

Acts 064

Gentile Salvation

Part 9

Acts 11:15-16

January 29, 2025

Dr. Andy Woods

Let us take our Bibles this evening and open them to Acts 11:15. We are going to finish, Lord willing, this whole extended treatment in the Book of Acts. It is, obviously, something that God wants us to understand, because there is so much data here in these two chapters. We are going to complete the conversion of Cornelius, the first Gentile that gets saved—full-fledged Gentile in the church Age.

Cornelius's conversion took place in Caesarea. Peter, who really is the instrument that God used to lead Cornelius to Christ, has to travel from Caesarea to the church in Jerusalem. That is where the church leadership was at the time. He explained to them, "Yes, a Gentile really got saved."

Can you imagine that? The leadership of Christianity—this movement of believers sometimes called The Way—do not even think that a Gentile could get saved. Here Cornelius is led to Christ, and we have read all of the circumstances involved in that. Now Peter has to explain himself, really defend himself, before the Jerusalem leadership. "How dare you, a Jew, set foot in the home of a Gentile."

VII. Peter's Defense in Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-18)

A. Charge against Peter (1-3)

B. Peter's defense (4-17)

1. Peter's exposition (4)
2. Vision (5-6)
3. Command (7-10)
4. Gentiles arrive (11-12a)
5. Journey to Caesarea (12b)
6. Entrance into the house (12c)
7. Cornelius's salvation (13-14)
8. Evidence (15-16)
 - a) Spirit's baptism (15)
 - b) Acts 1:5 fulfilled (16)
9. Peter's conclusion (17)

C. The verdict (18)

That is where we find ourselves. Essentially what has happened is that Peter has gone to Jerusalem, charges have been issued against him (Acts 11:1-3) by the legalists in

church leadership (Acts 11:1-3). Peter is now defending himself (Acts 11:4-17). He is explaining what happened.

You read Acts 11, and it is like, "Why am I getting all this data again? Isn't all this data repeated? Why did Luke record it twice?" Because he records the events in Acts 10 of Cornelius's salvation, but then he records Peter's recounting of the story on how he led Cornelius to Christ.

You might say to yourself, "Acts 11 reads the exact same way as Acts 10." As I will try to show you tonight, we can praise the Lord that he told the story twice, because when the story is retold by Peter to the Jerusalem leadership in Acts 11, he adds some details which are absolutely critical to one's systematic theology.

A systematic theologian like myself loves these extra details, because the extra details allow you to piece together theological concepts that you could not do otherwise. These are in two areas: soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, and ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church. If this information had not been recounted with a few extra details thrown in, then we would be left in a state of confusion regarding salvation, as I will show you; and in ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church.

We come to Acts 11:15-16, where Peter is explaining to the Jerusalem leadership, "Here is the evidence of Cornelius's salvation. Here is what happened to him. What happened to him also happened to us Jews who got saved at the beginning." This is obviously the work of the Holy Spirit. If you deny the work of the Holy Spirit here, then you have to deny the work of the Holy Spirit related to how we came to Christ as Jews, primarily revolving around Acts 2, as I will show you.

What are the two pieces of evidence that Peter brings up? The first thing he brings up is the Holy Spirit's baptism in Acts 11:15. Notice Acts 11:15:

"And as I [Peter] began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them [the household of Cornelius] just as He did upon us at the beginning."

Most people would just read right over that, but that is a huge statement about the doctrine of salvation. The reason I say that is because if you have ever dealt with a Church of Christ person, they basically believe that faith alone in Christ alone is not enough to be saved. You have to be water baptized. You bring up the thief on the cross, and they have all these excuses that they use. "The thief on the cross did not have a choice," and all of these kinds of things.

You have to understand how these people think. I do not know what it is about me, but I am like a magnet for false teachers. When they see me at conferences they surround me, corner me at conferences, and throw Acts 2:38 at you. They will try to use this to say, "Faith alone in Christ alone is not enough; you have to be water baptized."

In Acts 2:38, you remember that Peter said to the first Jewish converts in the church Age,

"Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
(Acts 2:38)

When we were in Acts 2, I gave you a way to handle this. The preposition "eis" translated "for" can also be translated as "because of." If that is the case, it changes the whole meaning of that verse. That preposition "eis" is translated as "because of" elsewhere in Scripture. It is translated that way in Matthew 12:41, which says,

"The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented ["eis"] [because of] at the preaching of Jonah." (Matthew 12:41)

You see that "eis" is translated as "because of" in most English translations. Do that in Acts 2:38, and you will see the true meaning.

"Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [because of] the forgiveness of your sins.'" (Acts 2:38)

In other words, you are not getting baptized to get your sins forgiven; you are getting baptized because the Lord has already forgiven your sins. The whole meaning changes. That is how to handle the Church of Christ people. When they cry foul, which they will, because they do not think that is a legitimate translation, then you take them right to Acts 11:15, where it says,

"And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning." (Acts 11:15)

Whatever you are doing in Acts 2 has to line up with Acts 11. You cannot have a doctrine of "faith plus baptism equals salvation" in Acts 2, if that is not what is going on in Acts 11. Here Peter says, "What happened to Cornelius is what happened to us." Then it is a matter of trying to figure out how Cornelius was saved.

Was Cornelius saved through baptism? Not at all. Acts 10:43-44 tells you exactly how he was saved:

"Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name, everyone who believes in Him receives the forgiveness of sins. While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon those who were listening to the message." (Acts 10:43-44)

How did Cornelius and his household get saved? By fulfilling one condition: the condition was faith alone in Christ alone. There is nothing here about Cornelius getting

baptized; that comes with the convert later. There is nothing here about Cornelius repenting of all of his sins—they will throw that one at you, frequently. "You are not saved unless you renounce all of your sins," which is nothing more than a work when you think about it. How do you renounce all your sins and repent of all your sins? How long does that have to last for? What about the sins you cannot remember?

The Lord does not require conversion through repentance of sins, because through the works of the Law, no man will be justified (Galatians 2:16). The Lord only requires conversion through fulfilling a single verb—to believe. Therefore I am completely justified in doing what I did to Acts 2:38. I came up with a legitimate interpretation of Acts 2:38, which harmonizes with Acts 11, because Acts 11 indicates that there is no record that Cornelius repented of all of his sins to be justified.

People confuse birth and growth constantly. Surely the Lord will deal with Cornelius and his sins, not in the birth stage of salvation, but in the growth stage, which is progressive sanctification, which is later. We are not talking about that; we are talking about how someone comes to Christ.

Cornelius did not come to Christ through "faith plus baptism." He did not come to Christ through "faith plus repenting of all of his sins." He came to Christ through faith alone. Period. There was one condition that he fulfilled. Since Peter himself says he was "saved like we were," I am completely justified in interpreting Acts 2:38 through the lens of "because of" and not "for."

"Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [because of] the forgiveness of your sins.'" (Acts 2:38)

In fact, that kind of interpretation is preferable because that makes it consistent with Acts 11. The Church of Christ people have probably never even heard this argument. They have got some interpretation of "faith plus baptism," which goes against Acts 11. You cannot do that because, as Peter said, "Cornelius was saved like we were from the beginning."

If Peter had not said that, then I would be in some trouble with the church of Christ people trying to answer them, but because Peter did say that, I point out to them that my interpretation of Acts 2 harmonizes with Acts 11 and theirs does not. It needs to, because Peter said, "He was saved like we were."

You might have been reading this chapter saying, "I wish this information was not here all over again," but Acts 11:15 is a gold mine when it comes to the doctrine of salvation. Almost everybody I know of that teaches "faith plus works equals justification" loves Acts 2. There is some ambiguity in Acts 2, but whatever interpretive scheme you are coming up with must harmonize with Acts 11. Thank You, Lord, for including Peter's recounting of this, because I would have a big gap in my systematic theology without it.

I think this is the kind of thing the Lord was speaking of when He said, "until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law." You might be reading something in the Bible that looks redundant, but carefully ask yourself why God put it there. I am convinced one of the reasons God put Acts 11 there, although it is redundant, is to fill in the missing piece. It is like if you put puzzles together, and is it not frustrating when you have a missing piece? That is always irritating, especially to OCD people like myself. You have to find the missing piece. There is the missing piece right there in Acts 11. Plug it right in there and the puzzle is complete.

Let me give you one other place where this is going to happen: the second Jerusalem Council. What we are reading about here is the first one—can a Gentile get saved? That is what they are trying to figure out. The second one people mistakenly call the first one—everybody says the Jerusalem Council is in Acts 15, but no, the second Jerusalem Council is in Acts 15, this is the first one in Acts 11. The issue in Acts 15 is: Does a Gentile have to submit to the Law of Moses to join the church?

