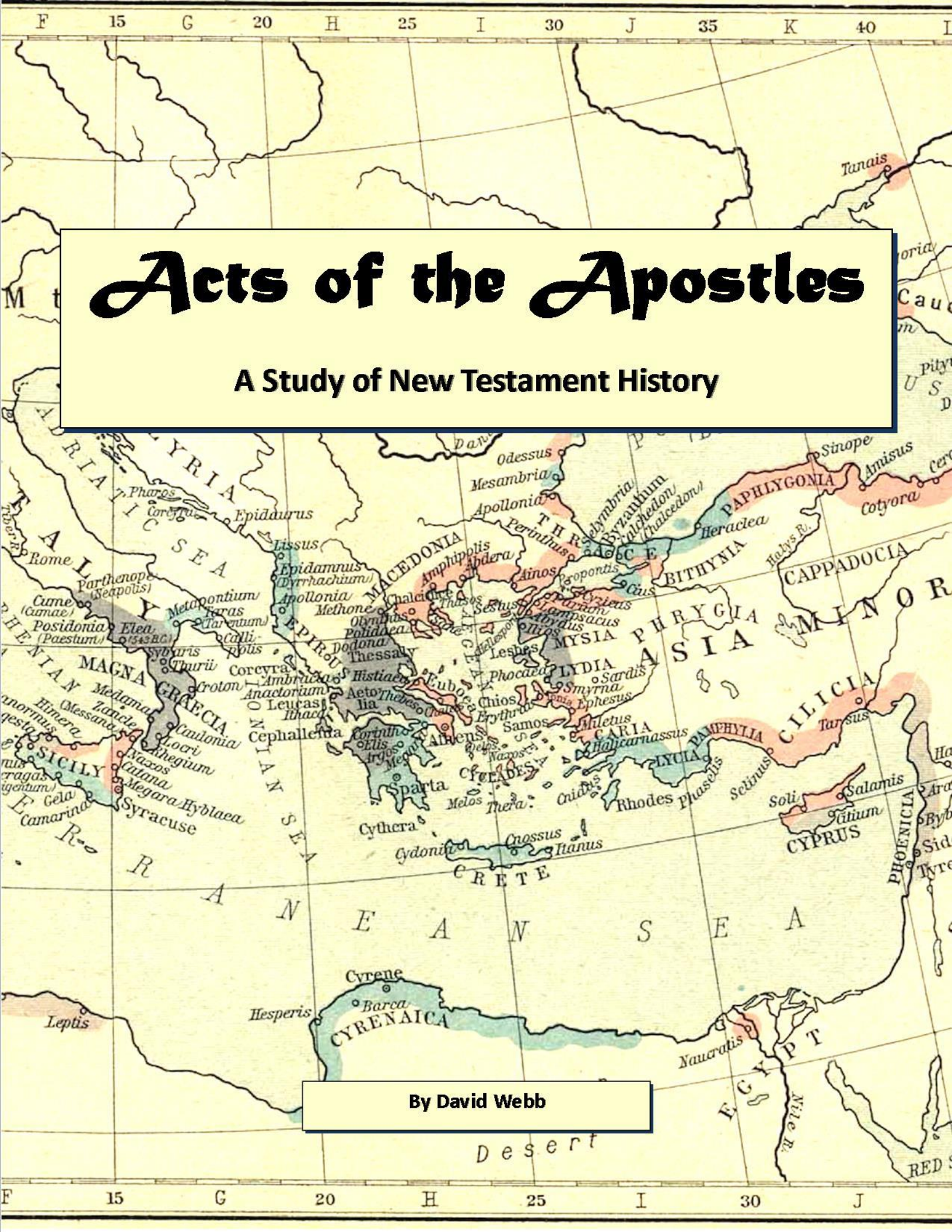


# Acts of the Apostles

A Study of New Testament History



By David Webb

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# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Overview

