

BACK TO THE BIBLE

30 Days To Understanding
The Bible





PART FOUR

There are 4 main divisions in the Gospel Era:

1. Early Life
2. Early Ministry
3. Later Life
4. Death and Resurrection

EARLY LIFE: Childhood to Baptism.

Through miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit, Jesus is born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea.

After a brief excursion into Egypt to save Him from Herod's attempt on His life, Jesus travels with Mary and her husband Joseph to live in Nazareth.

There He learns the trade of carpentry and apparently lives a fairly normal life from childhood to the time of His baptism, when He is thirty years old.

His cousin, John the Baptist, is ministering and baptizing people in the Jordan River near the Dead Sea. After Jesus is baptized by John, a remarkable event takes place.

God the Father is heard speaking from heaven, saying, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,*” and the Holy Spirit, in the visible form of a dove, descends on Him.

EARLY MINISTRY: Initial Acceptance.

After Jesus' baptism and temptation He begins His public ministry. His message has a two-fold focus.

First, He is predicted Messiah, or as the word is translated in the New Testament, the CHRIST, and the people should believe in Him.

Second, He challenges the people to live a life of genuine righteousness, not the external hypocrisy of the religious leaders.

He validates His message by performing astounding miracles, and the signs of initial acceptance by the crowds are encouraging.

Much of this early activity takes place around Jerusalem.

LATER MINISTRY: Growing Rejection.

Jesus' initial popularity does not last. The religious leaders are profoundly jealous of Him and begin stirring up animosity toward Him.

This growing rejection results in a progression in Jesus' ministry pattern.

He begins to focus more attention on the mounting opposition from the religious leaders, warning them of the seriousness of their attitude.

At the same time, He begins setting aside more time for the twelve disciples whom He has chosen, preparing them to carry on without Him.

He also begins challenging the multitude to count the cost of following Him.

Though Jesus travels quite a bit during this time, His home base is Capernaum, on the north bank of the Sea of Galilee.

DEATH AND RESURRECTION:

Final Rejection.

The Jewish people become more polarized about Jesus, either following him enthusiastically or resenting Him deeply.

In the volatile atmosphere of the festival time of the Passover when Jesus and many other Jewish people are in Jerusalem, the religious leaders are finally able to stir up enthusiasm for Jesus' crucifixion.

They subject Him to a series of mock trials on false charges. Then Jesus is crucified on Friday, buried that night, and rises again from the dead on Sunday, after being in the tomb for three days.

LET'S REVIEW

The 4 Main Divisions in the Gospel Era

Division:

1. Early Life:

2. Early Ministry:

3. Later Life:

4. Death and Resurrection:

Description:

Childhood to Baptism.

Initial Acceptance.

Growing Rejection.

Final Rejection.

There are 4 major subjects in the Church

Era:

1. Creation
2. Growth
3. Persecution
4. Transition

CREATION:

Birth of the Church (Acts 1-5)

The birthplace of the church is
Jerusalem.

After His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus instructs His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they receive the power of the Holy Spirit and then to be witnesses to Him in Jerusalem (their city), Judea and Samaria (the surrounding provinces), and the remotest part of the earth (the rest of the world).

Then Jesus ascends into heaven right before their eyes. Shortly after, on the Jewish feast day of Pentacost, the Holy Spirit comes upon Jesus' disciples.

While they are gathered in a house, a sound like a violent rushing wind fills the place and flames of fire rest on each disciple, and they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

They begin speaking in different foreign languages, with the result that many of the Jewish people from different parts of the world hear them speak in their own languages.

This and other notable miracles associated with the birth of the church take place in the early days as the number of converts to Christianity increases rapidly in Jerusalem.

GROWTH:

Organization of the Church. (Acts 6)

As the number of converts increases, some measures are taken for the organization of the church, giving structure to their activities and responsibilities.

Peter organizes a relief effort for needy Christians.

