

TEACHER NOTES:



ADULT LEADER GUIDE 2

the failure
of the Church at Jerusalem



Bearing Precious Seed is a ministry of First Baptist Church of Milford, Ohio



INTRODUCTION

The Successful Beginning: What began in just a room soon spread to the city of Jerusalem, and then beyond that to the surrounding regions of Judaea. These believers were very active in telling those around them the Gospel; however, they seemed to fall into a one-mode aspect of their commission, focusing only on Jerusalem and Judaea. Through the avenue of persecution, God then scattered them to the rest of the areas where He had commanded them to go. These scattered believers bore the marks of Christ, the Spirit of God, a burning testimony, and were armed with what form of the Scriptures that were then available. Combined with persecution, this act caused the Word of God to grow and to be multiplied (Acts 12:24).

The Problem: It is amazing to read about what God did through 120 people. Can you imagine being a part of a service when 3,000 walk the aisle and accept Christ as their Savior? What about seeing a crippled man rise and walk? There was an unmistakable, genuine movement of God. What is surprising is in spite of such love and devotion that these saints showed for our Lord, they still had a seemingly glaring omission which limited their efforts to only reaching the Jewish people.

Jesus had instructed them in the beginning to target the “*house of Israel*” (Mt. 10:6; 15:24). His plan for them was to grow in their relationship with Him, and with the work of the Holy Ghost in their lives to go way beyond that. He changed this initial assignment of who they were to reach with the Gospel after He resurrected and was getting ready to ascend into heaven. He clearly told them who they were to reach. He said, “...*Go ye into **all** the world, and preach the gospel to **every** creature*” (Mk 16:15). He told them specifically in Acts 1:8 to evangelize “**Both**” in Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth, “**Both**” meaning *simultaneously*. While they were reaching their Jerusalem, it spread to Judaea.

Their reasons for stopping short of Samaria are not specifically portrayed for us in Scripture; however, there are some references that would lead us to a conclusion. Jesus, when going to the Samaritan woman at the well, was asked about His boldness in breaking the ethnic barrier to speak with her (Jn. 4:9-10). In Mt. 15:21-28, when dealing with a woman from Canaan whose daughter was demon possessed, Jesus made reference to the social view of the day. This being the opinion of the Jews that the Gentiles were as *dogs* (a deep cultural insult). Therefore, in spite of Jesus’

best efforts to adequately expose their attitudes, it is likely that those deep-seated prejudices caused the Jerusalem church to set their limits on how far they were willing to go for our Lord. They would surrender to anything in reaching their own people group, but they would not go any further (Acts 2:9-11, 14, 22, 36, 39; 3:12; 4:10; 6:7; 11:19).

The Propagation: It has been said for this reason that God brought about the strong [persecution](#) and scattered them in Acts 8:1. They would not fully obey and take the Gospel to everyone for whom Jesus died. He then caused them to do it. When Philip (Acts 8) and Peter (Acts 10), being directly sent by God, stepped outside of that realm and went to Gentiles also, the church legalists got upset with them (Acts 11:2-3). Acts 8:25 tells us how Peter, John, and Philip “*preached the word*” and “*preached the gospel*” in many villages of the Samaritans on their way back to Jerusalem. The [preaching](#) of the Gospel is necessary for salvation (Gospel tracts), but **the preaching of the Word of God is necessary to show that saved person how to live**. Literally, as the saved Jews were scattered to various lands, they took with them the Word of God available at that time. As a result, “*the word of God grew and multiplied*,” (Acts 12:24).

The Failure of the New Testament Church in Jerusalem

I. The [Shortcomings](#) of the Jerusalem church

In spite of all the amazing, unparalleled accomplishments of this church, even *they* seemed to have their limits as to how far they would allow God to take them. Let’s look at some of their shortcomings. By recognizing what was produced when they got out of balance in fulfilling the commission of the church, perhaps we can prevent that from happening in our own churches today.

A. [Disobedience](#) to Jesus’ last command to reach the world (Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:8).

1. Jesus told them to go into ALL the world and preach to EVERY creature.
2. They limited their attention to the Jews only (Acts 2:9-11, 14, 22, 36, 39; 3:12; 4:10; 6:7; 11:19).

B. Dishonesty in service (Acts 5:1-11).

1. Ananias and Sapphira’s actions could have been a failed attempt to imitate Barnabas’ sincere offering (Acts 4:36-37).
2. They were trying to APPEAR spiritual when they really weren’t.
3. They evidently promised God to give whatever the land sold for, and then didn’t.
4. God killed them (Acts 5:9-10).

C. [Disputing](#) over what should be the priority of the leadership (Acts 6:1-2).

1. The unity began to break down.
 2. The people began to murmur.
 3. The people began to second guess what the leadership was spending their time doing in the ministry. (Widows being neglected meant something else was being done instead.)
- D. Disapproved of the evangelization of Gentiles (Acts 11:2-3).

WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE ARE SITTING WHEN THEY SHOULD BE SERVING, PROBLEMS AMONGST THE BRETHREN WILL ALWAYS MANIFEST THEMSELVES.

1. The legalists disapproved of Peter having associated with Gentiles (Acts 11:3).
2. They did not want to accept that God would save a Gentile as well as a Jew (Acts 11:18).

II. The [Scattering](#) of the Jerusalem church (Acts 8:1)

(They did not FULLY obey their commission of Acts 1:8, and God sent them Acts 8:1) God scattered the church members, but the apostles stayed in Jerusalem. God gave them two direct examples to follow of His desire and ability to save the Gentiles also.

A. [Philip](#) went to the Gentiles.

1. Samaria (Acts 8:5-25)
2. Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39)
 - a. For him to be reached with the Gospel, it took BOTH the **messenger** and the **Message** (Acts 8:31).

B. [Peter](#) went to a Gentile in Caesarea named Cornelius (Acts 10:1-43).

1. Peter argued with God and had to see the vision three times for him to overcome those ethnic barriers he had been taught (Acts 10:28).
2. He learned that salvation was for ALL not just the Jews (Acts 10:34-35).

Both Philip and Peter were directly sent by God to reach beyond just the Jewish people. In spite of the results of both of their journeys, the church at Jerusalem was still reluctant to fully obey their commission.

III. The Scattering results - the Word of God [grew](#) and [multiplied](#) (Acts 12:24).

These scattered believers took with them God’s Word in whatever form was then available. God can use us *today* to multiply the Word of God by sending copies with the messengers we send to the field.