BIBLE TOPICS · NEW TESTAMENT

The Church Is Created

From Pentecost to Rome · Acts 1–28

120 Believers
In the upper room

Pentecost
About A.D. 30

3,000
Baptized the first day

Rome
The gospel reaches the capital

ACTS 1–11

The Birth of the Church in Nine Scenes

The first eleven chapters of Acts move in nine scenes, from the ascension to the first Gentile believers.

1

The Promise and the Ascension

Jesus gives His mission and is taken up into heaven.

ACTS 1:1–11

2

Waiting and Praying

About 120 believers pray, and Matthias takes Judas' place.

ACTS 1:12–26

3

Pentecost: Wind and Fire

The Holy Spirit comes, and the crowd hears God praised in their own languages.

ACTS 2:1–13

4

Peter Preaches

The man who denied Jesus boldly preaches the risen Christ; 3,000 believe.

ACTS 2:14–41

5

The Believers Together

Teaching, fellowship, meals and prayer, and the Lord adds to them daily.

ACTS 2:42–47

6

Boldness Under Pressure

A lame man walks, the apostles are arrested, and the church prays for courage.

ACTS 3–5

7

Stephen and the Scattering

Stephen is martyred, and the gospel reaches Samaria and Africa.

ACTS 6–8

8

Saul Meets Jesus

The church's fiercest enemy becomes its greatest missionary.

ACTS 9:1–31

9

The Door Opens to the Gentiles

Cornelius believes, and disciples are first called Christians.

