

Acts and the church

Home Study 11



Day 1

Read John 14:8-21

Who will Jesus leave for the believer?

What will this person do for the believer?

Day 2

Read John 15:26 – 16:15

What does the Holy Spirit do in the unbeliever?

Day 3

Read Acts 1:1-11

What are the disciples to do?

Day 4

Read Acts 2:14-36

What does Peter use to explain that Pentecost is from God?

Day 5

Read Acts 2:42-47

What does God form from Pentecost?

Day 6

Read Acts 20:13-38

How does Paul see the church?

What is the greatest danger it faces?

Day 7

Who is the Holy Spirit?

What does he do?

Acts and the church

Group Study 11



Jesus ascends into heaven so that he can see the fruit of his suffering

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. '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 1:9-11, NIV).

'In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed' (Daniel 7:13-14, NIV).

Questions:

1. **Read Daniel 7:13-14 again.** What is Jesus given as he approaches his Father in the ascension? (In fact this is where he sees the fruit of his death.)

As we look at each subject in this study we should constantly keep him in mind. He is its beginning and end. **Read Revelation 1:8.**

It is he who commands the disciples to preach to the nations and he is to be the subject of the sermons. **Read Matthew 28:18-19 and 1 Corinthians 2:2.**

He, with the Father, is the one who will give the Holy Spirit. And his work is to point to, and apply, the work of Jesus. **Read John 15:26.**

And he, Jesus is the head of every church that is formed. **Read Ephesians 5:23b.**

Pause for thought

What does Scripture teach is the great hope for the whole world and the part of the world you live in?

- The gospel is preached to the nations
- The power to fulfil the task
- The task itself
- The Apostle Paul and his message
- Understanding the letters

The gospel is preached to the nations

In Genesis 11 we see one of the great curses of sin – Babel. Life would be intolerable in a world of unity without God. So the world is divided into nations. God did this by introducing different languages. – setting up a huge partition between nation and nation, which no empire or kingdom has or could ever break down.

Key verses:

That is why it was called Babel – because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth (Genesis 11:9, NIV).

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV).***

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, NIV).

This gospel to the nations is not completely new. The people of the nations – Rahab, Ruth, Uriah the Hittite and Naaman, were all saved through faith in Jesus (See Hebrews 11:31). But what is to come now is on a different scale. Also, these people had to go to the physical people of Israel to be blessed. God commands his disciples to go out of Israel, into all the world.

This is how we are to understand the fulfilment of the gospel preached in advance to Abraham – when we see the nations hearing about and believing in Jesus.

2. Read Galatians 3:6-9. Who are the true children of Abraham in the times we live in?

3. Read Acts 2:5-13. The sermon at Pentecost begins with a very unusual event: How does the speaking of tongues announce the removal of the curse of Babel?

Later in the sermon we see how, in Christ, all barriers are broken down; barriers of sex (Acts 2:17), age (Acts 2:17) and barriers between Old Testament believers and our own time (Acts 2:24–34).

Pause for thought

What barriers do we build between people in church which Christ has broken down?

The power to fulfil the task

Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of age' (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV).

Jesus says he will never leave them

4. Read Acts 1:8. What does this mean in the light of the ascension, and is it possible for sinful men to carry out this great task?

Again not completely new. In the Old Testament David, Samson and others were given the Holy Spirit to complete the tasks they were given. But what occurs in Acts is on a different scale because it is a different and greater task. The Old Testament explains this.

5. Read Acts 2:16-21 and Acts 10:45. Why is it on a different scale and a greater task?

The Holy Spirit does something for the unbeliever through the believer which will help us understand the many incidents in Acts and also in our own lives.

6. Read John 14:16-18. What does the Holy Spirit do for the believer?

7. **Read John 16:7-14.** What does he do for the unbeliever through the believer?

8. Why is it to their advantage that Jesus goes away?

The task itself

The Spirit of God is poured out. The end of the curse of Babel is seen. Christ is preached. Three thousand souls are saved. So what happens next? A church is formed!