When we get over there, we are going to read these words in Acts 15:11:

"But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

In Acts 15, the point is going to be made that these Gentiles came to Christ the exact same way we Jews came to Christ in Acts 2. In Acts 15, it is pure salvation by faith alone; therefore, whatever interpretation you are coming up with in Acts 2, it must be by faith alone, or else you have an internal contradiction in the Scripture. Tuck that into your memory banks there, Acts 11:15 and Acts 15:11.

In fact, you might even add that to your prayer time. Lord, thank you for Acts 11:15 and Acts 15:11, because this fills out my doctrine of salvation. Praise the Lord. We have got a lot of things to be thankful for, right? Sometimes we do not know what blessings to praise the Lord for, but that is one of them.

It gets better. There is another piece of the puzzle that comes together here, because now Peter explains that when Cornelius got saved, it reminded him of his own salvation—not really his own salvation, but the salvation recorded in Acts 2 of Peter preaching the sermon. It reminded him that when those people got saved in Acts 2, it was the fulfillment of something the Lord said a chapter earlier before He ascended. When you put this together, it fills out your doctrine of the church.

Now we are not dealing with soteriology, we are dealing with ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church. One of the most contentious issues in the theological warfare that goes on in Christendom: When did the church start? There is no chapter in the Bible that says, "The church is starting now." You have to reason together with different strands of evidence.

*"It says it is the glory of God to conceal a matter,
But the glory of kings to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2).*

There are some truths that I believe God will put a little under the surface, so you have to do a little digging. The Bible student that is more diligent, God rewards their diligence with certain insights. This is one of them right here. We are going to learn exactly when the church started. You say, "Who cares when the church started?" It is a big deal.

If you were sitting in a reformed church right now and I was, let us say, a Presbyterian or Lutheran pastor or something like that, I would probably tell you the church started with Abraham. Some push it back even further and say, the church started with Adam; the moment he got out of the garden and had his clothes on, the church started. They say the church is all the people of God. That is what you call Reformed Theology.

Once you get your arguments down against Reformed Theology from the left, all of a sudden you get hit from the right. This happened to me by a group of people I did not even know existed, who also have schools and theological journals and have written volumes and they are called hyper-Dispensationalists, mid-Acts Dispensationalists. They will tell you that the church did not start in Acts 2, but the church started with Paul. They do not even agree among themselves completely, but somewhere in Paul. Some would say it started in Acts 9 when Paul got saved. Others would say it started in Acts 13 when Paul went on his first missionary journey.

Others, like a commentator named Bollinger—who has some beautiful insights and figures of speech in the Old Testament, and all kinds of things that he wrote about 100 years ago, and was what you would call a hyper-hyper-Dispensationalist—will say, the church did not start until Acts 28 when Paul was thrown in prison and penned the message of the mystery of the church in the Book of Ephesians for the first time. There are different schools of thought amongst hyper-Dispensationalists, sometimes called Mid-Acts Dispensationalists.

What they are trying to say is that the church did not start in Acts 2 like we believe, but it started sometime in the writings of Paul. When they want to join the church, the issues get very sticky because they will say things like, "We believe in communion, but we do not believe in water baptism." "Why do you believe in communion but not water baptism?" "We think the church started with Paul." Everything else beforehand was what they call a Jewish church, not a church that changed ethnicity the way we teach—not the same church, but a different church.

They say, "Paul was not a baptizer. He said things like, 'Some of you remember who I baptized, but Paul practiced communion.'" When they go to sign a paper at Sugar Land Bible Church that says, "We believe in the ordinances of baptism and communion," they say, "We do not believe in baptism, but we do believe in communion." Now, why would someone say that? Because there are mid-Acts Dispensationalists and they think the church started with Paul.

By the way, they are very nice people; I am just trying to explain the practicality of understanding exactly when the church started. Reformed Theology teaches that the church is in the Old Testament. Those are the folks coming at you from the left. Once you figure them out, all of a sudden you get sideswiped by the right, that you did not even know was there. They will tell you the church started with Paul.

We do not believe the church started with Paul. Man does not start the dispensations—God starts them. Paul explained what God started, but that is not the same thing as saying Paul started the church. So when did the church start? There is a key piece of data in your theological jigsaw puzzle that is missing until you plug it in. It is right there in Acts 11:16, as Peter is explaining himself to the Jerusalem leadership concerning Cornelius's salvation.

