

THE BOOK OF

Acts

AD 30/33~64

THE BOOK OF ACTS has a central role in the NT: It connects Jesus with the emerging Christian community, and the Gospels with the rest of the NT. It frames the proclamation of the Christian message in both Jewish and Gentile settings and underscores the key roles of Peter and Paul in the spread of the Good News throughout the Mediterranean. It is the story of a dynamic message with an outreach to all.



Setting

Luke wrote at a time when the Good News about Jesus Christ was spreading from Jerusalem throughout the Mediterranean world. Luke was probably a Gentile (non-Jew), and his material on Christian origins keeps the needs and outlook of the wider world in mind.

Luke began his presentation of the message of Christ with an account of Jesus' life (the Gospel of Luke). In the book of Acts, Luke describes how the Christian faith was carried across the Mediterranean world.

It was important for Luke to show that God's love and mercy reaches out to all people—"God shows no favoritism," as Peter told Cornelius (10:34). Christ is the only Savior (4:12), so all people can believe in him for salvation and new life (16:31). Despite the tendency of Jewish Christians to keep God's grace to themselves, the church came to the united conclusion that Gentiles are fully included in God's promises (see 15:1-31). The message of the forgiveness of sins is for all nations.

Summary

The apostles and other people of God were filled with the Spirit and empowered to carry out the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). Acts highlights the ministries of Peter (Acts 1:1-12:25) and Paul (13:1-28:31).



KEY PLACES IN ACTS (AD 39~AD 62)

The Roman empire spanned the entire Mediterranean world, from Syria to Spain and from Egypt to Macedonia. Following the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47), Acts tells the story of how the Good News of salvation through Jesus went out throughout the entire Roman world, from Jerusalem to Rome, through the activities of the apostles and their associates.

Antioch of Pisidia Acts 13:14; 14:19, 21

Antioch of Syria Acts 11:19-30; 13:1; 14:26–15:2; 15:22-35; 18:22-23

Athens Acts 17:15–18:1

Caesarea Acts 8:40; 10:1, 24; 21:8; 23:23, 31-33; 25:1-6

Corinth Acts 18:1–19:1

Derbe, Lystra Acts 14:6-23; 16:1-2

Ephesus Acts 18:19-21, 24-27; 19:1-41; 20:1, 16-17

Jerusalem Acts 1:4–8:1; 9:26-30; 11:2-18; 12:1-25; 15:3-29; 21:15–23:11

Philippi Acts 16:12-40; 20:6

Rome Acts 18:2; 19:21; 23:11; 25:25; 28:14-16, 30

Thessalonica Acts 17:1-13

Acts follows a geographical outline based on 1:8. The Christian message and community of believers spread in Jerusalem (1:1–8:3), in Palestine and Syria (8:4–12:25), and in the Gentile world throughout the Roman empire (13:1–28:31). The closing word in the Greek text of Acts (*akōlutōs*, “unhindered,” 28:31) speaks of the unhindered spread of the gospel to Jews (3:1–5:42), Samaritans (6:1–8:40), “God-fearers” (8:26-40; 9:32–11:18), and Gentiles (11:19-30; 13:1–28:31).

Meaning and Message

Acts shows that the Christian faith truly fulfills God’s promises in the Hebrew Scriptures (2:16-36; 4:11-12; 10:42-43; 13:16-41; 17:30-31; see Luke 24:25-27, 44-47). Christ brought salvation (Acts 8:35; 10:36; 16:17, 30-31). Prayer advances God’s Kingdom (1:12-15; 2:1-4; 4:24-31; 12:5) while the Holy Spirit energizes and equips God’s people to carry out their mission (1:8; 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5, 10; 7:55; 11:24; 13:9, 52).

Acts shows the importance of the individuals that God has chosen to carry his message and testify about Christ. At the beginning the apostles

testified about the life and ministry of Jesus (1:22; 10:39-41; see Luke 1:2) and explained Jesus' significance in God's plan to redeem humanity (Acts 2:40; 3:15; 4:33; 10:42). Matthias was chosen to replace Judas in the company of the twelve apostles (1:12-26). Later, other Christian leaders shared in the task of testifying for their Lord; Stephen and Philip are two outstanding examples of bold witness to their faith (7:2-53; 8:4-40). Other Christians simply shared their faith as they had opportunity (e.g., 8:1-4; 11:19-21). Later, God called Paul to participate in this enterprise as his "chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel" (9:15; 22:1-21; 26:2-23). Paul, like Peter, occupies a central role in Acts as a major witness for Christ.

The apostles proclaimed that the death and resurrection of Jesus was God's plan fulfilling Scripture (2:22-36; 3:15; 4:27-28, 33; 7:52; 8:32-35; 10:38-43; 13:26-39). Jesus was the one appointed to redeem humankind, so the apostles' message was, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved" (16:31). God offers his grace and forgiveness to all. "There is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all" (10:36).

OUTLINE

- 1:1-5
Prologue: The Promise of the Holy Spirit
- 1:6-5:42
The Church Begins in Jerusalem
- 6:1-12:25
The Church Grows From Jerusalem to Antioch
- 13:1-21:17
The Christian Message Goes to the Gentiles
- 21:18-26:32
Paul in Jerusalem and Caesarea
- 27:1-28:31
Paul Goes to Rome

BEHIND THE TEXT

Purposes of Acts

History. Acts describes people, places, and events involved in the early spread of the Good News.

Geography. Acts shows how the message was taken from Jerusalem to Rome (1:8; 9:15).

Biography. Peter, Stephen, James, and Paul were the principal figures leading the Christian movement.

Evangelism. Acts gives clear examples of how Christian leaders proclaimed the Good News to different audiences (note the speeches of chs 2-5; 7; 10; 13; 22; 26). Acts shows that the Gospel is open to all—not only to Jews but also to Gentiles (2:8-11; 8:4-25; 10:1-11:18), and not only to men but also to women (5:14; 8:12; 16:13-15; 17:4, 12, 34; 18:26; 21:9).

Politics. Acts presents a strong defense of the Christian faith to Jews (4:8-12; 7:2-53) and to Gentiles (24:10-21; 26:1-23). Luke argued that Christianity was entitled to the same protection Judaism enjoyed as a "permitted religion" and that it represented no danger to Rome (18:15; 19:37; 23:29; 25:25; 26:32).

Authorship

Luke was Paul's traveling companion (see 16:10) and was with Paul during his later years (2 Tim 4:11). Several passages in Acts appear in the first person ("we"; Acts 16:10-18; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16), which suggests that Luke was with Paul for those parts of his journeys. Paul calls Luke the "beloved doctor" in connection with other non-Jews who were working with Paul (Col 4:11, 14; see Phlm 1:24). Paul was grateful for Luke as a faithful co-worker and friend.

Luke was also apparently the author of the Gospel that bears his name. The theological viewpoint is consistent throughout both works. Each book highlights the historical reality of God's action in redemption, the role of the Holy Spirit, the central place of prayer, the importance of angels, and the fulfillment of OT promises in the life of Jesus and in the Christian community. Luke saw God as governing the course of history for the outworking of the divine purpose.

As a responsible Hellenistic historian, Luke used good historical methods and described his procedures in detail, writing an accurate and orderly account of Christian origins (Luke 1:1-4). Where other sources can verify Luke's writings, he demonstrates that he was careful and accurate. Luke was also a literary artist, a gifted storyteller who perceived and clearly portrayed the hand of God in the development of the Christian community. He is one of the most important historical writers between Polybius, "the last of the great Greek historians" (100s BC), and Eusebius, the first major church historian (AD 275-339).

Place and Date of Writing

Acts was probably written in Rome, though Greece and Asia Minor are possible locations.

Acts is generally dated between the early 60s AD and the end of the expected life span of Paul's co-workers and traveling companions (mid-80s AD). Many scholars have opted for a date after AD 70, arguing that Luke used Mark as one of his sources and dating Mark in the late 60s. However, Acts makes no mention of the outcome of Paul's trial (about AD 62); the death of James, the Lord's brother (early 60s AD); the persecution of

The Book of Acts is . . . a narrative about the Triune God on an unstoppable mission to the ends of the earth.

WILLIAM J. LARKIN
Acts in Cornerstone
Biblical Commentary,
vol. 12

means “one who loves God.” Theophilus is described by the title, “most honorable” (Luke 1:3), which is used elsewhere for Roman governors such as Felix and Festus (Acts 23:26; 24:2-3; 26:25). Theophilus may have been Luke’s patron and benefactor. He was a Gentile who had received Christian instruction (Luke 1:4). Luke wanted him and others to have an accurate understanding of the Christian faith and of its spread into the Mediterranean world so they could be “certain of the truth” concerning Christianity (Luke 1:4).

Literary Characteristics

The material of Acts is presented carefully and accurately (e.g., Acts 11:28; 18:2); this precision has often

Christians carried out by Nero following the fire of Rome in AD 64; the deaths of Peter and Paul (about AD 64~65) and Nero (AD 68); the Jewish revolt (AD 66); or the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70). Acts ends with Paul under house arrest (AD 60–62). Therefore, it seems more likely that Luke wrote Acts before AD 64. Those who date Acts after AD 70 would answer that Luke omits these events because they were not pertinent to his purpose (see 1:8; 9:15; 28:31).

Recipients

The prime recipient of Luke’s Gospel and the book of Acts was Theophilus (Acts 1:1; Luke 1:3), whose name

been affirmed by archaeology, geography, and related studies. Luke has combined historical accuracy and detail with a gift for vivid and dramatic descriptions (e.g., 5:17-32; 12:1-17; 14:8-20; 16:11-40; 27:1-44).

Acts is punctuated by powerful speeches of Peter, Stephen, James, and Paul (2:14-40; 7:2-53; 15:13-21; 22:3-21). The varied literary styles in Acts fit the cultural settings in a remarkable way. Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost has a strongly Jewish character (2:14-40), while Paul’s preaching before the cultured Greek philosophers in Athens uses the forms of Greek oratory (17:22-31). These characteristics all support the historical authenticity of the book.

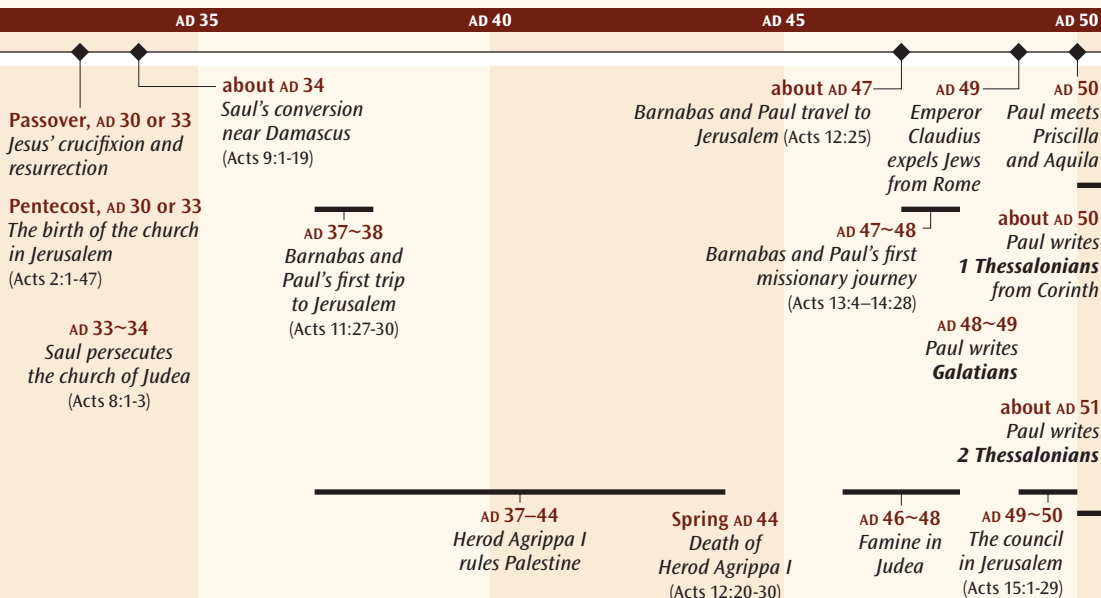
Chronology of the Apostolic Age

Events in the apostolic age are difficult to date because few precise statements are made about time. Many events, however, can be correlated with known dates in the Roman world.

Events from AD 30 to 50. We know from Roman sources that Herod Agrippa I died in AD 44 (12:23), so his execution of the apostle James and imprisonment of Peter (12:2-17) must have happened before that date.

The famine prophesied by Agabus befell Judea during the reign of Emperor Claudius (11:28-29). When the church in Antioch sent famine relief to the church in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul were appointed to carry the money (11:29-30). It was Paul’s second trip to Jerusalem after his conversion. The Jewish historian Josephus dates the famine between AD 46 and 48.

While Paul was in Corinth on his second missionary journey, Gallio was governor of Achaia (18:12). An inscription discovered at nearby Delphi indicates that Gallio’s term was AD 51–52. The incident in 18:12-17 probably occurred at the beginning of Gallio’s term.



Paul then left Corinth not long afterward, probably in the summer or autumn of AD 52. Paul had spent eighteen months in Corinth (18:11), so he probably arrived in early AD 50. That arrival date is confirmed by 18:2. When Paul came to Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla had recently been exiled from Rome. Claudius expelled Jews from Rome in AD 49.

Events from AD 50 to 70. Festus replaced Felix as governor of Judea during Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea (24:27), probably in the summer of AD 59. This event helps us date events in the rest of the book of Acts. Paul's arrest (21:33) was about two years beforehand (AD 57). Earlier that spring, Paul had celebrated Passover in Philippi (20:6; April AD 57). Paul had just spent three months in Greece (20:3), probably the winter of AD 56–57 (see 1 Cor 16:6). Previously Paul had spent three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31; AD 53~56).

After Festus arrived in the summer of AD 59, Paul quickly stood trial and appealed to Caesar (25:1-12). The voyage to Rome most likely began in the fall of AD 59 (27:2) and ended early in AD 60 (28:11-16). Paul stayed in Rome "for the next two years" (28:30). The NT does not report the outcome of Paul's trial, but he was probably released and then recaptured and martyred in Rome along with Peter and many others during Nero's persecution (about AD 64~65).

In Jerusalem, James the brother of Jesus was stoned to death by the Jewish authorities in AD 62 (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1). Not long afterward, the church in Jerusalem left that doomed city and settled in Pella, one of the cities of the Decapolis east of the Jordan. Thus, when war broke out between the Jews and the Romans in AD 66, the Christians for the most part escaped its fury. That war ended in AD 70, when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed.

Events from AD 70 to 100. The NT and early Christians left few records of the period following the destruction of Jerusalem. It is possible that both Matthew and Luke wrote after AD 70, but they did not write about the developments after AD 70. Similarly, the apostle John probably wrote his Gospel and three letters during the period before AD 90, but we learn few specifics about the late-first-century church from those writings. If Revelation was written in the early 90s AD, then it gives us a glimpse of what the churches in Asia Minor were facing during that time (see Revelation Introduction, "Date of Writing").

As the apostolic age came to a close, the church around the Mediterranean grew and developed, as it would continue to do after the last of the apostles had died and the leadership of the church passed on to the following generations (see "After the Apostles," p. 2378).

FURTHER READING

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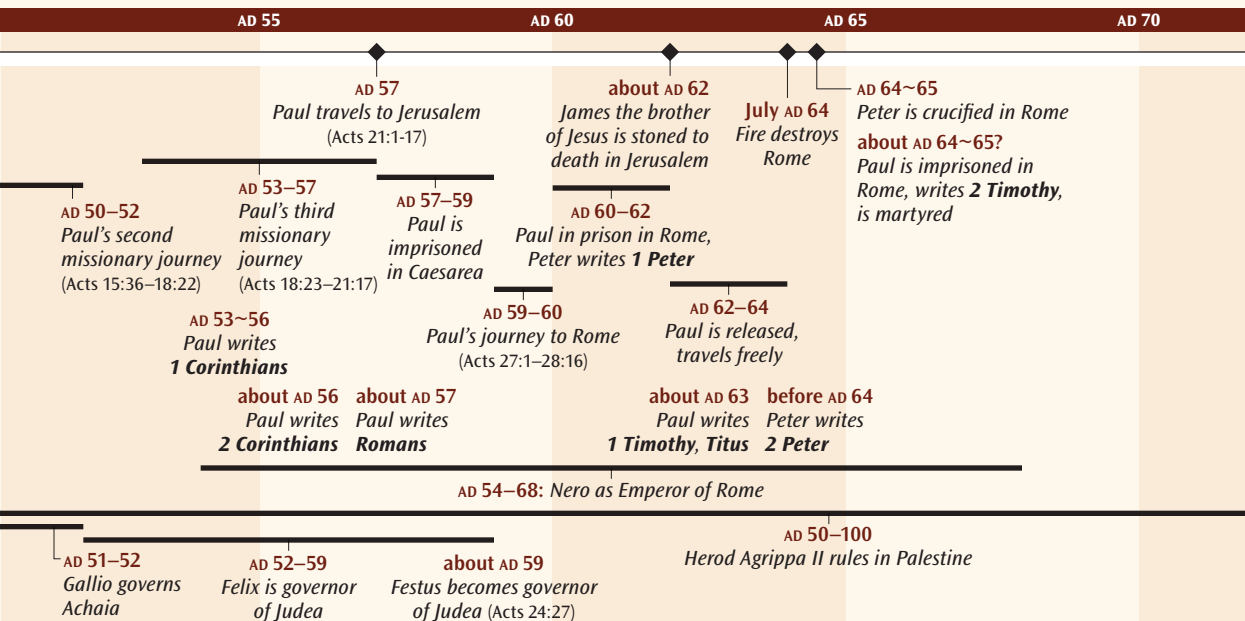
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1. PROLOGUE (1:1-5)**The Promise of the Holy Spirit**

1 In my first book* I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions through the Holy Spirit. ³During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

⁴Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, “Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. ⁵John baptized with* water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

2. THE CHURCH BEGINS IN JERUSALEM (1:6–5:42)**The Coming of the Holy Spirit (1:6–2:47)****The Ascension of Jesus**

ACTS 1:6-11 // MARK 16:19-20 // LUKE 24:50-53

⁶So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”

⁷He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes

1:1 The reference is to the Gospel of Luke. 1:5 Or *in*; also in 1:5b.

upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. ¹⁰As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ¹¹“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!”

Matthias Replaces Judas

ACTS 1:18-19; CP. MATT 27:3-10

¹²Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile.* ¹³When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying.

Here are the names of those who were present: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the zealot), and Judas (son of James). ¹⁴They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

¹⁵During this time, when about 120 believers* were together in one place, Peter

1:12 Greek *a Sabbath day's journey*. 1:15 Greek *brothers*.

1:1
Luke 1:3

1:2
Matt 28:19-20
Luke 24:49-51

1:3
Luke 24:33-36
John 20:19, 26;
21:1, 14

1:4
Luke 24:49
John 14:16-17, 26
Acts 2:33

1:5
Luke 3:16

1:7
Matt 24:36
1 Thes 5:1-2

1:8
Luke 24:48
John 15:27
Acts 2:1-4

1:9
Mark 16:19

1:11
Rev 1:7

1:12
Luke 24:52

1:13
Matt 10:2-4
Mark 3:16-19
Luke 6:14-16

1:14
Acts 2:42

1:1-3 Here Luke summarizes his *first book*, the Gospel of Luke, which Luke had previously written to *Theophilus* (Luke 1:3). Theophilus is elsewhere called “most honorable” (Luke 1:3)—the title indicates that he was a person of very high social standing (cp. Acts 23:26; 24:2; 26:25). He was probably a benefactor or patron who assisted Luke with the expenses of publication or distribution of his work (see note on Luke 1:3).

1:3 he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive: The Gospels describe the evidence for Christ’s resurrection: Jesus’ tomb was empty (Luke 24:3-4), his grave clothes were undisturbed (John 20:3-9), and many people saw him (see Matt 28; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-53; John 20:11–21:23; 1 Cor 15:3-8). Jesus *appeared to the apostles* in part to overcome their doubt (Matt 28:17; Luke 24:17-24, 38, 41; John 20:27; see Mark 16:14) • *The Kingdom of God* was the central theme of Jesus’ teaching (see Acts 1:6-8; Matt 4:17; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43).

1:4 until the Father sends you the gift he promised: See 2:1-13; cp. John 14:15-17.

1:5 baptized: See “Baptism,” 2:38, 41.

1:6-11 Jesus’ ascent into heaven (see also Luke 24:50-53) took place on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12; Luke 24:50). It was Jesus’ last physical appearance—he was taken into heaven, where he will remain “until the time for the final restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21).

1:8 This key verse outlines the geographical extension of the Good News from its Jewish starting point in *Jerusalem and Judea* (1:6-8:1), out to *Samaria* (8:4-25), Antioch in Syria (11:19-30), and eventually throughout the Mediterranean world to Rome (13:1-28:31). Christ later gave a similar call to be his *witnesses*. . . *to the ends of the earth* to Saul of Tarsus (9:15), who had persecuted the Jewish Christians and then became the primary instrument for taking the Good News to the Gentiles. • *The Holy Spirit* was the source of *power* for all this evangelistic and missionary effort (see “The Holy Spirit’s Presence,” 1:8).

1:10 Christ’s *rising into heaven* indicates his elevation to a place of ultimate authority (see Eph 1:19-23; Phil 2:9-11).

1:11 Jesus promised to *return from heaven in the same way* (see Matt 24:30; Mark 13:26; John 14:3). Jesus has gone

to heaven to prepare the place for his followers (John 12:26; 14:1-4; 2 Cor 5:4; Phil 3:21; Heb 6:20).

1:12 The witnesses of the ascension *returned to Jerusalem* with joy, worship, exhilaration, and praise to God (Luke 24:52), and with their doubts assuaged (see note on Acts 1:3).

1:13-26 While the apostles waited for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit (1:4-5), the whole company of 120 disciples in Jerusalem engaged in earnest prayer (1:13-14), and then appointed an apostle to replace Judas Iscariot (1:15-26).

1:13 All eleven of the remaining apostles *were present* (cp. Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:13-16). Judas Iscariot is omitted from this list on account of his betrayal and death (Acts 1:18-19).

1:14 The first disciples *were united* in worship, fellowship, and *prayer* (see also 2:42, 46-47; 4:24-31; 5:12; 12:5; 13:1-3). The faithful women who had been witnesses of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection were *present* (Luke 23:49, 54-56; 24:1-10, 22). • *The brothers of Jesus* had not believed in him during his ministry (John 7:3-5; cp. Matt 12:46-49), but became his disciples after his resurrection (see “James,” Acts 15:13-21).

1:16
Ps 41:9
1:17
John 6:70-71
Acts 1:24-25
1:18
Matt 27:3-8
1:20
*Pss 69:25; 109:8
1:21-22
Mark 1:9-11
1:22
*anastasis (0386)
*Acts 2:31
1:24
Acts 6:6

stood up and addressed them. ¹⁶“Brothers,” he said, “the Scriptures had to be fulfilled concerning Judas, who guided those who arrested Jesus. This was predicted long ago by the Holy Spirit, speaking through King David. ¹⁷Judas was one of us and shared in the ministry with us.”

¹⁸(Judas had bought a field with the money he received for his treachery. Falling headfirst there, his body split open, spilling out all his intestines. ¹⁹The news of his death spread to all the people of Jerusalem, and they gave the place the Aramaic name *Akeldama*, which means “Field of Blood.”)

²⁰Peter continued, “This was written in

the book of Psalms, where it says, ‘Let his home become desolate, with no one living in it.’ It also says, ‘Let someone else take his position.’^{*}

²¹“So now we must choose a replacement for Judas from among the men who were with us the entire time we were traveling with the Lord Jesus—²²from the time he was baptized by John until the day he was taken from us. Whoever is chosen will join us as a witness of Jesus’ resurrection.”

²³So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴Then they all prayed, “O Lord, you know every heart. Show us which of

1:20 Pss 69:25; 109:8.



Jesus’ Ascension

Jesus’ ascension into heaven was a final commissioning service for the apostles (1:6-11; Luke 24:45-53). The ascension marks the beginning of the powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit through the church (Luke 24:49).

Christ’s ascension to heaven indicates his elevation to ultimate power and authority (Eph 1:19-23; Phil 2:9-11). That Jesus was going to the Father is noted in other places (John 3:13; 6:62; 13:1-3; 14:3, 28; 16:10, 16, 28; 20:17; Eph 4:8-10). It occurred at the last of Jesus’ physical appearances; after this he would remain in heaven until the “times of refreshment” (Acts 3:20).

The ascension reminds believers of Jesus’ promised return (1:11; see Matt 24:30; Mark 13:26; John 13:3). The witnesses of the ascension went back to Jerusalem with joy and exhilaration, in praise and worship of Christ (Luke 24:52). They were convinced that their Lord would return again, physically and personally (1 Thes 4:16; 2 Thes 1:7-10; 2 Pet 3:10).

Jesus’ ascension anticipates the believer’s own glorious entrance into the presence of God, where Jesus has gone to prepare the way (John 12:26; 2 Cor 5:4; Phil 3:21; Heb 6:20).

Acts 1:6-11

Matt 24:30
Mark 13:26
Luke 24:45-53
John 6:62; 13:1-3;
14:1-4, 27-28; 16:10,
16, 28; 20:17
Acts 3:20; 7:54-56
2 Cor 5:4
Eph 1:19-23; 4:8-10
Phil 2:9-11
Heb 6:19-20

Mount of Olives, where Jesus’ ascension occurred

1:16-17 *the Scriptures had to be fulfilled:* See 1:20.

1:18-19 Matthew’s account (Matt 27:3-10) is somewhat different; the two can be harmonized by considering the priests’ purchase of the “*Field of Blood*” as acting in Judas’s name. In addition, Judas may have committed suicide by hanging, but subsequently he fell *headfirst* and his *body split open*, perhaps when the rope broke.

1:20-21 *‘Let someone else take his position’:* It was imperative that a

replacement be found for *Judas* so that his position as the twelfth apostle would not remain empty. The new people of God, like Israel, were to have twelve designated and appointed leaders (see Matt 19:28; Luke 22:29-30).

1:21-22 To qualify for nomination as an apostle, a man had to have been *with* the other apostles *the entire time* of Jesus’ public ministry, *from the time he was baptized by John* until his ascension.

1:23-26 With prayer (1:14, 24) and humble dependence on God to reveal

his will, the apostles *cast lots*, using an established method of finding God’s will (see Lev 16:8; Num 27:21; Deut 33:8; Josh 14:2; 18:3-10; Prov 16:33). *Matthias was selected* to replace Judas. After Pentecost, the Holy Spirit guided Jesus’ followers through dreams, visions, and prophecies instead of through lots (cp. Acts 2:17-18; 13:2; 16:7-10). • *you know every heart:* See also 1 Sam 16:6-7; 1 Kgs 8:39; 1 Chr 28:9; 2 Chr 6:30; Pss 7:9; 44:21; Jer 11:20; John 2:24-25; Rev 2:23.

these men you have chosen ²⁵ as an ^bapostle to replace Judas in this ministry, for he has deserted us and gone where he belongs.” ²⁶ Then they cast lots, and Matthias was selected to become an apostle with the other eleven.

The Holy Spirit Comes

2 On the day of Pentecost* all the believers were meeting together in one place. ² Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. ³ Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. ⁴ And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other ^clanguages,* as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

⁵ At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. ⁶ When they

heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

⁷ They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, ⁸ and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! ⁹ Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own ^dlanguages about the wonderful things God has done!” ¹² They stood there amazed and perplexed. “What can this mean?” they asked each other.

¹³ But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, “They’re just drunk, that’s all!”

- 1:25
^bapostole (0651)
↳ Acts 2:42
- 1:26
Prov 16:33
- 2:1
Lev 23:15-21
Deut 16:9-11
- 2:2
Acts 4:31
- 2:4
Mark 16:17
Acts 4:31; 10:44-46;
19:6
1 Cor 12:10; 13:1
^gglossa (1100)
↳ Acts 2:11
- 2:9
Acts 16:6; 19:10
1 Pet 1:1
- 2:10
Matt 27:32
Acts 13:13; 16:6
- 2:11
^gglossa (1100)
↳ Acts 10:46
- 2:13
1 Cor 14:23
Eph 5:18

2:1 The Festival of Pentecost came 50 days after Passover (when Jesus was crucified). 2:4 Or in other tongues.



NATIONS AT PENTECOST (Acts 2:9-11)

When the Holy Spirit filled the believers, people from all over the Roman and Parthian empires were in Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost. Some of those who witnessed the believers “speaking in other languages” (2:4) were converted, and many of them eventually returned to their homelands, taking with them the message of Christ.

2:1-4 Jews observed three great annual pilgrimage festivals, when many would go to the Temple in Jerusalem—Unleavened Bread (which includes Passover), *Pentecost* (Harvest), and Shelters (see “Israel’s Festivals,” Lev 23:1-44). On Pentecost, when the Jewish people were gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the harvest of God’s blessings, and when the disciples were united and expectant as they gathered for prayer, the *Holy Spirit* came and *filled* the gathered believers.

2:4 *everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit*: This event marks the

coming of the Holy Spirit to fill Jesus’ disciples, as he had promised, so that they could be powerful witnesses (1:4-5, 8). The Spirit’s wisdom, energy, and power were the driving force behind the church’s work and witness (e.g., 2:14-41, 43; 4:31; 9:17, 20; 13:9-12; see also Eph 5:18). • *began speaking in other languages*: The Holy Spirit gave extraordinary communication that made it possible for people from other countries to hear in their own languages about what God had done (Acts 2:6-11). This passage is one of several references to speaking in “other languages” or “tongues” (see also 10:44-48; 19:6; 1 Cor 14:2-28, 39).

Here, this supernatural gift reveals the energizing presence of God’s Spirit and inaugurates the proclamation of the Good News to people of every nation.

2:5-11 Because Pentecost was a pilgrimage festival (see note on 2:1-4), Jews *from every nation* were present *in Jerusalem* at that time and were thus able to hear the Good News being proclaimed in *their own languages*. The Good News is for all people (2:38-39).

2:9-11 *Parthians* came from the region stretching from the Tigris River eastward to India. *Medes* (now called Kurds) were from Media, east of Mesopotamia and north of the Persian Gulf. *Elamites* were from Elam (now in Iran), north of the Tigris River and just east of the Tigris River. *Mesopotamia* lay between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. *Judea* was well known as the Jewish homeland. *Cappadocia*, *Pontus*, and *Asia* were Roman provinces in Asia Minor (now in Turkey; see 1 Pet 1:1); Paul later taught and preached in some of these areas (see Acts 16:6; 19:10, 26). *Phrygia* and *Pamphylia* were districts of Asia Minor later visited by Paul (13:13; 18:23). *Egypt* had a large Jewish population, particularly in the city of Alexandria (see 18:24). North Africa was also represented by *Libya* and *Cyrene*. *Rome* was the imperial capital and the home of thousands of Jews. The *Cretans* came from the island of Crete, located south-southeast of Greece, and the *Arabs* from the area south and east of Jerusalem. • The inclusion of all of these nations suggests how the Good News was going to go out to the ends of the earth (1:8).

2:11 *converts to Judaism*: See note on 13:43.

The Holy Spirit's Presence

Acts 1:8

John 14:15-17, 26;
15:26; 16:7-15
Acts 1:16; 2:4,
41-47; 4:31; 5:32;
6:1-7; 8:15, 17,
29; 9:15, 17, 31;
10:19-20; 11:12;
13:1-5; 14:3; 15:28;
16:6; 20:28
1 Cor 2:13; 12:1-11
Eph 1:13-14
2 Tim 3:16-17
Heb 2:4; 3:7-11, 15;
9:8; 10:15-17
1 Pet 1:11-12
2 Pet 1:20-21

See Also:

"The Holy Spirit's
Work," 1 Cor 12:1-11

The book of Acts clearly highlights the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Before the coming of the Spirit, Jesus spoke of the Spirit's influence on the growth of the church (1:8; see John 14:15-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15). The Spirit's guidance was clear in the selection of Spirit-filled leaders to care for the needs of the Hellenistic widows (Acts 6:1-7) and in the appointing of Barnabas and Saul for missionary service (13:1-5). When the first church council met to consider the membership of Gentiles in the church, those present followed the Spirit's direction (15:28). Christian workers such as Stephen and Philip were filled with the Spirit and preached by his power (6:1-8:40), and Paul's ministry was charged with the Spirit's energy from the beginning (9:17). In Acts, the growth, development, and expansion of the church took place entirely under the guidance and power of the Spirit (e.g., 2:4, 41-47; 4:31; 5:32; 8:15, 17, 29; 9:31). Because of the prominence of the Spirit's work in Acts, the book has often been called "the Acts of the Holy Spirit."

The Holy Spirit works in many ways. He gives and restores life (Gen 2:7; Ps 104:24-30; Ezek 37:1-14; Joel 2:28-32; Rom 8:9-11). He calls and commissions workers for the service of Christ (Acts 13:2; 20:28) and guides God's servants where and when he wants, to do as he desires (8:29; 9:15; 10:19-20; 11:12; 16:6; 1 Cor 2:13; 1 Pet 1:12). He inspired the writing of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21), instructing the church in Christ's message (John 14:26; 1 Cor 12:3). He bears witness to the power of the Good News in signs and wonders (Acts 14:3; Heb 2:4), and teaches the truths of the Bible to God's people (Acts 1:16; Heb 9:8; 10:15-17; 1 Pet 1:11-12). He bears witness to Jesus and brings him glory (John 15:26; 16:14). He convicts people of their sinfulness and need for the Good News (John 16:8) and warns people against hardening their hearts (Heb 3:7-11, 15). He bestows gifts upon God's people (1 Cor 12:4-11), and he energizes and equips them to share the Good News, serve the Lord, and work for the Kingdom of God.



Peter Preaches to the Crowd

¹⁴ Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that. ¹⁶ No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

- ¹⁷ 'In the last days,' God says,
 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.
 Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
 Your young men will see visions,
 and your old men will dream dreams.
¹⁸ In those days I will pour out my Spirit
 even on my servants—men and
 women alike—
 and they will prophesy.
¹⁹ And I will cause wonders in the heavens
 above
 and signs on the earth below—
 blood and fire and clouds of smoke.
²⁰ The sun will become dark,
 and the moon will turn blood red
 before that great and glorious day
 of the LORD arrives.
²¹ But everyone who calls on the name
 of the LORD
 will be ^esaved.*

²² "People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene* by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. ²³ But God knew what would happen, and his ^fprearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles,

you nailed him to a cross and killed him. ²⁴ But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip. ²⁵ King David said this about him:

- 'I see that the LORD is always with me.
 I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.
²⁶ No wonder my heart is glad,
 and my tongue shouts his praises!
 My body rests in hope.
²⁷ For you will not leave my soul among
 the dead*
 or allow your Holy One to rot in the ^hgrave.
²⁸ You have shown me the way of life,
 and you will fill me with the joy
 of your presence.*

²⁹ "Dear brothers, think about this! You can be sure that the patriarch David wasn't referring to himself, for he died and was buried, and his tomb is still here among us. ³⁰ But he was a prophet, and he knew God had promised with an oath that one of David's own descendants would sit on his throne. ³¹ David was ⁱlooking into the future and speaking of the ^jMessiah's ^kresurrection. He was saying that God would not leave him among the dead or allow his body to rot in the ^lgrave.

³² "God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. ³³ Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today. ³⁴ For David himself never ascended into heaven, yet he said,

2:17-21
^aJoel 2:28-32
 2:18
 Num 11:29
 1 Cor 12:10
 2:20
 Matt 24:29
 2:21
^aJoel 2:32
 Rom 10:13
^esōzō (4982)
 ▶ Acts 2:47
 2:22
 John 3:2
 2:23
 1 Pet 1:20
^fprognōsis (4268)
 ▶ Acts 2:25
 2:24
 Acts 3:15
 2:25-28
^gPs 16:8-11
 Acts 13:30-35
 2:25
^hpsōroō (4308)
 ▶ Acts 2:31
 2:27
^hhadēs (0086)
 ▶ Acts 2:31
 2:29
 1 Kgs 2:10
 Acts 13:36
 2:30
 2 Sam 7:12-14
ⁱPss 89:4; 132:11
 2:31
^jPs 16:10
^kpsōroō (4308)
 ▶ Rom 8:29
^lichristos (5547)
 ▶ Acts 5:42
^manastasis (0386)
 ▶ Acts 17:32
ⁿhadēs (0086)
 ▶ Jas 3:6
 2:33
 John 14:26
 Acts 1:4, 8
 Eph 4:8
 Phil 2:9
 Heb 1:3
 2:34-35
^oPs 110:1

2:17-21 Joel 2:28-32. 2:22 Or *Jesus of Nazareth*. 2:27 Greek in *Hades*; also in 2:31. 2:25-28 Ps 16:8-11 (Greek version).

2:14-36 This is the first of about thirty speeches in Acts and one of the most important, standing as it does at the very inception of the church. It is a typical example of the preaching of the apostles, who proclaimed (1) that the OT promises had been fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is the promised Messiah; (2) that the apostles themselves were eye-witnesses of Jesus' entire public ministry and were his chosen representatives; (3) that people are called to repent of their sins and have faith in God through Christ; and (4) that salvation and the presence of the Holy Spirit are promised to those who respond affirmatively to this message of Good News. This basic message is echoed in the sermons of

chs 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, and 13. The same themes characterized Paul's preaching (see 1 Cor 15:3-9). This message was repeatedly preached to both Jews and Gentiles throughout the Mediterranean world; all people are summoned to repent of their sins and turn to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

2:17-21 This passage quotes Joel 2:28-32. The prophet Joel predicted a wider exercise of the gifts of prophecy, including *visions* and *dreams* by both *young and old*, both *men and women* in *the last days* (Joel 2:28-29). In Acts, on the day of Pentecost, Peter declared that Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled, signaling that "the last days" had arrived. See also "The Gift of Prophecy," Acts 21:9-11.

2:23-28 While cruel men had crucified Jesus, this action had not defeated God's

prearranged plan for salvation. In fact, God *raised him back to life*, which David had foretold (2:25-28).

2:27 among the dead: See note on Matt 11:23.

2:32-36 God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this: The witness theme is often repeated in Acts (e.g., 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39-43). The capstone of this message is that God the Father, *as he had promised*, was now pouring out his *Holy Spirit* on the church through the risen Jesus. All Israel was called upon to recognize that God had acted decisively to make the crucified Jesus *both Lord and Messiah!*

2:34-35 This passage quotes Ps 110:1, which Jesus fulfilled when he *ascended into heaven* (Acts 1:9).

Baptism

Acts 2:38, 41

Matt 3:6-16; 21:25;
28:19

Mark 1:4-9;
10:38-39; 11:30;
16:16

Luke 3:3-22;
7:29-30; 12:50; 20:4

John 1:25-36;
3:22-23, 26; 4:1-2;
10:40

Acts 1:5, 22; 2:38,
41; 8:12-13, 16-17,
36-38; 9:18; 10:37,
47-48; 11:16; 13:24;

16:15, 33; 18:8, 25;
19:1-7; 22:16

Rom 6:3-4

1 Cor 1:13-17; 10:2;
12:13; 15:29

Gal 3:27

Eph 4:5

Col 2:12

Heb 6:2

1 Pet 3:21

1 Jn 5:6

Baptism was an important element of the Christian faith from the very beginning (2:38; cp. John 4:1-2). Baptism is a ritual cleansing that signifies the removal of impurity and sin; it represents repentance from sin and turning to God for forgiveness and purification.

The words “baptism” and “baptize” were already used in Judaism to refer to a religious rite for cleansing. The law of Moses established the use of water to cleanse people from ceremonial defilement (Num 19:14-19). Later, Gentile converts to Judaism from pagan religions were admitted to Judaism only after fulfilling certain obligations, which included the study of the Torah, circumcision, and a ritual bath to wash away the impurities of the Gentile background.

John had thus preached “that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven” (Luke 3:3). John’s baptism was an aspect of his role in preparing people’s hearts to receive the Messiah (Luke 3:4-6), and those who had received his baptism and repented of their sins were those who were prepared for Jesus’ message (Luke 7:29-30).

After his resurrection, Jesus commanded

his disciples to baptize new converts (Matt 28:19). Christian baptism is understood as dying and rising with Christ, signifying the death of the old life and the beginning of the new (Rom 6:1-4; Col 2:12). Thus baptism signifies a Christian’s spiritual union with Christ (Gal 3:27) and with his church. Baptism thus became the rite of initiation in the Christian community. For this reason, many interpreters see baptism as the Christian equivalent of circumcision, the rite that initiated membership into the nation of Israel under the old covenant (Col 2:11-12). Whatever the connection with OT circumcision, baptism signifies a changed heart and a clean conscience that come from God’s forgiveness (Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; Rom 2:28-29; Phil 3:3; 1 Pet 3:21).

As a ritual cleansing, Christian baptism signifies both forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18) and the reception of the Holy Spirit (2:38, 41; 9:17; 10:47-48; 11:16-17; 19:5-7; Luke 3:16). Many interpreters see baptism as the outward confirmation of the inward “seal” of the Spirit, whose presence is a “guarantee” of the eternal inheritance that awaits God’s faithful people (2 Cor 1:21-22; Eph 1:13-14; 4:30; Titus 3:5).



