to repent, for spiritual hypocrisy. Paul**
40. **The open, strong public rebuke by Peter here in Acts 5 is a necessary thing. Probably this event was unusual at this point since this is such a young church but God was taking special care with it!**
41. **There was no repentance only hiding the truth …deception comes at a high cost. Both had conspired to do this.**
42. **Christ is exalted by the integrity of His church.**
43. **This kind of judgment tells us that God is focused on His people in a special way, for He disciplines those He loves.**
44. **In this case the lesson was for the rest of the Church. For Ananias and Sapphira had shown by their fruit that they were not actually part of them.**
45. **Whenever we set out to deceive or to protect ourselves we lose sight of the oneness we are to have in Christ.**
46. **It is like keeping secrets…that never ends well for both the deceiver and those who have been deceived.**
47. **When God responds so promptly…lessons are learned by the Church and the Church is spared a worse drift than when the church does nothing about the sin within its midst. Vs. 11- *“And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.”***
	* + 1. **As we just said, 5:11 states, “*And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard these things.”* How would this type of “fear” help the church then and now?**
48. **This passage testifies, along with the rest of Scripture, that there is to be a healthy and appropriate place for fear in the life of faith.**
49. **We are never to get to comfortable with God. When we do we will not bring Him glory as the Almighty God.**
50. **This is a holy fear that is not to be watered down into mere respect.**
51. **This healthy fear comes from knowing who He is…**
52. **What He expects of those who call themselves by His name**
53. **Knowing what He is able to do whenever He sees fit.**
54. **Also, the whole church must have sense of the gravity of what it means to trifle with the Holy God.**
55. **Jesus may have said to us, *“Fear not!”* But He also said, “*I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear Him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you fear Him!”***
56. **Jesus is telling us not to waste our fear on anyone less than the Almighty God…for when we fear the Lord we have nothing to fear from Satan or ourselves.**
57. ***Many are not comfortable with this word “*fear”… feeling it too strong, since we relate *“fear”* to horror we can’t apply this term to our relationship with our Heavenly Father after all I John says, *“There is no fear in love. Perfect love drives out fear.”***
58. **But to be honest with the text I John doesn’t really speak to the issue at hand.**
	* + 1. **However, we would rather use terms like “awe” or “reverence”.**
			2. **We say this is all the Bible really means when it speaks of the *“fear of the LORD.”***
			3. **But in reality it means even more. Think of those who have stood before God and trembled…IN fact it is a command…**
				1. **Ex. 20:18-20- *“Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, ‘You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.’ Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of Him may be before you, that you may not sin.”***
				2. **Ps. 2:11- *“Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.”***
				3. **Ps. 96:9- *“Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before Him, all the earth!”***
				4. **Look at Isaiah 6:1-7. What causes true humbleness if it is not a combination of reverence and good ol’ fashioned fear?**
				5. **Look at Phil. 2:12-13- *“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*.” We should not be surprised to find our flesh trembling and quaking before our relentless God who will not leave us alone, but is constantly pushing us beyond what we think we can endure.**
			4. **Just think about it: If you had been one of the young men who buried Ananias and Sapphira, how do you think you would have felt? Twice the text tells us that *“fear struck”* the believers. Why?**
59. **They knew they were in God’s presence.**
60. **They saw His swift decisive act against one of their own.**
61. **They worried about their own misdeeds. A recognition of their own sinfulness.**
62. **These and more caused great fear and trembling.**
63. **A recognition as C.S. Lewis stated once…he is not safe…but He is good.**
	* + 1. **How do you respond to the severity of God’s judgment?**
			2. **Which of these lessons strikes you as something we need to learn today?**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**March 5, 2025**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
	* + 1. **Generally speaking, why do you think Ananias and Sapphira’s offenses were so grave?**
3. **Generally speaking, it went against everything that was just displayed in verses 32-37.**
4. **Not just a NT principle- Prov. 14:2*-“Whoever walks in uprightness fears the LORD, but he who is devious in his ways despises Him.”***
5. **I find it interesting that Luke and the Church does not hold back concerning the sin within its ranks*.***
6. **This is done in the infancy of the Church to show they aren’t withholding anything of importance.**
7. **Revival/Reformation does not guarantee the absence of sin in the community. Even with so many rallying to Christ in true faith there will always be posers who want to look hole but aren’t really…their fruit will exposes them eventually.**
8. **Their compromise and personal corruption could affect the unity that God had put into place.**
	* + 1. **Luke clearly intends for us to see the death of Ananias and Sapphira as a work of divine judgment. Why was the punishment so severe?**
9. **This type of thing is not new…while not common it is not new…when God’s holiness has been disregarded among his people.**
10. **Think Nadab and Abihu who *“offered unauthorized fire before the LORD.”***
11. **Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and was immediately struck down in II Sam. 6.**
12. **We have a tendency to be shocked by these another similar occurrences when God chose to act without impunity and swiftly…but we should be more shocked that it doesn’t happen more often!**
13. **The gravity of their sin.**
14. **Interesting, when Sapphira is confronted and she lies, Peter says to her, *“How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?”***
15. **Testing the Spirit or the Lord depending upon the context is never a good idea.**
	* + 1. **When the children of Israel complained that God had led them out to die of thirst in the desert, Moses describes this as putting the Lord to the test.**
			2. **When Satan tempted Jesus to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple to prove that God would save Him, Jesus answered with Moses’ words, *“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”***
	1. **In their deceit they were testing the Spirit and the leadership to know if they were lying.**
	2. **But also, they were testing to see if the Lord would actually tolerate being lied to.**
	3. **In this case His judgment came swiftly…there was a lot at stake in this new church.**
	4. **His judgments are sometimes slow, but they are always certain and correct.**
	5. **The author of Hebrews says it best, *“The Lord will judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of the living God.”* Heb. 10:31**
16. **They also sought to break down the unity they were all exhibiting.**
17. **It shows the need for church leadership and church discipline.**
18. **There was no repentance only hiding the truth …deception comes at a high cost. Both had conspired to do this.**
19. **Christ is exalted by the integrity of His church.**
20. **This kind of judgment tells us that God is focused on His people in a special way, for He disciplines those He loves.**
21. **In this case the lesson was for the rest of the Church. For Ananias and Sapphira had shown by their fruit that they were not actually part of them.**
22. **Whenever we set out to deceive or to protect ourselves we lose sight of the oneness we are to have in Christ.**
23. **It is like keeping secrets…that never ends well for both the deceiver and those who have been deceived.**
24. **When God responds so promptly…lessons are learned by the Church and the Church is spared a worse drift than when the church does nothing about the sin within its midst. Vs. 11- *“And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.”* Why?**
25. **Acts 5:12-16- *“Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico. 13 None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. 14 And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, 15 so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. 16 The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.***

**What is verse 12 communicating to us?**

* 1. **In verse 12 we read that *“many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the disciples.”* This was definitely An answer to the prayer back in Acts 4:29-30- *“And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”***
	2. **But it wasn’t just the people in Jerusalem taking note as we see from the rest of the text but those outside. Vs. 16 says, *“The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bring the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were All healed.”***
		1. **What this means is that people are no longer bringing their needs to the temple leaders.**
			1. **They are coming to the temple, but not to the leaders. And the temple leaders don’t like it much.**
			2. **The temple was still the center of these people lives for the moment…a place where they could maximize their meeting space in an area that was not used any longer.**
		2. **The people are coming to these apostles who had been with Jesus because the apostles are doing exactly as Jesus had done…healing people and removing unclean spirts as signs that the kingdom was at hand just as Jesus said.**
	3. **Solomon’s Portico or porch was a piece of Solomon’s temple that had been spared by the Babylonians when they sacked the Temple under Nebuchadnezzar.**
		1. **It is thought that it was in disarray and no one used it much… (Josephus speaks of a work order put forward when Herod was rebuilding the temple to renovate this area but it appears to have been denied.)**
		2. **Jesus walked there, it is here that the lame man was healed and Peter preached his 2nd sermon in Acts 3, and it is where the early church met according to our text.**
		3. **But there wasn’t enough room for all those needed to be healed to be healed so it stretched out into the city outside the temple walls. As vs. 15, says, *“…so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them.”***
			1. **Verse 13 is an interesting verse. What is it communicating? *“None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem.”***
1. **Interestingly enough, it is communicating that God had placed the fear of God into any curious ones…those who were insincere…they were not going to be part of such a “scary” movement.**
2. **However, these apostles and the church were held in high regard.**
3. **The Christians were receiving favor from the people for their integrity and faith.**
4. **Every one also knew from the death of Ananias and Sapphira that following God in Christ was a serious thing. This act would reduce the level of casual commitment, at least at first.**
5. **For the people kept bringing their sick and possessed to them and God gave the necessary results to prove that His Kingdom is reversing the curse.**
	* + 1. **Having said that though we then have verse 14. What is being communicated here? *“And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women…”***
6. **Taking into account these 2 verses (13-14) we see the on-going paradox of how some are alarmed and even turned away by the Word of God while others are drawn in and it is appeal to them.**
7. **Though people knew it was a serious thing to be a Christian, the Spirit of God kept adding to the number as the Word was proclaimed and people lived the Word out in their daily lives.**
8. ***“Believers”-* elect” were added to the church…Greek word- “ecclesia” usually translated church in the NT. Which the same word in the Greek OT meant *“congregation” or “assembly of God’s covenant people”.***
9. ***“both men and women”* Luke mentions women and their involvement in the church often even in the his Gospel account. Women were seen as equal members something radically different than the temple and synagogue worship.**
	* + 1. **Again, what is the purpose for all of these signs and wonders if faith is not by sight?**
10. **Confirming God’s presence with this “new” church…giving them signs and wonders just like He did in the OT because He knows of our need to know.**
11. **Also, and not at all least among the reasons…is that He was also confirming the Apostles authority to speak and act for Him and that He was not with the religious leaders of the day.**
12. **Remember as we have said many times these signs and wonder are given primarily to authenticate the message. They back up the Word.**
13. **Also, this demonstration of these signs and wonders demonstrated God’s power in mercy and grace just as He had demonstrated His power in judgment.**
	* + 1. **What is the purpose for this information today when we obviously don’t see these things happening like this?**
14. **Acts 5:17-41**

**What reasons do you find for the actions that the high priest and the Sadducees took? What do they seem to realize? Vs. 17-18, *“But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy 18 they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.”***

* 1. **The apostles success with the people was threatening the control they had over the people…or confirmed that they already had lost control.**
	2. **They also realize that they are not the ones God is speaking to even if they had a misguided understanding now they knew God was speaking to these simple men…and they were jealous.**
	3. **Jealous…the Sadducees are the religious leaders duly appointed by themselves not God…which kind of says it all.**
		1. **This is the same high priestly council (or at least part of it) that had been jealous of Jesus. Think Matthew where Pilate also knew their motivation, 27:18- *“For he knew that it was out of envy (jealousy or zeal for themselves) that they had delivered Him up.”***
		2. **Given their status…as usurpers of the God-ordained and designed priestly role they would have been indignant and jealous for the position was all they had…certainly not God’s call and authority or faith which it was becoming more clear the apostles did have…though they wouldn’t want to admit it.**
		3. **They actually thought they could stop the spread of the gospel through intimidation. Hadn’t work with Jesus or those who followed Him so far.**

**How does God intervene on behalf of the Apostles the first time? Vs. 19-21a- *“But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 ‘Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.’ 21 And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.”***

1. **He releases them to preach for Him…**
2. **Prison doors are no match for the power of God.**
3. **So an angel of the Lord simply opens the prison door. After all Hebrews 1:14 tells us, *“Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?”***
4. **To oppose the Sadducees and the high priest…to humiliate them.**
5. **The intimidation of a spiritual bankrupt religious council is no match for the clear instruction of an angel of the Lord.**
6. **The Sadducees didn’t believe in angels so this would have added to their humiliation….and God’s humor is seen iin sending an angel.**
7. **Who do these religious leaders think they are to try and stop the very words of Life…as Jesus said…that if people didn’t do it the very stones would praise God!**
8. **They are let out to do what they had been doing when they were arrested… *“speaking the words of this Life”***
	* + 1. **Like is capitalized here to denote a particular Life.**
			2. **Life in Christ.**
9. **And where are they preaching? In the temple…possibly back in Solomon’s Portico.**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**March 12, 2025**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
	* + 1. **What lessons do we learn for today from vs. 16? *“The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.”***
			2. **Again, what is the purpose for all of these signs and wonders if faith is not by sight?**
3. **Confirming God’s presence with this “new” church…giving them signs and wonders just like He did in the OT because He knows of our need to know.**
4. **Also, and not at all least among the reasons…is that He was also confirming the Apostles authority to speak and act for Him and that He was not with the religious leaders of the day.**
5. **Remember as we have said many times these signs and wonder are given primarily to authenticate the message. They back up the Word.**
6. **Also, this demonstration of these signs and wonders demonstrated God’s power in mercy and grace just as He had demonstrated His power in judgment.**
7. **Acts 5:17-41**

