

The Early Days of the Church

Year 3, Quarter 3

This quarter will focus upon the establishment and gradual expansion of the fledgling kingdom of Christ. We will first study the history of Acts 1-15, then turn our attention to the book of Galatians which addresses some of the cultural stresses between Jew and Gentile as both learn to embrace a common faith and practice.

Outline

Week 1: The Events of Pentecost

- ◆ The Ascension of Jesus
- ◆ A Replacement for Judas
- ◆ The Coming of the Holy Spirit
- ◆ Peter's Pentecost Sermon
- ◆ The New Church in Jerusalem

Week 2: Threats from the Sanhedrin

- ◆ Healing of the Lame Man
- ◆ Peter's Second Recorded Address
- ◆ Differing Reactions to the Gospel
- ◆ Before the Sanhedrin
- ◆ Heavenly Edification

Week 3: More Hurdles to Overcome

- ◆ The Bonds of Brotherhood
- ◆ The Death of Ananias and Sapphira
- ◆ Further Interference by the Sanhedrin
- ◆ Gamaliel's Intercession
- ◆ Dissension in the Church

Week 4: The Winds of Change

- ◆ Stephen's Powerful Influence
- ◆ Stephen's Defense
- ◆ Stephen's Rebuke of the Jewish Leaders

- ◆ Stephen's Martyrdom
- ◆ The Rising Tide of Persecution

Week 5: The Gospel in Palestine

- ◆ Philip's Work in Samaria
- ◆ An Ethiopian Convert
- ◆ The Conversion of Christianity's Arch-Enemy
- ◆ Saul: Persecutor Turned Preacher
- ◆ Saul's Return to Jerusalem

Week 6: Entrance of the Gentiles

- ◆ Peter's Work Along the Sea-Coast
- ◆ Peter's Summons to Caesarea
- ◆ The Sermon and the Spirit
- ◆ Peter's Defense at Jerusalem
- ◆ The Church at Antioch Established

Week 7: The Threat of Herod

- ◆ Herod Agrippa I
- ◆ Attack upon the Apostles
- ◆ Peter's Release from Prison
- ◆ Peter's Reunion with His Brethren
- ◆ Punishment upon Herod

Week 8: Paul's First Preaching Tour

- ◆ Preaching on Cyprus
- ◆ Preaching in Pisidian Antioch
- ◆ On to Iconium
- ◆ The Highs and Lows of Lystra and Derbe
- ◆ The Return Trip to Antioch

Week 9: The Jerusalem Conference

- ◆ Controversy Comes to Antioch
- ◆ Apostolic Testimony
- ◆ The Judgment of James
- ◆ The Letter to the Gentiles
- ◆ The Return to Antioch

Week 10: The Galatian Epistle

- ◆ Defection from the Gospel (Gal 1:1-10)
- ◆ Defense of Paul's Apostolic Commission (Gal 1:11-17)
- ◆ Continuing Distance from Early Apostles (Gal 1:18-24)
- ◆ The Jerusalem Conference (Gal 2:1-10)
- ◆ Correction of Anti-Gentile Behavior (Gal 2:11-21)

Week 11: The Galatian Epistle

- ◆ "O Foolish Galatians!" (Gal 3:1-9)
- ◆ Redeemed from the Curse (Gal 3:10-14)
- ◆ The Promise vs. the Law (Gal 3:15-18)
- ◆ The Purpose of the Law (Gal 3:19-25)
- ◆ Sons of God through Faith (Gal 3:26-29)

Week 12: The Galatian Epistle

- ◆ Adoption as Sons (Gal 4:1-7)
- ◆ Paul's Anxiety for the Galatians (Gal 4:8-20)
- ◆ The Covenant Allegory (Gal 4:21-31)
- ◆ "You Have Fallen from Grace" (Gal 5:1-6)
- ◆ Liberty and Love (Gal 5:7-15)

Week 13: The Galatian Epistle

- ◆ The Lust of the Flesh (Gal 5:16-21)
- ◆ The Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-26)
- ◆ Burden-Sharing (Gal 6:1-5)
- ◆ Reaping What Is Sown (Gal 6:6-10)
- ◆ Paul and the Judaizers (Gal 6:11-18)

MEMORY VERSES: YEAR 3, QUARTER 3

- Week 1:** So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.
☞ *Acts 2:46-47a*
- Week 2:** This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.
☞ *Acts 4:11-12*
- Week 3:** So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.
☞ *Acts 5:41-42*
- Week 4:** The Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: ‘Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the Lord, or what is the place of My rest?’
☞ *Acts 7:48-49*
- Week 5:** For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.
☞ *Acts 22:15-16*
- Week 6:** And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.
☞ *Acts 10:42*
- Week 7:** And when Peter had come to himself, he said, “Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from the expectation of the Jewish people.”
☞ *Acts 12:11*
- Week 8:** And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”
☞ *Acts 14:21-22*

Week 9: After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name.

☞ *Acts 15:16-17*

Week 10: ... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

☞ *Galatians 2:16*

Week 11: Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

☞ *Galatians 3:24-25*

Week 12: But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

☞ *Galatians 4:4-5*

Week 13: Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

☞ *Galatians 6:7-8*

Day 1: The Ascension of Jesus

Luke supplements his history of the life of Jesus with a history of the “Acts of the Apostles,” or more accurately the “Acts of Peter and Paul.” In the brevity characteristic of divinely inspired writing, Luke highlights the people, the message, the methods, the social and political forces, and the divine power which combined to propel the gospel throughout the Roman world.

In Acts 1:1-14 Luke relates Jesus’ final exhortations to His disciples before ascending into heaven. Jesus indicates that the coming of the Holy Spirit is imminent and commands the apostles to remain in Jerusalem until “*endued with power from on high*” (Lk 24:49; Ac 1:4-5, 8). This will qualify them to be “*witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*” (Ac 1:8). This verse is a synopsis of Acts.

1. Where did the apostles go and who were they with after the ascension?
2. What promise is made by the two “men” who appear to the apostles?

Day 2: A Replacement for Judas

In fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and undoubtedly according to the instruction of Jesus, the apostles nominate two men as possible replacements for Judas (Ac 1:15-26). Their desire is for God to “*show which of these two You have chosen ...*” (1:24). God’s selection, indicated by lot, is of Matthias.

3. List the criteria for one to be an apostle.

Day 3: The Coming of the Holy Spirit

The circumstances surrounding the establishment of the church are truly astounding. Less than two months have passed since the Jewish aristocracy smothered the flames of excitement and hope kindled by Jesus. A small band of His disciples have returned to Jerusalem for Pentecost but are keeping a low profile due to the recent hostility against them. What could possibly turn the tide in favor of these timid, backwater Galileans?

The “sign from heaven” so long sought by the Jews from Jesus finally comes (Ac 2:1-13). First a sound “*as of a rushing mighty wind*” fills the house where the apostles are gathered, then fire-like tongues rest upon each of them. This audible and visible display of the Spirit’s power serves both to infuse the apostles with miraculous linguistic abilities and to attract a multitude awestruck by the spectacle: “*they were confused ... they were all amazed and marveled ... they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘Whatever could this mean?’*” (2:6-7, 12).

It is unfortunate that such a momentous occasion as the apostles' baptism in the Holy Spirit has been corrupted and abused by men desiring some experience that God has not promised to them. Note the focus upon ***the apostles*** in the first two chapters of Acts:

- 1) The *apostles* are specified as recipients of the Holy Spirit: Ac 1:2-11. All the nouns (apostles, witnesses, men of Galilee) and pronouns apply exclusively to them.
- 2) Those in the “upper room” (Ac 1:13) are only the eleven, some women (probably the apostles' wives and Jesus' closest friends) and Jesus' mother and brothers.
- 3) The “120” are *only* mentioned in regard to the selection of Matthias (Ac 1:15), and this is not said to occur in the upper room. Neither is the baptism of the Spirit said to be in the upper room; the apostles were simply “*with one accord in one place ... it filled the house where they were sitting ...*” (2:1-2).
- 4) The pronouns “they” and “them” in Ac 2:1-6 refer to the antecedent “apostles” in 1:26. The chapter division obscures this. Further, the crowd marvels “*are not all these who speak Galileans?*” (2:7). How did the angels address the eleven? “*Men of Galilee ...*” (1:11).
- 5) Further, Peter stands up with *the eleven* and says “*these are not drunk ...*”. He continues, “*This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses*” (Ac 2:14-15, 32). The apostles were witnesses of the resurrection, not the group of 120 disciples.