MIKVAHS (Acts 2:41)

Mikvahs are baths used in Judaism for ritual cleansing on a number of different occasions. When Gentiles converted to Judaism, they would immerse themselves in water as a part of the process of becoming a proselyte. There were mikvahs at many synagogues, and the Temple in Jerusalem had a large number of mikvahs, which suggests that those who approached for worship would ritually bathe. These pools were probably used to baptize the new followers of Christ on the day of Pentecost (2:41).

BELOW: Mikvah at the temple mount in Jerusalem,
LOWER LEFT: Modern day baptism in the Jordan River



"The LORD said to my Lord,
 "Sit in the place of honor at my right
 hand
 35 until I humble your enemies,
 making them a footstool under
 your feet."*

36 "So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!"

37 Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be ^mbaptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away*—all who have been called by the Lord our God." 40 Then Peter continued preaching

2:34-35 Ps 110:1. 2:39 Or *and to people far in the future, or and to the Gentiles.* 2:42 Greek *the breaking of bread*; also in 2:46.

for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!"

41 Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

The Believers Form a Community

42 All the believers devoted themselves to the ⁿapostles' teaching, and to ^ofellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper*), and to prayer.

43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared

2:36
 Acts 5:30-31
 2:37
 Acts 16:30
 2:38
 Mark 16:16
 Acts 3:19; 8:12; 22:16
^mbaptizo (0907)
 ▶ Acts 9:18
 2:39
 Isa 44:3; 57:19
 Eph 2:13
 2:40
 Deut 32:5
 Phil 2:15
 2:42
 Acts 2:07
ⁿapostolos (0652)
 ▶ Acts 15:2
^okoinōnia (2842)
 ▶ 1 Cor 1:9
 2:44-45
 Acts 4:32-37



The Growth of the Church

The book of Acts outlines the church's growth after Pentecost. In the early days there was **numerical growth**. Only 120 believers were present at the first prayer meeting seeking divine direction (1:13-15). After the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the number of Christians increased to about 3,000 (2:41). Many more believed the preaching of Peter and John, and the number grew to about 5,000 (4:4) and continued to rise (5:14; 6:1; 9:31; 21:20).

There is also ample evidence of **geographical growth** (1:8; 9:15). The church was not confined to Jerusalem, for the message spread to Lydda, Sharon, and Joppa on the Mediterranean coast (9:35, 42). The message of salvation in Christ also moved out from its Jewish base into Samaria (8:6, 12), then into Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (11:19-26). As Peter declared to Cornelius's household, "God shows no favoritism" (10:34). The message of Good News offers peace with God through Jesus Christ to all people (10:36).

With the increase in numbers and the geographical spread of the faith, the Christian communities also experienced **spiritual growth** in depth and vitality. Acts 2:42-47 vividly depicts this development in the inner life of the church, featuring earnest, united prayer in crises, generous sharing of possessions, courage during persecution, and boldness in witness (4:23-31, 32-37; 5:27-33, 40-42; 16:19-25). Philip's preaching and the manner of Stephen's death manifested a high standard of spiritual life and maturity (7:59; 8:4-40; 16:19-25). Church leaders encouraged and strengthened believers, made them more steadfast in their faith, enabled them to face persecution (14:22; 15:32, 41; 18:23; see 2 Tim 1:8; 2:1-9; 3:12), and lived by the standards they set for others (1 Cor 4:16, 20; Phil 4:9; 1 Thes 1:5-8; 2 Thes 3:9; 2 Tim 2:7). The church's sensitive handling of the Gentiles' inclusion also resulted in significant spiritual growth. "So the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew larger every day" (Acts 16:5).

2:37-38 *Brothers, what should we do?* Peter answered by strongly exhorting his listeners to *repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized*. See "Baptism," 2:38, 41.

2:42-47 Luke makes a clear connection between personal faith and membership in the Christian community. Life in this new community involved devotion to apostolic *teaching* of God's Word, fellowship, *sharing*, joy, and praise, and it resulted in the Lord's continuing to

add to their number *those who were being saved*.

2:42 fellowship: Greek *koinōnia*, a close mutual relationship and participation in life together. • At this stage, *prayer* probably included participation in the formal prayers of the Temple (see 3:1).

2:47
Acts 4:4; 6:7
Rom 14:18
Psozo(4982)
▶ Acts 4:12

3:1
Acts 10:3, 9, 30

3:2
Acts 14:8

3:4
Acts 13:9; 14:9

3:6
Acts 4:10

3:8
John 5:14

3:9
Acts 4:16, 21

3:10
John 9:8

3:11
John 10:23
Acts 5:12

3:13
*Exod 3:6, 15
Matt 22:32
Acts 5:30; 7:32

3:15
Acts 2:24; 5:30

3:17
Luke 23:34
Acts 13:27

1 Tim 1:13

3:18
Pss 22; 41:9; 69:4, 21
Isa 50:6; 53:4-11
Zech 12:10; 13:7
Luke 24:27, 44, 46

3:19
Acts 2:38; 26:20

3:21
Luke 1:70

3:22
*Deut 18:15, 18
John 1:20-21;
7:40-41, 52

their meals with great joy and generosity*—⁴⁷all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

The First Clash with Judaism (3:1–4:31) Peter Heals a Crippled Beggar

3 One afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. ²As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. ³When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money.

⁴Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, "Look at us!" ⁵The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. ⁶But Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene,* get up and* walk!"

⁷Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. ⁸He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

⁹All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God. ¹⁰When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded! ¹¹They all rushed out in

amazement to Solomon's Colonnade, where the man was holding tightly to Peter and John.

Peter Preaches in the Temple

¹²Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd. "People of Israel," he said, "what is so surprising about this? And why stare at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or godliness? ¹³For it is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of all our ancestors—who has brought glory to his servant Jesus by doing this. This is the same Jesus whom you handed over and rejected before Pilate, despite Pilate's decision to release him. ¹⁴You rejected this holy, righteous one and instead demanded the release of a murderer. ¹⁵You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. And we are witnesses of this fact!

¹⁶"Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed—and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus' name has healed him before your very eyes.

¹⁷"Friends,* I realize that what you and your leaders did to Jesus was done in ignorance. ¹⁸But God was fulfilling what all the prophets had foretold about the Messiah—that he must suffer these things. ¹⁹Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. ²⁰Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, and he will again send you Jesus, your appointed Messiah. ²¹For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²²Moses

2:46 Or and sincere hearts. 3:6a Or Jesus Christ of Nazareth. 3:17 Greek Brothers.

3:6b Some manuscripts do not include get up and.

3:1-11 Jesus' promise that his disciples would do even greater works than he had done (John 14:12; see Mark 16:20) was fulfilled in the signs, wonders, and mighty works of the apostles (Acts 2:43; 5:12; 8:4-8). Here, Peter clearly exercised the power to heal in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene (3:6, 16). The cure was instant and undeniable (3:8), resulting in the man's praising God (3:8-9; cp. 2:47; 16:25; Luke 2:20; 17:15-18; 18:43; 19:37; 24:53). This is the first of many demonstrations of divine power given to disciples in Acts (Acts 4:24-31; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6; 9:33-42; 28:8).

3:6 The name of Jesus represents his identity and power to heal (see Mark 9:38-39).

3:10-11 The Beautiful Gate was probably the Nicanor Gate, built of Corinthian bronze and located on the east side of the Temple (see Josephus, *War* 5.5.3). It was adorned in a costly manner, with richer and thicker plates of

silver and gold upon its panels than other gates. • *Solomon's Colonnade* was a portico on the east side of the Temple (see Josephus, *War* 5.5.1-3; *Antiquities* 20.9.7).

3:12-26 The evangelistic speeches in the book of Acts focus on Jesus, the crucified and risen Lord. They call people to repentance and faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah and the divinely appointed Judge (2:38; 3:19; 11:18; 17:30; 26:20). They also offer the same Good News for the people of Israel and the Gentile world—"there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all" (10:36).

3:15 It was unfathomable to the Jewish mind that the author of life, God himself, could be killed. They didn't recognize Jesus as Messiah (cp. 13:27; Luke 23:34), and they did not realize that the Messiah would be divine (see John 1:1-18; cp. Dan 7:13-14).

3:17 *Friends*: Literally *Brothers*, which was a common way to address one another (13:15, 26, 38; Gen 27:29; Lev 10:6; 25:46; Num 20:3; Deut 1:28; 24:7; Josh 22:3-4; 2 Sam 2:26; Ezek 11:15). • *in ignorance*: Cp. Acts 17:30; 1 Tim 1:12-14. The Christian message challenges this ignorance and calls all people to respond in faith and repentance (Acts 2:38).

3:19 The Good News of forgiveness is more fully explained elsewhere (see 5:30-32; 10:36-43; 13:26-38; Luke 24:25-27, 45-47).

3:20-21 The message of Good News offers refreshment (see Matt 11:28-29). The second coming of Christ will be one of those times of refreshment from God, when he will again send . . . Jesus to his people.

3:22 Jesus fulfills the ancient promise of a Prophet like Moses (see Deut 18:15, 18; cp. John 6:14; 7:40).

said, ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your own people. Listen carefully to everything he tells you.’* ²³Then Moses said, ‘Anyone who will not listen to that Prophet will be completely cut off from God’s people.’*

²⁴‘Starting with Samuel, every prophet spoke about what is happening today. ²⁵You are the children of those prophets, and you are included in the covenant God promised to your ancestors. For God said to Abraham, ‘Through your descendants* all the families on earth will be blessed.’ ²⁶When God raised up his servant, Jesus, he sent him first to you people of Israel, to bless you by turning each of you back from your sinful ways.’*

Peter and John before the Council

4 While Peter and John were speaking to the people, they were confronted by the priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and some of the Sadducees. ²These leaders were very disturbed that Peter and John were teaching the people that through Jesus there is a resurrection of the dead. ³They arrested them and, since it was already evening, put them in jail until morning. ⁴But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so the number of men who believed now totaled about 5,000.

⁵The next day the council of all the rulers and elders and teachers of religious law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was there, along with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other relatives of the high priest. ⁷They brought in the two disciples and demanded, ‘By what power, or in whose name, have you done this?’

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers and elders of our

people, ⁹are we being questioned today because we’ve done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed? ¹⁰Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene,* the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead. ¹¹For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says,

‘The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.’*

¹²There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be ¹³saved.’

¹³The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus. ¹⁴But since they could see the man who had been healed standing right there among them, there was nothing the council could say. ¹⁵So they ordered Peter and John out of the council chamber* and conferred among themselves.

¹⁶‘What should we do with these men?’ they asked each other. ‘We can’t deny that they have performed a miraculous ¹⁷sign, and everybody in Jerusalem knows about it. ¹⁷But to keep them from spreading their propaganda any further, we must warn them not to speak to anyone in Jesus’ name again.’ ¹⁸So they called the apostles back in and commanded them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

¹⁹But Peter and John replied, ‘Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than

3:23
Lev 23:29
Deut 18:19
3:25
*Gen 22:18; 26:4
Rom 9:4-8
3:26
Mark 7:27
Acts 13:46
Rom 1:16
4:1
Luke 22:4
4:3
Acts 5:18
4:4
Acts 4:21
4:6
Matt 26:3
Luke 3:2
4:7
Matt 21:23
4:10
Acts 2:24; 3:6
4:11
*Ps 118:22
Isa 28:16
Matt 21:42
1 Pet 2:4, 7
4:12
Matt 1:21
Acts 10:43
1 Tim 2:5
*sōzo (4982)
‣ Rom 1:16
4:13
Matt 11:25
4:15
Acts 5:34-35
4:16
John 11:47
Acts 3:6-10
*ēmeion (4592)
‣ Acts 8:6
4:17-19
Acts 5:28-29

3:22 Deut 18:15. 3:23 Deut 18:19; Lev 23:29. 3:25 Greek *your seed*; see Gen 12:3; 22:18. 4:10 Or *Jesus Christ of Nazareth*. 4:11 Ps 118:22. 4:15 Greek *the Sanhedrin*.

3:23 Refusing to heed Jesus, God’s final *Prophet*, would have disastrous consequences (John 3:16, 17, 36).

3:25 *all the families on earth will be blessed*: God’s blessings on the covenant people were not intended to be selfishly hoarded, but were to be shared with the world.

4:1-22 Persecution was a common experience of God’s people throughout the Bible. God’s servants often faced hostility and opposition (Deut 30:7; 1 Kgs 18:13; Neh 4:1-3; Jer 37-38; Matt 23:34-37; Luke 11:49-51; 1 Thes 2:14-15). Jesus himself was persecuted (Luke 4:29; John 5:16), and he told his disciples to expect the same kind of treatment (Matt 10:23; 24:9; Mark 13:9; Luke 21:12; John 16:2), but he promised

that the Holy Spirit would provide strength (Acts 1:8; Luke 12:11-12; 21:15). Acts records frequent times of persecution (Acts 4:3; 5:17-41; 7:54-8:3; 9:1-2; 11:19; 12:2; 13:50; 14:19; 16:19-24), but Acts also reiterates that the Holy Spirit empowers disciples to bear witness in such circumstances (2:44; 4:8-13; 6:10; 7:55). The boldness of Peter and John before the hostile high council exemplifies facing persecution with courage and power (4:20). See ‘Persecution,’ 4:13-31.

4:1 Sadducees: See ‘The Sadducees,’ Matt 16:1-12.

4:4 the number of men who believed now totaled about 5,000: See note on Matt 14:21.

4:13 ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures: That is,

they were not scholars or ordained teachers—they were working men without higher education. The educated members of the Jewish high council were treated as authorities on the Scriptures and matters of religion, so it *amazed* them to see uneducated men speaking with such *boldness* about such matters.

4:16-18 They recognize the miracle but still stubbornly tried to prevent the message. Jesus had encountered similar resistance (Matt 19:8; Mark 10:5; see also Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4).

4:19-20 The apostles stated a principle that can guide God’s people in dealing with hostile authorities (see also 5:40; cp. 1 Sam 15:22; Jer 7:23; Luke 20:20-26; Rom 13:1-7). Jesus had predicted that

4:20
1 Jn 1:1, 3

4:24
*Exod 20:11
*Ps 146:6

4:25-26
*Ps 2:1-2

4:27
Isa 61:1
Acts 3:13

4:28
Acts 2:23
**proorizo* (4309)
* Rom 8:29

4:29
Eph 6:19

4:30
Acts 5:12

him? ²⁰We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard."

²¹The council then threatened them further, but they finally let them go because they didn't know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God ²²for this miraculous sign—the healing of a man who had been lame for more than forty years.

The Believers Pray for Courage

²³As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said.

²⁴When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: "O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—²⁵you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying,

4:25-26 *Or his anointed one; or his Christ.* Ps 2:1-2.

"Why were the nations so angry?

Why did they waste their time with futile plans?

²⁶The kings of the earth prepared for battle; the rulers gathered together against the LORD and against his Messiah.^{27*}

²⁷"In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. ²⁸But everything they did was ²⁹determined beforehand according to your will. ²⁹And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. ³⁰Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus."



Persecution

Persecution is a common experience of God's people. God's servants have often faced hostility and opposition (e.g., Deut 30:7; 1 Kgs 18:13; Neh 4:1-3; Jer 37–38; Matt 23:34-37; Luke 11:49-51; 1 Thes 2:14-15). Jesus also dealt with persecution (Luke 4:29; John 5:16). At the end of his earthly life, he endured mocking, beating, and a horrible death by crucifixion, and he told his disciples to expect the same kind of treatment (Matt 10:23; 24:9; Mark 13:9; Luke 21:12; John 16:2). He prepared his followers for such occasions, telling them that the Holy Spirit would give them the needed courage (Acts 1:8; Luke 12:11-12; 21:15).

The book of Acts documents the persecution of the earliest Christians, beginning with the hostility of the Jewish high council and the attacks of Saul of Tarsus on the early church prior to his encounter with Jesus near Damascus (Acts 8:3; 9:1-13, 21; 22:4; 26:9-11; see 1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6). Peter, John, Stephen, James, Paul, and Barnabas all suffered persecution (Acts 4:17-18; 5:17-18; 7:57-60; 12:1-4; 14:5-6). Jesus, in his parable of the farmer and the seed, noted the withering effects of persecution on those with shallow faith (Matt 13:21-22; Mark 4:5-7). Persecution purifies God's people and gives them the opportunity to conform more closely to the character of Jesus. The apostles' experiences in Acts bear out Paul's general statement: "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim 3:12; see Mark 10:30).

Jesus told his disciples to expect to defend their faith in hostile settings (Matt 10:18-20; Luke 21:12-15), and the apostles and other leaders did so with courage and boldness (e.g., Acts 4:8-12, 31; 5:29-32; 6:8-10; 8:4-40; 9:27). Christians are called to defend their faith courageously and graciously, explaining their convictions to those who ask questions (Col 4:6; 2 Tim 2:24, 25; 1 Pet 3:15).

his disciples would encounter hostility and persecution (Luke 21:12-19).

4:23-31 The believers *heard the report* that their leaders had been threatened and commanded never again to speak about Jesus (4:18). The Christian movement was clearly under attack from the religious authorities, so they united in *prayer*. They turned to *God*, placing their troubles before him and asking him to make them bold in speaking the message and to divinely confirm its truth

with *signs and wonders*. God dramatically answered their request.

4:25-26 This passage quotes Ps 2:1-2, which describes the response of the Gentile nations to the Lord's anointed king. In a similar manner, the Jews and Gentiles in Jerusalem had gathered together against Jesus and now against his followers.

4:26 The Hebrew term *Messiah* ("anointed one") originally referred to Israel's anointed king; it came to refer to

the Messiah, the coming King of Israel who would establish God's Kingdom forever (2 Sam 7:14-16; Ps 89:36-37; Isa 9:6-7; 11:1-9; 61:1; Jer 23:5-6; 33:14-16; Luke 1:32-33).

4:28 God's hand had been directing events all along in order to achieve his purpose. A similar awareness of God's hand guiding the affairs of his people is found in the OT (cp. Ezra 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 31; Neh 2:8, 18; Eccl 9:1; Ezek 8:1; Rom 8:28; 1 Pet 5:6).

³¹After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

**The Fellowship of the Church (4:32–5:16)
The Believers Share Their Possessions**

³²All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. ³³The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God’s great blessing was upon them all. ³⁴There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them ³⁵and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.

³⁶For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means “Son of Encouragement”). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. ³⁷He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.

**Ananias and Sapphira
Attempt to Deceive**

5 But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. ²He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife’s consent, he kept the rest.

³Then Peter said, “Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. ⁴The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren’t lying to us but to God!”

⁵As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified. ⁶Then some young men got up, wrapped him in a sheet, and took him out and buried him.

⁷About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸Peter

4:31
Acts 2:4; 16:26
4:32
Acts 2:44
4:33-35
Acts 2:45-47
4:33
¹marturion (3142)
▶ 1 Cor 1:6
4:36
Acts 9:27; 11:19-30;
12:25; 13:2
5:2
Acts 4:34-35, 37
5:3
Deut 23:21
John 13:2
¹satanas (4567)
▶ Rom 16:20
5:5
Acts 2:43



PROFILE

BARNABAS Wise Encourager

Barnabas, like Stephen (see 6:5–8:2), is presented in Acts as a model Christian leader. A native of Cyprus, Barnabas was active in the Jerusalem church and demonstrated unselfish generosity in meeting the needs of the poorer members of that community (4:32-37). His given name was Joseph, but he was nicknamed Barnabas (“Son of Encouragement,” 4:36), which indicates his character. He was a suitable person to give a fair and open-minded assessment of the new work in Antioch (11:19-22). Barnabas perceived God’s blessing there and “encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord” (11:23). His sterling character was clear in his transparent goodness, abundant faith, and Spirit-filled life and work (11:24). The leaders of the Antioch church chose him as their representative on the first missionary journey (13:1-3), confirming their recognition of his worth.

Barnabas’s wisdom is clear in his trip to Tarsus to find Saul (11:25). Barnabas had been impressed by the boldness of Saul’s preaching as a new Christian in Damascus and had taken him to the apostles, providing a vital introduction for a man who was under suspicion for his previous unrelenting attacks against believers. Through Barnabas’s intervention, Saul obtained needed contact with the original apostles, received their acceptance, and preached fearlessly in Jerusalem until he was forced out of the city (9:26-30). Barnabas’s trip was successful, and for a full year the two worked together in the Antioch church, drawing large crowds (11:26).

Acts 4:36-37

Acts 9:26-28;
11:19-30;
13:1–15:40;
Gal 2:1-14

4:32-35 The sharing of early believers was remarkable (see also 2:44-45; cp. 6:1). Being *united in heart and mind*, they willingly offered anything they possessed to meet the needs of other believers. This sharing was voluntary and without coercion, and it related to pressing needs in the community and was prompted by Christian love and concern for one another.

4:36-37 *Barnabas* is held up as an example of generous, unselfish giving in response to the genuine needs in the Christian community (see “Barnabas,” 4:36-37).

5:1-11 Luke is fond of balancing a positive example with a negative example. He has just recorded the remarkable story of Barnabas (4:36-37). Now Luke presents the opposite conduct of *Ananias and Sapphira*, who were tempted by the desire to be held in high regard. Ananias had not been forced to sell his property or to give the proceeds away. The couple’s sin was in their pretense and deception.

5:3-4 In *lying* about their *property* sale, Ananias was not just lying to others but *to the Holy Spirit*—that is, *to God*. His actions compromised the transparent sincerity, unity, and integrity of the

church at its very foundation, and thus he fell under the direct judgment of God (cp. Lev 10:1-5; Josh 7:16-26).

5:11 *Great fear gripped the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened*: The sudden judgment on Ananias and then on Sapphira had a sobering effect on both the Christian community and those who heard about this incident (cp. Heb 10:31). Believers were forcefully reminded that they needed to be pure, and for non-Christians the believers’ integrity was reestablished, so that once again “all the people had high regard for them” (Acts 5:13). Yet it also made

5:9

1 Cor 10:9

5:12

Mark 16:15-20

John 10:23

Acts 3:10

Heb 2:4

5:13

Acts 2:47

5:14

†*pisteuō* (4100)

▶ Acts 18:8

5:17

Acts 4:1, 2

5:18

Acts 4:3

5:19

Acts 12:7-10

†*angelos* (0032)

▶ Acts 8:26

5:20

John 6:63, 68

5:21

Acts 4:5-6

asked her, “Was this the price you and your husband received for your land?”

“Yes,” she replied, “that was the price.”

⁹And Peter said, “How could the two of you even think of conspiring to test the Spirit of the Lord like this? The young men who buried your husband are just outside the door, and they will carry you out, too.”

¹⁰Instantly, she fell to the floor and died.

When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹Great fear gripped the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened.

The Apostles Heal Many

¹²The apostles were performing many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers were meeting regularly at the Temple in the area known as Solomon’s Colonnade. ¹³But no one else dared to join them, even though all the

5:16 Greek *unclean*.

people had high regard for them. ¹⁴Yet more and more people ^vbelieved and were brought to the Lord—crowds of both men and women. ¹⁵As a result of the apostles’ work, sick people were brought out into the streets on beds and mats so that Peter’s shadow might fall across some of them as he went by. ¹⁶Crowds came from the villages around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those possessed by evil* spirits, and they were all healed.

The Second Clash with Judaism (5:17-42) The Apostles Arrested and Rescued

¹⁷The high priest and his officials, who were Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. ¹⁹But an ^wangel of the Lord came at night, opened the gates of the jail, and brought them out. Then he told them, ²⁰“Go to the Temple and give the people this message of life!”

²¹So at daybreak the apostles entered the

Barnabas was an impressive figure (note his reception in Lystra as Zeus, 14:8-18) and “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith” (11:24). He was John Mark’s cousin and mentor and played a major role in giving John Mark a second chance to make good as a Christian leader (15:36-40).

Barnabas knew peer pressure, and he gave in to it on one occasion although he knew better (Gal 2:11-16). Paul’s reminder to the Romans is helpful here: “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think” (Rom 12:2). Barnabas wasn’t perfect, but he was a Son of Encouragement to many and a generous, unselfish man who fostered growth in others and in the church.



Coastline of Cyprus, Greece

outsiders wary of joining a movement with such high standards (5:13). This divine “pruning” (see John 15:1-11) helped new growth to follow (Acts 5:14; cp. 6:5-7; 11:24; 21:20).

5:12-16 As in Jesus’ ministry, the apostles’ preaching was accompanied by *many miraculous signs and wonders*, including convincing works of healing and exorcism (see also 6:8; cp. Matt 4:24; 9:35; Mark 1:32-34; Luke 4:40-41).

5:13 *no one else dared to join them*: Perhaps the high standards of belief or what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira (5:11) were daunting to the

crowds. • *though all the people had high regard for them*: Christians were markedly different from the unbelievers around them.

5:17-40 The success of the apostles’ ministry again aroused strong opposition (cp. 4:1-3). The wealthy and powerful *Sadducees* controlled the Temple establishment and had a Temple police force at their disposal. They opposed belief in the resurrection (see “The Sadducees,” Matt 16:1-12) and were determined not to allow the apostles to proclaim their message about the resurrection of Jesus

unchallenged. They also sensed that their hold on the Jewish people was loosening, so, *filled with jealousy*, they attacked the apostles.

5:19-20 The irony here is that the Sadducees denied the existence of angels (23:8). Angels frequently intervened in Acts (see also 10:3, 7, 22; 11:13; 12:6-11, 23; 27:23-24). Luke presents God as guiding his people in their ministry, using angels to accomplish his purpose.

Temple, as they were told, and immediately began teaching.

When the high priest and his officials arrived, they convened the high council*—the full assembly of the elders of Israel. Then they sent for the apostles to be brought from the jail for trial. ²²But when the Temple guards went to the jail, the men were gone. So they returned to the council and reported, ²³“The jail was securely locked, with the guards standing outside, but when we opened the gates, no one was there!”

²⁴When the captain of the Temple guard and the leading priests heard this, they were perplexed, wondering where it would all end. ²⁵Then someone arrived with startling news: “The men you put in jail are standing in the Temple, teaching the people!”

The Apostles Arrested Again and Examined

²⁶The captain went with his Temple guards and arrested the apostles, but without violence, for they were afraid the people would stone them. ²⁷Then they brought the apostles before the high council, where the ^xhigh priest confronted them. ²⁸“We gave you strict orders never again to teach in this man’s name!” he said. “Instead, you have filled all Jerusalem with your teaching about him, and you want to make us responsible for his death!”

²⁹But Peter and the apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than any human authority. ³⁰The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead after you killed him by hanging him on a cross.* ³¹Then God put him in the place of honor at his right hand as Prince and ^ySavior. He did this so the people of Israel would repent of their sins and be forgiven. ³²We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit, who is given by God to those who obey him.”

³³When they heard this, the high council was furious and decided to kill them. ³⁴But one member, a Pharisee named Gamaliel,

5:21 Greek *Sanhedrin*; also in 5:27, 41. 5:30 Greek on a tree.

who was an expert in religious law and respected by all the people, stood up and ordered that the men be sent outside the council chamber for a while. ³⁵Then he said to his colleagues, “Men of Israel, take care what you are planning to do to these men! ³⁶Some time ago there was that fellow Theudas, who pretended to be someone great. About 400 others joined him, but he was killed, and all his followers went their various ways. The whole movement came to nothing. ³⁷After him, at the time of the census, there was Judas of Galilee. He got people to follow him, but he was killed, too, and all his followers were scattered.

³⁸“So my advice is, leave these men alone. Let them go. If they are planning and doing these things merely on their own, it will soon be overthrown. ³⁹But if it is from God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You may even find yourselves fighting against God!”

The Apostles Beaten, Threatened, and Released

⁴⁰The others accepted his advice. They called in the apostles and had them flogged. Then they ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go.

⁴¹The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus.* ⁴²And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: “Jesus is the ^zMessiah.”

3. THE CHURCH GROWS FROM JERUSALEM TO ANTIOCH (6:1–12:25)
The Role of the Greek-Speaking Jews (6:1–8:40)

Seven Men Chosen to Serve

6 But as the believers* rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily ^adistribution of food.

²So the Twelve called a meeting of all the

5:41 Greek for the name. 6:1 Greek *disciples*; also in 6:2, 7.

5:24 Acts 4:1
 5:26 Matt 14:5; 21:26
 5:27 ^x*archiereus* (0749) › Acts 23:2
 5:28 Matt 23:35; 27:25 Acts 2:23; 4:18; 7:52
 5:29 Acts 4:19
 5:30 Acts 10:39
 5:31 Acts 2:33, 38 Heb 2:10 ^y*sofer* (4990) › Acts 13:23
 5:32 Luke 24:48 John 15:26-27
 5:33 Acts 7:54
 5:34 Acts 22:3
 5:36 Acts 21:38
 5:37 Luke 2:1-2; 13:1-2
 5:39 Prov 21:30 Isa 46:10
 5:40 Matt 10:17 Mark 13:9
 5:41 Matt 5:10-12 John 15:21 1 Pet 4:13
 5:42 Acts 2:46 ^z*christos* (5547) › Rom 8:35
 6:1 Acts 2:45; 4:35 1 Tim 5:3 ^a*diakonia* (1248) › Acts 6:4
 6:2-4 Exod 18:13-26

5:29 See note on 4:19-20.

5:30-32 *We are witnesses of these things*: The apostles, as witnesses, were required to testify to what they had seen and heard (see Lev 5:1; cp. Acts 1:8; Matt 28:18-20; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21).

5:33-40 God once again thwarted the Jewish leaders’ plans to stop the apostles—this time through the counsel of *Gamaliel*.

5:34 *Gamaliel* was an eminent *Pharisee*, a leader in the Jewish high council, and a famous teacher of the law. He was

Paul’s teacher during his rabbinical education (see 22:3).

5:36-37 This *Theudas* is otherwise unknown, although Josephus mentions a different man by that name who raised a revolt some years later (see Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.5.1). Theudas was a common Jewish name. • *Judas of Galilee* appears in Josephus as a rebel who opposed giving tribute to Caesar about AD 6 or 7, following the census of Quirinius (see Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.5.2; cp. Luke 2:2). His resistance, too, was crushed.

6:1 *The Greek-speaking believers* were Jewish Christians who had lived elsewhere in the Greco-Roman world and probably observed some Greek customs. *The Hebrew-speaking believers* were more traditional Jews, native to Palestine, who spoke Hebrew or Aramaic and refrained from Greek customs. • *their widows were being discriminated against*: This injustice threatened the growth and development of the church with *rumblings of discontent*, and had to be addressed.

6:2-6 Wisely, the apostles *called a meeting of all the believers* to address the

6:2
^blogos (3056)
 ▶ Acts 7:22

6:3
 1 Tim 3:7-8

6:4
 Acts 1:14
^cdiakonia (1248)
 ▶ Rom 12:7

6:5
 Acts 21:8

6:6
 Num 8:10
 Acts 1:24; 13:3
 1 Tim 4:14

6:7
 Acts 12:24; 19:20;
 21:20

6:9
 Matt 27:32

6:10
 Luke 21:15

6:11
 Matt 26:59-61

believers. They said, “We apostles should spend our time teaching the ^bword of God, not running a food program. ³And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. ⁴Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and ^cteaching the word.”

⁵Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith).

⁶These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them.

⁷So God’s message continued to spread.

The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.

Stephen Is Arrested

⁸Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people. ⁹But one day some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, as it was called, started to debate with him. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia. ¹⁰None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke.

¹¹So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen, saying, “We heard him blaspheme Moses, and even God.” ¹²This roused the people, the elders, and the teachers of



Empowering Leadership

In Acts 6:1-15 the new Christian community faced a crisis of leadership. The Hellenists, the Greek-speaking Jews in Jerusalem, were upset because the needs of their widows were being overlooked “in the daily distribution of food” (6:1). This disruption threatened the development of the church with “rumblings of discontent” (6:1) and had to be seriously addressed. Wisely, the apostles recognized the problem (6:2-3) and called for the selection of seven men to administer the food program (6:5-6). Many interpreters see the seven as the first deacons (see note on 6:2-6).

The apostles provided empowering leadership by sensitively listening to genuine community needs. This wise handling of the issue, with the united, responsible action of both people and leaders, resulted in spiritual growth and increased the number of believers (6:7). Different gifts were recognized in the church and put to work for the common good (see 1 Cor 12:4-11; 1 Pet 4:10-11). A clear division of labor was agreed upon, with the apostles attending to preaching and teaching, and the material needs of the people being handled by other Spirit-filled leaders.

Every believer has the opportunity to exercise some kind of ministry. This usefulness of every Christian in the service of God is sometimes called the “priesthood of all believers” (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; see Exod 19:6; Isa 61:6; Rev 20:6). Not everyone has the same role, but all have the same calling to use their gifts in God’s service.

God has given the church its leaders, not to “lord it over” other people, but to serve the community (Matt 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:25-27; 1 Pet 5:2). The leaders of the church do well when they recognize both the needs of the community and those whom God has prepared to meet those needs. Good leaders recognize gifted people and help them develop, empowering the members of the body to use their God-given gifts (Eph 4:11-12).

dispute. They recognized the seriousness of the problem, as well as their own priority of *teaching the word of God*. The solution was to select wise and Spirit-filled men to oversee the food distribution. The community accepted the apostles’ solution and chose good leaders from the ranks of the Greek-speaking believers (all of their names are Greek). These *seven* devoted themselves to this special ministry, allowing the *apostles* to spend their time *in prayer and teaching the word*. • *These seven* men are sometimes called the first deacons because of

the similarity of their role to the office of deacon (see 1 Tim 3:8-13). Although the Greek term translated “deacon” (Greek *diakonos*, “servant”) is not used here, a related Greek word is translated *running a food program* (6:2; Greek *diakonein*, “to serve”).

6:7 The result of the apostles’ wise handling of the issue was growth and increase in *the number of believers*, including *many of the Jewish priests*. • This is the first of three places in Acts where Luke notes that *God’s message continued to spread* (see also 12:24;

19:20). When real difficulties arose, God’s message could overcome the challenges posed by internal strife, idolatry, and paganism, and the result was growth in the community. Acts is the story of the “unhindered” message of Good News (see 28:31).

6:8-15 The Jewish leaders did to *Stephen* as they had done to Jesus (cp. Matt 26:3-4, 59-66): They got someone to *lie* about him, accused him of blasphemy, incited a riot, arrested him, and posted false charges against him.

religious law. So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high council.*

¹³The lying witnesses said, “This man is always speaking against the holy Temple and against the law of Moses. ¹⁴We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth* will destroy the Temple and change the customs Moses handed down to us.”

¹⁵At this point everyone in the high council stared at Stephen, because his face became as bright as an angel’s.

Stephen’s Testimony before the Council

7 Then the high priest asked Stephen, “Are these accusations true?”

²This was Stephen’s reply: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me. Our glorious God appeared to our ancestor Abraham in Mesopotamia before he settled in Haran.* ³God told him, ‘Leave your native land and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.’* ⁴So Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran until his father died. Then God brought him here to the land where you now live.

⁵“But God gave him no inheritance here, not even one square foot of land. God did promise, however, that eventually the whole land would belong to Abraham and his descendants—even though he had no children yet. ⁶God also told him that his descendants would live in a foreign land, where they would be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. ⁷‘But I will punish the nation that enslaves them,’ God said, ‘and in the end they will come out and worship me here in this place.’* ⁸“God also gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision at that time. So when Abraham became the father of Isaac, he circumcised him on the eighth day. And the practice was continued when Isaac became the father of Jacob, and when Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs of the Israelite nation.

⁹“These patriarchs were jealous of their brother Joseph, and they sold him to be a slave in Egypt. But God was with him ¹⁰and rescued him from all his troubles. And God gave him favor before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. God also gave Joseph unusual wisdom, so that Pharaoh appointed him governor over all of Egypt and put him in charge of the palace.

¹¹“But a famine came upon Egypt and Canaan. There was great misery, and our ancestors ran out of food. ¹²Jacob heard that there was still grain in Egypt, so he sent his sons—our ancestors—to buy some. ¹³The second time they went, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers,* and they were introduced to Pharaoh. ¹⁴Then Joseph sent for his father, Jacob, and all his relatives to come to Egypt, seventy-five persons in all. ¹⁵So Jacob went to Egypt. He died there, as did our ancestors. ¹⁶Their bodies were taken to Shechem and buried in the tomb Abraham had bought for a certain price from Hamor’s sons in Shechem.

¹⁷“As the time drew near when God would fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased. ¹⁸But then a new king came to the throne of Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph. ¹⁹This king exploited our people and oppressed them, forcing parents to abandon their newborn babies so they would die.

²⁰“At that time Moses was born—a beautiful child in God’s eyes. His parents cared for him at home for three months. ²¹When they had to abandon him, Pharaoh’s daughter adopted him and raised him as her own son. ²²Moses was ^dtaught all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was powerful in both ^espeech and action.

²³“One day when Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his relatives, the people of Israel. ²⁴He saw an Egyptian mistreating an Israelite. So Moses came to the

God had sent. • Stephen’s review of Israel’s history has three principal parts, dealing with the work of the patriarchs (Acts 7:2-16), the ministry of Moses (7:17-43), and the role of the Tabernacle and the Temple (7:44-50). Stephen followed up his historical survey with a clear attack on the hardness of heart of his own people. With a prophetic challenge, he urged them to stop rebelling against the *Holy Spirit* and turn to God with repentance and faith.

7:8 the covenant of circumcision: See Gen 17:9-14; see also “Circumcision,” Acts 15:1-5.

7:14 Compare this figure with the *seventy* mentioned in the Hebrew text of Gen 46:27. The number *seventy-five* is probably taken from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) for Gen 46:27. The Septuagint includes three descendants of Ephraim and two of Manasseh at Gen 46:20, making for a total of five more persons, whereas the Hebrew text does not include descendants for Joseph’s sons. The NT authors often quote from the Septuagint, which sometimes differs from the Hebrew Masoretic Text.

7:16 a certain price: Four hundred pieces of silver, according to Gen 23:16.

6:13

Acts 7:48; 21:28

6:14

John 2:19-21

Acts 21:21

7:2

Gen 11:31-12:1; 15:7

Acts 22:1

7:3

*Gen 12:1

7:4

Gen 12:5

Heb 11:8

7:5

Gen 12:7; 13:15; 15:2, 18; 17:8; 24:7

7:6

*Gen 15:13-14

7:7

Exod 3:12

7:8

Gen 17:10-14; 21:2-4;

25:26; 35:23-26

7:9

Gen 37:28; 39:2

Ps 105:17

7:10

Gen 41:37-43

Ps 105:21

7:11

Gen 41:54

7:12

Gen 42:1-2

7:13

Gen 45:1-4

7:14

Gen 45:9-10; 46:26-27

Deut 10:22

7:15

Gen 46:5-7; 49:33

Exod 1:6

7:16

Gen 23:16-20

7:17-18

*Exod 1:7-8

Ps 105:24

7:19

Exod 1:10-11; 22

7:20

Exod 2:2

Heb 11:23

7:21

Exod 2:3-10

7:22

1 Kgs 4:30

Isa 19:11

^d*παῖδός* (3811)

^eActs 22:3

^e*λογός* (3056)

^eActs 15:6

7:23-24

Exod 2:11-12

6:15 His face became as bright as an angel’s, just as Moses’ face had (6:14; see Exod 34:32-35). Stephen, like Moses, was bringing God’s instruction to Israel (see also 2 Cor 3:7-18).

7:1-53 Stephen responded to the accusations by testifying about his Lord (cp. Luke 21:12-17). Instead of defending himself against their prosecution, he became a witness in God’s prosecution of them, exposing their stubbornness and unfaithfulness to God. Stephen’s recital of Israel’s past reminded them of their repeated rejections of those whom

God had sent. • Stephen’s review of Israel’s history has three principal parts, dealing with the work of the patriarchs (Acts 7:2-16), the ministry of Moses (7:17-43), and the role of the Tabernacle and the Temple (7:44-50). Stephen followed up his historical survey with a clear attack on the hardness of heart of his own people. With a prophetic challenge, he urged them to stop rebelling against the *Holy Spirit* and turn to God with repentance and faith.

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7:16 a certain price: Four hundred pieces of silver, according to Gen 23:16.

6:12 Greek *Sanhedrin*; also in 6:15. **6:14** Or *Jesus the Nazarene*. **7:2** *Mesopotamia* was the region now called Iraq. *Haran* was a city in what is now called Syria. **7:3** Gen 12:1. **7:5-7** Gen 12:7; 15:13-14; Exod 3:12. **7:13** Other manuscripts read *Joseph was recognized by his brothers*.

STEPHEN

Powerful Witness of Christ

Acts 6:5–8:2

Acts 11:19; 22:20

Stephen, like Barnabas (see 4:36-37), was an exemplary early Christian who, as a result of the boldness of his witness, was arrested and killed by the Jewish authorities. He is known as the first Christian martyr.

A Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Jewish Christian, Stephen was one of seven men chosen to help administer the distribution of food to needy Christians in Jerusalem (6:1-6). He was the most prominent of the seven and is singled out as a man “full of faith and the Holy Spirit” (6:5). Manifesting the grace and power of God in an unusual measure, he did miraculous things (6:8) and proved to be a bold and effective evangelist and defender of the faith (6:9-10). His witness was so powerful, he was soon arrested by the authorities and brought before the high council for interrogation (6:9-12).

When witnesses accused Stephen of speaking against the sacred Temple and the law of Moses (6:13-14; cp. Mark 13:2; John 2:19; 4:21), he defended himself before the Jewish high council (Acts 7:1-53). He spoke of Israel’s long history of resisting God and his servants—first Moses and now the Prophet whom Moses had predicted (7:51-53). The Jewish authorities, infuriated by Stephen’s

bold accusations, dragged him outside the city and stoned him to death (7:54-60). As he died, Stephen prayed that they might be forgiven (7:60).

Stephen’s bold witness gave rise to the first wave of persecution of the early Christians (8:1-3). But it resulted in the Good News spreading even wider as the believers fled Jerusalem and proclaimed the message of Jesus everywhere they went (8:4; 11:19-21). Stephen’s death provides the first example of the maxim, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” His martyrdom marks the beginning of the spread of the Good News beyond the borders of Judaism, which ultimately made Christianity, more than any other faith, a worldwide religion. Stephen’s strong expression of faith, even as he was dying, could have been a factor in the later conversion of Saul, who observed his stoning (7:58–8:1; see 22:19-20).

Stephen’s life reminds us of the determined opposition that a faithful Christian witness can provoke. A bold testimony for Christ may be costly (see 22:20; Rev 2:10, 13), but there is no insuperable barrier to the growth of the church (see Acts 8:1-3; Matt 16:18).

“Lord, don’t charge them with this sin!” Acts 7:60



man's defense and avenged him, killing the Egyptian. ²⁵Moses assumed his fellow Israelites would realize that God had sent him to rescue them, but they didn't.

²⁶"The next day he visited them again and saw two men of Israel fighting. He tried to be a peacemaker. 'Men,' he said, 'you are brothers. Why are you fighting each other?'

²⁷"But the man in the wrong pushed Moses aside. 'Who made you a ruler and judge over us?' he asked. ²⁸'Are you going to kill me as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?' ²⁹When Moses heard that, he fled the country and lived as a foreigner in the land of Midian. There his two sons were born.

³⁰"Forty years later, in the desert near Mount Sinai, an angel appeared to Moses in the flame of a burning bush. ³¹When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight. As he went to take a closer look, the voice of the LORD called out to him, ³²'I am the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' Moses shook with terror and did not dare to look.

³³"Then the LORD said to him, 'Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. ³⁴I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groans and have come down to rescue them. Now go, for I am sending you back to Egypt.*'

³⁵"So God sent back the same man his people had previously rejected when they demanded, 'Who made you a ruler and judge over us?' Through the angel who appeared to him in the burning bush, God sent Moses to be their ruler and savior. ³⁶And by means of many wonders and miraculous signs, he led them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and through the wilderness for forty years.

³⁷"Moses himself told the people of Israel, 'God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your own people.*' ³⁸Moses was with our ancestors, the assembly of God's people in the wilderness, when the angel spoke to him at Mount Sinai. And there Moses received life-giving words to pass on to us.*

7:31-34 Exod 3:5-10. 7:37 Deut 18:15. 7:38 Some manuscripts read *to you*. 7:42-43 Amos 5:25-27 (Greek version). 7:44 Greek *the tent of witness*. 7:46 Some manuscripts read *the house of Jacob*. 7:49-50 Isa 66:1-2.

³⁹"But our ancestors refused to listen to Moses. They rejected him and wanted to return to Egypt. ⁴⁰They told Aaron, 'Make us some gods who can lead us, for we don't know what has become of this Moses, who brought us out of Egypt.' ⁴¹So they made an idol shaped like a calf, and they sacrificed to it and celebrated over this thing they had made. ⁴²Then God turned away from them and abandoned them to serve the stars of heaven as their gods! In the book of the prophets it is written,

'Was it to me you were bringing sacrifices and offerings during those forty years in the wilderness, Israel?'

⁴³ No, you carried your pagan gods—the shrine of Molech, the star of your god Rephan, and the images you made to worship them.

So I will send you into exile as far away as Babylon.*'

⁴⁴"Our ancestors carried the Tabernacle* with them through the wilderness. It was constructed according to the [†]plan God had shown to Moses. ⁴⁵Years later, when Joshua led our ancestors in battle against the nations that God drove out of this land, the Tabernacle was taken with them into their new territory. And it stayed there until the time of King David.

⁴⁶"David found favor with God and asked for the privilege of building a permanent Temple for the God of Jacob.* ⁴⁷But it was Solomon who actually built it. ⁴⁸However, the Most High doesn't live in temples made by human hands. As the prophet says,

⁴⁹ 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you build me a temple as good as that?' asks the LORD. 'Could you build me such a resting place?'

⁵⁰ Didn't my hands make both heaven and earth?*

7:26-28

[†]Exod 2:13-14

7:29

Exod 2:15

7:30-31

Exod 3:1-4

7:32-34

[†]Exod 32:4-10

7:35

[†]Exod 2:14

7:36

Exod 7:3; 12:41

7:37

[†]Deut 18:15
Acts 3:22

7:38

Exod 19:1-6
Deut 32:45-47

7:39

Num 14:3

7:40

[†]Exod 32:1, 23

7:42-43

[†]Amos 5:25-27

7:44

Exod 25:9, 40

Heb 8:5

[†]tupos (5179)

› Rom 5:14

7:45

Josh 3:14-17; 18:1;

23:9

2 Sam 7:2, 6

7:46

2 Sam 7:2-16

1 Kgs 8:17

Ps 132:1-5

7:47

1 Kgs 6:1-38;

8:17-21

7:48

2 Chr 2:6

Isa 57:15

Eph 2:22

1 Pet 2:5

7:49-50

[†]Isa 66:1-2

7:37 This verse quotes Deut 18:15. *Moses* had prophesied that the Messiah would come, and it had happened as Moses said.

7:39-40 Just as the ancient Jews had *rejected* what *Moses* was saying, now Stephen was speaking to descendants who were still rejecting God's deliverers—in this case, Jesus, the ultimate deliverer.

7:42-43 This passage quotes Amos 5:25-27 (Greek version) to illustrate how the people of Israel rebelled against Moses (Acts 7:39-41). *Molech* was a Canaanite god to whom human sacrifices were offered (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; 1 Kgs 11:7; 2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 32:35). *Rephan* was a star god identified with the planet Saturn, who was worshiped by the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings.

7:48-50 One of the charges was that Stephen was speaking against the Temple (cp. 6:14). The leading priests and scribes controlled the Temple commerce and had a vital business interest in maintaining their enterprises unhindered (see Luke 19:45-48). That is why these leaders were so worried about the Temple despite the fact that God himself had said that *the Most High doesn't live in temples made by human hands*.

7:51
Exod 32:9; 33:3, 5
7:52
Matt 23:30-34
7:53
Gal 3:19
7:55
Heb 1:3, 13
7:56
Matt 3:16
7:58
Lev 24:14-16
Deut 17:7
7:59
Ps 31:5
Luke 23:46
7:60
Luke 23:34
8:1
Acts 7:58
8:3
Acts 9:1; 22:4;
26:9-11
1 Cor 15:9
Gal 1:13

⁵¹“You stubborn people! You are heathen* at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That’s what your ancestors did, and so do you! ⁵²Name one prophet your ancestors didn’t persecute! They even killed the ones who predicted the coming of the Righteous One—the Messiah whom you betrayed and murdered. ⁵³You deliberately disobeyed God’s law, even though you received it from the hands of angels.”

⁵⁴The Jewish leaders were infuriated by Stephen’s accusation, and they shook their fists at him in rage. ⁵⁵But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand. ⁵⁶And he told them, “Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand!”

⁵⁷Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him ⁵⁸and dragged him out of the city and began

to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

⁵⁹As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰He fell to his knees, shouting, “Lord, don’t charge them with this sin!” And with that, he died.

8 Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen.

Persecution Scatters the Believers

A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria. ²(Some devout men came and buried Stephen with great mourning.) ³But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison.

7:51 Greek *they were circumcised*. 7:54 Greek *they were grinding their teeth against him*. 7:58 Saul is later called Paul; see 13:9.



Miracles

In the book of Acts, the activity of the living God is clearly seen in miraculous signs, wonders, and mighty works (4:29-31; 5:12-15; 6:8; 8:6-7; 9:34; 14:3). The Bible does not attempt to prove miracles, but simply reports them. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the apostles and other Christian leaders performed them. The miracles offer tangible evidence of the power and truth of the Christian message (14:3; see John 3:2; Heb 2:4).

The greatest miracles are (1) the coming of Jesus Christ as the Word of God in human flesh (John 1:14), (2) his glorious resurrection from the dead (Matt 28; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-53; John 20:1-31; Acts 1:3; 1 Cor 15:3-8; cp Acts 23:6; 26:8), and (3) the miracle of the new birth (John 3:3-8; Gal 2:20; Eph 2:8-10). The coming of Jesus into the world to be the Savior and to die for our sins shows us how much God loves us (John 3:16; Rom 5:8; 8:32; Eph 2:4-5; 1 Jn 3:1-2). The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead reveals God’s power over death and gives us a living hope, the promise of eternal life (1 Pet 1:3-8). The person who puts faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord receives eternal life (John 1:12; 3:36; Rom 5:1-2; 1 Jn 5:12-13). Miracles remind us of the truth that “nothing is impossible with God” (Luke 1:37; 18:27; cp. Matt 19:26; Mark 10:27).

Acts 8:4-23

Matt 19:23-26;
28:1-20
Mark 10:23-27
Luke 1:30-38;
18:24-27; 24:1-53
John 1:12-14; 3:2-8,
16; 20:1-21; 25
Acts 4:29-31;
5:12-16; 6:8;
9:32-42; 14:3-4;
26:8
Rom 5:1, 8; 8:32
Eph 2:4-5, 8-10
Heb 2:4
1 Pet 1:3-5
1 Jn 5:12-13

7:51 Stephen raised the same charge that God had raised against his people in the wilderness: that they were *heathen at heart and deaf to the truth*, because they were rejecting the gospel and obstinately resisting the *Holy Spirit* (see Exod 32:9; 33:3; 34:9; Deut 9:6, 13; 31:27; see also Ps 78:8; Zech 7:11-12).

7:55-56 *Jesus standing . . . at God’s right hand*: Usually Jesus is described as seated in heaven at God’s right hand (2:33-34; 5:31; Luke 20:42; 22:69; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 10:12). One possible explanation is that Jesus was welcoming Stephen, the first martyr, to heaven with *honor*. Stephen had confessed his Lord faithfully on earth,

and now his Lord honored his promise to confess his faithful servant in heaven, standing as a witness to defend him (Matt 10:32; Luke 12:8). • *the Son of Man standing*: Cp. Dan 7:13-14. The Jewish leaders understood that Stephen was speaking of Jesus as the divine Son of Man (Acts 7:57), a title that speaks of Jesus’ power and authority (cp. Rev 1:12-15).

7:57 *they put their hands over their ears*: They believed that the comparison of Jesus to the divine Son of Man (7:56) was horrible blasphemy.

7:58 *Saul* was the Hebrew form, Paul the Greek form of his name (see 13:9).

7:59-60 Stephen’s prayer, *Lord, don’t*

charge them with this sin, is strikingly similar to Jesus’ prayer at his crucifixion (Luke 23:34). Jesus clearly taught his followers the importance of both forgiveness (Matt 6:14-15; Mark 11:25; see Luke 11:4; 17:3-4) and prayer (Luke 11:5-10; 18:1-8; see also Acts 1:12-15; 4:23-31; 12:5; Jas 5:16-18). The Lord answered Stephen’s prayer affirmatively in the case of Saul (Acts 9:1-43).

8:1-4 *Saul*: Cp. 9:1-2; 22:4; 26:9-11; Gal 1:13-14. The result of this *great wave of persecution* was that *all the believers . . . were scattered*. Rather than having their enthusiasm dampened, however, they simply spread the *Good News about Jesus wherever they went*.

Philip Preaches in Samaria

⁴But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went. ⁵Philip, for example, went to the city of Samaria and told the people there about the Messiah. ⁶Crowds listened intently to Philip because they were eager to hear his message and see the miraculous signs he did. ⁷Many evil* spirits were cast out, screaming as they left their victims. And many who had been paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸So there was great joy in that city.

⁹A man named Simon had been a sorcerer there for many years, amazing the people of Samaria and claiming to be someone great. ¹⁰Everyone, from the least to the greatest, often spoke of him as “the Great One—the Power of God.” ¹¹They listened closely to him because for a long time he had astounded them with his magic.

¹²But now the people believed Philip’s

8:7 Greek *unclean*.

message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized. ¹³Then Simon himself believed and was baptized. He began following Philip wherever he went, and he was amazed by the signs and great miracles Philip performed.

¹⁴When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God’s message, they sent Peter and John there. ¹⁵As soon as they arrived, they prayed for these new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸When Simon saw that the Spirit was given when the apostles laid their hands on people, he offered them money to buy this power. ¹⁹“Let me have this power, too,” he

8:4 Acts 8:1; 11:19
 8:5 Acts 6:5; 21:8
 8:6 ἄσημειον (4592) Acts 15:12
 8:7 Matt 10:1 Mark 6:7; 16:17
 8:9 Acts 5:36; 13:6
 8:12 Acts 2:38
 8:13 Acts 19:11
 8:14 Acts 8:1
 8:15 Acts 2:38; 19:2
 8:16 Acts 10:44
 8:17 Acts 6:6; 19:6

PROFILE



PHILIP Empowered and Effective Evangelist

Acts 8:5-8, 26-40

Acts 6:5; 8:4-13; 21:8-9

Philip, a prominent Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Jewish Christian, was one of the first to take the Good News of Christ to those outside the borders of Judaism. Well respected among the early Christians, he was one of seven men chosen to administer the food-distribution program for needy believers in Jerusalem (6:1-6). Philip was a strong and effective evangelist in the power of the Spirit.

When Christians were forced to flee Jerusalem following the death of Stephen (8:4), Philip carried the Good News of Christ north to the ethnically-mixed city of Samaria. There he performed many miraculous healings and exorcisms, and people responded eagerly to his message (8:5-8). Many men and women were baptized, including a notorious sorcerer named Simon (8:9-13). Then, directed by an angel, Philip traveled southwest from Jerusalem toward Gaza (8:26). There, directed by the Spirit, he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, who was returning home after visiting Jerusalem (8:27). When the Ethiopian asked Philip to help him understand Isa 53, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus (Acts 8:26-35), then baptized the man by the roadside (8:36-38). Philip was then suddenly taken away by the Spirit of God to the town of Azotus (8:39-40), where he again preached the Good News. He traveled through all the coastal towns until he came to the large Roman city of Caesarea on the coast, where he settled down (8:40; 21:8-9).

Many years later, Paul spent a night in Philip’s home in Caesarea (21:8). By this time Philip was known as Philip the Evangelist. He had raised four unmarried daughters, all of whom had the gift of prophecy (21:9).

Philip exemplifies early Christian evangelists, whom the Holy Spirit empowered and guided to authenticate their witness (see also 1:8; 3:4-8; 5:12-16; 6:8; 10:9-20; 13:2; 14:8; 16:6-10; 19:11-12; 20:9-12, 22-23). Philip submitted to the power and guidance of the Spirit, and God used him to take the Good News to those beyond the borders of Judaism.

8:7 cast out . . . healed: Miracles often accompany evangelism in Acts (see note on 3:1-11).

8:9-24 Simon the sorcerer was a showman, dazzling the people of Samaria and making self-exalting claims. Simon’s attempt to obtain spiritual power

through payment gave the name *simony* to the later corrupt practice of buying and selling ordination to church leadership (cp. 1 Tim 6:9-10). Peter strongly rebuked Simon’s *wickedness*.

8:14-17 When *the apostles* sent two of their own to *Samaria*, it was an amazing

step in overcoming prejudice (cp. Matt 10:5; Luke 9:52-54; John 4:9; 8:48). Then, it was even more amazing that *Peter and John* prayed that the new Samaritan believers would *receive the Holy Spirit*. This event parallels the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-47)

8:20Matt 10:8
Acts 2:38**8:21**

Ps 78:37

8:22

Acts 2:38

8:23Deut 29:17-18
Isa 58:6**8:24**Exod 8:8
Num 21:7**8:26**Acts 5:19; 6:5
† *angelos* (0032)
‡ Acts 10:3**8:27**1 Kgs 8:41-43
Ps 68:31
Isa 56:3-5
Zeph 3:10**8:32-33**

† Isa 53:7-8

8:32† *amnos* (0286)
‡ 1 Pet 1:19**8:35**Luke 24:27
Acts 18:28**8:36**

Acts 10:47

8:391 Kgs 18:12
2 Kgs 2:16
Ezek 3:12**9:1-29**//Acts 22:3-21;
26:9-18**9:1**

Acts 8:3

exclaimed, “so that when I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Spirit!”

²⁰But Peter replied, “May your money be destroyed with you for thinking God’s gift can be bought! ²¹You can have no part in this, for your heart is not right with God. ²²Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive your evil thoughts, ²³for I can see that you are full of bitter jealousy and are held captive by sin.”

²⁴“Pray to the Lord for me,” Simon exclaimed, “that these terrible things you’ve said won’t happen to me!”

²⁵After testifying and preaching the word of the Lord in Samaria, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem. And they stopped in many Samaritan villages along the way to preach the Good News.

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

²⁶As for Philip, an ^hangel of the Lord said to him, “Go south* down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza.” ²⁷So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹The Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and walk along beside the carriage.”

³⁰Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

³¹The man replied, “How can I, unless

8:26 Or *Go at noon.* **8:32-33** Isa 53:7-8 (Greek version). **8:36** Some manuscripts add verse 37, “You can,” *Philip answered, “if you believe with all your heart.”* And the eunuch replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” **9:1** Greek disciples.

someone instructs me?” And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

³²The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter. And as a ^llamb is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

³³He was humiliated and received no justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.”*

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?” ³⁵So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus.

³⁶As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look! There’s some water! Why can’t I be baptized?”* ³⁸He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰Meanwhile, Philip found himself farther north at the town of Azotus. He preached the Good News there and in every town along the way until he came to Caesarea.

Saul’s Conversion (9:1-31)

The Experience of Saul near Damascus

9 Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord’s followers.* So he went to the high

and marks the spread of the Holy Spirit’s power from Judea to Samaria (1:8).

8:24 *Simon* recognized the need for Peter to intercede in prayer for him, but it is not clear that he repented and turned from his wickedness. His main concern was apparently to avoid the *terrible* consequences that Peter predicted when his wicked motives were exposed.

8:26-40 *Philip* obeyed the Holy Spirit’s leading and then seized the opportunity to share the message of *Good News* with a *eunuch on the desert road . . . from Jerusalem to Gaza*. This incident shows Philip’s remarkable effectiveness as a Christian apologist and evangelist in his outreach for Christ and in his commitment to bringing the Good News to all people regardless of social class or ethnicity.

8:27 In the ancient world, a *eunuch* was an official, typically castrated, who served in a royal court (see 2 Kgs 9:30-32; Esth 1:10; 2:3, 14-15, 21; 4:4-5). Eunuchs were often scorned by Jews because they could not perpetuate the covenant family, and

the law of Moses excluded men who had damaged genitals from the assembly of Israel (Deut 23:1; cp. Lev 21:17-23), but Isaiah spoke of God’s acceptance of Gentiles and eunuchs (Isa 56:3-8; see also Matt 19:12). In the new covenant, all who have genuine faith have a place among the people of God. • The eunuch had traveled from Africa *to Jerusalem to worship* in the Temple, probably for one of the great Jewish festivals.

8:29 *The Holy Spirit* guides the servants of God in where, when, and what to preach, teach, or do (9:15; 10:19-20; 11:12; 16:6; 1 Cor 2:13; 1 Pet 1:12). See “The Holy Spirit’s Presence,” Acts 1:8.

8:32-33 *The passage of Scripture* was Isa 53:7-8, one of the Servant Songs of Isaiah, a passage that speaks of the suffering servant of the Lord.

8:39-40 *After the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away*, Philip continued northward from *Azotus* (=Ashdod, 1 Sam 5:1-7; Neh 13:23-24; Isa 20:1) up the coast, preaching *in every town along the*

way until he came to Caesarea, where he settled (Acts 21:8). • *Caesarea Maritima*, a major seaport on the Mediterranean, was the seat of Roman government in Judea. It was built by Herod the Great about 22–9 bc and was named to honor Emperor Caesar Augustus.

9:1-19 The conversion of *Saul* of Tarsus on the *Damascus* road is of central importance to the narrative of Acts—Luke recounts the story three times (also 22:1-21; 26:1-29). Paul alludes to this experience several times in his letters (1 Cor 15:8-10; Gal 1:11-17; Phil 3:4-11; see 1 Tim 1:12-17). Saul’s conversion was his prophetic call and commission as an apostle (Acts 9:15; 22:15, 21; 26:15-18). No one is beyond the power of God to reach, redeem, and use them for holy purposes—nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). Paul was prepared through his training, upbringing, and experience to play a unique role in taking the gospel into the broader world as the “apostle to the Gentiles” (Rom 11:13; see 1 Cor 15:9; 2 Cor 12:11-12; Gal 1:1; Eph 3:8).

priest. ²He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.

³As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?”

⁵“Who are you, lord?” Saul asked.

And the voice replied, “I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! ⁶Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

⁷The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone’s voice but saw no one! ⁸Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. ⁹He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

The Role of Ananias

¹⁰Now there was a believer* in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, “Ananias!”

“Yes, Lord!” he replied.

¹¹The Lord said, “Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. ¹²I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again.”

¹³“But Lord,” exclaimed Ananias, “I’ve heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers* in Jerusalem! ¹⁴And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name.”

¹⁵But the Lord said, “Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. ¹⁶And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name’s sake.”

¹⁷So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸Instantly something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. ¹⁹Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength.

Saul in Damascus and Jerusalem

Saul stayed with the believers* in Damascus for a few days. ²⁰And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is indeed the Son of God!”

²¹All who heard him were amazed. “Isn’t this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus’ followers in Jerusalem?” they asked. “And didn’t he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?”

²²Saul’s preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn’t refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. ²³After a while some of the Jews

9:2 Acts 9:14; 22:4
 9:3 Acts 22:6-7; 26:12-13 1 Cor 15:8
 9:5 Acts 5:39
 9:7 Dan 10:7 Acts 22:9; 26:14
 9:10 Acts 10:3; 11:5; 12:9; 22:12
 9:11 Acts 21:39
 9:13 Acts 26:10
 9:15 Acts 13:2 Rom 1:1 Gal 1:15-16 1 Tim 1:12
 9:16 Acts 20:23; 21:11 2 Cor 11:23-27
 9:17 Acts 13:52; 22:12-13 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8
 9:18 *ibaptizo* (0907) → Acts 11:16
 9:19 Acts 26:20
 9:21 Acts 8:3
 9:22 Acts 18:28
 9:23 Acts 23:12

9:10 Greek *disciple*; also in 9:26, 36. 9:13 Greek *God’s holy people*; also in 9:32, 41. 9:19 Greek *disciples*; also in 9:26, 38.

9:2 The *synagogues* (Greek *synagōgē*, “gathering place”) were local Jewish meeting places. After the Exile, Jews began to meet in local synagogues as places of instruction and centers of worship. Synagogue services consisted of the reading of the Law and the Prophets, exposition of the Scriptures, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving (see 13:15; 15:21; Neh 9:5; Matt 6:5; Luke 4:16-21). Jesus attended, taught, preached, and performed miracles in synagogues (Matt 12:9-10; Mark 1:21, 39; Luke 4:16; 13:10-13; John 6:59; 18:20), as did the apostles (see Acts 9:20; 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19, 26). • **Damascus**, the capital of Syria, was an important center with a long and distinguished past and the nearest major city outside of Palestine. It took from four to six days to reach Damascus from Jerusalem, a fact that highlights Saul’s earnestness (9:1-5; see 22:4-8; 26:9-15). • The term *the Way* is used in Acts for Christianity (see 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22)—it is “the way

of God” (18:26) that tells people “how to be saved” (16:17, literally *the way of salvation*). See also John 14:6; 2 Pet 2:2.
9:10 Ananias: See also 22:12. The name Ananias was quite common (note the husband of Sapphira, 5:1, and the Jewish high priest [AD 47–59], 23:2). • **a vision**: See “Visions,” 10:9-16.
9:15 Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles: In God’s plan for spreading the Good News, the Gentiles were the next step (see 1:8; cp. chs 10–11). Saul of Tarsus (Paul) was God’s choice to spearhead this expansive missionary effort to bring the Christian message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. The rest of Acts illustrates Saul’s (Paul’s) faithfulness in carrying out this divine commission (e.g., 26:19-23).
9:16 As Jesus predicted, Paul suffered greatly for his faith (see 2 Cor 11:23-27; see Acts 13:45; 14:19; 16:22-27; 21:30-31; 26:21; 2 Tim 1:11-12).

9:17 Ananias’s God-given role was to welcome Saul into the Christian family, beginning with laying hands on Saul to heal him and fill him with the Holy Spirit.
9:20-21 immediately he began preaching about Jesus: The genuineness of Saul’s encounter with the risen Christ is attested by the enthusiasm and boldness of his preaching. Saul’s outspoken declaration provoked astonishment, for he was the very man who had created such devastation among Jesus’ followers in Jerusalem.
9:22-25 Despite the bewilderment of his hearers, Saul so compellingly presented the evidence for the claims of Jesus as Messiah that the non-believing Jews in Damascus found themselves unable to refute it. Apparently this went on for some time (see Gal 1:18), so some of the non-believing Jews launched a plot on his life, but he was spared when some believers let him down out of the city in a large basket. Paul recounts this incident in 2 Cor 11:32-33.

Early Apostolic Journeys

Acts 8:4–11:18

The early chapters of Acts describe several journeys of the apostles and their associates as the Good News began to spread out from Jerusalem into the surrounding areas.



The Baptism of the Eunuch, Rembrandt

Philip (8:5-8, 23-40)

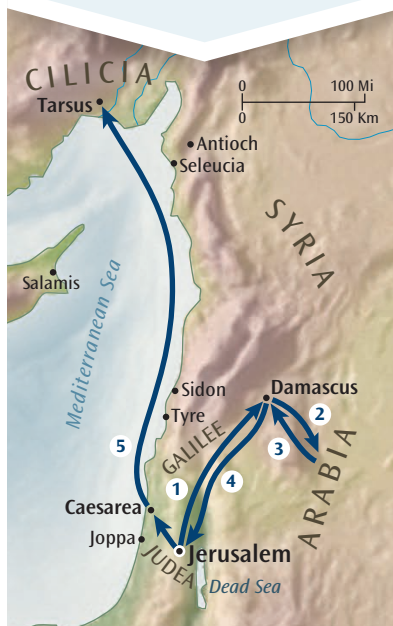
When persecution began sweeping over the church in Jerusalem (8:3-4), Philip (1) traveled north to Samaria, where he proclaimed the Good News and many people became believers. Later, (2) God's Spirit directed Philip to go south toward Gaza. Along the way, he evangelized an Ethiopian eunuch. After the eunuch was baptized, (3) the Spirit "snatched Philip away" to Azotus (8:39-40). (4) Philip preached and traveled north to Caesarea, where he continued to live (21:8-9).



The Conversion on the Way to Damascus, Caravaggio

Saul (Paul) (9:1-31)

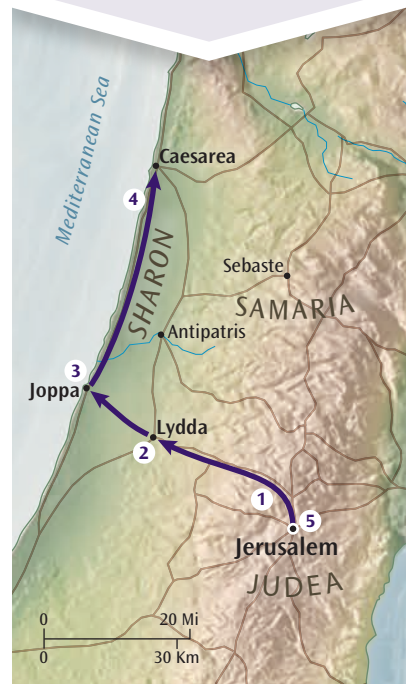
In his zeal to stamp out Christianity, Saul (1) traveled north toward Damascus, where he intended to arrest believers, but along the way Christ appeared to him. In Damascus, Saul was baptized and began preaching about Jesus (9:20-23). During this time, Saul evidently (2) traveled to Arabia and (3) back (see Gal 1:17). After three years in Damascus, he escaped a plot against his life and (4) went to Jerusalem, where he finally met with the apostles (Acts 9:26-28; see Gal 1:18). There, too, he faced death threats, so after a visit of about two weeks he was taken to Caesarea and (5) sailed to Tarsus, his hometown (Acts 9:29-30; see Gal 1:21), where he stayed for approximately ten years (AD 37-47; see Acts 11:25-26).



St. Peter Baptizing the Centurion, Cornelius, Alberto Carlieri

Peter (9:32-11:18)

Sometime after meeting Saul in Jerusalem (9:26-28; see Gal 1:18; about AD 37), (1) Peter left Jerusalem and began traveling "from place to place." (2) He first went to Lydda (Acts 9:32-38) (3) and then Joppa, where he stayed "a long time" (9:39-43). He was there when (4) the Lord sent messengers from Cornelius and prompted Peter to go to Caesarea, where Cornelius and his household heard the Good News and believed (10:1-48). After staying a few days, (5) Peter returned to Jerusalem and gave the church a report of what had happened (11:1-18).



PAUL (SAUL)

Apostle to the Gentiles

Acts 9:1-31

Acts 7:58-8:3;
11:25-30;
12:25-28:31;
Rom 1:1-16:27;
1 Cor 1:1-16:24;
2 Cor 1:1-13:14;
Gal 1:1-6:18;
Eph 1:1-4:24;
Phil 1:1-4:23;
Col 1:1-4:18;
1 Thes 1:1-5:28;
2 Thes 1:1-3:18;
1 Tim 1:1-6:21;
2 Tim 1:1-4:22;
Titus 1:1-3:15;
Phlm 1:1-25;
2 Pet 3:15-16

Paul was a leading persecutor of the early Christians who later became an apostle of Jesus Christ, the most illustrious of the early Christian missionaries, and the great apostle to the Gentiles. He has done more to shape Christianity than any other individual except Christ himself. We know about him from Luke's account of his conversion and ministry in Acts and from the thirteen letters bearing his name in the New Testament.

Paul was born in Tarsus to Jewish parents who were Roman citizens (through which he himself acquired Roman citizenship) and grew up in a traditional Jewish home. A tent-maker (or leatherworker) by trade, he was educated as a Pharisee by the well-known rabbi Gamaliel in Jerusalem. He became active in the violent persecution of Christians as a young man (22:3-5). But through a life-changing, personal revelation of the resurrected Jesus (9:3-6; 22:6-10), he was radically converted. He then dedicated the rest of his life to proclaiming Jesus as Savior and Lord throughout the Mediterranean world (see Gal 1:11-16). His dedication and hard work, especially among Gentiles (to whom he was specifically called), resulted in the founding of scores of churches during the first century. Most of his letters were written to these churches.

Paul's belief in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah

set him apart from his Jewish contemporaries. His vision of Jesus (Acts 9:1-43) brought him to the realization that Jesus' death and resurrection bring righteousness and life-transforming power to those who believe in him. Paul no longer understood righteousness in terms of the careful observance of the law of Moses, but as a gift from God to those who put their trust in Christ, the Savior who died for their sins (Rom 4:1-8). And he was convinced that this gift is for Gentiles as well as Jews (Rom 3:21-26).

Paul's thirteen letters deal with a wide range of issues, such as salvation and what Christians believe about Christ (Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians), specific problems in the church (1 Corinthians), the nature of Christian life and community (Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians), Paul's own authority as an apostle (2 Corinthians, Galatians). Some of his letters are intended to encourage young believers who are suffering for their faith (Philippians, 1 Thessalonians) or to correct false teachings (Galatians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians). Still others are written to individuals, giving specific advice related to their life and ministry (1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon). Together, these thirteen letters reveal much about the life of the earliest Christians and

AD 35

AD 40

AD 45

Pentecost,

AD 30 or 33

The birth of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-47)

AD 33~34

Saul persecutes the church of Judea (Acts 8:1-3; Gal 1:13-14)

about AD 34

Saul's conversion near Damascus (Acts 9:1-19; Gal 1:15-16)

about AD 35

Saul's retreat in Arabia (Gal 1:17); *Saul is sent to Tarsus* (Acts 9:30)

AD 37~38:

Barnabas and Paul's first trip to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30; Gal 1:18-20)

about AD 37

Barnabas goes to Tarsus and takes Saul to Antioch (Acts 11:25-26)

about AD 47

Barnabas and Paul travel to Jerusalem with famine relief (Acts 12:25; Gal 2:1-10)

AD 47~48: *Barnabas and Paul's first missionary journey* (Acts 13:4-14:28)

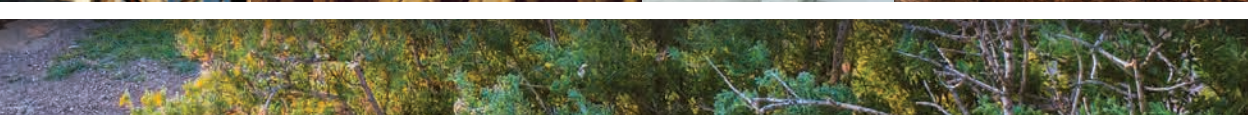
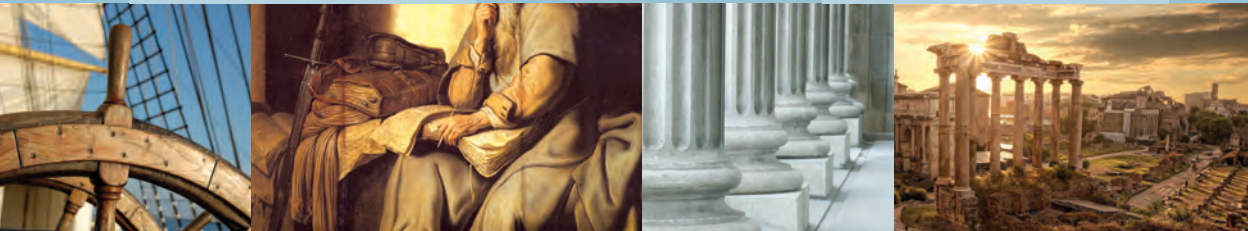
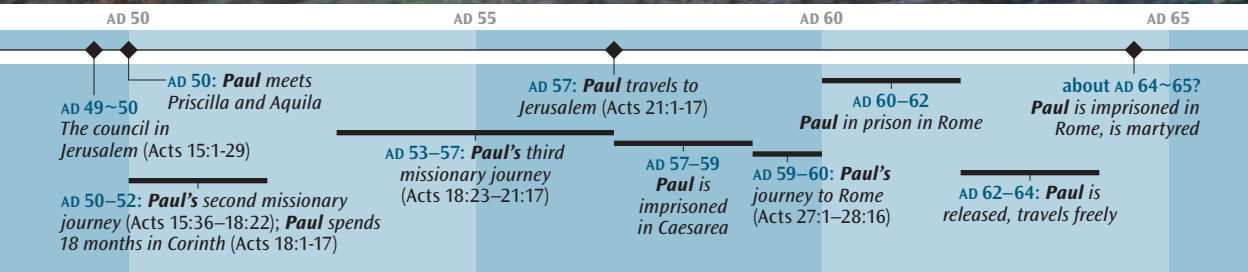


the problems they faced, and about Paul's own grace-centered understanding of the Christian faith and life.

Paul's letters, with their strong focus on Christ, reflect his all-consuming passion for Christ and his twin convictions that (1) salvation is given only to those who put their faith in Christ as Savior (Gal 2:16), and (2) every part of a believer's life is to be devoted to serving Christ as Lord (Rom 14:7-9; 2 Cor 5:15). Of all the NT writers, it is Paul who spells out most clearly what salvation is (Rom 1–8) and gives us the fullest picture of the Christian life and Christian community. Paul's letters also highlight the power of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives (Eph 5:18; cp. Gal 2:20; Col 1:27). He encourages believers to pursue the high standard of a life that is truly like Christ (Rom 8:30; Eph 4:13, 15; 5:1). Believers are to live a life of love (1 Cor 13:1-13; Eph 5:2) and fully submit to Christ. Paul, more than any other NT writer, shows us how and why Christians must always find their deepest roots and motivation in the

grace of Christ (Rom 12:1-2). For Paul, the whole of a believer's life—and indeed, the entire universe—is centered in Christ and Christ alone; everything finds its true meaning only in relation to him (Col 1:15-20; 2:6–3:4).

Luke's account of Paul's missionary life, which spans a period of perhaps thirty years, begins with Paul's preaching in Damascus shortly after his conversion (about AD 32~35) and ends with his imprisonment in Rome (AD 60–62). But the Pastoral Letters (1 Timothy—Titus) appear to be dated to a later time, and reliable later traditions affirm that Paul was released from prison (around AD 62) and continued his missionary activity. He was later rearrested and—after a lifetime of suffering as an evangelist for Christ—finally killed in Nero's persecution of Christians around AD 64~67. Paul's desire, not only to suffer as Christ suffered but also to die as Christ died, was thus fulfilled—with the sure hope of one day being resurrected, just as Christ was resurrected (Phil 3:10-11).



plotted together to kill him. ²⁴They were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him, but Saul was told about their plot. ²⁵So during the night, some of the other believers* lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the city wall.

²⁶When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer! ²⁷Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus.

²⁸So Saul stayed with the apostles and went all around Jerusalem with them, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. ²⁹He debated with some Greek-speaking Jews, but they tried

9:25 Greek *his disciples*. 9:30 Greek *brothers*.

to murder him. ³⁰When the believers* heard about this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus, his hometown.

Summary of the Church

³¹The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers.

The Mission of Peter to the Gentiles (9:32–11:18)

Peter Heals Aeneas and Raises Dorcas

³²Meanwhile, Peter traveled from place to place, and he came down to visit the believers in the town of Lydda. ³³There he met a man named Aeneas, who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. ³⁴Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! Get up, and roll up your sleeping mat!” And he was

9:24 Acts 20:3; 23:16, 20
2 Cor 11:32

9:25 Josh 2:15
1 Sam 19:12
2 Cor 11:33

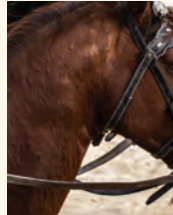
9:26 Acts 22:17-18
Gal 1:17-18

9:27 Acts 4:36

9:31 Acts 8:1

9:32 Acts 8:14

9:34 Acts 3:6; 4:10



ROMAN SOLDIERS (Acts 10:1-8)

Cornelius was both a centurion and a captain in the Roman army (see note on 10:1-8; see also “Rome,” Rom 1:1-7). The Roman military was highly structured. Each company of 100 men formed a *century*, which was headed by a centurion. There were six centuries in a regiment, headed by a captain. Ten regiments formed a legion.

9:26-28 When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, the Christian community understandably did not immediately trust him, given his recent history of violently persecuting Christians (8:3; 9:1, 13; 22:3, 4; 26:9-11). Fortunately, *Barnabas*, the “Son of Encouragement” (4:36), introduced the changed man to *the apostles* and explained his encounter with the Lord at *Damascus*, his sense of call, and his subsequent boldness in preaching *in the name of Jesus in Damascus*. Barnabas was able to convince the apostles that Saul’s conversion was genuine, so Saul remained with the apostles in Jerusalem, where he *preached boldly* for his Lord. Paul recalls this visit in Gal 1:18-19.

9:29 Again Saul *debated with some Greek-speaking Jews*, and again an assassination was planned (cp. 9:22-24).

9:30 After the *believers heard about* the plot, Saul was once again sent away (cp. 9:25), this time *to Tarsus, his hometown*, the capital of Cilicia (see “Early Apostolic Journeys,” 8:4–11:18; see 21:39; 22:3; 23:34; cp. Gal 1:21).

9:31 This verse is one of several in Acts that detail the numerical and spiritual growth of the church (see also 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7; 12:24; 21:20). • The first Christians were discovering the truth of the principle, “*the fear of the Lord* is the foundation of true knowledge” (Prov 1:7;

9:10; cp. Job 28:28; Ps 111:10; Eccl 12:13; see Luke 7:16), and they were growing in their faith (cp. Acts 2:43; 19:17).

