

# ACTS: The Story So Far

## The Story of Jesus

- Acts is the continuation of the Gospel of Luke (Acts 1:1-3)
- It is the story of Jesus continuing His ministry through the Holy Spirit working in the early Church (Acts 1:8)
  - The Church is commanded to stay in Jerusalem until the coming of the Holy Spirit, which happens at Pentecost (2:1-4)

## Jerusalem

- Through the work of the Spirit and the preaching of the Apostles, the Church grows constantly
  - With a commitment to learning, praying, sharing & fellowship (2:42-47)
- Signs & wonders mark the Apostles' ministry, which is often met with hostility by religious leaders (ch. 3 & 4)
  - And the Lord shows His protection of the Church through the killing of Ananias & Sapphira
- As ministry grew, more leaders are added (ch. 6)
  - One of whom, Stephen, is then martyred for preaching in the name of Jesus (ch. 7)
    - Which causes persecution to break out and scatter believers beyond Jerusalem
    - One of the persecutors of the Church is Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:1-3)

## Judea & Samaria

- The Gospel begins to spread to surrounding areas through the ministry of the Apostles and other believers
- Philip preaches in Samaria & to an Ethiopian eunuch who returns to his homeland transformed by Jesus (8:4-40)
- Saul, in his zeal to persecute the Church has a vision of Christ on his way to Damascus (9:1-31)
  - He puts his faith in Jesus and begins ministering in His name
- Peter begins ministering in Judea mostly to fellow Jews (9:32-43)
  - Until the Spirit leads him to a Roman Centurion named Cornelius (ch. 10)
  - Gentiles begin putting their faith in Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit
    - As Peter & others struggle with their inclusion in God's kingdom (11:1-18)

## To the Ends of the Earth, part 1

- Syrian Antioch becomes a new hub for the Church (ch. 12)
  - With exponential growth & missionaries using it as a base of operations
    - Including Barnabus & Saul
- Meanwhile, greater persecution hits the Church in Jerusalem through Herod (ch. 12)
  - James is martyred; Peter is imprisoned & then saved through divine intervention
  - God brings judgment on Herod, resulting in his death
- Barnabus & Saul go on their first missionary journey (Acts 13-14)
  - To Cyprus\*; Pisidian Antioch; Iconium; Lystra; & then return to Syrian Antioch
- Because of the influx of so many Gentiles into the Church, Paul & Barnabus are summoned to Jerusalem, to a counsel of the Church leaders (Acts 15:1-34)
  - The consensus is that Gentiles who put their trust in Jesus are equally part of the Church
    - And they should NOT be made to follow the Jewish Law or customs

- Paul & Barnabus then part ways over whether to bring Barnabus' cousin John Mark with them (Acts 15:35-41)

## **To the Ends of the Earth, part 2**

- Timothy joins Paul & Silas and they are called in a vision to bring the Gospel to Macedonia
- Despite persecution and resistance, Paul and co. establish congregations in Philippi, Thessalonica, & Berea
- Paul travels to Athens, where he addresses the philosophers' guild and sees some conversions
- Paul then travels to Corinth, where he partners with Priscilla & Aquilla to establish the Church, and stays for 18 months
- He then returns to Jerusalem, with a layover in Ephesus, vowing to return
- We are introduced to Apollos who travels to Ephesus to help build and strengthen the Church there

## **So What?**

- The story of Acts, and the Church throughout history, is the story of the Holy Spirit continuing the work of Jesus through His people
- We can see God's hand at work, and He is inviting us to join Him in it
- Are we ready?

**Meditation Verse:** *Acts 1:8*