There is no foundation other than wishful thinking to assert that the baptism of the Holy Spirit affected anyone other than the apostles.

4. What were the apostles speaking in the various dialects of the assembled Jews?
5. What did mockers accuse them of? What can we learn from their mockery?

Day 4: Peter's Pentecost Sermon

Peter now makes use of the “keys” promised to him by Jesus months before (Ac 2:14-39). With newfound courage and the guidance of the Holy Spirit Peter ties the current events to Joel's prophecy of the future pouring out of the Spirit. He then directly charges the assembled Jews with the responsibility for the death of God's Messiah, “*a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst ...*” (2:22). He proceeds to declare both the resurrection of Jesus and His exaltation to the right hand of God, seated upon the throne of David. From this position of authority, “*He poured out this which you now see and hear*” (2:33). And with one last thrust of the sword of truth: “*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (2:36).

Finally, the teaching and work of Jesus, the two months of reflection upon His murder, the public, powerful display of the Holy Spirit and the bold truth proclaimed by Peter all come together in clear, genuine conviction: *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* What they must do, Peter says, is not only repent of the rebellion toward God of which they are guilty but pursue forgiveness through the very one they had rejected and crucified: *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit ...”* (2:38).

Let us be careful not to take for granted what is happening here by simply using Ac 2:38 as an answer to false teaching. The plan of God to restore fellowship with sinful men and to establish a spiritual kingdom upon the earth has now come to fruition. It is the beginning of the end of Judaism. It is the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham so long ago that, through his seed, all the nations of the earth would be blessed: *“For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call”* (Ac 2:39). This kingdom established on Pentecost still exists and the promise is still extended to all who desire salvation.

6. Who, according to Joel, shall be saved?

7. Describe the cooperative work between Jesus and the Father (2:22, 24, 33-36).

Day 5: The New Church in Jerusalem

What did the apostles intend should follow this initial admission of sin by the Jews? Was it to be a one-time act on their part and then back to their routines of Jewish life? A consequence of the truth which they have now acknowledged is that Judaism, as a religious system, is dead; there really is nothing to which they can return. Therefore, we find that new associations are formed between the new believers and the old disciples; a spirit of community develops based upon new teaching and practices (Ac 2:40-47).

Thus, *“they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers ... all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need ... so continuing daily with one accord ... and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart”* (Ac 2:40-47). Conversion to Christ is truly a change of life which has far-reaching implications. The creation of the church in Acts 2 is truly phenomenal when we consider that these same people just a short time before killed the one for whose sake they have now renounced Judaism. This event upon Pentecost is one that can never be repeated; it is the beginning of the church **of Christ**.

8. T/F Immediately after Peter’s command in Ac 2:38 3,000 Jews were baptized.

9. What things were being done by the apostles (Ac 2:43)?

10. What was the general reaction to these new converts to the Lord (Ac 2:47)?

Early Days of the Church: Threats from the Sanhedrin Week 2

Day 1: Healing of the Lame Man

While the apostles were performing “many” miracles in these early days (Acts 2:43), one in particular is noted for its publicity and resultant persecution. A man lame from birth and a daily beggar in the temple is instantaneously cured by Peter (Ac 3:1-10). The miracle fills the assembled crowds with wonder and amazement, for all who knew the man and his condition now see him “*walking, leaping, and praising God*” (3:8-10).

1. Why were Peter and John going to the temple?
2. How long had the man been crippled (Ac 3:2; 4:22)? Where did he spend his days?

Day 2: Peter’s Second Recorded Address

There is a consistent connection between miracles and preaching throughout Acts; the miracles are designed to create a climate for teaching. Peter, as on Pentecost, seizes the moment and addresses the amazed multitude. Peter strongly ties the present events with the Old Testament prophecies. The main thoughts of his sermon (Ac 3:11-26): 1) The God who healed the lame man also glorified Jesus of Nazareth whom they had rejected and killed; 2) These things had been foretold in the OT and fulfilled the ancient promises made to Abraham; 3) They must now repent “*so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord ...*”. Note that Christianity is rooted in historical facts: events, evidence, witnesses, etc., rather than some abstract theory or philosophy. These facts provide the basis of reasoned belief which leads to reconciliation with God (3:19, 26).

3. How were the people looking at Peter and John?
4. List the OT figures in Peter’s sermon. Why were these references important?
5. What condition contributed to Jesus’ death (Ac 3:17)? How could this be?

Day 3: Differing Reactions to the Gospel

As Peter and John teach in the temple, the priests and Sadducees are agitated both by the infringement upon their authority and the content of the teaching; i.e., the assertion of resurrection. They thus have them arrested (Ac 4:1-4). In spite of this hostility, thousands are moved by the truth and obey the gospel. As then, so it will always be: the disposition of heart will determine one’s reaction to the truth. The preaching of the gospel forces hearers to make a choice. They will either listen and submit to God’s will or they will oppose God. This pattern will be repeated throughout Acts as the apostles carry the gospel throughout the Roman Empire.

6. What did the Sadducees particularly find offensive about Peter and John's preaching?
7. How many are mentioned as having obeyed the gospel?

Day 4: Before the Sanhedrin

Note: The Sanhedrin had ancient roots in the seventy elders appointed by Moses (Num 11:16). It gradually developed into the governing body we read about in the NT: a group of 70-72 priests and elders from the Jewish aristocracy and encompassing Sadducees, Pharisees and scribes. The high priest was chief ruler of the Sanhedrin.

“The high court was the supreme authority in the interpretation of Mosaic law and, when it mediated in questions disputed in the lower courts, its verdict was final. Beyond this, the Sanhedrin also governed civil affairs and tried certain criminal cases under the authority of the Roman procurator. The Romans were quite content to let subject nations regulate internal affairs but ... reserved the right to intervene at will, and while it is probable that they usually went along with the high court's decisions, they were under no compulsion to do so” (**Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible**, Vol. 5, pp. 271-272).

Before this powerful and intimidating body come the fishermen Peter and John, and before this body they stand their ground and magnify the name of Christ (Ac 4:5-22). Not only do they declare that Jesus is the power behind the healing, they lay the guilt for His death at their feet. Unable to present any evidence of a crime and fearing a public backlash, the Sanhedrin lamely threatens the apostles to silence. Their response: *“Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard”* (4:19-20). Amen!

8. For what kind of work does Peter say they are being judged?
9. What caused the Sanhedrin to marvel at Peter and John?

Day 5: Heavenly Edification

These events cause the apostles and their companions to reflect upon prophecies which foretold their occurrence (Ac 4:23-31). The Jewish and Roman forces which conspired to execute Christ were now turning their attention upon the apostles. What would happen? Could they withstand the enormous pressure to be exerted upon them? They present their concerns to God who then indicates His approval with the shaking of the house. What momentous and exhilarating times these were!

10. For what did the apostles pray? Protection? Vindication? Boldness?
11. What would accompany the speaking of the word (Ac 4:29-30)?

Early Days of the Church: More Hurdles to Overcome Week 3

Day 1: The Bonds of Brotherhood

In spite of (or because of?) the threats from the Jewish hierarchy, a spirit of love and unity prevails among the community of believers (Ac 4:32-37). They have a great need for one another as their allegiance to Christ has undoubtedly alienated them from their families and friends. This common spirit is complemented by strong leadership: “*And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus ... they brought the proceeds ... and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need*” (4:33-35). Love and leadership are two essentials of any congregation.

1. Why do you think these early Christians might have had financial troubles?
2. How did the brethren who were well off look upon their material possessions?
3. Who is Joses? What did the apostles call him? Why?