#### Introduction:

**The Name:** The book is most commonly called "The Acts of the Apostles," although it is quite probable that, in its original form, it had no title at all. Over the centuries it has been called simply "Acts," or "The Acts" (Eusebius). This title "The Acts of the Apostles" is somewhat misleading since only a few of the apostles of Jesus Christ are mentioned, with special emphasis given to the "acts" of Peter and Paul. Therefore, it covers a time-span of approximately 32 years –from the ascension of Jesus Christ (ca. AD 30) to Paul's imprisonment in Rome (ca. AD 68). Some have suggested a more appropriate title would be "The Acts of the Holy Spirit," since the presence and work of the Holy Spirit is central to the book beginning on Pentecost (Acts 2).

**The Author:** Although the author does not identify himself by name, scholars have ascribed the authorship of Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts to Luke, the companion of Paul. One reason for concluding both books came from the same author is that both were addressed to the same individual, Theophilus, a distinguished Gentile:

*Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed. (Luke 1:1-4)*

*The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:1-3)*

Furthermore, the literary style, vocabulary, and theological contents of Acts and the Gospel of Luke are quite similar. The numerous references to "we" (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16) indicate Luke had joined Paul as a fellow traveling companion and reliable historian. Since he was present and personally familiar with many of the events surrounding Paul's latter missionary journeys, Luke was able to write with greater clarity and vividness in the latter half of Acts. He was an eyewitness to many of these events. Luke also mentioned 95 different persons from 32 countries, 54 cities, and 9 Mediterranean islands in Acts. It has been suggested that he may have gathered

information for the first part of Acts (chapters 1–12), and for the gospel bearing his name, from many these sources. In Acts, however, Luke writes a very selective history, focusing only on the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.

**The Date:** It is difficult to determine the actual date of the writing of Acts. The only thing that can be said with any certainty is that it was written after the Gospel of Luke, and before the final events in the life of the apostle Paul is played out. Many scholars date Acts as early as AD 62 and as late as AD 68 or a little later, since it concludes with the account of Paul's imprisonment and his earliest ministry in Rome.

**The Theme:** The book Acts has been described like a drama with two main characters, Peter and Paul. The theme deals with the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem (the city where Jesus was crucified) to Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire, and provides valuable information concerning the development of the early church following the ascension of Jesus. Standing between the Gospels and the Epistles, the book of Acts is a bridge between the life of Jesus and the ministry of the apostle Paul.

Since the book of Acts is the continuation of the gospel account of all Jesus "began to do and teach," it catalogs what Jesus continued to do and teach through the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. In fact, the principle theme of Acts is outlined by Jesus Himself:

*"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)*

Essentially, the theme of Acts focuses on the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and eventually the world of that day – or from a gospel given to the "Jews first" (chapters 2–9) and then to "the Gentiles" (chapters 10–26). But in providing a historical record of the establishment of the church and the spread of the gospel, Luke also defended "the Way" (Acts 9:2) from the suspicion of it being some kind of secret, subversive cult (Acts 26:26). Perhaps this is why so many public speeches are recorded in Acts – so that no one could claim the message of the apostles was secretive and given to only a select few. Furthermore, Luke showed that the apostles were not leading sedition against Rome. Time after time Luke recorded that the Roman authorities acquitted the apostles of the charges brought against them (Acts 16:38-39; 17:5-9; 18:12-17; 19:35-41; 23:23-30; 25:23-27; 26:28-31). This may be the reason for Luke devoting nearly one third of Acts (chapters 21–28) to Paul's imprisonment – to not only show the gospel reached its destination despite numerous obstacles, but also to show that Paul and his message were not politically subversive.

**Theological Contribution:** The book of Acts could just as easily be titled; "The Acts of the Holy Spirit," for the Spirit is mentioned nearly 60 times in the book. In His parting words, Jesus reminded His disciples of the promise of the Father – that "you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" and be empowered to proclaim the message of the gospel by the divine inspiration of the Spirit. Ten days later the

power of the Spirit descended on the apostles at Pentecost (2:1-4). Persons "from every nation under heaven" (2:5) saw the miraculous demonstrations of the Holy Spirit's power – "the wonderful works of God" (2:11) – and heard the divinely inspired message proving beyond any doubt that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Thus, the Lord's church was born with the baptism of three thousand souls on that same day.