After explaining that the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius "just like He did upon us at the beginning," then Peter says to the Jerusalem leadership:

"And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 11:16).

When Cornelius got saved and Paul saw the Holy Spirit fall upon Cornelius, he remembered what the Lord had told them before He ascended in Acts 1:5:

"...but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Peter says Cornelius's conversion reminded him of the Lord's promise in Acts 1, and then he makes the point that the same thing that happened to Cornelius, happened to us. In other words, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which I am going to explain in just a minute, had to take place sometime after Acts 1, because the Lord told Peter, *"You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."* (Acts 1:5)

It had to take place sometime after Acts 1, but before Acts 11, because in Acts 11 he says, "When I watched Cornelius get saved, it reminded me of what happened to us at the beginning. I remembered the Lord's promise, 'You will be baptized by the Holy Spirit.'" The baptism of the Holy Spirit, as I will show you, is the ministry that the Lord started; it is to men and women who have trusted in the Messiah—that Israel rejected—for personal salvation. The moment they place their faith in Messiah, the Holy Spirit takes them and connects them to the body of Christ in a nanosecond. Without that ministry, you have no church. All you have to do is to figure out when that ministry started.

If you can figure out when that ministry started, then you can anchor down the birthday of the church. You will not be pulled into Reformed Theology, which says the church has always been; neither will you be pulled into hyper-Dispensationalism, which says the church started with Paul. The baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit had to start after Acts 1, but before Acts 11. I would never know that if I did not have Acts 11:16 in my

Bible. I would have a big piece of my jigsaw puzzle in the doctrine of ecclesiology missing.

Here is what Peter remembered when he saw Cornelius get saved in Acts 10: he remembered the Lord's promise. Before He ascended, the Lord said to Peter,

"For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5).

"I remembered that promise when I saw Cornelius get saved. What happened to him happened to us at the beginning."

This baptism of the Holy Spirit has to happen sometime after Acts 1 and before Acts 11. As I will show you, the only place it fits is Acts 2. You study through those chapters, Acts 1-11, and you will see the only place that this baptism in the Holy Spirit can fit logically and historically is in Acts 2.

Acts 2:4, describing what happened on the day of Pentecost, says,

"And they were filled with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:4)

That is what happened to the apostles; that is when the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit started. Peter, on that same day, gets up and preaches the opening sermon on the Day of Pentecost—the beginning of the church Age—and about 3,000 people were saved (Acts 2:37-41). In other words, the Holy Spirit, after identifying the apostles with the body of Christ, took about 3,000 people who had trusted in Christ and connected them with this New Man called the Body of Christ.

That is what Jesus said is coming (Acts 1), and that is what Peter says already happened (Acts 11). "What happened to Cornelius happened to us from the beginning." "I remembered what the Lord had promised in Acts 1."

With that in mind, let me give you six arguments why the church started in Acts 2. It is going to build on statements we have already made. Why do we believe the church started in Acts 2? Do we believe the church started in Acts 2 because the pastor told me? That is how most people think, unfortunately. "If the pastor says it, it must be true; so I believe it is true." You have to go a little deeper in your Christianity than that. If there is someone with the gift of gab that can talk you into something, eventually you are going to run into somebody with a greater gift of gab, who is going to talk you out of what the first guy talked you into, unless you know what the Word of God says on this subject.

The first reason why the church started in Acts 2 is because Jesus referred to the church in the future tense in Matthew 16:18. Here it is clear that Israel is going to reject their King for a season. In the midst of all of that, Jesus makes a statement up north in Caesarea Philippi:

"I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church." (Matthew 16:18)

The rock is not Peter, because "rock" and "Peter" in Greek are two different words. Peter, "petros" is a masculine noun—little rock. When he says "this rock" it is a feminine noun—big rock. Jesus never built the church on Peter. It is a good thing, because the next thing out of his mouth was, "Do not go to the cross." Jesus says, "Get behind me, Satan." Lord, I am glad You did not build the church on Peter because he is the one that is going to deny you three times.

