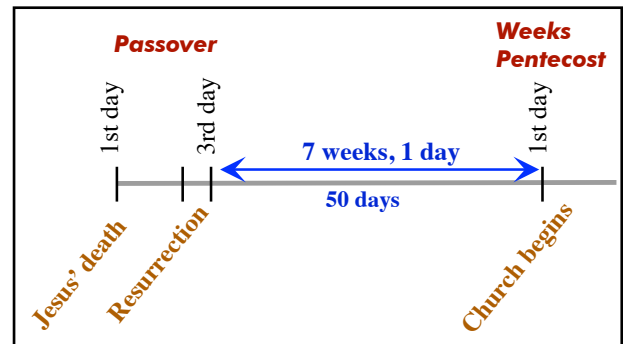


PREPARATION FOR LESSON: Read Acts 1 - 12**BACKGROUND** of the book as a whole

- ◆ **Theme:** The *Acts* or *Activities* of the Holy Spirit in the first local churches.
- ◆ **Author:** Dr. Luke
- ◆ **Date:** Information gathered from 56-58 AD while in Caesarea; written from Rome c. 60 AD.
Happened over a period of 30 years, from Jesus' ascension to Paul's house arrest in Rome 31 - 60 AD.
- ◆ **Purposes:** To tell Theophilus, a high ranking Greek, about the beginnings of Christianity.
To show how the Holy Spirit continues to work thru Jesus' Body, the Church.
To show how the early disciples accomplished the command of Jesus.

OUTLINE

- I. Witnesses in Jerusalem 1 - 7
- II. Witnesses in Judea and Samaria 8 - 12
- III. Witnesses to the ends of the earth 13 - 28
 - Paul's 1st missionary trip 13:1 - 15:35
 - Paul's 2nd missionary trip 15:36 - 18:22
 - Paul's 3rd missionary trip 18:23 - 21:19
 - Paul, a prisoner 21:20 - 28:31

**EXPLANATION**

- ◆ **Jewish Holy Days**
 - **Passover:**
 - **Feast of Weeks** The Hebrew name because it was 7 weeks plus one day after Passover.
 - **Pentecost** The Greek name because it was 50 days.
This is the day the Holy Spirit comes to live inside believers and the Church begins.
- ◆ **Peter's Sermon on the day of Pentecost:** Jesus claimed deity.
 - **Jewish leaders** said this was a lie and blasphemy and therefore crucified Him.
 - **God the Father** said this was true and therefore raised Him and sent the Holy Spirit.
 - Jewish people should recognize these events because David and Joel described them in the Old Testament.
Psa. 16:10; Joel 2:28
- ◆ **The community of believers in Jerusalem are all Jewish**
 - Some were born and raised outside the land of Israel and speak Greek; called **Hellenists**.
 - Some have always lived in the land of Israel and speak Aramaic.
 - By 33 AD **all believers** except the apostles leave the city because of persecution. Acts 8:1
- ◆ **Chronology of Acts 1-12** is approximately 15 yrs. from 31 - 45 AD.
 - 31 - 33 AD Jesus' Ascension, Pentecost, Ananias and Sapphira, Stephen, Philip, persecution
 - 33 AD Conversion of Saul of Tarsus
 - 33 - 43 AD Peter's Ministry; Saul in Arabia, Damascus, Jerusalem and Tarsus
 - 43 - 44 AD Antioch church is formed; it is the first local church outside the land of Israel
it is the first place the name "Christian" is used
 - 44 AD James martyred; Peter imprisoned, Herod Agrippa I dies
 - 45 AD Famine relief sent from Gentile Christians in Antioch to Jewish Christians in Jerusalem

APPLICATION: The greatest miracles

People will be convinced about Jesus, not thru spectacular experiences but what they see in our lives. The greatest miracle of God's power is how the Holy Spirit is changing us. We are dealing with problems instead of avoiding them; we have balance instead of going to extremes; we accept responsibility instead of blaming others. Instead of being dogmatic and demanding, we have become reasonable and considerate. God is still in the business of miracles. It is the changes we allow Him to make in our lives that are the greatest miracles of all.

KEY IDEAS

♦ The Holy Spirit

- In the **Old Testament** and the **time of Jesus**, the Holy Spirit came *over* a person for ministry.
The Holy Spirit left, when the ministry was finished, or if the person disobeyed.
The Holy Spirit was *over* the apostles for their ministry with Jesus.
The Holy Spirit left the apostles when they deserted Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.
The Holy Spirit came *over* the apostles again on the day of Jesus' resurrection
when He said, *receive the Holy Spirit*.
- At **Pentecost**, the Holy Spirit came to live *within* those who believed in Jesus.
The Holy Spirit will live inside *all* believers. not just those with ministry.
The Holy Spirit will live within believers *permanently*; He will never leave or remove Himself from them.

♦ **Baptism:** in the first century, meant you were identifying / agreeing with a belief or message.

- It was not invented or started by the Church.
- It was practiced by all religions; it was done at a river so the public could see.
- Its purpose was to let the world know you were identifying yourself with a particular belief or religion.

♦ **Speaking in languages they never learned** (tongues)

Jews at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was sent for the first time to them.

120 believers began to speak in languages they never learned...

...so the dispersion Jews in Jerusalem could hear the wonders of God in their own language.

...to get their attention so they would listen to Peter as he presented Jesus to them.

Samaritans

When the Holy Spirit was sent to them for the first time, they had a special experience. It was delayed until Peter could come and verify their faith in Jesus. When he laid hands on them, the only way Peter could know they received the Holy Spirit was if they had a special experience. It was evidence God no longer required the Samaritans to convert to Judaism. To be right with God, all that Samaritans needed was faith in Jesus.

Gentiles: Cornelius, his family and friends

When the Holy Spirit was given to Gentiles for the first time, they had a special experience. The only way Peter could know they received the Holy Spirit was if they had a "Pentecost" like the Jews. It was evidence God no longer required Gentiles to convert to Judaism. To be right with God, all that Gentiles needed was faith in Jesus.

Summary

Pentecost was the **first** time the Holy Spirit came to *live inside* the Jews; there were unusual experiences.

The **first** time the Spirit came to *live inside* Samaritans or Gentiles, there were unusual experiences.

After the first time for each group, *then* Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles received the Holy Spirit the moment they believed in Jesus. It did not require any special action; there were no special experiences or signs.

The first time experiences are recorded in Acts so everyone, down thru history, can be sure only faith in Jesus is required for Jews or Gentiles to be right with God

♦ **Keys to the Kingdom given to Peter** Matt. 16:19

This is Jewish picture language to say when the Church began at Pentecost, Peter was the one to present Jesus.

He opened the door ...

first to *Jews* thru his sermon at Pentecost; 3000 believed; they became the first members of the Church.

then to *Samaritans*; as he laid hands on them, they received the Spirit.

then to *Gentiles*; family and friends of Cornelius believed the message of Jesus and received the Holy Spirit.

Peter was the one to state the method of God's acceptance and entrance into the Church: faith in Jesus.

Once the door was open for all to become members of God's family thru faith in Jesus, then God used others like Philip, Stephen, Barnabas and Paul.