Beginning with the conversion of three thousand on Pentecost, the book of Acts contains a total of seven specific examples of conversions (Acts 2:14-47; 8:5-13; 26:39; 9:1-18; 10:34-48; 16:14-15; 25-34) in which the gospel was proclaimed and those who were receptive to the message were all baptized into Christ. From these seven examples we have the complete picture of all the steps leading to salvation by grace through faith.

Acts also contains portraits of many Christians of the early church and the outstanding characteristics of each. For example, Barnabas exemplified generosity (4:36-37), Stephen modeled forgiveness (7:60), Philip demonstrated dedication to others (6:1-5; 8:26); Paul typified humble obedience (26:19); and Cornelius exhibited deep devotion to God (10:2); all the apostles demonstrated great boldness (2:29; 4:13, 29, 31; 28:31). In fact, ordinary people were empowered to perform extraordinary feats: a cowardly apostle was empowered to address multitudes (2:14) and made a defense before the betrayers and murders of Jesus (4:8); a servant defended his faith to the point of death (7:58); the despised Samaritans turned to Christ (8:4-8); so did a Gentile Centurion (10); a staunch persecutor of the gospel was converted (9:1-19), and through him the gospel reached the capital of the world!

Finally, the book of Acts shows that nothing can stop the spread of the gospel, whether it be persecutions (8:3-4; 11:19), famines (11:27-30), opposition (13:45), or violent storms (27). Through it all, the Holy Spirit ensures that "all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28) to further the cause of Christ.

**Historical Notes:** Archeological research has greatly strengthened the historical credibility of Acts. Sir William M. Ramsay (d. 1935) recognized as the leading archeologist to research the New Testament, initially questioned the historical accuracy of the Bible. In his quest to point out inconsistencies in the Bible through archaeology, Ramsay discovered archaeological evidence to support the Bible as historically accurate.

His studies in Asia Minor caused him to study the book of Acts, which he accepted as a document of the second half of the second century, but later changed his belief based on the irrefutable evidence from the book of Acts itself. In his book, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, Ramsay explained that the purpose of his book, *St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen*, was to show:

*". . .that Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy; he is possessed of the true historical sense; he fixes his mind on the idea and plan that rules in the evolution of history, and proportions the scale of*

*his treatment to the importance of each incident. He seizes the important and critical events and shows their true nature at greater length, while he touches lightly or omits entirely as much that was valueless for his purpose. In short, this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians." (222)*

Numerous excavations and explorations have now been conducted at places mentioned in the book of Acts, offering further proof to the historical accuracy of the book. Luke also detailed various common modes of travel in Acts. Whether on land, by foot or horse (23:24, 32), or chariot (8:27-38), or by sea (21:1-3; 27:1-5), Luke's account concerning these modes of travel was consistent with historical evidence. In fact, it has been said that the story of the wreck of Paul's ship is the most exciting and dramatic narrative of a sea adventure in ancient literature (Acts 27-28).

In addition to being historically accurate, Luke gives us insight into the many cultures of the day, such as the philosophical inquisitiveness of the Athenians (Acts 17:17-18) and the commercial monopoly of the silversmiths at the temple of Artemis in Ephesus (19:24-34).

