

FORERUNNERS OF THE FAITH

Lesson 2



FROM PENTECOST TO PATMOS

The Apostolic Age

- The book of Acts is the first book of church history ever written. It describes events that occurred during the Apostolic Age, and was written by Luke.
- It covers roughly the first thirty years of Christian history, from about AD 30–62.

Key Verse: Acts 1:8

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

The Apostolic Age

- Acts features the advance of the gospel through the preaching of the Apostles, especially Peter and Paul.
- The disciples were transformed into courageous preachers by both the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Apostolic Age

- The word “apostle” means sent one or ambassador.
- The title “Apostles of Jesus Christ” refers to a specific group of men personally appointed by the Lord. They saw the risen Christ with their own eyes, and were able to perform miracles.

The Apostolic Age

An Apostle of Jesus Christ had to be:

1. an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22; 10:39–41; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7–8)
2. directly appointed by Jesus Christ (Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:2, 24; 10:41; Gal. 1:1)
3. able to confirm his mission and message with miraculous signs (Matt. 10:1–2; Acts 1:5–8; 2:43; 4:33; 5:12; 8:14; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3–4)

The Apostolic Age

- The Apostle John was the last surviving apostle. When he died around 100, the apostolic age ended.
- No one after John has met the qualifications to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul said he was the last to see the risen Christ (1 Cor. 15:8).

Pentecost

- In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promised He would build His church. That promise was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2.
- The year was AD 30.

Key Events before Pentecost

- ~ 4 BC – The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem
- 4 BC– The death of Herod the Great
- ~ AD 8 – Jesus travels to the Temple as a 12-year-old (Luke 2:41–52)

Key Events before Pentecost

- ~ AD 26 – Jesus begins His earthly ministry at about thirty years of age (cf. Luke 3:23)
- AD 30 – (March/April) Crucifixion and Resurrection
- AD 30 – (May/June) Pentecost (celebrated 50 days after Passover)

Pentecost

- Jesus' followers (about 120 people) gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem (Acts 1)
- They were waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost

- Many Jewish pilgrims from around the Roman Empire traveled to Jerusalem for the feast. They came from places where Hebrew or Aramaic were not their native languages.
- The gift of tongues demonstrated the gospel was to be preached to all peoples.

Pentecost

- The Apostle Peter preached a powerful gospel sermon to the crowds that gathered.
- Some 3,000 souls were added to the church that day. They expressed faith in Christ, repented, and were baptized as a symbol of their commitment to Him.

After Pentecost (AD 30–32)

- The Apostles continue to preach while persecution escalates (Acts 3–5).
- Stephen is ordained, arrested, tried, and martyred (Acts 6–7). Martyr means “witness.”
- These events likely take place within the first two years of the church’s existence.

After Stephen's Death (~ 32)

- The gospel also goes to Samaria (Acts 8:4 ff) and to Ethiopia (Acts 8:26ff).
- Saul continues to persecute the church, heading to Damascus to find Christians there (Acts 9). “Saul” is Paul’s Hebrew name. “Paul” is his Greek name.

After Stephen's Death (~ 32)

- Saul's persecution efforts against the church led to Christians scattering throughout the Roman Empire. They took the gospel with them.
- Some went north to Syrian Antioch, where they planted a church that Saul would later co-pastor with Barnabas.

Saul as a New Believer

- According to Galatians 1 and 2, Saul was converted 17 years before the Jerusalem Council (which occurred about AD 49).
- After his conversion, Saul spent three years in Arabia learning from the Lord (Gal. 1:16–18).

Saul as a New Believer

- Saul returned to Damascus to preach; eventually being forced to flee from Damascus (Acts 9:23–25).
- He came publicly to Jerusalem, but the believers were afraid of him (Acts 9:26). This likely took place around AD 37.

Saul as a New Believer

- Saul was again persecuted by the Jewish leaders, and the church sent him to Caesarea.
- After spending time in Caesarea (where Philip had also gone in Acts 8:40), Saul returned to his hometown of Tarsus.



Cornelius

After showing him a vision of unclean animals (Lev. 11), God sent Peter to Caesarea to preach the gospel to a Gentile man named Cornelius (Acts 10).

The Gospel to the Gentiles

- According to Acts 11, the gospel was taken throughout the Roman Empire by Jewish Christians who were scattered after the persecution of Stephen (Acts 11:19).
- A large number of Gentiles came to Christ (Acts 11:21) in Antioch, probably in the early 40s.

The Gospel to the Gentiles

- The apostles heard about it and sent Barnabas to pastor a primarily Gentile church in Antioch (around the year 42).
- Under Barnabas's ministry, many more came to Christ (Acts 11:23–24). He then sought Saul in Tarsus to come help.

The Gospel to the Gentiles

- Around AD 45, Saul ministered with Barnabas for a full year in Antioch (Acts 11:26), before raising support for the church in Jerusalem due to a coming famine (Acts 11:27–30).
- After going to Jerusalem and returning to Antioch, they departed on their first missionary journey (Acts 11:30; 12:25).

First Missionary Journey (AD 47-49)

- Cyprus (Acts 13:4–12); Saul called “Paul.”
- Perga – John Mark leaves (Acts 13:13)
- Psidian Antioch (13:13–52)
- Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 14:1–18)
- Return to Syrian Antioch (14:19–28)

First Missionary Journey (A.D. 47-49)



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Acts 13:38–39

Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. (NKJV)

Acts 13:38 39

- Paul preached the good news that his listeners could be forgiven of their sin and justified (or declared righteous) in the eyes of God.
- This salvation was available, not through the Mosaic Law, but through faith alone in the resurrected Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

Acts 15:1, 5

Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” . . . But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.”



The Jerusalem Council (49)

Acts 15

Acts 15:7–11

After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; →

Acts 15:7-11

and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.”

