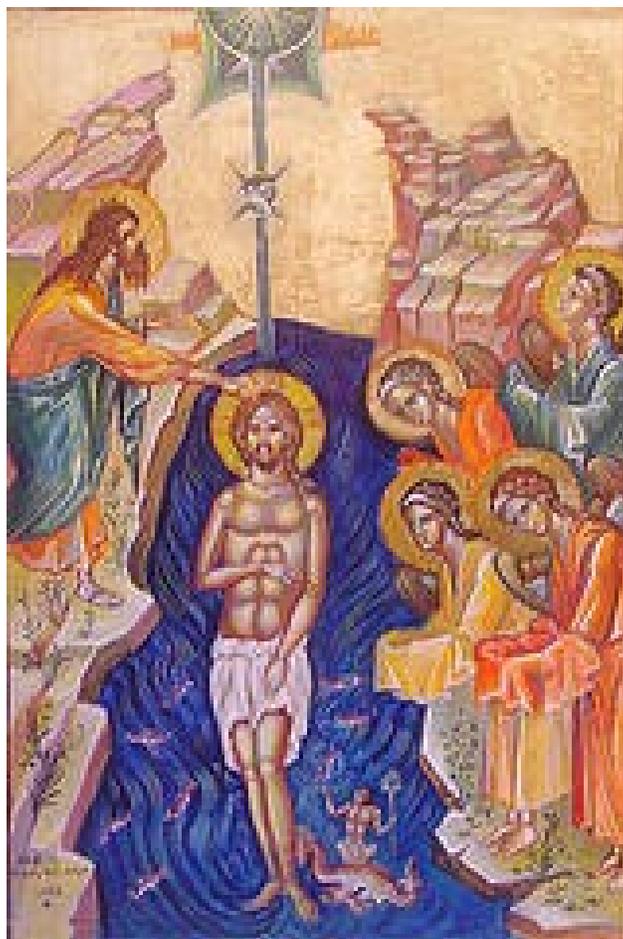


Acts 1-8

The Early Church



by John Edmiston

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Study One - Jesus' Last Instructions

Bible Passage: Acts 1:1-12

What are the similarities between Acts 1:1-3 and Luke 1:1-4?

Theophilus is Greek for "God-lover" - what do you think Luke is trying to say by using that name?

On what basis did Jesus choose the apostles? (v.2) How should spiritual leadership be selected?

What did Jesus do during the forty days between the resurrection and His ascension into Heaven? (v.3)

What did Jesus command the apostles to do? (v.4)

What did Jesus promise them would happen to them? (v. 4,5,8)

But what was uppermost in the minds of the disciples? (v. 6,7)

What would be the spiritual effect of the baptism of the Holy Spirit? (v.8)

Where were the apostles to take the gospel to? (v.8) What does this tell us about our Christian witness today?

How did Jesus ascend into Heaven? What does this tell us about the return of the Lord? (v. 9-12)

* Note: A Sabbath day's journey was about 4000 feet (two thousand cubits) or 6 furlongs, that is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. That is as far as a Jew was traditionally allowed to travel on the Sabbath and was the "city limits" of an ancient Hebrew town.

Study Two - Judas Is Replaced

Bible Passage: Acts 1:13-26

How many disciples were gathered in the Upper Room (v. 13-15) ?

What type of people were there and what were they doing? (v. 13-15)

What was their attitude like and what relationship term did they use? (v. 13-15)

What was the problem that Peter was addressing? (v. 16,17)

How did Peter see prophecy as applying to this situation? Who is the author of prophecy? (v. 16,17,20)

What happened to Judas? (Note: See Acts 1:18,19 see also Matthew 27:5-10, it appears Judas hanged himself in a high place then fell to a gruesome death when the rope broke or when he was cut down. The Greek verb for fall is to fall prone or headlong. The field was bought with the money he threw to the priests (which was his “thirty pieces of silver”).

What induced Judas to do this? (Matthew 26:6-16, Mark 14:3-11, John 6:66-71, John 12:5,6)

What happened to Judas spiritually as a result of his greed? (Luke 22:3-6, John 13:27) How does this warn us? (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

What happened to Judas at the Last Supper (John 13:10,11,18, 21-30)

How did Judas betray Jesus? (Matthew 26:47-50)

What were the qualifications for a replacement for Judas? (Acts 1:21,22)

How did the apostles decide on a replacement? (Acts 1:23-26) How is this applicable to our decision-making today?