Day 2: The Death of Ananias and Sapphira

The early church not only faced outward opposition but the even greater danger of *inward corruption* (Ac 5:1-16). The facts of the transgression are clear: Ananias and Sapphira conspire to deceive and defraud the congregation by claiming to contribute the full sale price of a piece of property when they had actually kept a portion for themselves. They likely coveted the honor given to Barnabas and others for their generosity and schemed to *steal* it for themselves instead of *earning* it. What is more troublesome is the immediacy and severity of the punishment of God against them - *death*. Perhaps we think such shouldn’t happen under the new covenant, but the grace and mercy extended in Christ doesn’t soften God’s attitude toward sin. Through Ananias and Sapphira God sends a powerful message to Christians in all ages: hypocrisy does grave damage to the church and God will issue a similar response to it in the judgment. Nevertheless, “*believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women ...*” (5:14). Congregational discipline should not be withheld for fear of numerical decrease.

4. Under whose influence did Ananias and Sapphira act in their hypocrisy?
5. What group continued to work signs and wonders among the people?
6. How does Acts 5:15-16 fulfill the request made of God in Acts 4:29-30?

Day 3: Further Interference by the Sanhedrin

Now incensed by the apostles’ flagrant disregard of their threats and by the burgeoning population of Christians in Jerusalem, the priests and Sadducees again arrest the apos-

ties only to have them released by an angel (Ac 5:17-21). Finding them again teaching in the temple, they apprehend them with “kid gloves” fearing the wrath of the adoring multitudes (5:22-27). Questioned about their disobedience, the apostles respond as they had done before: “*We ought to obey God rather than men*” (5:28-32). Note the implication of their charge to the council: God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him; *You* have disobeyed in killing the Messiah; **therefore**, you do not have the Holy Spirit. The Sanhedrin here takes the place of the Egyptian Pharaoh: they ignore the signs and wonders of God in order to hold their own brethren captive.

7. What instruction was given to the apostles by the angel? When was it obeyed?
8. How does the council describe the extent of the preaching of the gospel in Jerusalem?
9. What is the focus of the Messiah’s reign as Peter describes it (Acts 5:31)?

Day 4: Gamaliel’s Intercession

With the Sanhedrin now filled with murderous rage against the apostles, Gamaliel counsels a calmer “hands off” policy which will allow Christianity, he hopes, to die a natural death (Ac 5:33-42). Gamaliel, according to Jewish sources, was the grandson of Hillel, the founder of the school of Jewish traditionalism. Gamaliel was considered one of the greatest seven teachers in the history of the Jews; therefore it is not surprising that his advice is heeded. His reference to the uprising of Judas (5:37) is dated by Josephus in AD 6. Gamaliel’s counsel, however, fails to properly evaluate Christianity. A false system will not necessarily be brief and inconsequential; if so, Islam would be validated. Gamaliel and the rest of the Sanhedrin continue to reject the evidence that is converting a growing number of Jerusalem’s citizens.

10. In what did the apostles rejoice?
11. What did they do on a daily basis?

Day 5: Dissension in the Church

Another internal threat next arises which disrupts the harmony crucial to the church’s survival (Ac 6:1-7). This episode is significant for a number of reasons: 1) The number of disciples is now so large that the apostles cannot personally attend to material affairs; 2) A special appointment is made which anticipates the permanent function of deacons; 3) These servants (at least two of them) are endowed with miraculous powers which also anticipates the future extension of spiritual gifts to many first-century Christians.

12. What kind of men were to be selected to deal with this sensitive issue?
13. What resulted from the effective handling of the matter (Ac 6:7)?

Day 1: Stephen's Powerful Influence

As the infant church has grown, the apostles begin to widen the circle of competent assistants. Stephen, one of the seven “deacons,” is particularly effective in the working of miracles and preaching (Ac 6:8-15). His opponents, stymied by his Spirit-led defense of the gospel, resort to false accusations which lead to Stephen's arrest by the Sanhedrin. The charges: blasphemous words against God, Moses, the temple and the law and declaring that Jesus will destroy the temple and Jewish practice.

1. What group spearheaded the opposition to Stephen? How did they attack Stephen when they couldn't defeat his arguments?

Day 2: Stephen's Defense

It is difficult to precisely understand the thread of Stephen's argument, and it appears that he did not have an opportunity to complete his train of thought. Nevertheless, note the following breakdown of his defense:

The Patriarchs (Ac 7:1-16): Stephen starts on agreeable terms by rehearsing the early history of the patriarchs. He hints at the theme of rebellion by mentioning the envy and hatred directed toward Joseph by his brethren. Stephen emphasizes the providence of God as he reflects upon the early development of the nation.

Moses (Ac 7:17-36): Stephen further shows his knowledge of and respect for the Old Testament by describing the history of Moses. However, he again introduces the element of rebellion as Moses was at first rejected as Israel's leader: *“This Moses whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’ is the one God sent to be a ruler ...”*.

The Law (Ac 7:37-43): Moses was not only the God-appointed leader of Israel but the lawgiver. To reject him was to reject God's law. Stephen stresses the idolatry that was present in the hearts of the people from Mt. Sinai until the removal to Babylon. It would not be presuming too much to say that the Sanhedrin was beginning to get the drift.

The Temple (Ac 7:44-50): Stephen briefly rehearses the history of the tabernacle and the temple but stresses *“the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands ...”*. This was emphasized by Solomon even at the dedication of the temple (1 Kgs 8:27). It would be no blasphemy to teach, as Jesus did, that the temple would be destroyed. It had been destroyed in the past as a result of Israel's stubborn rebellion and would be so again within 40 years. Interestingly, Paul, who was likely listening to this “blasphemous” speech, later uses Stephen's argument before the Athenians (Ac 7:48; 17:24).

2. In what did the Israelites rejoice at Mt. Sinai (Ac 7:41)?

3. List the OT books quoted by Stephen in his defense.

Day 3: Stephen's Rebuke of the Jewish Leaders

Stephen's tone and thought process abruptly changes in Ac 7:51. Perhaps the Sanhedrin was growing restless and agitated and Stephen realized he would not be able to finish his oration. At any rate, he launches a blistering attack upon the Jewish leaders for their stubborn resistance to the work God was now doing through Jesus and His church (Ac 7:51-53). The irony here is the same as in the trial of Jesus: it is the Jewish leadership which is actually on trial, not Stephen. They are again in violation of the law even as they seek to protect and uphold it. It is their character, not Stephen's, which is ungodly.

4. List the various accusations of Stephen against the Sanhedrin.

Day 4: Stephen's Martyrdom

In a blind rage against Stephen, the Sanhedrin throws all restraint and caution into the wind as they thrust Stephen out of Jerusalem and stone him to death (Ac 7:54-60). As the proceedings deteriorate and it becomes apparent to Stephen that his life will be taken, and he is strengthened by a vision of heaven. God always helps His people endure the suffering and persecution arising from obedience.

5. What is Stephen allowed to see before he dies?
6. What two things does Stephen ask of Jesus?

Day 5: The Rising Tide of Persecution

Present on this occasion of injustice and acting as an accomplice in the proceedings is a young Jewish man named Saul (Ac 7:58). By Saul's later admission he was "*advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries ...*" (Gal 1:14). He was "head and shoulders" above the rest, a young man who showed tremendous potential as a future leader. He was a student of the illustrious Gamaliel and an agent of persecution acting in behalf of the Sanhedrin. It is also possible that he belonged to the Synagogue of the Freedmen (see Cilicia, Ac 6:9) and therefore involved in the dispute with Stephen. Saul approved of the actions against Stephen (Ac 8:1; 22:20) and moves to expand the persecution against the whole church (Ac 8:2-3). Acts 8 begins a new section in Luke's history; he moves from the church's early beginning in Jerusalem to its gradual spread throughout Palestine. Unwittingly, Saul has merely poured water on an oil-based fire; the cause of Christ which he wishes to destroy will now be spread by the persecution in Jerusalem.

7. Where did the brethren and apostles go during these early persecutions?
8. What was done with the Christians who were apprehended?