Jerusalem Council

- As Peter reiterated, the hearts of both Jewish and Gentile people are cleansed by faith (v. 9), according to the grace of the Lord Jesus (v. 11).
- Under the leadership of James, the brother of Jesus, the council affirmed the true gospel. The Law of Moses is not necessary for salvation.

Second Missionary Journey (50–52)

- Paul travels with Silas and Timothy (15:36–16:10)
- Philippi (16:11–40)
- Thessalonica (17:1–9)
- Berea (17:10–15)
- Athens (17:16–34)
- Corinth (18:1–17)
- Return to Syrian Antioch (18:18–22)

Second Missionary Journey (50–52)

- In each city, Paul would start by preaching in the synagogue, demonstrating that Jesus is the Messiah from the Old Testament.
- He would then shift his focus to preaching the gospel to the Gentiles in that city.

Second Missionary Journey (A.D. 50-52)



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Third Missionary Journey (AD 53–56)

- Ephesus (Acts 19) – impact on Asia Minor
- Various places in Macedonia (20:1–6)
- Troas (20:7–12)
- Miletus with the Ephesian elders (20:13–38)
- Journey to Jerusalem (21:1–16)

Third Missionary Journey (A.D. 53-56)



Thessalonica

Philippi

Berea

Troas

Ephesus

Lystra

Antioch

Corinth

Miletus

Tyre

Caesarea

Jerusalem

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Paul's Arrest (AD 56–62)

- Paul arrested in Jerusalem (21:17–23:10)
- Paul transported to Caesarea (23:11–35)
- Paul on trial before Felix (24:1–27)
- Two years pass according to Acts 24:27

Paul's Arrest (AD 56–62)

- Paul on trial before Festus (25:1–12)
- Paul before Herod Agrippa II (25:13–26:32)
- Paul's journey to Rome (27:1–28:15)
- House arrest in Rome for at least two years (28:16–31)

Paul's Journey to Rome (~ A.D. 59)



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After Paul's Release

- Paul's "Fourth Missionary Journey" (AD 62–66) IS based on references in the pastorals that do not fit with Acts:
 - Troas and Miletus (2 Tim. 4:13, 20)
 - Crete (Titus 1:5)
 - Spain (Romans 15:23–24)

After Paul's Release

- Paul writes his “Pastoral Epistles” to Timothy (pastor at Ephesus) and Titus (church planter on Crete) (AD 62–66).
- Peter writes his epistles to encourage suffering believers and to warn of false teachers in the church. Jude is also written around this time.

Nero's Persecution (64–68)

- A great fire started in Rome on the night of July 18/early morning of July 19, 64.
- According to the historian Tacitus (56–117), the fire burned for five days, destroying or damaging ten of Rome's fourteen districts.

Nero's Persecution (64 –68)

- When rumors began to circulate that Nero may have been behind the fire, the emperor shifted blame to the Christians.
- He then began to persecute them violently. This persecution provides the historical context for 2 Timothy, 1 & 2 Peter, and Hebrews.

Nero's Persecution (64 –68)

- Paul was imprisoned a second time (67/68) and executed (prior to Nero's death in 68).
- Mark wrote down the “memoirs of Peter,” sometime before Peter was also executed under Nero (prior to 68).

Fall of Jerusalem(70)

- Anti-Roman Zealots had occupied Jerusalem since the year 66.
- The Roman army, lead by future emperor Titus, besieged the city in 70 and after several skirmishes successfully took the Antonia Fortress, from which the rest of the city was quickly subdued.

Fall of Jerusalem(70)

- In the process of the fighting the Temple was burned to the ground.
- After regaining control of the city (on September 7, 70), the Romans pursued those rebels who had fled.
- Masada, the final Zealot stronghold, fell in 73.

Fall of Jerusalem(70)

- The apostles seem to have left Jerusalem before these events took place.
- According to tradition, the Jerusalem church fled to Pella (in the region controlled by Herod Agrippa II) prior to the Roman siege of the city.

The Writings of John

- At some point (probably in the mid 60s), John moved from Jerusalem to Ephesus, where Timothy was pastoring.
- It may have been the deaths of Peter and Paul that motivated John to come to Asia Minor and help give oversight to those churches.

The Writings of John

- John likely wrote his three letters and his gospel in the 80s. The book of Revelation was written in the mid 90s.
- Persecution under Domitian (AD 81–96) resulted in John's exile to the Isle of Patmos (in the mid-90s) from Ephesus.

The Writings of John

- The first three chapters of Revelation give valuable insights into the state of the church in the last decade of the first century.
- According to church tradition, John died a natural death (back in Ephesus) during the reign of Trajan, sometime after AD 98.

The End of an Era

- With the death of the Apostle John, the apostolic age came to an end.
- In subsequent generations, the church is led not by apostles, but by elders and deacons (cf. 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1) who rely on the apostle's teachings as recorded in Scripture.

The End of an Era

- During the Apostolic Age, the foundation of the church was laid (cf. Eph. 2:20) and the canon of the New Testament closed—since only the apostles had the authority to write or oversee the writing of Scripture (cf. John 14:25–26; 16:12–15).

The End of an Era

- As the book of Acts demonstrates, the gospel had gone forth in power, from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the Roman world.
- Every generation since the apostles is also called to be faithful witnesses to Christ in fulfillment of His Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20).

Acts 1:8

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How should we emulate the courage and conviction of the Church apostles and servants in our lives today?
2. Read 2 Cor 11:23-29 – written during 2nd missionary journey. What stands out to you about the sacrifices Paul was willing to make for the sake of Christ?
3. In Revelation 2-3, there are 7 churches mentioned. Some were faithful and some were not. What you identify as the primary marks of a faithful church?

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