Study Three – Pentecost

Bible Passage: Acts 2:1-21

Pentecost In the Old Testament (from the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia) :

, *pentekoste*), this second of the great Jewish national festivals was observed on the 50th day, or 7 weeks, from the Paschal Feast, and therefore in the Old Testament it was called “the feast of weeks.” The festival and its ritual were minutely described in this Law. Every male in Israel was on that day required to appear before the Lord at the sanctuary (Exo 34:22, Exo 34:23). It was the first of the two agrarian festivals of Israel and signified the completion of the barley-harvest (Lev 23:15, Lev 23:16; Deu 16:9, Deu 16:10), which had begun at the time of the waving of the first ripe sheaf of the first-fruits (Lev 23:11). Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks, therefore fell on the 50th day after this occurrence. The wheat was then also nearly everywhere harvested (Exo 23:16; Exo 34:22; Num 28:26), and the general character of the festival was that of a harvest-home celebration. The day was observed as a Sabbath day, all labor was suspended, and the people appeared before Yahweh to express their gratitude (Lev 23:21; Num 28:26). The central feature of the day was the presentation of two loaves of leavened, salted bread unto the Lord (Lev 23:17, Lev 23:20; Exo 34:22; Num 28:26; Deu 16:10). The size of each loaf was fixed by law. Lev 23:18 describes the additional sacrifices required on this occasion. It was a festival of good cheer, a day of joy. Free-will offerings were to be made to the Lord (Deu 16:10), and it was to be marked by a liberal spirit toward the Levite, the stranger, and orphans and widows (Deu 16:11, Deu 16:14). Perhaps the command against gleaning harvest-fields has a bearing on this custom (Lev 23:22).

Read Acts 2:1-4 - what actually happened in the Upper Room? How audible was it? How visible and tangible was it?

Could the people outside the room hear it? (Acts 2:6) How is this different from most “mystical experiences”? Could it be validated by other outside observers?

Read Acts 2:5-11 - what was the nature of the languages being spoken? Why were the bystanders surprised? What were the disciples talking about? (Acts 2:11)

What misunderstanding occurred? Why was it obviously incorrect? (v. 12-15)

Which prophet did Peter point to as a way of understanding what was happening? How does this dovetail with what Peter did in chapter 1?

How should we use the Bible for guidance when unusual spiritual events occur?

What were some of the unusual events prophesied by Joel? How do they point to a new and different kind of spiritual experience from Judaism? Who would be the recipients of these spiritual experiences?

Study Four - Peter's First Sermon

Bible Passage: Acts 2:22-40

How did Peter describe Jesus? (Acts 2:22)

How does God's predetermined plan sometimes even make use of evil men? (v.23)

Why was it impossible for Jesus to be held by death? (v.24)

How does Peter use Psalm 16 to point to the resurrection? (v. 25-32)

Why was Jesus able to pour out the Holy Spirit? (Acts 2:33-36)

What is involved in Jesus being at the right hand of God? (Matthew 22:43,44; 26:64, Mark 12:36, 14:62; 16:19; Luke 20:42, 22:69, Acts 5:31, 7:55, 56; Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3,13; 8:1, 10:12, 12;2 1Peter 3:22)

What was the response of the Jewish listeners? (Acts 2:36,37,41)

What did the apostle Peter tell them to do? (v. 37-39)

What was the "promise"? (v. 38,39 - see also Luke 24:29, Acts 1:4, Galatians 3:14)

What did Peter say about the state of the world and our need for salvation? (v. 40)

Study Five - The Birth Of The Church

Bible Passage: Acts 2:41-47

Acts 2:41-47 MKJV Then those who gladly received his word were baptized. And the same day there were added about three thousand souls. (42) And they were continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship and in the breaking of the loaves, and in prayers. (43) And fear came on every soul. And many wonders and miracles took place through the apostles. (44) And all who believed were together and had all things common. (45) And they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, according as anyone had need. (46) And continuing with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they shared food with gladness and simplicity of heart, (47) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

What was the first thing that the new converts did that day? How many were involved(v.41)

What were the four basic things that the new believers did? (v.42) How should these four things be part of our lives?