**What reasons do you find for the actions that the high priest and the Sadducees took? What do they seem to realize? Vs. 17-18, *“But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy 18 they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.”***

* 1. **The apostles success with the people was threatening the control they had over the people…or confirmed that they already had lost control.**
	2. **They also realize that they are not the ones God is speaking to even if they had a misguided understanding now they knew God was speaking to these simple men…and they were jealous.**
	3. **Jealous…the Sadducees are the religious leaders duly appointed by themselves not God…which kind of says it all.**
		1. **This is the same high priestly council (or at least part of it) that had been jealous of Jesus. Think Matthew where Pilate also knew their motivation, 27:18- *“For he knew that it was out of envy (jealousy or zeal for themselves) that they had delivered Him up.”***
		2. **Given their status…as usurpers of the God-ordained and designed priestly role they would have been indignant and jealous for the position was all they had…certainly not God’s call and authority or faith which it was becoming more clear the apostles did have…though they wouldn’t want to admit it.**
		3. **They actually thought they could stop the spread of the gospel through intimidation. Hadn’t work with Jesus or those who followed Him so far.**

**How does God intervene on behalf of the Apostles the first time? Vs. 19-21a- *“But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 ‘Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.’ 21 And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.”***

1. **He releases them to preach for Him…**
2. **Prison doors are no match for the power of God.**
3. **So an angel of the Lord simply opens the prison door. After all Hebrews 1:14 tells us, *“Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?”***
4. **To oppose the Sadducees and the high priest…to humiliate them.**
5. **The intimidation of a spiritual bankrupt religious council is no match for the clear instruction of an angel of the Lord.**
6. **The Sadducees didn’t believe in angels so this would have added to their humiliation….and God’s humor is seen iin sending an angel.**
7. **Who do these religious leaders think they are to try and stop the very words of Life…as Jesus said…that if people didn’t do it the very stones would praise God!**
8. **They are let out to do what they had been doing when they were arrested… *“speaking the words of this Life”***
	* + 1. **Like is capitalized here to denote a particular Life.**
			2. **Life in Christ.**
9. **And where are they preaching? In the temple…possibly back in Solomon’s Portico.**

**How does God intervene, at least, at the beginning of the 2nd incarceration? You have to love this: Vss. 21b-26- *“Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22 But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, 23 ‘We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside.’ 24 Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. 25 And someone came and told them, ‘Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.’ 26 Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.”***

1. **The whole Sanhedrin was assembled the next day to have the prisoners stand before the nation’s religious leaders…to wonder what to do with them…just as they had done with Jesus. I’m sure the irony was not lost on all of them.**
2. **This council was made up of 70 men.**
3. **It included Sadducees and Pharisees and scribes.**
4. **The angel had done his work so well…that everyone was unaware of their being gone from their cells. How embarrassing it would have been for them that the prisoners had escaped and no one even knew.**
5. **Every time the gospel meets opposition in Acts, God rescue to advance its message anyway.**
6. **He places the fear of the people in the guards…sounds similar to when the High Priest had sent the guard to collect Jesus.**
7. **The apostles were soon arrested again…**
8. B**ut probably, this time, more along the line of a request, “Will you come with us, please? …as not to upset the people who were listening and being healed by them.**

**I can’t even imagine the feeling in the Sanhedrin…having to wait, because the apostle had somehow been let out of prison, found and basically asked if they would come back in so not to cause a riot among the people. Then they finally get them back before them (as everyone had been waiting). Vs. 27-28-*“And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, 28 saying, ‘We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.’”*  What did the high priest say and did it have much force? Why or why not?**

1. **The captain with his officers brought them before the whole council to intimidate them again…but they had been here before. The apostles knew …really knew…that God was with them so what was there to be intimidated about?**
2. **They said to them, *“We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.”***
3. **They had commanded them before to not teach in the name of Jesus…been there…done that.**
4. **And the apostles had told them that if let out they would do just that in obedience to God over man…and then the council let them go…so not much to fear here.**
5. **They made an interesting admission, *“…yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching…”***
	* + 1. **Even the accusation of the high priest was a wonderful testimony to the effectiveness of the apostle’s message.**
			2. **God uses everything at His disposal to witness for Himself...even in the midst of this illustrious council.**
			3. **They even understood the impact among the people…requiring them to bring them in to the council by invitation rather than force.**
6. **They also recognized the accusation Peter had been making about their role in Jesus’ death though they didn’t want to mention Jesus’ name… “The-One–Who–Must-Not-Be –Named”**
7. **How did Peter and the Apostles respond to such questioning? Vs. 29-32- *“But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging Him on a tree. 31 God exalted Him at His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.”***
8. **Again they reiterated who they are to be obedient to FIRST.**
	* + 1. **This testimony was also an answer to prayer since once again we see the boldness granted to them by God.**
				1. **This was not a defense by the apostles. This was not a plea for mercy…they had no reason for either. God had proved Himself faithful.**
				2. **Authority of those over us is something we should be concerned with but not when they openly oppose God’s Word.**
			2. **This stands in stark contrast to the Sanhedrin which was more concerned with the opinion of men and the keeping or getting back their authority among the people.**
9. **They spoke of their identity …a testimony faithful to the foundations of the Christian faith. *“The God of our fathers raised Jesus..”***
10. **But then Peter spoke to them of their sin and the repentance and forgiveness through Jesus Christ…even to them…as other priest will do. Acts 6:7- *“And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.”***
11. **And what the apostles have said is true since they were there and saw what happened…and what Jesus had commanded.**
	* + 1. **Mark 1:15- *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”***
			2. **Oh, and so was the Holy Spirit, though I am not sure what if anything that would have done accept irritate them more…which it does.**
12. **What does their response teach us for today?**

 **Why, then, was the council enraged/furious with them? Vs. 33-*“When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.”***

1. **They were enraged/furious!**
2. **Peter had clearly and very briefly explained the core ideas of the Gospel…**

**But because of their unbelief at the moment they are furious…**

**This is the same message they heard the first time , in their hearing. Can you say…Broken Record?**

1. **We can imagine what went through their minds, right?!?**

**Who are you to tell us we need to repent.**

**We don’t need any forgiveness.**

**Don’t blame us for Jesus’ death.**

**Don’t you know who we are?**

1. **So they plotted to kill them…they wanted to kill them all. Sound familiar?**
2. **Up to this point we have not read of their desire to kill the apostles. But now it is clear.**
3. **They couldn’t content with them with the truth…for it was on the apostle’s side.**
4. **So they want to resort to brute force in their anger and unbelief.**

**6. How does God intervene next? And how is this significant? Vs. 34-39- *“But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. 35 And he said to them, ‘Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. 36 For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. 37 After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. 38 So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; 39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. ”***

1. **God used Gamaliel’s speech.**
2. **Gamaliel was actually a Pharisee**

**He was highly respected because of his being a grandson of Hillel a very prominent Rabbi and founder of Israel’s strongest school of religion.**

**The Mishnah makes this assertion about Gamaliel- *“Since Rabban Gamaliel the elder died there has been no more reverence for the law; and purity and abstinence died out at the same time.”***

**This part of the Pharisees was a more tolerant group that may have sympathized with these new Christians to a certain degree because of their stand on resurrection and their uneasiness toward the Sadducees.**

 **Interestingly enough… the names and information can be loosely confirmed in the writings of Josephus.**

1. **Gamaliel wisdom is seen:**

**He references 2 “recent” Messiah types who were not and their movement came to nothing but not after a lot of blood shed which would bring the ire of Rome down on them.**

**Do nothing…for if this is of man it will not last but if it from God…you will be in a world of hurt. For they don’t want to fight with God because they will lose.**

**Gamaliel was not a believer but he did prophesy that day…just like other non-believers that God had used in the past.**

* 1. **They took his advice…whether through wisdom or fear.**
1. **After Gamaliel’s speech the council is quieted and they bring the men in and have them flogged. Why? Vs. 39-40- *“So they took his advice, 40 and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.”* 40 lashes minus 1 as the law demanded…**
	1. **The Jews were not known for the same cruelty for which the Romans came to be known with their lashings (no steel or glass pieces placed in the whip like a cats claw… “just” a whip…**
	2. **But all the same, each of them would have come away with their backs lacerated and bleeding.**
	3. **Then they let them go…so much for worrying about the apostles being a menace to society.**
2. **Why do you suppose God doesn’t intervene here but allows them to be flogged? What was their response? Vs. 41-42- *“Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. 42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.”***
	1. **For we are meant to walk in Jesus’ steps…**
		1. **Jesus had said that they would be brought before council and would be able to bear witness before them and they did.**
		2. **Jesus said we would be hated as He was hated…and they are!**
		3. **Jesus had said we would suffer as He had suffered…and they are.**
		4. **So they rejoiced in the fact that they were suffering for Jesus sake!**
	2. **What would that have communicated to the people who knew about the judgment on them?**
3. **Persecution of the church defined by voices from the past:**
4. ***“Kill us, torture us, condemn us, grind us to dust…The more you mow us down, the more we grow; the seed is IN the blood of Christians.”-* Tertullian (160-220 AD)**
5. ***“Without bleeding the church fails to bless. Persecution will refine the church, but not destroy it. If it leads to prayer and praise, to an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God and of solidarity with Christ in His sufferings, then…however painful…it may be welcome.”-* Bishop Festo Kivengere in February 1979 on the 2nd anniversary of the martyrdom of Archbishop Janani Luwum of Uganda.**
6. **We are so blessed, that it would be hard to even think of an answer to this question but, what would you be willing to be flogged for? What is it that really matters to you?**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**April 2, 2025**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review- Acts 6:1-7- *“Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve (including Matthias) summoned the full number of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers (and sisters), pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’ 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.”***
	* + 1. **What were the “2” conflicts going on in this passage that moves the Apostles to act?**
	1. **The Greek widows were not a part of the daily distribution of relief as they should be.**
	2. **But the Greeks were also complaining/ murmuring which potentially could cause a great division in the fledgling church…which is Satan’s plan.**
		* 1. **What seems to be the wisdom of these Apostles in a few words to deal with both conflicts?**
				1. **Provide structure to promote a healthy church.**
				2. **This structure will bring them together as they all will be involved with the work of caring for one another.**
3. **Finishing up Acts 6:1-7**
4. **Why is their solution the right one for the church? How do we know?**
5. **If the apostles are distracted from their calling …**
6. **preoccupied with administrative type work…**
7. **neglecting their calling for the tyranny of the urgent…**
8. **the church is left defenseless against false doctrine and further dissentions.**
9. **They didn’t neglect the concern… they found a solution that was best for the church so they could continue in the work they were called to witnessing for Christ and growing His Church.**
10. **Another, perhaps overlooked, lesson for the deacons found here in this text is their role in preserving congregational unity.**
11. **This situation was more than a need to feed.**
12. **The Apostles, as the elders will be later, are faced with a conflict...a dilemma threatening the church’s health, stability and unity.**
13. **Since the gospel insists that our unity supersedes any worldly difference we see that the Apostles didn’t delegate this issue to just anyone but to chosen men of good repute, full of the Spirit and wisdom.**
14. **In light of the task entrusted to the 7 and the underlying conflict it was meant to solve, it is clear that deacons should be those who stand in the gap with solutions against the shockwaves that seek to menace the church...seeking to relive the tensions of such needs.**
15. **That is one reason why these men are to be of Good repute and filled with the Spirt and with wisdom…for they are not to be men who are easily contentious themselves.**
16. **Rather they are to be men with fined-tuned *“conflict radars”* as one pastor put it…being full in God’s wisdom takes this into account.**
17. **They are also men who love solutions more than drama and rise to the occasion to promote unity in creative and constructive ways.**
18. **One author put it this way, *“Deacons biblically understood are the cavalry of servants, deputized to execute the elder’s vision by coordinating various ministries that support the purpose of the Church to glorify God.”***
19. **And the Lord honored their decision by growing the church. Vs. 7- *“And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.”***
20. **Peace among the brethren was restored.**
21. **Purity of the Church was maintained.**
22. **The progress of the Gospel continued to go forth.**
23. **But this begs the question, along with Acts 2:41 and 47 (look at these passages) what caused these people to flock into the church?**
	1. **The unity and excitement of those bringing the message.**
	2. **The commitment of those living the life before their neighbors.**
	3. **Jesus said of us as the Church that this would be true when:**
		1. **John 13:34-35- *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”***
			* **What are the people around us supposed to see from us?**
				+ **The same thing they saw from them.**
				+ **Love for one another in a day of building oppression and persecution.**
				+ **Jesus has given the world the right to judge us by our fullness or lack of love for one another.**
			* **How well are we doing?**
	4. **John 17: 20-21- *“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”***
		* + **Oneness with the Lord…that the world is to see.**
				- **So that… *“…the world may believe that you have sent me.”***
				- **We cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus’ claims are true, and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the ones of true Christians to God and with one another.**
				- **Wow, that is a higher bar than we usually think about.**
			+ **But it seems they did and God was adding to their number daily!**
	5. **Frances Schaeffer makes one more point here based on these texts, *“This is to be a real seeable oneness… a practicing oneness, and a practical oneness across all line, among all true Christians.”***
	6. **We don’t think of “evangelism” this way but it is interestingly enough.**
		* + **What the world sees us practicing among ourselves may be the vehicle God uses to draw His elect in…**
			+ **And at the same time, as Jesus said in Matt. 5: 16- *“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”***
			+ **There seems to be a pattern, and it seems very important that we are seen loving one another as Jesus Loves us!**
	7. **They are bold for the faith…they are on fire before their neighbors because they have been set free from their sin and misery and can’t wait to show and express this.**
	8. **The MESSAGE and the HOLY SPIRIT moving on the hearts of His elect and the curious. (Think of the Parable of the Seeds)**
		* + 1. **Causing them to recognize their sin and their need for a Savior…Jesus.**
				2. **They saw that these Christians had something they didn’t have…with all their duty to their religious beliefs and actions they did not see the level of commitment and desire that these people had…in serving God and one another.**
24. **It is also amazing that many priests were becoming a part of the church. *“…and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.”***
	1. **Maybe not so amazing since they should have known the scriptures and could recognize Jesus fulfilling prophesy.**
	2. **Humanly speaking, some of them could see how far their fellow priest and scribes were willing to go …even breaking the Law…with lying and murder and torture for no sanctioned reason.**
	3. **But all in all it was the Spirits work on His elect even from those ranks.**
		* 1. **So why aren’t we seeing that kind of enthusiastic desire to come into the church today?**
				1. **Some places around the world do see this and are seeing this.**
				2. **Maybe it is our methods!**
				3. **Maybe it is US!**
25. **How much are we seen as being melancholy by others? How many Christians walk around as if depressed when the greatest thing in the world has happened to us? How many Christians lack assurance which rubs off on the rest of our personality?**
	* + - **We are so aware of the problems with Christianity and the church, immersed in them sometimes, that we have forgotten all the glory around us and having seen nothing but the problems in the church and of life, in general, we lead ourselves to an increasing depression.**
			- **We focus on what is wrong forgetting about all that is right in Christ!**
			- **Because Christians are not trained in sound doctrine, they wholeheartedly embrace error, often finding it more satisfying than God’s revealed truth….so we seem less than unified to those looking in from the outside and we are less trustworthy of our brothers and sisters within.**
26. **What do we communicate about our desire to be in Church on a Sunday morning?**
27. **How would your children characterize our desire…not our commitment…but our desire?**
28. **Many get up on Saturday morning and prepare for the days fishing, golfing, or football with an excitement that reveals their desire.**
29. **Then comes Sunday morning…do we approach going to church the same way?**
30. **Is it possible that the people around us don’t see the excitement and desire …all they see is duty and drudgery especially if your kids have decided to stop going?**
31. **Making us the problem that is keeping people out of the church.**
	* + 1. **Generally speaking then, for what overall purpose did God appoint the office of Deacon…according to this text …in your own words?**

