

Living Word Fellowship Church

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## Walk Through the Bible

### **Acts**

#### ***The Establishment of the New Testament Church***

#### **I. Introduction**

Where Luke concludes the Gospel of Luke (Luke 24:50-53), he continues it in Acts 1:8. He writes to an associate name Theophilus to tell him all he knew about the life of Christ (in the Gospel of Luke – Acts 1:1) and the life of the New Testament church (Acts).

Acts trace the rapid expansion of the gospel in the world. Each section of the book, 1-7, 8-12, 13-28, focuses on a significant phase of the expansion of this gospel. The book also communicates the rapid growth of the church, the popular favor they enjoyed (2:47), and the genuineness of the miracles performed (4:15-16).

Stephen's address to the high priest in defense of the Gospel accusing them of rejecting Christ enraged them so they did not wait for legal counsel (7:54-60). They took him outside and stoned him to death laying their garments at the feet of Saul (Paul). Paul became the persecutor of the church only to be persecuted by the church. The stoning of Stephen began the persecution of the church, the scattering of the church, the salvation of Paul, and the planting of churches across the world. The book begins with the great commission and ends with it being fulfilled by the person who caused it to spread throughout the known world.

#### **II. An Exposition of the Book of Acts 6 Through 9**

**A. Acts 6:1-7, The need for Administration of the church:**

1. The Holy Spirit is firmly implanted into the church.
2. Peter's leadership has been established:
  - a) Preached at Pentecost; many souls come to Christ (Acts 1:12-14).
  - b) The church's major elements of worship and ministry focus have been shaped (Acts 2:42-47). Just like leaving Egypt they worshipped; after the church began to be established, they worshipped God.
  - c) The healing of the blind man reaffirms the powerful movement they saw in Christ being represented throughout the ministry of the Apostles, vividly portraying that Christ is still alive and expressed through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
  - d) After being jailed and released, preaching continues, causing continual growth in the church (Acts 4:1-31).
  - e) The growth of the church is consistent (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7).
3. Because the church's growth is consistent and there is now a significant presence of people, the church needed to be effectively served. Even though ministries were operating in the church the leadership structure required crystallizing to best serve the people as directed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:1-7).

**B. Acts 6:8-9:31 -- The Witness in all Judea and in Samaria; progressive expansion of the gospel as defined by Christ in Acts 1:8.**

1. Chapter 6:8-60 – Stephen's ministry and death.

a) Performed miracles and preached the historic nature of the progressive development of the gospel from Jew to Gentile.

**b) 6:8-7:1, He is arrested [Jewish leaders continue to be jealous (Acts 5:17) and obsess with maintaining the same attitude that nailed Christ to the cross]. This is the 3rd of 4 times believers in Acts have stood before a Jewish court: 4:15, 5:27, and 22:30.**

I. **During ministry for Christ, not everything will go great every day. Satan is still our adversary.**

II. **When significant advancements are going to be made Satan seems to function more intense.**

c) Chapter 7:2-53, His message. Note three ideas in his message:

I. The progress and change in God's program, from Abraham to building a tabernacle.

II. God's blessings are not limited to Israel in the Promised Land and the temple.

III. Israel has always opposed God, so they are just like your fathers. (The problem of 400 years, 7:6, Gal 3:17, and Gen 15:13-16. Stephen could have simply used round numbers).

d) The Attack (Acts 7:54-60) - Jesus stands (Acts 7:55) when He is normally seated (Psalm 110:1; Romans 8:34, Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 3:1).

2. Saul was introduced as a persecutor of the church – Acts 8:1-3.

a) Paul was very aggressive and very brutal about his commitment to destroy the church, the 'new Way.' (Acts 9:2)

- b) He seems to have the same attitude as the Jewish leaders who lock Peter and John in jail (Acts 5:17-42).
- c) Change is hard, and when challenged, people can become very vicious.
- d) Satan would do his best to create resistance outside and inside the church (Acts 5:1-11; 20:29-31).
- e) This led to the scattering of the church.

**3. Acts 8:1b-40 -- The ministry of Philip:**

- a) Even though the church was scattered, it did not break the spirit of the leaders (there seemed to be a determination never to walk away from Christ ever again, something predicted by Gamaliel – Acts 5:33-39).
- b) As Gamaliel predicted, if the church is persecuted, they become even more fervent in preaching the gospel (Acts 5:33-39; Acts 8:4).
- c) Philip became the key proclaimer of the gospel message in Samaria (the Samaritan revival; seems to still be ripe from the impact Christ made; John 4:7-38) before the apostles came to Samaria (Acts 8:14); upon their arrival, Peter assumed leadership once more (Acts 8:14-24).

- Even though the Jewish leaders and Paul thought they were accomplishing much by persecuting the church Christ was “working things out for His good.” (Romans 8:28) The church was now in Samaria, based on Acts 1:8.
- When we are committed to executing the will of God, and people do evil, and we keep obeying God, “He works it out for His good.”
- Note that this began with the persecution of the church. Simon, the magician, became envious and wanted the gift of miracles (Ryrie suggests that he never accepted Christ). The arrival of Peter and John and the bestowing of the Holy Spirit was God's confirming to the lead Apostles, the fulfillment of Acts 1:8.

d) 8:26-40 The Ethiopian Eunuch. It occurred in Gaza. He was a Jewish proselyte.

- Note the sovereign guiding of God in this story. Even though the Apostles are faithful to obey Christ, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, it is the Holy Spirit directing the expansion of the church. This was predicted from Genesis 12:1-3. Christ extended God's plan (John 1:11-13; Luke 19:10) because "God so loved the world." (John 3:16)

4. To the world (John 3:16; Acts 1:8) - There is a transition taking place from Peter to Paul. Now that the disciples have gone from Jerusalem to Samaria, Paul continues the development of Acts 1:8 to the rest of the world.

5. Paul's conversion and ministry development (Acts 9:1-31):

a) Paul's conversion (Acts 9:1-9). There were witnesses (Acts 9:7).

b) The introduction of Paul to the disciples:

- The Lord called Ananias to go to Paul. He was a respected prophet who can confirm Paul's call.

- Before the disciples in Jerusalem, Barnabas introduces Paul.

c) Paul wasted no time engaging in sharing the gospel in Damascus (Acts 9:19-25).

d) Paul, after being confirmed before the disciples in Jerusalem, immediately began sharing the gospel with the Hellenistic Jews; he would be the best (He was taught by the best, Gamaliel; Acts 22:3) to get this done as a Pharisee of Pharisees (Philippians 3:5).

6. As the transition continues (Peter to Paul), Peter raises Dorcas back to life by the power of the Holy Spirit, vividly demonstrating how powerfully God was working through as the Lord builds His church upon this rock (Matthew 16:13-20).

a) Peter, after getting the vision to go to Cornelius's house, was then prepared to guide the Apostles and elders in Acts 15 to approve of Paul going to the Gentiles.