Day 1: Philip's Work in Samaria

The persecution waged by Saul was God's way of "pushing the chicks out of the nest." Remaining in Jerusalem would have been the comfortable thing for these early Christians, but it would have overlooked God's greater purpose of taking the gospel to the world. Philip, another of the "deacons" of the Jerusalem church, is among the scattered disciples who "*went everywhere preaching the word*" (Ac 8:4). Philip, like Stephen, is a zealous, effective preacher and takes up the challenge of preaching in the city of Samaria (Ac 8:4-25). This story is particularly valuable for its insight concerning miraculous gifts. While Philip possessed miracle-working power, he could not confer the same upon the new converts. It took the same process which had empowered him: the prayer and touch of apostles (Ac 8:14-19; 6:6).

1. What did the Samaritans think of Simon the sorcerer before Philip came?
2. What was Simon told to do about his post-conversion sins?
3. What did Peter and John do after leaving Samaria?

Day 2: An Ethiopian Convert

One of the roles of the Holy Spirit in the early days of the church is to bring potential believers in contact with those who know the truth. **Neither the Holy Spirit nor Jesus ever told anyone directly what to do to be saved.** Under the direction of an angel and the Spirit, Philip makes contact with the treasurer of Ethiopia and teaches him the truth about Christ (Ac 8:26-40). The process of the treasurer's conversion remains unchanged to this day: the truth is presented followed by the hearer's decision to either accept or reject Christ. Baptism always follows the decision to accept Christ; it is fundamental to "preaching Jesus" (Ac 8:12-13, 35-38). The significance of the Holy Spirit's involvement in this conversion is the spread of the gospel onto the African continent.

4. Who initiated the conversation between Philip and the treasurer?
5. What passage was Philip's beginning text for study? Why was this passage used?
6. What resulted from the obedience of the Samaritans and the treasurer (Ac 8:8, 39)?

Day 3: The Conversion of Christianity's Arch-Enemy

Saul, "*still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord*" (Ac 9:1), now expands his persecution beyond the borders of Palestine. We should not underestimate

the severity of Saul's attack against the church: *"many of the saints I shut up in prison ... and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities"* (Ac 26:10-11). Thus on his way to Damascus for this purpose, the Lord intervenes in a special, one-time appearance to Saul and convicts him of his rebellion (Ac 9:1-19; see also Ac 22:3-16; 26:9-18). Note again that Jesus does not tell Saul what to do to be saved. Rather, He brings the seeker and the teacher into contact. Ananias, at first reluctant because of Saul's fearsome reputation, restores Saul's sight and baptizes him. The greatest enemy of Christianity is now set to become its greatest advocate.

7. Describe the commission of Saul (Ac 26:16-18).

8. What suggests that Saul was not yet saved during his three days of prayer/fasting?

Day 4: Saul: Persecutor Turned Preacher

Instead of going to the synagogues of Damascus in search of Christians, Saul goes upholding the name of Jesus and proving His Messiahship from the Scriptures (Ac 9:20-22). This sudden, drastic change causes consternation among those who know Saul and know his opposition to Christianity. People in general, and especially a committed, zealous and knowledgeable Jew, do not change their entire outlook upon life overnight. People with mental or emotional instability might undergo personality changes, but Saul acts and preaches with reason, logic and balance. Though Luke does not mention it, Paul later tells of an extended stay in Arabia during this time (Gal 1:17). Perhaps it fits best in the phrase "after many days" in Ac 9:23. Upon Saul's return to Damascus, the Jews plot to murder him with the assistance of the governor under King Aretas (Ac 9:24-25), but Saul manages to escape with the help of the brethren. On a chronological note, the control of Damascus by Aretas was not earlier than AD 37. With the three-year span mentioned in Gal 1:18, together with some other chronological information, it is likely that Saul's conversion occurs between AD 34-36.

9. Compare the effects of the preaching of Saul and Stephen (Ac 9:22; 6:10).

Day 5: Saul's Return to Jerusalem

How difficult it must have been for Saul to return to Jerusalem (Ac 9:26-31). He is considered a traitor by his former Jewish associates; the Christians are suspicious of him; and he must confront his memories of Stephen's death. Saul preaches boldly for two weeks (Gal 1:18-19) causing the frustrated Jews to again plot his death. While praying in the temple, Jesus warns Saul in a vision to flee Jerusalem (Ac 22:17-21).

10. Who mediates between Saul and the wary Christians in Jerusalem?

11. Why did Jesus tell Saul to flee Jerusalem? Where does he go?

Day 1: Peter's Work Along the Sea-Coast

The extension of the kingdom to the Gentiles was a gradual, delicate process. Many years of prejudice and cultural exclusion had to be overcome. Peter is again selected by the Holy Spirit to initiate this new phase. In preparation for his meeting with Cornelius, Luke tells of Peter's work in the Plain of Sharon (Ac 9:32-43).

1. What miracle occurred in Lydda? In Joppa? What effect did they have?

Day 2: Peter's Summons to Caesarea

Divine intervention is needed to bring the Jewish preacher and the Gentile prospect together (Ac 10:1-33). Cornelius needs instruction; Peter needs confidence. An angel directs Cornelius to send to Joppa for Peter "*who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved*" (Ac 10:1-8; 11:13-14). Peter, meanwhile, receives a vision which is designed to open his mind to the Gentiles (Ac 10:9-16). As he ponders the meaning of the vision, the messengers from Cornelius arrive. The Holy Spirit now informs Peter to "*arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them*" (Ac 10:17-23). Peter, six brethren from Joppa (Ac 11:12), and the three messengers all make their way to Cornelius' home in Caesarea (Ac 10:24-33). The stage is now set for the gospel to be preached. **Note again** that the particulars of salvation are not communicated directly to the one in need of it by Jesus, the Spirit, an angel or a vision. When necessary to the development of the kingdom, the Holy Spirit did miraculously guide certain preachers to those whom He wanted converted. However, this was a unique accommodation for the time and not intended as a permanent fixture.

2. What kind of man is Cornelius (Ac 10:1-2, 22, 33)?
3. How does Cornelius respond to Peter upon his arrival? How does Peter react to this?
4. What conclusion has Peter properly drawn from the events (Ac 10:28)?

Day 3: The Sermon and the Spirit

Peter now begins his address to Cornelius and those of his household who are assembled (Ac 10:34-43). Note the emphasis upon Jesus: peace is preached through Him and He is Lord of all (v 36); He was anointed with the Spirit of God and "*went about doing good* ..." (v 38); He was killed, raised and "*ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead*" (v 39-40, 42). These facts are established both by common knowledge (v 37) and by the work of the specially chosen witnesses (v 39, 41-42). Peter also appeals to the OT prophets who testified that forgiveness would be obtained by belief in Jesus (v 43). Even though Peter refers to this as the "beginning" of his discourse (Ac 11:15), enough has

been said to produce faith and obedience in Cornelius. Peter is interrupted by a miraculous outpouring of the Spirit upon his audience reminiscent of that which occurred on Pentecost. Peter is convinced by this act of heavenly approval that Cornelius, in his present uncircumcised state, cannot be refused baptism (Ac 10:44-48).

5. What two things result in salvation (Ac 10:35)?
6. What was the reaction of Peter's companions when the Spirit came upon Cornelius?
7. In what way had the members of Cornelius' household received the Spirit (10:47)?

Day 4: Peter's Defense at Jerusalem

When news of Cornelius' conversion reaches Jerusalem, Peter is "called on the carpet" for fraternizing with the Gentiles (Ac 11:1-18). Obviously, Peter was not held to be infallible by these brethren or later by Paul (Gal 2:11). Again, Luke rehearses the events as described by Peter. Some question whether Cornelius was "baptized" with the Holy Spirit in the same way as the apostles on Pentecost, yet it seems that Peter and Luke go to great lengths to equate the two episodes. "*The Holy Spirit fell upon them, **as upon us at the beginning***" (Ac 11:15). This occurrence caused Peter to reflect upon Jesus' promise that the apostles would be "*baptized with the Holy Spirit*" (11:16). Finally, Peter affirms that "*God gave **them** the same gift as He gave **us***" (11:17). This baptism of the Spirit did not equip Cornelius to be an apostle, but it did convince Peter and his Jewish associates to accept the Gentiles on an equal basis. If the gift was anything *less* than what the apostles received, then it could be argued that the Gentiles were of *less standing* in the kingdom - the very opposite of what God intended to convey.