I bring this up because Roman Catholics teach that Peter was the first Pope; the Lord built the church on the first Pope, Peter. When you study this in the original language, "Peter" is a different word from "rock." What He is saying is, "I say to you that you are a little stone—referring to Peter. Upon this rock—big rock—I will build my church, *"and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."* (Matt 16:18)

He made this statement in Caesarea Philippi. When you travel to Caesarea Philippi, up north in Israel, you will sit there and say, "This whole thing makes perfect sense." At Caesarea Philippi there is a giant rock cliff straight down, and all over the ground are these little rocks. When Jesus says, "And you are Peter," He was probably pointing to one of the little rocks on the ground. "Upon this rock," He pointed to the cliff, because this took place at a geographical location that you can travel to today.

I have been there twice myself. I thank God every day of my life that I went there, because suddenly this story that I have been reading about in the Bible made perfect sense as to why He is saying "little rock, big rock." Jesus never built the church on the little rock; He built it on the cliff—"petra" not "petros."

What is the cliff? The cliff is Peter's accurate confession of who Jesus is. *"Who do men say that I am?"* (Mark 8:27). Peter coughs up the right answer (Mark 8:29). Jesus says, "Upon this rock I will build My church—not you, but the statement, the veracity of the statement of My true identity, which, by the way, was revealed to you by the Holy Spirit."

When Jesus makes this statement about a church—they had never heard of the church at this point—He uses the Greek verb "oikonomia" in the future tense "I will build My church." Meaning the church did not exist when Jesus made this statement. The church did not exist in the Old Testament, or He would not have phrased it in the future tense. You can read the Old Testament until your eyeballs bleed, and you can read most of the Gospels, and you will not find any references to the church, except for a few faint references like I am giving you here.

They probably do not know what church He was talking about, but it is the people that are trusting in the Messiah that Israel would reject—the remnant that would trust in the Messiah for personal salvation. They start getting placed into a New Man called the Body of Christ, through the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit, yet future.

We are looking at why we believe the church started in Acts 2. You need to know more than my pastor told me it started in Acts 2, and the Sugar Land Bible Church doctrinal statement says it started in Acts 2. You need to not only know what, but you need to know why.

Number two, Paul referred to the church as a mystery. In Ephesians 3:3, as Paul is in prison, he is explaining the church, which he did not start; God started it, and he is just explaining it.

"That by revelation there was made known to me the mystery," (Ephesians 3:3)

"By referring to this, when you read it, you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ." What is the mystery, Paul? Paul says, I am glad you asked.

Ephesians 3:6,

"To be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."

That is the mystery: Jew and Gentile, who both believe in the Messiah, are connected through the Spirit's baptism into one new body called the church. That is a concept that you will not find in the Old Testament, as God is dealing with the Nation of Israel. Neither is it a concept that you will find very aggressively taught in the Gospels as God is dealing with the Nation of Israel.

But now we are in the Church Age. Israel has been put on the shelf for a season, and God is working through a New Man, this remnant of people that has trusted in the very Messiah that Israel rejected for personal salvation. That is the church; that is the group that God has been using for 2,000 years; and that is the mystery.

It is really in Ephesians that Paul gets down to business and talks about this, and he does such a good job. The hyper-Dispensationalists think, "The church must have started here." No. Man does not start the dispensations—God does. Paul is just explaining what God started.

Ephesians 3:9 says,

"And to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things."

There again, he calls the church a mystery. What is a mystery? He wrote Colossians at the same time he wrote Ephesians; they are both prison letters written at the same time about A.D. 60. Ephesians focuses on the body of Christ, while Colossians focuses on the head of the body, which is Jesus.

Colossians 1:26 says,

"That is, the mystery which has been hidden from past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints."

A mystery is something unknown and now revealed. Vines defines "mysterion" as:

"In the New Testament, it ["mysterion"] denotes, not the not the mysterious (as with the English word), but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made only known by Divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those who are illumined by His Spirit."¹

That is what a mystery is—it is something brand new, never before disclosed. The fact that Jesus put His building of the church in the future tense, and the fact that Paul called it a mystery shows that you cannot find this in the Old Testament. You really cannot even find it in the Gospels. It started sometime after Jesus left planet Earth.

Reason number three as to why the church started in Acts 2 is that the church did not exist prior to Acts 1, since Christ became the head of the church after His ascension. Jesus is the head of the church. Ephesians 5:23 says,

"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church." (Ephesians 5:23)

Ask yourself a question: When did Jesus become the head of the church? When did that happen? Did some board have to vote Him in? No. He became the head of the church right after He ascended.

