

An All-In Church

The Church Reaching Jerusalem

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A Gospel for All Peoples!

Jesus clearly teaches his purpose for coming in the Gospel of Luke. He has come to seek and save the lost, to reach out to the sick, and to find the lost sheep (Luke 19:10; 4:18; 5:31-2; 9:56; 15). Acts records the passing of this ministry onto the disciples and a young growing church.

Acts is informative, but not considered normative. In other words, the principles we see in the early church are a model for us, but the specific instances will probably never be repeated. The church was established to continue the mission of Christ. The church of Acts was a particular group of people, in a unique period of time, during the very first stages of the church's establishment and growth. Those particulars cannot be repeated today, but the mission and purpose remain the same – the mission of the church in their day is the same as the mission of the church in our day. If we find that our church has drifted away from living out the mission of Jesus, then we are the ones who need to make the adjustment.

The Birth and Growth of the Church 1-2

Jesus Sets the Church on Mission 1:1-11

1-5 – Luke summarizes the last phase of Jesus' earthly ministry and the birth of the church. What were the last orders of Jesus?

6-8 – Even after the death and resurrection of Christ, the disciples and many of his followers were still expecting Jesus to become a political Messiah for the people of Israel. He tells them that the Father will determine times and dates for the future of Israel and the nations. They will not know when and where, **but** they know exactly what they are to be doing between now and then. What is the mission that Jesus gives his church?

What happens to a church that becomes overly focused on the 'when and where' of future events, but is not living out their mission?

As a church, we think through our outreach as:

- Jerusalem – Charleston
- Judea - The Valley
- Samaria – WV and United States
- Ends of the Earth

The church started by focusing on their city. Over time, through persecution and intentionality, the church began to spread. Bible Center desires to renew its commitment and focus to the mission of reaching our 'Jerusalem'. We desire to love and reach Charleston (and surrounding areas) with the Gospel through our generosity, actions, and words. Our church, and other Gospel-centered churches in this area, will be the only ones who will be truly committed to our area of the world.

But we must remember, 'Jerusalem' is never the end goal! As we see the church grow in Charleston, we hope, pray, and plan for God to use us to take the Gospel forth in ever-expanding circles impacting the remotest parts of the earth.

Presently, our vision is to be:

A Church Charleston Can't Live Without

Someday we hope to become:

A City that the World Can't Live Without

Can you see the connection between our mission and the mission of Jesus? What are your next steps in becoming more involved in the mission?

9-11 – It is easy, as Christians, to still be looking up at the sky. We are to be ready for his return, but 'ready' means that we are diligently living out the will and work of Jesus. What kind of impact are you having on your 'Jerusalem', on the 'remotest parts of the earth'?

Disciples Gather and Pray 1:12-26 (Sermon #5, May 13)

12-14 - Who all composed of the group in the upper room?

14 – Describe what they were like and what they were doing together?

Did the women and men separate themselves from one another?

On every TV show or movie, it seems like whenever men and women are in the same place, something awkward, flirtatious, or inappropriate always happens. This consistent stream of seemingly uncontrollable emotions, desires, and decisions can warp the way we view inter-

gender relationships. Brothers and sisters living on mission can be done in an appropriate God-honoring way that displays both the love and holiness of God to a watching world. How can we live together 'with one mind' as brothers and sisters and uphold God's desire for a holy church living together as family?

1:15-26 – What had happened to Judas?

What did Peter call the church to do? What were the requirements for the man selected?

The Holy Spirit Comes and the Gospel Goes Forth 2:1-13

Pentecost is the day the Holy Spirit descended upon the church signifying the presence and power of God at beginning of the church age. We do not expect this day to be repeated in scope or in nature, it was a one-time event. How can a church develop confused priorities if they view Pentecost as a normative (reoccurring) event?

2-4 – Why did God make this event so miraculous and memorable?

5-13 – Who made up the crowds that witnessed this event?

Why was this a strategic time for the filling of the Holy Spirit? Who was in Jerusalem? Who all heard the Gospel?

When the disciples spoke in tongues, were they unintelligible languages or intentional languages? What was the purpose of them being able to speak in tongues?

13 – What did they assume? Even though this was clearly a miracle, simple men all of a sudden able to speak new languages, many still did not believe and assumed drunkenness. How is this similar to Jesus’ ministry experience?

Peter Preaches the Gospel 2:14-36

14 – What do we learn about Peter in this verse?

15-21 – How does Peter explain what is happening? Why was using Joel an appropriate means of communicating with this crowd?

Prophecy – The best way to learn how to understand prophecy of the Old Testament (and possible interpretations of New Testament prophecy) is to see how it is understood, interpreted, and applied in the New Testament.

17 – According to Peter, when are the “Last Days”?