8. How did the Jerusalem brethren respond to Peter's defense?

Day 5: The Church at Antioch Established

We again see beneficial fallout from Saul's persecution as brethren, following the lead of Peter in Caesarea, teach Gentiles in the city of Syrian Antioch (Ac 11:19-21). Barnabas is sent by the apostles from Jerusalem to assist and encourage the work, and he determines that Saul would be helpful in this situation (Ac 11:22-26). In a sense, Saul has again come full circle: he now serves with a church that was established by virtue of his earlier persecution. Of significance is Luke's notation that in this first congregation of Jewish/ Gentile composition "*the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.*" The designation "Christian" is not employed until the church begins to fulfill its ultimate goal: uniting Jew and Gentile in one body.

9. What nationality of Jews taught the Gentiles in Antioch? Where was Barnabas from?
10. How do the Gentile brethren in Antioch show their concern for their Jewish brethren in Judea (Ac 11:27-30)?

Day 1: Herod Agrippa I

Herod Agrippa I was the grandson of Herod the Great and the son of Aristobulus. He was the brother of Herodias, who married her uncle Antipas and who requested the execution of the prophet John. Herod Agrippa I was raised and educated in Rome and became friends with the future emperor Caligula. Upon Caligula's accession to the throne in AD 37, Agrippa was given the title of "King," the territory of Lysanius, and the tetrarchy of his uncle Philip which included the regions of Batanea, Trachonitis and Auranitis. When his other uncle Antipas was banished by Caligula, Galilee and Perea were added to Agrippa's dominion. After Caligula's assassination in AD 41, the new emperor Claudius conferred upon Agrippa the territories of Judea and Samaria. Agrippa I was the most popular of any of the Herodian rulers among the Jews. Part of that favor is gained by his zealous persecution of the Christians (Acts 12).

1. Draw the portion of the Herodian family tree represented in the above paragraph.

Day 2: Attack upon the Apostles

The persecution of Herod (Ac 12:1-4) is unique as it is the first civil opposition against Christianity. It is also for purely political motives. Herod wants to endear himself to the Jews in order to secure their loyalty and support. In the brevity characteristic of divine inspiration, Luke simply notes "*he killed James the brother of John with the sword.*" What a traumatic, wrenching event this must have been to the church. And what is worse, Peter is also imprisoned awaiting the same fate.

2. During what feast is Peter imprisoned?
3. Why might so many soldiers (16) have been assigned to Peter (comp. Ac 5:18-23)?

Day 3: Peter's Release from Prison

The church at Jerusalem had been tested by fire in its first few years: they had endured material poverty, internal dissension, divine discipline, religious persecution, famine, and now civil terrorism. They have learned firsthand the necessity of prayer and dependence upon God. While Peter is awaiting his fate, his brethren are fervently praying for him (Ac 12:5-11). As a result, an angel is sent to secure his release. The NASB rendering makes the timing critical: "*And on the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward ...*" (Ac 12:6).

4. What was Peter doing when the angel appeared? What did Peter think at first?
5. What obstacles had to be overcome to free Peter?

Day 4: Peter's Reunion with His Brethren

Peter makes his way to where the disciples are engaged in prayer on his behalf (Ac 12:12-19). They are gathered in the home of Mary, the mother of a man named John Mark. [Note Luke's literary technique of introducing characters early which will later appear prominently in his story; i.e., Barnabas, Stephen, Philip, Saul/Paul. He mentions John Mark in 12:12 and James, the Lord's brother, in 12:17, both of whom figure prominently in later chapters.] The skeptical reaction of the disciples is interesting. Were they praying for Peter's release? If so, it seems that they did not expect such a swift and favorable answer to their prayer. Of course the Lord had permitted the apostle James to die, and this may have created the expectation that Peter would die also. Christians must always remember that the Lord is omnipotent and can do the most unlikely and, to human reasoning, impossible things. We may not know His will in a given situation, but we must never doubt what He *can* do if He so chooses.

6. T/F The whole Jerusalem church was not assembled for this prayer meeting.
7. When was Peter discovered missing? What happened to the guards?

Day 5: Punishment upon Herod

Herod Agrippa I was, as most despotic rulers, vicious, vain, arrogant and selfish. He had been angered in some way by the citizens of Tyre and Sidon, cities not even under his jurisdiction. In their efforts to appease Agrippa, they gather to him in Caesarea and praise him as a god rather than a man (Ac 12:20-24). God had refrained from immediate punishment against Herod even as he murdered an apostle, but He will not abide Herod's acceptance of adoration rightfully addressed only to Him. Herod is immediately stricken by worms in the very moment of his blasphemous vainglory and dies a hideous and excruciating death shortly thereafter. Herod died in AD 44 at 54 years of age. He enjoyed such a short time at the pinnacle of political success in exchange for an eternity of suffering. Ac 12:25 is a transition verse; it serves to close out both this episode of persecution and the general emphasis upon the church in Jerusalem. Attention will now shift to Antioch which will serve as a base for Paul in his work among the Gentiles.

8. Why did the people of Tyre and Sidon wish to remain on good terms with Herod?
9. How did they scheme to regain Herod's favor?
10. What happened to the influence of the word after Herod's threats were lifted?
11. Who accompanied Saul and Barnabas as they returned to Antioch?

Early Days of the Church: Paul's First Preaching Tour Week 8

Day 1: Preaching on Cyprus

The time has finally come for extensive, systematic preaching work among the Gentiles and the Holy Spirit designates Saul and Barnabas as the first to be so engaged (Ac 13:1-3). They first set sail for Cyprus, Barnabas' home, landing in the eastern coastal city of Salamis (Ac 13:4-12; chart this entire preaching trip on the map provided). Apparently meeting with little success there, the preachers travel the length of the island to the western city of Paphos, the Roman capital of Cyprus. Saul and Barnabas are challenged by a Jewish sorcerer who attempts to undermine their influence upon the Roman pro-consul who has shown an interest in their teaching. In response, *Paul* (for now he is so called by Luke) takes the unusual step of removing rather than restoring health: Elymas is stricken blind. This powerful display confirms Sergius Paulus' belief in the gospel.

1. Of what was Elymas guilty? Can people be guilty of such today?
2. What does the "hand of the Lord" upon someone mean (Ac 11:21; 13:11)?

Day 2: Preaching in Pisidian Antioch

"*Paul and his party*"; i.e., Barnabas, John Mark and possibly others from either Antioch or new converts from Cyprus, now sail northward from Paphos to Perga in the Roman province of Pamphylia (Ac 13:13). It is from here that, for reasons unknown, Mark returns home to Jerusalem. The preachers press on to the city of Pisidian Antioch (Seleucus I Nicator built a number of cities named in honor of his father Antiochus) and preach in the synagogue (Ac 13:14-41). Paul masterfully retraces Jewish history, reviews the work of John the Baptist and introduces Jesus as the Messiah wrongfully put to death by Judean Jews. However, Paul declares this Jesus alive - resurrected by the power of God - and thus the source of that which the Law of Moses could not provide: *the forgiveness of sins* (Ac 13:38-39). Paul ends his sermon with a solemn warning against rejecting what has transpired in fulfillment of prophecy. The work of Paul and Barnabas enjoys initial success but then is undermined by the scheming of the Jews (Ac 13:42-52).

3. How did the Jews react to the interest of the Gentiles in Paul's preaching?
4. Of what are those who reject the gospel unworthy?

Day 3: On to Iconium

Paul's evangelistic efforts begin to show a characteristic pattern: Go to a synagogue; preach until the Jews resist; shake off the dust and work with the interested Gentiles (and Jewish believers); remain until persecution intensifies; move on to the next city. In

Iconium, the initial enthusiasm is again quelled by the Jews who “*poisoned their minds against the brethren*” (Ac 14:1-7). Paul and Barnabas finally flee to save their lives.