9:32-43 These verses describe Peter’s itinerant ministry in Judea, particularly along the seacoast. Exercising spiritual powers given to him by God, Peter performed wonderful works, including the healing of *Aeneas* and the raising of *Dorcas*. Jesus had promised such signs and wonders to the disciples (John 14:12). • Typical of Luke’s writing, the healing of a man is matched by the healing of a woman (see Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6). The people in the area were deeply moved by these miracles, and many were drawn into the faith (Acts 9:35, 42).

9:35

Acts 2:41

9:36

1 Tim 2:10

Titus 3:8

9:40

1 Kgs 17:19-23

2 Kgs 4:32-36

Matt 9:25

John 11:43

9:42

Acts 2:41

9:43

Acts 10:6

10:1-2

Acts 8:40; 27:1, 3

10:3

Acts 3:1

^kangelos (0032)

▶ Acts 12:7

10:4

2 Chr 7:15

Matt 25:40

Rev 8:4

healed instantly. ³⁵Then the whole population of Lydda and Sharon saw Aeneas walking around, and they turned to the Lord.

³⁶There was a believer in Joppa named Tabitha (which in Greek is Dorcas*). She was always doing kind things for others and helping the poor. ³⁷About this time she became ill and died. Her body was washed for burial and laid in an upstairs room. ³⁸But the believers had heard that Peter was nearby at Lydda, so they sent two men to beg him, "Please come as soon as possible!"

³⁹So Peter returned with them; and as soon as he arrived, they took him to the upstairs room. The room was filled with widows who were weeping and showing him the coats and other clothes Dorcas had made for them. ⁴⁰But Peter asked them all to leave the room; then he knelt and prayed. Turning to the body he said, "Get up, Tabitha." And she

opened her eyes! When she saw Peter, she sat up! ⁴¹He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then he called in the widows and all the believers, and he presented her to them alive.

⁴²The news spread through the whole town, and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³And Peter stayed a long time in Joppa, living with Simon, a tanner of hides.

Cornelius Calls for Peter

10 In Caesarea there lived a Roman army officer* named Cornelius, who was a captain of the Italian Regiment. ²He was a devout, God-fearing man, as was everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God. ³One afternoon about three o'clock, he had a vision in which he saw an ^kangel of God coming toward him. "Cornelius!" the angel said.

⁴Cornelius stared at him in terror. "What is it, sir?" he asked the angel.

9:36 The names *Tabitha* in Aramaic and *Dorcas* in Greek both mean "gazelle." 10:1 Greek a *centurion*; similarly in 10:22.



Visions

Visions are closely related to other revelatory experiences such as dreams (Gen 37:5-10; 40:9-13). Classic examples include Ezekiel's vision of the valley of the dry bones (Ezek 37:1-14) and Isaiah's vision of God's throne (Isa 6).

Visions are prominent in Acts, and they are usually connected with prayer (Acts 9:11-12; 16:9, 10; 22:17-21; 23:11; see Luke 1:8-20). Cornelius was praying when an angel visited him (Acts 10:4, 30-32). The following day, Peter received a vision as he prayed (10:9-12; see 11:5-9). In the previous chapter of Acts, the visions of Paul and Ananias are connected with prayer and highlight God's involvement in their lives (9:3-6, 10-16). These visions are not chance coincidences but the providential outworking of God's saving purpose in the world.

Visions give divine direction and show Christian workers the way in which they should carry out the Great Commission (see 1:8; Matt 28:16-20; Luke 24:47; see also Mark 16:15; John 20:21-23). Paul had visions on the Damascus road at his conversion (Acts 9:5; 22:7-10; 26:14-19), on the threshold of his missionary advance into Europe (16:9), at Corinth (18:9, 10), in the Temple (22:17-18), and again in Jerusalem before he set out on his trip to Rome (23:11). Through visions God is active in guiding the affairs of the church and in extending its mission (see the notes on 10:3, 9-16; 22:17-22; 23:11; see also Gal 1:8-9 and note).

9:43 living with Simon, a tanner of hides: Tanning was an unclean business in Jewish eyes, which might suggest that Peter was not scrupulous in observing Jewish traditions (cp. Gal 2:11-14).

10:1-8 a Roman army officer: Literally a *centurion*, the highest-ranking non-commissioned officer in the Roman army, in command of a *century*, a subdivision of roughly 100 men. Luke often describes centurions in favorable terms (10:22; 21:32; 22:25-26; 23:17, 23; 27:6, 11, 43; 28:16; Luke 7:1-10; 23:47). It was important for Luke to show that Christianity was not hostile to Roman officials or institutions and

could, like Judaism, be permitted in the Roman empire (see Acts Introduction, "Purposes of Acts: Politics"). • **a captain of the Italian Regiment:** A regiment included six centuries; a Roman legion was usually divided into ten regiments. The NT mentions the Italian Regiment and the Imperial Regiment (Acts 27:1).

10:2 a devout, God-fearing man: Gentiles who are described as *God-fearing* were attracted to the high ethical standards of Judaism but were not prepared to accept the rite of circumcision or the full implications of the Jewish law by becoming full converts to Judaism (cp. 13:43). Christianity was

an attractive option to Gentiles who worshipped God (18:7; see 13:48; 16:30; 17:4, 12, 17). These people would be wide open to the message of the gospel that announced that "there is peace with God through Jesus Christ" (10:36).

10:3 In Acts, visions are usually related to prayer (9:3-6, 10-16; 10:2-6, 9-12; 11:5-9; 12:9-17; 18:9-10; 22:17-21; 23:11). These visions are not chance coincidences, but expressions of God's saving work, providing divine direction and encouragement.

And the angel replied, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering!⁵ Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter.⁶ He is staying with Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.”

⁷As soon as the angel was gone, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier, one of his personal attendants.⁸ He told them what had happened and sent them off to Joppa.

Peter Visits Cornelius

⁹The next day as Cornelius’s messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon,¹⁰ and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance.¹¹ He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners.¹² In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds.¹³ Then a voice said to him, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.”

¹⁴“No, Lord,” Peter declared. “I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean.*”

¹⁵But the voice spoke again: “Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.”

¹⁶The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven.

¹⁷Peter was very perplexed. What could the vision mean? Just then the men sent by Cornelius found Simon’s house. Standing outside the gate,¹⁸ they asked if a man named Simon Peter was staying there.

¹⁹Meanwhile, as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, “Three men have come looking for you.²⁰ Get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitation. Don’t worry, for I have sent them.”

²¹So Peter went down and said, “I’m the man you are looking for. Why have you come?”

²²They said, “We were sent by Cornelius, a Roman officer. He is a devout and God-fearing

10:14 Greek *anything common and unclean*.

man, well respected by all the Jews. A holy angel instructed him to summon you to his house so that he can hear your message.”²³ So Peter invited the men to stay for the night. The next day he went with them, accompanied by some of the brothers from Joppa.

²⁴They arrived in Caesarea the following day. Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.²⁵ As Peter entered his home, Cornelius fell at his feet and worshiped him.²⁶ But Peter pulled him up and said, “Stand up! I’m a human being just like you!”²⁷ So they talked together and went inside, where many others were assembled.

²⁸Peter told them, “You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean.²⁹ So I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. Now tell me why you sent for me.”

³⁰Cornelius replied, “Four days ago I was praying in my house about this same time, three o’clock in the afternoon. Suddenly, a man in dazzling clothes was standing in front of me.³¹ He told me, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your gifts to the poor have been noticed by God!’³² Now send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. He is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.’³³ So I sent for you at once, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here, waiting before God to hear the message the Lord has given you.”

The Gentiles Hear the Good News

³⁴Then Peter replied, “I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism.³⁵ In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right.³⁶ This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is ¹peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.³⁷ You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee, after John

10:6 Acts 9:43

10:9-32 //Acts 11:5-14

10:11 Ezek 1:1-3 Matt 3:16 Acts 7:56

10:14 Lev 11:1-47 Ezek 4:14

10:15 Matt 15:11 Rom 14:14, 17, 20 1 Cor 10:25 1 Tim 4:3-4 Titus 1:15

10:19 Acts 11:12; 13:2

10:20 Acts 15:7-9

10:22 Acts 10:2

10:23 Acts 10:45; 11:12

10:24 Acts 8:40

10:25-26 Acts 14:13-15 Rev 19:10; 22:9

10:28 John 4:9 Acts 11:3; 15:9

10:30-33 Acts 10:1-8

10:34 Deut 10:17 Rom 2:11 Col 3:25

10:35 Acts 15:9

10:36 Rom 5:1 Eph 2:1 ¹leiréne (1515) ¹ Rom 5:1

10:9-16 Peter received the same vision three times to confirm its truthfulness (see Gen 41:32; 2 Cor 13:1).

10:14 See Lev 11 for a description of animals that Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean.

10:17 Peter was very perplexed: The meaning of the vision would become clear through the events that followed (10:17-48; see 11:1-18): Peter should not hesitate to enter or even eat in the home of a Gentile because God has accepted Gentiles and cleansed them.

10:25-26 Cornelius . . . worshiped him:

This act must have been more than traditional obedience to a high-ranking person. The Bible restricts worship to God alone (see 14:11-17; Exod 20:3; Deut 5:7; Matt 22:37-38; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27; 1 Cor 10:14; Col 3:5; 1 Pet 4:3; 1 Jn 5:21; Rev 4:10; 9:20; 22:8-9). Peter was just a fellow human being whom Cornelius should not worship.

10:34-35 God shows no favoritism: See Deut 10:17; 2 Chr 19:7; Job 34:19; Luke 20:21; Rom 2:11; Gal 2:6; Col 3:25; 1 Pet 1:17. The application of this principle is

the meaning of Peter’s vision (10:9-16).

• *In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right:* See Rom 10:11-13.

10:36-43 Peter repeatedly underscores the importance of the apostolic witness to the message of Good News. The apostles ate and drank with Jesus (see Luke 24:41-43) and were eyewitnesses of his resurrection, so they could attest that he had conquered death (see Acts 3:15; 4:33; 13:30-31). The original apostles were chosen in advance to be his witnesses (see 1:12-26); gradually, others

10:38
Luke 4:18-19

10:39
Luke 24:48

10:40-41
John 21:12-13

10:42
Matt 28:19
2 Cor 5:10

10:43
Isa 53:11
Jer 31:34

10:44
Acts 11:15; 15:8

10:46
Mark 16:17
Acts 2:4; 19:6
mglossa (1100)
Acts 19:6

10:47
Acts 8:36; 11:17

10:48
Acts 2:38; 19:5

11:3
Acts 10:28
Gal 2:12

began preaching his message of baptism. ³⁸And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

³⁹“And we apostles are witnesses of all he did throughout Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a cross,^{*} ⁴⁰but God raised him to life on the third day. Then God allowed him to appear, ⁴¹not to the general public,^{*} but to us whom God had chosen in advance to be his witnesses. We were those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead. ⁴³He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name.”

10:39 Greek on a tree. **10:41** Greek the people. **10:45** Greek The faithful ones of the circumcision. **10:46** Or in other languages. **11:1** Greek brothers. **11:2** Greek those of the circumcision.

The Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit

⁴⁴Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. ⁴⁵The Jewish believers^{*} who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in other ^mtongues^{*} and praising God.

Then Peter asked, ⁴⁷“Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?” ⁴⁸So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterward Cornelius asked him to stay with them for several days.

Peter Explains His Actions

11 Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers^{*} in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God. ²But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers^{*} criticized him. ³“You



Acts 10:34-43

Matt 4:23-24; 24:14
Mark 1:1, 14-15
Luke 4:18-21
Acts 2:14-40;
3:12-26; 8:25-40;
13:16-41; 16:31;
17:16-31; 20:21
Rom 1:1-5, 15-17;
10:15-17; 16:25-27
1 Cor 1:18; 15:3-8
2 Cor 4:3-7
Eph 1:13; 2:4-18
2 Thes 2:13-14
2 Tim 1:9-10; 2:8-13
Heb 4:1-16
1 Pet 1:3-12
Rev 14:6-7

The Good News Message

The apostles proclaimed the Good News message in a definite sequence, with the following elements: (1) the OT promises have been fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (2) God has exalted Jesus by resurrecting him to be the head of the new Israel as the divinely appointed Messiah. (3) The apostles were witnesses of God's work in Jesus Christ, both as eyewitnesses of his public ministry and resurrection (13:31) and as his chosen advocates (1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39-43). (4) The proper response to this Good News is repentance and faith (2:38; 3:19; 13:39, 48; 17:30, 34; 20:21; 26:20). (5) The Holy Spirit is promised to those who accept this offer of God's forgiveness and salvation from sin through Jesus Christ.

This basic message was repeatedly preached to many people, both Jews and Gentiles, throughout the Mediterranean world (note 1:8; 9:15; 28:31). It is echoed in the sermons of 2:1-47, 3:1-26, 4:1-37, 5:1-42, 8:1-40, 10:1-48, and 13:1-52. The same themes characterize Paul's preaching (e.g., 1 Cor 15:3-9).

All people are summoned to repentance from sin and faith in the saving power of Jesus (Acts 4:12; 13:38; 16:31)—through his death we can be “declared right with God” (13:39). Because the message is crucial to people's destiny, those who proclaim it are warned not to change it (13:40-42; see Heb 2:3).

such as Paul and Barnabas carried on this powerful preaching and teaching in the name of Jesus Christ (9:15; 14:1-3; 26:16).

10:43 Based on what they had seen and heard (10:39-42), the apostles could proclaim that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed *the one all the prophets testified about*. The whole plan of the Scriptures is profoundly centered in Christ (see Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; John 5:39). • The major point of their message was that *everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name* (see Luke 24:47).

10:44-48 On the day of Pentecost, Peter told the assembly that if they would

repent, turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, they would receive “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (2:38; cp. 19:1-7). As Cornelius and his household listened to Peter's message, *the Holy Spirit fell upon* them, too, and they were *baptized* (see “Baptism,” 2:38, 41). They received the Holy Spirit *just as* the Jews did, so clearly God had shown no partiality (10:34-35). This event parallels the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (2:1-47) and marks the spread of the Holy Spirit's power to Gentiles (1:8; 2:39).

10:48 Cornelius asked Peter to stay with them for several days, perhaps because

of his need for instruction in the Christian way.

11:1-18 Jews traditionally kept themselves separate and did not eat or associate socially with Gentiles (10:28; 22:21-22; see John 4:9, 27; 18:28; Gal 2:12-14). Therefore, when the Jewish believers in Jerusalem learned that *Gentiles had received the word of God*, they criticized Peter's unconventional actions and wanted an explanation, which Peter provided.

entered the home of Gentiles* and even ate with them!" they said.

⁴Then Peter told them exactly what had happened. ⁵"I was in the town of Joppa," he said, "and while I was praying, I went into a trance and saw a vision. Something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners from the sky. And it came right down to me. ⁶When I looked inside the sheet, I saw all sorts of tame and wild animals, reptiles, and birds. ⁷And I heard a voice say, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.'

⁸"No, Lord,' I replied. 'I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure or unclean.*'

⁹"But the voice from heaven spoke again: 'Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.' ¹⁰This happened three times before the sheet and all it contained was pulled back up to heaven.

¹¹"Just then three men who had been sent from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were staying. ¹²The Holy Spirit told me to go with them and not to worry that they were Gentiles. These six brothers here

accompanied me, and we soon entered the home of the man who had sent for us. ¹³He told us how an angel had appeared to him in his home and had told him, 'Send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. ¹⁴He will tell you how you and everyone in your household can be saved!

¹⁵"As I began to speak," Peter continued, "the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning. ¹⁶Then I thought of the Lord's words when he said, 'John ⁿbaptized with* water, but you will be ⁿbaptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is I to stand in God's way?"

¹⁸When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, "We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of ^orepenting of their sins and receiving eternal life."

**The Church in Antioch of Syria (11:19-30)
The Ministry of the Greek-Speaking Believers**

¹⁹Meanwhile, the believers who had been scattered during the persecution after Ste-

11:5-14 //Acts 10:9-32
11:12 Acts 10:23, 45
11:13 Acts 10:30-32
11:14 Acts 10:22, 44; 16:31
11:15 Acts 2:4
11:16 Acts 1:5
ⁿbaptizo (0907)
*Acts 16:15
11:17 Acts 10:47
11:18 Acts 13:48
^ometanoia (3341)
*Acts 20:21
11:19 Acts 8:1-4; 13:1; 14:25-27; 15:3

11:3 Greek of uncircumcised men. 11:8 Greek anything common or unclean. 11:16 Or in; also in 11:16b.



PROFILE

HEROD AGRIPPA I Completely Un-Godlike King

Herod Agrippa I was Herod the Great's grandson, Herod Antipas's nephew, and Herodias's brother (see "The Herod Family," Matt 2:1-20). Agrippa I ruled the whole of Palestine for a short time following the death of Jesus, during the very early days of the Christian movement (AD 41-44).

While at school in Rome, Agrippa lived a wanton life, incurring many debts. At one point he stated that he wished his friend Gaius Caligula were emperor rather than Tiberius. This was reported to Tiberius, who imprisoned him. He remained in prison until Tiberius's death six months later.

Upon Caligula's accession to the throne, he rewarded Agrippa by releasing him and giving him Philip the Tetrarch's territories and the northern part of Lysanias's territory as well as the title of king. The title of king aroused the jealousy of Herodias, and Herod Antipas (her husband) was both critical and jealous of Agrippa. Agrippa responded by accusing Antipas of

11:4-17 Peter reviewed the sequence of events, explaining that the whole development was the result of God's initiative (11:12). Peter had eaten with Gentiles because God had made it clear that he should (11:4-12). Peter had then observed the Holy Spirit's definite action of coming upon Gentiles, and he realized that they were being accepted and blessed by God just as Jewish believers had been (11:15-17; see 1:5). Peter was submitting to God's will in admitting Gentiles to the church.

11:18 Peter's logical, straightforward explanation convinced those who had objected—they recognized God's hand at work in the conversion of the Gentiles

and their *receiving eternal life*. However, issues relating to the inclusion of Gentiles would soon provoke a major crisis (15:1-35; Paul's letter to the Galatians).

11:19-26 *The persecution* that followed *Stephen's death* forced believers into other areas (8:1-3), and they *traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch*. • *Antioch of Syria* was a thriving cosmopolitan city, the third-largest in the Roman empire after Rome and Alexandria. Antioch was of central importance in the spread of the Christian message to the Gentile world.

11:20 This outreach effort on the part of Jewish *believers . . . from Cyprus and*

Cyrene was the first systematic attempt to preach to Gentiles *about the Lord Jesus*.

11:21-24 Once again, as had happened in the household of Cornelius, Gentiles *turned to the Lord* in considerable numbers. The explosion of Christian faith into the Gentile world had to remain in harmony with the church at Jerusalem, so the Jerusalem church *sent Barnabas to Antioch* to oversee developments there. He could see that *God's blessing* was on what was happening, so he endorsed it *with joy*.

11:25-26 *Barnabas* recognized the special gifts that *Saul* possessed for preaching and *teaching*. His assessment

11:21

Luke 1:66
Acts 2:41

11:22

Acts 4:36

11:23

Acts 13:43; 14:26;
15:40; 20:24

11:24

Acts 2:41

11:25

*Acts 9:30

11:27

Acts 13:1; 15:32

11:28

Acts 21:10

11:29

Rom 15:26

11:30

Acts 12:25
1 Pet 5:1

12:2

Matt 4:21; 20:23
Mark 10:39

phen's death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. They preached the word of God, but only to Jews. ²⁰However, some of the believers who went to Antioch from Cyprus and Cyrene began preaching to the Gentiles* about the Lord Jesus. ²¹The power of the Lord was with them, and a large number of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord.

The Ministry of Barnabas

²²When the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he arrived and saw this evidence of God's blessing, he was filled with joy, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord. ²⁴Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. And many people were brought to the Lord.

²⁵Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul. ²⁶When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching large crowds of people. (It was at

11:20 Greek *the Hellenists* (i.e., those who speak Greek); other manuscripts read *the Greeks*. 11:26 Greek *disciples*; also in 11:29. 11:29 Greek *the brothers*. 12:1 Greek *Herod the king*. He was the nephew of Herod Antipas and a grandson of Herod the Great.

Antioch that the believers* were first called Christians.)

The Ministry of the Church in Antioch

²⁷During this time some prophets traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them named Agabus stood up in one of the meetings and predicted by the Spirit that a great famine was coming upon the entire Roman world. (This was fulfilled during the reign of Claudius.) ²⁹So the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters* in Judea, everyone giving as much as they could. ³⁰This they did, entrusting their gifts to Barnabas and Saul to take to the elders of the church in Jerusalem.

Persecution in the Jerusalem Church (12:1-25)

The Martyrdom of James

12 About that time King Herod Agrippa* began to persecute some believers in the church. ²He had the apostle James (John's brother) killed with a sword.

conspiracy and orchestrating Antipas's banishment. Agrippa then acquired all of Antipas's territories and property (AD 39).

When his friend Caligula died in AD 41, Agrippa carried the favor of the new emperor, Claudius, whereupon Claudius added Judea and Samaria to Agrippa's domain—territory once ruled by his grandfather, Herod the Great.

Agrippa was an active persecutor of the early Christians. He is remembered for killing the apostle James and having Peter arrested—acts which gained him the favor of the Jews (Acts 12:1-4). The Jews, for their part, liked him more than any of the other Herods. Agrippa died suddenly in AD 44 shortly after his subjects hailed him as a god (12:18-23; see Josephus, *Antiquities* 19.8.2; 19.9.1; *War* 2.11.5).



ABOVE: Roman coin bearing the image of Herod Agrippa I

of Saul's gifts was wise, and it resulted in a fruitful team ministry in Antioch.

11:26 *Christians* was possibly a term of derision. The Greek text uses this term in only two other NT passages (26:28; 1 Pet 4:16).

11:27-28 *some prophets*: See "The Gift of Prophecy," 21:9-11. • *Agabus*: See also 21:10-12.

11:28 *Claudius*, nephew of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1), was the Roman emperor in AD 41–54. His last wife was his niece Agrippina, whose son Nero he adopted.

11:29-30 The upshot of Agabus's prophecy was that the believers in Antioch decided to make a contribution to the

Jewish believers—the *brothers and sisters*—in Judea. The believers in Antioch gave as generously *as they could* and committed the responsibility for this financial aid to leaders they trusted, namely, to *Barnabas* and his fellow worker *Saul*. This unified love and support of Christians for one another was a tangible demonstration of the difference Christ had made in their lives. Paul describes this visit in his letter to the Galatians (Gal 2:1-10).

11:30 This is the first reference in Acts to *elders* as officers of the Christian church (see also 14:23; 15:2-23; 16:4; 20:17-35; 21:18; cp. 1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

12:1-5 Jesus had clearly predicted persecution and hardship for his followers (Luke 11:49-51). For the first time since Jesus' death, Roman authorities took direct violent action against the church. *James*, the brother of John, was one of the first called to be a disciple (Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11), and he was one of the first Christians to be martyred for his faith. • *King Herod Agrippa* attacked the church (cp. Acts 12:20-23), a move that he found to be politically helpful with *the Jewish people*. The letter of James, the brother of Jesus, was probably written after this persecution to the scattered Christians (see 8:1-4; James Introduction, "Date of Writing").

The Imprisonment and Escape of Peter

³When Herod saw how much this pleased the Jewish people, he also arrested Peter. (This took place during the Passover celebration.)*⁴Then he imprisoned him, placing him under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring Peter out for public trial after the Passover. ⁵But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.

⁶The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, he was asleep, fastened with two chains between two soldiers. Others stood guard at the prison gate. ⁷Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, "Quick! Get up!" And the chains fell off his wrists. ⁸Then the angel told him, "Get dressed and put on your sandals." And he did. "Now put on your coat and follow me," the angel ordered.

⁹So Peter left the cell, following the angel. But all the time he thought it was a vision. He didn't realize it was actually happening. ¹⁰They passed the first and second guard posts and came to the iron gate leading to the city, and this opened for them all by itself. So they passed through and started walking down the street, and then the angel suddenly left him.

¹¹Peter finally came to his senses. "It's really true!" he said. "The Lord has sent his angel and saved me from Herod and from what the Jewish leaders* had planned to do to me!"

¹²When he realized this, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer. ¹³He knocked at the door in the gate, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to open it. ¹⁴When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the door, she ran back inside and told everyone, "Peter is standing at the door!"

12:3 Greek *the days of unleavened bread*. 12:11 Or *the Jewish people*. 12:25 Or *mission, they returned to Jerusalem*. Other manuscripts read *mission, they returned from Jerusalem*; still others read *mission, they returned from Jerusalem to Antioch*.

12:4 Herod had Peter guarded by *four squads* of soldiers, making it humanly impossible for the apostle to escape (cp. 12:6). However, God was in charge, and nothing is too hard for him (cp. 4:27-31; Gen 18:14; Jer 32:17, 27; Matt 19:26; Mark 10:27; Luke 1:37; 18:27).

12:5 *the church prayed very earnestly*: God answers the earnest prayers of his people (12:6-17; see Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8; cp. Matt 7:7-11; John 15:7; Phil 4:6-7; Jas 5:16; 1 Jn 3:22).

12:6-19 God, through *an angel*, led Peter out, reunited him with his praying

¹⁵"You're out of your mind!" they said. When she insisted, they decided, "It must be his angel."

¹⁶Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking. When they finally opened the door and saw him, they were amazed. ¹⁷He motioned for them to quiet down and told them how the Lord had led him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers what happened," he said. And then he went to another place.

¹⁸At dawn there was a great commotion among the soldiers about what had happened to Peter. ¹⁹Herod Agrippa ordered a thorough search for him. When he couldn't be found, Herod interrogated the guards and sentenced them to death. Afterward Herod left Judea to stay in Caesarea for a while.

The Death of Herod Agrippa I

²⁰Now Herod was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. So they sent a delegation to make peace with him because their cities were dependent upon Herod's country for food. The delegates won the support of Blastus, Herod's personal assistant, ²¹and an appointment with Herod was granted. When the day arrived, Herod put on his royal robes, sat on his throne, and made a speech to them. ²²The people gave him a great ovation, shouting, "It's the voice of a god, not of a man!"

²³Instantly, an angel of the Lord struck Herod with a sickness, because he accepted the people's worship instead of giving the glory to God. So he was consumed with worms and died.

The Success of the Mission

²⁴Meanwhile, the word of God continued to spread, and there were many new believers.

²⁵When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission to Jerusalem, they returned,* taking John Mark with them.

friends, and sent him out to Caesarea to carry on the work of spreading the Good News. The message advanced despite determined opposition.

12:7-11 See "Angels," 27:23-24.

12:12 *The home of Mary, the mother of John Mark*, was evidently a gathering place for believers. John Mark later became a missionary colleague of Barnabas and Saul (12:25; see "John Mark," 13:4-5, 13).

12:13-17 *Rhoda* was so surprised when Peter appeared that she left him standing at the closed *door*. Both she and the other believers were

amazed by God's answer to their prayers (12:5).

12:18-23 When Peter couldn't be found after a careful *search*, Herod *interrogated the guards* and put them to *death* (cp. 16:27). However, Herod met his own painful end as a divine judgment on his conceit when he *accepted the people's worship*. Josephus records the death of Herod Agrippa I in greater detail (Josephus, *Antiquities* 19.8.1-2).

12:24-25 Herod's demise from a terrible illness (12:23) contrasts with the growth of the Christian church and the unhindered message of Good News (28:31).

12:3
Exod 12:15; 23:15
12:4-10
Acts 5:18-25
12:5
Acts 1:14
Eph 6:18
12:7
Acts 5:19
Pangalos (0032)
Acts 27:23
12:9
Acts 9:10
12:10
Acts 5:19; 16:26
12:11
Ps 34:7
Dan 3:28; 6:22
2 Pet 2:9
12:12
Acts 12:25; 15:37
Col 4:10
1 Pet 5:13
12:15
Matt 18:10
12:17
Acts 15:13; 21:18
12:19
Acts 8:40; 16:27
12:22
Ezek 28:2
12:23
1 Sam 25:38
2 Sam 24:16-17
2 Kgs 19:35
Dan 5:20
12:24
Acts 6:7; 19:20
12:25
Acts 11:29-30

13:1
Acts 11:27
Rom 16:21

13:2
Acts 9:15
Gal 1:15-16

13:3
Acts 6:6

13:5
Acts 9:20; 12:12

13:6
Matt 7:15
Acts 8:9

4. THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE GOES TO THE GENTILES (13:1–21:17)
Paul and Barnabas's First Missionary Journey from Antioch (13:1–14:28)
Barnabas and Saul Are Commissioned

13 Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called “the black man”*), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas*), and Saul. ²One day as these men were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.” ³So after more fasting and prayer, the men

13:1a Greek *who was called Niger*. 13:1b Greek *Herod the tetrarch*.

laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.

Barnabas and Saul in Cyprus

⁴So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus. ⁵There, in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God. John Mark went with them as their assistant.

⁶Afterward they traveled from town to town across the entire island until finally they reached Paphos, where they met a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus.

13:1-3 The *prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch* spent significant time in worship and prayer, earnestly seeking the Lord’s will as they fasted and opened themselves to divine direction. As they prayed, *the Holy Spirit* spoke to them, and they set apart *Barnabas and Saul* in clear recognition of God’s call for them to carry out a *special work* in his name. The believers’ inward journey in prayer and listening to God is matched by their outward journey in service, evangelism, and mighty works of healing and salvation.

13:1 *prophets and teachers*: See “The Gift of Prophecy,” 21:9-11; see also 1 Cor 12:28-29; Eph 4:11. • The name *Simeon* suggests a Jewish background (see Gen 29:33; Luke 2:25; 3:30); he is also called “*the black man*”—he was probably of African descent. • *Lucius* is a Latin name; he came from *Cyrene*, the capital of Libya in North Africa. He was probably one of the preachers from Cyrene who had brought the Christian message to Antioch (Acts 11:20). • *Manaen* had been brought up with *King Herod Antipas*; he was probably Luke’s source for insight into Antipas’s thoughts and actions (see Luke 9:7-9). • *Barnabas* and *Saul* are prominently featured in the subsequent narrative.

13:3 *the men laid their hands on them*: This solemn act was only done *after more fasting and prayer*; the Pastoral Epistles warn against laying hands on a person to appoint that person as a Christian leader without due care and diligence (1 Tim 5:22). At this point, Barnabas and Saul were *sent . . . on their way* as missionaries of the church at Antioch.

13:4 Barnabas and Saul’s first missionary journey was undertaken with a strong consciousness of *the Holy Spirit* as their guide. • *Seleucia* was Antioch’s ancient *seaport*, located about twelve miles (20 km) west of the city at the



ANTIOCH OF SYRIA (Acts 13:1-4)

Antioch was built about 300 BC by the Syrian emperor Seleucus I in honor of his father Antiochus (see “Hellenistic Kingdoms,” Dan 11:4-39). Antioch was a busy, cosmopolitan center of trade, religious reform, and high levels of intellectual and political life. The city played an important role in the book of Acts. Nicholas from Antioch became one of the first deacons in the early church (Acts 6:5). Jewish Christians fled to Antioch from fierce persecution in Jerusalem (11:19). Antioch became an important center for early combined Jewish and Gentile Christianity, and the church there helped support the church in Jerusalem through a famine (11:27-30). Barnabas and Paul were active as leaders in the Antioch church, and were sent as missionaries from there (13:1-3; see “Journeys of Paul and Barnabas,” Acts 13:1–14:28; 15:36–21:17; 27:1–28:16). Antioch continued as an important center for the development of Christian theology until about the AD 700s.

mouth of the Orontes River. • Their journey took them westward by sea to *the island of Cyprus*, which was Barnabas’s homeland (4:36).

13:5 Landing in *the town of Salamis* on the eastern end of Cyprus, they *went to the Jewish synagogues* (see note on 9:2), where the Jews could hear and respond to the Christian message. They would also meet converts to Judaism (see note on 13:43) and spiritually hungry Gentiles who are sometimes described as “God-fearers” (see note on 10:2).

13:6-12 At *Paphos* there was a power struggle with a *false prophet*, with the result that the power of God was manifested and the Roman governor *became a believer*.

13:6 *Paphos* was located on the southwest coast of Cyprus. As the leading city of Cyprus, it was of strategic importance. • *a Jewish sorcerer . . . named Bar-Jesus*: Such eastern magicians often exercised a tremendous influence in the Greco-Roman world.

⁷He had attached himself to the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor invited Barnabas and Saul to visit him, for he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸But Elymas, the sorcerer (as his name means in Greek), interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said. He was trying to keep the governor from believing.

⁹Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked the sorcerer in the eye. ¹⁰Then he said, “You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, and enemy of all that is good! Will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord? ¹¹Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind. You will not see the sunlight for some time.” Instantly mist and darkness

13:13-14 Pamphylia and Pisidia were districts in what is now Turkey. 13:15 Greek from the law.

came over the man’s eyes, and he began groping around begging for someone to take his hand and lead him.

¹²When the governor saw what had happened, he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

Paul and Barnabas in Antioch of Pisidia

¹³Paul and his companions then left Paphos by ship for Pamphylia, landing at the port town of Perga. There John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. ¹⁴But Paul and Barnabas traveled inland to Antioch of Pisidia.*

On the Sabbath they went to the synagogue for the services. ¹⁵After the usual readings from the books of Moses* and the prophets, those in charge of the service sent them this message: “Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, come and give it.”

13:8
2 Tim 3:8

13:9
Acts 2:4

13:10
Hos 14:9
Matt 13:38
John 8:44

13:11
2 Kgs 6:18
Acts 9:8

13:13
Acts 12:12; 15:38

13:14
Acts 14:19, 21

13:15
Acts 15:21



JOHN MARK Useful Deserter, Dynamic Author

John Mark, writer of the earliest Gospel (the Gospel of Mark), was an assistant of three early missionaries—Barnabas, Paul, and Peter.

Mark was taken along as an assistant by Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey. However, for unknown reasons, he left them to return to Jerusalem before the trip was completed (Acts 12:25; 13:4-5, 13). Because of this, when Barnabas wanted to take him along on the second trip, Paul flatly refused. The sharp disagreement that resulted broke the team apart: Barnabas took Mark (his cousin) with him, and Paul chose Silas, and the two pairs went their separate ways (15:36-41).

Later, it appears that Paul and Mark were reconciled and that Mark once again served as his assistant. In Colossians, Paul refers to him as a co-worker and suggests that he may soon be sending him to visit the church in Colosse (Col 4:10; Phlm 1:24). Still later, when Paul was awaiting execution in prison in Rome, he asked Timothy to bring Mark with him, for he thought Mark would be “helpful” (or, “useful”) to him in his ministry (2 Tim 4:11).

Mark also appears to have assisted Peter when Peter was engaged in missionary work in Italy near the end of his life; early Christian tradition speaks of him as Peter’s “interpreter.” In one of Peter’s letters, he speaks endearingly of Mark as his “son” who is with

13:7-8 The governor, *Sergius Paulus*, who was an intelligent man, was attracted to the teaching of Barnabas and Saul. But *Elymas* (the sorcerer’s Greco-Roman name) recognized a challenge to his power and strongly opposed the message of Barnabas and Saul.

13:9 Luke makes the significant transition from the name *Saul* (a Hebrew name) to *Paul* (a Greco-Roman name), perhaps indicating that Paul was now on a predominantly Gentile mission. For the rest of the book of Acts, he is called Paul except when he recounts his conversion (as in 22:7, 13; 26:14).

13:10-11 Paul, who became the chief spokesman, rebuked the sorcerer’s

fraudulent claims, exposed his deceit, and pronounced divine judgment (cp. 8:20-24). The sorcerer was *instantly* struck *blind*, a condition that lasted *for some time*, giving a strong demonstration of the truthfulness and superiority of the apostolic message over the bogus claims of the sorcerer.

13:12 The *teaching about the Lord* included a miraculous demonstration of divine power (cp. Mark 1:21-27), for it was a teaching about the living God (see Acts 14:15).

13:13-14 They landed at the port of *Perga*. From here, major roads opened into the interior beyond the Taurus Mountains. • At this point, *John Mark*

left the team for reasons that are not stated (see note on 15:36-41). Possibly he was unhappy that the Good News was moving out into Gentile lands; possibly he was homesick or otherwise unable to continue a difficult journey. Whatever the reason, he *returned to* the more familiar and comfortable Jewish surroundings of *Jerusalem*.

13:14 *Paul and Barnabas traveled inland* into the high country, and came to *Antioch of Pisidia* (in the Roman province of Galatia in Asia Minor, not to be confused with Antioch in Syria). As was their custom, the apostles began at *the synagogue* (see note on 9:2; cp. 13:5; 14:1; 17:1, 2, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8).

13:17
Exod 6:6-7
Deut 7:6-8

13:18
Exod 16:35
Num 14:34

13:19
Deut 7:1

13:20
Judg 2:16
1 Sam 3:20

13:21
1 Sam 8:5; 10:21-24

13:22
1 Sam 13:14; 16:1, 13

13:23
2 Sam 7:12
Isa 11:1
Luke 2:11
ἠσώτηρ (4990)
▶ Eph 5:23

13:24
Mark 1:4-5

13:25
Mark 1:7
John 1:20

¹⁶So Paul stood, lifted his hand to quiet them, and started speaking. “Men of Israel,” he said, “and you God-fearing Gentiles, listen to me.

¹⁷“The God of this nation of Israel chose our ancestors and made them multiply and grow strong during their stay in Egypt. Then with a powerful arm he led them out of their slavery. ¹⁸He put up with them* through forty years of wandering in the wilderness. ¹⁹Then he destroyed seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to Israel as an inheritance. ²⁰All this took about 450 years.

“After that, God gave them judges to rule until the time of Samuel the prophet. ²¹Then the people begged for a king, and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. ²²But God removed Saul and replaced him

with David, a man about whom God said, ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. He will do everything I want him to do.’*
²³“And it is one of King David’s descendants, Jesus, who is God’s promised Savior of Israel! ²⁴Before he came, John the Baptist preached that all the people of Israel needed to repent of their sins and turn to God and be baptized. ²⁵As John was finishing his ministry he asked, ‘Do you think I am the Messiah? No, I am not! But he is coming soon—and I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the sandals on his feet.’
²⁶“Brothers—you sons of Abraham, and also you God-fearing Gentiles—this message of salvation has been sent to us! ²⁷The people in Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize Jesus as the one the prophets had

13:18 Some manuscripts read *He cared for them*; compare Deut 1:31. **13:22** 1 Sam 13:14.

him (1 Pet 5:13). Early tradition says it was from Peter himself that Mark got the information for his account of the life and words of Jesus. Generally considered to be the earliest of all the Gospels, Mark’s Gospel was almost certainly one of the key sources used by Matthew and Luke when they later wrote their own Gospels. For this reason, Mark’s Gospel is one of the most influential of all the early Christian writings.

Mark’s story reminds us that God can overcome human failings and restore rocky relationships for the sake of Christ and the Good News. Early failures do not disqualify a person from a life of effective service and even lasting significance.



13:15 After the *usual* Scriptures for the day had been read, one *from the books of Moses* and the other *from the prophets* (see Luke 4:16-28), the officials of the synagogue invited the visitors to speak *any word of encouragement for the people*.

13:16-41 Paul accepted the invitation, motioned to *quiet* his audience (cp. 19:33; 21:40), and launched into a straightforward proclamation of the *Good News*. This is Paul’s first great speech in Acts, and it provides a model of his preaching to a Jewish audience (see 22:1-21).

13:17-22 To establish common ground, Paul traced Jewish history from the

Exodus onward, stressing the Jews’ powerful deliverance from Egyptian bondage, the providential occupation of their inheritance in *Canaan*, the establishment of the monarchy, the removal of *Saul*, and the special place of *David*.

13:22 David was *a man after* God’s *own heart* despite his sins (e.g., 2 Sam 11–12).

13:23-25 Paul here moved to the theme of his message: *Jesus*, one of *David’s descendants*, was *God’s promised Savior of Israel*. The Messiah’s way had been prepared by *John the Baptist*, who insisted that *Israel needed to repent . . . and turn to God and be*

baptized. John was a humble servant who simply cleared the ground for the one whose *coming* he announced.

13:26-37 Paul reviewed the shameful treatment Jesus had received, involving unjust condemnation and death. *But God raised Jesus from the dead*, as attested by *witnesses*. This message provides good news, for through Jesus sinners can experience the forgiveness of sins. But this message must be met with faith, or dire consequences will follow.

spoken about. Instead, they condemned him, and in doing this they fulfilled the prophets' words that are read every Sabbath. ²⁸They found no legal reason to execute him, but they asked Pilate to have him killed anyway.

²⁹"When they had done all that the prophecies said about him, they took him down from the cross* and placed him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead! ³¹And over a period of many days he appeared to those who had gone with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to the people of Israel.

³²"And now we are here to bring you this Good News. The promise was made to our ancestors, ³³and God has now fulfilled it for us, their descendants, by raising Jesus. This is what the second psalm says about Jesus:

'You are my Son.
Today I have become your Father.*'

³⁴For God had promised to raise him from the dead, not leaving him to rot in the grave. He said, 'I will give you the sacred blessings I promised to David.*' ³⁵Another psalm explains it more fully: 'You will not allow your Holy One to rot in the grave.*' ³⁶This is not a reference to David, for after David had done the will of God in his own generation, he died and was buried with his ancestors, and his body decayed. ³⁷No, it was a reference to someone else—someone whom God raised and whose body did not decay.