**They exist to assist the elders, to guard the ministry and to promote unity.**

**With church having the correct leadership the church is healthy and grows.**

**With the church having the correct leadership doing what they are to do the church grows naturally.**

**Conclusion: the Church needs both the office of Elder and Deacon as prescribed by the Lord in the Scriptures.**

1. **A church without effective deacons may exhibit signs of health for a while but overtime its health will suffer.**
2. **Also the Church robs itself of God’s revealed wisdom when we either unduly elevate the role of deacon to the role of a pseudo-elder (some church call their leadership deacons) or we unduly reduce their role to say glorified janitors.**
	* + - 1. **A Deacon should be skilled as well in spotting practical needs and then taking the initiative to meet them efficiently.**
				2. **The Deacon doesn’t react to the present needs he responds to them but should also be anticipating future ones. Men of Issachar- I Chr. 12:32*-“Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, 200 chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command.”***
				3. **The larger principle that must not be forgotten concerning the deacon’s role is: dealing with anything in a church’s life that threatens to distract and derail elders from their primary responsibilities.**
			1. **What principles can we glean from this as to how the church should function in relationship to problem solving? In relationship to ministry?**
			2. **Last time we talked just about the positive characteristics of this new church. After having looked at these first 7 verses what other characteristics have we seen as well?**
	1. **Unity in prayer and ministry…in purpose.**
	2. **Desire to be together and share even suffering together.**
	3. **Maturity in faith, giving and growth in numbers as well as spiritually.**
	4. **Boldness in their witness for Christ.**
	5. **Integrity and favor with the people*.***
	6. **SIN…in fighting…murmuring/ complaining behind the back of the leadership.**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**April 9, 2025**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
	* + 1. **Looking briefly at 6:1-7, what are some of the obvious purposes for God appointing the office of Deacon…in your own words? *“Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists1 arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’ 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, ta proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.***

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**The larger principle that must not be forgotten concerning the deacon’s role is: dealing with anything in a church’s life that threatens to distract and derail elders from their primary responsibilities.**

* + - 1. **So why aren’t we seeing that kind of enthusiastic desire to come into the church today?**
				1. **Some places around the world do see this and are seeing this.**
				2. **Maybe it is our methods!**
				3. **Maybe it is US!**
1. **How much are we seen as being melancholy by others? How many Christians walk around as if depressed when the greatest thing in the world has happened to us? How many Christians lack assurance which rubs off on the rest of our personality?**
	* + - **We are so aware of the problems with Christianity and the church, immersed in them sometimes, that we have forgotten all the glory around us and having seen nothing but the problems in the church and of life, in general, we lead ourselves to an increasing depression.**
			- **We focus on what is wrong forgetting about all that is right in Christ!**
			- **Because Christians are not trained in sound doctrine, they wholeheartedly embrace error, often finding it more satisfying than God’s revealed truth….so we seem less than unified to those looking in from the outside and we are less trustworthy of our brothers and sisters within.**
2. **What do we communicate about our desire to be in Church on a Sunday morning?**
3. **How would your children characterize our desire…not our commitment…but our desire?**
4. **Many get up on Saturday morning and prepare for the days fishing, golfing, or football with an excitement that reveals their desire.**
5. **Then comes Sunday morning…do we approach going to church the same way?**
6. **Is it possible that the people around us don’t see the excitement and desire …all these see is duty and drudgery especially if your kids have decided to stop going?**
7. **Making us the problem that is keeping people out of the church.**
	* + - 1. **The Bible makes it also clear that the polity/government of the Church is important for its growth …promoting unity and growth through its officers as spiritual leaders. See Phil. 1: 1-6- *“To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 And I am sure of this, that he who began ha good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”***
				2. **All throughout Acts and the other Epistles, Paul makes clear of the need and importance for elders are for the health of the church.**
				3. **In this passage Paul acknowledges the elders and deacons and then doesn’t skip a beat in talking about how healthy they are spiritually to the point of calling them partners with him in the Gospel. It is no accident that he opens the letter the way he does.**
				4. **In Acts 6 we see the church growing as one of the outcomes of a correct polity/government.**
8. **Read Acts 6:8-15-*“And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. 10 But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. 11 Then they secretly instigated men who said, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.’ 12 And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, 13 and they set up false witnesses who said, ‘This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, 14 for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.’ 15 And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.”***
	* + 1. **What are some things we know about Stephen in our text?**
9. **A man full of grace and power.**
	* + - 1. **Again what does this mean in modern language?**
			- **Gracious-Christ-like…**
			- **Loving- some have defined the term as a combination of sweetness and strength- a perfect balance…**
			- **God did signs and wonders through him.**
10. **A man full of the Spirit and wisdom. (From Acts 6:3,5as well)**
11. **What does that statement mean?**
	* + - **No one could oppose his debating…the truth of what he said and the way he said it…vs. 9-10- *“Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. 10 But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.***
			- **This fulfilled the Prophesy of Jesus …See Matt. 10:16-23; Mark 13: -13**
12. **Why was it important?**
	* + - **He was the “head deacon”- go after the leadership first.**
			- **These qualities were required to be a leader in the church.**
		1. **A man of great conviction in his preaching…proclamation of the Word.**
13. **So much so that just like Jesus his words were twisted because he was speaking the truth.**
	* + - 1. **A trait that will occur with almost everyone who is speaking the truth…your words will be twisted by others.**
	1. **A man who stirred up opposition…like Jesus...especially among freed slaves.**
14. **The Synagogue of the Freedmen were freed slaves and their descendants…**
	* + - **There was only one Temple but obviously at this time there were many synagogues.**
			- **These were at the center of Jewish life…rather than the Temple.**
			- **Stephen probably spoke of the Kingdom of God and maybe even that kingdom being the Temple which would have been misunderstood by the hostile crowd.**
			- **Jesus had spoken of the Temples destruction maybe Stephen repeated his words…**
			- **This would have been anathema to them-**
15. **The *“Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia”***
	* + - **These all had been freed from slavery …had suffered for their “faith” and had made the pilgrimage back to Jerusalem…**
			- **They had returned to be near the Temple…which they revered.**
			- **They may have been some of the most zealous/legalistic of the Jews…**

**so they would also be among the most outspoken against any Jew who converted to Christianity**

**It is supposed that Saul of Tarsus may have been from the group from the region of Cilicia.**

* + - * **Since they couldn’t thwart him in open debate they did the next “best” thing…start a smear campaign full of lies. Vs. 10-11- *“But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. 11 Then they secretly instigated men…’***
1. **Peter and John were hauled before the Sanhedrin, then all the disciples, now Stephen. What is Satan doing?**
	* 1. **Seeking to scare the church even more…obviously persecution has gotten progressively worse.**
		2. **What is God doing? Setting the stage for the spread of the gospel ...preparing to bring in Paul.**
2. **Jesus had prophesied on a few occasions BEFORE He died that the gospel was to be proclaimed to all the nations. In that it was to be our first priority.**
3. **Here is the beginning of Acts He had commanded the 120, saying, *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* Acts 1:8**
	* + - **In fact, Luke has been showing us how things are going in the *“you shall be my witnesses”* department.**
			- **Bearing witness even against you accusers- Mark 13:9**
			- **Even priest were coming into the church because of their boldness to proclaim the Gospel.**
4. **Why were they so angry?**
	* 1. **Couldn’t win a debate. Because he supported everything he said with the scriptures that all believed in.**
		2. **They see the priest defecting and transferring their alliance.**
		3. **They see the people coming to the apostles and their followers .**
		4. **Being the most legalistic of the Jews because of their persecution for being a Jew they were the most seeking to uphold the Law as they perceived it.**
5. **What were the charges levels against him in verse 12-14? How would these stir up the people against him? *“And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, 13 and they set up false witnesses who said, ‘This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, 14 for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.”***
	* 1. **They went to the religious leaders as allies*… “And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes…”***
6. **You don’t mess with Moses…the most revered of all …the law giver.**
7. **Any Jew that goes against Moses is blaspheming.**
8. **And God, of course…but Moses first!**
9. **And the Temple and the Law.**
	* 1. **The charge went from blaspheming against Moses and God and then the lies were elaborated on by bribed witnesses to include that he never stops speaking against the holy place and the law.**
		2. **Nothing was more sacred to the Jew, especially these “radical” Jews, than the Law and the temple.**
10. **Moses and God were of course associated with the Law.**
11. **When speaking of the temple they always had in mind the “holy of holies”… God’s personal room from their perspective… so to speak against either was to be blasphemous! Just like the charge against Jesus.**
12. **However, in what sense did Stephen speak against the temple and the law?**
	* 1. **Only by repeating Jesus’ own words perhaps. *“for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.”***
		2. **But what Jesus taught was that the temple and the law would find their God-intended fulfillment in Him.**
		3. **But the main thing Jesus taught was that He would be killed and raised again on the 3rd day.**
		4. **So Jesus would replace the need for a temple…the reason there won’t be one in the New Heaven and the New Earth and He fulfills the law.**
		5. **The Temple was Ichabod! The Glory of the Lord had departed long ago.**
		6. **They misunderstood Jesus so they would naturally misunderstand Stephen.**