Commentators disagree on the prophetic reference point for these verses (17-20). Does it describe the first coming of Christ or the second coming (or a little of both)? Some would hold that all of these descriptions were being used to describe the events of the cross and coming of the Spirit. They hold that the intention of the sermon was to bring clarity about the present happenings to the audience, not on a day in the future. They refer to “Day of the Lord” (in this instance) as referring to the death and resurrection of Christ.

Can we know for sure what the Lord’s intention was as He spoke through Joel?

Would your interpretation lean to a description of the present happenings of the audience or future happenings? How would you contextually (the historical and literary occasion for the text) explain your leaning (there is freedom for disagreement and discussion)?

What would be the purpose of using this extreme figurative language?

How might our interpretation of this prophecy effect our interpretations of prophecies found in the New Testament?

22 – How did Jesus prove who He was?

Peter references the fact that these people have seen these miracles. No one was questioning the facts of Peter's statement. Witnesses were abundant, yet faith was not equally as abundant.

23 – Was the crucifixion an accident? What role did the Father play?

How can the Lord work out his predetermined plan and at the same time man is fully responsible for what happened?

24-36 – What are the connections that Peter makes between Jesus and the words of David? Why does he take the time to focus on this during his sermon?

During the ministry of Jesus, we see the Holy Spirit filling Him, empowering Him, and often leading Him from place to place. Describe the relationship and actions between the Son and Spirit in verse 33:

**A Church That's Strong Inwardly (Sermon #1, April 15)
The Church Grows Deep and Wide 2:37-47**

37 – What was the result of Peter's sermon? How were their hearts effected?

38 – How are they to respond to Peter's message? What does it mean to repent?

39 - Who should be baptized? What does it signify? What also happens in salvation?

41 – Why would Luke view it as important to record this number?

In one day, the early church became larger than 98% of U.S. churches. How could they have managed such explosive growth?

42 – Large churches can have dozens of ministries and events during the year. It is imperative that a church, regardless of size, never drifts too far from the basics. What were the basics of this early church?

How does a focus on the basics give a church the ability to grow and thrive?

How does the church presently live out “devoting ourselves to the apostles’ teachings”?

Fellowship?

The breaking of bread?

Prayer?

43 – Verse 42 tells us what the church was doing, this verse tells us how the people were feeling. What was the emotional response to all that was happening?

Even in the book of Acts, the church went through phases of explosive growth, persecution, scattering, expanding, fear, and miraculous acts. Their hearts and emotions would have gone through huge swings as their circumstances were consistently in flux. How do the actions in verse 42 help stabilize a believer’s heart during phases of change and struggle the without the continuance outward ‘signs and wonders’?

44-45 – How does the early church care for one another?

46 – What did fellowship look like in the church?

They were all together in the temple, a great time to receive teaching. They also spent time together in smaller groups as they broke bread from “house to house”. How do we see the church functioning both gathered together and scattered throughout the city? What would be the benefits to this model of ministry?

How can the church model this same type / style of ministry? Can we receive the same spiritual growth benefits today from this form of ministry as they did in the early church?

47 – What was the internal and external results of their fellowship and ministry?

The Church Faces Opposition 3-5

A Church That's Strong Outwardly 3:1-10 (Sermon #2, April 22)

How was the man healed? How did this healing effect the people who knew of this man?

We may not see miraculous healing today, but how can we demonstrate Christ's love today in a way that draws a crowd?

Peter Teaches that Jesus is the Anticipated Messiah 3:11-26

After a crowd is drawn, what does Peter do?

Peter recognizes that the people "acted in ignorance" (3:17) in crucifying Christ, yet he holds them responsible for disowning Him (3:14). 18 & 24 – What connection does Peter make between Christ and the prophets?

25 - What connection does Peter make between Abraham and Christ?

How are we to better understand the Old Testament based upon Peter's message?

19 – How are they to respond to this message?

Peter and John Arrested and Threatened 4:1-22

Who arrested Peter and John? What was their motivation and reasoning?

How did Peter respond to the possibility of persecution while Jesus was being tortured and killed (Mark 14:66-72)? What has changed in Peter?

Luke 12:11-12 – How did Jesus prepare Peter and John? What is the role of faith in their boldness?

Can we trust Jesus in the same way today? When are times that we need Him to speak in and through us?

8 – What is the work of the Spirit in this moment? How does this reflect the ministry of Jesus?

12 – How does our American culture feel about this verse and its reality?

How will our faith in salvation through Jesus alone become a source of persecution against today's church? What must be our response?

How can we demonstrate both love (Acts 3:1-10) and confidence (Acts 4:5-12) when we are hated for our beliefs today?

4:4 – What was the result of this miracle and message (despite the persecution)?

How effective were their threats? How did the apostles respond?

Released and Prayer for Boldness 4:23-31

What did they say and do when they returned to the others?

29 – In the face of persecution, what did they pray? How can we have this same boldness and desire for our lives and expressed in our prayers?

31 – What was the response to their prayers? What kind of prayer does the Lord loves to answer?

What is the content of your prayers? When was the last time you prayed for boldness?