³⁸*"Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. ³⁹Everyone who believes in him is made right in God's sight—something the law of Moses could never do. ⁴⁰Be careful! Don't let the prophets' words apply to you. For they said,

⁴¹ 'Look, you mockers,
be amazed and die!
For I am doing something in your own day,
something you wouldn't believe
even if someone told you about it.*"

⁴²As Paul and Barnabas left the synagogue that day, the people begged them to speak about these things again the next week.

⁴³Many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, and the two men urged them to continue to rely on the grace of God.

Paul and Barnabas Turn to the Gentiles

⁴⁴The following week almost the entire city turned out to hear them preach the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵But when some of the Jews saw the crowds, they were jealous; so they slandered Paul and argued against whatever he said.

⁴⁶Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and declared, "It was necessary that we first preach the word of God to you Jews. But since you have rejected it and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we will offer it to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷For the Lord gave us this command when he said,

'I have made you a light to the Gentiles,
to bring salvation to the farthest
corners of the earth.*"

⁴⁸When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and thanked the Lord for his message; and all who were chosen for eternal life became believers. ⁴⁹So the Lord's message spread throughout that region.

⁵⁰Then the Jews stirred up the influential religious women and the leaders of the city, and they incited a mob against Paul and Barnabas and ran them out of town. ⁵¹So they shook the dust from their feet as a sign

13:28
Matt 27:22-23
Acts 3:14

13:29
Matt 27:59-60
Luke 23:52-53

13:30
Matt 28:6
Acts 2:24

13:31
Luke 24:48
Acts 1:11
1 Cor 15:5

13:32
Rom 1:2-4

13:33
*Ps 2:7
Heb 1:5; 5:5

13:34
*Isa 55:3

13:35
*Ps 16:10

13:36
1 Kgs 2:10

13:37
Acts 2:24

13:39
Rom 3:28; 10:4

13:41
*Hab 1:5

13:45
Acts 8:6
1 Pet 4:4
Jude 1:10

13:46
Acts 18:6

13:47
*Isa 49:6
Luke 2:32

13:48
Rom 8:29-30
Eph 1:4-5, 11
1 Pet 1:2

13:51
Matt 10:14
Mark 6:11
Luke 9:5; 10:11
Acts 18:6

13:29 Greek from the tree. 13:33 Or Today I reveal you as my Son. Ps 2:7. 13:34 Isa 55:3. 13:35 Ps 16:10. 13:38 English translations divide verses 38 and 39 in various ways. 13:41 Hab 1:5 (Greek version). 13:47 Isa 49:6.

13:31 The fact that Jesus was raised from the dead was well documented by *witnesses*.

13:38-41 Paul appealed for them to believe the message about Jesus, through whom *there is forgiveness for your sins*.

13:39 Faith is prerequisite to being *made right in God's sight*; this was not provided for in the *law of Moses* (Ps 14:1-3; see Rom 3:9-20).

13:40-41 Paul closed his message with a strong warning (cp. Heb 2:3). The Good News must not be ignored, neglected, or rejected, or frightening consequences will follow.

13:42-43 The message stirred up interest among the people, and *many* of them were converted.

13:43 Full *converts to Judaism* (also called *proselytes*) were Gentiles who had gone through the rite of circumcision to become full members of the Jewish community, observing the Jewish law (see also 2:11; 6:5; Matt 23:15). • *The grace of God* is a key concept in the NT to describe God's unmerited favor shown preeminently through Jesus Christ (see "The Grace of God," Acts 20:24).

13:44-49 The excitement caused by the apostles' preaching led to a mass turnout on the following week. This response provoked the jealousy of *some of the Jews* (cp. 4:1-2; 5:17), whose ability to win converts to Judaism (13:43) was being dwarfed by Paul's ministry. They verbally attacked Paul and his ministry (cp. 6:8-12; 18:6; 19:9; Matt 23:13). Paul met this hostility with a bold declaration

that these Jews had had their opportunity to hear *the word of God*, and that since they had rejected it, the offer of salvation would now be given to *the Gentiles* (cp. Acts 10:34-35), in accord with the Lord's *command* in Scripture. The local Gentiles welcomed the Good News and many responded to it, so the Lord's message was carried *throughout that region*.

13:50-51 Jewish opposition once again forced *Paul and Barnabas . . . out of town*. They *shook the dust from their feet as a sign of rejection*, as Jesus had taught his disciples (see Matt 10:14-15; Mark 6:11-12; Luke 9:5-6; 10:10-11). That place was then treated as pagan territory, and other people were given access to the message of new life in Christ.

13:52 Despite probable harassment and

13:52

1 Pet 1:8

14:1

Acts 13:45

14:2

2 Tim 3:11

14:3

Heb 2:4

14:4

Acts 28:24

14:5

Acts 14:19; 20:3

2 Tim 3:11

14:6

Matt 10:23

14:8

Acts 3:2

14:10

Acts 3:8

14:11

Acts 28:6

of rejection and went to the town of Iconium. ⁵²And the believers* were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Paul and Barnabas in Iconium

14 The same thing happened in Iconium.* Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue and preached with such power that a great number of both Jews and Greeks became believers. ²Some of the Jews, however, spurned God's message and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas. ³But the apostles stayed there a long time, preaching boldly about the grace of the Lord. And the Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴But the people of the town were divided in their opinion about them. Some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

⁵Then a mob of Gentiles and Jews, along

13:52 Greek *the disciples*. 14:1 Iconium, as well as Lystra and Derbe (14:6), were towns in what is now Turkey.

with their leaders, decided to attack and stone them. ⁶When the apostles learned of it, they fled to the region of Lycaonia—to the towns of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area. ⁷And there they preached the Good News.

Paul and Barnabas in Lystra and Derbe

⁸While they were at Lystra, Paul and Barnabas came upon a man with crippled feet. He had been that way from birth, so he had never walked. He was sitting ⁹and listening as Paul preached. Looking straight at him, Paul realized he had faith to be healed. ¹⁰So Paul called to him in a loud voice, "Stand up!" And the man jumped to his feet and started walking.

¹¹When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in their local dialect, "These men are gods in human form!"

¹²They decided that Barnabas was the Greek god Zeus and that Paul was Hermes, since

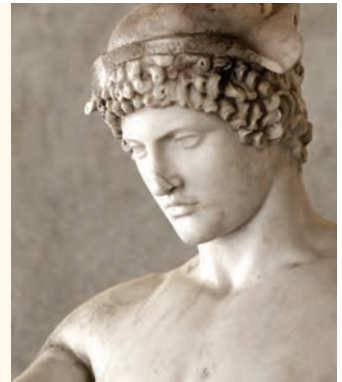
persecution, *the believers were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit* (cp. 5:41; 16:23-25; Matt 5:10-12; 2 Cor 8:2; 1 Thes 1:6).

14:1 The missionaries moved on to the next town, *Iconium* (now called Konya), located east of Pisidian Antioch on a high plateau in south central Asia Minor. Iconium enjoyed a favorable location on several key trade routes. • In their usual fashion, *Paul and Barnabas* began their ministry in the area by speaking powerfully in *the Jewish synagogue*, which led to a great response from *both Jews and Greeks*.

14:2 Once again *Paul and Barnabas* faced hostile *Jews* who rejected the *Christian message* and also *poisoned the minds of the Gentiles*.

14:3 The Spirit-inspired *apostles* were resilient to withstand the verbal attack against them, and they persisted in *preaching* the Good News that God's *grace* was available to Gentiles as well as to Jews. • *boldly*: Spirit-inspired boldness is evident throughout Acts (see 2:14; 4:9-10, 13; 7:2-53; 8:30-35; 9:27-28; 18:26; 19:8; 22:3-21; 23:1-6; 28:16-20, 23-31). • In addition, the Holy Spirit confirmed the Christian message with *miraculous signs and wonders* (cp. 5:12-16; 15:12; 16:18; 19:11).

14:4 The apostolic message required a decision about belief in Jesus, and *opinion* was clearly split. • Paul and Barnabas are called *apostles* for the first time (also in 14:14), extending the idea of apostleship beyond the Twelve. Their message was in continuity with that of the original apostles, and they were prepared to suffer hardship and persecution for it as the earlier apostles had done (5:41; 14:19; 20:24; 21:13-14; see also Rom 8:35-38; 2 Cor 4:8-17).



ZEUS AND HERMES (Acts 14:11-13)

In Greek mythology, Zeus was the chief god, while Hermes was the messenger of the gods and the god of eloquent speech. The people in Lystra acclaimed Barnabas as Zeus, perhaps because of his impressive appearance, and Paul as Hermes because of his miraculous work and role as chief speaker (see note on 14:11-13).

14:6 *Lycaonia* was a southern region of the Roman province of Galatia. Its major cities were Lystra, Derbe, Laranda, and Iconium. Acts reports two more visits by Paul to Lycaonia (16:1-5; 18:23). Paul's letter to the Galatians was probably addressed to scattered believers in the churches of Lycaonia (see Galatians Introduction, "Recipients"). • *Lystra* was located roughly twenty-five miles (40 km) south-southwest of Iconium. • *Derbe*, situated about thirty miles (50 km) southeast of Lystra, was on the busy major road that stretched from Iconium and Lystra eastward to Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia.

14:8-20 Paul's healing of *a man with crippled feet* recalls a similar incident in 3:1-12. In Acts, the work of Paul

parallels the work of Peter, and the many miraculous signs and wonders performed among the Jews were also performed among the Gentiles.

14:9 *Paul realized he had faith to be healed*: Paul, full of the Holy Spirit (9:17), sensed the man's spiritual openness and expectancy for divine help and intervention.

14:11-13 *Zeus* was the patron god of Lystra, and the city had a *temple* in his honor. They associated Barnabas with Zeus, perhaps because he was the more impressive figure, and *Hermes* was identified with *Paul*. . . *since he was the chief speaker*. The native people of Lystra thought that they were being treated to a divine visitation similar to a past

he was the chief speaker. ¹³Now the temple of Zeus was located just outside the town. So the priest of the temple and the crowd brought bulls and wreaths of flowers to the town gates, and they prepared to offer sacrifices to the apostles.

¹⁴But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting, ¹⁵“Friends,* why are you doing this? We are merely human beings—just like you! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. ¹⁶In the past he permitted all the nations to go their own ways, ¹⁷but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, he sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts.” ¹⁸But even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could scarcely restrain the people from sacrificing to them.

¹⁹Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowds to their side. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of town, thinking he was dead. ²⁰But as the believers* gathered around him, he got up and went back into the town. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

Paul and Barnabas Return through Pisidia and Pamphylia

²¹After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, ²²where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that we must

14:15 Greek *Men*. 14:20 Greek *disciples*; also in 14:22, 28. 15:1 Greek *brothers*; also in 15:3, 23, 32, 33, 36, 40.

suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God. ²³Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

²⁴Then they traveled back through Pisidia to Pamphylia. ²⁵They preached the word in Perga, then went down to Attalia.

The Successful Return to the Antioch Church

²⁶Finally, they returned by ship to Antioch of Syria, where their journey had begun. The believers there had entrusted them to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed. ²⁷Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported everything God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too. ²⁸And they stayed there with the believers for a long time.

The Council at Jerusalem: Conflict over Gentiles (15:1-35)

The Challenge of the Judaizers

15 While Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch of Syria, some men from Judea arrived and began to teach the believers*: “Unless you are circumcised as required by the law of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

The Debate in the Jerusalem Church

²Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them, arguing vehemently. Finally, the church decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, accompanied by some local believers, to talk to the ³apostles and elders about this question. ³The church sent the delegates to Jerusalem, and they stopped along the way in Phoenicia and Samaria to visit the

14:15
Exod 20:11
Ps 146:6
Matt 16:16
Acts 10:26
1 Thes 1:9
Rev 14:7
**mataios* (3152)
• 1 Cor 3:20

14:16
Ps 81:12

14:17
Ps 147:8
Rom 1:20

14:19
Acts 13:45
2 Cor 11:25
2 Tim 3:11

14:22
2 Tim 3:12

14:26
Acts 13:1-3

14:27
1 Cor 16:9
Col 4:3
Rev 3:8

15:1
Lev 12:3
Gal 5:2

15:2
Acts 11:30
Gal 2:1-10
**apostolos* (0652)
• 1 Cor 9:1

15:3
Acts 11:19; 14:27

mythological appearance cited by the poet Ovid (in which the gods Zeus and Hermes came to visit the area but were unrecognized except by an old couple; see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.616–724). So the people set out to honor these supposed gods.

14:13-18 The apostles opposed the people’s idolatry and their attempt to offer sacrifices to them. They directed the people’s worship to the living God; the apostles were his representatives as they brought the Good News of the Christian message.

14:19-20 The crowd became fickle when some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and easily turned the people against the apostles. • **They stoned Paul and dragged him out of town:** Paul later referred to this time of persecution as a lesson (2 Tim 3:11-12). • **thinking he was dead:** That Paul got up and went back

into the town suggests that God miraculously healed him of his wounds.

14:20 The next day he left: Paul later returned to Lystra on his second missionary journey (16:1).

14:22-23 The apostles were diligent in following up with those who had made a Christian profession of faith. These new disciples needed to be nurtured, supported, and encouraged (15:32, 41; 16:40; 18:23; see 1 Thes 3:2; 4:18; 5:14). • **Paul and Barnabas . . . appointed elders:** See “Church Leaders,” Titus 1:5-9.

14:26-28 As soon as Paul and Barnabas returned home to Antioch from their first missionary journey, they called the church together and gave a full report of their evangelism and discipleship. They humbly acknowledged divine guidance in opening the door of faith to the Gentiles (see 11:18; 1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12).

Similar reports (Acts 15:4, 12; 21:19) always stressed the activity of God as working through the ministries of his servants (see Rom 15:17-18; 1 Cor 3:5-9; 15:10-11).

15:1 These men from Judea were Jewish Christians who taught the necessity of circumcision (and with it, conversion to Judaism) in order to be saved. The central issue was how Gentiles were to be received into Christian fellowship. Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians about this time to counter the same teaching in Galatia (see Galatians Introduction, “Date of Writing”).

15:2-3 The Antioch church decided to send . . . delegates to Jerusalem to resolve this matter in discussion with the apostles and elders there. En route, the entourage visited believers in Phoenicia and Samaria, where the Christian faith had made substantial inroads (ch 8).

15:5
Acts 15:11
†*nomos* (3551)
‡ Rom 2:12

15:6
‡*logos* (3056)
‡ Rom 14:12

15:7-8
Acts 2:4; 10:44; 11:15

15:9
Acts 10:43
Rom 10:12
†*kardia* (2588)
‡ Acts 21:13

15:10
Matt 23:4
Gal 5:1

15:11
Rom 3:24
Eph 2:5-8

15:12
Acts 14:27; 15:4
†*wsmeion* (4592)
‡ Rom 15:19

15:13
Acts 12:17

15:14
Acts 15:7-9

15:16-17
† Amos 9:11-12

believers. They told them—much to everyone's joy—that the Gentiles, too, were being converted.

⁴When they arrived in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul were welcomed by the whole church, including the apostles and elders. They reported everything God had done through them. ⁵But then some of the believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and insisted, "The Gentile converts must be circumcised and required to follow the law of Moses."

⁶So the apostles and elders met together to resolve this issue. ⁷At the meeting, after a long discussion, Peter stood and addressed them as follows: "Brothers, you all know that God chose me from among you some time ago to preach to the Gentiles so that they could hear the Good News and believe. ⁸God knows people's hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us. ⁹He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through faith. ¹⁰So why are you now

challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers* with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear? ¹¹We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus."

¹²Everyone listened quietly as Barnabas and Paul told about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

¹³When they had finished, James stood and said, "Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴Peter* has told you about the time God first visited the Gentiles to take from them a people for himself. ¹⁵And this conversion of Gentiles is exactly what the prophets predicted. As it is written:

¹⁶ 'Afterward I will return
and restore the fallen house* of David.
I will rebuild its ruins
and restore it,
¹⁷ so that the rest of humanity might seek
the LORD,
including the Gentiles—
all those I have called to be mine.

15:10 Greek *disciples*. 15:14 Greek *Simeon*. 15:16 Or *kingdom*; Greek reads *tent*.



Circumcision

Circumcision (cutting off the male foreskin) was widely practiced in the ancient Near East (Jer 9:25-26). For Jews, it had religious significance as the sign of the covenant that God had established with the people of Israel (Acts 7:8; Gen 17:9-14; Josh 5:2; John 7:22; *Sirach* 44:20). It was normally performed on the eighth day of a male infant's life (Acts 7:8; Gen 17:12; Lev 12:3; Luke 1:59). The NT notes the circumcision of John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, and Timothy (Acts 16:3; Luke 1:59; 2:21; Phil 3:5). Circumcision became a metaphor for the renewal of a person's relationship with God (Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; Rom 2:28-29). In the late 40s AD, some Jewish Christians tried to require Gentile Christians to undergo circumcision (Acts 15:1, 5; see 21:20-21; Gal 2:4, 11-13), to which Paul and Barnabas objected (Acts 15:2). The ensuing church council at Jerusalem settled the matter in favor of not requiring Gentiles to be circumcised (15:19-21, 28-29).

Paul insisted that "it makes no difference whether or not a man has been circumcised" (1 Cor 7:19). "What is important is faith expressing itself in love" (Gal 5:6). In Galatians, Paul argued against vigorous Jewish opponents and insisted that everyone enters God's family simply through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 2:14-21). Circumcision is not required for acceptance by God (Gal 5:6). The cross of Christ is the way that sinners enter into covenant with God (Gal 2:14-21; Col 2:11-15).

Acts 15:1-5

Gen 17:9-14
Lev 12:3
Josh 5:2-9
Jer 9:25-26
Luke 1:59; 2:21
John 7:22-24
Acts 7:8; 15:19-21,
28-31; 16:2-3;
21:18-24
Rom 2:25-29
1 Cor 7:17-19
Gal 2:3-5, 11-21;
5:6; 6:15
Phil 3:5-9
Col 2:11-23

15:4-21 The first council of the church met to resolve the dispute concerning Gentiles and circumcision (15:1-2).

15:5 These *Pharisees* were *believers*, yet they retained their strong adherence to *the law of Moses* (see "The Pharisees," Matt 3:7). Paul argued against their message most strenuously (see Gal 1:6-9; 2:14-3:14).

15:7-11 *Peter*, no doubt remembering his own experience in the household of

Cornelius (ch 10), argued that God had already *confirmed* his acceptance of the Gentiles without circumcision by *giving them the Holy Spirit*. The *undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus* had been made available to all.

15:13-19 *James*, the brother of Jesus, declared that the conversion of the Gentiles was clearly in accord with Scripture. He argued forcefully that it was contrary to the divine will to put unnecessary

requirements on the admission of the Gentiles.

15:14 *Peter*: Greek *Simeon*. Peter's given name was Simon (see Matt 16:17-19).

15:15-19 Because God's *prophets* had *predicted* the conversion and inclusion of *the Gentiles*, James argued that the Gentiles should be accepted as Gentiles, without requiring them to practice Judaism (15:1).

The Lord has spoken—
 18 he who made these things known so long ago.*

19“And so my judgment is that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. 20Instead, we should write and tell them to abstain from eating food offered to idols, from sexual immorality, from eating the meat of strangled animals, and from consuming blood. 21For these laws of Moses have been preached in Jewish synagogues in every city on every Sabbath for many generations.”

The Decision of the Council

22 Then the apostles and elders together with the whole church in Jerusalem chose delegates, and they sent them to Antioch of Syria with Paul and Barnabas to report on this decision. The men chosen were two of the church leaders*—Judas (also called

15:16-18 Amos 9:11-12 (Greek version); Isa 45:21. 15:22 Greek *were leaders among the brothers*.

Barsabbas) and Silas. 23This is the letter they took with them:

“This letter is from the apostles and elders, your brothers in Jerusalem. It is written to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Greetings!

24“We understand that some men from here have troubled you and upset you with their teaching, but we did not send them! 25So we decided, having come to complete agreement, to send you official representatives, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27We are sending Judas and Silas to confirm what we have decided concerning your question.

28“For it seemed good to the Holy

15:18
Isa 45:21
15:20
Gen 9:4
Exod 20:3-4
Lev 3:17
Deut 12:16
1 Cor 8:7; 10:7
15:21
Acts 13:15
15:22
Acts 15:27; 16:19
1 Pet 5:12
15:24
Gal 1:7; 5:10
15:26
Acts 14:19
1 Cor 15:30

PROFILE



JAMES Jesus' Brother, Wise Leader

James, one of Jesus' brothers (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3; Gal 1:19; cp. Jude 1:1), became the recognized leader of the church in Jerusalem shortly after Jesus' resurrection. He is traditionally recognized as the author of the book of James.

Though Jesus' brothers were initially skeptical of his claims (John 7:3-5), they later became believers (Acts 1:14). James's personal encounter with the resurrected Jesus (1 Cor 15:7) might have helped convince him. Two of Jesus' brothers (James and Jude) are known to have played significant roles in the early Christian community. James quickly rose to the position of leader of the church in Jerusalem. At the council in Jerusalem, James was instrumental in getting the Jewish church leaders to accept Gentile believers without requiring that they be circumcised—a decision of major importance for Paul and the early mission to Gentiles (Acts 15:13-21). Paul visited James in Jerusalem after his third missionary trip (21:18), just as he had done earlier, following his conversion (Gal 1:19).

Like most Jewish Christians, James continued to observe the law of Moses. He emphasized the need for believers to observe certain key laws when among Jews (Acts 15:20-21; 21:18-25). James acknowledged the validity of Paul's missionary calling and emphasis on salvation by faith alone (Gal 2:6-9), but many Jewish Christians did not. These Jewish believers demanded that Gentile converts be circumcised and observe the law of Moses in order to be saved.

James's Jewish background is reflected in his letter, which is full of wise practical advice for living, much of it in line with the traditional wisdom teaching of Jewish Scripture. One paragraph of his letter (Jas 5:1-6) reads very much like the work of the OT prophets (e.g., cp. Amos 5:21-24; 6:1-7).

James, titled “the Just” by his contemporaries, was apparently put to death for his faith by Jewish priests in Jerusalem (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9; Eusebius, *Church History* 2.23.4–18).

Acts 15:13-21

Matt 13:55
Mark 6:3
Acts 12:17;
21:18-25
1 Cor 15:7
Gal 2:9, 12
Jas 1:1–5:20
Jude 1:1

15:20 *Eating food offered to idols* is sinful if it involves knowingly partaking of an idolatrous sacrifice (see Exod 20:4; Deut 5:8; 1 Cor 8:4-13; 10:14-30; Rev 2:14, 20). • *Sexual immorality* was common in the Greek world but is always sinful (Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18; Gal 5:19). • *eating the meat of strangled animals*:

God's law prohibits eating meat that has blood in it (Lev 17:13-14) or *consuming blood* (Lev 17:10-12), “for the life of every creature is in its blood” (Lev 17:14). Also, “It is the blood, given in exchange for a life, that makes purification possible” (see Lev 17:11 and note). This command was first given to Noah,

the ancestor of Gentiles as well as Jews (Gen 9:4).

15:22-29 The Jerusalem church chose *two of the church leaders to report its decision*. They took with them a letter from the apostles and elders . . . in Jerusalem explaining the terms of the agreement.

15:29
Gen 9:4
Lev 17:10-14

15:32
Acts 11:27; 13:1

15:36
Acts 13:4, 13-14, 51;
14:1, 6, 24-25

15:37
Acts 12:12, 25

15:38
Acts 13:13

16:1
Acts 14:6
Phil 2:19-22
2 Tim 1:2, 5-6; 3:15

16:3
Gal 2:3-5

16:5
Acts 9:31

16:7
Rom 8:9
Phil 1:19

Spirit and to us to lay no greater burden on you than these few requirements:

²⁹You must abstain from eating food offered to idols, from consuming blood or the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. If you do this, you will do well. Farewell."

Joyful Return to the Antioch Church

³⁰The messengers went at once to Antioch, where they called a general meeting of the believers and delivered the letter. ³¹And there was great joy throughout the church that day as they read this encouraging message.

³²Then Judas and Silas, both being prophets, spoke at length to the believers, encouraging and strengthening their faith. ³³They stayed for a while, and then the believers sent them back to the church in Jerusalem with a blessing of peace.* ³⁵Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch. They and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord there.

Paul's Second Missionary Journey from Antioch (15:36–18:22)

Paul and Barnabas Separate

³⁶After some time Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's go back and visit each city where we previously preached the word of the Lord, to see how the new believers are doing."

³⁷Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. ³⁸But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted

them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in their work. ³⁹Their disagreement was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus. ⁴⁰Paul chose Silas, and as he left, the believers entrusted him to the Lord's gracious care. ⁴¹Then he traveled throughout Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches there.

Paul Returns to Derbe and Lystra

16 Paul went first to Derbe and then to Lystra, where there was a young disciple named Timothy. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek. ²Timothy was well thought of by the believers* in Lystra and Iconium, ³so Paul wanted him to join them on their journey. In deference to the Jews of the area, he arranged for Timothy to be circumcised before they left, for everyone knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴Then they went from town to town, instructing the believers to follow the decisions made by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. ⁵So the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew larger every day.

A Call from Macedonia

⁶Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. ⁷Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia,*

15:33 Some manuscripts add verse 34, *But Silas decided to stay there.* 16:2 Greek brothers; also in 16:40. 16:6-7 Phrygia, Galatia, Asia, Mysia, and Bithynia were all districts in what is now Turkey.

15:29 Farewell: The letter to the churches includes this familiar Hellenistic greeting at the end of a letter, found only here in the NT. Paul often ended his letters on a more theological note (e.g., 1 Cor 16:23-24; 2 Cor 13:13; see Eph 6:23-24; Phil 4:23; Col 4:18; 1 Thes 5:23-28; 1 Tim 6:21).

15:30-31 The believers at Antioch received the decision with *great joy* that conversion to Judaism and keeping all the requirements of the law of Moses was not required of them. The dispute had been resolved, so the work of teaching and preaching in Antioch could continue unimpeded.

15:36-41 The discordant separation of Paul and Barnabas is indicated by a very strong word in Greek (*their disagreement was so sharp*). It was an honest disagreement between two godly men about whether John Mark (Barnabas's cousin, Col 4:10) should be given a second chance to accompany them on a mission journey after he *had deserted them in Pamphylia* (see Acts 13:13). The

rift between Paul and John Mark was eventually healed (2 Tim 4:11).

15:40-41 Following his disagreement with Barnabas over John Mark, *Paul chose Silas* as his partner for a second missionary journey through *Syria and Cilicia*. The two men traveled overland to visit Derbe and Lystra, explaining the decision of the Jerusalem council and *strengthening* believers in their faith.

16:1-3 Paul returned to churches that he and Barnabas had established on their previous journey.

16:3 Paul had Timothy *circumcised* to enhance Timothy's acceptance and effectiveness as a Jew in Jewish circles (contrast Titus, who was a full Gentile, Gal 2:3). Elsewhere Paul clarified that it makes no difference to God whether we are circumcised or not circumcised (Rom 2:25-29; Gal 5:6; 6:15). Paul was prepared to use any legitimate means to communicate the Good News (1 Cor 9:20-21) to various audiences.

16:4-5 Paul and Silas faithfully communicated the *decisions* of the Jerusalem council. The wisdom of the decision was indicated as *the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew larger every day* (cp. 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1; 9:31; 21:20).

16:6-10 God directed the missionaries' travels: *The Holy Spirit had prevented them* from proceeding westward into the province of Asia, *the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go north to Bithynia*, and then *Paul had a vision* calling them to go northwest over the Aegean Sea to *Macedonia*. God's Spirit guided his servants in Acts in a variety of ways, including divine visions (see also 9:10; 10:9-16; 22:18), direct intuition (cp. 8:29, 39; 10:19; 20:22), counsel with other believers (cp. 15:29), guidance through prayer (13:2, 4), insight through Scripture (28:25-27), and prophecy (11:28). Guidance by the indwelling Holy Spirit helped them to accomplish their mission to be Christ's witnesses (1:8; see also 4:8, 31; 11:24; 13:9).

Journeys of Paul and Barnabas

Acts 13:1–14:28;
15:36–21:17;
27:1–28:16

Paul and Barnabas were originally sent out by the church in Antioch of Syria about AD 47. Paul spent the next twelve years traveling around the Roman world, preaching the Good News to both Jews and Gentiles, and planting churches in the cities he visited. Most of Paul's letters to these churches were also written during this time.

ITALIA
Rome

Three Taverns
Forum of Appius
Puteoli

ROME was the capital of the Roman Empire and the final destination of Paul's journeys in Acts. See "Rome," Rom 1:1-7; "The Roman Church," Rom 16:1-16



MACEDONIA
Philippi
Amphipolis
Apollonia
Thessalonica
Berea

Neapolis

Samothrace
Lemnos
Aegean Sea

EPIRUS

Ionian Sea

Delphi

Evvoia

Athens
Corinth
Cenchrea

ACHAIA

Sparta

Syracuse

Rhegium

Malta

Crete
Phoenix
Fair Havens

CORINTH stood at the crossroads of Greece, a bustling commercial hub. Paul spent 18 months there on his second journey. See "Corinth," 1 Cor 1:1-2



ATHENS, the leading city of classical Achaia, was still a center of learning when Paul stopped there on his second journey. See "The Unknown God," Acts 17:16-32



Paul's Journeys:

- ➡ **1** **First Journey, AD 47–48, Acts 13:4–14:28**
- ⋯➡ *Return journey to Antioch*
- ➡ **2** **Second Journey, AD 50–52, Acts 15:36–18:22**
- ⋯➡ *Return journey to Antioch via Jerusalem*
- ➡ **3** **Third Journey, AD 53–57, Acts 18:23–21:17**
- ⋯➡ *Return journey to Jerusalem*
- ➡ **R** **Journey to Rome, AD 59–60, Acts 27:1–28:16**

PHILIPPI was a prominent Roman military city, and was Paul's first stop in Macedonia on his second journey. See "Philippi," Phil 1:1



EPHESUS was the wealthy hub of Artemis worship. Paul tried to go there earlier, but could not until his third journey; he spent three years there. See "Ephesus," Eph 1:1



Black Sea

ANTIOCH was the earliest and most important hub of Jewish-Gentile Christianity; from there Paul and Barnabas were sent out on their journeys. See "Antioch of Syria," Acts 13:1-4



CYPRUS was Barnabas's birthplace. He and Paul traveled through Cyprus on their first journey, and Barnabas later returned there. See Acts 4:36; 11:19-20; 13:4-13; 15:39



CAESAREA was the administrative center of Palestine. Paul was imprisoned there for two years before his journey to Rome. See "Caesarea," Acts 23:23-35



EGYPT

ARABIA

Mediterranean Sea

SYRIA

CILICIA

GALATIA

BITHYNIA

ASIA

THRACE

Marmara Sea

MYSIA

PHRYGIA

PISIDIA

LYCAONIA

LYDIA

PAMPHYLIA

CARIA

LYCIA

ISSUS

TARSUS

SELEUCIA

ANTIOCH

SALAMIS

PAPHOS

CYPRUS

ALEPPO

EUFRATES R.

DAMASCUS

SIDON

TYRE

PTOLEMAIS

CAESAREA

JORDAN R.

DEAD SEA

JERUSALEM

ALEXANDRIA

but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there. ⁸So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas.

⁹That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” ¹⁰So we* decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.

Journey to Philippi

¹¹We boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis.

¹²From there we reached Philippi, a major city of that district of Macedonia and a

Roman colony. And we stayed there several days.

Lydia of Philippi Believes in Jesus

¹³On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. ¹⁴One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. ¹⁵She and her household were ^xbaptized, and she asked us to be her guests. “If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my home.” And she urged us until we agreed.

16:8
2 Cor 2:12
2 Tim 4:13

16:9
Rom 15:26

16:11
2 Cor 2:12

16:12
Phil 1:1
1 Thes 2:2

16:14
Rev 1:11; 2:18, 24

16:15
^xbaptizo (0907)
→ Acts 19:3

16:10 Luke, the writer of this book, here joined Paul and accompanied him on his journey.

PROFILE



LUKE Beloved Doctor and Historian

Luke, a Gentile medical doctor who became a convert and trusted assistant of Paul in his missionary work, wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles—one-quarter of the NT.

Though we know very little about Luke’s background, he seems to have first encountered Paul and his preaching in western Asia Minor, where he became a convert. Leaving his home, he devoted his life to the service of Christ and the Good News as a dedicated assistant of Paul. Paul speaks of him warmly as “the beloved doctor” and one of his faithful “co-workers” (Col 4:14; Phlm 1:24). Luke is the only Christian who faithfully remained with Paul when Paul was awaiting execution in Rome (2 Tim 4:11). He is the only Gentile to have his writings included in the NT.

Accompanying Paul on his last trip to Jerusalem, Luke probably acquired the information for his Gospel and the early part of the book of Acts from people he interviewed in Judea when Paul was imprisoned there for two years. Having talked extensively with people who heard and saw Jesus, and having carefully studied what others had written about him, Luke then wrote his own careful account of Jesus’ life and teachings (see Luke 1:1-4).

When Paul was sent by ship to Rome to have his case tried there, Luke accompanied him. While Paul was under house arrest, awaiting his trial, Luke might have used the time to write the book of Acts. The first fifteen chapters provide a chronological account of the earliest missionary work as told to him by the early followers of Christ and by Paul

16:8 *Troas*, a major port on the Aegean Sea, was one of the more significant cities in the Roman empire. Paul’s strategy was often to visit principal places such as Troas, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus. When the Christian faith had been planted in major centers, local Christian workers could carry it into outlying areas (e.g., Epaphras took the message from Ephesus to Colosse, Col 1:7; 4:12-13).

16:9-10 *a vision*: See “Visions,” 10:9-16.

16:10 *we*: The most natural interpretation of the shift from “they” to “we” is that Luke accompanied Paul from Troas to Philippi (16:10-17). Later Luke joined Paul again at Philippi and sailed with him to Troas, then to Miletus (20:5-15),

then from Miletus to Jerusalem (21:1-18). After Paul’s two-year imprisonment in Caesarea, Luke traveled with him to Rome (27:1–28:16).

16:11 *Samothrace* is a small mountainous island lying west-northwest of the Hellespont about twenty miles (32 km) from the coast of Thrace. • *Neapolis* (modern Kavala) was the seaport for Philippi and the eastern terminus of the famous *Via Egnatia* (the Egnatian Way), which ran from Rome to Asia.

16:12 At *Philippi*, about ten miles (17 km) inland from Neapolis, Paul began his missionary labors in Europe.

16:13-36 Luke gives his readers cameos of three lives touched by the Good News in Philippi: a wealthy

woman (16:14-15), an exploited slave girl (16:16-21), and a middle-class officer (16:23-36).

16:13 The Jewish community at Philippi was too small to have a synagogue, which required ten adult males. Instead, Jews met *for prayer* in an open space by the Gangites (now called Angista) River that afforded privacy, quiet, and water for Jewish purification rites.

16:14-15 The first person changed by Christ in Philippi was *Lydia*, a successful businesswoman *from Thyatira* (modern Akhisar), a city of western Asia Minor famous for its woolen fabrics, weavers, and linens. Lydia responded to the message and *she and her household were baptized* (cp. 16:32-33). • One of Lydia’s first acts as a *true believer in the Lord*

16:16Deut 18:10-11
1 Sam 28:3, 7**16:18**Mark 16:17
Acts 19:13**16:20**

Acts 17:6

16:21

Esth 3:8

16:222 Cor 11:25
1 Thes 2:2**16:25**

Eph 5:19

16:26

Acts 5:19; 12:10

Paul and Silas Imprisoned and Released

¹⁶One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit that enabled her to tell the future. She earned a lot of money for her masters by telling fortunes. ¹⁷She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved.”

¹⁸This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And instantly it left her.

¹⁹Her masters’ hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the

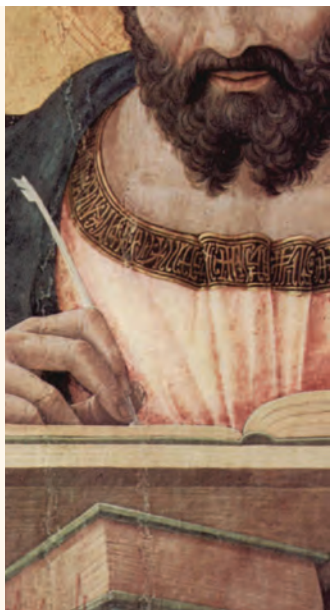
marketplace. ²⁰“The whole city is in an uproar because of these Jews!” they shouted to the city officials. ²¹“They are teaching customs that are illegal for us Romans to practice.”

²²A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. ²³They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn’t escape. ²⁴So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.

²⁵Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. ²⁶Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All

himself. But beginning in Acts 16:10—the point at which Luke joined Paul’s team—he provides a direct eyewitness account. Acts emphasizes the way the Holy Spirit empowered and guided the early missionaries in their witness (1:4-5, 8) and ends with Paul still under house arrest in Rome (28:30-31).

We are indebted to Luke for many unique passages: his full account of Jesus’ birth, descriptions of Jesus’ ministry to women, many words about Jesus caring for the poor, and the only comprehensive account of the first thirty years of Christian missionary activity—all carefully documented. Through Luke’s writings we gain a much deeper appreciation of the crucial work of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of Jesus and the early missionaries.



was to extend hospitality to the visiting missionaries. Hospitality is an important Christian virtue (Matt 25:31-46; Rom 12:13; 16:23; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8; Heb 13:2; 1 Pet 4:9; 3 Jn 1:5-8; cp. Gen 18:1-8; 19:1-3; 24:23-33).

16:16-18 The second portrait of a changed life in Philippi is of a *slave girl who had a spirit that enabled her to tell the future*. • Even though the *demon within her* was stating the truth, Paul, like Jesus, did not permit it to proclaim the Christian message (cp. Mark 1:25, 34; 3:11-12; Luke 4:35, 41). The Lord had commanded that the gospel be proclaimed by his disciples, not by opponents (Acts 1:8; 9:15; 26:15-18; Matt 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; see Acts 22:15).

16:19-21 As in the ministry of Jesus, sometimes the Good News threatened established commercial interests (see also 19:25-27; Mark 5:1-20). The slave girl’s exploiters viciously attacked the missionaries and *dragged them before the authorities* as criminals, blamed them for fomenting a disturbance, resorted to racial bias (*these Jews*), and appealed to the Philippians’ pride (*us Romans*; the Philippians prided themselves on being Roman citizens of a Roman colony). • *customs that are illegal*: By law, Jews were not permitted to make converts of Romans.

16:22-24 All reasonable security measures were taken to ensure that Paul and Silas *didn’t escape* after they had been *stripped and beaten with wooden*

rods (see 22:24-26; 2 Cor 6:5; 11:23-25). As at Christ’s tomb (Matt 27:65), however, human effort did not prevent divine intervention.

16:25 *Paul and Silas*, like the persecuted apostles in Jerusalem, were joyful, “rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus” (5:41).

16:26 The *massive earthquake* is reminiscent of the great earthquake at Jesus’ resurrection (Matt 28:2-3).

the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! ²⁷The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. ²⁸But Paul shouted to him, “Stop! Don’t kill yourself! We are all here!”

²⁹The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

³¹They replied, “Believe in the *υ*Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household.” ³²And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. ³³Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. ³⁴He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.

³⁵The next morning the city officials sent the police to tell the jailer, “Let those men go!” ³⁶So the jailer told Paul, “The city officials have said you and Silas are free to leave. Go in peace.”

³⁷But Paul replied, “They have publicly beaten us without a trial and put us in prison—and we are Roman citizens. So now

they want us to leave secretly? Certainly not! Let them come themselves to release us!”

³⁸When the police reported this, the city officials were alarmed to learn that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. ³⁹So they came to the jail and apologized to them. Then they brought them out and begged them to leave the city. ⁴⁰When Paul and Silas left the prison, they returned to the home of Lydia. There they met with the believers and encouraged them once more. Then they left town.

Paul Preaches in Thessalonica

17 Paul and Silas then traveled through the towns of Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ²As was Paul’s custom, he went to the synagogue service, and for three Sabbaths in a row he used the Scriptures to reason with the people. ³He explained the prophecies and proved that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead. He said, “This Jesus I’m telling you about is the Messiah.” ⁴Some of the Jews who listened were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with many God-fearing Greek men and quite a few prominent women.*

⁵But some of the Jews were jealous, so they gathered some troublemakers from the marketplace to form a mob and start a riot.

16:27
Acts 12:18-19
16:30
Acts 2:37
16:31
John 3:15
Acts 11:14
υkurios (2962)
• Eph 6:5
16:37
Acts 22:25
16:38
Acts 22:29
16:39
Matt 8:34
16:40
Acts 16:14
17:1-9
1 Thes 1:1; 2:1-2
2 Thes 1:1
17:2
Acts 9:20; 13:14;
17:10, 17
17:3
Luke 24:26
Acts 3:18; 9:22; 18:5
17:5
Rom 16:21
1 Thes 2:14

17:4 Some manuscripts read *quite a few of the wives of the leading men*.