1. **This section closes with an interesting statement, *“And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.”* What is the point?**
	* 1. ***“…his face was like the face of an angel.”* - Euphemisms for a glowing face ...a radiant face…a face that all true believers are supposed to have.**
2. **Matt. 5:14-16- *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so nthat2 they may see your good works and ogive glory to your Father who is in heaven.”***
3. **Ps. 34:5- *“Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.”***
4. **Radiant= Heb.*-* Beaming/glowing-Reflecting His glory!**
5. **This is said many times of those who earnestly seek the Lord in prayer…this is a cheerfulness that is peace!**
6. **Moses, Jesus and Stephen.**
7. **The implication is that as they are accusing Stephen of showing disrespect for Moses, his face begins to glow like Moses’ did.**
8. **See Ex. 34:29-30. *“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. 30 Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.”***
	* 1. **Perhaps that should have informed them that just maybe he had a better grasp on the Law of Moses than they did.**
		2. **A miracle? If so, what is God doing through this miracle?**
9. **God is doing something interesting here before these men…it seems that He deliberately was showing that both Moses’ ministry of the law and Stephen’s interpretation of the law had His approval.**
10. **Stephen’s grace and power, his irresistible wisdom and the shining face were all God’s way of revealing to any who were paying attention…those that He was calling to himself… that He was in fact WITH Stephen in all respects.**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**April 16, 2025**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **What did we learn about Stephen from chapter 6?**
4. **What did we learn about those who call themselves the spiritual leaders from verses 8-15?**
5. **Read Acts 7: 1-8:1a…long read but it is the whole thing!!! (Then we will break it down into digestible pieces.)**

**As we move into chapter 7 we will be looking more at Stephen, whom we began to explore last time. Chapter 6 closed with an interesting statement, *“And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.”* What is the point?**

**The implication is that as they are accusing Stephen of showing disrespect for Moses, his face begins to glow like Moses’ did.**

**See Ex. 34:29-30. *“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. 30 Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.”***

**Perhaps that should have informed them that just maybe he had a better grasp on the Law of Moses than they did.**

**A miracle? Maybe…but then as was said…when God does a work it is a miracle! So, what is God doing through this?**

1. **God is doing something interesting here before these men…it seems that He deliberately was showing that both Moses’ ministry of the law and Stephen’s interpretation of the law had His approval.**
2. **Stephen’s grace and power, his irresistible wisdom and the shining face were all God’s way of revealing to any who were paying attention…those that He was calling to himself… that He was in fact WITH Stephen in all respects.**

**Now to the text: You gotta love this man…when confronted with the charges against him what does he do?**

**Preaches a sermon!!!**

 **And what a sermon it was, by a deacon, no less!**

* + - 1. **What was significant about this sermon?**

**He did not simply rehearse key features of the OT that the Sanhedrin would have been familiar with, but he draws lessons from these sections that had been missed, forgotten or purposefully overlooked overtime.**

**He was in fact, proving the purpose of the Messiah to do exactly what he and Jesus said it would be to replace the temple and fulfill the law as the OT clearly taught…going so far as to implicate their rejection of the true meanings of God’s Word and their disregard for the law. Just like Jesus often had done!**

* + - 1. **Let’s just stop at this first verse a minute. What is going on…or what has been going on that would cause these men to ask such a question? Vs. 1- *“And the high priest said, ‘Are these things so?’***

**Remember the last verse in chapter 6 was, *“And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.”***

**Well they had been accusing Stephen, at least, of disrespecting the law of Moses, and then his face begins to glow in the same way as Moses’ face was said to have glowed.**

**This is the first sign from God that Stephen had a fuller grasp upon the law than these leaders did…**

**He was also filled with the Spirit …which they weren’t.**

**So the high priest is asking him, How do you plead to the charges? These, of course, are the same men that Jesus had stood before only weeks earlier.**

* + - 1. **Now let’s look at the particulars of Stephen’s sermon/defense. What do we see in these first verses (vs. 2-8) that tells us what Stephen knows about his God and the history of God’s people? *2 And Stephen said: Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, 3 and said to him, ‘Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.’ 4 Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living. 5 Yet He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot’s length, but promised to give it to him as a possession and to his offspring after him, though he had no child. 6 And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years. 7 ‘But I will judge the nation that they serve,’ said God, ‘and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.’ 8 And He gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.”***

***“The God of Glory”* , a thoroughly OT understanding of all that God is.**

1. **It communicates that Stephen fully understands who God is and his immense respect and faith in Him. Stephen has a high view of God using this statement.**
2. **It speaks to God’s absolute sovereignty. Providence and election. Language that these men would understand.**
3. **This God came to Abraham, before Moses…his covenant is a greater covenant for it is the Covenant of Grace and Moses’ was more a Covenant of Works.**
4. **Abraham would not have come to Him…just like all of His children…He comes to us in our sin and changes us and gives us a job!**
5. **It is important that we notice…in answering the high priest he doesn’t start with Moses…But God and then Abraham speaking of the greater covenant of God.**

**What was God’s promise to Abraham and how did He fulfill this promise?**

1. **See these passages:**
* **Gen. 11: 26-12:3-**
* **Gen. 15:1-21-**
* **Gen 17: 1-13-**
1. **God chose to speak to a pagan and call him out of his pagan beliefs into the true faith.**
2. **Verses 3-7. A seed/ offspring and a land are promised… *“a place”*…a place to worship and a home will be provided.**
3. **A long time before there was a *“holy place”* there were a holy people to whom God had pledged Himself by covenant.**
	* + - **God appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia…**

**Looking on as map one can easily see the great distance between Ur and Jerusalem…Approx. 700 miles.**

**By giving them a geography lesson Stephen shows that God was with His people long before the law of Moses or the temple, as we will see in a minute. ..**

* + - * **God was in Mesopotamia, appearing to Abraham.**
1. **God was with Abraham building the nation of God’s people…first, before Moses.**
2. **Stephen was making some things clear to them..**
	* + - **He is NOT discounting the law…for it has an important part to play in God’s plan of salvation…it reveals our sin and our need for God Redeemer.**
			- **He is simply seeking to re-orient them to the whole counsel of God.**
			1. **Given all the details we have discussed in the first 8 verses, what point(s) is he making concerning Joseph in verses 9-19? *““And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him 10 and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. 11 Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers on their first visit. 13 And on the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family became known to Pharaoh. 14 And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all. 15 And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, 16 and they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.”***
				1. **First, the patriarch rejected their own brothers message from God. Vs. 9**
				2. **Interesting that that Joseph’s brothers are call patriarchs.**
				3. **In what way(s) are they patriarchs?**
				4. **The key phrase again is this, *“but God was with Him”* God’s presence defines Joseph and his faith throughout his long life.**
3. **Interesting fun fact, since God was with Joseph, that also means that God’s glory was in Egypt, at the time…not in Jerusalem.**
4. **In fact, Jerusalem was not even God’s or David’s city yet and wouldn’t be for some time…**
	* + - 1. **Egypt is named at least 6 times in 7 verses showing the connection between what was promised to Abraham about God’s people being in a land where they would become strangers and slaves for 400 years…**
				2. **And the people died a long way away from the *“promised land”* and yet God was with them before there was a tabernacle or a temple.**
				3. **God was with His people. God is everywhere. A simple fact that they had forgotten.**
			1. **How does Stephen communicate his respect for Moses? vs. 17-50**

**The largest section of his sermon seems to be devoted to Moses. See verses 20-22, 38. Moses is not TO BE OVERLOOKED…just is NOT to be the first look. God- vs. 2, then Abraham! Then Moses!**

**What is his point concerning how the people responded to Moses?**

1. **Verses 35--39- *“This Moses, whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’—this man God sent as both ruler and redeemer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush. 36 This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt and vat the Red Sea and win the wilderness for forty years. 37 This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.’ 38 This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us. 39 Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt…”***
2. **Moses, this man that they revered, was not even considered the right kind of leader that these people would want by his own people.**
3. **Even in Exodus 32:1- The people tired of waiting for Moses to come down from being in God’s presence said to Aaron, *‘Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”***
	* + - **This Moses…this man… was the way they described him.**
			- **Nothing special…back to the question …who died and made you king? Vs. 35- *“This Moses whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you ruler and a judge?’”***
			- **No respect for God’s anointed one…a major problem with the Church today!**
			- **Vs. 39- *Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned (back) to Egypt.”***
4. **In other words the people refused to listen to the will and Word of God but rather turn to their own understanding…**
5. **Stephen had been accused of mishandling the law of Moses, so his history lessons points to the fact that the people of Israel have a history of not responding according to God’s Word/ law.**
	* + - **They fall into idolatry, to only fall into the hands of an angry God, who gives them over to sinfulness.**
			- **He points to Aaron, the high priest at the time, as a reminder of how the first high priest led the people into idolatry…hence a pointed indictment against the current high priest. Vs. 40-42- *“To Aaron they said, ‘Make for us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him. And they made a calf in those days and offered sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. But God turned awau and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets…”***
			- **Rather than actually building an actual calf idol this time…they have turn the law, the temple and Jerusalem into an idol.**
		1. **After this he speaks of the tabernacle where God chose to meet with His people…and then the Temple. And before they could say that the temple is the place where God dwells among His people, He quotes- Isaiah 66:1-2- in vs. 49-50- *“Thus says the LORD: ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD.”***
		2. **Look at these 2 passages from Stephen’s sermon:**
6. **vs. 33, “*Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place you are standing is holy ground.”***
7. **vs.48, *“Yet the Most high does not dwell in houses made by hands…”***
8. **What would have been especially significant and cogent to the conversation about these references in vs. 33?**
	* + - **Interesting to the argument here…God is NOT bound to a place:**

**Long before there was a Jerusalem and a temple, the glory of the Lord was being displayed at a burning bush that did not burn up.**

**God declared the dusty ground where Moses stood to be holy…because He was there.**

**Wherever God is… is holy ground…and God is everywhere, especially wherever His people are.**

* + - * **So, Stephen’s point, if He has a home anywhere on earth, it is with His people. According to His covenant…wherever His people are, God is there also and that is where Stephen wants to be.**
			* **He cannot be contained in a simple or elaborate building.**
		1. **In fact, this whole narrative reveals that the glory of God had never been CONFINED to Jerusalem, or the temple.**
		2. **Trying to get them to see something very significant…Since this has always been true of God and God’s word confirms it, why are they so unwilling to accept that God’s presence had in their day…and before, actually…shifted away from the temple in Jerusalem? But they couldn’t…**
1. **If they admit this possibility they would be accepting that the people didn’t need to come to Temple any longer.**
2. **They would also be admitting that they and their offices are obsolete….and they would lose their perceived power, position and purpose for existence.**
3. **But they couldn’t…**
	* + 1. **What is Stephen’s particular accusation in verses 51-53 and does it relate to the previous 50 verses? In other words, how are Stephen’s accusers guilty of that which they accused him of according to Acts 7:51-53? *“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. 52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, 53 you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”***

***“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.”-* These are words God used of the Hebrews when they didn’t keep covenant with God.**

1. **The Hebrew meaning of these terms equal-- spiritually stubborn and unregenerate.**
2. **Isaiah 63:10- *“But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore He turned to be their enemy, and Himself fought against them.”***
3. **They could not do this because of this simple statement…they were false, reprobate…and lost.**
4. **With such hearts there was no way for them to see anything…unless God intervenes.**
	* + - **These men also have Jesus’ blood on their hands. Just like their father’s had the blood of the prophets on theirs.**
			- **They are murder’s…which according to the law they revere… requires them to be put to death!**
			- **He spoke so boldly because they needed the indictment…but also because he probably knew there was no getting out of this.**
			1. **Read Acts 7:54-8:1a- *“Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. 55 But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 And he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’ 57 But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. 58 Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ 60 And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul approved of his execution.”***

**Why would the Sanhedrin be so upset with Stephen sermonizing? Why do you suppose Rabbi Gamaliel’s words didn’t help in their decision making this time?**

