



Old Testament Reading – Daniel 12:1-4

New Testament Reading – Acts 1:1-11

The Church Triumphant “The Spread of the Gospel”

Acts 1:1-11

In less than 100 years, the gospel of Jesus’ birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension spread from the city of Jerusalem, to Judea, Samaria, and, against severe persecution and martyrdom, throughout the whole Roman Empire.

- From there it spread to Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and the British Isles, and from there to America, the Orient; including East, West, South, and Central Asia, China, Japan, Viet Nam, Thailand, Indonesia, Turkey, and even to Iran.
- While the initial spread of the gospel is attributed to the eleven disciples – Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, another James, and another Simon – with Jude having taken his own life, the main person responsible for getting the gospel to the Gentiles was the Apostle Paul and the few men he trained and equipped in understanding and sharing the gospel.

- Empowered by the Holy Spirit, these uneducated, uncultured, and unrefined men were able to overcome the barriers of race, culture, wealth, and false religions, and geography in their proclamation of the gospel.

These men faced many difficulties in fulfilling the great commission Jesus had given to them to spread the gospel to the whole world.

- Diverse cultures, people who believed in various false religions, with all kinds of evil practices.
- Resistance from the Jewish religious leaders who saw Jesus as a heretic and Christianity as a threat to their hold on the people.
- The Roman government, that saw Christianity as an insurrection, and therefore, a threat to their rule.
- Limited resources for their travel. They traveled by foot along roads and trails that were filled with bandits, thieves, and murderers. They also relied on the hospitality of strangers.
- Limited resources for their ministry. They only had their personal notes of the many things Jesus had taught about the new kingdom, and their memory of the parables He used to illustrate it.
- The systemic racial hatred that had existed between the Jews and Gentiles for centuries.

However, in the first century after Jesus ascended, Christianity spread from a small sect in the Roman Empire to Ancient Greece and Egypt.

- By the end of the 3rd century, there were 30 million Christians in the world, and by the end of the 4th century, 56.5% of the Roman population had received Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.
- Seeing the wide acceptance of Christianity and claiming to have been converted, Roman Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity in the Roman Empire.

1. **The Witness of the Disciples – Matthew 28:18-20**



While the devil fought against each one of them in various ways, God protected each one of them until they had finished the word He had sent them to do.

- Judas killed himself, John was boiled in oil and exiled, and the other ten were put to death because they proclaimed that Jesus was who He claimed to be, which we now know was the gospel truth.
- The final thing they all did to prove they truly believed in Jesus was to give their lives in defense of the gospel.
- By dying for their faith in Jesus, they were telling the world that Jesus was the God sent Savior. Their deaths put an exclamation point on their message of the gospel.

2. **The Witness of the Apostle Paul – Acts 9:10-16**



In Acts 7:58, Dr. Luke introduced to us a devout Jewish Religious leader named Saul.

- He was a Pharisee, a group of Jews who followed the law of Moses to the letter, and who saw Christianity as a threat to Judaism.
- Saul not only threatened those Jews who converted to Christianity, but he also sent many to be martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ.
- However, the Lord arrested Paul on the road to Damascus, convinced him that Jesus was who He claimed to be, and converted Saul from a persecutor of Christians to a man who proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole Roman Empire and beyond.
- In Acts 9:15, the Lord said to Ananias, ***“Paul is a chosen vessel of mine to bear My name before Gentiles, Kings, and the children of Israel.”***
- Paul traveled over 10,000 miles proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and established at least 14 churches.
- While Luke wrote more actual words, the Apostle Paul wrote 2/3rds of the New Testament, including the Book of Romans, to which theologians refer as the most critical theological Christian work ever written.
- In 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, Paul wrote: ***“I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night***

and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”

- And yet he remained resolute and steadfast in his mission.

3. **The Witness of the Church – Matthew 24:14 – “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”**

- Even with all of the advanced technology available to us today, there are more than 7,000 unreached people groups in the world, and these groups make up 40% of the world’s population.
- While Christianity is being rejected in the West, over 3-billion people in the world have yet to hear it, and have no access to it.

