

**Life After Jesus:**  
**The Shape of the Christian Life, According to Acts**  
Christian Assembly Foursquare Church — Wednesdays, 7 p.m., in 203  
**Class Schedule**

**5/6 Course Introduction**

**The Structure and Background of (Luke-)Acts**

**The Church As Israel: The Apostolicity of the Church**

*Acts 1 (compare Acts 3:25-26; Acts 24:10-21; Acts 26:1-23)*

**Paul's Farewell Speech: How to Be Apostolic Without Apostles**

*Acts 20:16-38*

**5/13 Pentecost: The Power of the Church**

*Acts 2:1-42*

**The Apostles' Preaching: How Sermons Work in Acts**

*Acts 1:16-20; 2:14-36, 38-39; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; (4:24-30?); 5:29-32, (7:1-53?); 10:34-43; 13:16-41; (17:22-31?); (20:18-35?)*

**Greater Works Than These: The Apostles Do Jesus' Signs**

*Acts 3:1-10*

**Power Belongs to the Church**

*Acts 8:18-24; Acts 19:11-20*

**5/20 All Things in Common: Sacraments and the Unity of the Church**

*Acts 2:41-46; Acts 4:32-37*

**Ananias and Sapphira: The Holiness of the Church**

*Acts 5:1-11*

**The Birth of the "Parachurch": The Politics of the Body of Christ**

*Acts 6:1-7*

**5/27 The Beginnings of Persecution**

*Acts 4:1-31, 5:12-42*

**Stephen's Martyrdom: The Seed of the (Samaritan) Church**

*Acts 6:8-8:3*

**Why Go to Jerusalem? The Church on the Way of the Cross**

*Acts 21:1-16, 27-36*

**6/3 Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Catholic, Pentecostal, and Magical Interpretations**

*Acts 8:4-17; Acts 19:1-7*

**Power Belongs to the Church**

*Acts 8:18-24; Acts 19:11-20*

**Reading the Church's Book**

*Acts 8:26-40*

**6/10 The Most Famous Conversion: Salvation as Acts Portrays It**

*Acts 9:1-31 (and others?)*

**Salvation Seen from the Outside**

*Acts 14:8-20; Acts 28:1-10*

**6/17 The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles**

*Acts 10-11, 13:13-52*

**How Jewish Is Christianity? The Catholicity of the Church**

*Acts 15:1-31*

**All Things to All People**

*Acts 17:16-34; Acts 21:20-26*

**6/24 Christ and Culture: How the Church Changes the World**

*Acts 16:16-40; Acts 19:21-41*

**How Should Christians Get Along with Governments?**

*Acts 22:22-26:32*

**Acts' Anticlimax: The Unending End of the Church**

*Acts 28:14b-31; Acts 1:6-11*

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**Assignment #1 (given May 6)**

Assignment: This is a massive reading assignment, but it will help you throughout the course.

1. Read Acts in its entirety. If this is too difficult to do in one week, then read Acts 1-12 this week and Acts 13-28 next week.

Pay special attention to common themes, key words that reappear in key places in the narrative, how key figures (like Peter) act in the narrative, and particularly how Old Testament passages are used.

2. For extra credit, read Luke. Pay attention to how Luke and Acts fit together into one narrative, how themes and key words in Acts look back to the Gospel, and how the work of Jesus Christ is proclaimed, lived out, and continued in Acts. In other words, look for continuity between the two books.
3. Next week we will concentrate on Acts 2:1-3:10, so whatever you do, read this section very closely.

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**Assignment #2 (given May 13)**

1. We'll be concentrating on Acts 4:32-5:11 and 6:1-7. (We'll leave 5:12-42 until next week, when we cover persecution.) So read these passages closely, paying attention to the details.
2. Look at the parallels between Acts 2:41-46 and Acts 4:32-37. Feel guilty? I do.
3. Notice that Barnabas, the fellow-traveler with Paul (see Acts 9:27, 11:22, 11:30, 12:25, and chapters 13-15) is introduced here.
4. How do Acts 4:32-37 and 5:1-11 fit together and shed light on each other?
5. Now look at 6:1-7. Ethnic diversity in the Church is already proving itself a problem as well as a blessing, and the Church responds by appointing several servants ("deacons").
6. How do our various duties in the Church fit together? What role does the Spirit's filling play in all of them, judging by 6:3-6?
7. C.A. speaks of "gathering," "growing," "giving" and "going" as four aspects of our life in Christ. What does Acts, and especially 4:32-5:11 and 6:1-7, have to say about these different aspects of our Church life?

