

The Sermons in Acts

□ 1 □ Class Title, "The Sermons in Acts," Part 1, Acts 1-4

- ❖ Welcome to the class study of Acts of the Apostles.
 - Most of our class time will be devoted to the disciples' personal energy in spreading the gospel through the Roman Empire in the first 30 years after Jesus ascension back to heaven.
 - I want to pay special attention to the content of their sermons & other teaching in Acts.
 - But, there are only 8 evangelistic sermons whose text is preserved in Acts, so this will not take a high percentage of our class time – still, these sermons address fundamentals of the Christian faith that are too vital to pass over lightly.
 - I want to recognize & honor the sacrifices of the evangelists who carried the gospel.
 - I also want us to learn from the life-lessons that can be drawn from their experiences.
- ❖ Trying to follow the natural grouping of events in the Book of Acts, our study is divided into 12 teaching units, and 6 are planned for this quarter.
 - A second quarter – scheduled for next year – should complete the Book of Acts.

□ 2 □ Unit 1 – His Witness at Pentecost Acts 1-2

- Let's take a brief trip through these first 6 units.
 - The first unit is centered around the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost
- 🔊 **Expand Unit 1**
 - 🕒 📖 Acts 2:1-2 1 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. NIV
 - This miracle is followed by Peter's sermon.
 - And Peter's message was received with open hearts, and about 3,000 obeyed the gospel.
- 🔊 **Retract image**

□ 3 □ Unit 2 – Healing the lame man at the Temple & Related events Acts 3-5

- The 2nd unit takes a sample of church activity some months or more after Pentecost; the church now numbers at least 10,000 in Jerusalem.
- 🔊 **Expand Unit 2**
 - This section begins with Peter & John healing a lame man at the gate of the temple, and teaching the crowds that gathered in awe of this miracle.
 - The Jewish authorities reacted, interrupting the sermon and jailing Peter & John as they were teaching.
 - They were warned not to teach in Jesus name any more.

- But when the teaching did not stop, the authorities arrested all the apostles and issued stronger warnings and punctuated with a flogging.
- The Jewish authorities were under pressure to block to this rapid growth of Jesus' followers by any means necessary.
- But regardless of threats and beatings, the disciples continued to share the gospel.

🔒2 **Retract image**

□ 4 □ Unit 3 – The Martyrdom of Stephen Acts 5-6

- In the 3rd unit, Jewish opposition was taken to the ultimate when members of the Sanhedrin abandoned Stephen's trial and dragged him out to be stoned.

🔒1 **Expand Unit 3**

- As a pretext for a trial, witnesses were suborned to make false charges against Stephen.
- Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin is the longest sermon in the Book of Acts.
- It ends with the court and its false witnesses becoming a mob, and in a fit of fury, they dragged Steven out and stoned him to death.
- We are introduced to Saul of Tarsus at the end of this unit; he was apparently instrumental in securing the suborned witnesses for the trial.

🔒2 **Retract image**

□ 5 □ Unit 4 – In All Judea and Samaria Acts 8-9

- The death of Stephen begins a ruthless period of persecution that scattered the church widely.
- Saul of Tarsus was a key part of this persecution.

🔒1 **Expand Unit 4**

- But those who were scattered carried the gospel with them to even more places
 - To Phoenicia
 - To the island of Cyprus
 - And to Antioch of Syria, to name a few.
- Saul of Tarsus responded by extending his persecution into foreign cities.
- Luke tells us about the outreach of Philip, is an example the gospel's spread.
 - Philip went into Samaria preaching the gospel and establishing churches.
 - He ignored the outcast status of the Samaritans in the eyes of devout Jews.
 - He offered them fellowship with God and His Son, and they responded with joy.
- But Saul of Tarsus was close behind bringing imprisonment and death to disciples – even in foreign cities.
- But the Lord interdicted Saul and his evil purpose on the road to Damascus, and Saul is confronted by the Lord and effects a total life-change.

