Week 1: Introduction + (The Ascension and Pentecost)

- **Brief introduction about St. Luke and the Book of Acts:**
  - St. Luke accompanied the St. Paul on his missionary journeys, so he accurately narrated what he witnessed. Being a physician, he also described events in detail.
  - He did not conclude the book of Acts with "Amen" like the other books because the *Synaxarion* (Church calendar of saints and events) comes after it, serving as the continuation of the Church's history beyond the Book of Acts.
  - The Church reads the **Synaxarion** (the lives of the saints of the day) after the Book of Acts during the liturgy, to declare that the Word of the Lord continues to grow and multiply in His holy Church.
  - The placement of the Book of Acts between the **Gospels** and the **Epistles** serves as a connection between them: the Gospels present the life of Christ, the Book of Acts shows the preaching of the Gospel, and the Epistles reflect how to live according to the Gospel.

- **Introduction:**
  - **Author**: St. Luke
  - **Time of writing:**
    - It was written around the year 63 AD in Rome, after he had written his Gospel. It covers a period of about thirty years—from the Ascension of Christ to Paul's first imprisonment in Rome.
  - **Purpose of the book**
    - A clear record of the ministry of Peter and Paul.
    - Demonstrates the behavior of the early Christians as high examples for us.
    - Shows the mighty work of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling Christ's promises and establishing the Church.
    - Displays the divinity of the Son.
    - Proclaims the divinity of the Holy Spirit.
- **Outline**
  - - **Chapter 1** – *The Apostles in Jerusalem from the Ascension to Pentecost:* Includes the selection of Matthias and the worship of the Church.
    - **Chapters 2–7** – *The Beginning of Evangelism until the Martyrdom of Stephen:* Includes the gifts of the Spirit, the growth of the Church, the healing of the lame man, threats against the apostles, the death of Ananias and Sapphira, the

imprisonment of the apostles, the selection of seven deacons, and the stoning of Stephen.
    - **Chapters 8–12** – *The Persecution of the Church in Jerusalem:*
      Includes the faith of the Ethiopian eunuch, the conversions of Paul and Cornelius, the founding of the Church in Caesarea, the martyrdom of James, the imprisonment of Peter, and the death of Herod.
    - **Chapters 13–15** – *The Evangelism of Paul and Barnabas Until Their Separation:*
      Includes the story of Elymas the sorcerer, the Church in Antioch, the healing of the lame man in Lystra, the stoning of Paul, and the First Council of Jerusalem.
    - **Chapters 16–20** – *Paul's Preaching in Europe*
    - **Chapters 21–28** – *Paul's Trials:*
      Includes his journey to Jerusalem, his arrest and transfer to stand trial in Rome, his trials before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, the shipwreck in Malta, and finally his arrival in Rome and preaching there for two years.
- **Reading:**
    - Chapter 1
- **Resources:**
    - The Book of Acts - Fr. Daoud Lamei English
- **Key verse:**
    - "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." *Acts 1:8*

- **Comments:**
    - **Chapter 1:**
        - **From the Resurrection to the Ascension (Acts 1:1–9):**
            - **To Theophilus**, whose name means *Lover of God*.
            - **In verse 1:** "began to Do and teach": Our Lord Jesus *acted before He taught*, because speaking is easy, but acting—especially accomplishing redemption—is what truly matters.
            - **In verse 3**: Our Lord Jesus confirmed His resurrection by appearing to His disciples and to those who believed in Him. He proved He was alive by eating with them, letting them touch Him, speaking with them, and breaking bread with them.
            - Our Lord Jesus instructed the disciples to return to Jerusalem and stay there and wait for the Holy Spirit. He assured them that the coming of the Holy Spirit on them would be accompanied by **great power** in both spiritual life and ministry.
            - **In verse 9:** The Lord ascended **in His body** during the day **before His disciples** , so they could be certain of His ascension.
                - The **cloud** in this verse symbolizes the **presence of God**, just as it did when Moses received the commandments, or when the cloud covered the **Tabernacle** and also as happened during the **Transfiguration**.

- **The Ascension and the Return to the Upper Room (Acts 1:10–14):**
  - After the ascension, two angels suddenly appeared before the disciples, in the form of men dressed in white garments. They informed the disciples that Christ will come again on the Day of Judgment.
  - The disciples **returned to Jerusalem** after the ascension of Christ, which took place at **the Mount of Olives.**
  - They continued steadfastly in prayer and supplication in the Upper Room at the house of St. Mark the Apostle, in **spiritual unity.**
    - **Contemplation:** It is very important to pray with spiritual unity and one heart in our homes and churches, so that the Lord may support us.
- **The Selection of Matthias (Acts 1:15–26):**
  - St. Peter saw the need to choose a **replacement for Judas**, someone who had been **close to Christ** and had **learned from Him throughout His earthly ministry**.
  - The disciples **nominated two men**, **Justus and Matthias**, then **cast lots**, and **God chose Matthias** to preach in the name of Christ.
- **Chapter 2:**
  - **The Pentecost (Acts 2:1–13)**
    - The Feast of Pentecost was one of the three major feasts for the Jews — Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles — during which all males were required to be in Jerusalem at the Temple.
    - In the house of **St. Mark**, a **sound like that of a rushing wind** was heard — but it came **from above**, Something **like fire appeared**, taking the form of **divided tongues**, which hovered in the air and then **rested on the head of each person** present in the upper room.
      - The fire symbolized **purification and power**
    - Three miracles took place:
      1. **The sound of the wind**,
      2. **The appearance of fiery tongues**,
      3. **Speaking in tongues**
    - The disciples left the upper room and spoke in foreign languages, astonishing the crowds. Though uneducated, they fluently spoke the native tongues of listeners from other nations, proclaiming God’s message.
  - **Peter's Sermon (Acts 2:14–36):**
    - Here we see Peter, transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit from fear to boldness
    - In verse 17:
      - **"All flesh"** refers to both Jews and Gentiles—everyone who believes in Christ.
      - **"Shall prophesy"** means they will speak about Christ’s redemption, His kingdom, and the need to prepare for it.
      - **"Visions"** refers to spiritual scenes seen while awake.
    - **Verse 21:** "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved."

        - Some people believe that just calling out to God is enough to be saved, but this verse tells us that true salvation comes through faith in Jesus and by following the teachings of the Church, like baptism, communion, and prayer. We can not separate this verse from other biblical verses.
    - **Verses 24-28:** Saint Peter the Apostle quotes the prophecy of David the Prophet, which David did not mean for himself, but spoke through the voice of Christ.
    - **Verses 31-33:** St. Peter is boldly telling the people that Jesus, whom they had rejected and crucified, is actually the **Lord (God)** and the **Christ (Messiah or Savior)**
  - **The Faith and Baptism of the Crowds (Verses 37–41)**
    - St. Peter asked the people to:
      1. **Repent** – Turn away from their sins and change their lives.
      2. **Believe in Jesus Christ** – Have faith in Him as the Savior, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit.
      3. **Be baptized** – Accept the sacrament of baptism.
  - **The Life of the Early Church (Verses 42-47)**:
    - Listening to the teachings of the apostles.
    - Fellowship, which is the love feast that expresses unity.
    - Breaking of bread, meaning partaking of the Lord's body and blood.
    - Liturgical prayers, meaning the Divine Liturgy.

1. Review/recap questions

   ** Servant may add more questions

8. Homework

   ** Servant may add more questions



Revision #5
Created 2025-04-21 20:04:16 UTC by Ehab Khalil
Updated 2025-04-21 22:02:09 UTC by Ehab Khalil