What was the extraordinary spiritual result? (v.43)

How did they regard their possessions? (v. 44 & 45)

How does love affect our view of ownership? (v. 44 & 45)

What was their fellowship characterized by? (v. 46)

Would you describe their lifestyle as positive and joyful or somber and negative?

How did other "ordinary" people react to the early Church (v. 46 & 47) ? Why do you think they reacted this way?

"The Lord added to the Church" - what does this say about how churches should grow? Should we employ showmanship and other Madison Ave. techniques?

Study Six – The Healing Of The Lame Man

Bible Passage: Acts 3:1-11 (note 'the ninth hour' is the 9th hour after sunrise - or about 3pm)

What were Peter and John doing? Where were they going and at what time? (v.1)

What incident crossed their path? How can “interruptions” be opportunities to witness to Christ? (v. 2& 3)

What was the lame man asking for? What did he receive? What does this say about how God sometimes answers our prayers? (v. 2& 3)

What does God often give us instead of cash? (Deuteronomy 8:18) Why is this a wiser course of action?

What procedure did Peter and John use to heal the lame man? (v. 4-7) What was different about the form the prayer took compared to the form we usually use in prayer?

What form of prayer was used by Jesus and later by the apostles for miracles, for healing and for exorcism? (Mark 1:25, 39-42, 5:41,42, Matthew 8:16, 10:1,8, John 5:8, 11:43,44)

How are Christians to pray for mighty things? (Matthew 17:20, 21:21, Mark 11:23, Luke 17:6)
Faith -> Picture of desired end state -> Command prayer -> Result

How did the apostles react in line with their faith? (v. 7,8)

What was the reaction of the lame man? (v. 8 & 9)

What was the reaction of “all the people”? (v. 10,11)

Study Seven - Peter's Second Sermon: Times of Restoration

Bible Passage: Acts 3:12-26

What power was NOT involved in the healing of the lame man? (v. 12)

Through what agency was the lame man healed? How did this affect the Jewish people of the time? (v.13-16)

How are faith and healing connected? (v. 16)

What crime had the Jews committed "through ignorance"? (v. 17 & 18)

How could they get right with God? (v. 19)

What did Peter promise them? (v.19,21,26)

How was Jesus spoken of by the prophets? How does He connect with the line through Moses and Abraham? (v. 20-25)

What is "the restoration of all things" ? (v.21, Matthew 19:28, Isaiah 11:1-16)

How does the Abrahamic covenant relate to Christians? (v.25, Galatians 3:13-16, 26-29)

What was the blessing that Jesus would bring to the Jews? (v.26) How should our Christian faith affect our behavior?

Study Eight – The Apostles Before The Sanhedrin

Bible Passage: Acts 4:1-22

What was the reaction of the Sadducees (the temple authorities) ? What was the reason they were so upset? (Acts 23:8) How do skeptical people who do not believe in the supernatural react to an obvious miracle?

What was the average listener's reaction to Peter and the lame man and the sermon he preached? (Acts 4:4)

Who gathered for the trial of James and John? What did they want to know? (v. 5 – 7)

What was Peter filled with? What was his reply? (v. 8-10)

What claims does Peter make concerning Jesus? (V. 11,12)

What do you think Peter means by verse 11? (see also Psalm 118:22)

Is there salvation outside of faith in Jesus Christ? (Acts 4:12)

What astonished the Sanhedrin? (Acts 4:13)

What was the problem for the High Priests etc.? What did decide to do? (v. 14-22)

What principle of obedience did Peter use (Acts 4:19, 5:29) ?

Study Nine – The Room Is Shaken!

Bible Passage: Acts 4:23-37

Where did Peter and John go after their trial before the Sanhedrin? (v.23)

What was the reaction of the brethren? (v.24-30)

How did they see the hand of God as being involved in human affairs? (v. 28,30)

What did they pray for? (v.29,30) How is this different from what we usually ask for?

What was the immediate result of their prayer? (v.31) What was the effect on the people and what did they do?

“The aim of persecution is to silence the Church” - how did the early Church react “in the opposite spirit” to that attitude which Satan was trying to produce?