🔒2 **Retract image**

□ 6 □ Unit 5 – Gentiles are Accepted Acts 10-11

🔑1 Expand Unit 5

- And God had planned for an even wider family of the saved.
- On one of Peter's pastoral visits in Samaria, God called him to preach the gospel to the first gentile; a devout Roman centurion named Cornelius stationed at Caesarea.
- Peter obeyed, but when he returned to Jerusalem he was harshly criticized, until he described God's multiple visions and messages to him, directing him to the house of Cornelius, punctuated by God's outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentiles at Cornelius' house. Then they acknowledged...
- 🕒📖 Acts 11:18 "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life"

🔑2 Retract image

☐ 7 ☐ Unit 6 – To the Ends of the Earth – Anatolia Acts 13-14

🔑1 Expand Unit 6

- And now the Lord is ready for the gospel to be taken outside the Levant (off the eastern shore of the Mediterranean).
- So the Holy Spirit directed a new and even wider outreach, and new lands for the gospel to be taken.
- 🕒📖 Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." NIV

🔑2 Retract image

☐ 8 ☐ Summary

- 🕒 **These 6 units of study (the first half of Acts) are scheduled to be completed by the last Sunday of December.**
- 🔑1 **The final 6 units are scheduled next year.**
- So, let's get started!

☐ 9 ☐ Sermons in Acts (Stream – Spring graphic)

- As the prophet Joel wrote
 - 🔑1 📖 Joel 3:18 "...A fountain will flow out of the Lord's house and will water the valley of acacias." NIV
- In Jesus' last meeting with the apostles, He commissioned them with the words:
 - 🔑2 📖 8 ...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."
 - With these words, Jesus gives us the three steps of the evangelistic work recorded in the Book of Acts.
 - This great evangelistic mission was the fulfillment of many ancient prophecies.

- The prophet Isaiah predicted

📖 Isa 2:2-3 2 In the last days
the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established
as chief among the mountains;
it will be raised above the hills,
and all nations will stream to it.

👉3 (stop stream movement)

🕒📖 3 Many peoples will come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths."

🕒 The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. NIV

👉4 📖 And it was God's plan that it begin from JERUSALEM, as seen from a number of prophecies..

- And like an ever flowing spring, the gospel will spread everywhere, and the apostles will be HIS witnesses beginning at Jerusalem and "to the ends of the earth."

- The Book of Acts is a history of some of the major events in the early church as the gospel spread across the Roman Empire.
 - At the same time, the gospel was being taken West into the Roman Empire, it was also being taken North, South, and East, but Luke has given us the record of the its westward expansion across the Roman Empire.

□ 10 □ His Witness at Pentecost – Unit 1

➤ 👉1 LEADING UP TO PENTECOST: ACTS 1

- Chapter 1 describes the events leading up to Pentecost.
 - They paint the backdrop for the events at Pentecost where Luke's narrative in ACTS begins in earnest.
- 👉2 - **Luke's introduction 1-3** (to the book of Acts, similar to the Gospel of Luke).
- 👉3 - **The apostles' commission 4-8** (This is the same mission statement found at the end of each of the synoptic gospels. Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Lk 24:47)
- 👉4 - **Jesus' ascension;** (also an extension of the Gospels, Mk 16:19; Lk 24:51)
Angels' promise 9-11 is a new
- 👉5 - The disciples go... **Back to Jerusalem** (from the Mt of Olives)
– **the believers** (now numbering 120, wait in Jerusalem in the upper room for the promised Holy Spirit. **12-14**)
- 👉6 - While they are waiting, a **Replacement is chosen for Judas. 15-26**





➤ 👉7 THE SPIRIT, THE SERMON, THE RESPONSE – ACTS 2

- 👉8 - **The Spirit** (is poured out, as promised). **1-13**
- 👉9 - **The Sermon** (is presented by Peter). **14-40**

- **☞10 - The Response** (is heartwarming, with about 3,000 were added to the 120).
41-47

➤ The tentative plan is to spend 2 weeks in unit 1.

