

Slide: A Bible Overview- Session 11- The Church's Beginnings

Summary of Sessions 7,8,9,10

- Jesus' birth; fulfilled prophecies; baptism; temptations
- Jesus taught through: conversations, miracles, & teachings
- Palm Sunday; Passover; Garden of Gethsemane; arrest & trials
- Crucifixion; burial; Isaiah 53's prophecies
- Resurrection; appearances to many
- Great Commission

Start Video SR-11A- Ascension & Holy Spirit

Welcome to Session 11 of A Bible OverView called: The Church's Beginnings

In our last four sessions, we looked in the four Gospels to learn about who Jesus Christ is and about His death and resurrection from the dead. After that, Jesus ascended into Heaven.

In this session we will be in the book of Acts. It is the history book about the birth and growth of Christian church. It was written by Luke who also wrote the Gospel of Luke.

We'll start from its beginning, **Acts 1:1-5-**

1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3 After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

- Note, the promise of the coming gift of the Holy Spirit.

At the end of Matthew's Gospel, we read Jesus' last words which we'll see repeated in **Acts 1:6-8-**

6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- Being Jesus' witnesses would start locally, or "Jerusalem," then regionally, or "all Judea and Samaria," and finally, "to the ends of the earth."

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Verses 9-11 go on to relate-

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

When Jesus was taken up to Heaven in a cloud it's called the "Ascension." When the angel prophesied that Jesus would come back in the same way, it's called "The second coming of Christ."

End Video SR-11A Ascension & Holy Spirit

Slide: Promised Holy Spirit

Jesus: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8

- What does this passage tell us about the disciple's future?
 - They will receive power when the Holy Spirit come on them
 - They will be Jesus' witnesses starting in Jerusalem, then regionally, then to the world

- What does it say about God?
 - Within the Trinity, the Holy Spirit will now come upon believers.
 - He has power
 - God has a plan
 - The Gospel will be spread starting with the disciples

Slide: Ascension & Promise

3 After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 ...when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:3, 9-11

- What does these passages tell us about Jesus?
 - After His death and because He was resurrected, Jesus was seen alive and with convincing proofs
 - He ascended into heaven while the disciples watched it happen
 - Jesus will come back again returning through the clouds to earth

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Start Video SR-11B- Pentecost & Sermon One

In the next recorded event, the Jews were celebrating the Jewish festival called Pentecost. Pente = 50. So, this was 50 days after Passover. **Remember:** Jesus was killed at the time of Passover.

Because Jews had traveled from all over the world to Jerusalem for Passover, many had remained in Jerusalem while they waited for Pentecost.

Thus, in the **sovereignty of God**, He used this time to send the promised Holy Spirit to believers so that many would observe the event. **Acts 2:1-6 recounts-**

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.

This dramatic event gave Peter the chance to preach to many different people. To summarize his speech, Peter reviewed the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and then **quoted King David's Psalm 16:8-10. Verse 10 specifically says,** "...nor will you let your faithful one see decay..." and Peter used this as proof that the Messiah's resurrection was predicted. Peter concluded that since Jesus was the person who rose from the dead, then Jesus is the Messiah. Let's read the crowd's reaction to his words in **Acts 2:36-41-**

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

End Video Video SR-11B- Pentecost & Sermon One

Slide: Peter's First Sermon

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." ...

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." ...

41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. Acts 2:36,38,39,41

- What are the main points and result of Peter's first sermon?
 - Jesus is the Messiah
 - He said for each person to repent and then be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and then the gift of the Holy Spirit is given.
 - This promise is not only for them but for all in the future
 - God calls people to Himself
 - 3000 people believed and were baptized. The church started growing.
- How does this apply to us today?

Start Video SR-11C- Church Grows

In Acts 3 there's a story of a miraculous healing that led Peter to preach his second sermon. To summarize this, he basically told the people to *"repent of their sins and turn to God."* The result was more than 5000 believed in Jesus.