1. **Satan was speaking into their ears…not the good Rabbi.**
2. **They had been wanting blood for sometime after getting a taste of it with Jesus. Stephen was a leader in the church…if they get him they will scare the others.**
3. ***“Enraged”* –“cut to the heart…furious…could not see logic or reason.**
4. **They were wanting to kill him because of the influence of his words.**
5. **They put him on the same level with Jesus since he could so effectively interpret the Word of God…**
6. **He accused them of murder…and perhaps he had convinced many of them of that fact…much to their shame so he must be dealt with.**
7. **But the apostles had all done the same…and yet they were not stoned. Why Stephen at this time?**
	* + - **It was God’s will.**
			- **He was a lesser figure than the apostles who were highly revered by the people.**
			- **They thought they could use HIM as an example.**
8. **And then there is this interesting statement in 8:1a- *“And Saul approved of his execution.”* What reason is that statement here?**
	* + - 1. **Luke is introducing us to one of the main characters of this book and the early church.**
				2. **This is the same Saul from (9:1 ) –*“But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord…”***
				3. **His presence signifies the significant role that he will play in the persecution of the church…he is more than a coat holder.**
9. **What else do we learn of Stephen’s character here in this section?**
10. **He was long seeing to be sure…he saw God’s glory…just like was said of the Apostles on the Mount of transfiguration and he saw Jesus waiting for Him.**
11. **He had talked last about the fact that god’s glory is in heaven and that is exactly what he is testifying to right now as the people and the Sanhedrin stood around.**
12. **Thus showing that God’s glory is NOT in the Temple…in fact, it hadn’t been for years and years and the temple would be destroyed because it is a hindrance to many.**
13. **And Jesus is with God…the one they killed is now risen…and if they were wondering where he went …Stephen confirms for them where He is.**
14. **A man full of faith and the Spirit shows us how such a person…a true Christian is to die:**
	* + - **Confident in the promise of God and Jesus.**
			- **But also, forgiving of his enemies…just as Christ was… *‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’***
			- **Luke records, *“And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”* Luke is recording it this way to help us see the peacefulness and assurance he had in Christ…**
			- **He fell asleep…might also communicate that God through Luke wants us to see that when a person dies in anticipation of being with Jesus, death is not the end. It is more like falling asleep as we await to awake on that great resurrection day when Christ Returns!**
15. **How is the death of this true influential servant of God good for the cause?**
16. **Saul/ Paul was there and while he was approving of this at this moment, he would later be used for God’ glory and reflect some of the same characteristics at his death..**
17. **The thousands of other martyrs as well would give their lives for the gospel.**
18. **How does Stephen promote the mission and life of the church?**
19. **What interests many people is that Stephen was the first Christian martyr.**
20. **But Luke’s main concern lies elsewhere.**
21. **He would rather show more about Stephen’s witness and ministry than about his death…emphasizing the role that God was having him play in the worldwide mission and growth of the church throughout his teaching and is death.**
22. **Stephen’s martyrdom supplemented the influence of his teaching. …for it shocked and stunned the church and the church was scattered… all but the apostles.**
23. **The scattering of Christians was followed by the scattering of the good news of the gospel…wherever they went they proclaimed Christ.**
24. **So what do we take away from the example of Stephen, the argument Stephen made and the death of Stephen?**
25. **One take away is that what Jesus said is true… *“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.”* John 15:18**
	* + - **When we point out peoples idols…we shouldn’t be surprised when they hate us, and throw everything they can at us to get us to shut up.**
			- **Stephen’s story assures us we will have to endure such words and actions in the future for the faith.**
	1. **Another thing he cleared up by his history lesson and with Scripture itself is that we don’t have to make pilgrimages to what men say are holy places to meet with God, to find forgiveness, or to find grace and peace.**
		* + **The Holy Spirit lives within us to seal us in Christ and to lead us to the truth.**
			+ **God has provided the Church…not as an idol…but as a place here on earth where His people congregate to worship Him together to His glory.**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**May 14, 2025**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **Back in Chapter 1 the disciples are commissioned to grow God’s Church…what passage speaks clearly to their call and how should that motivate us today?**
4. **Acts. 1:8- *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”***
5. **We too are be witnesses!**
6. **Since we have the reliable witness …the Gospels and the Epistles…. we have the record of what these men saw, experienced and heard Jesus Teach and do.**
7. **So our role is to proclaim what these witnesses handed down to us…firsthand accounts. We are to proclaim the Gospel according to the Apostles.**
8. **We are to hold fast to that Gospel just as they proclaimed it…not changing it or embellishing it…or it no longer is their firsthand account.**
9. **And we are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to make our “witness” effective.**
10. **Verse 8 always causes me pause…especially this part… *“…you will be my witnesses…”***
11. **This is first commanded of the disciples. It is a command and an expectation.**
12. **It is by virtue of our connection, as we have discussed, a command and an expectation for us as well.**
13. **This is what hits me whenever I read this…**
* **The fact is, based on what Chris says, we will be His witnesses.**
* **So do I even consider on a day to day basis …what does my witness communicate to those around me? Is my witness glorifying Him or myself?**
1. **What characteristics do we see of the early church from chapters 1-7 that we are to emulate today as a church? To what end?**
2. **What seems to be the main purposes for God having Luke tell us about Stephen?**
3. **And then there are a couple of interesting statements that seem to be just dropped in, 7:58- *“And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.”* And in *8:1a- “And Saul approved of his execution.”* What reason is that statement here?**
4. **Before we consider the person spoken of…let’s consider a bit about the law of God and witnesses.**
5. **The detail of laying their garments aside is more than just having to remove some of their clothing to increase the velocity of the throwing of the stone.**
6. **It underscores the premediated and deliberate nature of the execution.**
7. **The witnesses by laying the garments aside, were also symbolically transferring responsibility for this act, as they were the ones who testified against Stephen.**
8. **In accordance with the law, witnesses were required to initiate the execution. Deut. 17:7- *“The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people.”***
9. **In this case they had falsely testified against Stephen and as such the law would have demanded they receive the accused sentence.**
* **Deut. 19:18-20- *“The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, 19 then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you.”***
* **Prov. 19:5-*“A false witness will not go unpunished***
1. **Luke is introducing us to one of the main characters of this book and the early church.**
2. **This is the same Saul from *(9:1 ) –“But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord…”***
3. **This same Paul/Saul acknowledged his own sin before the Lord in Acts 22:20- *“And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.”***
4. **His presence signifies the significant role that he will play in the persecution of the church…he is more than a coat holder.**
5. **Acts 8:1-25**
6. **What else seems to have been going on the day of Stephen’s death? vs. 1-4-*“*** ***And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. 3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.*  *Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.”***
7. **The text says… *“And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem…”***
8. **There seems to have begun a well-engineered *“house to house search”* beginning of the persecution of the whole church on the day of Stephen’s death…his death was not an isolated event….his guilt and sentence had probably already been decided another way they were just like Stephen said in 7:51-53.**
9. **They viewed the growing Christian movement a sa threat to their religious and social order.**
10. **It seems clear that this was all part of the religious leaders plan…this was wide spread and coordinated…with Saul of Tarsus at the lead.**
11. **What Saul was doing defines the *“*great persecution” begun that day.**
12. ***“Ravaging/destroying”*= with brutal and sadistic cruelty…**
13. **According to Paul/Saul’s own testimony Stephen was not the only death that Saul facilitated. He had much blood on his hand. Acts. 22:4-5- *“I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, 5 as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness.”***
14. **All of this is occurring just as Jesus said it would be. John 16:2- *“Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.”***
15. **But in the face of this growing persecution we read, *“Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him.”*  How was this possible? What would spur them on to do such a service knowing they would be completely exposed to the persecution?**
16. **God required the body be buried within 24 hours…they may not be in town in 24 hours…so they did their duty to God and to Stephen their brother.**
17. **This is the first actual death in the Church through persecution… Stephen is the first Christian martyr which has set the stage for the relentless persecution that would take place for years.**
18. ***“the great lamentation…great mourning over him.”* This was true and sincere as they were devout or godly men…this was not some societal burial where you had to pay for mourners.**
19. **It reveals the great love and respect the early church had for one another even in the face of persecution.**
20. **This reminded them and us of the cost of discipleship.**
* **Both the persecution for our faith…**
* **but also, the continuous work that is to be done even in the face of persecution.**
1. **After reading this section, how would you say that we are seeing Acts 1:8 being fulfilled?**
2. **A Christian diaspora … *“and they were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”***
3. **They were exiled even to Samaria…just like Jesus said…but that was one place Jews did not want to go.**
4. **But as they went and spread the gospel they would have begun the breakdown of long standing ethnic and religious barriers.**
5. **This diaspora led to the proclamation of the gospel among different people groups…and the churches growth just as Jesus had said.**
6. **Acts. 11:19- *“Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except the Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.”***
7. **And the text says clearly, *“Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.”***
* **Interesting, the persecution is on-going.**
* **So they may have been fearful but they didn’t let that discourage them from what the Lord had commanded them.**
1. **God seems to engineer this because people wouldn’t leave Jerusalem on their own.**
* **This was their comfortable place.**
* **Sometimes God moves people around today because they are too comfortable…or because they won’t grow where they are.**
* **Leaving can be hard…sometimes whole church splits occur for this purpose.**
* **But they HAD to leave…though not all would have left…hence one of the reasons why the Apostles would stay.**
* **Hide in plain sight was a strategy.**
* **Fewer numbers for the authorities to look for.**
* **Plus a force of hundreds can get more work in the expansion of the kingdom than 12.**
* **This tells us who it is who are expected to proclaim the gospel to the masses.**
* **Leaders are necessary to teach, to support, to encourage and to hold together the necessary structure of God’s work…but it is the people who are the main force of ministry.**
1. **What is significant about Philip, a Jew, going to Samaria and the Samaritans actually listening to him? Vs. 5-8- *“Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. 6 And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. 8 So there was much joy in that city.”***
2. **Acts 6- one of the founding deacons…a man *“of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.”***
3. **Philip saw that he was fulfilling the gospel as the Lord had commanded.**
4. **He went specifically to the city in Samaria. It seems he wanted to tackle his own prejudices as well as maybe the most difficult of people. The actual cities name is “Sabaste”…the capital city. But Luke may have used Samaria so as to highlight the whole Northern Kingdom that had been estranged from the South for so long.**
5. **We definitely see the power of the gospel to overcome even hard-core prejudice here.**
* **Hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans had lasted for a 1000 years.**
* **It began with the monarchy in the 10th Cent. BC when the tribes defected, making Samaria their capital, leaving only 2 tribes loyal to Jerusalem…(The Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom split)…**
* **Things got steadily worse when Samaria was captured by Assyria in 722 BC. Thousands of its inhabitants were deported and repopulated by foreigners.**
* **In the 6th Cent. BC, when the Jews returned to their land, they refused to help the Samaritans rebuild their temple.**
* **Things went along for a couple of hundred years until the 4th cent. BC when relationships hardened between the Jews and the Samaritans when they completed their rival temple on Mt. Gerizim and they rejected all the OT with the exception of the Pentateuch.**
* **The Samaritan were so despised by the Jews for their blasphemy and their inter-marriage that they set up trade routes around Samaria and no reasonable Jew would go there even if it would save time to cut through Samaria on a trip North or home.**
* **In John’s gospel we see the relationship illustrated by the words, *“For Jews had no dealing with Samaritans.”***
1. **Philip taking the gospel to Samaria was clearly a geographical milestone in the expansion of the Kingdom of God and the church’s witness.**
2. **With the Gospel came the people *“of one accord”* that wanted to hear what he had to say…**
3. **They wanted to experience the miracles that those in the South had witnesses and experience in the South with Jesus.**
4. **The road may have been paved/prepared a little bit because of the Samaritan woman that Jesus purposefully encountered. His heart went out to her and them by virtue of His association and His trip through their “airspace”. Jesus has a heart for “all” His people wherever they are found.**
5. **Vs. 8 tells us of the product of the gospel in that area. *“So there was much joy in that city.”***
6. **The city was all aghast with revival or reformation.**
7. **People had been heals and saved…and the upshot is the joy of the Lord.**
8. **What comparisons can be made between Simon the Sorcerer and Philip the deacon in verses 9-13? What contrasts? *“But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. 10 They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is the power of God that is called Great.’ 11 And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.”***
9. **Here we have Simon the Great and his traveling Magic Show!**
10. **Historically known as Simon Magnus. A name forever associated with magic and sorcery.**
* **Justin Martyr…who was from Samaria…and Irenaeus both report this man as being a man of many heresies and considered to be a god among the people.**
* **Philip on the other hand preached the good news of the gospel and did all that he did in the name of Jesus Christ…not his name.**
1. **A Samaritan who had made a name for himself.**
2. **Simon was doing things to make himself look like a “god”. *“This man is the power of God that is called Great.”* Simon never discouraged them from these beliefs.**
3. **Be held in such high esteem by the people *“saying the he himself was somebody great.”* …**
4. **Greek Language the word for *“great”* and the word for *“magic”* are the same word, interestingly enough…so we see a little play on words here.**
5. **All that he did was based on the people being able to see…belief by sight and yet they were being deceived by Simon into believing he had some great power…**
6. **The people are exposed to the “real deal” and the spirit opens their hearts…because Philip was proclaiming and doing things in the name of the Lord…and by His power.**
7. **They had listened to Simon for a long while but they didn’t get anything in return from him other than entertainment which was fleeting.**