□ 11 □ Luke's Introduction Acts 1:1-3

- Acts: Luke begins Acts in much the same way as he opened the Gospel of Luke, addressed to a "lover of God" or "friend of God".
 - Luke's introduction is as much a part of the inspired record as anything else in Acts.
- ☞1  Acts 1: 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. NIV
- ☞2 - **Careful (and very thorough) historian**
 - This is VERY important to me.
 - If I am going to commit my life and eternal destiny, I need to be as sure as possible.
 - ☞3  Lk 1:3 Therefore, since I myself have **carefully investigated everything** from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,
 - His purpose was...
 - ☞4  Lk 1:4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.
 - We saw Luke's precision and accuracy in the Gospel of Luke, and we will see it again in the Book of Acts.
 - For example, every official is called by his proper title: king, governor, proconsul, procurator, etc.
 - Travel on the sea is described with proper nautical terms, as "lea of Cyprus"
 - The date of major events is noted by who is in office at the time; as for example....
 -  Luke 3:1-2 1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar — when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. NIV
- ☞5 - **Tender heart**
 - He sees and describes responses of the heart (the needs of widows, the persecution of the saints, times spent in prayer, contrition of sinners, etc.)
 - He notes the care the disciples have for one another.
 - And Luke has a spiritual heart, he tells us about the frequent prayers in the early church.
- ☞6 - **Physician**
 - He is described by Paul as a physician, a healer – likely his a vocation before his conversion (Col 4:14).
 - As a scholar with a tender heart, what else could Luke be but a healer?
- ☞7 - **Became a Dedicated evangelist**
 - When he is converted, he learned a new kind of healing.
 - He worked to bring Christ's healing to broken lives.

- He became a trusted minister of the gospel who worked side-by-side with the apostle Paul on mission trips.
 - Paul left him to minister to the church at Philippi after Paul himself was released from prison and prematurely expelled that city.
 - Paul needed someone to stay behind to stabilize and strengthen the young church at Philippi.
 - Five years later when Paul passed back through Philippi, Luke was still at that station, faithfully serving as minister.
- **8 - Widely respected**
- Most believe that Paul is describing Luke to the Corinthian church with his words in 2 Cor 8.
 - Paul had told the Corinthians that he was sending Titus back to Corinth to assist in gathering their benevolent aid for Judea, and...
 - 📖 2 Cor 8:18-19 18 And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. 19 What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, NIV
- Acts: Luke begins Acts in much the same way as he opened the Gospel of Luke, addressed to a “lover of God” or “friend of God”.
- 📖 Acts 1: 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. NIV
- As a scholar and physician, Luke is careful to point out the empirical evidence of Jesus’ resurrection.
- ☞ **9** 📖 Acts 1:3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men 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. NIV
- ☞ **10** ➤ **What were some “convincing proofs” that Jesus gave (He was alive)?**
- What convinced people that Jesus was alive? (they could see, touch, hear)
 - Groups saw Him when they were together, and they all saw the same thing, they all heard the same words, & they all understood the same message. 1 Cor 15:6 (“More than 500 of the brothers at the same time”).
 - They heard Him speak; they carried on a dialog with him, He answered their questions and asked them questions.
 - They took meals together and fellowshiped together for extended periods.
 - They were invited to touch His crucifixion injuries. Jn 20:27
 - ◆ Jesus gave “many convincing proofs”
- ☞ **11** Jesus gave “many convincing proofs” **“MANY CONVINCING PROOFS THAT HE WAS ALIVE (highlighted)”**
- These experiences were repeated many times over 40 days.
 - THESE WITNESSES WERE SO THOROUGHLY CONVINCED AND CERTAIN THAT THEY WOULD NOT TAKE BACK THEIR TESTIMONY, EVEN IN THE FACE OF DEATH!