Thus, the church grew rapidly and the new **faith** of many started to concern the Jewish leaders. **Acts 4:5-22 says-**

5 The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. 6 Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. 7 They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 Jesus is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone."

12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

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13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. 14 But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. 15 So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. 16 "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. 17 But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name."

18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! 20 As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

21 After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. 22 For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

But, the religious leaders did come up with a way to punish them. **Acts 5:17-21 and 26-42 says-**

17 Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. 18 They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. 19 But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. 20 "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life."

21 At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles.

26 At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them. 27 The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 28 "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."

29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings! 30 The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. 31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. 32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

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33 When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. 34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. 35 Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. 36 Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. 37 After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. 38 Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. 39 But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

40 His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. 42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

- Note, when the disciples are for a second time told they must not teach in the name of Jesus, Peter and the disciples again replied, "We must obey God rather than human beings!"
- Note, because the disciples had to live in order to spread the Gospel, God, in His **sovereignty**, used Gamaliel to advise against killing the disciples.
- Also, notice that the disciples have gone from confused and fearful men who ran away at Christ's crucifixion to being courageous. This is because they knew Jesus had risen from the dead and because the Holy Spirit now lived in them.

At this time, the first converts were Jews not Gentiles. And, they were not called Christians yet but "People of the Way" or "Believers".

End Video SR-11C- Church Grows

Slide: Peter Continues Preaching

The religious leaders arrest Peter and John (Acts 4:3)

Peter to religious leaders: *12 "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." 13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. Acts 4:12-13*

18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. Acts 4:18

Peter: "We must obey God rather than human beings!" Acts 5:29

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- What point does Peter make and what's the response?
 - Peter says Jesus is the only way to salvation
 - The leaders see the disciples have changed into courageous well-spoken men who somehow seem educated after being with Jesus
 - The leaders command them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.
 - Peter responds: "We must obey God rather than human beings!"
- How does this apply to us today?

Start Video SR-11D- Stephen

Now let's see how the Gospel continued to be spread locally, meaning "Jerusalem."

It started with Stephen, described in **Acts 6:8** as "a man full of God's grace and power." * He was arrested by a Jewish council, called the Sanhedrin, and chapter 7 records Stephen's speech to them. In it, he summarized Jewish history beginning with Abraham through King Solomon. Then he pointed out the council's guilt. We'll pick up the story in **7:51-8:1-**

51 "You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! 52 Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— 53 you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it."

54 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

8 *And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.*

- Note: as he was dying, Stephen saw Jesus.

Stephen was the first Christian martyr. A real martyr is someone who does not choose to die but is killed by others for what they believe in.

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- In the 2000 years of Christian church history, it's estimated there have been 70 million believers martyred with 65% of those in just the 20th century. And that does not take into account all those martyred in recent years.

End Video SR-11D Stephen

Slide: Stephen First Christian Martyr

Stephen: *"You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!" Acts 7:51*
But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Acts 7:55

- How does Stephen's description of the religious leaders apply to today?
 - Hearts can get so hard they just always resist the promptings of the Holy Spirit
- What does this passage tell us about the Holy Spirit?
 - He is trying to get people to believe the truth
 - He indwells people, specifically Stephen in the account.
 - Thus, Stephen while dying, could see the glory of God and Jesus sitting at the right hand of God

Start Video SR-11E- Gospel Spreads Regionally

Now, we'll look at how the Gospel is spread regionally, meaning *"Judea and Samaria."* **Acts 8:26-38-**

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship,²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.

31 "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

*"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.*

*33 In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?
For his life was taken from the earth."*

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34 The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" 35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" [37] 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

Note: the Eunuch was reading Isaiah 53 and his **heart** was eager for truth. You might remember we read this same passage in our last session because it describes the events of Jesus' crucifixion 750 years before Jesus was born.