## **Outline:**

Although the book of Acts can be divided into two main sections – the work of Peter and the twelve (Acts 1–12), and the work of Paul (Acts 12–26) – the book is more commonly arranged according to the outline given in Acts 1:8:

- I. The Gospel Preached in Jerusalem (Acts 1:1–8:4)**
  - A. The Power of the Church (1:1–2:47)
  - B. The Progress of the Church (3:1–8:4)
- II. The Gospel Preached in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:5–12:25)**
  - A. The Preaching of Philip (8:5–40)
  - B. The Conversion of Saul (9:1–31)
  - C. The Witness of Peter (9:32–11:18)
  - D. The Example of the Early Church (11:19–12:25)
- III. The Gospel Preached to the End of the Earth (Acts 12:26–28:31)**
  - A. Paul's First Missionary Journey (13:1–14:28)
  - B. The Jerusalem Council (15:1–35)
  - C. Paul's Second Missionary Journey (15:36–18:22)
  - D. Paul's Third Missionary Journey (18:23–21:16)
  - E. The Journey to Rome (21:17–28:33)

## **Memorization:**

In addition to every student being required to answer review questions based on the text of the book of Acts, each student will also be required to memorize the follow:

1. Key passages in Acts
2. Key events in each chapter of Acts
3. Paul's three missionary journeys and the key cities in each

## **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

These websites contain numerous Bible Versions and Translations, Concordances, Dictionaries, Lexicons and many other useful tools: <http://biblos.com/> and <http://www.biblestudytools.com/> (Click on "Our Library" at the top of the home page)

## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Introduction**

#### **A. The Name**

1. What does the name "The Acts of the Apostles" imply and why is this perhaps not the best title for the book?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Think of some other names or titles you could give to the book of Acts, and explain why you would choose those names.

#### **B. Author**

1. List the reasons for Luke being credited as the author of the book of Acts.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Of the reasons mentioned above, in your opinion which are the strongest for concluding Luke is the author of Acts.

### **C. Date**

1. Some scholars previously thought the book of Acts was written sometime during the second century AD. What evidence would you offer to discredit that belief?

### **D. Theme**

1. Why is the book of Acts considered as a "bridge" between the gospels and the epistles?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. List some of the ways Luke defended the integrity of gospel message and the Lord's church.

### **E. Theological Contribution**

1. List the four "theological contributions" of Acts mentioned in this outline and briefly explain each.
  - a.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b.



c.

d.

2. Which of these do you consider to be the most useful and most significant?  
Explain your answer.

### **E. Historical Notes**

1. In what ways is the book of Acts historically significant?

## **II. Memorization**

Read through the book of Acts and find your own "favorite" passage. Memorize the passage and explain why it is especially significant to you.

**Application:**

In your own words, explain the lessons we can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations?

# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 1

#### Acts 1:1-26

#### Introduction:

The "former treatise" which Luke referred to in Acts 1:1 is the Gospel of Luke (see Luke 1:14) in which Luke revealed all that Jesus began to do and teach while He was on earth. Acts continues the narrative by telling what Jesus continued to do and teach through the inspired apostles as they proclaimed the gospel of Christ, and through the church which took the gospel to the known world. The Gospel of Luke speaks of Christ's ministry on earth in a physical body, while Acts speaks of His rule as King over His spiritual kingdom, reigning from His throne in heaven and directing the affairs of His church. For example, in Acts 1:24 the disciples asked to be shown which man the Lord had chosen to replace Judas as an apostle. In Acts 2:47 it is the Lord who added to the church those who were being saved. In Acts 13:1-3, it is Christ through His Spirit who sent out Paul and Barnabas; and in Acts 14:27, Paul and Barnabas told what God had done through them.

Following His resurrection from the dead, Christ continued to minister to His apostles for a period of forty days (read Luke 24:36-53 in connection with Acts 1:1-11). In the concluding remarks of the Gospel of Luke and in Acts, Jesus told His apostles to remain in Jerusalem and wait until they are "endued with power from on high" when they would be "baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." The proclamation of the gospel message through the inspired apostles in the city of Jerusalem harmonizes with Isaiah's prophecy "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

This baptism of the Holy Spirit had been announced by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33).<sup>1</sup> The Spirit, through the preaching of the gospel, would unite all the believers in one body, to be known as the church (see 1 Corinthians 12:13). The Spirit would also be given to certain believers through the laying on of the apostle's hands to empower them with spiritual gifts to benefit the church. There are actually two occurrences of this baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts: (1) in Acts 2, when the apostles were "endued with power from on high"; and (2) in Acts 10 (also see 11:16) when Cornelius and his household were empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak with tongues as proof that God now accepted Gentiles into the church. According to Ephesians 2:11-22 the body of Christ is composed of Jews and Gentiles who are all baptized by into this spiritual body.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that Jesus did not mention a baptism with fire on this occasion. The baptism of fire refers to judgment.