16:27-36 Luke’s third portrait in Philippi is of the Philippian *jailer* who, shaken by what had happened, responded in faith when challenged to accept *the Lord Jesus and be saved*. He was *baptized with his household* and rejoiced in his newfound faith as he reached out with hospitality to the preachers.

16:27 The Roman jailer clearly knew that his life could be forfeited if the prisoners for whom he was responsible escaped. This was standard practice (12:19; 27:42; cp. *Code of Justinian* 9.4.4).

16:29-30 *Paul and Silas* had impressed *the jailer* with their cheerful faith (16:25), their composure in crisis, and their concern for his well-being (16:28). Whatever the jailer’s previous understanding of Paul’s message, God touched his heart, and he cried out for divine help.

16:31-34 Paul and Silas directed the jailer to a faith in Christ that brings blessing both to him and his family. The whole household received Christian instruction, and their response was expressed in baptism (see “Baptism,”

2:38, 41) and the offering of hospitality to Paul and Silas.

16:37-39 Paul and Silas were both *Roman citizens*, so the beating and imprisonment (16:22-24) had been illegal. After the city officials learned of this, they were justifiably alarmed because they had committed a crime against Rome. • *Let them come themselves to release us*: Paul made use of his rights as a Roman citizen in order to clear his name and ensure that no disrepute would attach to the Christian message or those who accepted it. Luke intended to show that Christianity should enjoy the same status as Judaism in the Roman empire as a permitted religion—the Christian faith was compatible with the life of a Roman citizen. Accordingly, it was important to note that Paul made use of his rights as a Roman citizen (cp. 22:25-27) and was ready to use the privileges of citizenship to advance the cause of Christ in a hostile world.

16:40 This meeting in *the home of Lydia* bolstered the spirits of the Philippian Christians who had to deal with the fallout from the missionaries’ work there.

17:1-9 After traveling through Macedonia to *Thessalonica*, Paul preached to the Jews first (Rom 1:16) in the synagogue. Here, as elsewhere, there was a mixed response.

17:1-3 *Amphipolis* was a Roman military post located on the Egnatian Way in the northeastern part of Macedonia. • *Apollonia*, named after the Greek god Apollo, was also situated on the Egnatian Way. • *Thessalonica* offered a starting point for ministry because it had a *Jewish synagogue* (see note on 9:2). Paul was able to preach for *three* consecutive *Sabbaths*, explaining *the Scriptures* and showing their fulfillment in Jesus.

17:4 *God-fearing Greek men*: See note on 10:2. • Luke regularly draws attention to *women* who joined the Christian movement (17:4, 12, 34; see also 5:14; 8:12; 16:13-15, 31-34; 18:26; 21:9).

17:5-7 Once again, the enemies of the Christian faith saw it as a disruptive threat (cp. 16:19-21). Ironically, *they gathered some troublemakers* and then accused Paul and Silas of causing *trouble* by disturbing the peace and committing *treason against Caesar*—serious charges of threatening the stability of the empire (cp. Luke 23:2).

17:6
Acts 16:20, 21
17:7
Luke 23:2
John 19:12
17:11
John 5:39
17:13
Acts 14:19
17:14
Matt 10:23
17:15
Acts 18:5
1 Thes 3:1
17:17
Acts 18:19
17:18
1 Cor 1:22

They attacked the home of Jason, searching for Paul and Silas so they could drag them out to the crowd.* ⁶Not finding them there, they dragged out Jason and some of the other believers* instead and took them before the city council. “Paul and Silas have caused trouble all over the world,” they shouted, “and now they are here disturbing our city, too. ⁷And Jason has welcomed them into his home. They are all guilty of treason against Caesar, for they profess allegiance to another king, named Jesus.”

⁸The people of the city, as well as the city council, were thrown into turmoil by these reports. ⁹So the officials forced Jason and the other believers to post bond, and then they released them.

Paul and Silas in Berea

¹⁰That very night the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. When they arrived there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul’s message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth. ¹²As a result, many Jews believed, as did many of the prominent Greek women and men.

¹³But when some Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word

17:5 Or *the city council*. 17:6 Greek *brothers*; also in 17:10, 14. Greek reads *the Areopagus*.

of God in Berea, they went there and stirred up trouble. ¹⁴The believers acted at once, sending Paul on to the coast, while Silas and Timothy remained behind. ¹⁵Those escorting Paul went with him all the way to Athens; then they returned to Berea with instructions for Silas and Timothy to hurry and join him.

Paul Preaches in Athens

¹⁶While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city. ¹⁷He went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and he spoke daily in the public square to all who happened to be there.

¹⁸He also had a debate with some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. When he told them about Jesus and his resurrection, they said, “What’s this babbling trying to say with these strange ideas he’s picked up?” Others said, “He seems to be preaching about some foreign gods.”

¹⁹Then they took him to the high council of the city.* “Come and tell us about this new teaching,” they said. ²⁰“You are saying some rather strange things, and we want to know what it’s all about.” ²¹(It should be explained that all the Athenians as well as the foreigners in Athens seemed to spend all their time discussing the latest ideas.)

17:19 Or *the most learned society of philosophers in the city*.

17:8-9 The charges did not hold up under scrutiny, so the officials *released* Paul and Silas after *Jason and the other believers* posted *bond*. Christianity, Luke contended, was politically harmless to the Roman empire and should therefore be recognized as a permitted religion and not subjected to political attack.

17:10-12 In light of the strong opposition in Thessalonica, *the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea*, located about nineteen miles (30 km) west of Thessalonica. There the missionaries had a better reception than in Thessalonica. Many Jews came to faith, as well as *many of the prominent Greek women and men*. The Bereans were exemplary in their attitude, for they were *open-minded* and eager to learn, good listeners, diligent Bible students, and thoughtful people. Their resulting faith had a strong foundation.

17:13-15 Paul acknowledged the determination and persistence of this persecution when he wrote to the Thessalonians (1 Thes 2:14-16).

17:16-34 In this chapter, we see Paul presented as a model witness for Christ, engaging the thinkers of his day and challenging them with the Christian

message. Paul quoted writers his audience would be familiar with and showed the relevance of the gospel by dialoguing with them, critiquing their assumptions, and offering Jesus as a constructive alternative (see Col 1:28). Paul reminded these proud intellectuals that there is a living God to whom all human beings are answerable; that they will be judged by him through Jesus, whom God raised from the dead; and that they should therefore repent and put their faith in Jesus.

17:16-17 Athens, like Alexandria and Tarsus, prided itself on its intellectual sophistication in examining ideas and considering the different philosophies that were current at the time.

17:18 Epicurean . . . philosophers: Epicureanism was a popular school of Greek philosophy, founded by Epicurus (341–270 BC). Epicureans believed that the principal aim of life was to secure happiness. They thought of pleasure not in terms of sensual indulgence, as their critics charged, but in terms of tranquility. Their contemporaries often called them atheists; in their view, there were no gods to fear, and death simply marked the end of human existence.

They sought their security in organized communities where they could live in contentment apart from society. • **Stoic philosophers:** Stoicism was founded by Zeno of Citium (335–263 BC) and became the most influential philosophy in the Greco-Roman world. It viewed the universe as permeated by Reason (sometimes referred to as God or Providence). Stoicism saw divine Reason as expressed in human reason and held that as humans made progress, they could advance from ignorance (the source of vice) to true knowledge (the source of virtue). They developed extensive lists of virtues and vices and produced detailed household codes to guide family behavior. Paul’s teaching resembles that of the Stoics in his use of household codes and lists of virtues and vices (Gal 5:19-23; Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-4:1; 1 Tim 3:1-13; 5:1-6:1). However, Paul’s message of Good News—focusing on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—was *strange* and *foreign* to these Greek philosophers. • The air of superiority with which they addressed Paul as *this babbling* indicates their arrogance.

The Unknown God

Acts 17:16-32

Ps 50:7-15
Isa 42:5-7
Rom 1:18-32
Col 1:15-23; 2:6-12
1 Thes 1:9-10
Heb 1:1-4

When Paul spoke to the Areopagus, the “high council of the city” of Athens (17:19), he was speaking to people who did not share his faith in the God of Abraham and Moses who had revealed himself “many times and in many ways to [their] ancestors through the prophets” (Heb 1:1). The members of his audience had a very different definition of the divine. A host of divinities inhabited their world, and the common people retained much of their belief in the ancient gods. But many of the cultural elite of Athens no longer believed in the gods in any literal sense. Instead, they held to either a form of materialism (the physical is everything) or pantheism (the divine inhabits everything).

What they all shared in common was the complete absence of the idea of a personal God who would, or even could, reveal himself to people specifically and verbally in

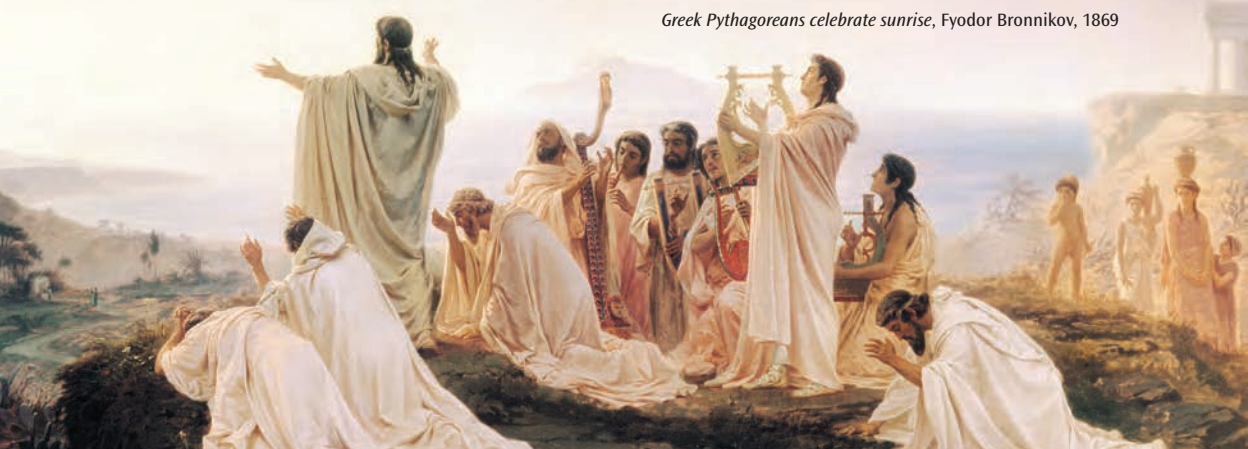
time and history. Their myths told of the activities of the gods long ago, but they did not have faith that the ultimate reality, God himself, was known to them, or even could be known. Instead, they reasoned and discussed “the latest ideas,” hoping for a better understanding of the nature of things.

When Paul spoke in that context, he used their own poets to proclaim things that they could barely comprehend: That the God who made everything is both personal and knowable; that he revealed himself clearly, historically, and definitively in Jesus Christ; that death is not followed by either the cessation of existence or the migration of the soul, but by judgment; and that the proof of all of this is the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

What was foolishness to most of the Greeks of Athens turns out to be the ultimate truth: God is knowable, and can be known through Jesus Christ.



Paul preaches in Athens, Ölauf Leinwant, 19th century



Greek Pythagoreans celebrate sunrise, Fyodor Bronnikov, 1869

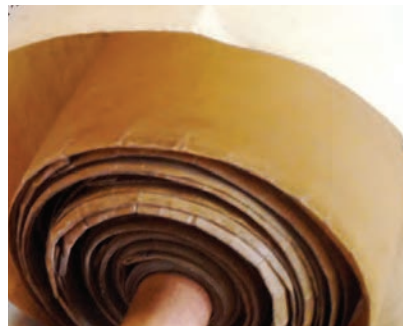


▲ ATHENS

For centuries Athens was the chief city of the province of Attica. Athens' most famous landmark is the Acropolis, a steep flat rock that rises about 200 feet above the plain around it. Athens began its rise to glory in the 500s bc. In this golden age, Athens became the center of philosophy, art, architecture, and drama. By the time Paul brought the Christian message to Athens (Acts 17:15-34), the city had only a portion of its former glory and prestige. Roman emperors provided for new buildings and the restoration of the Agora (marketplace). Athens continued to be the home of the most prominent university in the Greek world.

▼ THE AREOPAGUS

Northwest of the Acropolis, the Areopagus (hill of Ares, or Mars Hill) overlooks the marketplace (Acts 17:19). "Areopagus" also refers to the Athenian high council that met there. Trials were held at the Areopagus; there Socrates had faced those who accused him of defaming the Greek gods. By Paul's day the council of the Areopagus oversaw political, educational, philosophical, and religious matters for Athens.



(TOP) *The School of Athens*, Raffaello Sanzio, 1509, detail showing Plato (left) and Aristotle (right).

(ABOVE) *The Women of Amphissa*, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 1886, portraying a group of young women who had been driven mad by Dionysus.

(BELOW) Menelaus, husband of Helen, was a prominent character in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the founding heroic legends of Greece.



SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT IN ATHENS

There were a wide variety of philosophical ideas current in Athens when Paul visited, but two main schools of thought dominated, Stoicism and Epicureanism (Acts 17:18).



STOICISM

Zeno of Citium (334~262 BC) founded Stoicism. Stoics studied nature's laws and believed in the Logos, a pervasive organizing and sustaining force that gives all things their essential nature and so gives life and reason to humanity. The good life is one in which reason rules, and peace of mind and harmony with nature prevail. Many prominent statesmen were Stoics or influenced by Stoicism, including Cicero, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius. Stoic ideas proved attractive to some Christians because of the similarities between the Stoic logos and the divine Logos (John 1:1-18), and between the idea of natural law and the law of God.



EPICUREANISM

Those who followed **Epicurus** (341~270 BC) were empiricists; they relied upon sense experience (as opposed to reason) for knowledge. Epicureans were concerned with natural evidence and were unenthusiastic about mathematics. Their focus was ethics, the study of right behavior; they judged the value of an action or thing in terms of the pleasure or pain it brought. Epicurus saw belief in gods (meddling and powerful beings who terrified ordinary mortals) as a serious threat to tranquility. For him and his followers: neither the gods nor death (which is the end) should be feared.

²²So Paul, standing before the council,* addressed them as follows: “Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way,²³ for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: ‘To an Unknown God.’ This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I’m telling you about.

²⁴“He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples,²⁵ and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.²⁶ From one man* he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries.

²⁷“His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us.²⁸ For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your* own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’²⁹ And since this is true, we shouldn’t think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone.

³⁰“God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him.³¹ For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.”

³²When they heard Paul speak about the resurrection of the dead, some laughed in contempt, but others said, “We want to hear more about this later.”³³ That ended Paul’s discussion with them,³⁴ but some joined him and became believers. Among them were Dionysius, a member of the council,* a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Paul in Corinth

18 Then Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.*² There he became acquainted with a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently arrived from Italy with his wife, Priscilla. They had left Italy when Claudius Caesar deported all Jews from Rome.³ Paul lived and worked with them, for they were tentmakers* just as he was.

⁴Each Sabbath found Paul at the syna-

17:23

John 4:22

17:24

1 Kgs 8:27

Isa 42:5

Acts 7:48

17:25

Ps 50:12

Isa 42:5

17:26

Deut 32:8

17:27

Isa 55:6

Jer 23:23-24

17:29

Isa 40:18-25

Rom 1:23

17:30

Acts 14:16

17:31

Ps 96:13

Acts 10:42

17:32

^aanastasis (0386)

^b1 Cor 15:12

18:2

Rom 16:3

1 Cor 16:19

18:3

Acts 20:34

1 Cor 4:12; 9:15

1 Thes 2:9

17:22 Traditionally rendered *standing in the middle of Mars Hill*; Greek reads *standing in the middle of the Areopagus*.

17:26 Greek *From one*; other manuscripts read *From one blood*. 17:28 Some manuscripts read *our*. 17:34 Greek *an Areopagite*. 18:1 *Athens* and *Corinth* were major cities in Achaia, the region in the southern portion of the Greek peninsula.

18:3 Or *leatherworkers*.

17:22-31 Paul’s remarkable sermon in Athens reveals his versatility in preaching the Good News (Rom 11:14; 1 Cor 9:19-23; 10:33; cp. Acts 16:3; 17:2-3; 21:20-26). While Paul’s Greek audience did not know the Scriptures or have a tradition of monotheism as the Jews did, they did have a rich intellectual heritage. So Paul established a point of contact on the basis of an Athenian inscription to an *Unknown God*. He then explained God’s nature as the Creator (17:22-29), followed by God’s purpose as the Redeemer (17:30-31). • As he did elsewhere in his own writings (see 1 Cor 15:33; Titus 1:12), Paul made use of the Greek poets. There are several points of connection in this sermon with the *Hymn to Zeus* by Cleanthes (about 315–240 BC). Paul was probably quoting Epimenides, who had declared about God, “*In him we live and move and exist*” (Epimenides, *Cretica*, about 600 BC). Paul also cited Aratus, a Stoic poet from Cilicia (about 315–240 BC), who had commented, “*We are his offspring*” (Aratus, *Phaenomena* 5). These allusions to their *own poets* established connections with his audience. Paul was then able to present the singular nature of God (Acts 17:29), and he stressed the coming judgment through Jesus Christ, whom God had raised from the dead.

This message, while touching on Greek culture and philosophy, had a clear focus on Christ that presented the challenge of Christ to a cultured and intellectual but idolatrous people.

17:30 The idea of *people’s ignorance* is carefully discussed both in the OT law (Lev 4:2, 22, 27; 5:15, 17; Num 15:25, 27) and in the NT (Eph 4:18; 1 Pet 1:14; 2:15; 2 Pet 3:5, 8). Paul was particularly fervent to overcome ignorance (see Rom 10:13-15; 11:25; 1 Cor 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor 1:8; 1 Thes 4:13). The message of Good News overcomes ignorance and summons all who hear it to *repent of their sins and turn to God* (see Acts 2:38).

17:32 The Athenians listened carefully until Paul spoke of *the resurrection of the dead* (17:31); at that point some *laughed* or mocked, for the notion of resurrection was foolish to Greek ears (see 1 Cor 15:12-19). Similarly, the Jews in Jerusalem later listened carefully to Paul until he mentioned God’s acceptance of the Gentiles (Acts 22:22). These are examples of how the message of Good News can offend people because of their prejudices (see 1 Cor 1:20-25).

17:34 *some joined him and became believers*: Paul’s sermon was not without positive response. Two prominent converts are mentioned: *Dionysius* and

Damaris. Luke often placed a man and a woman in juxtaposition (e.g., 5:1-11; 17:4, 12; Luke 14:1-6; 15:3-10). • Dionysius was *a member of the council* of the Areopagus, the highest governing body of Athens.

18:1-17 Paul spent eighteen fruitful months preaching and teaching in *Corinth*, first in the synagogue and then *next door* in the house of *Titius Justus* (18:1-11). Then, in court, Paul won a significant victory over his enemies (18:12-17).

18:1 In Roman times, Greek political power in Achaia resided in *Corinth*, a prominent city-state and major commercial city. Corinth was notorious for its prostitution, immorality, and drunkenness (see 1 Corinthians Introduction, “Setting”). Paul invested much time and effort establishing a Christian community in Corinth (see note on Acts 16:8).

18:2-3 The edict of *Claudius Caesar* that had *deported all Jews from Rome* around AD 49 is mentioned by the Roman historian Suetonius (*Life of Claudius* 25). • *Aquila* and *Priscilla* became an outstanding husband-and-wife team in the early church (see “Priscilla and Aquila,” 18:1-3). They earned their living as *tentmakers*, as did Paul, who probably *lived and worked*

18:5
Acts 17:3; 18:28
18:6
Ezek 33:3-9
Matt 10:14
Acts 13:45-46; 20:26
18:8
1 Cor 1:14
ἰπisteύσθε (4100)
↳ Rom 1:17
18:9-10
Isa 41:10
Jer 1:18

gogue, trying to convince the Jews and Greeks alike. ⁵And after Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul spent all his time preaching the word. He testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. ⁶But when they opposed and insulted him, Paul shook the dust from his clothes and said, “Your blood is upon your own heads—I am innocent. From now on I will go preach to the Gentiles.”

⁷Then he left and went to the home of Titius Justus, a Gentile who worshiped God and lived next door to the synagogue. ⁸Crispus,

the leader of the synagogue, and everyone in his household ^abelieved in the Lord. Many others in Corinth also heard Paul, became ^abelievers, and were baptized.

⁹One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, “Don’t be afraid! Speak out! Don’t be silent! ¹⁰For I am with you, and no one will attack and harm you, for many people in this city belong to me.” ¹¹So Paul stayed there for the next year and a half, teaching the word of God.

¹²But when Gallio became governor of Achaia, some Jews rose up together against



Acts 18:1-3

Acts 18:18-19,
24-28
Rom 16:3-5
1 Cor 16:19
2 Tim 4:19

PRISCILLA AND AQUILA Hospitable Christian Workers

Priscilla and Aquila were a Christian couple with whom Paul lived and worked during his early days in Corinth. They were later active in Christian ministry and instrumental in bringing Apollos to a true understanding of Christ. They made a habit of opening their home in hospitality to other Christians.

Paul first met Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth, where they had newly arrived as a result of Claudius Caesar’s deportation of all Jews from Rome (AD 49). Paul became acquainted with them and, because they were tentmakers (or possibly leatherworkers) like he was, Paul lived and worked with them during his first year and a half in Corinth (AD 50–52; 18:1-3).

When Paul left Corinth, he took Priscilla and Aquila with him and left them in Ephesus (18:18-19) while he returned to Jerusalem and Antioch. When Apollos came through Ephesus later, enthusiastically preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and explained to him more fully the truth of Christ. As a result of their training, Apollos went on to become a powerful evangelist and Christian apologist (18:24-28).

Later, Paul speaks of their home as a meeting place for Christians in Ephesus, and he sends their greeting with his own to the church in Corinth (1 Cor 16:19; cp. 2 Tim 4:19). Still later, it seems they returned to Rome (presumably after the relaxation of Claudius’s edict), for they are the first of many to whom Paul sends his greetings when he writes to the church in Rome (Rom 16:3-5). Here, too, their home became a meeting place. It is clear that Paul felt a close bond of friendship with them and that he regarded their work for Christ highly—he speaks of them as “my co-workers in the ministry of Christ,” and he refers to a time when they even risked their lives for him.

Priscilla and Aquila are examples of early Christians who, in the course of their daily work, were bold in bearing witness to Christ and active in ministering to his people—in this case, as a married couple dedicated to the service of Christ. The fact that Priscilla’s name often occurs first (unusual for the time) might say something about the strong role she played in the couple’s witness and ministry.

with them during his year and a half in Corinth (18:11; see Rom 16:3-4; 1 Cor 16:19). • *just as he was*: Paul would have been trained as a tentmaker as a young man. It was Jewish custom to provide sons with a manual trade, including young men who intended to become rabbis or other professionals.

18:4-6 Once again Paul followed his custom of *preaching to the Jews* first, and then reaching out to *Gentiles* after he met with rejection and opposition (13:42-49; see 3:25-26; 26:20; Rom 1:16; 2:10; 3:29, 30; 4:9-12). • Paul probably wrote his letters to the Thessalonian

Christians *after Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia* with a report of how things were going there (see 1 Thes 3:6; 2 Thessalonians Introduction, “Setting”).

18:7 *Titius Justus* (“Titus the Just”) was a *Gentile who worshiped God* (a “God-fearer”; see note on 10:2). Because Titus was a common Roman name, *Justus* differentiates him from the better-known Titus, Paul’s co-worker (2 Cor 2:13; 7:6, 13; 8:6, 16, 23; Titus).

18:9-10 Paul had experienced real opposition in Corinth (18:6) and

apparently was afraid of being attacked again, so the divine message was a comfort to him (cp. 23:11; Ps 34:4, 7, 19; Matt 28:20), encouraging him to persist in his public ministry and promising God’s protection (cp. Ps 91:11; 2 Tim 4:17).

18:12-13 *The governor of Achaia*, Junio Gallio, was the older brother of the Roman philosopher Seneca (Seneca was a tutor to Emperor Nero). An inscription indicating that he was governor around AD 51–52 helps to date Paul’s visit in Corinth to about that time.

Paul and brought him before the governor for judgment. ¹³They accused Paul of “persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to our law.”

¹⁴But just as Paul started to make his defense, Gallio turned to Paul’s accusers and said, “Listen, you Jews, if this were a case involving some wrongdoing or a serious crime, I would have a reason to accept your case. ¹⁵But since it is merely a question of words and names and your Jewish law, take care of it yourselves. I refuse to judge such matters.” ¹⁶And he threw them out of the courtroom.

¹⁷The crowd* then grabbed Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and beat him right there in the courtroom. But Gallio paid no attention.

Paul Visits Ephesus and Returns to Antioch

¹⁸Paul stayed in Corinth for some time after that, then said good-bye to the brothers and sisters* and went to nearby Cenchrea. There he shaved his head according to Jewish custom, marking the end of a vow. Then he set sail for Syria, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him.

18:17 Greek *Everyone*; other manuscripts read *All the Greeks*. **18:18** Greek *brothers*; also in 18:27. **18:21** Some manuscripts read “*I must by all means be at Jerusalem for the upcoming festival, but I will come back later.*” **18:22** Greek *the church*. **18:23** Greek *disciples*; also in 18:27. **18:25** Or *with enthusiasm in the Spirit*.

¹⁹They stopped first at the port of Ephesus, where Paul left the others behind. While he was there, he went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews. ²⁰They asked him to stay longer, but he declined. ²¹As he left, however, he said, “I will come back later,* God willing.” Then he set sail from Ephesus. ²²The next stop was at the port of Caesarea. From there he went up and visited the church at Jerusalem* and then went back to Antioch.

Paul’s Third Missionary Journey from Antioch (18:23–21:17)

Paul Visits the Churches in Galatia and Phrygia

²³After spending some time in Antioch, Paul went back through Galatia and Phrygia, visiting and strengthening all the believers.*

Apollos in Ephesus and Corinth

²⁴Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, an eloquent speaker who knew the Scriptures well, had arrived in Ephesus from Alexandria in Egypt. ²⁵He had been taught the way of the Lord, and he taught others about Jesus with an enthusiastic spirit* and with accuracy.

18:15

John 18:31

18:17

Acts 18:8

1 Cor 1:1

18:18

Num 6:18

Acts 21:24

Rom 16:1

18:19

Eph 1:1

Rev 1:11; 2:1

18:21

Jas 4:15

18:22

Acts 8:40; 11:19

18:23

Acts 16:6

18:24

Acts 19:1

1 Cor 1:12; 4:6;

16:12

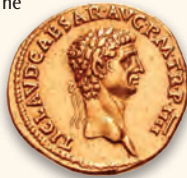
Titus 3:13

18:25

Acts 19:3

CLAUDIUS CAESAR (Acts 18:2)

Claudius Caesar was emperor of Rome, AD 41–54. He issued an edict (AD 49–50?) expelling all Jews from Rome; Aquila and Priscilla were among those who had been ordered to leave the imperial city (18:2). The Roman biographer and historian Suetonius wrote that “because the Jews of Rome were indulging in constant riots at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from the city.” Most scholars agree that the name Chrestus was an alternate spelling for the name Christus (Christ), viewed by Romans at that time as the founder of a movement (Christianity) that had evolved from Judaism.



18:14-17 Gallio’s ruling indicated that the charges against Paul were unjustified. The Roman government had nothing to fear from acknowledging Christianity as a legal religion.

18:17 It is most likely that the Greeks beat *Sosthenes* to express their hostility to the Jews; it is possible that the Jews attacked their own synagogue leader because he was unsuccessful in pleading their case. Sosthenes may be the same man Paul later mentions as “our brother” (1 Cor 1:1), but it is uncertain, as the name was fairly common.

18:18 *Cenchrea* was a seaport located on the Aegean Sea, roughly five miles (8 km) east of *Corinth*. It was here that Paul *shaved his head according*

to Jewish custom to mark the completion of a temporary Nazirite *vow* (cp. 21:23-24; see Num 6:1-21; Judg 13:4-7; 16:1; Amos 2:11-12; Luke 1:15).

18:19-23 Paul made a quick stop at *Ephesus*, the most important city in the Roman province of Asia. There he *left the others behind*, including Priscilla and Aquila (18:26). He sailed to Judea, landing at *Caesarea*, the headquarters of the Roman forces of occupation. After a visit to *the church at Jerusalem*, Paul returned to *Antioch*, the church that had originally commissioned him. This marked the end of his second missionary journey. In Antioch, he spent a rewarding time of reporting what God had done through him and his colleagues, sharing the excitement and challenges of their work with the

home church. Then *after . . . some time*, Paul began his third missionary journey. He went by land rather than by sea, traveling *through Galatia and Phrygia* and revisiting *believers* whom he had led to faith in Christ on his previous trips. It was important to him that these young converts not be left to founder and shipwreck their faith (see Eph 6:10-20; 1 Tim 1:18-20; 2 Tim 1:15; 4:10).

18:21 “*I will come back later*”: Paul later spent significant time in Ephesus during his third missionary journey (19:1–20:1; see 19:8, 10).

18:23–19:41 This section describes Paul’s third missionary journey (about AD 53–57). Paul revisited Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the disciples (18:23). He then traveled to Ephesus (19:1), where he remained for two years (19:10).

18:23 Paul wanted to keep in touch with earlier converts and strengthen their faith.

18:24-26 *Alexandria*, the second-largest city in the Roman empire, was famous for its rhetorical tradition and the philosophical work of Philo. Apollos was an *eloquent speaker* with an excellent knowledge of the *Scriptures* (the OT). His knowledge about Jesus and the Holy Spirit was inadequate, though. He did not understand that believers could experience and enjoy the power of the

18:27

2 Cor 3:1

18:28

Acts 9:22

19:1

Acts 18:24

19:2

John 7:39; 20:22

Acts 8:16

19:3

Acts 18:25

^bbaptizo (0907)

↳ Acts 22:16

19:4

Mark 1:4

However, he knew only about John's baptism. ²⁶When Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly in the synagogue, they took him aside and explained the way of God even more accurately.

²⁷Apollos had been thinking about going to Achaia, and the brothers and sisters in Ephesus encouraged him to go. They wrote to the believers in Achaia, asking them to welcome him. When he arrived there, he proved to be of great benefit to those who, by God's grace, had believed. ²⁸He refuted the Jews with powerful arguments in public debate. Using the Scriptures, he explained to them that Jesus was the Messiah.

19:1 Greek *disciples*; also in 19:9, 30.

Paul's Ministry in Ephesus

19 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions until he reached Ephesus, on the coast, where he found several believers. * ²"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" he asked them.

"No," they replied, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

³"Then what ^bbaptism did you experience?" he asked.

And they replied, "The baptism of John."

⁴Paul said, "John's baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus."



APOLLOS Eloquent Advocate for Christ

Apollos was a Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Jew, well versed in Scripture, who became a strong evangelist and Christian apologist. A native of Alexandria in Egypt, where there was a large Jewish community, Apollos apparently came under the influence of John the Baptist's followers. He then became a bold and enthusiastic preacher of Jesus in Hellenistic synagogues, though he knew nothing of Christian baptism.

When Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos preach in Ephesus, they invited him to their home and explained the way of Christ to him more fully. With the encouragement of the believers in Ephesus, who recognized his God-given gifts and ministry, Apollos then traveled on to Achaia (i.e., Corinth). There he greatly helped the believers as an effective defender of the Good News in public debate with the Jews, boldly demonstrating that Jesus is the Messiah predicted in Scripture (18:24-28).

A dynamic communicator, Apollos was popular with some of the Christians in Corinth because of his intellectual style and his powerful speaking abilities. As a result of his powerful ministry, some in Corinth were more drawn to Apollos than to Paul (1 Cor 1:11-12). When they began to criticize Paul for not matching up to Apollos (cp. 2 Cor 10:10), Paul was forced to defend himself and his simpler, unimpressive way of preaching the Good News. Significantly, Paul nowhere criticized Apollos himself. He called Apollos a fellow servant and was grateful for the follow-up work he had done—Apollos watered the seed that Paul had planted, and God blessed the work of both (1 Cor 3:5-9; 4:1). Paul only criticized the shallow perspectives and divisiveness of those drawn to Apollos for superficial reasons (1 Cor 1:10-12; 3:3-4; 4:6-7).

Perhaps Apollos's reluctance to return to Corinth from Ephesus (1 Cor 16:12) was due to concern over the divisions that resulted from his ministry. Yet Paul encouraged him. Several years later, when Apollos was ministering on the island of Crete, Paul encouraged Titus to make sure Apollos's needs were met as he set off to an unknown destination for further missionary service (Titus 3:13). Apollos, with his strong intellectual gifts and powerful speaking abilities, had a significantly different approach and style from that of Paul—yet both men proved effective and useful in the service of Christ.

Holy Spirit as a present energizing reality. Fortunately, *Priscilla and Aquila* took him aside and corrected his spiritual understanding.

19:1-7 Paul traveled to Ephesus after Apollos had left. Subsequently, Apollos returned to Ephesus while Paul was still working there (1 Cor 16:12). The two

men had different personalities, gifts, and roles, but God worked through both of them. • Some *believers* in Ephesus still had an inadequate understanding of the Christian faith (cp. Acts 18:26) and did not *receive the Holy Spirit* when they *believed*. They had accepted *John's baptism*, which *called for repentance*

from sin, but had not received Christian baptism, which included the gift of the Holy Spirit. When Paul had instructed them further, they were able to receive Christian baptism (19:5) and the Holy Spirit (19:6).

⁵As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues* and prophesied. ⁷There were about twelve men in all.

⁸Then Paul went to the synagogue and preached boldly for the next three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God. ⁹But some became stubborn, rejecting his message and publicly speaking against the Way. So Paul left the synagogue and took the believers with him. Then he held daily discussions at the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰This went on for the next two years, so that people throughout the province of Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the word of the Lord.

¹¹God gave Paul the power to perform unusual miracles. ¹²When handkerchiefs or aprons that had merely touched his skin were placed on sick people, they were healed of their diseases, and evil spirits were expelled.

¹³A group of Jews was traveling from town to town casting out evil spirits. They tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus in their incantation, saying, “I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!” ¹⁴Seven sons of Sceva, a leading priest, were doing this. ¹⁵But one time when they tried it, the evil spirit replied, “I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?” ¹⁶Then

the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence that they fled from the house, naked and battered.

¹⁷The story of what happened spread quickly all through Ephesus, to Jews and Greeks alike. A solemn fear descended on the city, and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored. ¹⁸Many who became believers confessed their sinful practices. ¹⁹A number of them who had been practicing sorcery brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bonfire. The value of the books was several million dollars.* ²⁰So the message about the Lord spread widely and had a powerful effect.

²¹Afterward Paul felt compelled by the Spirit* to go over to Macedonia and Achaia before going to Jerusalem. “And after that,” he said, “I must go on to Rome!” ²²He sent his two assistants, Timothy and Erastus, ahead to Macedonia while he stayed awhile longer in the province of Asia.

The Riot in Ephesus

²³About that time, serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way. ²⁴It began with Demetrius, a silversmith who had a large business manufacturing silver shrines of the Greek goddess Artemis.* He kept many craftsmen busy. ²⁵He called them together, along with others employed in similar trades, and addressed them as follows:

19:5 Acts 8:12, 16; 10:48 Gal 3:27
 19:6 Acts 2:4; 10:44, 46 ḡlossa (1100) *Rom 14:11
 19:8 Acts 28:23
 19:10 Acts 20:31
 19:11 Mark 16:20
 19:12 Acts 5:15-16
 19:13 Matt 12:27 Mark 9:38 Luke 9:49
 19:15 Mark 1:24, 34 Luke 4:34, 41
 19:17 Acts 5:5, 11
 19:19 Deut 18:10-14
 19:20 Acts 6:7; 12:24
 19:21 Acts 23:11 Rom 15:25 1 Cor 16:5
 19:22 Rom 16:23 2 Tim 4:20
 19:23 2 Cor 1:8
 19:24 Acts 16:16

19:6 Or in other languages. 19:19 Greek 50,000 pieces of silver, each of which was the equivalent of a day's wage. 19:21 Or decided in his spirit. 19:24 Artemis is otherwise known as Diana.

19:6 When Paul *laid his hands on them* they received the *Holy Spirit, spoke in other tongues* and *prophesied*, thereby experiencing the same filling with God's power and presence that the disciples had received on the day of Pentecost (2:4, 11).

19:10 Paul probably wrote 1 Corinthians during this time (see 1 Corinthians Introduction, “Date and Occasion of Writing”).

19:11-12 Paul, like other Christian evangelists (3:1-11; 4:22; 5:12-16; 6:8; 8:6-7, 13; 9:33-42), performed *unusual miracles*. • *evil spirits were expelled*: As Jesus and Peter had done (cp. 5:16; Mark 1:21-34; Luke 4:31-37).

19:13-16 Paul's effectiveness is contrasted with the impotence of the traveling Jewish exorcists, who used *the name of Jesus* as though it were magical but did not have a relationship with him or the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit (cp. Matt 12:27; Mark 9:38-39; Luke 9:49-50; 11:19).

19:17-19 The contrast between Paul and the Jewish exorcists was not lost

on the people of Ephesus, *Jews and Greeks alike*. The resulting *fear* caused the inhabitants to honor and respect *the name of the Lord Jesus*. It led many to confess and forsake *their sinful practices*, including *sorcery*.

19:20 Luke's summary of the success of the Good News in Ephesus is short but pungent (cp. 2:43-47; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; see Rom 1:16). When the Christian faith overcame problems of internal dissension, idolatry, and pagan practices, it *spread widely* and grew rapidly.

19:21-22 felt compelled by the Spirit: No doubt Paul was troubled by what he had heard about the situation in Corinth (see 1 Corinthians Introduction). Instead of going immediately himself, *he sent . . . Timothy*, who was carrying a letter, 1 Corinthians, from Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10-11). Paul himself did *go over to Macedonia and Achaia* not long afterward (Acts 20:1-3). • *“I must go on to Rome!”*: Perhaps compelled by his proven strategy (see note on 16:8), Paul wanted to proclaim the

Good News in the most significant city in the world.

19:23-41 The patron deity of *Ephesus* was *the Greek goddess Artemis*. Her birthplace was believed to be Ephesus, so Ephesus was *the official guardian of the temple*. Twice annually, elaborate festivals were held in her honor with athletic, musical, and theatrical celebrations that included singing *Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!* The temple of Artemis at Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Conversions to Christianity clearly damaged the worship of Artemis and the associated economic activity, but it became clear that Paul and his associates had committed no crime.

19:23 the Way: See note on 9:2.

19:24-34 Demetrius, a silversmith whose *business* was threatened by Paul's proclaiming faith in one God, whipped up a major riot against him.

19:24 Silver coins and *shrines* carrying the image of *Artemis* were minted in Ephesus; statuettes of the goddess were used in civic processions and are still sold there today.

19:26

Ps 115:4
Isa 44:10-20
Jer 10:3-5
Acts 17:29
1 Cor 8:4

19:28

Acts 18:19

19:29

Acts 20:4
Rom 16:23
1 Cor 1:14
Col 4:10
Phlm 1:24

19:32

Acts 21:34

19:33

1 Tim 1:20
^a*apologeomai* (0626)
Acts 22:1

19:37

Rom 2:22

20:1

Acts 16:9-10

20:3

Acts 9:23-24; 23:12
2 Cor 11:26

20:4

Acts 16:1; 19:29;
21:29
Eph 6:21
2 Tim 4:20
Titus 3:12

“Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business. ²⁶But as you have seen and heard, this man Paul has persuaded many people that handmade gods aren’t really gods at all. And he’s done this not only here in Ephesus but throughout the entire province! ²⁷Of course, I’m not just talking about the loss of public respect for our business. I’m also concerned that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will lose its influence and that Artemis—this magnificent goddess worshiped throughout the province of Asia and all around the world—will be robbed of her great prestige!”

²⁸At this their anger boiled, and they began shouting, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” ²⁹Soon the whole city was filled with confusion. Everyone rushed to the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, who were Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia. ³⁰Paul wanted to go in, too, but the believers wouldn’t let him. ³¹Some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, also sent a message to him, begging him not to risk his life by entering the amphitheater.

³²Inside, the people were all shouting, some one thing and some another. Everything was in confusion. In fact, most of them didn’t even know why they were there. ³³The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander forward and told him to explain the situation. He motioned for silence and tried to speak. ³⁴But when the crowd realized he was a Jew, they started shouting again and kept it up for about two hours: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

³⁵At last the mayor was able to quiet them

down enough to speak. “Citizens of Ephesus,” he said. “Everyone knows that Ephesus is the official guardian of the temple of the great Artemis, whose image fell down to us from heaven. ³⁶Since this is an undeniable fact, you should stay calm and not do anything rash. ³⁷You have brought these men here, but they have stolen nothing from the temple and have not spoken against our goddess.