Most likely, this Eunuch went home and testified to his faith in Jesus, which spread the Gospel further. It shows the consistent theme in Scripture: **God wants to be known and remembered.**

End SR-11E- Gospel Spreads Regionally

Slide: Gospel Goes Forth Regionally

The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." Acts 8:29

34 The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" 35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. Acts 8:34-35

- What are the main points of this encounter?
 - God cares. God saw the eunuch's hungry heart for truth and miraculously sent Philip to meet him and share the Gospel
 - Phillip obeyed and went
 - God used Philip to share the Gospel. He uses believers to do His work on earth.
 - In the **sovereignty of God**, the eunuch was reading Isaiah 53 which was perfect for using in leading him to understand who Jesus is.

Start Video SR-11F- Gospel Spreads to World

Now, we'll meet Paul who will take the Good News "to the ends of the earth." **Acts 9:1-19-**

9 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. 3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

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"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7 The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. 8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. 9 For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

11 The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

13 "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. 14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.

- Note, Ananias was **obedient** to do what God told him even when he didn't want to.

At first, the disciples in Jerusalem didn't trust Paul since he had been killing believers. Eventually, though, he is accepted and got to be called an apostle because He met Jesus. Otherwise, only the original 12 disciples were called Apostles.

We see in Paul's conversion the **sovereignty of God** as Paul was God's "*chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.*" This meant the Gentiles were included in salvation in addition to the Jews.

End Video SR-11F- Gospel Spreads to World

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Slide: Paul's Conversion

3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." Acts 9:3-6

- What does this passage tell us about Jesus?
 - In the **sovereignty of God**, Paul was chosen to have unique conversion experience and then have a specific mission.
 - Jesus is alive and speaking from heaven to Paul
 - Because Jesus says: *"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting"* -even though it was humans on earth being physically persecuted- it shows Jesus is the one being hated: when persecution is done to humans it is like doing it to Jesus.

Slide: Paul's Mission

The Lord to Ananias: *15 "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." Acts 9:15-16*

Ananias: *"Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Acts 9:17*

- What does this passage tell us about Paul and his mission?
 - He was chosen by God to be God's instrument
 - He will proclaim Jesus' name to Gentiles and their kings and the people of Israel
 - He will suffer a lot in doing so
- What does this passage tell us about God?
 - God chose Paul for a special mission with a special appearing of Jesus to get his attention
 - Paul's mission will include suffering
 - In the **sovereignty of God**, He sends Ananias to speak to Saul and assures Ananias it's safe to do so
 - God provided Ananias as a "brother"
 - God will heal Paul's eyesight
 - The Holy Spirit will fill Paul

Start Video SR-11G- Gentiles Included

In chapters 10 and 11, God in His **sovereignty** had both Peter and a *"God-fearing"* Gentile Roman soldier have visions at the same time which brought them together.

1. For the Gentile soldier, his vision meant he should find Peter and ask him to come to his house so that he and his family could hear God's message.

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2. For Peter, his vision meant he should go to this soldier's home. Otherwise, Peter would not have considered entering a Gentile's home since Jewish law said that would make him "unclean." But, although confused, out of **obedience**, Peter went to this soldier's home. Let's read what Peter tells them when he's there. **Acts 10:34-43-**

34 Then Peter began to speak: I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism

35 but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. 36 You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. 37 You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

39 "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, 40 but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. 41 He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

The result was that this soldier and his entire family became believers!

This was a major breakthrough because now Peter, and the other disciples, **finally** understood God's original **covenant** with Abraham in *Genesis 12:3*: "... all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Before, the disciples thought the Gospel was only for the Jews. They should have understood from the Old Testament Scriptures and some of Jesus' teachings, that Gentiles would be included in God's salvation but they didn't get it until now.

Let's read what other Jewish believers thought when they heard what happened in the Gentile's home. **Acts 11:18 says-**

18 When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life."

End Video SR-11G- Gentiles Included

Slide: Gospel For All People

Peter: 34 "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right." Acts 10:34-35

Jewish believers: When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life." Acts 11:18

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- Why was this realization a crucial breakthrough to the beginning of the Church?
 - From the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12:1-3 God had said ALL people of the earth would be blessed through the nation of Israel.
 - The Jewish disciples had not gotten this point until now: Gentiles were also included into the Kingdom of God (they'd always considered them too unclean). Salvation through the **blood sacrifice** of Jesus is a gift of God's **grace** offered to everyone.

