

## Approaching God

Read Psalm 103:1-3 and begin with an opening prayer (Consider that God is Sovereign)

*Not to us, LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness. Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?" Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. (Psalm 103:1-3)*

## Countdown To Acts

**Passage Introduction:** In the Great Commission, Jesus said His followers would be His witnesses "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In those days, many considered the Roman Empire to reach to the ends of the earth. In that sense, the progression Jesus described is precisely what we see happen in the book of Acts as the gospel spreads from Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria to the ends of the Roman Empire. Since that time, the gospel has traveled around the globe many times over.

## Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

**Start with Engaging the Text:** Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words. Use the margins to take notes. What is the gospel? Where & how does it begin to go forth?

What do you observe about the nature of the gospel in these passages? How does it spread?

**John 12:44-50** - **44** And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. **45** And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. **46** I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. **47** If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. **48** The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. **49** For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment--what to say and what to speak. **50** And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

**Acts 23:11** - **11** The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome."

**Romans 1:8-17** - **8** First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. **9** For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you **10** always in my prayers, asking

that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. **11** For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you-- **12** that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. **13** I want you to know, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. **14** I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. **15** So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. **16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. **17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

### Close in Prayer:

Where were you when the gospel came to you? What were the sovereign circumstances that brought about the opportunity for you to hear the gospel? Who was involved? Take some time to thank God for the people and places that were involved in the gospel landing with power in your life. Pray that it might continue to spread and bear fruit in your life. Ask God to show you what that might mean.

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## Resources for Further Study

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### Introduction to the Book of Acts

**Places in Acts** - In terms of our present-day geography, here are some key places where the events of Acts took place:

**Jerusalem** - Roughly the same city as the one established during King David's reign. As Israel's capital city, Jerusalem is the heart of Jewish history and culture.

**Judea** - The southern half of present day Israel—stretching from the Jordan River and Dead Sea west to the Mediterranean Sea, and from Gaza and the Red Sea north to Tel Aviv. It became a Roman province in 6 AD.

**Samaria** - The northern half of present-day Israel, reaching from the Jordan River west to the Mediterranean Sea. Samaria was home to descendants of the Israelites who intermarried with their Babylonian captors during exile. These "Samaritans" were shunned by many traditional Jews.

**Asia Minor** - The region of Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey—modern-day Turkey and Syria. Asia Minor included the regions of Phrygia, Pisidia, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Cilicia, and the cities of Derbe, Lystra, Ephesus, Colossae, Miletus, Philadelphia, and Antioch.

**Rome, Sicily, Malta** - The same as today. Sicily and Malta are the two islands just off the toe of Italy's "boot." Rome was the power center and heart of the vast Roman Empire.

## The Setting of Acts - c. A.D. 30–60

The book of Acts records the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, thus fulfilling the risen Christ's words to his apostles in Acts 1:8



(Map courtesy of the ESV Study Bible)