

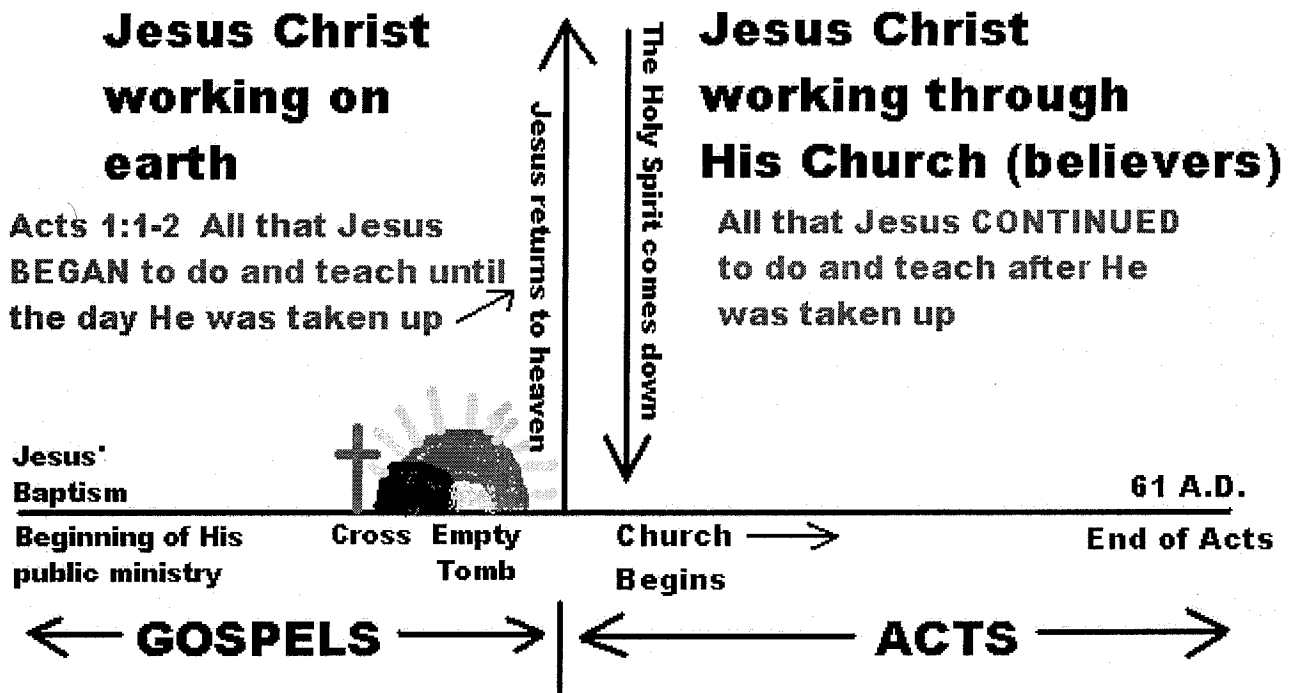
CHAPTER 4

Proclaiming the Risen Lord (Acts)

After the four gospels comes a fifth book in the New Testament which is called **Acts** or the **Acts of the Apostles**. This book was written by the same man who wrote the Gospel of Luke. See Colossians 4:14--"L _____, the beloved P _____."

This book, like the four Gospels, is a history book. However, the Gospels cover a period of about three and a half years (from Jesus' baptism to His death, resurrection and ascension), while the book of Acts covers a period of about 30 years (from the beginning or birth of the church to when Paul arrived in Rome as a prisoner about 61 A.D.).

This can be illustrated in the sketch below:



The **Acts of the Apostles** could also be called the **Acts of Jesus Christ** because it was actually the risen Christ who was working and acting in and through His chosen apostles. Read carefully Mark 16:19-20. What happened to Jesus according to Mark 16:19?

_____ Jesus was in heaven, but was He still working and acting (see Mark 16:20)? _____ In Matthew 28:19 Jesus told His apostles to "go and **teach** (make disciples of) all nations." Would the disciples have to do this work all by themselves (Matthew 28:20)? _____

Yes, Jesus Christ is working and acting today! But to do His work, He needs willing hands and mouths and tongues and feet and minds because today **He works through people**, just like He worked through Peter, Stephen, Philip and Paul. Are you letting the living Lord work through you (see Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 13:21)?

As we read the book of Acts we must remember that the risen Christ is working in and through believers by the power of the Holy Spirit!

In Acts 1:4 Jesus told the Apostles not to go anywhere and not to do anything but just to W_____ for the promise of the Father. They were to just **sit still** and **wait** for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

In John's gospel, quickly look through chapters 14,15 and 16 and see if you can find verses where God promises to send the Holy Spirit (the Comforter):

John 14, verses _____

John 15, verses _____

John 16, verses _____

Without the Holy Spirit, there would be no POWER to live for Jesus and to be His witnesses (see Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8). Trying to do the work of God without the Holy Spirit is like trying to drive a car without gas or trying to run a battery operated toy without the batteries! It's impossible! You must have the energy and power or you will go nowhere and accomplish nothing! How much can believers accomplish without the Lord (John 15:5)? _____

Finally, on the day of Pentecost (which was ten days after Jesus went back to heaven) the Holy Spirit came and the church was born. You can read about the coming of the Spirit in Acts chapter two. God came to live in His believers and to give them the POWER that they needed to show the world that Christ was alive!