The question posed to Jesus by His apostles concerning the coming of the kingdom (Acts 1:6-8) showed they simply did not understand the nature of the Lord's spiritual kingdom (Luke 17:20-21; John 18:36). Like all Jews of that day, the apostles labored under the same misconceptions. They initially believed the Lord came to establish a physical kingdom in Israel like in the days of David and Solomon over which He would reign as King from Jerusalem. The apostles were confused until their understanding was eventually clarified by the Holy Spirit. Since this understanding would come in the days ahead, Jesus simply avoided answering the question directly, but gave them a hint as to when the kingdom would come – namely, when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised that His kingdom would come with "power" (Mark 9:1), and that the power would come with the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5), and that would occur in Jerusalem in just a few days.

The ascension of Jesus into heaven seemed to be sudden and unexpected. The "two men" (or angels) who stood by in "white apparel" assured the apostles, "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). This corresponds to Paul's statements regarding the Lord's return (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10).

The next order of business was to select a new apostle to replace Judas. Their decision was clearly based on the Word of God (Psalms 109:8; 69:25) and on the basis of continued prayer (Acts 1:14, 24). The man who replaced Judas had to meet very specific qualifications (Acts 1:21-22). Of the names put forth, Matthias was God's choice, since he was likewise filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

Everything was now ready for the coming of the Spirit. It was only a matter of time, and as the believers waited for that day to arrive, they spent their hours in prayer and fellowship in an upper room. Among those present were "Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers" (Acts 1:14). These were the same brothers who had once mocked Jesus (John 7:5). But following the Lord's resurrection from the dead, they were overwhelmingly convinced He was indeed the Christ.

### **Memorization:**

*"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)*

### **Key Events of Acts 1:**

- Jesus met with His apostles 40 days after His resurrection and promised the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus ascended into heaven.
- Matthias was selected to replace Judas.

## **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

These websites contain numerous Bible Versions and Translations, Concordances, Dictionaries, Lexicons and many other useful tools: <http://biblos.com/> and <http://www.biblestudytools.com/> (Click on "Our Library" at the top of the home page)

## **The Exposition:**

### **I. The Power of the Church (Acts 1:1-26)**

#### **A. The Prolog (Acts 1:1-3)**

1. What is the "former account" referred to in Acts 1:1? Explain your answer.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Consult a Bible dictionary and answer the following:
  - a. Who is Theophilus? What do we know about this person?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What does the name "Theophilus" mean?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. What is the significance of addressing Theophilus as "most excellent?"

#### **B. The Holy Spirit Promised (Acts 1:4-8)**

1. What is "the Promise of the Father" and when had the apostles heard Jesus speak of this "promise?" Cite as many passages as you can.

2. Why did the disciples ask if Jesus was going to "restore the kingdom to Israel?"
  
3. What did the disciples not understand about the nature of the kingdom? Cite two verses where Jesus explained the spiritual nature of the kingdom.
  
4. Explain how the statement "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" is the link between Mark 9:1 and Acts 2.

### **C. The Ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:9-11)**

1. Where were Jesus and His apostles when He ascended into heaven and what other notable events occurred there? (Consult "the former account" and a Bible dictionary).
  
2. List all the ways in which Jesus went up into heaven, and explain how He will come again in the same manner.



3. What is the significance of Luke mentioning "Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers" as those among the 120 disciples – especially His brothers?