Have you ever witnessed a powerful move of God? If so what happened?

What was the financial effect of this powerful move of God? How did attitudes change? (v.32)

What role did the Apostles have? (v.33) What is the role of Christian leadership? (Acts 6:1-4)

How did the early Christians help the poor? (v.34, 35) What did Barnabas do? (v.36,37)

Study Ten – Apostolic Authority

Bible Passage: Acts 5:1-16

What was the sin of Ananias & Sapphira? (Acts 5:1-11)

How did their greed cause them to “lie to God”? How were they pretending to be more righteous than they really were? What were their options? (Acts 5:1-4)

How can money tempt us away from God? (1 Timothy 6:6-19, Ephesians 5:3-6, Colossians 3:5-7, 1Corinthians 6:10, Isaiah 57:15)

What will be one of the toughest temptations in the End Times? (Revelation 13:15-18)

Read Luke 12:13-34 – List some of the things Jesus teaches us about money and possessions?

What was the reaction of the other church members to the death of Ananias and Sapphira? How was church discipline in the first century quite harsh? (1 Corinthians 5:5,11; 11:30, 2Corinthians 12:20-13:3)

Why should sin be taken so seriously?

What happened afterwards (Acts 5:11-14) ? How does God bless holiness?

What miracles did Peter do? (Acts 5:15,16)

What percentage of sick people were healed? How should we deal with those who are tormented by evil spirits? (v.16)

Study Eleven – The Apostles Are Arrested

Bible Passage: Acts 5:17-42

What “filled” the Chief Priests? (v. 17) But what “filled” the Apostles? (Ephesians 5:18)

What did the Chief Priests do? (v.18) and what was God's response? (v.19,20, 21a)

What surprised the Sanhedrin (v.21-24)? Do you think God might have been trying to get their attention?

Why was the commander cautious? (v.25,26) What does this say about the popularity of the early Christians? (Acts 5:13,14)

What is the nature of the power struggle in verses 27-29?

What is Peter's reply? (v. 30-32) And what was their response (v.33)?

What was Gamaliel's advice? (Acts 5:34-39) Since the apostles were outside how do we know about it? (Paul was a student of Gamaliel's)

How were the apostles punished? (Acts 5:40)

What was their attitude to being beaten? (Acts 5:41)

How did it affect their ministry? (Acts 5:42)

Study Twelve– The Hellenists Cause Trouble

Bible Passage: Acts 6:1-15

Hellenists = Greek speaking Jews, Hebrews = Hebrew speaking Jews, Libertines / Freedmen = probably freed slaves, Cyrenians, Alexandrians etc – Greek speaking Jews from centers of higher learning in the Roman Empire. These were intellectual Jews and may have been into Kabbala.

What was going wrong? Who was being helped? Who was being neglected? How was language and culture dividing the early Church? (v.1)

What was the response of the apostles? (v. 2-4)

The names of the deacons they appointed are all of Greek origin, why do you think they chose people familiar with Greek culture and language for the job (Acts 6:5)

How were the new deacons commissioned? (Acts 6:6)

How did this new arrangement help things? (Acts 6:7) What effect do you think the conversion of “many of the priests” would have had on the rest of the religious establishment?

What is the significance of Stephen doing “great wonders and miracles”? (Hint: Stephen was one of the new deacons, and not one of the Twelve.)

What community would have been most impacted by the miracles of Stephen?

When the Greek-speaking Jewish intellectuals tried to oppose Stephen what was the result? (v.9,10)

How does God give wisdom to His servants? (Matthew 10:19,20; Mark 13:11)

What were the charges they brought against Stephen? Does this remind you of how some religious groups and atheists react against Christians today? (Acts 6:11-14)

What was Stephen's face like? (Acts 6:15)

What should be our attitude to such irrational and hateful persecution? Should we stop preaching the gospel and doing signs and wonders just because it offends some people?

Study Thirteen - God Is Everywhere

(Stephen's Speech Part 1)

Bible Passage: Acts 7:1-34

The point of today's passage lies in the geography, the place names, which are all outside of Israel. God was appearing to the patriarchs outside of Israel and outside of the Temple system! The implication is that God could turn up and act on behalf of anyone, at any time.