Ephesians 1:20 describes His ascension:

"Which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 1:20)

Ephesians 1:22 says,

"And He put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church." (Ephesians 1:22)

Jesus is the head of the church. Jesus became the head of the church right after His ascension to the Father's right hand. Therefore, you cannot have a pre-ascension

¹ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament Words (Nashville: Nelson, 1996), 424.

church, or else you have a body without a head. He became the head of the church right after He ascended.

Number four, the church did not exist prior to Acts 1 since spiritual gifts only came into existence after His ascension. What are these spiritual gifts? They are Spirit-empowered abilities to serve God in a special way and on the authority of Scripture. Everyone has at least one spiritual gift; most, I am convinced, have more than one gift.

First Corinthians 12:7 says,

"But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit." (1 Cor 12:7)

What is the purpose of these spiritual gifts? They are to edify the body of Christ, the church—fellow believers.

First Corinthians 12:7 says,

"But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Cor 12:7)

No spiritual gifts, no common good. Whatever your spiritual gift is, when you use it, it will bless other people. Leadership blesses other people; administration blesses other people; helps blesses other people; mercy blesses other people; giving blesses other people; teaching, which hopefully is happening here at least a little bit, is blessing you.

When God gave you the gift, He had in mind all the people that would be blessed through your influence.

First Corinthians 14:26, of spiritual gifts, says,

"Let all things be done for edification." (1 Cor 14:26)

Paul is saying, "Use the gifts, because when the gifts are in operation, others are blessed."

Now let me ask you a question: Can you have a church without spiritual gifts? You cannot. Could you imagine going to a church where no one has the gift of pastor-teacher, or no one has the gift of administration? No one has the gift of leadership. No one has the gift of teaching. Why even go? You might as well just go to the Rotary Club. There is a crowd over there, but the spiritual gifts are not in operation. You cannot have a church absent of the spiritual gifts.

When did the spiritual gifts start? According to Ephesians 4:7-11, they started with the Ascension, when Jesus ascended back to heaven and took His seat at the Father's right hand. The first thing that happened is that He became head of the church. The second

thing that happened is that He gave the spiritual gifts to the church. That is found in Ephesians 4:7-9:

"But to each of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Therefore it says,

*'When He ascended on high,
He led captive a host of captives,
And He gave gifts to men.'*

(Now this expression, 'He ascended,' what does it mean...)"

Spiritual gifts start post-Ascension, so you cannot have the church pre-Ascension, or else you would have a group of people that have no gifts on which to function—no edification. Just as Christ became the head of the church at His Ascension, so the gifts of the Holy Spirit come into operation after the Ascension—meaning you cannot have a pre-Ascension church.

You cannot have it in the Old Testament or in the Gospels because Jesus put its building in the future tense. You cannot have it in the Old Testament or the Gospels because Paul called it a mystery. You cannot have it pre-Ascension because you would have a headless body, and you would have an ungifted body.

Number five, the church existed before Paul was converted. This is the difference of opinion with the Mid-Acts Dispensationalists. They say the church started with Paul. Okay. If the church started with Paul, then what in the world was Paul persecuting before he got saved?

Acts 8:1:

"Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem."

Acts 8:3:

"But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison."

If the church started with Paul, who was pre-saved Paul (Saul) persecuting? They say that is the Jewish church. I am sorry, but John 10 says that Jesus has one flock. Paul, over and over again, praises the Lord for the grace of God in his life and his epistles, because he says things like, "The church that I am now an advocate for, I used to persecute when I was Saul."

Acts 5:11, before we even know the name Saul, says,

"And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things." (Acts 5:11)

Romans 16:7 is almost the death knell for hyper-Dispensationalism because Paul says,

"Greet Andronicus and Junius, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me."

"In Christ" is a technical word that always refers to people in the church. There he is, talking about people that were in Christ before him. You can go to all of the hyper-Dispensational commentaries and they will never interact with that verse. It is almost as if it does not exist.

The church existed before Paul's conversion in Acts 9. It does not exist before Acts 1, for reasons we have already explained, but it certainly is in existence before Acts 9. When did this whole thing start?

Number six, it started with the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. The word baptism confuses us because everybody thinks we are talking about water. In this context we are not talking about water. Water baptism just symbolizes the reality that has happened to you, but the word "baptizo" in Greek means "to join, unite, and identify." The baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, taking people at the point of faith and connecting them to Christ's metaphorical body, the church, began in Acts 2.

Why would we say that? Paul is going to define the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit as follows. Paul did not start this; he explains it.

First Corinthians 12:13:

"For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."

