



**Bethel Gospel Chapel**  
**Studies in Acts**  
**Introduction**

In conjunction with the ministry on Sunday mornings for the next ten weeks, we will be making a study of Acts in our home Bible studies. In his Gospel, Luke wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen (Acts 1:1). Now he continues to record how the apostles carried out the Lord's instructions, and what the results were.

**1. Acts is a historical book**

Luke is accurate in the information he gives to us. After doing research for many years in the region where the events described by Luke were enacted, Ramsey, the famous archaeologist, states unambiguously that:

*Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect to its trustworthiness. Luke is a historian of first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, but he is possessed of the true historic sense ..... In short, this author should be placed along with the greatest historians.* N.I.C. on the Gospel of Luke, pp.39-40

This assessment is confirmed by Harrison through his research in the times of which Luke writes. He states that Luke is accurate in the information he gives:

*Geographical notes are accurate, as are the references to Roman officials, who are always called by the title appropriate to their position. For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming.*  
Acts, the Expanding Church, pp.21 & 25

## **2. Acts is a transitional book**

It is a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles of the New Testament. It contains both historical and biographical information that is crucial to our understanding of how Christianity spread from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Luke has combined careful research with firsthand knowledge to produce the book. Acts is not an exhaustive history, but is a carefully selected series of events that trace the first steps of the disciples toward fulfilling their responsibility *"to be witnesses for me."*

# Study #1 The Church and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

**READ: Acts 1:1-11, 2:22-41**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an important event to the New Testament Christian. His resurrection was promised by the Lord Jesus. In Matthew 16:21 we read;

*"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."*

This promise was fulfilled in the events that followed in the experience of Jesus and it is confirmed by Luke in his introduction to the Book of Acts. He writes in Acts 1:3; *"After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive."* The church's existence, development and future was to be tied to the fact that he is alive. It is part of the gospel message, in 2 Corinthians 15:3 the apostle Paul writes;

*"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."*

The resurrection with the ascension of Christ allowed for the descent of the Holy Spirit. The resurrection is a central theme in New Testament preaching and teaching, it is important to the present priestly ministry of Christ and it is the foundation of the believer's hope for the future.

1. What is the *"former book"* referred to in chapter 1:1?

Why does he describe the contents of that book as *"all that Jesus began to do and to teach"*?

2. List some of the convincing proofs that Jesus gave to the disciples after he rose from the dead.

Which do you think is the most convincing?

3. Why do you think Jesus wanted his disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they received *"the gift of his Father?"* Refer to 1:8.

4. Read Chapter 2:22-24, what part did God have in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ? Why is it stressed here?

5. The quotation 2:25-28 is from Psalm 16:8-11, express the meaning of Peter's explanation given in 2:29-31 in your own words.

6. According to 2:32-33, what was the result of Christ's resurrection?

7. The quotation in 2:34-35 is from Psalm 110:1, what additional truth is being emphasized by its use here?

8. In 2:36, Peter says, "*God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.*" Explain how the resurrection allowed God to accomplish this.

9. In 2:37 we read, "*When the people heard this,*" what is included in this and why were those things so convicting?

10. Explain Peter's answer to the peoples' question, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

## **Study #2 The Church and the Holy Spirit**

**READ: Acts 2:1-21; 10:44-11:18 (for background Ch.10:1-43)  
Acts 19:1-7.**

In Matthew 16:16-17; the Lord Jesus blesses Simon in regard to his declaration of Christ's deity, by saying *"and I tell you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church."* In this statement Jesus indicates that the birth of the church was still future and that he would be both the church's foundation and builder.

The actual work of building the church, however, was to be done by the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 3:11; John the Baptist proclaimed:

*"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."*

Referring to John's words in Acts 1:5; Jesus promised: *"For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."* This baptism occurred on Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended from the risen Christ. The Holy Spirit filled and indwelt the believers gathered in Jerusalem producing a new corporate entity -the church, the body of Christ. (2 Corinthians 12:12-13) The ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit in the church provides the gifts, graces, and power necessary to enable the church to accomplish the purpose of her risen head.