# **Life After Jesus: The Shape of the Christian Life**

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**Assignment #3 (given May 20)**

1. The main readings this week are Acts 4:1-31, Acts 5:12-42, and Acts 6:8-8:3. Read them closely. Each episode here is an instance of the early Church being persecuted.
2. Let's study the scene in extra detail. In each episode of persecution, why *specifically* does opposition arise? What is God's specific answer?
3. Now let's study the story Luke has crafted for us. What is the literary effect of putting these three passages near (but not right next to) each other?
4. You may have noticed the word "name" reappearing in this part of Acts. If you want to see how Luke is using "name" in a special way in his story, you can use a Strong's Concordance (or any Greek concordance) to find the passages with a common word. I've already done that work for you — so here's a list of uses of "name" near our passages:  
2:21; 2:38; 3:6; 3:16; 4:7; 4:10; 4:12; 4:17-18; 4:30; 5:1 (unimportant); 5:28; 5:34 (unimportant); 5:40-41; 8:9 (unimportant); 8:12; 8:16.  
Look at those passages and their contexts. From what you see here, what is the significance of *Jesus' name* according to Luke?
5. Luke dedicates quite a bit of space to Stephen's speech. Why do you think this speech is so important to him? Why is Moses in particular so important?
6. What role is culture (compare 6:1) possibly playing in the persecution?
7. What do the stories here offer a persecuted Church (say, in China or Indonesia today)? What do they offer us?
8. Extra credit: Read Acts 21:1-16 and 21:27-36. See how Luke uses "name" again in 21:13.

How is Paul, the former persecutor, now a persecuted Christian?

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**Assignment #4 (given May 27)**

1. Read Acts 8. If we have time we'll tie in passages from Acts 19:1-20, so you should read those too. Read these passages closely so you can answer the following questions in detail.
2. Why are Philip's activities (4-13) distinguished from Peter's and John's? In our passage, why do both groups need to go to Samaria?
3. What did Simon want to purchase? What is Peter's response?
4. What does 4-25 teach about "baptism in the Holy Spirit"?
5. In 26-40, why does Philip have to speak to the Ethiopian? Why doesn't the angel just do it himself?
6. Read Isaiah 53 for background on Acts 8:32-33.
7. How are we able and/or unable to understand Scripture today when we read it on our own? In other words, what does this passage say about how we are to read and interpret the Bible?

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**Assignment #5 (given June 3)**

1. Read 9:1-31, on Paul's experience on the road to Damascus. Pay attention especially to the dramatic details in the story. It's such a famous passage that you may miss details or even read in details that aren't in the text, simply because you're so sure about what is going to happen next.
2. How does this conversion account differ from the conversion stories we've read so far in Acts? (For example, Acts 2:41-47, 4:3-4, and so on.)
3. Keeping in mind that Paul's salvation is exceptional, what does Acts 9:1-31 tell us about God's gift of salvation?
4. How does this passage, along with those we read last week, shed light on the relationship between God's salvation and God's Church?
5. If you have extra time, read our 'extra' passages: Acts 14:8-20 and Acts 28:1-10. What do these passages reveal about what salvation looks like to observers not acquainted with God?

# **Life After Jesus: The Shape of the Christian Life**

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**Assignment #6 (given June 10)**

1. Next week we'll read several passages that describe the Church's first experience of Gentile conversion and its consequences. In the first (Acts 10-11), the Gospel goes out to the Gentiles.

What is keeping the Gentiles out of the Church? In what ways does God take the initiative in bringing Gentiles in?

We've seen how Israel is already a blessing to the Gentiles. In what way are Gentiles already proving to be a blessing to the Church? (Hint: 11:29-30)

2. The next passage (13:42-52) illustrates the shift in the Church's missionary strategy towards the Gentiles.
3. The third passage (15:1-31) shows the Church asking the question: How Jewish do Gentile converts to Christianity need to be? Why does the Church feel the need to answer the question? What is the Church's answer? And how does it arrive at it?

If you've read all of Acts, how do these three passages "set up" the transition from the first nine chapters to the rest of the book? What do you see here that you hadn't appreciated about the fact that Gentiles can be Christians?

4. Extra credit: Look at two images from later in Acts. The first (17:16-34) shows Paul preaching to a sophisticated Athenian audience. The second (21:17-26) shows him purifying himself in accordance with Jewish law (see Numbers 6:1-21). Why does Paul act so differently in these two situations? Is he being a hypocrite?
5. How do these passages change your attitude towards Judaism? And what do they have to

say about how the Church should embrace Christians from new cultures?