8. **Philip is giving out the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ as the true Messiah and Redeemer of His people.**
9. **Simon while impressed enough to be baptized because he perceived the power to be stronger than his own is still looking for that power to be his…bring about his exposure a little later on when he tries to buy the Holy Spirit from Peter. Acts. 8:18-24.**
10. **Why do you think it was important for the Jerusalem church to send Peter and John to minister to these new believers in Samaria in verses 14-17? *“Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.”***
11. **Philip understood that he wasn’t starting his own church in Samaria.**
12. **He was just a messenger from the Lord and the Jerusalem church so the church in Jerusalem would have been notified of the progress and it was up to them to find a way to connect these bodies so that the message of unity could be expressed and experienced.**
13. **In a sense, this was the Samaritan Pentecost. The believing Samaritans would be filled with the oly spirit that had filled the people in Jerusalem…Jew and gentile …on the day of Pentecost.**
* **This gift of the Spirit was proof positive that these who had received the spirit were folded into the church family.**
* **The Samaritan believers would be counted as full members of the ne true church…the covenant people of God.**
1. **Interesting side note that John would be one of the Apostles to be sent to Samaria to check out this. It seems that his prejudice against the Samaritans was well known…see Luke 9:51-56.**
2. **Why do you suppose that God would withhold from these believers…for we are told that they…. *“…had only been baptized into the name (into the allegiance or the ownership of) of the Lord Jesus.”* … the Holy Spirit until the apostles arrived?**
3. **The gospel had obviously changed people here as all could see by the reports but the question remained would the Samaritan Christians be accepted into the fold?**
* **Would they be welcomed by the Jewish Christians or would there need to be a separate faction of Jewish Christians and Samaritan Christians in the Church of Jesus Christ? Of course, this would not do.**
* **Remember just as Pentecost was unique so isn’t this work in Samaria and is not to be equated with the way God works in every generation…in fact we don’t see this type of thing again.**
* **The rest of the Scriptures Old and New tell us that regeneration is an experience of the Holy Spirit, just as the belief of these Samaritans was an experience of the Holy Spirit—because we cannot believe apart from the Holy Spirit.**
* **Faith is a gift of God, created in us by the Holy Spirit, and just as the apostles believed having experienced the Holy Spirit in that way, they then subsequently experienced the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.**
* **So God in His wisdom waited for the outpouring of the Spirit on these so that all would see that God had in fact brought them into the whole church .**
1. **The laying on of hands was a specific act by the Apostles as a sign of their inclusion publicly.**
2. **They were to be considered BONA FIDE Christians to be incorporated into the community of the redeemed on precisely the same terms as Jewish converts.**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**May 21, 2025**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **What was the point of the persecution that God ordained for His church?**
4. **To spread the gospel. Acts 1:8-**
5. **But why this way? Seems rather harsh on his part.**
6. **People generally don’t normally get away from what is normal for them.**
7. **People often need a swift kick in the behind to get going and fear of imprisonment and death is a pretty powerful motivator.**
8. **The church grows through suffering!**
9. **What have we learned so far about Philip in chapter 8:5-13? Simon the Magician? The church?**
10. **Acts 8: 18-25**
11. **Now… what is up with Simon the Sorcerer? He seems to have made the same conversion as the others before the Holy Spirit had come upon them. But here in our text (vs. 18-25) we see that he obviously hadn’t. So what is it we see here that we need to be aware of in the church today? *“Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, ‘Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’ 20 But Peter said to him, ‘May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21 You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.’ 24 And Simon answered, ‘Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.’ Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.”***
12. **Well, we actually know how this works.**
13. **There are those who make profession and are even baptized but are not of the fold. Think the parable of the Seed and the sower.**
14. **You see, there are only believers and non-believers in God’s economy not Jew and Samaritan.**
15. **We know for a fact that throughout the ages there have been those in the covenant community that are not really part of the community of faith. (Even in this book…we have seen Ananias and Sapphira)**
* **Jesus says perhaps one of the hardest truths of His ministry in Matthew 7:21-23- *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”***
* **I John 2: 4- *“Whoever says ‘I know Him’ but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”***
* **I John 2:18-19- *“Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”***
* **These are hard truths…but truths none the less.**
1. **We are told that he believed and was baptized but we are left to wonder at this exchange if he truly repented or simply wanted to find a way to get more power.**
2. **If Justin Martyr and Irenaeus are telling the truth then we know he never really believed…and that is the consensus of the historical church.**
* **Historically known as Simon Magnus. A name forever associated with magic and sorcery.**
* **Justin Martyr…who was from Samaria…and Irenaeus both report this man as being a man of many heresies and considered to be a god among the people.**
* **Philip on the other hand preached the good news of the gospel and did all that he did in the name of Jesus Christ…not his name.**
* **A Samaritan who had set to and did made a name for himself…a celebrity that loved his celebrity.**
1. **So how do you suppose Peter knew that Simon was not a believer?**
2. **It seems clear by this reading that Simon had not repented of his past life and was instead still seeking to “use” whatever he could to his advantage.**
3. **He tried to buy this power so that he could be seen giving the Spirit to others so he could be in the same league as the Apostles.**
4. **The Greek in verse 20 is much clearer. ESV says- *“But Peter said to him, ‘May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! “* The Greek says, *“Cursed is your money and you!”* And he says it that way because he’s picking up the language of Deuteronomy 29, the language of covenantal cursing, as he goes on to say *“in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity,”* (vs. 23)**
5. **In other words, what Peter is doing is pronouncing a covenantal curse on what Simon the magician has actually said, because it is totally out of accord with the language of someone who believes in Jesus Christ.**
6. ***“Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.”* Peter says, *“if possible”* …here because he didn’t believe Simon would actually repent.**
7. **And what Peter is saying is that Simon the magician has no share in the blessings of the gospel… *“You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.”*, but rather is under the umbrella of the curses of the covenant of God…a reprobate!**
8. **What is Simon’s response to Peter’s judgment and call to repentance?**
* **It is not as encouraging as it might appear…remember Simon has made his living in deceit.**
* **Peter had commanded Simon to repent and pray to Lord… perhaps then the Lord might forgive the intent of his heart…note he was not saying that HE would be forgiven…in fact, Peter had just condemned him.**
* **So instead of praying for forgiveness and repenting he ask Peter to do it for him.**
* **Hoping Peter would pull some strings…with his connections so that he would be delivered from God’s judgment without him having to repent and admit his faults/sins.**
* **It seems that he is far more interested in avoiding the consequences than he was in forsaking his sin.**
* **Because he saw Peter as the “alpha” if you will…more powerful than himself.**
* **What seems to concern him most was not to receive pardon from God in salvation but to escape God’s judgment.**
1. **The narrative ends unresolved. Why do you suppose?**
* **Maybe this is a teaching moment for Luke. Maybe we are to reflect on ourselves rather than Simon.**
* **Has the power of the gospel so affected me that repentance is a normal part of my life?**
* **What are the reasons that I don’t find myself in repentance that often?**
* **Am I just that good that I have nothing to repent about at the end of the day? Am I that blind?**
* **Do I love the things that I want so much that repentance does not come naturally to me?**
1. **How does verse 25 once again confirm the role that the apostles had defined for themselves in Acts 6 as being left to *“…we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*? *“Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.”***
2. **They preached the gospel which is their main job.**
3. **They also expanded the church which they had been commanded by the Lord to do.**
4. **Their preaching was crucial in affirming the Holy Spirit among the Samaritans.**
5. **This preaching and teaching confirmed the oneness of God’s Church throughout the land. There was:**
6. **One kingdom.**
7. **One flock under one Shepherd**
8. **One flock that began to reflect the elect from every nation, tongue and tribe.**
9. **But it was also away to support Philip’s preaching so that the people could see multiple peoples…especially ones in authority in the Jerusalem church … and all of them proclaiming the same message.**
10. **The Samaritans have been welcomed in as full members of the covenant community.**
* **And given that they preached in many Samaritan villages it shows that the old prejudices were set aside as the Lord said…neither Jew nor Gentile…in this case neither Jew or Samaritan.**
* **They probably surprised the people in these villages.**
* **Men from Jerusalem were going out of their way to engage with them.**
* **And they were sharing with them a vision of a new community in which they were welcomed in.**
1. **Acts 8:26- 40- *“Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ This is a desert place. 27 And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 And the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over and join this chariot.’ 30 So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ 31 And he said, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: ‘Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.’ 34 And the eunuch said to Philip, ‘About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?’ 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. 36 And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?’5 3 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.”***
2. **We have talked about Philip, now let’s consider for a moment the Ethiopian…he was a eunuch which was common for most courtiers…especially those working for the royal women. He was also a treasurer for Candace as the text indicates. Why would an Ethiopian travel to Jerusalem to worship?**
3. **It seems that he may have been born into Judaism or was a proselyte making the yearly pilgrimage to festival.**
	* + 1. **So do we see God converting His people even from among the Jews…?**
				- **In this case…one who is removed from the formality of day to day life in Jerusalem and has only the Scriptures to influence his thinking…which are the power of salvation.**
				- **During the time of Manasseh a treaty with Egypt required the king to send off Jews to outposts on the borders of Egypt which included south towards Ethiopia/Cush or modern day Sudan.**
				- **Zeph. 3:10- *“From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering.”***
			2. **OR…we do see God converting Gentiles…a high-ranking one …a eunuch and a God-fearer as well. Fulfilling multiple prophesies to this fact…**
				- **Interesting...he is not only a Gentile but also a eunuch --- an outcast according to the law.**
				- **Deut. 23:1- *“No one whose testicles are crushed or whose male organ is cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD.”***
				- **But God’s grace overcomes the law. Isaiah 56:3-5-8- *“Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, ‘The LORD will surely separate me from His people”; and let not the eunuch say, ‘Behold, I am a dry tree.’ For thus says the LORD: ‘To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off…*vs. 8- *The LORD God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, ‘I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.’”***
				- **This encounter signifies the expanding reach of the Gospel beyond Jewish boundaries…the utter most parts of the earth. For Cush was at the boundaries of the then known world.**
4. **Some fun facts:**
5. **Cushite or Ethiopian kings were perceived as gods and so did not take up the day to day rule of the nation.**
	* + - * **They were too holy to be charged with such menial tasks.**
				* **The kings reigned but they did not rule.**
				* **Therefore the business of the kingdom was put into the hands of the queen mother and every queen mother was given the title or name Candace.**
				* **This was a name of title much like Caesar.**
6. **So the closet males must be eunuchs.**
7. **Eunuchs were often employed in court because of the fact that they were perceived as trust worthy and their inability to establish a competing dynasty.**
8. **They often rose to power as this one has as butlers—house managers or treasurers.**
9. **Interesting they knew what would happen when you put men and women together in a stressful and intimate environment!**
	* 1. **But what more DO WE learn about Philip here?**
10. **This sounds a lot like the call of Abram to go into another country.**
	* + 1. **They both arose and went when called by God.**
			2. **He submitted without having to know all the details.**
			3. **He went to the desert. There wouldn’t be many people there at all.**
			4. **He was evangelizing so he would have naturally thought …How does this make sense?**
			5. **But we don’t see any hesitation.**
			6. **He trusted God to send him to the “right” place! *“And he rose and went.”***
11. **We saw how Philip was defined back in Acts 6 so we know that he was prepared…ready to be used…well equipped. He was ready… I Peter 3:15-*“*** ***But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,*” This is to be where we are always.**
12. **How well do we listen and obey the LORD? Why?**
	* 1. **Where is Philip when the Ethiopian is reading the book of Isaiah?**
13. **Running alongside the chariot.**
14. **Anyone else running alongside a chariot come to mind? Elijah, perhaps?!? He ended up out running Ahab’s chariot. I Kings 18**
15. **And he is running alongside close enough to hear what the man is reading out loud and close enough to ask the Ethiopian a question, “*Do you understand what you are reading?” How can I, unless someone guides me?”***
	* + 1. **What do you think about that question? How might this question help us? If only all evangelistic encounters would be so easy!!!**
				- **Asking questions first shows people that we respect their opinions…even if we might not agree.**
				- **Asking questions gives us insight into what the other person is thinking and with that knowledge we can better address their need.**
				- **Asking questions gives the other side space and time to think through and clarify their own thoughts before they answer.**
			2. **What does the eunuch’s response tell us about his character?**
16. **Calvin contrast the Ethiopian’s modesty and humility in acknowledging his inability to be a person who is *“swollen-headed with too many confidences in his own ability”*…someone who think too highly of himself.**
17. **Calvin goes on to say: *“This is also why practically the reading of Scripture bears fruit with such a few people today, because scarcely one in a hundred is to be found who gladly submits himself to teaching…any teaching.”* Sound familiar for our day!**
	* 1. **What divine providences do we see at work here in the life of this Ethiopian?**
18. **Worshiping in Jerusalem…How would this prepare him to receive the teaching of God truly? What might have been some of the natural impediments to his hearing the Gospel?**
	* + 1. **If his people are part of the people group living in and around Cush/Ethiopia He may have been taught about a Messiah that would be triumphant over the oppressors of Israel…**
				- **He would have been taught what he did in worship is what might cause God to show Him favor…**
				- **He wouldn’t have any assurance except in his religion…being a Jew that is…to the exclusion of everyone else.**
			2. **If he was a Gentile God-fearer he would be pretty much in the dark…hearing bits and pieces just enough to cause him to seek for more…hence the power of the gospel once again.**
	1. **As one of the elect he was obviously moved by the Spirit to discover more.**
		* 1. **Would be interesting for either a Jew or a Gentile to get their hands on a scroll of Scripture…**
			2. **Here he is with a copy of the scroll of Isaiah**