What was the high priest concerned about? (Acts 7:1, 6:11-15)

What is Stephen saying about Abraham? (v2-8) What was Abraham's lifestyle like?

What was extraordinary about Abraham and his faith? (v.2-8)

How did God help Joseph? Which is more powerful God's favor - or man's rejection? (v.9,10)

What happened to Jacob and his family? What was the only land that they owned? (v. 11-16)
What were the circumstances surrounding the birth of Moses? (v. 17-22)

To what level did Moses rise in Egypt? (v. 20-22) Why was this academic preparation important?

What incident took Moses off-track for forty years? (v. 23-30) How can acting in our own strength get us out of the will of God?

What was the turning point back to God and to destiny? (v. 30-34)

In what places did God speak to and bless Abraham, Joseph and Moses? Is God the God of just one nation or people? Does He only turn up in church?

Study Fourteen - The Disobedience Of The Jews

(Stephen's Speech Part 2)

Bible Passage: Acts 7:35-60

What was the initial response of the Jews to Moses?(v35, Exodus 2:13,14, 6:9) How did it parallel the Jewish response to Jesus?

What parallels are there between Moses and Jesus in verses 36-38? Who was the prophet "like Moses" that would come later?

What sin did the Israelites commit? (v. 39-41) Can you think of some modern equivalents to the Golden Calf?

Even when God speaks clearly, sometimes people Philip go wrong, why do you think this is so?

What was the long term consequences of this sin? (v. 42-43)

What was the relevance of the tabernacle and the Temple to God? (v. 44-50)

How do verses 48-50 answer the charges brought against Stephen? (Acts 6:11-15) Who uses part of Stephen/s speech in Athens (Acts 17:24,25)? How do you think this coincidence came about?

What did Stephen accuse them of? (Acts 7:51-53) What was their reaction? (Acts 7:54)

What did Stephen see? How as this a claim that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 7:55,56; Psalm 80:17, 110:1-7) What reaction did this provoke? (Acts 7:57,58)

How did Stephen act during his stoning? (Acts 7:59,60) How is this similar to Jesus on the cross? (Luke 23:34) What should we do? (Matthew 6:12-15)

Study Fifteen - The Revival Among The Samaritans

Bible Passage: Acts 8:1-25

What happened after the death of Stephen? (Acts 8:1-4)

Where did the believers go and what did they do? (Acts 8:4)

Sometimes marvelous revivals precede terrible persecutions. Why do you think that this happens? Why don't the good times last forever? Who opposes revivals?

What happened when Philip went to Samaria? (Acts 8:4-8) Who might have "plowed the ground" for him? (John 4:1-43)

What manifestations accompanied Philip's preaching? (Acts 8: 6,7) How might this have looked to an outsider?

Who was Simon and what happened to him? (Acts 8:9-13)

What experience were they missing? What did the apostles do about it? (Acts 8:14-17)

What did Simon's serious spiritual error? (Acts 8:18-19) What is wrong with commercialized Christianity? "When Simon saw that..." why do you think he could see the baptism in the Holy Spirit – what evidence might there have been?

What was Peter's response? (Acts 8:2-24) What is interesting about it? What can we learn from Peter's statements?

How did the apostles follow up the revival? (Acts 8:25) What is the role of itinerant ministry?

Study Sixteen - Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Bible Passage: Acts 8:26-40

Who spoke to Philip? What sort of directions did the angel give? Did the angel tell Philip the reason for the journey? Did the instruction “make sense”? (Acts 8:26)

What additional instructions did Philip receive when he got there? (Acts 8:27-29)

What does this tell us about how we should obey leadings from God?

Who was the eunuch? Of what race was he? Why was he important? (Acts 8:27,28)

Why is it important to reach leaders with the gospel?

What Bible passage was the Ethiopian eunuch reading? What questions did he have? How did Philip use his point of spiritual curiosity to lead him to Christ?(Acts 8:30-35)

What happened to the Ethiopian eunuch straight after he believed? What question did Philip ask him to make certain he was a Christian? (Acts 8:36-38)

What happened to Philip after that? (Acts 8:39,40)

How did Philip handle the supernatural elements of his ministry?

When there was no obvious supernatural leading what did Philip do? (Acts 8:40)