As soon as the church was born, it began to grow! How do the following verses show the growth of the early church? [The first verse is done for you.]

Acts 2:41 Three thousand souls were added in one day. _____

Acts 2:47 _____

Acts 4:4 _____

Acts 5:14 _____

Acts 6:7 _____

Acts 11:21 _____

Acts 12:24 _____

Acts 16:5 _____

Acts 19:20 _____

Why was the early church so healthy? What was its secret of success? Why did the church prosper and grow and increase in number, even in the midst of great persecution and trouble?

As we read and study the book of Acts, we find that there were at least three things that made the early Christians strong:

- A. They were men and women of prayer.
- B. They were fed and taught the Word of God.
- C. They boldly preached the Word of God and told others about the Lord.

Before each of the following verses, place the proper letter or letters from the three things mentioned above. The first three are already done for you:

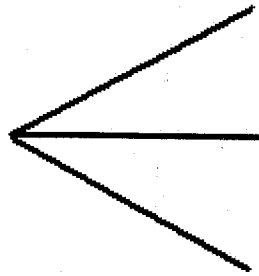
- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| <u> A </u> Acts 1:14 | _____ Acts 11:20 |
| <u> A </u> Acts 1:24 | _____ Acts 12:5,12 |
| <u> A, B </u> Acts 2:42 | _____ Acts 13:3 |
| _____ Acts 3:1 | _____ Acts 14:7 |
| _____ Acts 3:12 and following | _____ Acts 16:25 |
| _____ Acts 4:2 | _____ Acts 16:32 |
| _____ Acts 4:8 and following | _____ Acts 18:28 |
| _____ Acts 4:18-20 | _____ Acts 20:20 |
| _____ Acts 4:24 and following | _____ Acts 20:27 |
| _____ Acts 4:29 | _____ Acts 20:28 |
| _____ Acts 5:28-29 | _____ Acts 20:32 |
| _____ Acts 5:42 | _____ Acts 20:36 |
| _____ Acts 6:4 | _____ Acts 28:31 |
| _____ Acts 6:6 | |
| _____ Acts 7:59-60 | |
| _____ Acts 8:4 | |
| _____ Acts 8:35 | |
| _____ Acts 9:20,27 | |

**How can you be a healthy believer?
How can your church be a healthy church?**

As already mentioned, this book is called the Acts of the Apostles. In the first twelve chapters (Acts 1-12), the Apostle Peter is the main character that you read about. In the remaining part of the book (Acts 13-28), the Apostle Paul is the main character. Peter had a special ministry to the Jews (the circumcision) and Paul had a special ministry to the Gentiles (the uncircumcision)-- See Galatians 2:7-8.

PETER

(Matthew 16:19-
-"keys"are for
opening doors)

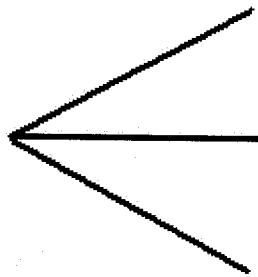


Peter opens the door of
faith to the Jews (Acts 2)

Peter opens the door of
faith to the Samaritans
(Acts 8:14-25)

Peter opens the door of
faith to the Gentiles (Acts
10:25-48)

ACTS 1-12

PAUL

Paul's first missionary
journey
(Acts 13-14)

Paul's second missionary
journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)

Paul's third missionary
journey (Acts 18:23-21:14)

ACTS 13-28

To understand the movement of the book of Acts, you need to understand the difference between Jews, Gentiles and Samaritans. Jews are those people who have descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Gentiles are those people who have not. Samaritans were a mixed race (half-Jew and half-Gentile) which came about earlier in Israel's history when some of the Jews living in Samaria intermarried with heathen or Gentile people.

