

# Week 1

## A New Dispensation/The Jerusalem Church

The Gospel of Luke joins with the other three gospels to give us an account of the life and ministry of Jesus, while he walked the earth. However, in this second book of Luke, The Acts of the Apostles, he shows us the continuation of Jesus' life in and through the power of His Holy Spirit and the life of the church. The gospel account was only the beginning of Jesus' ministry; His story is one without end.

At the end of Matthew's gospel, Jesus promised his apostles and disciples that he would be with them, "... *always, even to the end of the age.*" (Mt. 28:20) As we follow the story in the first seven chapters of the book, Acts shows us how Jesus continues to lead his apostles after his return to Heaven. Thus, a new dispensation begins. Although Jesus will no longer lead His disciples with His physical presence among them, He leads them spiritually.

Jesus begins by giving some last-minute instructions that the disciples must follow if they are to receive the power, He has promised them. During his ministry, Jesus told them He would one day go away and send them, a gift, the Holy Spirit, "the Comforter", who would guide them into all truth (John 16:13). However, the receiving of the gift was always contingent on obedience.

Before leaving, Jesus instilled a great hope into His disciples – He promised to return to them, in person. They didn't understand that it was in His return, His second coming, that he would fully restore the kingdom of God with a new heaven and a new earth. Jesus knew his disciples were too focused on the return of an earthly kingdom, one that would overthrow the Romans and restore Israel's rightful place in the world, as God's chosen.

They shouldn't be faulted for their focus on the restoration of an earthly kingdom, after all, it's prophesied throughout the scriptures. As good Jews, they grew up with such thoughts of restoration ingrained within them; it was the Jewish understanding of the world as it should be. Yet, Jesus makes it clear that they are not to focus on the timing of such a physical restoration. They are to focus on being His witnesses, no matter the cost.

The Greek word for witness is 'martyria', from which we get the English word 'martyr'. The witness for Christ is to be His witness in thought, word, and deed, even if it meant to lay down his or her life. It is just such a passionate commitment to the gospel that would in time turn the world upside down. In time, such witnessing would prove out, as all but one of the twelve apostles, and many other disciples, would face a martyr's death, in the ensuing decades of the first Christian century.

This new dispensation was unlike anything the world had ever seen. Such commitment changed the world, as the church won multitudes to Christ with the gospel message of transformation,

preached in the power of the Spirit, spread to all the known world, just as Jesus said it would. The power of the gospel to change the world is still possible today; it's possible in every generation that will embrace the truth of Jesus, and His message of transforming grace. The great question is... will we? Will we be the church that stands on the truth of the Word, that loves with the unconditional love of God, that believes in the blood of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit, to not only save the soul of the sinner, but to transform the lives of lost and broken people into those who find wholeness in Christ.

## I. A NEW DISPENSATION BEGINS

### A. JESUS COMMISSIONS THE DISCIPLES (1:1-11)

1. The Reaffirmation of the Promise & The Charge (1:1-5)
2. The Re-orientation to the Kingdom Principle (1:6-8)
3. The Ascension and Predicted Return (1:9-11)

### B. THE 12-FOLD APOSTLESHIP IS RE-ESTABLISHED (1:12-26)

1. The Apostles and Disciples Gather in Jerusalem (1:12-14)
2. Peter Takes the Leadership to Choose a Replacement for Judas (1:15-26)
  - a. The Apostacy of Judas Fulfilled Scripture (1:15-20)
  - b. The Criteria for a New Apostle (1:21,22)
  - c. The Electoral Process (1:23-26)

## II. THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM (2-8:3)

### A. THE CHURCH IS BORN IN POWER & AUTHORITY (2:1-11)

1. The Day of Pentecost
  - a. The Coming of the Holy Spirit (2:1-4a)
  - b. The Tongues of Fire (2:4b-11)
  - c. The People React (2:12-13)
2. The First Christian Sermon (2:14-36)
  - a. Pentecost: Joel 2 Fulfilled (2:14-21)
  - b. Pentecost: Christ's Work/The Plan of God (2:22-36)
3. The First Evangelistic Harvest (2:37-41)
  - a. Hearts Pierced (2:37-40)
  - b. 3000 Saved and Baptized (2:41)

### B. THE NEW CHURCH BEGINS (2:42-47)

1. The Unity & Practice of the Church (2:42-47)

- a. Devotion to Teaching & Sacrament
- b. Sense of Awe
- c. Unity

2. The Favor of God (2:47)

- a. The Lord of the Harvest

