Lesson 12– The Early Church

Text – Acts 1-28

Main Characters – Peter, Paul, Philip, Stephen, Barnabas, Cornelius

Theme Verses
- Acts 1:8 – Jesus tells his apostles they will be his witnesses first in Jerusalem, Judea & Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.
- Acts 2:38—Forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in Jesus for the first time.
- Acts 2:42-47 – Shows us what the Christians were doing after receiving the gospel
- Acts 8:1-4 – Persecution arose in Jerusalem with the stoning of Stephen, and the disciples left and preached the gospel in Samaria and other areas.
- Acts 10: 45-48– The first Gentiles are baptized into Jesus Christ. (Cornelius and his house). The gospel has now and will continue to go to the uttermost parts of the world.

Transition from the Life of Christ to the Early Church

The book of Acts begins by telling us how many days Jesus was on earth after having been raised from the dead and what he was doing during that time (Acts 1:3). After being on earth for 40 days after his resurrection, Jesus ascended back into Heaven (Luke 24:50 & Acts 1:4-11). Jesus had previously promised his apostles that they would receive the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-49 & Acts 1:4-5). They received this in Acts 2 and from then on preached the gospel throughout the world.

Main Storyline

Before Jesus ascended into heaven he told his apostles that they would be his witnesses beginning in Jerusalem, then throughout Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the world (Acts 1:8). They were witnesses of his resurrection and they testified to this many times in the book of Acts. The message these apostles delivered was very simple: Jesus was killed, but God raised him from the dead, that forgiveness of sins can only be found in his name, and to therefore repent and be baptized (Acts 2:32-38). Those who obeyed this message became the church (Acts 2:41). The book of Acts shows the apostles and prophets preaching this message throughout the world.

A deeper observation in this part of the story is seeing the gospel of Jesus Christ spread from Jerusalem to the ends of the world. The apostles preach the gospel first in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5ff). The gospel then spreads to Samaria (Acts 8:1-4) after Stephen is stoned in Jerusalem (Acts 7) and the people scatter due to the persecution. The gospel spreads to the Gentiles in Acts 10 with the conversion of Cornelius. Much of the remainder of the book is Paul going and preaching to the Gentiles (Acts 13-28).

Transition to Letters to the Christians

The churches that we see Paul start and attempt to establish in the book of Acts (specifically chapters 13-20) are the recipients of many of the letters to the Christians. We have a letter to the Philippians, a church he started in Acts 16. We have a letter to the Thessalonians, a church that began in Acts 17. The letters were sent to teach, encourage and rebuke those who had received the gospel of Christ.