5. How did the Lord bear witness to His word spoken by Paul and Barnabas?

6. Of what duration was the stay in Iconium?

Day 4: The Highs and Lows of Lystra and Derbe

The events at Lystra show the insufficiency of miracle-working power alone (Ac 14:8-18). When Paul heals a crippled man, pandemonium breaks out because the Lystrians think that their gods are making a personal visit. In Greek mythology, Zeus “was originally associated with the sky and atmospheric phenomena ... as the supreme deity, ruler of gods and humanity, he functioned among the Greeks as benefactor, especially to those engaged in agricultural pursuits” (**ISBE**, Vol. 4, p. 1194). Hermes “functioned primarily as the attendant, herald, and interpreter of the gods. He was the god who conducted the souls of the dead to the underworld ... He was popular as the patron of orators ... and renowned for his trickery” (**ISBE**, Vol. 2, p. 687). Paul and Barnabas are mortified at the attempt to sacrifice to them and turn the Lystrians’ idolatrous concepts Godward. Quickly, however, with the agitation of the Jews from Antioch and Iconium, this wild enthusiasm turns into a murderous uprising and Paul is stoned (Ac 14:19). Superstition is unstable because it is an emotional, subjective evaluation of circumstances as opposed to Biblical faith which is a reasoned response to historical details and facts. It was not hard for the Jews to turn the Lystrians’ ardor into doubt. Paul recovers and travels with Barnabas to the fruitful fields of nearby Derbe (Ac 14:20-21a).

7. Why was Paul thought to be Hermes?

8. What did Paul say about God that was attributed to Zeus in mythology?

Day 5: The Return Trip to Antioch

Though now close to Syrian Antioch by land, Paul and Barnabas return via the cities where they had just established new churches (Ac 14:21-28). Their objectives were two-fold: 1) to exhort the new converts to “*continue in the faith*”, and 2) to establish leadership in each church by the appointment of elders. It is my conviction that this was made possible by the ability of the Law of Moses to create spiritual maturity and prepare one fully for Messianic realities. It would only take a little teaching to turn a godly Jew into an adult Christian (remember Paul’s immediate preaching in Damascus after his conversion?). There is no Scriptural evidence of spiritual gifts imparting the *character* that is prerequisite for a man to qualify to serve as a shepherd and overseer.

9. Through what would these early Christians enter the kingdom of God?

10. What did Paul and Barnabas do upon their return to Syrian Antioch?



Day 1: Controversy Comes to Antioch

The burgeoning number of Gentiles now being added to the Lord's church heralds a trend which some Jewish brethren find unsettling: Jews are becoming a minority among believers. When Peter first preached to Cornelius several years previously, the objection of "the circumcision" was that Peter had eaten with a Gentile (Ac 11:2-3). Now that Gentiles are pouring into the church, the opposition turns doctrinal: demands are made that Gentiles be circumcised and observe various aspects of the Law of Moses (Ac 15:1-5). McGarvey aptly comments, "When men take an unreasonable and obstinate stand against any cause, they frequently assume more extravagant ground as the cause they are opposing advances" (**Commentary on Acts**, p. 180-181). Realizing the grave danger of such internal discord, Paul, Barnabas and others travel to Jerusalem to resolve the matter once and for all.

1. Who was one of the "certain others" who accompanied Paul and Barnabas (Gal 2:1)?
2. What did Paul and Barnabas do on their way to Jerusalem?

Day 2: Apostolic Testimony

In Jerusalem a public meeting is held wherein Paul and Barnabas recount their experiences among the Gentiles (Ac 15:4). Paul also mentions a private meeting with the apostles where Titus is made a test case in the disposition of all Gentile brethren (Gal 2:2-3). A second public meeting then follows which brings final resolution. This meeting generates "much dispute" (Ac 15:7) and elicits testimony from Peter, Paul and Barnabas (Ac 15:6-12). Peter's argument focuses on God's equal acceptance of the Gentiles and challenges the Judaizers, "*Why do you test God ...?*". Paul and Barnabas testify of the miracles done by God among the Gentiles, further evidence of divine approval in the present course of events.

3. What distinction was made in the giving of the Holy Spirit to Jews and Gentiles?
4. What was the end result of what the Jews were trying to do (Ac 15:10)?

Day 3: The Judgment of James

James, the brother of the Lord, has grown in spiritual stature among the brethren in Jerusalem (see Ac 21:18ff; Gal 1:19; 2:12) and he has the last word at the conference (Ac 15:13-21). The process at work here is interesting: God does not choose to dramatically settle the matter with a vision or a direct revelation. The men present have all the resources they need to arrive at the truth and the correct course of action. James makes an appeal to **approved apostolic action**: Peter first preached to the Gentiles several

years earlier wherein God “*visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name*” (15:14). He then quotes a **direct statement** from Scripture that indicates God’s future plans and enjoins man’s compliance with His will (15:15-17). Finally, James draws a **necessary conclusion** from the evidence: “**I judge** that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God ...” (15:19). This conclusion made use of intellectual faculties which correctly weighed the evidence; truth was arrived at by a balanced consideration of a number of factors bearing upon the case. *This episode teaches us how to determine religious truth today!* There are no shortcuts. Sometimes truth is excavated by controversy, debate and always by prayer, study and a proper disposition.

James declares that the matter is so serious that letters should be written to the Gentiles indicating that they should take special care to maintain purity in certain areas of cultural weakness (15:20) but that no additional burden of any Mosaic regulations would be laid upon them. James’ amplification in Ac 15:21 is a bit cloudy. He may be suggesting that the Jews need no such injunction since knowledge of the Law in these areas is ancient and widespread. Perhaps there are other explanations as well.

5. What was the “tabernacle of David” which Amos said was to be rebuilt by God?

Day 4: The Letter to the Gentiles

Since the Judaizing troublemakers had gone out from the Jerusalem church, the apostles and elders “*with the whole church*” determine not only to write a letter of clarification but to send representatives to verify these matters (Ac 15:22-29). In the letter they distance themselves from the Judaizers: “*to whom we gave no such commandment*”; they stress unity: “*being assembled with one accord*”; they affirm that this is not merely a “church decision” but the will of the Holy Spirit. The letter is concise and clear. However, discord created by the Pharisaic zealots will cause problems for years to come.

6. Who were the two delegates of the Jerusalem church sent to Antioch?

7. What effect did the teaching of the Judaizers have upon the Gentiles?

Day 5: The Return to Antioch

The present crisis having passed, Paul and his companions return to Antioch and read the letter to the church (Ac 15:30-35). The disturbance and anxiety previously felt by the ugly controversy gives way to the joy and exhortation provided by the extensive teaching of Judas and Silas. Too, Paul, Barnabas and others resume the teaching in which they had been previously engaged. What a rich church Antioch must have been as it feasted on the inspired teaching of apostles and prophets and enjoyed a leading role in the evangelism of the Roman world.

8. Discuss: A church with elders never has a need for the entire membership to meet to debate doctrinal questions or decide a particular course of action.

Day 1: Defection from the Gospel (Gal 1:1-10)

It is impossible to conclusively determine when and from where the book of Galatians was written. While some scholars defend a later date of composition, perhaps from Corinth on Paul's third journey, we suggest an earlier date before Paul's second journey. Paul wrote, "***I marvel*** that you are turning away ***so soon*** from Him who called you ... to a different gospel" (1:6). This suggests that not a great amount of time has elapsed since their conversion during Paul's first foray into Asia Minor. These predominantly Gentile brethren are being influenced by the same Judaizing element which had earlier threatened Antioch. The conference of Acts 15, while uniting faithful brethren upon the acceptance of Gentiles, did not quell the opposing Judaizers. A.T. Robertson notes, "Paul is all ablaze ... with indignation as he faces the men who are undermining his work in Galatia" (**Word Pictures**, Vol. 4, p. 273).

1. What does Paul assert about his apostleship in the very first verse of the epistle?
2. What eternal threat is made against any who would contradict the original gospel?

Day 2: Defense of Paul's Apostolic Commission (Gal 1:11-17)

It is apparent from this passage and elsewhere in the New Testament that Paul's authenticity as an apostle was attacked by those who wished to neutralize his teaching. Paul denies that he learned the gospel from any human source but that "*it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (1:12). He recounts that in the days following his conversion he went from Damascus to Arabia and back to Damascus, not having any contact with the apostles or other Christians (1:16-17; comp. Ac 9:22-23). Paul does not reveal the purpose of this sojourn in Arabia, but it was **not** a crash course in Christian indoctrination. Anyone who knew otherwise could have contradicted Paul's testimony.