1. Jesus was crucified at Passover, try to discover how much time elapsed between Passover and the Day of Pentecost.
2. Read John 16:5-7; Acts 1:4; Acts 2:32-33, why was it necessary for the disciples to *"wait for the gift my father promised?"*
3. Describe the experience of the early disciples as they gathered in Jerusalem, Acts 2:1-4.
4. Try to explain the purpose of each thing that was heard and seen in 2:1-4.
5. List the results of the Holy Spirit's coming in the experience of the observers spoken of in 2:5-12.

6. Can you think of any reason why the behaviour of the disciples would be described by onlookers with the words, "*they have had too much wine.*"

7. Why did Peter use Joel's prophecy as an explanation of their experience? Was it all relevant to Pentecost?

8. Who was Cornelius and why was Peter specially prepared to witness to him? (Acts 10)

9. What explanation does Peter give when called to Jerusalem to account for his visit to the gentile, Cornelius? (Acts 11:15-17)

10. List the similarities between the Holy Spirit's activity in Acts 2, Acts 10, and Acts 19. Why do we have the three separate accounts of the coming of the Holy Spirit?

## Study #3 The Church and Miracles

**READ: Acts 3 and 4; 14:8-20**

God and miracles go together. In fact, a miracle is simply God intervening in human affairs. Miracles are prominent in the Bible. Sometimes coming one here and one there, then at other times occurring very frequently. There are frequent miracles at the time of Elisha, Jesus Christ, and the early church.

Biblical miracles glorify God, but they also display His power, compassion, wisdom, and particularly in the case of the Lord Jesus and the Apostles, they are a means of accreditation. In Acts 2:22; we read, "*Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.*" Again in Hebrews 2:32, "*This salvation which was announced by the Lord was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders, and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*"

God is a miracle worker but we must not be presumptuous by demanding them at our whim or careless in dismissing the possibility as irrational.

1. What does society in general think of miracles today?

What do you think?

2. Refer to Acts 3:1-10; who is the subject of this miracle?

Why do you think the details given in 3:2 and 10 are recorded?

3. Refer to Acts 3:1-10; what are the results for the beggar and the people who observed the miracle?

4. Refer to Acts 3:11-24; what was the reason for this miracle?

5. At least one denomination believe that miracles should still accompany the presentation of the Gospel. Review Acts 3 and 4 and Acts 14:8-20; do miracles help or hinder evangelism?

6. Read Acts 4:14-16; what frustrated the leaders as they attempted to stop the Apostles' witness?

7. How are miracles used in Acts 14:1-7 and what are the results?

8. The miracles in Acts 14:8-20 was performed before gentiles. Compare this to Peter's miracle in Acts 3 performed before Jews; make a list of the similarities and differences and try to explain them.

9. The Apostles are identified with Jesus in Acts 4:13, why? How can we project such a relationship?

10. Hebrews 2:4 seems to summarize the purpose of God in miracles; is this testimony from God something we should continue to expect as we proclaim the Gospel; why or why not?



## Study #4 The Church and Government

**READ: Acts 4; 6:16-40; 19:23-41**

Government is ordained by God. In the declaration of his covenant with Noah after the flood, God said in Genesis 9:5, 6;

*"And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man."*

The book of Daniel reinforces this in chapter 2:20, we read;

*"Praise be to the Name of God forever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them."*

In the New Testament Romans 13:1 reads;

*"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities for there is no authority except that which God has established. " And in verse 6; "This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing."*

Because of this instruction Christians are to pray for governments, obey their edicts if they are not contrary to God's commands, and support them with our taxes. This responsibility has been consistent through time even though, at times, governments have been the greatest threat to the church's well-being.

1. Make a list of the possible areas of conflict between the government and the Christian.
2. What is the problem facing the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:15-20; why is their solution ineffective?
3. Read Acts 4:19, why does Peter and John ask for the opinion of the Sanhedrin regarding their stand?
4. In Acts 4:23-31, the Christians join together to pray, what is acknowledged in their prayer?

What do you think they believed about human government?