Start Video SR-11H- Gospel Spreads

In chapters 13-21 we read about three missionary journeys Paul went on. He planted many churches in cities like Corinth, Philippi, and Ephesus. After leaving one city to start a church in another, Paul would write letters back to the churches already started. These later became the letters in the New Testament.

When Paul got to a city, he would generally start teaching in the Jewish synagogue so that his people could have a chance to hear about the risen Christ. But, because they generally refused to listen, he ended up preaching mostly to Gentiles.

Acts 15 records the first church conflict, which was a misunderstanding amongst the Jewish and Gentile believers. The problem was that some Jews, who had become followers of Christ, thought that Gentiles believers should practice the Jewish laws and feasts. As we read about this, note, Peter is also called Simon. **Acts 15:1-19-**

15 Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. 3 The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad. 4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. 5 Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses."

6 The apostles and elders met to consider this question. 7 After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. 8 God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. 9 He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. 10 Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? 11 No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

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12 The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. 13 When they finished, James spoke up. "Brothers," he said, "listen to me. 14 Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. 15 The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

16 "After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, 17that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things"—18 things known from long ago.

19 "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God..."

- The **spiritual conflict** which occurred here was because some wanted to complicate the simple message of the Gospel. That message is that the **Redeemer's blood sacrifice** brings us **gracious forgiveness** through **heart faith**.
- This conflict has happened throughout church history. Then, as now, it happens when different people focus on their preferred rituals and traditions and prayers instead of who Jesus Christ is, and what He did for us on the cross, and through His resurrection.

Here are a few more events recorded in the book of Acts: many times Paul was persecuted in such ways as beatings, stoning, and imprisonments. Eventually, he appealed for protection on the basis of being a Roman citizen and was sent to Rome to stand trial. This trial didn't take place for two years.

- While awaiting his trial, Paul was given freedom to preach as he was under what we'd call house arrest.
- In the end, Paul became frustrated with the Jewish people because of their increasing resistance to the Gospel. **Acts 28:25-28 says-**

25 They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet:

*26 "Go to this people and say,
"You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving."*

*27 For this people's heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.*

*Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.'*

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28 "Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!"

This ends the history of the Bible.

END Video SR-11H -Gospel Spreads

Slide: Conflict On Salvation

Believing Pharisees: *"The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses."*
Acts 15:5

Peter: *8 "God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. 9 He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. 10 Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? 11 No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."* Acts 15: 8-11

James: *19 "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God..."* Acts 15:19

- What is the conflict?
 - Believing Jews wanted to add works to **grace**.
 - Believing Jews were so accustomed to following the Law in order to be right with God they thought Gentiles must also.

- How is it resolved?
 - Reminding them that salvation is now available to all people the same way: by grace through the Lord Jesus
 - Don't make the issue of salvation difficult with works when it is the accomplished through Jesus alone.

Start Video SR-11i Conclusion

But here are a few more things to know before we end this session.

First, it is thought that Paul was beheaded in Rome and that Peter was crucified. All the apostles died as martyrs except for John who was exiled to the Island of Patmos. There, John received the vision called "*Revelation*," which is the last Bible book.

Then, because the Jews revolted against Rome, in 70 A.D. the emperor destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. Six hundred thousand Jews were killed and many ran for their lives. This fulfilled the prophecy Jesus made when He rode into Jerusalem and wept over the city. The roads the Romans had built now became useful to Jews as well as the persecuted Christians.

Thus, in 70 AD, the nation of Israel ended. But, the Old Testament Scriptures tell us Israel would become a nation again, and that happened in 1948.

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The letters that follow in the Bible were all written within the timeframe of the book of Acts. In our last session, we will look at topics within the letters and summarize the last book, *Revelation*.

End Video SR-11i Conclusion

Slide: A Bible Overview

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