3. For what specific purpose did God "reveal His Son" in Paul?

Day 3: Continuing Distance from Early Apostles (Gal 1:18-24)

When Paul finally did make his way to Jerusalem, he states that he only saw Peter and James, the Lord's brother. According to Luke, Paul's two weeks in Jerusalem was filled with preaching and controversy (Ac 9:28-30). The brethren escorted him to Caesarea and sent him on his way to his home country to await the right opportunity for beginning his apostolic work. God thus isolated Paul as a future defense against accusations but surely this required much patience in a man of such decisiveness and action as Paul.

4. How long was it before Paul returned to Jerusalem from Damascus? How long was he in Jerusalem?

5. T/F During Paul's stay in Jerusalem, he became well-known and immediately recognizable among the brethren in Judea.

Day 4: The Jerusalem Conference (Gal 2:1-10)

Paul is not giving a detailed history but rather highlighting those things which have a bearing upon his apostolic credentials or work. The phrase "after fourteen years" (2:1) skips the visit of Ac 11:27-30 which was for benevolent purposes. Paul supplements Luke's account in Ac 15 by stating that he and Barnabas took Titus, a purely Gentile believer, as a test case of fellowship. The pro-Jewish group was insisting that Gentiles be circumcised and keep other selected aspects of Mosaic law in order to be a "legitimate" Christian. But Paul says Titus was not compelled to be circumcised (2:3) and "*we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you*" (2:5). Further, "*those who seemed to be something,*" i.e., the apostles and leaders in the Jerusalem church, recognized Paul's apostolic credentials and understood that the Lord's particular use for Paul was among the Gentiles. Thus James, Peter and John "*gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship*" (2:9) and agreed to honor the division of labor which the Lord had made evident among them. That Paul reviews the conference in such detail suggests that he had not visited Galatia again on his second tour; otherwise, he would have already explained the significance of the conference (comp. Ac 16:4).

6. List the ways Paul describes the leaders of the Jerusalem church (2:2, 6, 9). What did Paul think of their prominence before men?
7. What request was made of Paul as he worked among the Gentiles (2:10)?

Day 5: Correction of Anti-Gentile Behavior (Gal 2:11-21)

Not only did Paul's apostolic work among the Gentiles enjoy the approval of both heaven and the "pillars," Paul had even been forced to publicly rebuke Peter for his hypocrisy toward the Gentile brethren. Peter associated with the Gentiles in Antioch until certain pro-Jewish brethren came from Judea. Intimidated by their strong-willed countrymen, both he and Barnabas then shunned the Gentiles. This was more than just a social faux pas; Paul "*saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel*" and confronted Peter face to face (2:11, 14). Paul says that he, Peter and the other Jewish brethren had come to the knowledge that keeping the Law of Moses would not save them; thus they had abandoned the Law as a judicial document. *Why, then, was Peter (in effect) judging the Gentiles according to the Law by not eating with them?* Paul testified that he had died fully and completely to the Law and had devoted himself to Christ whose sacrifice had provided true justification before God (2:20). Thus in various ways Paul vindicates his credentials and teaching in the first two chapters of Galatians.

8. By the works of the law _____ shall be justified.

Day 1: “O Foolish Galatians!” (Gal 3:1-9)

Paul is now going to expand upon the contrast between salvation by faith and salvation by works of law. He introduced the concept in his rebuke to Peter stating that “*by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified*” (Gal 2:16). He pursues two main lines of reason: 1) *Their own experience in the gospel rules out the necessity of circumcision*. They had been taught the crucifixion of Jesus and all its implications, and the Holy Spirit had worked miracles among them (3:1, 5). Were these things done by the works of the law or the hearing of faith? Did they lack any necessary thing when they had “*begun in the Spirit*”? (3:3); 2) *The promises made to Abraham are now being fulfilled*. Understanding Abraham is crucial to an appreciation of the gospel being preached among the Gentiles. Abraham was justified by faith (albeit an *obedient* faith) and not by perfect adherence to a system of law. On the basis of such faith and trust, God promised that all nations would eventually be blessed through Abraham’s posterity (3:8). Thus “*only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham*” (3:7), a lesson hard for Jews to accept.

1. What had the Galatians allowed the Judaizers to do to them (Gal 3:1)?
2. In what sense was the gospel preached to Abraham (Gal 3:8)?

Day 2: Redeemed from the Curse (Gal 3:10-14)

Paul continues his attack against those who would bind the law upon others. He asserts that those living under the principle of law (that is, a performance-based system of justification as opposed to a faith/forgiveness system) actually are **cursed** due to the fact that no one keeps law perfectly (Gal 3:10). But the death of Jesus upon the cross “*has redeemed us from the curse of the law*” (3:13). Further, Paul cites the Old Testament against itself when Habakkuk declares “*the just shall live by faith*.” Again, a faith-system and a law-system are mutually exclusive.

3. How does the death of Jesus redeem us from the curse of the law?
4. Is the promise of the Spirit through faith or law?

Day 3: The Promise vs. the Law (Gal 3:15-18)

Paul now connects the universal blessings of the gospel with the covenant promises made to Abraham rather than the Law of Moses. That covenant could not be nullified or altered by the law which came hundreds of years afterward. Paul states that the promised blessing through the seed of Abraham was realized in Christ, Abraham’s descendant through the tribe of Judah and the family of David. By connecting salvation directly to

the Abrahamic covenant instead of the law, Paul is denying that circumcision, which was an ordinance of the law, is a prerequisite to being saved.

5. Who is the “Seed” of Abraham?

6. If spiritual inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of _____.

Day 4: The Purpose of the Law (Gal 3:19-25)

If the Law of Moses was “fleshly,” a curse, unable to justify a man before God and was added long after the covenant between God and Abraham, for what purpose was it given? Paul anticipates and addresses this question (Gal 3:19). The law was glorious and good being “appointed through angels” (comp. Ac 7:53; Heb 2:2). It was not flawed and neither was its source, God. But men, specifically the Israelites who were crucial to the execution of the promises made to Abraham, were indeed sinful. The law was added because of transgressions (3:19) and confined all under sin (3:22). The law clarified and magnified sin so as to convict mankind of his need for a Savior. Further, it demonstrated that man was incapable of saving himself by his own goodness and integrity. Thus *“the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith”* (3:24).

7. What does the word “till” (Gal 3:19) say about the duration of the Law of Moses?

8. Why could a law not be given which could bring life (Gal 3:21)?

9. What would “afterward be revealed”? Once revealed, what was then removed?

Day 5: Sons of God through Faith (Gal 3:26-29)

The result of justification from sin and the promise of the Spirit is now explained: redeemed people are “sons of God” (Gal 3:26). The provision of sonship by faith rather than a law-system **does not preclude** obedient action: *“for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (3:27; see also 3:1 - *“Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth ...?”*; 5:7 - *“who hindered you from obeying the truth?”*). Compliance is the outgrowth of faith in the Christian as it was in the life of Abraham. Without this quality we are not “of faith” as was Abraham (3:9). This sonship is free and open to all regardless of ethnicity, social status or gender (3:28). Those who establish a relationship with Christ on the principle of faith are “Abraham’s seed,” not those who happen to be genetically related. Thus in this one brief chapter Paul reviews and clarifies God’s scheme of redemption from Abraham to Christ and explains the core principle: a working, obedient faith as opposed to meritorious keeping of law.

10. Who are heirs according to the promises made to Abraham?

11. How do they become heirs?

Day 1: Adoption as Sons (Gal 4:1-7)

Paul continues the theme of sonship and amplifies the idea of being under a guard or a tutor (see Gal 3:23-25). A minor in Roman society was entrusted to “guardians and stewards” until a point of maturity as determined by the father (4:1-2). Paul equates this with all sinful men being held under the bondage of law and, consequently, sin (since all are lawbreakers), until the “fullness of the time” when God liberated them through His Son (4:3-5). Those redeemed from law and its curse are now full-fledged sons of adoption and can call God “Father” with mature understanding (4:6).