- Because they knew that if Jesus was raised from the dead—just as he promised—then Jesus’ promise of their resurrection was true as well.
- **AND THEY KNEW JESUS WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD!!**
- They had seen many convincing proofs!!
- Every sermon in the Book of Acts presents Jesus’ resurrection as a pivotal fact of the Christian faith and a central element of the saving gospel.

□ 12 □ The Apostles’ Mission Acts 1:4-8 (Flame)

➤ Luke records a repeat of the Great Commission, first recorded in the gospels.

📖 Acts 1:4f 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command:

☞1 📖 "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.

- Jesus had promised that the Spirit would be given in a special way after he was “glorified,” that is, after he had ascended back to the right hand of God.
- The Scripture uses the term “glorified” to describe Jesus’ ascension back to heaven.
- e.g. 📖 John 7:38-39 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” 39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. NIV

☞2 📖 you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

- **(Flame graphic)**
- Now Jesus is about to be “glorified”, and they will witness it.

☞3 📖 6 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

☞4 🗨️ **What kind of kingdom were they expecting?**

- The restoration of the earthly state of Israel in the “promised land” was expected.

☞5 🗨️ **Why?**

- This was based more on prophecies than on Jesus’ teaching.
- The prophets had spoken often of “restoring” the kingdom of David.
- Jesus had taught... “

☞6 📖 “...the kingdom of God is within you.” Lk 17:21

- So Jesus answered...

☞7 📖 Acts 1:7-8 7 ... “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.”

- Jesus is not sidetracked by their question.
- (remove shapes 12,14)

☞8 📖 8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;

- **(Flame graphic - stilled)**

☞9 📖 “and you will be my witnesses

🕒 📖 ✨ in Jerusalem,

🕒 📖 ✨ and in all Judea and Samaria,

🕒 📖 ✨ and to the ends of the earth.”

- We will use this quotation from Jesus as our outline of the Book of Acts.
 - “in Jerusalem” – the first 7 chapters
 - “and in all Judea and Samaria” – the next 5 chapters
 - “and to the ends of the earth.” – the final 16 chapters
- “all Judea” includes more than the Roman province of “Judea”.
 - The term “Judea” means “Land of the Jews”, and “all Judea” includes every area with a substantial Jewish population, including Decapolis, Perea, Idumea, and Galilee (*Luke uses the term “Judea” to refer to the city of Nain in Galilee. Lk 7:17*).
 - ◆ “All Judea” DOES NOT include Samaria, where devout Jews hesitated to even travel.

☐ 13 ☐ Cloud Hid Him from their sight (clouds graphic)

🕒 📖 9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

➤ Jesus has completed his mission on earth, and it was now time for Him to be taken back to the throne of God.

🕒 **(Graphic)** Jesus ascended into the clouds right before their eyes.

- And now, the apostles must turn to their mission to carry the gospel to the “ends of the earth”
- Jesus’ ascension is a significant point emphasized in the early sermons in The Book of Acts.

☐ 14 ☐ Two Angels (Two Angels Graphic)

🕒 (graphic) 2 Angels

🕒 📖 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

👂1 📖 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.”

- Jesus had promised the disciples before his death that he would return on the clouds, “with power and great glory.” NIV Lk 21:27

➤ Jesus had given them their marching orders.

- He called them to be HIS messengers 3 years earlier in Galilee.

▪ 👂2 **In these three years Jesus had...**

- 👂3 **Strengthened their faith** with many demonstrations of Divine power.
- 👂4 **Shaped their hearts** with the gospel message & His example.
- 👂5 **Commissioned them as His spokesmen**, to carry the gospel to every corner of the earth.

- **☞6 As soon as the Spirit was given**, it would be the time for them to begin the mission.
 - **☞7 They would begin sharing the gospel message world-wide.**
- I FEEL COMPELLED TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT THE GOSPEL MESSAGE THEY SHARED...