5. Read Acts 4:27-28, Herod and Pilate are referred to in these verses, what did their involvement in the crucifixion accomplish?

6. If Herod and Pilate simply rubber stamped God's plan for Jesus Christ, should we believe that the actions of present governments also accomplish God's will?

Explain your answer.

7. Review Acts 16:19-21; what are the charges being brought against Paul and Silas?

Explain the real reason for the charges.

8. What creates injustice?

Do Christians face similar injustices today?

If so, try to give an example.

9. Explain Paul's reason for insisting on his rights in Acts 16:35-39.

10. Consider the events recorded in Acts 19:23-29, what is the problem and why is Demetrius reluctant to face the courts with his complaint?

Do similar tactics occur today?

## Study #5 The Church and Sin

**READ: Acts 4:32 - 5:10**

The word 'church' in the New Testament is used in most versions to translate the Greek word 'Ekklesia'. Ekklesia means "To call out of," "to segregate from the whole," it is better translated by the English word assembly.

In God's plan the church is called out from the world of sinners by the gospel to be gathered to Christ her head. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9:

*"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."*

The idea is that having been called out from the world the church would remain distinct from the world. In 2 Corinthians 6:14, we are commanded;

*"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"*

And in 2 Corinthians 6:17, *"Therefore come out from them and be separate."*

It is God's expectation that his people would be holy. This is called for in Leviticus 11:44-45, and repeated by Peter in 1 Peter 1:15-16 where he writes;

*"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*

Israel rejected this call and suffered judgement and ruin. In Acts 5 sin creeps into the church and meets God's swift disapproval. History reveals that the church has followed Israel's example, yet it is not necessary to continue on that course, we can honour our "called out" status by being holy.

1. What is sin?

2. Read Acts 4:32-33, what do you think created the unity in the church described here? Which ingredients are missing in our churches today?

3. Was the practice recorded in Acts 4:34-37 a spontaneous reaction to the local situation, or should it be common among us as well?

4. List what could be the possible advantages and disadvantages of the practice.
5. Why do you think Ananias and Sapphira sold a property? When did they decide to act as they did about the proceeds? Acts 5:1-11.
6. Peter reacts very strongly, why?
7. What principle is being taught in Acts 5:4?

What is important to God when Christians make public commitments?

8. Why does Peter approach Sapphira separately, what does he want to demonstrate?
9. In Acts 5:3, Peter says Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit, but in Acts 5:9, he says the couple had tested the Holy Spirit, are these different? Explain.
10. Do you think that the sin recorded in Acts 5 could be committed today?

If so, what would the results be?

## Study #6 The Church and Persecution

**READ: Acts 6:7-15; 7:54-8:3; 12:1-18**

The Lord Jesus gave his disciples fair warning about their future. In John 15:18-20, he said:

*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also."*

In these words he made it clear that their association with him would bring to them the treatment he experienced. In chapter 16:1-3, he adds:

*All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.*

The reason for this treatment was the same in both references, *"they have not known the Father or me."* However, along with the warnings he gives his promise in John 16:33;

*"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

The apostles faced persecution from the first moment of public witness and history shows that this was the experience of the church from their day to ours. It has been said, "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," and this seems to be true. The church appears to thrive under fire and shrink with complacency when the pressure eases. Perhaps we need to go back to John and remember that it was identification with Christ that drew opposition. If the pressure eases on us it may well be because that identification with Christ is less obvious.

1. In 2 Timothy 2:12, we are told *"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."* Why is this promise given and how is it fulfilled?

2. Read Acts 6:8-10, who are the persecutors of Stephen?

Why are they opposed to him?

3. What tactics are used when arguments fail? Is this common? (Acts 6:12-15)

4. Read Acts 6:12-14, and 7:59-60, list the parallels from the experience of the Lord Jesus?

5. Note what is written in Acts 6:5, 7:10, 7:15, 7:59, and use the information to describe Stephen.

6. Refer to Acts 12:1-18, why is Herod persecuting the church?

7. Were Stephen and James killed because the church had failed to pray for them?

Why are some persecuted Christians delivered while others are killed?