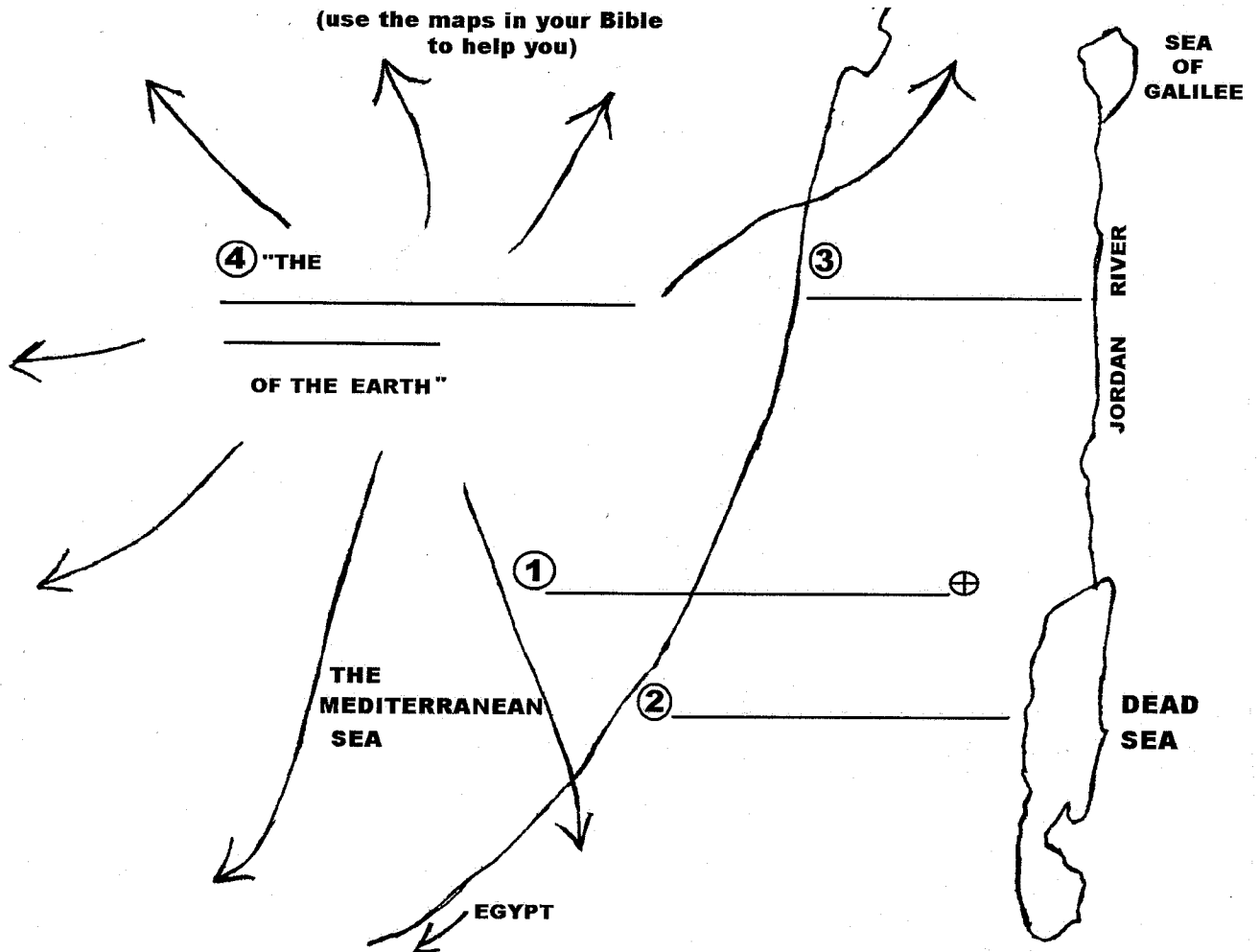
The key verse in the book of Acts is Acts 1:8. This verse also gives us an outline of the book:

The Forward Progress of the Gospel to all Nations

Before the Lord Jesus went back to heaven, He gave His disciples a brief, one-verse outline of His new program in which He would B _____ (Matthew 16:18) His Church and call out a P _____ (Acts 15:14) for His Name. This verse is found in **Acts 1:8** and could be called "The Book of Acts in a Nutshell." In this verse Christ taught that His W _____ would be

1. IN JERUSALEM--the starting point (see Luke 24:49)
(ACTS 2-ACTS 7)
2. IN ALL JUDAEA--the home of the JEWS
(ACTS 8:1-4)
3. IN SAMARIA--the home of the SAMARITANS
(ACTS 8:5-25)
4. UNTO THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH--the home of the GENTILES
(ACTS 8:26-ACTS 28)

To help you to better understand Acts 1:8, please complete the following map by taking the place names found in Acts 1:8 and placing them on the map below: (You may use the maps in your Bible to help you.)



When the church first began (Acts 2) it was made up of Jewish believers (compare Acts 2:5). Today the church is made up mostly of saved Gentiles. There are some saved Jews in the church today, but not many when compared with the vast number of saved Gentiles. How did this great change take place? How did the Jewish membership become less and less and the Gentile membership become more and more? The book of Acts explains how this happened. See for example Acts 13:46-47; 18:6; 28:28.

What was the great message that the early Christians believed in and preached and were even willing to die for (see Acts 2:24; 2:32; 3:15; 3:26; 4:2; 4:10; 4:33; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30; 13:33; 17:18; 17:31; 26:23; etc.)?

Today we too are **witnesses** (Acts 1:8) of the resurrection of Christ. How can we show the world that we have a living Lord? How can others see that we serve a risen Saviour? How can I prove to my friends and neighbors that Jesus Christ is alive today? To answer these questions, consider the following verses:

1. Romans 6:4,5,11,13
2. Galatians 2:20
3. 2 Corinthians 4:8-11
4. 2 Corinthians 5:15
5. Hebrews 13:20-21

Do we sometimes live and act as if Christ were dead and as if there were no Holy Spirit living within us? If the Holy Spirit were suddenly to leave the earth for a few days, would we notice any difference? Do we have the same joy and enthusiasm and boldness and love for the Lord that the early church had? Is there a difference between the churches described in the book of Acts and the churches today? (even the Bible believing churches of today?)