How much of your prayers are based around our mission of seeing the Gospel go forth (Acts 1:8)? How can you grow in this area of your prayer life? What is a practical way you can remind yourself to pray this way?

The Unified Lifestyle of the Church 4:32-37 (Sermon #4, May 6)

Well over 8,000 had come to faith and joined the church in Jerusalem. This expansion does not fit into any church growth model ever designed. There were tons of brand new believers with a limited number of apostles. How does this passage describe the daily life of this young church?

A Church That's Known for Authenticity (Sermon #7, May 27)

Ananias and Sapphira 5:1-11

What was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira? What was at the heart of this sin?

In what ways do we struggle with this same sin?

Apostles Healing the Masses 5:12-16

How would we expect people to respond when they heard the news of what happened? 5:13-14 – How did they actually respond?

15-16 – How was the church starting to increase its influence?

The Unstoppable Nature of the Gospel 5:17-42

17 – What do we learn about the hearts of the Sadducees?

20 – We are called to obey our authorities, but here we see leaders going directly against the desire and will of God. How does the Lord clearly display his power over these authorities through the disciples?

28 – How have the disciples impacted the city?

29 – What are examples of how we need to live out this conviction today? How is the Gospel under attack, being distorted, or being persecuted?

33-42 – What was Gamaliel's suggestion?

41 – Why were they rejoicing? Could you rejoice in a similar situation?

Expansion through Persecution 6-8

Appointing of Deacons 6:1-6 (Sermon #5, May 13)

Why does Luke continue to update us on growth?

Persecution was coming from without and growing pains were coming from within. What are some growing pains that we are experiencing or will experience as a church?

2 – What do we learn about their priorities? How do they keep the most important things as the highest priority?

How can we as a church keep prayer and the Word as the highest priorities for our pastors?

3 – Serving meals is delegated out of the apostles' hands, though it is an important duty. What kind of men are selected for this task?

How can we judge if someone is full of the Spirit?

Why would they need to be 'full of wisdom' to serve food to these widows?

4 – How can this verse help us best pick out our teachers and preachers?

What does it look like for someone to be devoted to prayer and the ministry of the Word?

How can we better protect and support our pastors?

5-6 – What was the process of picking and setting apart these men?

We view this as the birth of the office of deacon. The word deacon means ‘servant’. If everyone is called to be a servant why are only some given the office of deacon?

The Church Continues to Grow 6:7 (Sermon #3, April 29)

Record the growth described in each passage:

2:41 –

2:47 –

4:4 –

5:14 –

6:1 –

6:7 – What was the result of restructuring? What was happening with many of the priests?

What is more important, faithfulness or fruitfulness?

How is growth and mission (1:8) connected?

Should we keep track of our growth?

Numbers = people, therefore numbers matter. But if we lose our perspective and numbers = pride, then we are living off mission, even in a season of fruitfulness. Both faithfulness and fruitfulness matter! Both glorify Jesus and are used to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Stephen Arrested 6:9-15

How is Stephen described?

How did he handle people trying to teach against the person and message of Christ?

What did they need to do in order to drag him into court?

If the world hates Christ and His message, it will do whatever it takes to undermine both the message and those who proclaim it. What are other ways that we see the world today trying to undermine the message of Christ and his church?

What are some ways the Gospel gets twisted or subtly changed?

What are ways that media and our education system try to fight against the person and message of Christ?

Stephen Proclaims the Gospel to the Council 7:1-53 (Sermon #7, May 20)

Who is Stephen's audience?

After reading his message, what point was Stephen trying to make to the Council?

What does he teach about the character of God in the history of Israel?

How does he describe the people of Israel?

What comparison is he making in his sermon regarding the council?

51-53 – He drives the nails in with a final blow. How did they respond?

Why do you suppose the Lord led Stephen to share this message of rebuke and conviction?

Stephen Martyred 7:54-60

How does reading the martyrdom of Stephen make you feel?

What does it motivate you to do? How should we respond to stories of believers who were faithful even unto death?

How did Jesus respond to the words and actions of Stephen? How would Stephen have thought and felt seeing Jesus standing beside the Father ready to receive his spirit?

How can we be preparing ourselves for crucial moments in our life where our faith will be challenged?

58 – Who are we introduced to in this verse? What is his driving passion and intent?

60 – Even though Stephen preached a message of rebuke and conviction, his last words were filled with love and grace. Many of us have a hard time forgiving someone who cuts us off in

traffic, how is Stephen able to ask the Lord to forgive them in the very moment they are literally killing him?

How do we learn to forgive at a deeper level?

Heavy Persecution and Expansion 8:1-3

Mentally cue the music played when Darth Vader enters the scene, and this is how the church felt whenever they saw Saul approaching. He was vigilant in persecuting the church. Who would fall into this category today?

Is our church ready if it fell under heavy persecution? What would happen?

How did God use this persecution to further the Gospel?

Could the Lord still use persecution in the same way today?