			3. **It obviously was important enough to him to spend whatever it would have cost to get a translation of the text…maybe why it appears to be a rough translation.**
			4. **He could speak Hebrew…and he had a desire to know the Word of God.**
			5. **God knows the heart of those He has prepared before the foundations of the earth and He will ensure that the gospel gets to them.**
	2. **The Spirit seems to have given him a clear mind prepared to want to understand…which requires a humble spirit before God…a repentant heart…**
	3. **What is the passage that the traveler is stuck on? A rough or literal translation of Isaiah 53:3-5. *“He was despised and rejected2 by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.* Who is the passage about?**
	4. **Then the Spirits sending to him Philip to teach him what the words meant.**
		* 1. **What insight is revealed by the eunuch even before Philip explains the gospel when he asks, *“‘About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?’”***
			2. **What does this reveal to us about common grace?**
	5. **Then Philip articulates the good news starting from where the eunuch had been reading. Interesting how this is similar to the events on the road to Emmaus right after Jesus’ resurrection. *“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.***
19. **What happens next in verse 36? *“And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?’”***
20. **Between the Explanation of the Word and the work of the Spirit this man recognizes that he is one of the elect…one of the people of God. And as such…**
21. **So well prepared by the Spirit was the Ethiopian’s heart that it seems he believe immediately and wishes to be baptized.**
22. **This guy makes things so easy for Philip. Or I should say the Spirit was making it easy for Philip.**
23. **Wait where is verse 37? See note.**
	* + 1. **These were side notes in later copies of the original.**
			2. **They seem to have been used in early baptismal liturgies for adults.**
				- **Adults who came into the church for the first time were required to make a profession of faith…adults only!**
				- **When adults came into the church for the first time they would make a profession of faith and then be baptized and then afterwards be welcomed into the fellowship of the church and then discipled in what would become the Didache…the teaching of the Apostles along with the rest of Scripture.**
				- **Early church liturgy makes it clear that people were NOT required to jump through doctrinal hoops to become members.**
				- **What was required was minimal at best…a simple credible profession of faith.**
			3. **It is felt that they were inserted into the text by a later scribe who figured that Philip would certainly want to make sure the Ethiopian made a public profession of faith which would have revealed his heart… as opposed to Simon the magician whose heart was not right before God.**
			4. **It sounds good but it is not in the original.**
			5. **It would seem that it was considering profession enough for a life-long Jew who was willing to give up his Judaism …leaving behind his past life of unbelief was sufficient “evidence for Philip.**
			6. **Or…as a God-fearer…one who COULD not really participate in the temple worship because of his being a eunuch and could not be circumcised…**
				- **Philip would have presented the gospel in such a way, with the work of the Spirit, that the eunuch’s profession was found in his desire to be baptized.**
				- **Since Philip would have surely spoken of how baptism was the sign of the covenant in Christ.**
24. **What does Vs. 39- say to us?  *“And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.”***
25. **By miracle or not… snatch up and delivered on the “wind” or simply that was his next port of call just like the one that brought him to the Ethiopian it doesn’t seem to really matter…**
26. **What matters is the Ethiopian, after Philip leaves, goes rejoicing that he is of the house of God…the elect of God.**
27. **Just like in the region of Samaria there is much joy associated with the reception of the gospel. 8:8- *“So there was much joy in that city.”***
28. **What would you say is missing from this evangelistic presentation of those who were saved?**
29. **Where is the call to repentance from Philip? Only 6 times in Acts is the word repent or repentance used.**
30. **Acts 2:38- Peter preaches to the Jews at Pentecost…**
31. **5:31- *“repentance of Israel”* before the Sanhedrin…**
32. **11:18 Peter explaining what God has done…He grants repentance and people respond accordingly…it is not something they can do on their own.**
33. **17:30- Paul before the Greeks…God is revealed and all people are required to repent…**
34. **20:21- Paul explaining his style of preaching…what was in his message**
35. **26:20- Paul doing the same thing as above with emphasis on the fact that true repentance is witnessed in faithful works. So we have a standard to know if one is truly saved.**
36. **What might this lack of mentioning of repentance say to us today?**
37. **Obviously a call to repentance is to be part of evangelism given the prophets and Jesus’ emphasis.**
38. **But it doesn’t appear to be absolutely necessary…or as necessary as many would leave us to believe.**
39. **It is God that works repentance…we need to remember that.**
40. **The most important aspect of the presentation is the correct teaching of the Scriptures…the good news.**
41. **Just for fun, what do you suppose is being taught about the mode of baptism in the text?**
42. **Not much really…it can’t support total immersion as many have tried…simply because the grammar is clear that if one was immersed both would have to be immersed…and it is rather hard to baptize someone if the one doing the baptizing is under that water too.**
43. ***“went down into the water”* proves nothing as to the depth of water for we go down into the water when we walk along the shoreline and our feet get wet…**
44. **So the mode may suggest that they went down into the water together …whatever the depth…and Philip baptized by pouring water scooped up from the water probably out of a container of some kind but could have been done with hands. We have baptism depicted that way in many paintings of the early church.**
45. **This passage actually supports the Reformed way of baptism more than anything else. Though what we see is not a direct explanation of the mode.**
46. **But baptism by water is seen as have taken the place of circumcision.**
47. **How does this passage fulfill the prophesy of Acts 1:8?**
48. **Ethiopia was the “furthest south “ the extreme boundary of the habitable world as far they knew….so this would begin to fulfill the part of the prophecy that stated *“to the ends of the earth.”***
49. **Philip was next called to Azotus or the Ashdod of the OT (see I Sam. 5:1) and he was called to evangelize up the Philistine coast.**
50. **Philip is busy …he is called from one place to the next to faithfully preach the gospel.**
51. **What do we know about the relationship between the Jews and the Philistines?**
52. **The Jews were supposed to have annihilated them when commanded by God and they didn’t. So God made them a severe thorn in their flash ever since.**
53. **But God…sent Philip to the Philistines as well.**
54. **Interestingly enough there are no recorded conversions. This doesn’t mean there weren’t any but we can’t read into the text that there were…we only know that Philip did what the Spirit directed and the results were up too God.**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**September 24, 2025**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **Back in Chapter 1 the disciples are commissioned to grow God’s Church…what passage speaks clearly to their call and how should that motivate us today?**
4. **Acts. 1:8- *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”***
5. **We too are be witnesses!**
6. **Since we have the reliable witness …the Gospels and the Epistles…. we have the record of what these men saw, experienced and heard Jesus Teach and do.**
7. **So our role is to proclaim what these witnesses handed down to us…firsthand accounts. We are to proclaim the Gospel according to the Apostles.**
8. **We are to hold fast to that Gospel just as they proclaimed it…not changing it or embellishing it…or it no longer is their firsthand account.**
9. **And we are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit to make our *“witness”* effective.**
10. **Verse 8 always causes me pause…especially this part… *“…you will be my witnesses…”***
11. **This is first commanded of the disciples. It is a command and an expectation.**
12. **It is by virtue of our connection, as we have discussed, a command and an expectation for us as well.**
13. **This is what hits me whenever I read this…**
* **The fact is, based on what Christ says, we WILL be His witnesses.**
* **So do I even consider on a day to day basis …what does my witness communicate to those around me? Is my witness glorifying Him or myself?**
1. **Where do we find this concept/doctrine of witness on display in the Old Testament or is this just a New Testament thing? To what end? Here are just a few examples:**
2. **Gen. 12:1-3- *“Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”-* The First Great Commission…**
3. **Isaiah 43:10- *“You are my witnesses, declares the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He.”***
4. **Isaiah 44:8, 21- *“Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses!”…* vs. 21- *“Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; I formed you; you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.”***
5. **From Genesis to Revelation we see this word.**
6. **It is used over 190 times which shows us its importance to be sure.**
7. **Explaining people witnessing things done be others, word given one to another, agreements made, and judgment made.**
8. **Even the created order stand as witnesses against us and our sin.**
9. **So this word is a BIG DEAL and ought to cause us pause…for it is to reflect the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth before the face of God and man.**
10. **What characteristics do we see of the early church from chapters 1-7 that we are to emulate today as a church? To what end?**
11. **What seemed to be the main purposes for God having Luke tell us about Stephen?**
12. **How does Chapter 8 help us to be assured that all God’s people no matter where they are at will come to faith?**
13. **What did God do to make the Church bold at this stage of the game?**
14. **Acts 9:1-9- Saul’s Conversion**
15. **What motivates Paul to act as he has and does based on 9:1-2-?*“But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”*?**
16. **His absolute belief in his belief system…not the God of the Bible or the Hebrew Tanakh…the Jewish Bible…**
17. **The Tanakh is a composite of the 3 main sections of the Jewish Bible.**
* **Torah (The Pentateuch)…**
* **Nevi’im (the Prophets)…**
* **The Ketuvim (the Writings).**
* **Or the Midrash…a Jewish commentary on the Torah…**
1. **Maybe, he took his marching orders from the High Priest who had broken the Law multiple time to achieve the end he wanted…the end justifies the means…But this was not the Law that he had professed to uphold.**
2. **More than likely he was motivated simply by the teachings of a particular rabbi who was particularly harsh on *“non-believers”*.**
3. **But it was mostly him and his zealousness**
* **Elsewhere (Acts 22:2; Acts 23:6; Phil. 3:4-6- *“…though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.”*) he tells us that he was a strict Pharisee, brought up (apparently) in Jerusalem, taught by one of the most renowned rabbis of the day and according to the standard of the law…namely the Pharisaical Law – blameless. With a wee bit o’ pride!**
* **For him, the notion of a crucified Messiah was a contradiction in terms. For everyone knows that Messiahs rule, they triumph, they win.**
* **The LAW insists that those who hang on a tree are cursed by God. Surely, therefore, the insistence that Jesus is the Messiah is not only stupid, but verges on the blasphemous.**
* **It might lead to political insurrection: the fledgling church was growing, and might become a dangerous block. It had to be stopped!**
* **Or pride wanting to measure up to being the best… of biblical proportion…**
* **In his mind, what was needed was a man of courage like a man like Phinehas who averted the wrath of God by his decisive action against the perverters of God’s truth and integrity, defined by God’s standards (Num. 25).**
* **Someone who really understood the implications of these wretched delusions and who saw where they would lead.**
1. **Saul approved of Stephen’s brutal death and then set out almost singlehandedly *“to destroy/ravage the church”…***
2. **The Greek word here is the word used to describe *“wild and ferocious beasts that tear their prey limb from limb”***
3. **The picture is more of a wild beast…a man possessed…in the way he treated Christians, than a respected man of the temple that actually believed the Law of God and how people as image bearers were commanded to be treated.**
4. **He was going house to house, like a possessed man, dragging believers off to prison and to their deaths.**
5. **Some speculate that Saul may have actually met Jesus, as a younger man, and heard Him speak and he was so moved by Jesus… and so conflicted by his own worldview that he went almost completely mad “against” Jesus…running in a sense until he couldn’t run any more. Then he met with Jesus...again?!? We will speculate on this a bit more later…or is it speculation.**
6. **Why do you suppose that Luke has given us these 3 pictures of Saul, each seemingly getting worse? Acts 7:58- *“And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.”;* 8:1-3- *“And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. 3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.”* And 9:1-2**
7. **He has been mentioned each time as a bitter opponent of Christ and His church…each time his description reveals more evil intent of Saul.**
8. **Luke now says the Saul is STILL in the same mental condition of hatred and hostility.**
9. **The text says of Paul… *“But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.”***
10. **He ate, slept and breathed hatred for these people.**
11. **It wasn’t enough to just deal with the believers in Jerusalem and the local cities…his hatred was so deep he took it upon himself to get letters…read arrest warrants…to chase down those in other countries even…in this case Damascus.**
12. **He was a hunter of human beings and he was good at it.**
13. **He himself says of himself in Acts 26:11 that he persecuted them with a *“raging fury”.* *“And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”***
14. **In other words, he was in no mood to consider the faith claims of Christ any other way but as extreme heresy… a threat to his very way of life.**
15. **He, like, Caiaphas with Jesus, was willing to redefine the Law to meet his own anger and hatred.**
* **Remember it was NOT a capital offense to claim Messiahship.**
* **There is no Hebrew word that can be translated as blasphemy. Translators often use the word “blasphemy” to translate other words like “curse” or “revile” or “despise” when these words are used when God is the object.**
* **Blasphemy was defined by God as someone cursing or insulting God directly.**
* **And in cursing God, which meant…taking the Lord’s name in vain or flouting his commandments in a way that deliberately abuses His name, (like the Israelites did when they made the golden calf while Moses was on the mountain) the death penalty was prescribed.**
* **But people of the Way did not do this anymore than Jesus did when Caiaphas accused Him of doing it.**
1. **This gives us some understanding why many oppose Christianity so vehemently today…it is a threat to the way they wish to look at life.)**
2. **This was not a man who was seeking…he was not like the Ethiopian who was seeking to know.**
3. **Consider Isaiah 8:11-22 as another possible reason for Saul’s anger.**
4. **We remember that Jesus generated anger pretty much wherever He went especially from the religious elites.**
5. **When He was speaking the truth… the truth was repulsive to those who should have known it best …**
6. **The problem seems to be that it was this same truth that was exposing their falsehoods and sins and He didn’t even need to speak always…just His mere presence caused great hatred.**
7. **But they were also, sons of their father the devil, so they as reprobates would assault Him and oppose Him…just because it was their nature.**
8. **So Saul was being exposed along the way by the Truth that he said he held in such high esteem.**
9. **But the actual truth was making him uncomfortable as the Spirit engaged him causing this tension.**
10. **And he would soon be a believer…this is sort of a trial by fire or like being born as he later relates as it being a violent birth which most births are. I Cor. 15:8- *“Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.”***
11. **What was this new “religion” being called at least by Paul?**
12. **The Way=disciples of the Lord.**
13. **We would call them Messianic Jews today.**
14. **These were Jews who believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven.**
15. **They wouldn’t be called Christians until Antioch.**
16. **What is ironic about this name that has obviously been given by the Jewish officials?**