In other words, when anybody put their personal faith in the Messiah that Israel rejected for personal salvation—the crucified and resurrected Christ—at that point, the Holy Spirit did a work. It is not something you get later; it is something that happened at the point of faith alone, in Christ alone. The Holy Spirit grabs you and connects you to His body. You are a hand, you are an ear, you are a nose, or maybe you are a mouth.

You do not really know what denomination you are. You might be a methocathobapterian or a bapcticostalfundamatic, but you do not have any idea of any of that stuff. You do not know anything about denominationalism, which is irrelevant. It is the work that God did, where He took you and connected you to His body. If you can figure out when that started, if I can figure out when 1 Corinthians 12:13 started, I can figure out when the church started, because you cannot have a church without this since there is no body to connect to.

When did it start? Jesus, before He ascended, said that it was going to start in a few days. In Acts 1:5, He said to Peter and the apostles,

"For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:5)

We are not given any more information about when it started. I said to the Lord, "Lord, I am frustrated, I am OCD, I have hypertension, and I have got this jigsaw puzzle and there is something missing. It is just bugging me. The Lord just says, 'Keep reading,' until I finally get to Acts 11. I say to the Lord, "This chapter is so boring, You are repeating everything You said in the previous chapter." The Lord says, "Study it more carefully," and suddenly you find that missing puzzle piece.

Acts 11:16-15:.

"And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning."

"What happened to him happened to us." He was baptized in the Holy Spirit like we were.

Acts 11:16:

"And I remembered the word of the Lord, and how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'"

The only thing I know after reading Acts 1 is that it started sometime down the road—"a few days from now." Here, Peter says, "What happened to him happened to us at the beginning." The occurrence to Cornelius brought to Peter's mind the promise of Acts 1. There is my clue that the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit is sometimes pre-Acts 11, but post-Acts 1.

Where is the only chapter that it would fit? The only place it would fit is Acts 2:4.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit..."

That is when it started—Acts 2.

What I am doing is reasoning from the data God has given us. Reformed Theology says it started in the Old Testament. No. Hyper-Dispensationalism says it started with Paul. No, it started in Acts 2. I believe it started in Acts 2, not because I read it in a doctrinal statement, not because my pastor told me what to believe, but I have put into motion that beautiful thing that God has given all of us: an intellect.

By virtue of the fact that you are an image-bearer of God, you have a very special, precious gift. It is the capacity for thought. My cats do not have the same thought process I have. I think I am a little smarter than them. I can fool them; I can trick them; I can put a laser light in the center of the room and have them run around, chasing the laser light for hours. Hours. By virtue of the fact that you are made in God's image, you have this capacity for reason and you can reason your way through this. You know exactly when the church started. It could not have been in the Old Testament because Jesus put it in the future tense.

It could not have been in the Old Testament because Paul calls it a mystery. It could not have been pre-Ascension because at the Ascension He became the head of the church and gave the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the church. It had to have existed before Paul, though, because what was Paul persecuting if it did not exist?

The key way to figure out when it started is to figure out when the baptizing ministry of the spirit started: When did the Holy Spirit start taking people and connecting them to Christ's body? That tells you when the body of Christ started. Jesus said in Acts 1 that it is going to happen a few days from now. In Acts 11, Peter said that it already happened to us Jews because it happened to Cornelius. "Yes, I remembered the Lord's promise. What happened to him happened to us at the beginning."

We go through those chapters, and the only place it fits is Acts 2:4. That is when the church started. This is why we think the church started in Acts 2.

We will pick it up there in Acts 11:17-18 next time. Then we are going to keep moving on to Acts 11:19 through the end of the chapter, where we are going to see the church really taking off in a place called Antioch—Syrian Antioch up north, which is where believers are called Christians for the first time.

I would call it a modern-day mega church because it talks about great numbers, not light shows and things to get people to come, but massive conversions. It is a very special place because it is through Antioch that Paul will launch his three missionary journeys, which we will continue to read about in Acts. Those become the people that are going to hold to the Premillennial return of Jesus for the first two centuries of the church.

All the folks in Antioch coming out of their post-Apostolic Age, believe that Jesus was coming back to set up a physical kingdom. They did not call themselves Premillennialists. They called themselves Chiliast from the Greek word "chilia," which means "a thousand." Antioch is huge in the development of the rest of the Book of Acts, and it is huge in the development of church history. We will read about that next time.