8. List the lessons to be learned about prayer in Acts 12:1-18.

9. What motivates persecution today?

What forms does it take?

10. What lessons can be learned about dealing with persecution in the various readings from Acts?

## Study #7 The Church and Her Commission

**READ: Acts 1:8; 2:22-24; 8:1-4; 8:14-17; 10:1-48.**

According to the dictionary a commission is *"a charge entrusted to anyone to perform,"* – or– *'authority to act as agent for another.'* What we call the church's commission is clearly defined by either definition. The church has a governing authority. In Ephesians 1:22-23 we read;

*"And God placed all things under his feet (the risen Christ) and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."*

In anticipation of his exaltation Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20:

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

These words have been called "the Great Commission." It is confirmed as God's purpose in Acts 1:8, where Jesus, now resurrected, says;

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Now if we go back to our beginning definitions and focus on them we can say, "the church has been given a charge to perform for Jesus Christ," – or – "she has been given the authority to act as Christ's agent." This is no doubt why the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:20, *"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."*

1. Write out the church's commission in your own words.

Is there a similarity between the commission to the church and the commission to the individual believer? Explain.

2. In Acts 1:4, the apostles are told to wait in Jerusalem until they receive the Holy Spirit, why?

3. What can be learned from the statement given in Acts 1:8?

4. Compare Acts 8:1-4, with Acts 1:8, did persecution result because of the Church's failure to obey the commission, or was the persecution the means used by God to accomplish the commission?

5. Why are Peter and John involved in Philip's ministry in Samaria? (According to Acts 8:4-8, Philip was very successful without their involvement.)

6. Who is Cornelius?

What did he have and what was he missing? (Acts 10:4-6)

7. What lesson is Peter taught by his experience recorded in Acts 10: 9-17?

Do we need a similar lesson?

8. Compare Peter's message in Acts 10:34-43 with his message in Acts 2:22-24, what are the similarities and differences?

9. Compare the results in Jerusalem with those in Caesarea.

10. In Acts 10, both Peter and Cornelius are prepared by God, describe the preparation of each. Should we be expecting God to work like this today?

Explain.



## Study #8 The Church and Grace

**READ: Acts 15:1-35.**

It seems inevitable as the gospel spread from Jews to Gentiles that the question of law vs. grace would arise. The Jewish people had been given the law by God, the law included certain requirements, such as the rite of circumcision, the sacrificial system, the special place of worship and the moral law. As the gospel spread and Gentiles as well as Jews flocked into the Kingdom the question arose, "*What about the law? Should Gentiles come under the Jewish code or not?*" This problem came to a head at the first Jerusalem Council where the question, "*Is there salvation without the rite of circumcision?*" was considered. Grace means "undeserved favour," the idea of something free and universal is implicit in it. The gospel proclaims, "*By grace you have been saved, through faith.*" The apostle Paul felt strongly that additions to grace seriously impaired the proclamation of the gospel and reflected negatively on the completeness of Christ's work on the cross.

Was salvation by law or by grace, or was it somehow by both together. Was it a gift or something like a reward, the books of Romans and Galatians defend Paul's position. But in the Acts the question is answered in chapter 15, Peter says in v.11, "No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

1. Define what is usually meant by the phrases "*being under grace*," and "*being under law*."
2. Express the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas and the "men from Judea" in your own words.
3. Why was the dispute brought to the church at Jerusalem?

How would such a problem be handled today?

4. Why do the believers referred to in Acts 15:5, hold the opinion expressed in the verse?

Could they be true Christian believers?

5. In Acts 15:7-9, Peter refers back to his experience with Cornelius recorded in Acts 10, what point is he making?
6. Express the meaning of Acts 15:10-11, in your own words.
7. What is the difference between legalism and the instructions given to the Gentile believers by James in Acts 15:19-21?
8. New Testament believers are described as "*not under law*," does this mean they are absolutely free?
- Explain.
9. How would you explain the difference between instruction given about Christian behaviour and legalism?
10. List some of the things we can learn about church interrelationship from Acts 15.

