

Session 6: Gospel/Church Eras (Chapter 16 and 17)

Today's session focuses on the life and ministry of Jesus and the beginning of the church.

IMPORTANT FACTS:

- Jesus's ministry lasted only about 3 years.
- His ministry was conducted in an area only about 30 miles wide and 90 miles long. (See map of Galilee, Samaria and Judah from last week.)
- Jesus's story is told in the four Gospels.
- When all four Gospels are put together and harmonized only about 50 days of Jesus's active ministry are dealt with.

Gospel Era

Central Figure

Jesus

Location

Palestine

Storyline Summary

Jesus comes in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of a savior and offers salvation and the true kingdom of God. While some accept Him, most reject Him, and He is crucified, buried, and resurrected.

4 Main Divisions in Gospels:

1. Jesus's Early Life:

A. Childhood (Matthew 1:18-25)

- Jesus is born in Bethlehem then flees to Egypt to save Him from Herod's attempt on His life. After Herod dies, they move back to Nazareth.
- He grows up in Nazareth.
- Learns the trade of a carpenter.

B. Baptism (Matthew 3)

- Was baptized by His cousin, John the Baptist when He was 30.
- After He is baptized, God the Father is heard speaking from heaven and the Holy Spirit in the visible form of a dove, descends on Him.
- Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan for 40 days. Jesus remains sinless and validates His readiness to begin making Himself known as the Messiah.

2. Early Ministry: Initial Acceptance

- His message was two-fold:
 1. He is the predicted Messiah and people should believe in Him.
 2. He challenges people to live a life of genuine righteousness, not the external hypocrisy of the religious leaders.

- He performs astounding miracles. (Matthew 15:32-39; John 2:1-11; John 5:1-12; John 6:16-21)
- Much of this takes place in Jerusalem.

3. Later Ministry: Growing Rejection

- His popularity didn't last long, as the religious leaders were jealous of Him and begin stirring up opposition against Him.
- His home base during His ministry years was Capernaum.

4. Death & Resurrection: Final Rejection

- The Jews became more and more polarized about Jesus, either they loved Him or hated Him.
- During the festival time of the Passover when Jesus was in Jerusalem, the religious leaders are finally able to stir up enough false charges against Jesus to have Him crucified. (Matthew 27:11-65)
- Jesus is crucified on Friday, buried that night and rises again from the dead on Sunday, after being in the tomb for three days. (Matthew 28)

Church Era

Central Figure

Peter

Location

Jerusalem

Storyline Summary

Peter, shortly after the Ascension of Jesus, is used by God to establish the church, God's next major plan for man.

IMPORTANT FACTS:

- The church is the means that has been chosen to carry the message of the gospel to the world.
- The gospel is carried *to* imperfect people *by* imperfect people. Then the imperfect people are to band together to help one another grow to spiritual maturity.

4 Major Subjects in the Church Era:

1. Creation: Birth of the Church

- The birthplace of the church is Jerusalem.
- After Jesus's resurrection, He 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, Judea and Samaria and the rest of the world.
- Jesus ascends into heaven before them and shortly after that the Holy Spirit descends upon the disciples, while they are gathered in a house and they began speaking in different foreign languages. This and other notable miracles associated with the birth of the church take place in the early days of the Church and the numbers of new Christians increase rapidly in Jerusalem.

2. Growth: Organization of the Church

- As the number of converts increases the organization of the church starts, which gives structure to their activities and responsibilities.
- Peter organizes a relief effort for the needy and those who have possessions can sell them and give the money to the apostles to distribute according to the needs.
- Deacons are chosen to look after the material needs of the church while the apostles attend to the spiritual needs.

3. Persecution: The first Christian Martyr

- Steven was the first Christian martyr. He was one of the early preachers who was arrested by the Jewish leaders for preaching about Jesus. When he didn't recant his message, he was stoned on the spot.
- This is the beginning of a new wave of persecution against new Christians.
- Persecution was so severe that many Christians 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. --> **How amazing that God turns this terrible situation into an opportunity to spread the Gospel!!!**

4. Transition: A Missionary to the Gentiles

- Saul is traveling to Damascus to find and persecute Christians, when Jesus appears to him from heaven and Saul is converted to Christianity.
- Jesus changes his name to Paul.
- Jesus expressly tells Paul to become a missionary to the Gentiles.
- This marks a transition in the nature of the church, because up to this time, the message has been given exclusively to Jews.