³⁸If Demetrius and the craftsmen have a case against them, the courts are in session and the officials can hear the case at once. Let them make formal charges. ³⁹And if there are complaints about other matters, they can be settled in a legal assembly. ⁴⁰I am afraid we are in danger of being charged with rioting by the Roman government, since there is no cause for all this commotion. And if Rome demands an explanation, we won’t know what to say.” ^{41*}Then he dismissed them, and they dispersed.

Paul Goes to Macedonia and Greece

20 When the uproar was over, Paul sent for the believers* and encouraged them. Then he said good-bye and left for Macedonia. ²While there, he encouraged the believers in all the towns he passed through. Then he traveled down to Greece, ³where he stayed for three months. He was preparing to sail back to Syria when he discovered a plot by some Jews against his life, so he decided to return through Macedonia.

⁴Several men were traveling with him. They were Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica; Gaius from Derbe; Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. ⁵They went on ahead and waited for

19:41 Some translations include verse 41 as part of verse 40. 20:1 Greek *disciples*.

19:27 all around the world: The ancient geographer Strabo reports that temples dedicated to Artemis existed in cities from Asia Minor (now Turkey) to what is now France and Spain (Strabo, *Geography* 3.4.8; 4.1.4).

19:29 Archaeologists have excavated the *amphitheater* where *the whole city* assembled; it held 24,000 people.

19:31 Some of the officials of the province (Greek *Asiarchai*, “rulers of Asia”): The “Asiarchs” were the appointed leaders in the Roman province of Asia. They served as civic benefactors and usually championed the emperor cult. Some of these officials in high places were *friends of Paul*—Luke highlights that Christianity was attractive to people of high standing in society.

19:35-41 The demonstration was finally quelled only when the *mayor*

intervened and *dismissed* the assembly to prevent the city from being charged by *the Roman government* with *rioting*. This story demonstrates that Christians in the Roman world were entitled to legal due process.

19:35 The tradition that the *image* (statue) of Artemis had fallen *from heaven* might point to its having been carved from a meteor.

20:1-2 Paul traveled to *Macedonia*, where he *encouraged the believers in all the towns*, including Thessalonica, Philippi, and Berea. He also continued to gather the offering for the needy in Jerusalem (see Rom 15:25-28; 2 Cor 8:1-9:15). Titus met Paul in Macedonia with a report from Corinth, which prompted Paul to write 2 Corinthians and send Titus back carrying it (2 Cor 7:5-7; 8:6).

20:2-3 From Macedonia, Paul *traveled down to Greece*—i.e., Corinth in the province of Achaia (see note on 18:1)—*where he stayed for three months* (cp. 2 Cor 13:1). Paul probably wrote his letter to the Romans during this time (see Romans Introduction, “Date, Place, and Occasion of Writing”). • *a plot . . . against his life:* Cp. Acts 9:23-25, 28-30; 23:12-35; 25:3.

20:4 Paul’s traveling companions were disciples from Berea, Thessalonica, Derbe, and Asia, whom he was mentoring and equipping to lead (cp. 2 Tim 2:2).

20:5-15 This is another of the “we” passages in Acts (see note on 16:10). Luke apparently rejoined Paul at Philippi, where Luke had remained several years earlier, and journeyed with Paul to Jerusalem (21:1-18).

us at Troas. ⁶After the Passover* ended, we boarded a ship at Philippi in Macedonia and five days later joined them in Troas, where we stayed a week.

Paul's Final Visit to Troas

⁷On the first day of the week, we gathered with the local believers to share in the Lord's Supper.* Paul was preaching to them, and since he was leaving the next day, he kept talking until midnight. ⁸The upstairs room where we met was lighted with many flickering lamps. ⁹As Paul spoke on and on, a young man named Eutyclus, sitting on the windowsill, became very drowsy. Finally, he fell sound asleep and dropped three stories to his death below. ¹⁰Paul went down, bent over him, and took him into his arms. "Don't worry," he said, "he's alive!" ¹¹Then they all went back upstairs, shared in the Lord's Supper,* and ate together. Paul continued talking to them until dawn, and then he left. ¹²Meanwhile, the young man was taken home alive and well, and everyone was greatly relieved.

Paul Meets the Ephesian Elders in Miletus

¹³Paul went by land to Assos, where he had arranged for us to join him, while we traveled by ship. ¹⁴He joined us there, and we sailed together to Mitylene. ¹⁵The next day we sailed past the island of Kios. The following day we crossed to the island of Samos, and* a day later we arrived at Miletus.

¹⁶Paul had decided to sail on past Ephesus, for he didn't want to spend any more time in the province of Asia. He was hurrying to get to Jerusalem, if possible, in time for the

Festival of Pentecost. ¹⁷But when we landed at Miletus, he sent a message to the elders of the church at Ephesus, asking them to come and meet him.

¹⁸When they arrived he declared, "You know that from the day I set foot in the province of Asia until now ¹⁹I have done the Lord's work humbly and with many tears. I have endured the trials that came to me from the plots of the Jews. ²⁰I never shrank back from telling you what you needed to hear, either publicly or in your homes. ²¹I have had one message for Jews and Greeks alike—the necessity of ^erepenting from sin and turning to God, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus.

²²"And now I am bound by the Spirit* to go to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, ²³except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. ²⁴But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.

²⁵"And now I know that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again. ²⁶I declare today that I have been faithful. If anyone suffers eternal death, it's not my fault,* ²⁷for I didn't shrink from declaring all that God wants you to know.

²⁸"So guard yourselves and God's people. Feed and ^fshepherd God's flock—his church, purchased with his own blood*—over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as ^gleaders.* ²⁹I know that false teachers, like vicious

20:6
Acts 16:8, 10
20:7
Acts 2:42, 46
1 Cor 16:2
Rev 1:10
20:10
1 Kgs 17:21
2 Kgs 4:34
Matt 9:23-24
20:15
2 Tim 4:20
20:18
Acts 18:19-21; 19:1-41
20:21
Acts 2:38; 26:18
^emetanoia (3341)
► Rom 2:4
20:22
Acts 19:21
20:23
Acts 9:16; 21:4, 11
20:24
Acts 21:13
2 Tim 4:7
20:26
Acts 18:6
20:28
Ps 74:2
John 21:15-17
1 Pet 5:2
^fpoimaino (4165)
► Eph 4:11
^gepiskopos (1985)
► Phil 1:1
20:29
Matt 7:15
John 10:12

20:6 Greek the days of unleavened bread. **20:7** Greek to break bread. **20:11** Greek broke the bread. **20:15** Some manuscripts read and having stayed at Trogyllium. **20:22** Or by my spirit, or by an inner compulsion; Greek reads by the spirit. **20:26** Greek I am innocent of the blood of all. **20:28a** Or with the blood of his own [Son]. **20:28b** Or overseers, or bishops.

20:7-12 On the first day of the week the early church commemorated Jesus' resurrection (see Mark 16:9; cp. John 20:19; Rev 1:10). • This was Paul's last visit to Troas, which included gathering to share in the Lord's Supper. This meal probably included both communion and a common meal (cp. Acts 2:42, 46; Jude 1:12). • The remarkable feature of this gathering was the understated miraculous restoration of Eutyclus, the young man who fell asleep on a windowsill and dropped three stories to his death (cp. Acts 9:36-41).

20:13-15 Assos was a key city in Mysia on the east coast of the Aegean Sea. • Mitylene was the most strategic city on the island of Lesbos. • The island of Samos was of major importance on the trade routes from Asia Minor to the west and from the Aegean Sea to Egypt.

20:16 The Festival of Pentecost was one of the three Jewish pilgrimage festivals (see note on 2:1-4).

20:17 Miletus was a major port on the western coast of Asia Minor at the mouth of the Meander River. It provided a place for Paul to meet briefly with the elders of Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem.

20:18-38 Paul's address to the elders of the church of Ephesus is a testimony regarding his life and ministry in Ephesus, calling for similar dedication from the leaders who would carry on the ministry. The sermon highlights Paul's integrity and pastoral care (20:18-21, 26, 31), speaks about the future (20:22-23, 25, 29-30), warns against false teachers (20:29-30), and exhorts the elders to be watchful and faithful (20:28, 31). Paul modeled sacrificial, conscientious, servant leadership.

20:23 the Holy Spirit tells me: See, e.g., 21:10-12.

20:26 I have been faithful. If anyone suffers eternal death, it's not my fault: Cp. Ezek 3:16-21.

20:28 Paul refers to the church as God's people and God's flock (cp. 1 Pet 2:25; 5:2, 4). Elsewhere the church is called the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27; Eph 1:23; 4:12; Col 1:24); the bride of Christ (2 Cor 11:2; Rev 19:7; see Eph 5:25-32), the temple of the living God, (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16), a chosen people, royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession (1 Pet 2:9), and God's field, God's building (1 Cor 3:9). • Paul expected the leaders to feed and shepherd the church over which the Holy Spirit had appointed them as leaders (see 1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Pet 5:1-4; cp. Acts 6:2-4).

20:29-30 vicious wolves: Paul's prophecy did in fact happen, prompting him to write to Timothy in Ephesus some five years later (see 1 Tim 1:3-7, 19-20; 4:1-5; see also Matt 7:15; 10:16; Mark 13:22; Luke 10:3; 2 Pet 2:1-22; 3:3).

20:30
1 Jn 2:19

20:32
Deut 33:3-4
Acts 26:18
Eph 1:18
Col 1:12; 3:24
1 Pet 1:4

20:33
1 Sam 12:3
1 Cor 9:11
2 Cor 7:2; 11:9;
12:14-17

20:34
1 Cor 4:12
1 Thes 2:9

20:35
1 Thes 4:11
^b*makarios* (3107)
▶ Rom 4:7

20:37
Rom 16:16

21:1
Acts 16:10

21:4
Acts 20:23; 21:11

21:5
Acts 20:36

21:8
Acts 6:5; 8:26, 40
Eph 4:11
2 Tim 4:5

wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock.³⁰ Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following.³¹ Watch out! Remember the three years I was with you—my constant watch and care over you night and day, and my many tears for you.

³²“And now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself.

³³“I have never coveted anyone’s silver or gold or fine clothes.³⁴ You know that these hands of mine have worked to supply my own needs and even the needs of those who were with me.³⁵ And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: ‘It is more ^b blessed to give than to receive.’”

³⁶ When he had finished speaking, he knelt and prayed with them.³⁷ They all cried as they embraced and kissed him good-bye.³⁸ They were sad most of all because he had

said that they would never see him again. Then they escorted him down to the ship.

Paul Travels from Miletus to Jerusalem

21 After saying farewell to the Ephesian elders, we sailed straight to the island of Cos. The next day we reached Rhodes and then went to Patara.² There we boarded a ship sailing for Phoenicia.³ We sighted the island of Cyprus, passed it on our left, and landed at the harbor of Tyre, in Syria, where the ship was to unload its cargo.

⁴ We went ashore, found the local believers,* and stayed with them a week. These believers prophesied through the Holy Spirit that Paul should not go on to Jerusalem.⁵ When we returned to the ship at the end of the week, the entire congregation, including women* and children, left the city and came down to the shore with us. There we knelt, prayed,⁶ and said our farewells. Then we went aboard, and they returned home.

⁷ The next stop after leaving Tyre was Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and sisters* and stayed for one day.⁸ The next day we

21:4 Greek *disciples*; also in 21:16. 21:5 Or *wives*. 21:7 Greek *brothers*; also in 21:17.



The Grace of God

“Grace” is a key word in the Bible. It is used to indicate God’s kindness and favor, which gives salvation to the undeserving (e.g., 13:43; 14:26). The NT stresses that grace came through Jesus Christ (John 1:14, 16, 17). In Acts, God’s great favor was initially experienced in the Jewish community (Acts 4:33); later, it became clear that God’s grace in Jesus Christ extends to Gentiles as well (11:23; 15:8-9; 2 Cor 6:1; Gal 2:21; Eph 2:4-10; Titus 2:11). Signs and wonders attested the reality of God’s grace at work among the Gentiles (Acts 14:3).

Paul’s ministry proclaimed the Good News “about the wonderful grace of God” (20:24), and he encouraged Christians to continue in “the grace of God” as they remained faithful to their Lord (13:43). Second Peter similarly closes with a command for Christians to “grow in the grace” of Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18). When Paul left the Ephesian elders, he commended them “to God and the message of his grace,” the divine message that was able to build them up and sustain them (Acts 20:32; see 15:40). God’s grace is at the core of the Christian message and the Christian experience, from beginning to end.

Acts 20:24

Num 6:22-27
Pss 30:5; 31:16
Isa 61:1-3
Luke 4:18-19
Acts 15:11
Rom 5:15-17, 20-21
2 Cor 6:1; 8:9; 12:9
Gal 2:21; 4:10; 5:3-6
Eph 1:3-8; 2:4-10
2 Tim 1:9; 2:1
Heb 2:9; 4:16; 13:9
1 Pet 5:5-6, 12
2 Pet 3:17-18

20:35 *‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’*: This saying of Jesus is not recorded in the Gospels.

20:38 The poignancy of the occasion was heightened by awareness that *they would never see him again* (20:25).

21:1-18 This “we” passage (see notes on 16:10; 20:5-15) covers Paul’s journey from Miletus to Jerusalem at the close of the third missionary journey.

21:1 *Cos* was an island in the Aegean Sea with a major trade port. • *Rhodes* is a large Aegean island that featured the Colossus, a huge statue 100 feet (30 meters) tall that once stood at the entrance to the city. In Paul’s time, the

statue lay where it had fallen during an earthquake over 200 years earlier; it would not be removed for another 600 years. • *Patara* was the major port of Lycia, located on the coast opposite Rhodes.

21:2-3 *Tyre* was an important port in *Phoenicia* with a maritime empire of far-flung commercial interests (see Isa 23; Jer 25:15-38; 47; Zech 9; Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-31).

21:4-6 The *local believers* at Tyre gave Paul a touching farewell that reveals deep Christian fellowship. • *prophesied through the Holy Spirit that Paul should not go on to Jerusalem*: The believers at

Tyre clearly foresaw the danger in Paul’s visiting Jerusalem and out of brotherly concern tried to dissuade him. Paul willingly accepted the risks in order to fulfill his apostolic mandate (cp. Phil 3:7-10). See also note on Acts 21:11-14.

21:7 Paul visited *Ptolemais*, an important city on the coast of the Mediterranean, as he made his way from *Tyre* to Caesarea.

21:8 *Philip* had the title of *Evangelist* due to his evangelistic activity (8:4-40; cp. Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5).

went on to Caesarea and stayed at the home of Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven men who had been chosen to distribute food. ⁹He had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy.

¹⁰Several days later a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, arrived from Judea. ¹¹He came over, took Paul's belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, "The Holy Spirit declares, 'So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles.'" ¹²When we heard this, we and the local believers all begged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.

¹³But he said, "Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but even to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴When it was clear that we couldn't persuade him, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

¹⁵After this we packed our things and left for Jerusalem. ¹⁶Some believers from Caesarea accompanied us, and they took us to the home of Mnason, a man originally from Cyprus and one of the early believers. ¹⁷When we arrived, the brothers and sisters in Jerusalem welcomed us warmly.

5. PAUL IN JERUSALEM AND CAESAREA (21:18–26:32)

Paul in Jerusalem (21:18–23:35)
Paul's Meeting with the Jerusalem Church Leaders

¹⁸The next day Paul went with us to meet with James, and all the elders of the Jerusalem church were present. ¹⁹After greeting them, Paul gave a detailed account of the things God had accomplished among the Gentiles through his ministry.

²⁰After hearing this, they praised God. And then they said, "You know, dear brother, how many thousands of Jews have also be-

21:9
Joel 2:28
Acts 2:17
21:10
Acts 11:28
21:11
Acts 20:23; 21:33
21:13
Acts 20:24
(*kardia* (2588))
► Rom 10:9
21:14
Matt 26:39
21:19
Acts 15:12
21:20
Acts 15:1, 5
Gal 3:10-11



The Gift of Prophecy

As Peter had declared at Pentecost, the gift of prophecy was one of the results of the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit (2:17-21; see Joel 2:28-32). The book of Acts names a few Christian prophets (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 15:32; 21:9-11; see also *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12:3; 16:2). One of the prophets was Agabus, whose function was similar to that of an OT prophet, performing symbolic acts (Acts 21:10-11; see 1 Kgs 11:29-32; Isa 20:2-6; Jer 13:1-11; "Prophetic Sign Acts," Ezek 4:1-17) and predicting events to come (Acts 11:28; 21:10-11).

Philip the Evangelist was the father of four young women who "had the gift of prophecy" (21:9). The apostle Paul also acknowledged the prophetic gift of some Christian women (1 Cor 11:5). In the OT, most prophets were men, but several women are described as prophets: Miriam (Exod 15:20), Deborah (Judg 4:4), and Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14-20; 2 Chr 34:22-28). In the NT, the gift of prophecy is given to both men and women, and both young and old, as Peter signaled in his sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-18).

Although prophecy sometimes involves foretelling the future (20:23; 21:10-11; see Rom 9:23-26; 1 Thes 4:13-17; 2 Thes 2:3-4), at its core prophecy is proclaiming God's word by preaching, exhorting, and explaining the will of God (Acts 15:32; 19:6; Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 14:3-4, 29-33; Rev 19:10). The gift of prophecy is clearly mentioned in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and of Christ to the church (1 Cor 12:4-11; Eph 4:11). It is to be used for the benefit of believers (1 Cor 14:22).

Prophecy is always in need of testing (1 Thes 5:19-21), and the church is strongly warned against false prophets (1 Jn 4:1; Rev 2:20-23). When used faithfully and in submission to God's word and his Spirit, courageous proclamation of God's truth helps the church to determine what God's will is and inspires God's people to do it.

21:9 Philip's daughters' *gift of prophecy* demonstrated the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, as Peter had preached at Pentecost (2:17-21; Joel 2:28-32).

21:10 Luke juxtaposes female prophets (21:9) with a male prophet (see note on 17:34). *Agabus*, like the OT prophets, used symbolic actions to proclaim his message (see "Prophetic Sign Acts," Ezek 4:1-17).

21:11-14 Despite Agabus's prediction of suffering and the believers' begging Paul not to go to Jerusalem, Paul was resolutely ready *even to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus*. Luke stresses Paul's courage, determination, and heroism as a Christian missionary who would let nothing interfere with his mission. See note on 21:4-6.

21:18-19 It was important for *James* and

all the elders of the Jerusalem church to hear of Paul's successful mission *among the Gentiles* and for the mother church to continue to endorse this effort (21:20; see 15:7-21). Paul's report communicated that *God had accomplished* his purposes *among the Gentiles through Paul's ministry*.

21:20-25 The Jerusalem church leaders urged Paul to strengthen his credibility

21:21

Acts 16:3

Gal 2:3

21:23

Acts 18:18

21:24

Num 6:5, 13-20

21:25

Acts 15:19-29

21:26

Num 6:1-21

1 Cor 9:20

21:27

Acts 24:18; 26:21

21:28

Matt 24:15

Acts 6:13; 24:5-6

21:29

Acts 20:4

2 Tim 4:20

21:32

Acts 23:27

21:33

Acts 20:23

Eph 6:20

21:36

Luke 23:18

John 19:15

Acts 22:22

21:39

Acts 9:11; 22:3

21:40

Acts 26:14

lieved, and they all follow the law of Moses very seriously. ²¹ But the Jewish believers here in Jerusalem have been told that you are teaching all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn their backs on the laws of Moses. They've heard that you teach them not to circumcise their children or follow other Jewish customs. ²² What should we do? They will certainly hear that you have come.

²³ "Here's what we want you to do. We have four men here who have completed their vow. ²⁴ Go with them to the Temple and join them in the purification ceremony, paying for them to have their heads ritually shaved. Then everyone will know that the rumors are all false and that you yourself observe the Jewish laws.

²⁵ "As for the Gentile believers, they should do what we already told them in a letter: They should abstain from eating food offered to idols, from consuming blood or the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality."

Paul Is Arrested

²⁶ So Paul went to the Temple the next day with the other men. They had already started the purification ritual, so he publicly announced the date when their vows would end and sacrifices would be offered for each of them.

²⁷ The seven days were almost ended when some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the Temple and roused a mob against him. They grabbed him, ²⁸ yelling, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who preaches against our people everywhere and tells everybody to disobey the Jewish laws. He speaks against the Temple—and even defiles this holy place by bringing in Gentiles.*" ²⁹ (For earlier that day they had seen him in the city with Trophimus, a Gentile

21:28 Greek *Greeks*. 21:29 Greek *Trophimus, the Ephesian*. 21:32 Greek *centurions*. 21:40 Or *Hebrew*.

from Ephesus,* and they assumed Paul had taken him into the Temple.)

³⁰ The whole city was rocked by these accusations, and a great riot followed. Paul was grabbed and dragged out of the Temple, and immediately the gates were closed behind him. ³¹ As they were trying to kill him, word reached the commander of the Roman regiment that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. ³² He immediately called out his soldiers and officers* and ran down among the crowd. When the mob saw the commander and the troops coming, they stopped beating Paul.

³³ Then the commander arrested him and ordered him bound with two chains. He asked the crowd who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ Some shouted one thing and some another. Since he couldn't find out the truth in all the uproar and confusion, he ordered that Paul be taken to the fortress. ³⁵ As Paul reached the stairs, the mob grew so violent the soldiers had to lift him to their shoulders to protect him. ³⁶ And the crowd followed behind, shouting, "Kill him, kill him!"

Paul Speaks to the Crowd

³⁷ As Paul was about to be taken inside, he said to the commander, "May I have a word with you?"

"Do you know Greek?" the commander asked, surprised. ³⁸ "Aren't you the Egyptian who led a rebellion some time ago and took 4,000 members of the Assassins out into the desert?"

³⁹ "No," Paul replied, "I am a Jew and a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia, which is an important city. Please, let me talk to these people." ⁴⁰ The commander agreed, so Paul stood on the stairs and motioned to the people to be quiet. Soon a deep silence enveloped the crowd, and he addressed them in their own language, Aramaic.*

by demonstrating that he was not teaching Jews to *turn their backs on the laws of Moses*. At the same time, no attempt was made to force Jewish rules on Gentile converts—those terms had been set previously (15:22-29) and were simply to be honored.

21:26-36 The concerns of the Christian leaders (21:20-25) were evidently well based, for *when their vows* were almost completed, *some Jews from the province of Asia* raised a mob against Paul with false charges. They were intent on killing Paul, but the Roman *commander* rescued him.

21:28-29 *Gentiles*: It was a crime punishable by death to bring any non-Jew into the Temple precincts beyond the

Court of the Gentiles (see also Josephus, *War* 5.5.2; 6.2.4). The Jews *assumed* that Paul had violated this sacred law by bringing *Trophimus, a Gentile from Ephesus*; see also Acts 20:4; 2 Tim 4:20), into the forbidden area.

21:30 This supposed desecration of the Temple aroused the fury of the Jewish populace. The *Temple . . . gates were closed* because they thought the Temple had been defiled by a Gentile.

21:31 *commander*: Or *tribune*, a Roman officer who commanded 1,000 men.

21:34 The *fortress* of Antonia, a large military garrison built by Herod the Great on the northwest corner of the Temple Mount, accommodated the

Roman cohort that was stationed there to keep the peace.

21:37-40 The *commander* had mistaken Paul for an *Egyptian* false messiah who had planned to seize power from the Romans around AD 54 (roughly three years earlier; see Josephus, *War* 2.13.5). Paul corrected the mistake, gained permission to speak to the people, and addressed the crowd in *Aramaic*, the common language of Judea. He gave a strong statement of his faith in Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 22:1-21).

22 “Brothers and esteemed fathers,” Paul said, “listen to me as I offer my defense.” ²When they heard him speaking in their own language,* the silence was even greater.

³Then Paul said, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. As his student, I was carefully^ktrained in our Jewish laws and customs. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just like all of you today. ⁴And I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison. ⁵The high priest and the whole council of elders can testify that this is so. For I received letters from them to our Jewish brothers in Damascus, authorizing me to bring the followers of the Way from there to Jerusalem, in chains, to be punished.

⁶“As I was on the road, approaching Damascus about noon, a very bright light from heaven suddenly shone down around me. ⁷I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ ⁸“Who are you, lord?” I asked.

“And the voice replied, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene,* the one you are persecuting.’ ⁹The people with me saw the light but didn’t understand the voice speaking to me.

¹⁰“I asked, ‘What should I do, Lord?’

“And the Lord told me, ‘Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything you are to do.’

¹¹“I was blinded by the intense light and had to be led by the hand to Damascus by my companions. ¹²A man named Ananias lived there. He was a godly man, deeply devoted to the law, and well regarded by all the Jews of Damascus. ¹³He came and stood beside

me and said, ‘Brother Saul, regain your sight.’ And that very moment I could see him!

¹⁴“Then he told me, ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and hear him speak. ¹⁵For you are to be his witness, telling everyone what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶What are you waiting for? Get up and be^lbaptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.’

¹⁷“After I returned to Jerusalem, I was praying in the Temple and fell into a trance. ¹⁸I saw a vision of Jesus* saying to me, ‘Hurry! Leave Jerusalem, for the people here won’t accept your testimony about me.’

¹⁹“‘But Lord,’ I argued, ‘they certainly know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. ²⁰And I was in complete agreement when your witness Stephen was killed. I stood by and kept the coats they took off when they stoned him.’

²¹“But the Lord said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles!’”

²²The crowd listened until Paul said that word. Then they all began to shout, “Away with such a fellow! He isn’t fit to live!” ²³They yelled, threw off their coats, and tossed handfuls of dust into the air.

Paul Claims His Rights as a Roman Citizen

²⁴The commander brought Paul inside and ordered him lashed with whips to make him confess his crime. He wanted to find out why the crowd had become so furious. ²⁵When they tied Paul down to lash him, Paul said to the officer* standing there, “Is it legal for you to whip a Roman citizen who hasn’t even been tried?”

²⁶When the officer heard this, he went to the commander and asked, “What are you doing? This man is a Roman citizen!”

22:1
Acts 7:2
Iapologia (0627)
► Acts 24:10

22:3-21
//Acts 9:1-29;
26:9-18

22:3
Acts 5:34-40
Rom 10:2

ḥpaideuo (3811)
► 1 Cor 11:32

22:4
Acts 8:3; 9:2

22:6
Acts 9:2-8; 26:12-13

22:9
Acts 9:7; 26:13

22:11
Acts 9:8

22:12
Acts 9:17

22:14
Acts 3:13
1 Cor 15:8

22:15
Acts 26:16

22:16
Acts 2:38
Rom 10:13

1 Cor 6:11
Heb 10:22
ḥbaptizo (0907)
► Rom 6:3

22:19
Acts 8:3; 22:4-5;
26:9-11

22:20
Acts 7:57-8:1

22:21
Acts 9:15; 13:2
Rom 15:15-16

22:22
Acts 21:36; 25:24

22:25
Acts 16:37

22:2 Greek in Aramaic, or in Hebrew. **22:8** Or *Jesus of Nazareth*. **22:18** Greek *him*. **22:25** Greek *the centurion*; also in 22:26.

22:1-21 Paul’s premier defense of his life and faith before his own people in Jerusalem illustrates his flexibility as a missionary, just as his speech to the Greek philosophers in Athens had done (17:22-31; see 1 Cor 9:20-23). Paul begins by recognizing his kinship with his people, explaining his Jewish background and training under the noted rabbi *Gamaliel* the Elder and describing his zealous desire to honor God in everything, which they shared (Acts 22:1-3). Paul then describes his persecution of Christians (22:4-5), the revelation of Jesus to him on the way to *Damascus* (22:6-10), and his conversion (22:11-16). Paul ends his speech by describing his conversation with the Lord in the Temple. The Lord had predicted the

Jews’ rejection of the message and had sent Paul to the *Gentiles* (22:17-21).

22:3 under Gamaliel: See note on 5:34.

22:12-16 Ananias: See note on 9:17.

22:14 the Righteous One: See also 3:14; 7:52; 1 Jn 2:1. Righteousness was one of the Messiah’s characteristics (see Isa 32:1; 53:11).

22:16 be baptized. Have your sins washed away: See “Baptism,” 2:38, 41.

22:17-22 While Paul was praying in the Temple, he saw a vision of Jesus telling him that the *people of Jerusalem* would not accept his testimony. The Lord then sent him to the *Gentiles*. The crowd’s response to this report (22:22-23) proved the point.

22:23 The crowd’s yelling, throwing off *their coats*, and tossing *handfuls of dust into the air* were probably ritual responses to perceived blasphemy. They opposed and tried to thwart Paul’s words that suggested the inclusion of Gentiles (22:21). Cp. Luke 4:16-30.

22:25-29 Paul claimed his status as a *Roman citizen* at this critical time when he was about to be tortured to make him confess his supposed crime. Roman citizenship was a valuable asset, and claiming it falsely was a capital offense. Its principal benefits were the prohibition of scourging and the right to appeal to the emperor (25:11). *The commander was frightened* at having nearly violated Roman law (cp. 16:35-39).

22:29
Acts 16:38

23:1
Acts 24:16
1 Cor 4:4
2 Cor 1:12
1 Tim 3:9
Heb 13:18
1 Pet 3:16, 21

23:2
John 18:22
Acts 24:1
archiereus (0749)
• Heb 4:14

23:3
Lev 19:15
Ezek 13:10-15
John 7:51

23:5
• Exod 22:28

23:6
Acts 26:5
Phil 3:5
elpis (1680)
• Rom 5:2

23:8
Matt 22:23
Mark 12:18
Luke 20:27

23:9
Acts 22:7; 25:25

23:11
Acts 18:9; 27:24;
28:23

23:12
1 Sam 14:24
Acts 9:23

23:14-15
Acts 25:3

23:16
Acts 21:34

²⁷So the commander went over and asked Paul, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?"

"Yes, I certainly am," Paul replied.

²⁸"I am, too," the commander muttered, "and it cost me plenty!"

Paul answered, "But I am a citizen by birth!"

²⁹The soldiers who were about to interrogate Paul quickly withdrew when they heard he was a Roman citizen, and the commander was frightened because he had ordered him bound and whipped.

Paul before the High Council

³⁰The next day the commander ordered the leading priests into session with the Jewish high council.* He wanted to find out what the trouble was all about, so he released Paul to have him stand before them.

23 Gazing intently at the high council,* Paul began: "Brothers, I have always lived before God with a clear conscience!"

²Instantly Ananias the ^mhigh priest commanded those close to Paul to slap him on the mouth. ³But Paul said to him, "God will slap you, you corrupt hypocrite!* What kind of judge are you to break the law yourself by ordering me struck like that?"

⁴Those standing near Paul said to him, "Do you dare to insult God's high priest?"

⁵"I'm sorry, brothers. I didn't realize he was the high priest," Paul replied, "for the Scriptures say, 'You must not speak evil of any of your rulers.*'"

⁶Paul realized that some members of the high council were Sadducees and some were Pharisees, so he shouted, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, as were my ancestors! And I am on trial because my ⁿhope is in the resurrection of the dead!"

22:30 Greek *Sanhedrin*. 23:1 Greek *Sanhedrin*; also in 23:6, 15, 20, 28. 23:3 Greek *you whitewashed wall*. 23:5 Exod 22:28. 23:12 Greek *the Jews*. 23:17 Greek *centurions*; also in 23:23.

22:28 *it cost me plenty!* During the early part of the reign of Emperor Claudius (AD 41–54), Roman citizenship could be purchased, but it was expensive.

23:1 In addressing *the high council*, Paul insisted on his personal integrity *before God*—he had not violated God's law or done the things they accused him of doing.

23:2 *Ananias* was the Jewish *high priest* from AD 47 to 58. • *slap him*: He apparently assumed that Paul was lying and tried to intimidate him.

23:3 *you corrupt hypocrite*: Cp. Ezek 13:10-17; Matt 23:27.

23:5 Why Paul did not recognize the *high priest* is not known. • *Paul replied* by quoting Exod 22:28, acknowledging the respect to which the high priest was entitled by virtue of his office.

23:6 Paul focused on the key issue in his trial, the *hope of resurrection from the dead*. His preaching was simply the outworking of that hope and the fact of Jesus' resurrection, but the message was unacceptable to both groups of Jews because of its implications. *Pharisees* could not abide the inclusion of the Gentiles apart from circumcision and keeping the law of Moses (cp. 15:5; see "The Pharisees," Matt 3:7), but that was what the resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit had provided (Acts 2:39; 10:34-48). *Sadducees* could not stand the proclamation of the resurrection at all (cp. 4:1-2; see "The Sadducees," Matt 16:1-12).

23:7-10 Paul's statement (23:6) *divided the council*, with the *Pharisees* taking Paul's side against the *Sadducees*. The resulting *uproar* was so great that the

⁷This divided the council—the Pharisees against the Sadducees—⁸for the Sadducees say there is no resurrection or angels or spirits, but the Pharisees believe in all of these. ⁹So there was a great uproar. Some of the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees jumped up and began to argue forcefully. "We see nothing wrong with him," they shouted. "Perhaps a spirit or an angel spoke to him." ¹⁰As the conflict grew more violent, the commander was afraid they would tear Paul apart. So he ordered his soldiers to go and rescue him by force and take him back to the fortress.

¹¹That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well."

The Plan to Kill Paul

¹²The next morning a group of Jews* got together and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³There were more than forty of them in the conspiracy. ¹⁴They went to the leading priests and elders and told them, "We have bound ourselves with an oath to eat nothing until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵So you and the high council should ask the commander to bring Paul back to the council again. Pretend you want to examine his case more fully. We will kill him on the way."

¹⁶But Paul's nephew—his sister's son—heard of their plan and went to the fortress and told Paul. ¹⁷Paul called for one of the Roman officers* and said, "Take this young man to the commander. He has something important to tell him."

¹⁸So the officer did, explaining, "Paul, the

commander rescued Paul and took him back into the *fortress* of Antonia.

23:11 At this critical juncture, Jesus encouraged Paul to continue as his faithful *witness* by assuring him that he would go to *Rome* (see 19:21).

23:12-15 The plan to kill Paul was desperate, as a *group of . . . more than forty took an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul* (cp. 1 Sam 14:24-46; Matt 14:6-11; see also Deut 23:21-23; Matt 5:33-37; Jas 5:12).

23:16-22 *Paul's nephew* thwarted the murderous plot by reporting it to one of the *Roman officers*.

prisoner, called me over and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you.”

¹⁹The commander took his hand, led him aside, and asked, “What is it you want to tell me?”

²⁰Paul’s nephew told him, “Some Jews are going to ask you to bring Paul before the high council tomorrow, pretending they want to get some more information. ²¹But don’t do it! There are more than forty men hiding along the way ready to ambush him. They have vowed not to eat or drink anything until they have killed him. They are ready now, just waiting for your consent.”

²²“Don’t let anyone know you told me this,” the commander warned the young man.

Paul Is Sent to Caesarea

²³Then the commander called two of his officers and ordered, “Get 200 soldiers ready to leave for Caesarea at nine o’clock tonight. Also take 200 spearmen and 70 mounted troops. ²⁴Provide horses for Paul to ride, and get him safely to Governor Felix.” ²⁵Then he wrote this letter to the governor:

²⁶“From Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency, Governor Felix: Greetings!

²⁷“This man was seized by some Jews,

23:23

Acts 8:40

23:27

Acts 21:30-33;

22:25-29



CAESAREA (Acts 23:23-35)

Caesarea, named in honor of Augustus Caesar, was built on Israel’s Mediterranean coast by Herod the Great from 22 to 10 BC. It became the administrative center of the country throughout the period of Roman occupation. Three Roman governors of Palestine lived there: Felix (23:24, 33), Festus (25:1, 4-6, 13), and Pontius Pilate, who visited Jerusalem on special occasions (as in John 19). Archaeologists found Pilate’s name carved in stone in the theater at Caesarea. Caesarea served as the major seaport of Judea in NT times. A Roman officer named Cornelius was converted to Christianity in Caesarea (Acts 10:1, 24). Later the apostle Peter visited Philip, a prominent Christian leader who lived there (21:8). Paul spent more than two years in prison in Caesarea (24:27–25:1) and embarked from there on his journey to Rome (27:1).

23:23-35 A mounted escort took Paul safely to the Roman *Governor Felix* in *Caesarea*, the Roman headquarters for Judea. There Paul would have greater protection than in Jerusalem. The military operation was executed *that night* with secret efficiency and maximum security (23:31).

23:24 Antonius *Felix* was procurator (*Governor*) of Judea about AD 52–59, with responsibility for both military and civil affairs. Felix had a bad reputation (see 24:24-27) and was eventually recalled to Rome by Nero.

23:26-30 The letter of *Claudius Lysias* to *Governor Felix* is a typical Hellenistic

letter, naming the writer and the person addressed, offering a greeting, and stating the business at hand (though there is no parting word of farewell; see note on 15:29). It summarizes the events that preceded it and explains the action taken; it also suggests that the commander has followed proper Roman judicial procedure. • The title *his*

23:28
Acts 22:30
23:29
Acts 18:14-15;
25:18-19; 26:31;
28:18
23:30
Acts 24:19; 25:16
23:33
Acts 8:40
23:34
Acts 6:9; 21:39; 22:3
23:35
Acts 25:16
24:1
Acts 23:2, 24-30, 35
24:3
Acts 23:26; 26:25
24:5
Mark 1:24
Acts 16:20; 17:6;
24:14
24:6
Acts 21:28, 30
24:9
1 Thes 2:16
24:10
^o*apologeomai* (0626)
• Acts 25:8
24:11
Acts 21:27
24:13
Acts 25:7
24:14
Acts 9:2; 26:22
24:15
Dan 12:2
Matt 22:31-32
John 5:28-29
Acts 23:6; 28:20
24:16
Acts 23:1

and they were about to kill him when I arrived with the troops. When I learned that he was a Roman citizen, I removed him to safety. ²⁸Then I took him to their high council to try to learn the basis of the accusations against him. ²⁹I soon discovered the charge was something regarding their religious law—certainly nothing worthy of imprisonment or death. ³⁰But when I was informed of a plot to kill him, I immediately sent him on to you. I have told his accusers to bring their charges before you.”

³¹So that night, as ordered, the soldiers took Paul as far as Antipatris. ³²They returned to the fortress the next morning, while the mounted troops took him on to Caesarea. ³³When they arrived in Caesarea, they presented Paul and the letter to Governor Felix. ³⁴He read it and then asked Paul what province he was from. “Cilicia,” Paul answered.

³⁵“I will hear your case myself when your accusers arrive,” the governor told him. Then the governor ordered him kept in the prison at Herod’s headquarters.*

Paul in Caesarea (24:1–26:32)

Paul Appears before Felix

24 Five days later Ananias, the high priest, arrived with some of the Jewish elders and the lawyer* Tertullus, to present their case against Paul to the governor. ²When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented the charges against Paul in the following address to the governor:

23:35 Greek *Herod’s Praetorium*. **24:1** Greek *some elders and an orator*. **24:6** Some manuscripts add an expanded conclusion to verse 6, all of verse 7, and an additional phrase in verse 8: *We would have judged him by our law; but Lystias, the commander of the garrison, came and violently took him away from us; commanding his accusers to come before you.*

Excellency was often applied to persons of high social, political, or economic status (Luke 1:3).

23:31 *Antipatris*, a city rebuilt by Herod the Great in 9 BC on the Plain of Sharon, was a convenient military control point between Jerusalem and Caesarea.

23:35 *The governor* followed the proper protocol and waited for Paul’s accusers to arrive before granting an official hearing. • *Herod’s headquarters* was Herod the Great’s palace at Caesarea; it subsequently became the residence of the Roman governors of Judea.

24:1-27 *Tertullus* presented a legal case against Paul in a Roman court on behalf of the *high priest* (24:1-9). Then Paul cheerfully made his *defense* and defended his faith (24:10-21), and the governor adjourned the hearing without a decision and *left Paul in prison* for two years (24:22-27).

24:1-4 *Tertullus* presented the case for the prosecution, beginning with the customary speech of praise intended to attract the attention and sympathy of the *governor*, followed by the statement of charges (24:5-8).

24:5 *Troublemaker* (or *agitator*) was a charge of political sedition. A Roman court would have taken this charge very seriously (see 16:21; 17:7; 18:13). Similar accusations were made against Jesus before Pilate (Luke 23:2, 5, 14). • The term *cult* (or *party*, or *sect*) is used here in a negative sense to put Paul’s religion under a pallor of suspicion if not illegality (see also Acts 24:14).

24:6 *trying to desecrate the Temple*: See note on 21:28-29.

24:10-21 Paul’s defense was that (1) he wasn’t in Jerusalem long enough to incite a riot; (2) none of his accusers had ever seen him stirring up a riot; and (3) he worshiped in accord with

“You have provided a long period of peace for us Jews and with foresight have enacted reforms for us. ³For all of this, Your Excellency, we are very grateful to you. ⁴But I don’t want to bore you, so please give me your attention for only a moment. ⁵We have found this man to be a troublemaker who is constantly stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the cult known as the Nazarenes. ⁶Furthermore, he was trying to desecrate the Temple when we arrested him. ⁸You can find out the truth of our accusations by examining him yourself.” ⁹Then the other Jews chimed in, declaring that everything Tertullus said was true.