**D. Matthias Chosen (Acts 1:12-26)**

1. What prophecies of David did Judas fulfill? Explain your answer.
2. How did Judas "purchase a field with the wages of iniquity?" How much did the field cost?
3. What Old Testament prophet (beside David) also spoke of this event?
4. How do you explain the contradiction between the gospel account of Judas' death in Matthew 27 and the one in Acts 1?

5. Where is "Akeldama" (Field of Blood) believed to have been located, and what is the significance of being buried there? Consult a Bible dictionary.
  
6. What qualifications did Matthias meet to be selected as one of the twelve apostles?
  
7. Which of these qualifications do you believe is the most significant, and why? Explain your answer.
  
8. Did the apostle Paul meet these same qualifications? How was he selected to be an apostle?

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.

# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 2

#### Acts 2:1-47

#### Introduction:

On the Day of Pentecost the promise of the ages was finally fulfilled. The gospel of Christ was preached, souls were saved through the redemptive blood of Jesus Christ in baptism, and the church (the Lord's spiritual kingdom) was established.

As the events of Pentecost began to unfold, the twelve apostles would have assembled in the temple courtyards and porticos. They were among thousands of other devout Jews who had come from every part of the Roman Empire to celebrate this great feast day in Jerusalem. At the third hour of the day the worshippers were suddenly distracted by the sound of a mighty wind. Then came what appeared to be flames of fire that sat upon the twelve. The Holy Spirit captured the attention of the massive crowd gathered in the house of God by providing an aural and visible demonstration of miraculous divine power.

Immediately, the twelve were filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in the languages and dialects of all those nations present. The confused crowd wanted to know what all this meant. They soon learned this was the fulfillment of a prophecy of Joel.

The apostles proceeded to affirm that Jesus of Nazareth was not only a man approved of God by miracles, signs and wonders. He was the Christ (the "Anointed One" – the Messiah). However, among the mass of people listening to the apostles on this Pentecost were those who, just seven weeks earlier, had deserted Jesus in disappointment and disbelief. Their hopes in Jesus had been crushed when He was arrested and violently scourged to a point just short of death. Many who had welcomed Him as the Christ during His triumphal procession into Jerusalem, now joined others who shouted for the imposter Jesus to be crucified. In their minds, no true Messiah would be so powerless in the hands of his enemies.

Therefore, the apostles faced the daunting task on this Pentecost of proving beyond any doubt that this same Jesus was, in fact, the Christ. Speaking through the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the twelve offered as irrefutable evidence (1) prophecies of David concerning the resurrection of Jesus, (2) testimony that the apostles had seen the resurrected Christ, (3) the Holy Spirit's endorsement of these truths by the things the crowd heard and saw, and (4) the testimony of God through the prophet David that Jesus was the Christ, and was now sitting at the right hand God in heaven.

When the crowd heard the indisputable facts concerning Jesus, and saw the visible evidence of the Spirit's endorsement of the apostles' preaching, they came to the sudden realization that they had crucified Jesus who is both Lord and Christ. In answer to their question, "*what shall we do*" (Acts 2:37), Peter replied, "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*" (Acts 2:38) Three thousand gladly received the gospel message and were baptized into Christ that day.

In the days that followed, the infant church assembled daily in Solomon's Poarch, and continued in "the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42) The apostles also continued to demonstrate the power of God through "*many wonders and signs.*" (Acts 2:43)

The disciples of Jesus also demonstrated the love of Christ within their hearts by freely sharing their material possessions with other disciples who were in need. Their love and their sense of oneness were also seen in the meals they gladly shared together from house to house. From that day forward, the Lord continued adding daily to the church those who were being saved.

Now that the good news about Jesus Christ had been proclaimed in the city of Jerusalem, it would soon spread throughout Judea and into Samaria, and eventually throughout the world. (Acts 1:8)

### **Memorization:**

*Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* (Acts 2:38)

### **Key Events of Acts 2:**

- Apostles are filled with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.
- Peter and the apostles preach Jesus Christ.
- Three thousand are baptized.