**Bible Study- The Acts**

**October 1, 2025**

**Prayer**

**Review**

* + - 1. **What were some of the reasons for why Paul was such a raging lunatic concerning followers of Christ?**
			2. **In vs 2 we read, *“…so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”*?**
				1. **What is the name of this “new” religion given by Paul and the other leaders?**
				2. **What is ironic about this name that has obviously been given by the Jewish officials?**
				3. **Listen to how Paul will speak of this following in Acts 24:14-15 before Felix, *“But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, 15 having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.”***

**Let’s look specifically for a moment at Saul/Paul’s conversion….Chapter 9: 3-9. *“Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. 4 And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ 5 And he said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.’ 7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8 Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.”***

* + - 1. **Describe in a few words Saul’s conversion experience on the road to Damascus. Talk about how it happened as well.**
				1. **In the middle of the day…around noon...so the sun is high in the sky and a light brighter than the noon day sun (Acts 26:13) shone. *“At midday, O king (Agrippa), I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me.”***
				2. **It was a light from heaven Luke tells us after the fact from Paul.**
1. **The radiant glory of the face of the risen Lord shining down so brightly that it blinded Paul in the moment.**
2. **This is the sovereign grace of God through Jesus Christ…the same things that causes our conversion.**
3. **Why? The answers seems to be to tell men for all time that faith is NOT something that we can choose….it is not something we decide to do…Saul is a picture of all men without Christ none of whom are NOT able to choose Christ…all in open rebellion whether they know it or not. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”***
* **It is Christ that decided for him before the foundation of the world.**
* **It is Christ that took the initiative and intervened in his life.**
* **It is Christ who changes this wild beast…the evidence is undisputable.**
* **Paul would not and could not have chosen Christ even if he wanted to which, of course, he didn’t.**
* **God arrested Saul, if you will, at the moment he had murder on his mind.**
	1. **But now on the Damascus Road Saul meets the resurrected, glorified Jesus. Whether he had seen him before we cannot be sure; that he sees him now, Saul cannot doubt.**
	2. **And a great deal of his “new” theology… worked out and displayed in his letters, stems from that brute fact….and force…getting knock off his donkey after all!**
		+ 1. **What is Jesus communicating to Saul when He says, Vs. 4-5-*“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And he said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”***
				1. **Saul would have preferred any other answer than the one he received.**
1. **Jesus was talking with Him so clearly… He was not dead. And not only was He not dead but He is in fact the living Lord of all, and He took personally Saul’s assault on His family.**
2. **He links Himself with His people completely. *“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?***
* **In persecuting Christians, Saul was persecuting Jesus Christ Himself.**
* **The logical implication is that Christ and His people are united…to persecute Stephen and his fellow believers was to persecute the savior Himself.**
* **This speaks clearly and practically of our union “in Christ” that Paul will speak so much of in His epistles.**
* **We have another example of this in King David…a OT type of Christ…Psalm 28:8- *“The LORD is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed.”*  King David is God’s anointed but also God’s people. God is the strength of and saving refuge of both. Vs. 9- *“Oh, save your people and bless your heritage!”***
* **This again speaks of both and David’s and the people’s national standing as well as their spiritual election as God’s children.**
* **David links himself inexplicitly with God’s believing children as Christ links Himself with all His children.**
	+ - * 1. **There, with his face to the ground, it began to dawned on him that Jesus was united to those who loved and believed in Him and that every cruel thing Saul had done to them, he had done to Jesus.**
				2. **The men with him were speechless and realized he was blind though they knew not why. They led him into Damascus…his “job” interrupted for the moment…for 3 days. Interesting, don’t you think? Ironic even! *“And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.”-* vs. 9**
1. **One has to wonder at least a little bit what was going through his mind during these 3 days in the dark and fasting?**
2. **F.B. Meyer (1847-1929- a Baptist pastor and evangelist to the inner city in England) writes, *“It is an awful discovery when a great light from heaven shows a man that what he has regarded his solemn duty has been one long sin against the dearest purposes of God.”***
	* + 1. **Why do you think God would want to use such a man as Saul? What character traits does he possess that might be useful to God’s calling**?
				1. **Look at his passion and his conviction!**
				2. **Look at his knowledge of the Scriptures…**
3. **He didn’t understand them the way they were meant to be understood but he probably had at least the Pentateuch memorized, if not the whole Tanakh.**
4. **He also understood many of the doctrines in Scripture…or, he at least, knew they were in there …like the Suffering Servant…even maybe substitutionary atonement for these are OT doctrines as well, but he missed the application and the Person of Christ.**
	* + 1. **Does Luke intend for us to regard Saul’s conversion experience as typical of all Christian conversions or as the exception? Why or Why not?**
				1. **On one hand, obviously not:**
5. **we don’t need to be struck by lightning, fall off a donkey, or hear our name called out in Aramaic…**
6. **And we certainly don’t need to go on some religious pilgrimage along the Damascus or Emmaus roads in order to be converted.**
7. **Nor is it possible to have a resurrection experience or a call to apostleship…. So not everything is going to happen like Paul’s Damascus Rd. experience.**
	* + - 1. **But on the other, what things are applicable to us today?**
8. **We must experience a personal encounter with Jesus as He comes to us;**
9. **Which enables us to receive faith from God and repent of our sins;**
10. **This enables us to recognize His call on our lives into His service.**
11. **We cannot choose for Christ…Christ must have chosen us, just like He chose Saul/Paul.**
	* + - 1. **Why do you suppose God used such a dramatic means to get Saul’s attention?**
12. **God brings us all to Himself “differently” (of course there is the major things that are the same…regeneration and faith…always s the same) but As was pointed out…everything Paul did was overly dramatic to show that he was in control…and then God made it abundantly clear WHO WAS actually in control. The irony would not be missed on one so intelligent once he heart was changed.**
13. **He literally had to break him. God uses whatever method necessary to get us off our high horse…or in this case donkey!**
14. **He had to stop him cold…so Paul would be able to witness to the way God loved him.**
* **In Gal. 1:11-18, he writes, *“11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel. 12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. 14 And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when He who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by His grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.”***
* **This way Saul would never be able to take any credit… for he knows what he was going to do...he knew what he had been doing. Becoming a follower of Christ was not in any way on his list of things he wanted to do.**
1. **Remembering, perhaps, what Jesus had said and the way He had said it… in Acts 26:14- *“And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew/Aramaic language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’”*, and here in some versions, there is this ancient Greek/Roman proverb offered in the conversation, “*It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”***
* **A “goad” is a pointed stick used to prod oxen to move in a particular direction. When an ox kicks against the goad it ends up driving the point into its flesh increasing its pain.**
* **The Proverb means that it is difficult and foolish to resist or oppose a superior intellect or force that is seeking to direct you, because the resistance only causes more pain and suffering for the one resisting.**
* **God was bringing Saul to himself and He was teaching Him along the way things that he would later realize after his conversion. … and this Pharisee bowed…kicking and screaming? He had to think through things:**
* **If Jesus were alive and glorified, then somehow his death on the cross did not prove he was damned. Far from it!**
* **The claim of believers that God had raised him from the dead, and that they had seen him, must be true — and that could only mean that God had vindicated Jesus.**
* **Then what on earth did his death mean? Saul needed to understand and now from that vantage point, everything looked different. If Jesus was under the curse of God when he died, yet was vindicated by God himself, he must have died for others.**
* **Somehow his death absorbed the righteous curse of God that was due others and canceled it out. In that light, the entire history of the Hebrew Scriptures looked different.**

 **Was it not written that a Suffering Servant would be wounded for our transgressions and chastised for our iniquities?**

**Does the death of countless lambs and bulls really take away human sin? Or do we need, as it were, a human *“lamb of God,”* a human *“Passover Lamb”*?**

**If the tabernacle and temple rituals are read as pointing to the final solution, what does scriptural texts that promise a new covenant, a great outpouring of the Spirit in the last days mean (Acts 2:17-21; see Joel 2:28-32)?**

**What place does the promise to Abraham have in the scheme of things, that in Abraham’s offspring all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:3)?**

**These may have been some of the early things that went through his mind he would get so many other things confirmed when he**

* **Grant that Jesus is alive and vindicated, and everything changes.**
	+ - * 1. **Could Saul have denied Christ at this point? Does God “make” him convert? Is there any evidence that Saul wanted to deny Christ working in his life? Why are questions like this important when considering this man especially… but us as well?**
1. **If it was his choice…where was the NO, I don’t want to ? He had a voice.**
2. **Instead, He asks, *“Who are you , Lord?”* So he could speak and he could still wonder…but by the time he got out the title of Jesus there seems to be some recognition of whom he was messing with.**
3. **His response was free and rational.**
4. **When does he become a Christian?**
* **Luke does not seem to be caught up in the science of conversion.**
* **We simply know that somewhere in this encounter he becomes a believer.**
* **Food for thought:**
* **It appears to be a sudden conversion…but what happened there was not an isolated EVENT…it is part of a bigger picture.**
* **In fact, every “sudden” conversions is really part of a larger picture. In this respect. Paul’s experience was not unique.**
* **Christians who experience a sudden or dramatic conversion can usually look back with the aid of Spirit sight and see that it was really part of a process in which God was working in their lives over a period of time, even if they failed to recognize His hand. My Father’s conversion story.**
	1. **What are some of the clues that Paul’s story is bigger than the Damascus Road conversion? Think of the 3 pictures of Saul painted for us by Luke again.**
1. **What caused this persecution of the church and the vehement way he went about it? Is it just because he was a devoted Pharisee?**
* **Persecuting the Church was not part of the job description of a Pharisee…**
* **Even his mentor Gamaliel cautioned the Sanhedrin about being rash and to NOT persecute the church. Acts. 5:34-39**
* **So Paul’s zeal took him beyond his theology. Why?**
* **Something must have been going on in his life under the surface …some point of tension that he couldn’t quite square as the most knowledgeable young Pharisee of the day. Gal. 1:14- *“Beyond many of my own age”—*thinking of himself too highly!**
* **God is in the tension working on him …preparing Him for the point on the road where he will meet Jesus. Rom. 7:9 speaks of *“the law …came”…*it seems the Spirit had been convicting him of a higher law…God’s law and his tension was with himself and he was taking it out on the ones he hated.**
1. **He tells us which part of the law set fire to his soul…**
2. **vs. 7- *You shall not covet.”* As a result *“sin came alive and I died.”***
* **But his encounter with Stephen revealed something to him that he didn’t have with all his position and knowledge… Acts 6:8-10 shed some light… *“8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. 10 But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.”***

**It is Paul’s synagogue or a group from the synagogue (was Saul part of that group that debated with Stephen, a Gentile convert) that could not withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he was speaking…”**

 **This was too much for Saul as God wrestled with him getting him ready for his encounter with Christ. The next thing we see of Saul is his standing over Stephen dead body approving of his death.**

1. **He admits later on in Acts 24 as we have seen, what he had probably heard that may have been something similar from Stephen, that this was a turning point, of course…**
2. **But it seems that the Christlikeness of Stephen arrested him and he fought it until he came face to face with Jesus….and He couldn’t fight it or Him anymore.**
3. **Acts 24:14-15-*“But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, 15 having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.”***
4. **He went from a paradoxical dissatisfaction after Stephen to being totally satisfied in Christ.**