¹⁰The governor then motioned for Paul to speak. Paul said, “I know, sir, that you have been a judge of Jewish affairs for many years, so I gladly present my ^odefense before you. ¹¹You can quickly discover that I arrived in Jerusalem no more than twelve days ago to worship at the Temple. ¹²My accusers never found me arguing with anyone in the Temple, nor stirring up a riot in any synagogue or on the streets of the city. ¹³These men cannot prove the things they accuse me of doing.

¹⁴“But I admit that I follow the Way, which they call a cult. I worship the God of our ancestors, and I firmly believe the Jewish law and everything written in the prophets. ¹⁵I have the same hope in God that these men have, that he will raise both the righteous and the unrighteous. ¹⁶Because of this, I always try to maintain a clear conscience before God and all people.

Jewish law and everything written in the prophets.

24:14 *The Way*: See note on 9:2. • Paul emphasized his common ground with his Jewish audience, including his *worship*, belief in the *Jewish law*, acceptance of the *prophets*, and hope in the resurrection (24:14, 15; see 24:21).

24:15 At the last judgment God *will raise both the righteous and the unrighteous*. Paul kept this final appointment with God constantly in mind (24:16). The fear of the “coming day of judgment” unnerved Felix in a subsequent conversation with Paul (24:25).

24:16 Paul stressed that he had acted with a *clear conscience* (see 20:27, 33; 23:1; 1 Cor 4:4; 2 Cor 1:12; 4:2; see 2 Tim 1:3). He had not departed from his Jewish heritage (Acts 24:14), and he had no fear of God’s judgment (24:15).

¹⁷“After several years away, I returned to Jerusalem with money to aid my people and to offer sacrifices to God. ¹⁸My accusers saw me in the Temple as I was completing a purification ceremony. There was no crowd around me and no rioting. ¹⁹But some Jews from the province of Asia were there—and they ought to be here to bring charges if they have anything against me! ²⁰Ask these men here what crime the Jewish high council* found me guilty of, ²¹except for the one time I shouted out, ‘I am on trial before you today because I believe in the resurrection of the dead!’”

²²At that point Felix, who was quite familiar with the Way, adjourned the hearing and said, “Wait until Lysias, the garrison commander, arrives. Then I will decide the case.” ²³He ordered an officer* to keep Paul in custody but to give him some freedom and allow his friends to visit him and take care of his needs.

²⁴A few days later Felix came back with his wife, Drusilla, who was Jewish. Sending for Paul, they listened as he told them about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵As he reasoned with them about righteousness and self-control and the coming day of judgment, Felix became frightened. “Go away for now,” he replied. “When it is more convenient, I’ll call for you again.” ²⁶He also hoped that Paul would bribe him, so he sent for him quite often and talked with him.

²⁷After two years went by in this way, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And because Felix wanted to gain favor with the Jewish people, he left Paul in prison.

24:20 Greek *Sanhedrin*. 24:23 Greek *a centurion*.

Paul Appears before Festus

25 Three days after Festus arrived in Caesarea to take over his new responsibilities, he left for Jerusalem, ²where the leading priests and other Jewish leaders met with him and made their accusations against Paul. ³They asked Festus as a favor to transfer Paul to Jerusalem (planning to ambush and kill him on the way). ⁴But Festus replied that Paul was at Caesarea and he himself would be returning there soon. ⁵So he said, “Those of you in authority can return with me. If Paul has done anything wrong, you can make your accusations.”

⁶About eight or ten days later Festus returned to Caesarea, and on the following day he took his seat in court and ordered that Paul be brought in. ⁷When Paul arrived, the Jewish leaders from Jerusalem gathered around and made many serious accusations they couldn’t prove.

⁸Paul denied the charges. “I am not guilty of any crime against the Jewish laws or the Temple or the Roman government,” he said.

⁹Then Festus, wanting to please the Jews, asked him, “Are you willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there?”

¹⁰But Paul replied, “No! This is the official Roman court, so I ought to be tried right here. You know very well I am not guilty of harming the Jews. ¹¹If I have done something worthy of death, I don’t refuse to die. But if I am innocent, no one has a right to turn me over to these men to kill me. I appeal to Caesar!”

¹²Festus conferred with his advisers and then replied, “Very well! You have appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar you will go!”

24:17
Acts 11:29-30
Rom 15:25-28
1 Cor 16:1-4
2 Cor 8:1-4
Gal 2:10

24:18
Acts 21:26-27

24:21
Acts 23:6

24:23
Acts 27:3; 28:16, 30

24:25
Acts 10:42
Gal 5:23
2 Pet 1:6

24:27
Acts 25:9, 14

25:1
Acts 24:27

25:2
Acts 24:1; 25:15

25:3
Acts 23:15

25:5
Acts 23:30

25:6
Acts 25:17

25:7
Acts 24:5-6, 13

25:8
Acts 6:13; 24:12;
28:17
papologemai (0626)
↳ Acts 25:16

25:9
Acts 24:27

25:10
Acts 25:21

25:11
Acts 26:32; 28:19

24:17 *money to aid my people*: See note on 20:1-2; see also Rom 15:25-29; 1 Cor 16:1-2; 2 Cor 9:1-7. • *and to offer sacrifices to God*: See Acts 21:23-26.

24:22 Perhaps *Felix* delayed his decision hoping that Paul would bribe him (24:26).

24:23 It was in keeping with the proper treatment of a Roman citizen to *give him some freedom and allow his friends to visit him and take care of his needs*.

24:24 *Drusilla* was the sister of Herod Agrippa II and Bernice (25:13; see “The Herod Family,” Matt 2:1-20); Drusilla had abandoned her former husband, Azizus the King of Emessa, and married *Felix*. Drusilla was *Jewish*, so in forsaking her original husband and marrying Felix she had disregarded God’s commands (Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18; cp. Mal 2:16; Mark 10:12). Josephus criticized her for this (*Antiquities* 20.7.1-2). Drusilla and

her husband were confronted in their conversation with Paul by the prospect of judgment.

24:25 Paul’s words about *righteousness, self-control*, and coming divine *judgment* frightened *Felix*, who was notably corrupt (24:26-27; see notes on 23:24; 24:24).

24:26-27 Felix kept Paul in custody hoping for a *bribe*. When this failed and his own term ended, he left Paul in prison *to gain favor with the Jewish people*.

24:27–25:5 Felix’s successor was *Porcius Festus*, appointed by Nero to be governor of Judea, about AD 59–62. Josephus describes Festus as a conscientious, honest administrator who was not able to stem the rising tide of Jewish unrest despite his strong action against the party of the Assassins (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.8.10; cp. Acts 21:38). He resisted the Jewish leaders’ attempt to have

Paul’s trial moved to Jerusalem, but he was not immune to their pressure (25:9).

25:7 The *serious accusations* were probably those raised previously (21:27-28; 24:5-9), but the accusations were unsupported by the evidence (24:10-13).

25:9 *Festus, wanting to please the Jews*: The governor would later state his official reason for delaying Paul’s trial and asking to move it to Jerusalem (25:17-20). His request was driven by politics, however, not justice.

25:10-11 Festus’s suggestion that Paul be tried in Jerusalem motivated the apostle’s *appeal to Caesar*. Paul was not afraid of death, but he objected to being turned over to a biased court intent on murder, not justice (25:7).

25:12 *Festus* granted Paul’s appeal. This fulfilled Paul’s conviction that he must see Rome (19:21; see also 23:11; 27:24; Rom 1:13-15; 15:22-29).

25:14
Acts 24:27

25:15
Acts 25:1-2

25:16
Acts 23:30
apologia (0627)
Acts 26:1

25:18-19
Acts 18:14-15; 23:29

25:21
Acts 25:11-12

25:22
Acts 9:15

25:24
Acts 22:22

25:25
Luke 23:4
Acts 23:9

¹³A few days later King Agrippa arrived with his sister, Bernice,* to pay their respects to Festus. ¹⁴During their stay of several days, Festus discussed Paul's case with the king. "There is a prisoner here," he told him, "whose case was left for me by Felix. ¹⁵When I was in Jerusalem, the leading priests and Jewish elders pressed charges against him and asked me to condemn him. ¹⁶I pointed out to them that Roman law does not convict people without a trial. They must be given an opportunity to confront their accusers and ¹⁷defend themselves.

¹⁷"When his accusers came here for the trial, I didn't delay. I called the case the very next day and ordered Paul brought in. ¹⁸But the accusations made against him weren't any of the crimes I expected. ¹⁹Instead, it was something about their religion and a dead man named Jesus, who Paul insists is alive. ²⁰I was at a loss to know how to investigate these things, so I asked him whether he would be willing to stand trial on these ^{25:13}Greek. Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived.

charges in Jerusalem. ²¹But Paul appealed to have his case decided by the emperor. So I ordered that he be held in custody until I could arrange to send him to Caesar."

²²"I'd like to hear the man myself," Agrippa said.

And Festus replied, "You will—tomorrow!"

Paul Speaks to Agrippa

²³So the next day Agrippa and Bernice arrived at the auditorium with great pomp, accompanied by military officers and prominent men of the city. Festus ordered that Paul be brought in. ²⁴Then Festus said, "King Agrippa and all who are here, this is the man whose death is demanded by all the Jews, both here and in Jerusalem. ²⁵But in my opinion he has done nothing deserving death. However, since he appealed his case to the emperor, I have decided to send him to Rome.

²⁶"But what shall I write the emperor? For there is no clear charge against him. So I



Acts 25:13–26:32

HEROD AGRIPPA II Trusted Ally of Rome

Herod Agrippa II, son of Herod Agrippa I, succeeded his father as king and ruled in Palestine AD 50–100, eventually controlling approximately the same area as his great-grandfather, Herod the Great. Agrippa II was in control of the Temple treasury and could appoint the high priest. He was not popular among Jews on account of his incestuous relationship with his sister Bernice. The Romans consulted him on religious matters, which is probably why Festus invited him to hear the apostle Paul's defense at Caesarea (AD 59, 25:13–26:32).

In May AD 66, the Jewish war against the Romans began (Josephus, *War* 2.14.4). When Agrippa's attempt to quell the revolt failed, he became a staunch ally of the Romans throughout the entire war (AD 66–70). During this time Nero committed suicide, the new emperor Galba was murdered, and Vespasian became the emperor. After pledging his allegiance to the new emperor, Agrippa remained with Titus, Vespasian's son, who was the general in charge of the war (Tacitus, *History* 5.81). After the fall of Jerusalem (Aug 6, AD 70), Agrippa was probably present to celebrate the destruction of his own people.

In AD 79 Vespasian died and Titus became emperor. Little is known of Agrippa's rule after this, except that he wrote to the historian Josephus, praising him for *The Jewish War*, and he purchased a copy of it (Josephus, *Life* 65; *Against Apion* 1.9.47–52).

Although the Talmud implies that Agrippa II had two wives (Babylonian Talmud, *Sukkah* 27a), Josephus gives no indication that he had any wives or children. He died around AD 100, and his death marks the end of the dynasty of the Herods.

25:13-22 Festus *discussed Paul's case* with Herod Agrippa II (ruled AD 50–100), who had come to Caesarea to make a courtesy call on the new governor.

25:16 It was a fundamental principle: *Roman law did not convict people without a trial. They must be given an opportunity to confront their accusers and defend themselves* (cp. 19:38-39). This put Roman judicial procedure in a favorable light for readers of Acts.

25:17 *I didn't delay*: In contrast with Felix, his predecessor (24:22-27).

25:18-20 These verses give Festus's official reasons for his actions; see also 25:9. There were no criminal accusations against Paul; the objections were *about their religion* and centered on Paul's claim that *Jesus . . . is alive*.

25:23-27 Paul's hearing before *King Agrippa* was accompanied by all the

pomp and circumstance appropriate for an official royal visit. The main purpose of the hearing was for Agrippa to advise Festus on what he should *write* in the appeal to Caesar, for there was *no clear charge against* Paul, and Festus himself believed Paul had *done nothing deserving death*.

have brought him before all of you, and especially you, King Agrippa, so that after we examine him, I might have something to write. ²⁷For it makes no sense to send a prisoner to the emperor without specifying the charges against him!"

26 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You may speak in your defense."

So Paul, gesturing with his hand, started his defense: ²⁸"I am fortunate, King Agrippa, that you are the one hearing my defense today against all these accusations made by the Jewish leaders, ²⁹for I know you are an expert on all Jewish customs and controversies. Now please listen to me patiently!

³⁰"As the Jewish leaders are well aware, I was given a thorough Jewish training from my earliest childhood among my own people and in Jerusalem. ³¹If they would admit it, they know that I have been a member of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of our religion. ³²Now I am on trial because of my hope in the fulfillment of God's promise made to our ancestors. ³³In fact, that is why the twelve tribes of Israel zealously worship God night and day, and they share the same hope I have. Yet, Your Majesty, they accuse me for having this hope! ³⁴Why does it seem incredible to any of you that God can raise the dead?

³⁵"I used to believe that I ought to do everything I could to oppose the very name of Jesus the Nazarene. ³⁶Indeed, I did just that in Jerusalem. Authorized by the leading priests, I caused many believers* there to be sent to prison. And I cast my vote against them when they were condemned to death. ³⁷Many times I had them punished in the synagogues to get them to curse Jesus.* I was so violently opposed to them that I even chased them down in foreign cities.

³⁸"One day I was on such a mission to Damascus, armed with the authority and commission of the leading priests. ³⁹About noon,

Your Majesty, as I was on the road, a light from heaven brighter than the sun shone down on me and my companions. ⁴⁰We all fell down, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic,* "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is useless for you to fight against my will.*"

⁴¹"Who are you, lord?" I asked.

"And the Lord replied, 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. ⁴²Now get to your feet! For I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant and witness. Tell people that you have seen me, and tell them what I will show you in the future. ⁴³And I will rescue you from both your own people and the Gentiles. Yes, I am sending you to the Gentiles ⁴⁴to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in me.'

⁴⁵"And so, King Agrippa, I obeyed that vision from heaven. ⁴⁶I preached first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that all must repent of their sins and turn to God—and prove they have changed by the good things they do. ⁴⁷Some Jews arrested me in the Temple for preaching this, and they tried to kill me. ⁴⁸But God has protected me right up to this present time so I can testify to everyone, from the least to the greatest. I teach nothing except what the prophets and Moses said would happen—⁴⁹that the Messiah would suffer and be the first to rise from the dead, and in this way announce God's light to Jews and Gentiles alike."

⁵⁰Suddenly, Festus shouted, "Paul, you are insane. Too much study has made you crazy!"

⁵¹But Paul replied, "I am not insane, Most Excellent Festus. What I am saying is the sober truth. ⁵²And King Agrippa knows about these things. I speak boldly, for I am

26:1
*apologeomai (0626)
†Phil 1:7

26:4
Gal 1:13
Phil 3:5-6

26:6
Gen 3:15; 22:18; 26:4
Deut 18:15
Isa 7:14; 9:6-7
Jer 23:5-6; 33:14
Ezek 34:23; 37:24
Dan 9:24
Mal 3:1; 4:2

26:7
Phil 3:11
1 Thes 3:10

26:8
Dan 12:2

26:9
John 15:21; 16:2
1 Tim 1:13

26:10
Acts 8:3; 22:4-5

26:12-18
//Acts 9:1-19; 22:6-16

26:14
Acts 9:7

26:16
Gal 1:12
Col 1:25
1 Tim 1:12

26:17
Acts 13:46-48; 22:21
Rom 11:13; 15:16
Gal 1:15-16; 2:7-9
1 Tim 2:7
2 Tim 1:11

26:18
Isa 35:5; 42:7, 16;
61:1
Luke 1:77, 79
Eph 1:11; 5:8
Col 1:13
1 Pet 2:9

26:20
Matt 3:8
Acts 9:19-29

26:22
Luke 24:27, 44

26:23
Isa 42:6; 49:6
Luke 24:46-47
Rom 1:3-4
1 Cor 15:20
Col 1:18
Rev 1:5

26:24
1 Cor 4:10

26:26
John 18:20

26:9 Or *Jesus of Nazareth*. **26:10** Greek *many of God's holy people*. **26:11** Greek *to blaspheme*. **26:14a** Or *Hebrew*. **26:14b** Greek *It is hard for you to kick against the oxgoads*.

26:1-23 In his eloquent *defense* before King Agrippa, Paul argued that his preaching was completely consistent with the *Jewish* faith. The defense begins with a courteous acknowledgement of Agrippa's competence to hear the evidence (26:2-3), outlines the nature of Paul's background, Jewish training, and membership in the *Pharisees* (26:4-5), and explains that the charges against him are merely for believing the fulfillment of Jewish hopes for the resurrection (26:6-8). Paul then tells the story of his conversion from strong opponent of Christianity (26:9-11) through a vision on the way to *Damascus* (26:12-18;

see 9:1-18). His preaching was nothing more than obeying this divine *vision* (26:19-20). Even though he encountered violent opposition from his fellow Jews (26:21), God *protected* him as he taught a message that the Jews should have embraced (26:22-23). This defense is a model for Christians put on trial for their faith (see 9:15; Luke 21:12-15).

26:12-18 See 9:1-18.

26:17-18 Throughout his defense in this trial for his life, Paul also clearly set out the conditions for receiving new life in Christ (also in 26:20, 23; see Matt 10:19-20).

26:22-23 Paul stressed God's protection as he carried out his witness (cp. 3:18; 10:43; Luke 24:25-27, 44-47). Paul then called on his hearers to believe his message, that Jesus is the *Messiah* who fulfills the promises of the OT (see Luke 24:27, 44).

26:24 *Paul, you are insane*: Festus, a Roman, thought all this talk about the prophets and resurrection was *crazy* (cp. 17:18, 32), and he concluded that Paul must have driven himself mad with *too much study*.

26:26 *They were not done in a corner*: The major events of the Christian faith

26:31
Acts 23:9, 29
26:32
Acts 25:11
27:1
Acts 25:12
27:2
Acts 19:29; 20:4
27:3
Matt 11:21
Acts 24:23; 27:43;
28:2, 16
27:6
Acts 28:11
27:9
Lev 16:29-31

sure these events are all familiar to him, for they were not done in a corner! ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do—”

²⁸Agrippa interrupted him. “Do you think you can persuade me to become a Christian so quickly?”*

²⁹Paul replied, “Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains.”

³⁰Then the king, the governor, Bernice, and all the others stood and left. ³¹As they went out, they talked it over and agreed, “This man hasn’t done anything to deserve death or imprisonment.”

³²And Agrippa said to Festus, “He could have been set free if he hadn’t appealed to Caesar.”

6. PAUL GOES TO ROME (27:1–28:31) Paul’s Journey to Rome (27:1–28:16)

The Journey to Cyprus and Crete

27 When the time came, we set sail for Italy. Paul and several other prisoners were placed in the custody of a Roman officer* named Julius, a captain of the Imperial Regiment. ²Aristarchus, a Macedonian from

26:28 Or “A little more, and your arguments would make me a Christian.” 27:1 Greek *centurion*; similarly in 27:6, 11, 31, 43. 27:2 *Asia* was a Roman province in what is now western Turkey.

Thessalonica, was also with us. We left on a ship whose home port was Adramyttium on the northwest coast of the province of Asia;* it was scheduled to make several stops at ports along the coast of the province.

³The next day when we docked at Sidon, Julius was very kind to Paul and let him go ashore to visit with friends so they could provide for his needs. ⁴Putting out to sea from there, we encountered strong headwinds that made it difficult to keep the ship on course, so we sailed north of Cyprus between the island and the mainland. ⁵Keeping to the open sea, we passed along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, landing at Myra, in the province of Lycia. ⁶There the commanding officer found an Egyptian ship from Alexandria that was bound for Italy, and he put us on board.

⁷We had several days of slow sailing, and after great difficulty we finally neared Cnidus. But the wind was against us, so we sailed across to Crete and along the sheltered coast of the island, past the cape of Salmone. ⁸We struggled along the coast with great difficulty and finally arrived at Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea. ⁹We had lost a lot of time. The weather was becoming dangerous for

were historical matters of public record that witnesses could attest as factually true. Agrippa could not invalidate Paul’s statements of fact.

26:27–28 Paul’s question put *Agrippa* in a bind: If he said he believed *the prophets*, he knew Paul would press home the Christian message; if not, he would offend the devout Jews in his audience. Agrippa knew that Paul wasn’t crazy and that Paul’s testimony about Jesus was historically sound (26:26). So Agrippa evaded Paul’s question and refused to face the claims of Christ, alleging that the statement given by Paul was too brief for him to arrive at a responsible decision.

26:28 “Do you think you can persuade me to become a Christian so quickly?” This enigmatic remark might have been ironic, incredulous, scoffing, or brushing off Paul’s challenge. It also might have been a direct statement of Paul’s persuasiveness, or a direct statement about or genuine question of Paul’s intention. It seems best to take Agrippa’s reply as deliberately evasive: He didn’t want to admit that he believed the prophets (26:27), for Paul had just made a strong case, and the next step would be to believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah to whom the prophets pointed. Agrippa didn’t want to take that step. On the other hand, he didn’t want to say that he didn’t believe the prophets, for that

would alienate the Jewish subjects to whose loyalties he wanted to appeal. His non-committal response underlines his discomfort with Paul’s testimony.

26:29 Paul’s bold answer shows his quickness in repartee. He challenges Agrippa and his whole audience about the value of knowing Christ and making a personal commitment to him.

26:31 The consensus of these rulers was that Paul had *not done anything to deserve death or imprisonment*; this verdict was given repeatedly by the Roman authorities that considered Paul’s case (25:25; see Luke 23:4, 15, 22).

26:32 *He could have been set free*: The legal verdict was clear (26:31). But as a practical matter, *if he hadn’t appealed to Caesar*, Paul might not have been alive (25:1-11). As it was, he was fulfilling God’s purposes for him (23:11).

27:1–28:16 The vivid nautical language used throughout the account of Paul’s journey to Rome yields one of the best available accounts of an ancient sea voyage. • This is the last “we” section in Acts (see also 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18). During the two years of Paul’s imprisonment, Luke had probably done much of the research for his Gospel throughout Judea and Galilee. Here, as a member of Paul’s sailing party, he was an eyewitness participant in the danger at sea.

27:1 *Julius* is otherwise unknown. • *The Imperial Regiment* (see note on 10:1-8) served in Syria during this time.

27:2 *Aristarchus* was a native of *Thessalonica* and a co-worker with Paul in Asia (see 19:29; 20:4, 6; Phlm 1:24). • *Adramyttium* was a port on the west coast of Asia Minor southeast of Troas.

27:3 *Sidon*, on the coast about 70 miles (110 km) north of Caesarea, was the first port of call. *Julius* treated Paul kindly and allowed his local Christian *friends* to care for him.

27:4-6 Luke describes in detail the sea voyage north and then west along the southern coast of Asia Minor. • *Myra* was a regular stop for *Egyptian* grain ships bound for Italy.

27:7 The *great difficulty* was due in part to the lateness of the season (27:9).

• *Cnidus* was a seaport on the southwestern coast of Asia Minor near the island of Cos. • *The cape of Salmone* was located at the northeastern tip of *Crete*, the largest of the Greek islands.

27:8 *Fair Havens* was a small bay on the southern side of the island of Crete.

27:9 *because it was so late in the fall*: This was a *dangerous* time for a voyage on the Mediterranean.

sea travel because it was so late in the fall,* and Paul spoke to the ship's officers about it.¹⁰ "Men," he said, "I believe there is trouble ahead if we go on—shipwreck, loss of cargo, and danger to our lives as well."¹¹ But the officer in charge of the prisoners listened more to the ship's captain and the owner than to Paul.¹² And since Fair Havens was an exposed harbor—a poor place to spend the winter—most of the crew wanted to go on to Phoenix, farther up the coast of Crete, and spend the winter there. Phoenix was a good harbor with only a southwest and northwest exposure.

The Storm at Sea

¹³When a light wind began blowing from the south, the sailors thought they could make it. So they pulled up anchor and sailed close to the shore of Crete.¹⁴ But the weather changed abruptly, and a wind of typhoon strength (called a "northeaster") burst across the island and blew us out to sea.¹⁵ The sailors couldn't turn the ship into the wind, so they gave up and let it run before the gale.

¹⁶We sailed along the sheltered side of a small island named Cauda,* where with great difficulty we hoisted aboard the lifeboat being towed behind us.¹⁷ Then the sailors bound ropes around the hull of the ship to strengthen it. They were afraid of being driven across to the sandbars of Syrtis off the African coast, so they lowered the sea anchor to slow the ship and were driven before the wind.

¹⁸The next day, as gale-force winds continued to batter the ship, the crew began throwing the cargo overboard.¹⁹ The following day they even took some of the ship's gear and threw it overboard.²⁰ The terrible storm

raged for many days, blotting out the sun and the stars, until at last all hope was gone.

²¹No one had eaten for a long time. Finally, Paul called the crew together and said, "Men, you should have listened to me in the first place and not left Crete. You would have avoided all this damage and loss.²² But take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down.²³ For last night an ^sangel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me,²⁴ and he said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What's more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.'²⁵ So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said.²⁶ But we will be shipwrecked on an island."

The Shipwreck at Malta

²⁷About midnight on the fourteenth night of the storm, as we were being driven across the Sea of Adria,* the sailors sensed land was near.²⁸ They dropped a weighted line and found that the water was 120 feet deep. But a little later they measured again and found it was only 90 feet deep.*²⁹ At this rate they were afraid we would soon be driven against the rocks along the shore, so they threw out four anchors from the back of the ship and prayed for daylight.

³⁰Then the sailors tried to abandon the ship; they lowered the lifeboat as though they were going to put out anchors from the front of the ship.³¹ But Paul said to the commanding officer and the soldiers, "You will all die unless the sailors stay aboard."³² So the soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat and let it drift away.

³³Just as day was dawning, Paul urged everyone to eat. "You have been so worried that you haven't touched food for two weeks," he said.³⁴ "Please eat something

27:14

Mark 4:37

27:18

Jon 1:5

27:21

Acts 27:10

27:23

Acts 18:9; 23:11

2 Tim 4:17

^sangelos (0032)

1 Cor 4:9

27:24

Acts 23:11

27:25

Rom 4:20-21

27:26

Acts 28:1

27:34

Matt 10:30

Luke 12:7

27:9 Greek *because the fast was now already gone by*. This fast was associated with the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), which occurred in late September or early October. 27:16 Some manuscripts read *Cauda*. 27:27 *The Sea of Adria* includes the central portion of the Mediterranean. 27:28 Greek *20 fathoms . . . 15 fathoms* [37 meters . . . 27 meters].

27:10-11 Paul realized what would happen if they went on. He warned the ship's officers, but they and the Roman *officer* were unlikely to listen to an imprisoned Jewish rabbi with no experience as a seaman. Later, however, they would respect him more (27:30-36, 42-43).

27:12 The prevailing southeasterly winds made Fair Havens an unsafe place for ships to harbor in the winter, but *Phoenix*, a town *farther up the coast of Crete*, offered a better harbor.

27:14-16 The storm, called a "*northeaster*," was of *typhoon strength*, very threatening to both the cargo and the crew. Forced to let the ship *run before*

the gale, they sailed past a small island called *Cauda* (known today as *Gaudos*), south of Crete.

27:17 Binding ropes around the ship's hull (called *frapping* in nautical terms) was intended to *strengthen it* against the tremendous pressure of the storm. • *Syrtis* refers to the shallow bays filled with *sandbars* off the coast of North Africa west of Cyrene.

27:18-20 The violence and persistence of the storm led to *throwing the cargo overboard* (cp. Jon 1:5) and the crew's abandoning *hope*.

27:21-26 Paul addressed the crew, first scolding them for not listening to him

(27:10-12) and then encouraging them with the angel's assurance of survival for all of them.

27:27 *The Sea of Adria*, south of Italy and Greece and between Malta and Crete, is now known as the Ionian Sea.

27:30-32 This time the soldiers listened to Paul (cp. 27:10-11).

27:33-35 Paul's words and actions are those of a true leader who personally assesses a perilous situation, decides on action, and leads others in solving the problem (cp. Neh 1-3; contrast Jon 1). Paul's positive example and strong faith in God (Acts 27:22-25) encouraged the others to eat and take heart.

27:35
Matt 14:19
27:38
Jon 1:5
Acts 27:18
27:41
2 Cor 11:25
27:43-44
Acts 27:22, 24

now for your own good. For not a hair of your heads will perish.”³⁵ Then he took some bread, gave thanks to God before them all, and broke off a piece and ate it.³⁶ Then everyone was encouraged and began to eat—³⁷all 276 of us who were on board.³⁸ After eating, the crew lightened the ship further by throwing the cargo of wheat overboard.

³⁹When morning dawned, they didn't recognize the coastline, but they saw a bay with a beach and wondered if they could get to shore by running the ship aground.⁴⁰ So they cut off the anchors and left them in the sea. Then they lowered the rudders, raised

27:44 Or or were helped by members of the ship's crew.

the foresail, and headed toward shore.⁴¹ But they hit a shoal and ran the ship aground too soon. The bow of the ship stuck fast, while the stern was repeatedly smashed by the force of the waves and began to break apart.

⁴²The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners to make sure they didn't swim ashore and escape.⁴³ But the commanding officer wanted to spare Paul, so he didn't let them carry out their plan. Then he ordered all who could swim to jump overboard first and make for land.⁴⁴ The others held on to planks or debris from the broken ship.* So everyone escaped safely to shore.



Angels

In the book of Acts we frequently encounter the ministry of angels. On several occasions, an angel of the Lord made possible miraculous escapes from prison (5:19; 12:6-11). An angel offered a message of encouragement to Paul in the midst of a violent storm (27:23-24). An angel also directed Cornelius to seek the Good News from Peter (10:3, 7, 22; 11:13). On the other hand, we are told that an angel struck down Herod Agrippa “because he accepted the people's worship instead of giving the glory to God” (12:23). Throughout Acts, God was guiding his people in their ministry and using angels to accomplish his purpose.

The ministry of angels is also prominent in the Gospels. Angels announced the births of John the Baptist and Jesus (Luke 1:1–2:52) and ministered to Jesus after his temptation (Matt 4:5-7). Angels appeared at the empty tomb after the resurrection of Jesus (Matt 28:2, 5; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:23; John 20:12).

Throughout the Bible, angels are God's heavenly agents who carry out his purpose and communicate God's will to humanity (Gen 16:7; Num 22:22-34; Judg 13:13-21; 2 Kgs 1:3, 15; Zech 1:4-12; 12:8). Angels had a role in putting God's law into effect through Moses (Acts 7:30, 35, 38, 53; Gal 3:19). They are “spirits sent to care for people who will inherit salvation” (Heb 1:14). Angels dispense God's grace and sometimes administer his judgment (Acts 12:23; 2 Kgs 19:35; Rev 9:15; 16:1-12). Angels were witnesses of Christ's life (1 Tim 3:16), and they are now witnesses of the lives of God's people (1 Cor 11:10; 1 Tim 5:21). There are guardian angels who protect God's people (Matt 18:10; see also Pss 34:7; 91:11; Acts 12:11). Angels will accompany Christ when he returns (Matt 25:31; 2 Thes 1:7-8) and will participate in the final judgment (Matt 13:39, 41, 49-50; 16:27; 24:31; Mark 13:27; Luke 9:26; 12:8; 2 Thes 1:7).

Some angels have fallen into sin and are destined for eternal judgment (Matt 25:41; 2 Pet 2:4, 11; Jude 1:6). The only angels named in the Bible are Michael and Gabriel, who carry out special assignments (Dan 8:16, 18; 9:21; 10:12, 21; 12:1-2; Luke 1:19-20; 1 Thes 4:16; Jude 1:9).

Although angels are spiritual and heavenly beings, angels are not to be worshiped (Gal 1:8; Col 2:18; Rev 19:10; 22:8-9), because they are inferior to Christ (Heb 1:5-14). Their role is to be servants of God (Heb 1:14).

27:36-37 The food brought renewed strength and encouragement to the frightened and exhausted crew and prisoners. • *all 276 of us*: The exact number of persons onboard fits well with what is known of grain ships of the period.

27:39-41 They ran *the ship aground on a shoal* or reef.

27:42-44 Even in a crisis, *the prisoners* remained the responsibility of *the soldiers* (see 12:19; 16:27; 27:32; see note on 16:27). Fortunately, *the commanding*

officer intervened on their behalf. It was a clear indication of God's protection and favor that all 276 people made it *safely to shore*, precisely fulfilling the angel's promise (see 27:24).

Paul on the Island of Malta

28 Once we were safe on shore, we learned that we were on the island of Malta. ²The people of the island were very kind to us. It was cold and rainy, so they built a fire on the shore to welcome us.

³As Paul gathered an armful of sticks and was laying them on the fire, a poisonous snake, driven out by the heat, bit him on the hand. ⁴The people of the island saw it hanging from his hand and said to each other, “A murderer, no doubt! Though he escaped the sea, justice will not permit him to live.” ⁵But Paul shook off the snake into the fire and was unharmed. ⁶The people waited for him to swell up or suddenly drop dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw that he wasn’t harmed, they changed their minds and decided he was a god.

⁷Near the shore where we landed was an estate belonging to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us and treated us kindly for three days. ⁸As it happened, Publius’s father was ill with fever and dysentery. Paul went in and prayed for him, and laying his hands on him, he healed him. ⁹Then all the other sick people on the island came and were healed. ¹⁰As a result we were showered with honors, and when the time came to sail, people supplied us with everything we would need for the trip.

The Trip from Malta to Rome

¹¹It was three months after the shipwreck that we set sail on another ship that had wintered at the island—an Alexandrian ship with the twin gods* as its figurehead. ¹²Our

first stop was Syracuse,* where we stayed three days. ¹³From there we sailed across to Rhegium.* A day later a south wind began blowing, so the following day we sailed up the coast to Puteoli. ¹⁴There we found some believers,* who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome.

¹⁵The brothers and sisters* in Rome had heard we were coming, and they came to meet us at the Forum* on the Appian Way. Others joined us at The Three Taverns.* When Paul saw them, he was encouraged and thanked God.

¹⁶When we arrived in Rome, Paul was permitted to have his own private lodging, though he was guarded by a soldier.

**Paul’s Ministry in Rome (28:17-31)
Paul’s Meeting with the Jewish Community**

¹⁷Three days after Paul’s arrival, he called together the local Jewish leaders. He said to them, “Brothers, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Roman government, even though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors. ¹⁸The Romans tried me and wanted to release me, because they found no cause for the death sentence. ¹⁹But when the Jewish leaders protested the decision, I felt it necessary to appeal to Caesar, even though I had no desire to press charges against my own people. ²⁰I asked you to come here today so we could get acquainted and so I could explain to you that I am bound with this chain because I believe that the hope of Israel—the Messiah—has already come.”

28:1 Acts 27:26, 39
28:4 Luke 13:2, 4
28:5 Mark 16:18
Luke 10:19
28:6 Acts 14:11
28:8 Jas 5:14-15
28:11 Acts 27:6
28:16 Acts 24:23; 27:3
28:17 Acts 24:12-13; 25:8
28:18 Acts 23:29
28:19 Acts 25:11
28:20 Acts 26:6

28:11 The twin gods were the Roman gods Castor and Pollux. **28:12** Syracuse was on the island of Sicily. **28:13** Rhegium was on the southern tip of Italy. **28:14** Greek brothers. **28:15a** Greek brothers. **28:15b** The Forum was about 43 miles (70 kilometers) from Rome. **28:15c** The Three Taverns was about 35 miles (57 kilometers) from Rome.

28:1 Malta was a major island under Roman control, about sixty miles (100 km) south of Sicily.

28:3-6 The locals of Malta understood justice as a personified power or deity carrying out judgment on a criminal. When nothing bad happened to Paul, the natives understood him as having power over snakes and concluded that he himself was a god (cp. 14:11-12). In fact, Paul’s survival demonstrated God’s protection (cp. Mark 16:17-18).

28:8-9 Cp. Luke 4:38-40.

28:10 Showing their gratefulness, the people supplied the ship’s company with what they needed.

28:11-16 Luke, himself present on this journey (see note on 27:1–28:16), recorded Paul’s itinerary from Malta to Rome with great geographical detail.

28:11 Another Egyptian ship from Alexandria took Paul and his companions on board after an interval of three months and the worst of the winter had passed.

28:12 Syracuse was the capital of the eastern half of Sicily.

28:13-14 They sailed across the Straits of Messina to Rhegium on the southern tip of Italy. This port was a stopping place for ships traveling from the west coast of Italy to the eastern Mediterranean. • Puteoli (modern Pozzuoli) was a major port of entry for large grain ships bringing supplies from the east to Rome. Paul spent a week here with some local believers before moving on to Rome.

28:15 Paul was greeted by brothers and sisters who met his party on the way up to Rome.

28:16 Paul was allowed to have his own . . . lodging, apparently in private

facilities, though he was guarded by a soldier. Though Paul was traveling in chains, “the word of God cannot be chained” (2 Tim 2:9). Paul was possibly treated so well because of his social status or Roman citizenship (cp. Acts 16:37-38; 22:25-28).

28:17-20 Conscious that the Good News was to be presented to the Jews first (13:46; Rom 1:16) and concerned that the false charges against him might already have reached Rome, Paul summoned the local Jewish leaders and gave an account of his life and work. He insisted that he was guilty of no criminal offense, but strong Jewish opposition had made it necessary for him to appeal to the emperor. Paul had nothing against his own people; rather, he wanted to explain his great conviction that the Messiah they had been expecting had already come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

28:22
Acts 24:14

28:24
Acts 14:4

28:26-27
^aIsa 6:9-10
John 12:39-40

28:28
Pss 67:2; 98:3
Luke 3:6
Acts 13:46

28:30
Acts 28:16

²¹They replied, "We have had no letters from Judea or reports against you from anyone who has come here. ²²But we want to hear what you believe, for the only thing we know about this movement is that it is denounced everywhere."

²³So a time was set, and on that day a large number of people came to Paul's lodging. He explained and testified about the Kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Scriptures. Using the law of Moses and the books of the prophets, he spoke to them from morning until evening. ²⁴Some were persuaded by the things he said, but others did not believe. ²⁵And after they had argued back and forth among themselves, they left with this final word from Paul: "The Holy Spirit was right when he said to your ancestors through Isaiah the prophet,

²⁶ 'Go and say to this people:
When you hear what I say,
you will not understand.

28:26-27 Isa 6:9-10 (Greek version). 28:28 Some manuscripts add verse 29, *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, greatly disagreeing with each other.* 28:30 Or in his own rented quarters.

When you see what I do,
you will not comprehend.
²⁷ For the hearts of these people are
hardened,
and their ears cannot hear,
and they have closed their eyes—
so their eyes cannot see,
and their ears cannot hear,
and their hearts cannot understand,
and they cannot turn to me
and let me heal them.*

²⁸So I want you to know that this salvation from God has also been offered to the Gentiles, and they will accept it.**

Paul's Unrestricted Preaching and Teaching

³⁰For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense.* He welcomed all who visited him, ³¹boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him.

28:21-22 The Jewish leaders assured Paul that they had received no *reports against* him, and they wanted to *hear* his explanation of *this movement*.

28:23 Paul *explained* how *Jesus* fulfilled the OT hopes for *the Kingdom of God*, the master theme of Jesus' own preaching (Mark 1:14-15; see Matt 4:12-17; Luke 4:14-21, 43). Referring to *the Scriptures*, Paul presented the case for Jesus as the promised Messiah.

28:24 Paul's all-day message met a mixed response, as it had in other quarters (e.g., 13:40-51; 17:11-14).

28:25-28 Paul parted with scriptural words of warning that are often used in the NT to explain the Jewish rejection

of the gospel (cp. Matt 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:38-40; see Rom 11:1-12, 25-32).

28:28 Since Jews everywhere had been given an opportunity to accept the faith (13:46; see Rom 1:16), it was now time for *the Gentiles* to be offered *this salvation*.

28:31 Despite being under house arrest (28:16), Paul *boldly* proclaimed the Kingdom message. • *And no one tried to stop him* (Greek *akōloutōs*, "without hindrance"): This single word in Greek is the last word of the book of Acts and one of the keys to its meaning: God's word cannot be chained, even when its messengers are (2 Tim 2:9; see Phil 1:12-14).

Acts is the story of an unhindered message of Good News, available to all people throughout the world, whether Jew, Gentile, proselyte, rich, or poor. The mission of proclaiming this message is accomplished in the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8); it embraces Jews (3:1-5:42), Samaritans (8:1-25), converts to Judaism (2:11; 13:43), "God-fearers" (8:26-40; 9:32-11:18), and Gentiles (13:1-28:28). • Luke ends his account with Paul still under house arrest in Rome (about AD 60-62). Paul was later freed and traveled freely. According to tradition, Paul was imprisoned again in Rome in about AD 64 and was martyred there during Nero's persecution of believers.