

## **Review**

Acts is about everything Jesus continued to do through his apostles and the church to make Himself known to the world after he left to go be with the Father.

The twelve disciples were witnesses to Jesus's life, miracles, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension to heaven.

They were also witnesses to two messengers of God who told them that Jesus will return.

Jesus is with the Father in heaven.

God sent the Holy Spirit to help the apostles and the church be witnesses of Jesus by telling everyone everything that Jesus did, to the ends of the earth.

The Holy Spirit came upon them like fire as they were gathered together, and only the apostles had the ability to see it.

The apostle Peter shared with them the things he saw Jesus do, and told them to turn from sin and to turn back to God.

Peter told them if they turned from sin and turned to God, and were baptized in the name of Jesus, they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter told them that this promise is to everyone the Lord calls.

About 3,000 people received Peter's word, were baptized, and were added as members of the body of Christ.

The church met together daily for teaching, fellowship, eating/communion, and prayer.

The Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to perform miracles and signs, so fear of the Lord came upon everyone who saw it.

All the believers were always together, and they used everything they had to advance the Kingdom of God.

They shared everything they had, and gave to anyone who had need.

The apostles and the church had favor with all the people, and the Lord saved people daily and the church grew.

The Holy Spirit allowed the apostles to perform miracles in order to demonstrate God's power in order to turn people to Himself.

Both the Jews and the Gentiles believed that God was only the God of Israel.

God performed miracles through the apostles to show that He was not only the God of Israel, but that He is the God of all who believe in His Son, Jesus.

He healed a lame man because the man did not deny Jesus as the Jews did (Acts 3:12-16), showing that God is the God of anyone who believes that Jesus is His Son.

### **Background from Jesus's Ministry**

If you recall in the Gospels, the Jews greatly opposed Jesus because they did not believe that He was the Messiah or that He was the Son of God, and He claimed to be both.

They believed Jesus was a false prophet who was leading Jews away from their Jewish faith, and it was threatening to them.

One reason they thought this was because they believed the Messiah was going to come as a political, military leader, sent by God to restore Israel and set them free from their Roman oppressors.

However, Jesus did not come as a political military leader to set Israel free from Rome, but as a King to set all people free from the bondage of sin so they can be forgiven and reconciled to God, and live as a part of His Kingdom.

The Jews also did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah because He was ministering not only to the Jews, but to everyone including the Gentiles.

Rome was the enemy of the Jews, and they believed the Messiah was going to use physical force, or war, to defeat Rome.

After Rome was defeated, the Messiah would reign as king over a restored kingdom of Israel. This restored kingdom of Israel would be comprised of all the Jews of the Babylonian exile.

Because of this, they believed the Messiah was for Israel alone, not also for the Gentiles. So they did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah because He was healing, performing miracles and offering forgiveness to all people, including their enemies, such as Roman soldiers, Samaritans, and Gentiles of all sorts.

The Jews did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God because they believed they alone were God's people, yet Jesus ministered to all people, not only the Jews.

Because they believed they alone were God's people, Jews thought they were better than Gentiles, and they looked down upon them as "filthy sinners" and treated them badly.

However, Jesus ate with sinners and many of His healings and miracles were for Gentiles.

Jesus's claim that He was the Messiah and the Son of God irritated the Jews, and hatred towards Him escalated to the point where they wanted to kill Him. They rejected His claims, and therefore they rejected Him as their King.

They killed the Son of God thinking they would put an end to Him and His message, but what they did not realize is that killing Jesus was part of God's plan of salvation for all people, and that no matter what they did to Jesus, the Gospel would not be stopped.

#### Read Acts 4

Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five the evening

And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name." So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in

them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.' "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 4:1-37

## **Overview**

### **Acts 4**

Like Jesus, many of the Jews opposed the apostles because they taught about Jesus and were healing in His name.

Verse 2 says the Jewish leaders were "greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead".

Many of the Jews rejected Jesus as their King, including the Sadducees who were a Jewish sect that did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, and therefore they did not believe that Jesus was raised from the dead.

The Jews arrested Jesus's apostles, Peter and John, and threatened them not to teach or speak about Jesus. This was the beginning of the persecution against the church.

However, the apostles did not stop sharing about Jesus and the church continued to grow.

## **The Deaths of the Apostles**

- James the son of Zebedee - the first apostle killed. Killed by the sword by King Herod in Jerusalem about AD 44 - Acts 12:2

- Philip - crucified and stoned in Hierapolis in AD 54
- Matthew- beheaded in Ethiopia in AD 60
- James, son of Alphaeus - stoned in Jerusalem or Syria in AD 63
- Peter- crucified upside down in Rome in AD 69
- Andrew- crucified in Patras in AD 70
- Judas/ Thaddeus- executed with arrows or a javelin in Armenia in AD 70
- Bartholomew/ Nathanael- flaying and crucifixion (head down) in Armenia in AD 70
- Thomas- thrown into an oven and speared in India in AD 70
- Simon the Zealot- crucified upside down then sawn in-half in AD 74
- John- though not dying a martyrs death, his life displayed a martyrs qualities of great suffering and persecution. Tradition has it that John escaped being put to death on several occasions, such as the time that he was scheduled to be boiled to death in oil, but God intervened. He died quietly in Ephesus in AD 98.
- Judas Iscariot- committed suicide after betraying Jesus.
- Matthias - stoned to death in Jerusalem in AD 70.
- Paul - beheaded in Rome in AD 69.

### **Other Members of the Early Church**




- John the Baptist - beheaded by King Herod in Jerusalem in about AD 30.
- Stephen - stoned to death in Jerusalem in AD 34 - Acts 6:8-7:60.
- Mark - dragged to death on the cobblestone streets of Alexandria in AD 64.
- Luke - hung in Greece in AD 93.

 What do you like about this passage?

 What is challenging about this passage?

 What does the passage teach about God?

 What does the passage teach about people?

   Pray and ask God:

How can I obey?

Who can I share with?

Listen for God and if you hear anything, do it immediately, otherwise you might not. This is I.R.C.O., Immediate, Radical, Costly Obedience. Tell someone your commitment and have them hold you accountable.