## Study #9 The Church and Leadership

**READ: Acts 6:1-5; Acts 14:21-25; Acts 20:13-37**

In his book entitled "The Making of Christian Leaders," Ted Engstrom writes: *"The Bible is filled with examples of God's searching for leaders, and when they were found they were used to the full limit as they met His spiritual requirements, despite their human failings."*

The choosing of the apostles marks the beginning of New Testament church leadership. The church was not yet formed but its future leaders are chosen carefully. We learn from what we read in Luke 6: 12-13, that Jesus took the task seriously;

*"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles."*

These apostles were to provide the initial leadership for the church, Jesus undertook their training himself. When the time came they would appoint and train others. We see this happening in the Acts. Jesus had qualifications in mind in choosing the apostles. Other qualifications would be laid down by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament epistles. The leaders would be elders or overseers and deacons. Speaking to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:1-2, Paul commands;

*"You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."*

So the learning and leading pattern was to continue so that the church would be provided with credible, knowledgeable, and capable leaders from generation to generation.

1. Acts 6:1-7, records a response to a need, list the steps taken to solve the problem?

What does the whole episode teach us about church administration?

2. Why is it necessary to have Spirit-filled men in charge of a social service issue?

3. What is the twofold purpose behind the return of Paul and Barnabas to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch?

4. In Acts 6, the church is asked to choose men to administer her affairs, in Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas appoint elders, why the different approach?

5. What do we learn about Paul from the record of his meeting with the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:13-38?

6. Why is Paul's first challenge to the elders keep watch over yourselves in Acts 20:20?

Why is this so important for elders?

7. What does "*be shepherds of the church of God*" mean? (Acts 20:20)

8. Where do the church's enemies come from and how are they recognized?

9. In Acts 20:31, Paul says "*Be on your guard,*" what should elders do then and now in order to obey that command?

Be specific.

10. In Acts 20:32, Paul commits the elders to "*God and to the word of his grace,*" how does God and his word accomplish the two promised results?

## Study #10 The Church and Expansion

**READ: Acts 1:1-12; 2:38-47; 4:1-3; 8:1-7; 13:42-52; 16:6-10**

The "Great Commission" infers that the church was to experience growth and development. As the disciples obeyed it and went out into the world they made disciples thus there was numerical growth, as these new disciples were taught there was spiritual growth and development. In addition the Lord's command in Acts 1:8 also demonstrates that growth and development was to be expected. The verse also tells us that the expansion would be worldwide.

This kind of expansion is reasonable when you consider what was accomplished by the Lord Jesus in his death and resurrection. John 3:16 says, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* The two facts that God loved the world and gave His Son for its salvation tells us God would want the world to know and have the opportunity to accept the salvation.

From the beginning the church was to have a world-wide vision and generally that has been true. However, at times that vision has been blurred and a settling down and a feeling of satisfaction crept in accompanied by spiritual decay and departure. It seems clear that an expanding church is an alive church, a church that is growing not only numerically but spiritually as well.

1. Luke writes in Acts 1:1, that his first book is about, *"all that Jesus began to do and to teach."* How is Luke's second book a continuation of that theme?
2. In Acts 1:8, the Lord Jesus predicts the path of the church's expansion, how did it actually happen as recorded in the various references for this lesson?
3. Both Acts 2 and 4 record great numerical increase, why do you think this happened?
4. In what ways were the four activities listed in Acts 2:42, important for the expanding church?

Suggest some specific value for each activity.

5. According to Acts 1:8 Samaria was to be the first step outside of Judea, why does it happen?

What are the results?

6. Describe what is happening in Acts 13:42-48.

What affect is this event going to have in world evangelism?

7. In Acts 16:6-10, how is the Holy Spirit directing Paul's team in their evangelistic efforts?

What can be learnt about guidance from his experience?

8. We are often unsure of divine guidance when it comes to witnessing, what is our problem?

9. Why was the progress of the gospel from Asia to Europe such a significant step in God's program of church expansion?

10. Much of the area where the gospel spread to so gloriously in Acts is now devoted to Islam, why do you think that happened?