9. **Read Acts 2:42-47.** How do they behave in that church?

Is the church something new? Stephen in his sermon, when speaking of the believers in the Old Testament, even uses the word 'church'.

*That is he, that was in **the church** in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers (Acts 7:38a, AV).*

Note: Assembly – ekklessia – church

The apostle Paul and his message

There is one incident which pulls the whole Bible together and shows how it applies to each church in the New Testament – and therefore to us today. In Acts 9 the apostle Paul is converted and given a great and glorious commission.

The term apostle simply means sent one. The significance of the term is completely dependent on who sends you.

10. **Read Ephesians 3:6-11 and Colossians 1:24-27.** What was Paul sent to do?

11. Where would the unsearchable riches of Christ be made plain?

So is the work Paul is doing completely new? Paul returns to the temple itself (See Acts 21:26) knowing he will be imprisoned for life. Why? Because he wants to show his faith is no different from that of the Old Testament believer.

12. **Read Acts 22:14-15.** Whose God does Paul feel called him to preach to all men?

13. **Read Acts 26:6-7 and 28:20.** What does Paul see as the reason behind his imprisonment?

Even Felix and Festus can see Paul's imprisonment is about the true understanding of the law (Acts 21:20 and 23:29). Paul argues strongly that he is not doing anything against the temple, the people, the customs of the ancestors or the law.

Then Paul made his defence: "I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar." (Acts 25:8, NIV).

Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: "My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans..." (Acts 28:17, NIV).

Quite the opposite. He is preaching the Jesus of the Law and the Prophets.

However, I admit that I worship the God of our Fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. (Acts 24:14-15, NIV).

And he sums up his calling in one magnificent sermon.

From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. (Acts 28:23, NIV.)

14. Read Acts 26:17-18 and Acts 26:21-23. What does Paul say which is beyond Moses and the prophets?

Understanding the letters

In what way are the churches in the New Testament like the church in the Old Testament?

How are they made?

The Father gathers his church, purely out of his grace, and not because of anything his church has done. **Read 1 Peter 2:9-10.**

The Shadow: In the same way Israel was called because of God's grace. **Read Exodus 19:4-6.**

How are they redeemed?

Christ redeems his church. **Read Colossians 1:13-14 and Ephesians 1:6-7.**

The Shadow: In the same way Israel was redeemed from a dominion of darkness by blood. **Read Exodus 6:6.**

How do they live?

The Spirit of God is poured out on each church to give it new life – applying the work of Christ. **Read 1 Thessalonians 1:5.**

The Spirit of God lives in the church giving it power. **Read 1 Corinthians 3:16 and Galatians 5:22-26.**

Because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we know we have an inheritance in the new heavens and new earth – the promised land. **Read Ephesians 1:13-14.**

The Shadow: In the same way the glory of the Lord moved in the Tabernacle. **Read Exodus 40:34-38.**

Great Quotes

'Paul can take the characteristic titles of Israel, the 'chosen', 'holy', and 'beloved' people and boldly give them to the local community of Christians in Colosse. The fact that this transfer of Israel's titles to the church is almost commonplace in the New Testament (Rom 8:33, Phil 3:3, 1 Pet 2:9, Jas 1:1, Rev1:6) shows the revolution in thinking that had taken place in Paul's mind. His meeting with Christ had transformed his whole understanding of God's plan for the world.'

Dick Lucas

The church and the Old Testament – the barriers are down

15. Read Ephesians 2:11-18 and Galatians 6:16. Who now enjoys the blessings foreshadowed in the Old Testament?

16. Read Galatians 3:26-29. How are we to look at other members of the church?

17. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:8, 1:1 and Romans 1:8. How does the gospel to the nations go out?

Conclusion

The work of Christ in his death, resurrection and ascension continues in each church today. And our position in Christ needs to be understood in the light of all the Law and the Prophets. Never call us a New Testament church again! We are simply Christ's church, the church of God!

Summary Questions:

What did this study teach me about Jesus?

What did this study teach me about the Bible?

What does this study teach me about myself?

Jesus