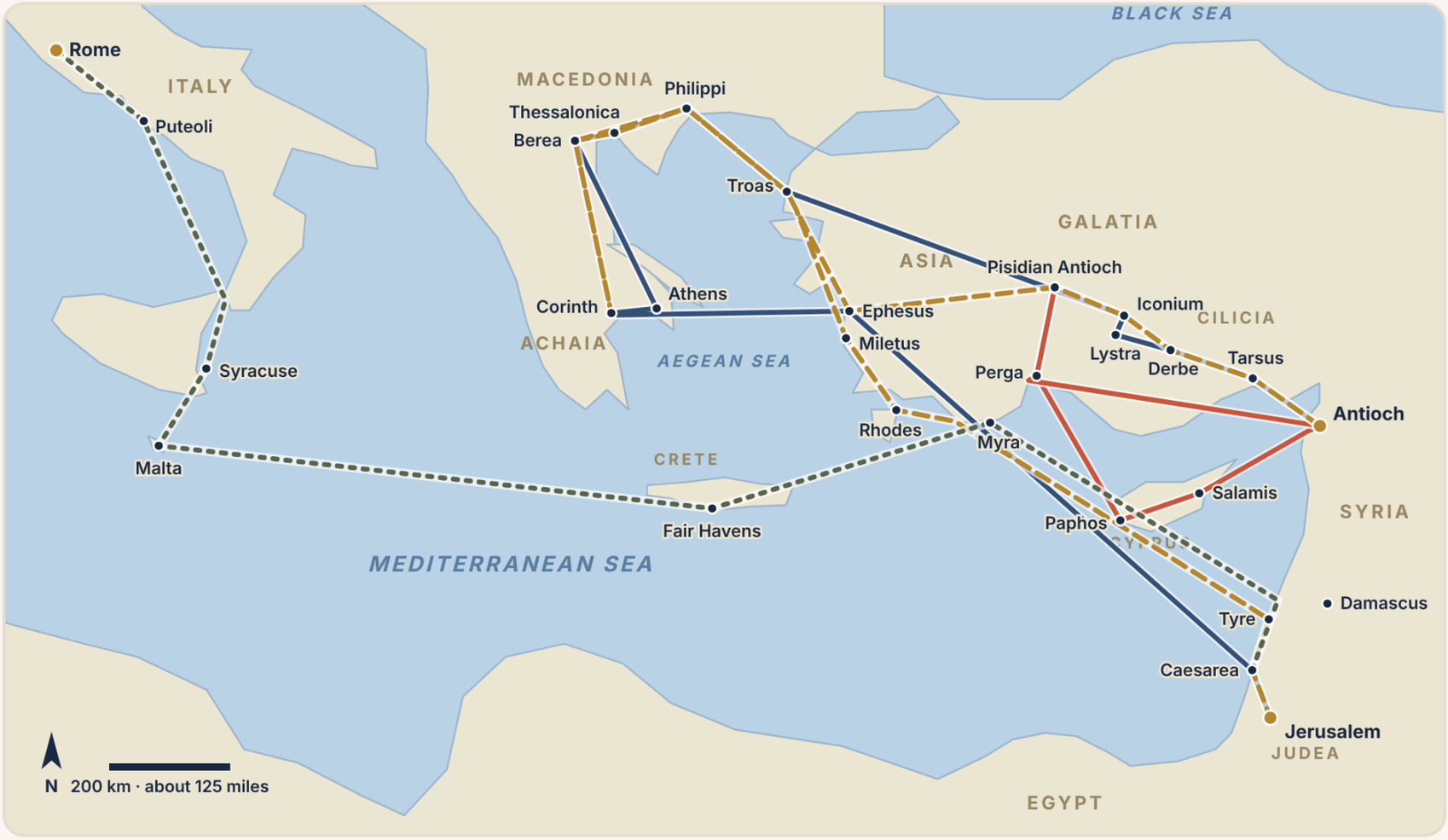
ACTS 10–11

KEY VERSE

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Acts 2:42 (KJV)

To the Ends of the Earth



First journey
c. A.D. 46–48 · Acts 13–14

Second journey
c. A.D. 49–52 · Acts 15:36–18:22

Third journey
c. A.D. 53–57 · Acts 18:23–21:16

Voyage to Rome
c. A.D. 59–60 · Acts 27–28

BibleStudyForAll.com · Acts 13–28 (KJV)

Four Marks and Six Pictures

ACTS 2:42

Four Marks of the First Church

Luke sums up the life of the new church in one verse. These four habits are still the heartbeat of a healthy church today.

1

The Apostles' Doctrine

They learned what Jesus taught and what the Scriptures said about Him.

2

Fellowship

They shared life and goods, "and had all things common" (Acts 2:44).

3

Breaking of Bread

They ate together and remembered Jesus at the Lord's Supper.

4

Prayers

They prayed together, in the temple and in homes (Acts 2:46; 4:24–31).

ACTS 2:9–11

Who Heard Peter at Pentecost

Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and people from Mesopotamia, Judæa, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Rome, Crete and Arabia. From the first day the church was international, and many of these visitors carried the news home with them.

THE CHURCH IN THE BIBLE

Six Pictures of the Church

The New Testament uses several pictures to describe the church. Each shows something of what it means to belong to Christ's people.

A BODY

Members of Christ

Christ is the Head; every believer has a gift to use for the others.

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

1 CORINTHIANS 12:27

A BUILDING

Living Stones

Built on the apostles and prophets, with Jesus the chief corner stone.

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house"

1 PETER 2:5

A BRIDE

Loved by Christ

Loved, cleansed, and waiting for the wedding at His return.

"Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it"

EPHESIANS 5:25

A FAMILY

The Household of God

Brothers and sisters with one Father.

"fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God"

EPHESIANS 2:19

A FLOCK

One Shepherd

Jesus knows His sheep and gave His life for them.

"and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

JOHN 10:16

BRANCHES

Joined to the Vine

Life and fruit come from staying joined to Jesus.

"I am the vine, ye are the branches"

JOHN 15:5

A Timeline of Acts

ABOUT A.D. 30–62

A Timeline of Acts

Acts covers about thirty years. Events such as the death of Herod Agrippa (A.D. 44) and Gallio’s term in Corinth (about A.D. 51–52) let us place the story in history.

c. A.D. 30

Ascension and Pentecost

The Spirit comes and about 3,000 are baptized.

ACTS 1–2

c. 30–33

The Church in Jerusalem

Healing at the temple gate; the apostles before the council; seven chosen.

ACTS 3–6

c. 33–34

Stephen and the Scattering

Stephen is stoned; Philip preaches in Samaria.

ACTS 7–8

c. 34

Saul Meets Jesus

On the Damascus road the persecutor becomes an apostle.

ACTS 9

c. 37–40

Cornelius

The Spirit falls on a Gentile household.

ACTS 10–11

c. 40–44

Antioch and Herod

Disciples first called Christians; James killed, Peter freed.

ACTS 11–12

c. 46–48

Paul’s First Journey

Barnabas and Paul sent out to Cyprus and Galatia.

