

WEEK 47 — THE GOSPEL SPREADS

Date: roughly AD 44-53

The Story: God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, continues to spread the good news of Jesus to the world, further and further from Jerusalem. Persecution continues in Jerusalem, but so does the working of God's power. Written teachings begin to spread from key church leaders, beginning with James the brother of Jesus and the apostle Paul. Gentiles become a prominent part of the (previously all-Jewish) church, and tensions over their inclusion threaten the young faith. Yet the church continues to grow; Paul's first two missionary journeys exemplify the spread of the gospel, especially to Gentiles.

* Kids' readings may not align with the daily full readings. Parents, see the content ratings on the back page.

NOVEMBER 20 JAMES

Today's reading is a teaching letter from James, the younger brother of Jesus, to the church at large. Both the New Testament and later writings from the early church tell us he became a highly-respected leader in the Jerusalem church (he is the James of Acts 15:13 & 21:18, Galatians 2:12, etc.). His letter may be the earliest of the writings preserved in the New Testament; it is addressed "To the twelve tribes scattered among the nation," using Jewish language, suggesting that it was written while the church was still predominantly Jewish. James addresses a range of practical issues affecting everyday Christian attitudes and conduct.

Date: probably early-mid AD 40s

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: James 1-3 • James 5:13-20

Kids' Reading*: Acts 10

NOVEMBER 21 ACTS 12-14

Today's reading begins badly: James (brother of John, not of Jesus) is executed. He is the first apostle to be martyred. Peter is arrested and scheduled for execution, too. What will happen to him? Then Saul returns to the story. Going by his other name, Paul, he is sent out by the Holy Spirit and the Antioch church to do mission work with Barnabas, planting churches as they share the news of Jesus with Jews and Gentiles.

Date: probably in and after AD 44

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Acts 12:1 to 13:12 • Acts 14

Kids' Reading*: James 1:19 to 2:9 • James 2:14-19 • James 3:13-18 • James 5:13-20

NOVEMBER 22 GALATIANS 1-3

Today's reading is our earliest letter from the apostle Paul, probably written before the Jerusalem council of Acts 15. It deals with a very early and vital issue in the young church: Does a Gentile have to become a Jew in order to be accepted by God? Or is it enough to simply follow Jesus? The argument that all Christians must also be (or become) Jews is the "different gospel" Paul denounces in 1:6-9. As one who was specifically called by God to "preach [Jesus] among the Gentiles" (1:16), Paul presents arguments for full Gentile inclusion in the church—because all, both Jews and Gentiles, are justified before God by faith.

Date: probably AD 48 or 49

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Galatians 1-3

Kids' Reading*: Acts 12:1-24 • Acts 13:1-12

NOVEMBER 23 GALATIANS 4-6

Today's reading completes our reading of Galatians. This is some of Paul's most emotional writing in the New Testament. He argues that the old covenant God established at Mount Sinai is inferior to the new covenant that brings us freedom in Christ. He strongly urges the churches in the Roman province of Galatia not to preach that Gentiles must become Jews to be saved through Christ. In 5:13 to 6:10 he warns the church not to quarrel (including over this issue), but to manifest the traits that mark the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS — Summit View Church of Christ

Date: probably AD 48 or 49

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Galatians 4-6

Kids' Reading*: Galatians 1:11 to 2:16 • Galatians 5:22 to 6:10

NOVEMBER 24 ACTS 15-16

Today's reading opens with the issue of Gentile inclusion in the church being addressed by the apostles and elders in the Jerusalem church, where Jewish culture was so pervasive there it made acceptance of Gentile Christians especially difficult. Then Paul begins his second missionary journey—but with Silas as his partner instead of with Barnabas. They go to Philippi in Greece, where God delivers them through a great miracle.

Date: about AD 49-50

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Acts 15-16

Kids' Reading*: Acts 16:6-40

NOVEMBER 25 ACTS 17-18 • 1 THESSALONIANS 1-2

Today's reading continues Paul's second missionary journey as he ministers in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth—all in Greece—planting churches and enduring persecution. Paul has to leave Thessalonica very suddenly (Acts 17:10) because of persecution there; this rapid departure is the occasion for his first letter to the Thessalonian church (see 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18), probably written from Corinth in the time of Acts 18:1-18. He begins that letter with encouragement and affirmation of his love for the Thessalonians.

Date: about AD 50-53

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: Acts 17:1 to 18:18 • 1 Thessalonians 1-2

Kids' Reading*: Acts 17:10-34 • 1 Thessalonians 1

NOVEMBER 26 1 THESSALONIANS 3-5 • 2 THESSALONIANS

Today's reading begins with Paul's encouragement when he heard that the church in Thessalonica was doing well. Then it continues with instructions for godly living (1 Thessalonians 4:1-12) and teachings about Jesus' second coming (4:13 to 5:11). 2 Thessalonians, another letter from Paul to that church probably a few months after the first letter and probably while Paul was still in Corinth, also deals with Jesus' second coming; apparently someone had claimed that Jesus' second coming had already taken place (2:1-2).

Date: between AD 50 and 52

In a hurry? 10-minute reading: 1 Thessalonians 4-5 • 2 Thessalonians

Kids' Reading*: 1 Thessalonians 4:9 to 5:28 • 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18

Parents' Guide

PG preview for young children

Acts 12:1-4 (V), 19 (V), 23 (T)

Acts 13:10-11 (T), 28-29 (V), 34-37 (T)

Acts 14:5 (V), 19 (V)

Acts 15:1 (C), 5 (C), 20 (S, T), 29 (S, T)

Acts 16:3 (C), 19-24 (V), 27 (V), 37 (V)

Acts 17:5-6 (V)

Acts 18:6 (T), 17 (V)

Gal 1:8-9 (T)

Gal 2:3 (C), 7-9 (C), 12 (C), 20 (V)

Gal 3:1 (V), 13 (T, V)

Gal 4:15 (V), 19 (T)

Gal 5:2-3 (C), 6 (C), 11 (C), 15 (T, V)

Gal 6:12-15 (C, V), 17 (V)

1Thes 2:7 (S), 15 (V)

1Thes 4:3-5 (S), 13 (T)

1Thes 5:3 (T), 7 (T)

2Thes 1:6-9 (T)

2Thes 2:3-12 (T)

Jam 1:10-11 (T), 15 (T)

Jam 2:11 (S, V), 21 (V), 25 (S)

Jam 3:6 (T), 8 (T)

Jam 4:1-2 (T, V), 4 (S), 14 (T)

Jam 5:1-6 (T, V)

PG-13 preview for under age 13

Gal 5:12 (S, V), 19-21 (S, T, V)

R shocking, graphic, or disturbing

none

C = Circumcision

N = Nudity

S = Sexuality

T = Dark/Sensitive Themes

V = Violence