1. What two qualities tie Jesus to humanity in Gal 4:4?
2. In what sense are Christians no longer slaves (Gal 4:7)? Slaves to what?

Day 2: Paul’s Anxiety for the Galatians (Gal 4:8-20)

Paul turns from his lofty reflections upon justification by faith and membership in God’s family to his serious misgivings about the Galatians’ present frame of mind. First, he wonders why they, having been liberated from the ignorant worship of false gods, have returned to “weak and beggarly elements” of Mosaic observance (4:8-11). Paul of all people knows the futility of pursuing God through the ritualistic, Pharisaic formulas. In addition to this doctrinal wandering, Paul next reminds them that they have strayed from their appreciation of him personally (4:12-16). Paul gives a detail about his first trip to Galatia that Luke omits in Acts: “*because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first.*” How this was so is not known, but his condition apparently was somewhat repulsive and could have interfered with the Galatians’ acceptance of the truth. But to their credit they did not let this happen. Why now have they become Paul’s enemies when he still espouses the same truth which he always preached? Paul warns them that the Judaizers are trying to win their allegiance for their own selfish purposes (4:17-20).

3. How does Paul describe idolatry in Gal 4:8?
4. Contrast Paul’s zealousness for the Galatians and the Judaizers’ zealousness for them.
5. To what does Paul liken his effort to reclaim the Galatians (4:19)?

Day 3: The Covenant Allegory (Gal 4:21-31)

Returning to the theme of sonship, Paul seeks to illustrate his point by the use of an allegory. An allegory (“symbolic” [NKJ] = *allegoreo* - Gal 4:24) is a literary device wherein literal images carry deeper symbolic meanings. Paul attaches such a spiritual meaning to the OT characters of Hagar and Sarah. Hagar was a slave who bore a child merely by

natural means and was eventually cast out. Sarah, on the other hand, was a wife and she bore her child by heavenly promise and the power of the Holy Spirit. Hagar represents Mt. Sinai (the Law of Moses) and earthly Jerusalem which produces only fleshly Jews. Jews who live according to the Law are in bondage, confined under sin. Sarah represents “the Jerusalem above,” and heaven’s children (Christians) are, as Isaac, children of promise and thus free. The Galatians are renouncing Sarah as their mother and embracing Hagar.

6. What covenant does Hagar represent? What covenant does Sarah represent?

7. How did Ishmael treat Isaac? What did it result in?

Day 4: “You Have Fallen from Grace” (Gal 5:1-6)

The last two chapters of Galatians are filled with fiery warning and exhortation. Paul is not going to give up his spiritual children without a fight. In urging these brethren to stand fast in the liberty of Christ, he points out that practicing circumcision as a religious ordinance would obligate one to keep the whole law (5:3). But in the attempt to “*be justified by law*” they have estranged themselves from Christ and “*have fallen from grace*” (5:4). In spite of the value placed upon it by the Judaizers, circumcision as a religious rite is worthless; it is “*faith working through love*” which lies at the heart of the gospel.

8. What is the Law of Moses and its ordinances called?

9. List the great concepts associated with salvation in this section (at least 5 words).

Day 5: Liberty and Love (Gal 5:7-15)

Paul had earlier chided the Galatians by expressing his grave concerns: “*I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain*” (Gal 4:11). Now he tries to stir them up by exhortation: “*I have confidence in you ... that you will have no other mind ...*” (5:10). He urges them to consider those who had hindered and troubled them and the effect they had produced: where once the Galatians “ran well” in peace and harmony, they were now in turmoil and conflict. If people would consider the *fruits* of false teaching, perhaps they would recognize it more quickly and reject it before greater damage is done.

10. What lies in store for those who pervert the gospel and sow discord (Gal 5:10)?

11. How can the concept of Christian liberty be abused?

12. What principle lies at the heart of both the Law of Christ and Law of Moses?

13. What will eventually happen to a congregation suffering from infighting?

Day 1: The Lust of the Flesh (Gal 5:16-21)

In the latter part of chapter 5 Paul sets up another contrast (there have been several in Galatians: freedom/bondage; son/slave; faith/law; Sarah/Hagar, etc.). The contrast here has to do with the controlling forces of our lives: we will either walk in or be led by the Spirit or be dominated by fleshly impulses (Gal 5:16). These two forces are “contrary to one another,” and it is a constant struggle to rein in our passions and do the things we know to be right (5:17). Paul describes the actions of those who reject the Spirit and live according to their own standards: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries **and the like**; i.e., this is not a complete catalog but a representative sample. If a Christian’s life manifests any one of these characteristics, he is not completely led by the Spirit.

1. Those who walk in the Spirit will not fulfill what?
2. What is the contrast in Gal 5:18?
3. T/F This teaching of Paul is new to the Galatians.

Day 2: The Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-26)

Evidence that one is led by the Spirit is not in some vague feeling or sense of direct communication but the effect produced in the Christian’s life. The Spirit-led life produces *fruit*: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Again, this is a representative list: “*Against **such** there is no law*”; that is, one may indulge himself to his heart’s content in these and similar qualities and not sin. “Those who are Christ’s” (3:29) have crucified the flesh; they have slain the beast of self-interest and have committed themselves to the better fortunes of submission and obedience to God. If any of these things is missing from the Christian’s life, he is not completely living in the Spirit.

4. The congregation whose members live in the Spirit will not do what (Gal 5:15, 26)?

Day 3: Burden-Sharing (Gal 6:1-5)

Not only will spiritually minded people avoid the mistreatment of their brethren, they will actively seek to assist them when in trouble. Those overtaken in a trespass should be gently restored (6:1); those with heavy burdens should be supported (6:2). What so often hinders this service is self-absorption and an overblown concern for one’s perceived status among others. Thus Paul warns each Christian to attend to his own responsibilities, do his own work and rejoice in his own accomplishments before the Lord (6:3-5).

5. What danger lies in assisting others out of their sins?
6. What does bearing one another's burdens fulfill?

Day 4: Reaping What Is Sown (Gal 6:6-10)

Paul continues his practical admonitions by counseling generosity. He does so by reference to an ancient maxim abundantly in evidence in nature: "*whatever a man sows, that he will also reap*" (6:7). The Galatians should be generous toward their teachers in material things in appreciation for the spiritual service rendered. They should seek opportunity to help all men but especially those "*of the household of faith*" (6:10). While Christians have special obligations toward one another as members of the same spiritual family, they must not look indifferently upon their fellows in the human family. Those who use this exhortation to force humanitarian endeavors into the local church budget are grasping for straws. Other new testament teaching clearly indicates that the collective body has particular responsibilities different from the individuals who comprise it. Paul is simply restating the Lord's teaching that God's people must care for all, even those who would abuse and mistreat them (Mt 5:43-48).

7. How can men be deceived (Gal 6:3, 7)?
8. What results from sowing to the flesh? To the Spirit?
9. What must a Christian do in order to reap a good harvest in the end (Gal 6:9)?

Day 5: Paul and the Judaizers (Gal 6:11-18)

Paul closes this epistle with a last contrast between himself and the Judaizers who were so diligently trying to undermine his work. Their motives: they "*desire to make a good showing in the flesh ... that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ*"; "*they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh*" (6:12-13). In other words, forcing Gentile brethren to be circumcised would soften the Judaizers persecution from unbelieving Jews. They were unwilling to suffer the consequences of their profession of faith. Paul, on the other hand, gloried only in the cross of Christ (6:14). If his allegiance to Christ and full acknowledgment of his spiritual family brought suffering, so be it. He refused to insult his Gentile brethren to spare himself grief from the anti-Messianic Jews. Though Paul desires to be further untroubled by his detractors (6:17), such is not to be. The zeal of the Judaizers will not be squelched easily, and Paul's apostolic authority will be challenged time and time again.

10. What did even the Judaizers fail to do (Gal 6:13)?
11. What really matters to those in Christ (Gal 5:6; 6:15)?
12. What did Paul, even at this early stage of life, bear in his body?