ACTS 13–14

c. 49

The Jerusalem Council

Gentiles are saved by grace, not by keeping the law of Moses.

ACTS 15

c. 49–52

Paul’s Second Journey

The gospel crosses into Europe.

ACTS 15:36–18:22

c. 53–57

Paul’s Third Journey

Three years in Ephesus; Macedonia and Greece again.

ACTS 18:23–21:16

c. 57–59

Arrest and Trials

Paul seized in the temple and held two years at Caesarea.

ACTS 21–26

c. 60–62

Paul in Rome

After a shipwreck on Malta, Paul preaches two years in Rome.

ACTS 27–28

Dates are approximate and follow this site’s dating of Jesus’ ministry (about A.D. 27–30), with Pentecost in A.D. 30.

Key Places and the Church and Jesus

WHERE IT HAPPENED

Key Places in the Story of the Church

Ten cities where the church took root, in the order they appear in Acts.

JERUSALEM

Where It Began

Pentecost, the first church, and the council.

ACTS 2; 15

SAMARIA

Old Enemies Believe

Philip preaches, and Samaritans believe.

ACTS 8:5–25

DAMASCUS

Saul Meets Jesus

Saul is baptized and preaches Christ.

ACTS 9:1–25

CAESAREA

The First Gentiles

Cornelius and his household believe.

ACTS 10

ANTIOCH

Called Christians

The base of the mission to the world.

ACTS 11:19–26; 13:1–3

PHILIPPI

First Church in Europe

Lydia and the jailer believe.

ACTS 16

ATHENS

Paul on Mars' Hill

Paul preaches about "the unknown god."

ACTS 17:16–34

CORINTH

Eighteen Months

Paul teaches the word of God there.

ACTS 18

EPHESUS

Three Years

Daily teaching, and a city in uproar.

ACTS 19

ROME

No Man Forbidding Him

Paul preaches in the capital of the empire.

ACTS 28

THE CENTER OF IT ALL

The Church and Jesus

The church exists because of Jesus and for Jesus. He promised it, bought it, sends His Spirit to it, rules it as its Head, and is coming back for it.

He Builds It

"upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

MATTHEW 16:18

He Sends the Comforter

"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever"

JOHN 14:16

He Feels Its Pain

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

ACTS 9:4

He Bought It

"to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood."

ACTS 20:28

He Is the Head

"And He is the head of the body, the church"

COLOSSIANS 1:18

He Is Coming for It

"for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready."

REVELATION 19:7

Lessons for Today

FOR TODAY

Five Things to Remember

The story of the early church is not only history. Here is what it calls every believer to remember and do.

1

The Spirit Came

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit filled the believers and the church was born.

ACTS 2:1–4

2

Jesus Is Lord

The apostles preached the crucified and risen Jesus as Lord and Christ.

ACTS 2:36

3

Repent and Believe

Forgiveness and the Spirit are offered to all who turn to Christ.

ACTS 2:38–39

4

Devoted Together

Teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper and prayer marked the church.

ACTS 2:42

5

Sent to the World

From Jerusalem to Rome, the gospel is for every nation.

ACTS 1:8; 28:31

6

Not Forsaking the Assembling

Christians belong together in a local church.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is"

HEBREWS 10:25

THINK ABOUT IT

Questions for Reflection

Why did Jesus tell the disciples to wait for the Spirit before they began (Acts 1:4–8)? What changed Peter from a man who denied Jesus into a bold preacher? Which of the four marks in Acts 2:42 does your church do well, and which could grow? When the believers were threatened, they prayed for boldness, not safety (Acts 4:29): what would it look like to pray that way about a hard thing you face?

KEY THEMES

Six Themes of the Early Church

These six truths run through the whole story of the church in Acts.

1

The Spirit Gives Power

The church began when the Holy Ghost came, not by human plans.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you"

ACTS 1:8

2

Jesus Is Risen

The resurrection was the center of every sermon in Acts.

"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."

ACTS 2:32

3

Salvation in One Name

Jesus is the only way to be saved.

"for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

ACTS 4:12

4

A Praying People

They prayed before Pentecost and after it.

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication"

ACTS 1:14

5

One Family

Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles are made one in Christ.

"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons"

ACTS 10:34

6

Nothing Stops the Word

Persecution only spread the gospel further.

"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."

ACTS 8:4