□ 15 □ The Gospel Message they Shared:

- Our study of the sermons in the Book of Acts is intended (among other things) to strengthen our understanding & appreciation of the gospel message.
 - This gospel propelled the number of Jesus' disciples from the band of 120 on Pentecost to millions within a few decades.
 - The message was heard throughout the entire civilized world of the 1st century.
- **☞1 IT WAS SIMPLE**
- **☞2 IT WAS COMPELLING AND GENEROUS**
- **☞3 IT WAS BASED ON VERIFIABLE FACTS (WITH MIRACLES)**
 - **☞4 IT WAS SIMPLE**
 - ☺ **A loving God offers to adopt you into HIS family.**
 - ◆ WE can be HIS own children.
 - ◆ WE can bask in HIS love forever.
 - ◆ WE will enjoy HIS provision and care.
 - ◆ And in the end to receive HIS rich inheritance and home in heaven.
 - **☞5 IT WAS COMPELLING AND GENEROUS because**
 - ☺ **God gave HIS OWN SON as a ransom to pay the debt of sin that all humans carry.**
 - ◆ The gospel offered a life free of the heavy burden of sin's guilt.
 - ◆ The gospel offered life with God for all eternity in the city of light
 - **☞6 IT WAS BASED ON VERIFIABLE FACTS (WITH MIRACLES)**
 - ◆ Jesus life, His sacrifice and His divine power were demonstrated beyond any reasonable basis for doubt; & this was done repeatedly.
 - **☞7 - Firsthand witnesses**
 - ◆ First-hand witness to Jesus miracles were abundant, first by spoken word, then also by multiple written accounts within 25 years of Jesus' death; written by eye-witnesses of the events.
 - **☞8 - The nature of His miracles** left no reasonable space for doubt.
 - ◆ Those receiving miraculous healing were identified by location, & malady, and often by name; so that the events invited closer examination for any who needed more assurance.
 - ◆ The nature of His miracles exceeded anything that could be staged, or could even be imagined, and far beyond the grasp of self-proclaimed soothsayers & fake healers that most generations in history have endured.
 - With Jesus:
 - ◆ Life-long deformity or blindness was corrected in an instant.

- ◆ Incurable diseases were healed immediately at HIS touch or by HIS order.
 - ◆ Storms at sea were halted instantly at His command.
 - ◆ The dead were instantly raised to life
 - In one case, after 4 days – when the natural decay would have been well advanced.
 - In another, Jesus broke up a funeral procession for a widow's son who was already prepared for burial.
 - ◆ His work was lauded by angels.
 - At His birth
 - At the end, at the tomb
 - Finally (in today's lesson), when He is taken back to heaven Acts 1:11
 - ◆ God spoke His endorsement audibly from heaven on at least 3 recorded occasions.
 - His baptism Mt 3:17 et. al.
 - His transfiguration Mt 17:5 et. al.
 - After a prayer Jn 12:28-30
 - At the cross, even the pagan Roman Centurion proclaimed openly, "Surely he was the Son of God!" Mt 27:54
 - ◆ In the end, the heavens opened as He was witnessed being drawn back to heaven, to the right hand of the Throne of God. Acts 1:7
 - Just as in HIS ministry, HE opened the way for us to follow to heaven's City of Light.
- **9 THE PRESENTATION WAS TAILORED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE HE IS TALKING TO.**
- Of course, the truth does not change, but...
 - Peter's audience on Pentecost of devout Jews, needed to know that Jesus fulfilled the Messianic prophecies.
 - Peter's message on Pentecost met this need.
 - Stephen took the gospel to Samaria.
 - The Samaritans had been regarded as spiritual outcasts by the Jews.
 - Steven would assure them that salvation was freely available to them now, by God's grace.
 - Paul's audience of philosophers in Athens had little need to know that Jesus fulfilled Messianic prophecies, at least until more fundamental truths were established, LIKE...
 - There is one God, who is the creator of all things.
 - There will be a day of accountability for everyone for their conduct.
 - All men must acknowledge their bad conduct and repent of their sins.
 - ◆ So, in Athens, Paul's message was centered on these things

□ 16 □ His Witness at Pentecost (title sheet)

- To The Ends of the Earth – Acts 1-2