Those who have possessions can sell them and give money to the apostles, who distribute it according to the needs.

Then deacons are chosen to look after the material needs of the church while the apostles attend to the spiritual needs.

PERSECUTION: The first Christian martyr. (Acts 7)

Stephen, one of the early preachers, is arrested by the Jewish leaders for preaching about Jesus.

When he does not recant his message but presses it further, the Jewish people stone him to death on the spot, making Stephen the first Christian martyr.

This incident kicks off a round of persecution against new Christians that is so severe many of them have to flee Jerusalem for their lives.

As they do, they take the message of the gospel with them to the surrounding provinces of Judea and Samaria.

TRANSITION:

A missionary to the Gentiles.

(Acts 8-12)

A zealous Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, looks after the cloaks of those who stone Stephen.

Shortly after, he is journeying to Damascus to find and persecute other Christians when Jesus appears to him from heaven, and Saul is converted to Christianity.

Jesus changes Saul's name to Paul, and he becomes known as the apostle Paul.

Jesus expressly tells Paul that he will become a missionary to the Gentiles.

Shortly after, the apostle Peter has a vision in which the Lord tells him that the message of the gospel is to be taken to the Gentiles also.

This marks a transition in the nature of the church because, up to this time, the message has been circulated exclusively to the Jews.

LET'S REVIEW

4 Major Subjects in the **Church Era**

Subject:

1. **Creation:**

2. **Growth:**

Description:

Birth of the Church.

Organization of the Church.

LET'S REVIEW

4 Major Subjects in the Church Era

Subject:

3. Persecution:

4. Transition:

Description:

The first Christian martyr.

A Missionary to the Gentiles.

There are 4 major subjects in the
Missions Era:

1. **First Missionary Journey**
2. **Second Missionary Journey**
3. **Third Missionary Journey**
4. **Trials and Imprisonment**

FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY:

Galatia for two years. (Acts 13-14)

In Paul's first missionary journey, he and Barnabas are selected by the Holy Spirit to travel to Galatia and take the gospel to Gentiles living there.

They depart from Antioch, the point of departure for all three missionary journeys, and are in Galatia for two years, experiencing encouraging results.

After they return to Jerusalem, a council is held amid much controversy, which determines the Gentiles do not have to become Jewish in addition to becoming Christians.

SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY:

Greece for three years. (Acts 15-17)

Paul leaves Antioch to visit the believers from his first journey. However, he receives a vision of a man in Macedonia (Greece) and changes his plans, going to Greece with the gospel message for the Gentiles there for three years.

THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY:

Asia for four years. (Acts 18-21)

Paul leaves to encourage the believers from his first two trips to spread the message of the gospel into Asia.

He has great success and great opposition.

In Ephesus, the whole city breaks out in riot over his visit.

Though Paul is warned that he will be imprisoned upon his return to Jerusalem, he returns anyway after being in Asia for four years, and is immediately arrested.

TRIALS AND IMPRISONMENT:

Roman prison for two years. (Acts 22-28)

Jewish leaders in Jerusalem have Paul arrested on false charges.

Since his life is threatened there, even under guard, he is moved to Caesarea, the Roman capital in the area.

There, he is tried under three men: Felix, Fustus, and Agrippa.

In order to thwart a miscarriage of justice in the process, Paul exercises his right as a Roman citizen to take his case before Caesar in Rome.

He is taken to Rome, but his case never comes to trial.

After being in a Roman prison for two years, it is said he was beheaded (the established means of execution for a Roman citizen).

LET'S REVIEW

4 Major Subjects in the **Missions Era**

Subject:

1. **First
Missionary
Journey:**

2. **Second
Missionary
Journey:**

Description:

Galatia for two years.

Greece for three years.

LET'S REVIEW

4 Major Subjects in the Church Era

Subject:

3. Third
Missionary
Journey:

4. Trials and
Imprisonment:

Description:

Asia for four years.

Roman prison for two years.