### **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

These websites contain numerous Bible Versions and Translations, Concordances, Dictionaries, Lexicons and many other useful tools: <http://biblos.com/> and <http://www.biblestudytools.com/> (Click on "Our Library" at the top of the home page)

## **The Exposition:**

### **I. The Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47)**

#### **A. The Apostles are filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4)**

1. What was the Day of Pentecost, and what were the other names given to this day? Use a Bible dictionary to find your answer.
2. What is the "one place" or "the whole house" where these events were taking place? Explain your answer.
3. What caught the attention of those present?
4. Who was filled with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1? Explain your answer.
5. What other passages in Acts 2 could you use to support your answer to question 4?



6. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit and what were the apostles able to do as a result?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. How do the events in Acts 2:1-5 tie together with the promises of Jesus in Mark 9:1 and Acts 1:8?

**B. Speaking With Other Tongues (Acts 2:4-13)**

1. What groups of people were in Jerusalem at this time?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What are the "tongues" mentioned in Acts 2:4? Explain your answer.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why were the people amazed?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How did some skeptics attempt to explain what was taking place?



6. How do we know the death of Christ was planned? Who planned it?
  
7. Why was it not possible that Jesus should remain in the grave?
  
8. What prophecies of David does Peter quote concerning the resurrection of Christ? How do we know David was not simply speaking about himself in these prophecies?
  
9. Who saw Jesus after He had been resurrected, and why was it impossible to deny their testimony?
  
10. What did the Holy Spirit offer evidence that Jesus had been resurrected from the grave and was sitting at the right hand of God?

11. What was the testimony of God that Jesus was sitting at the right hand of God? Where else is this testimony found?
  
  
  
  
  
12. Why were the people so deeply moved by Peter's sermon? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
13. What were the people told to do, and what would they receive?
  
  
  
  
  
14. What is the "gift of the Holy Spirit" which was promised here. and who would be included in this "promise"?
  
  
  
  
  
15. What else happened to those who were baptized that day and how many were there?

**D. Practices of the Early Church (Acts 2:42-47)**

1. List the four things the church continued to do, and explain what each one means.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  
2. Why did people sell their possessions and goods? Explain why this is not the first example of "Communism" as some claim.
  
  
3. Where did the church meet daily for worship, and where did they break bread?

4. Explain the difference (if there is a difference) between the term "breaking of bread" in Acts 2:42 and "breaking bread" in Acts 2:46. Explain your answer.
  
5. Similar expressions of "break bread" and "broken bread" are found in Acts 20:7-11. Explain the difference between these two terms.
  
6. Who determines who will be added to the church, and what is the one prerequisite?

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.



# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 3

#### Acts 3:1-26

#### **Introduction:**

Following the events of Pentecost, Peter and John went to the Temple to pray in keeping with Jewish tradition. As they approached the gate called Beautiful, they encountered a man lame from birth who asked for alms. What Peter offered instead of money was far more than that man could have ever dreamed possible. The quietness of those praying was suddenly interrupted when the man was instantly healed from his lifelong infirmity and joyously celebrated by leaping around and praising God. The miracle captured the attention of those present, and they immediately turned their attention to Peter and John.

In a sermon which, in many ways, is similar to the one Peter preached on Pentecost, he pointed the amazed crowd to Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the one through whom this great miracle had been done. He was the same Jesus whom they and their rulers had ignorantly denied and condemned to death, but whom God had raised from the dead. To prove that the suffering and death of Jesus was no mere accident, Peter stated that even the Old Testament prophets had spoken of these things. Jesus had fulfilled every Old Testament Messianic prophecy.

Therefore, it was now time for those who had been the betrayers and murderers of Jesus to "repent and turn" so that they could be forgiven of their sins. Peter further affirmed that Jesus was now in heaven, and would remain there "until the times of restoration of all things" – times which all the holy prophets of God had spoken about. Peter also told the crowd that Jesus was the Prophet of whom Moses spoke saying, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people."

In a sermon which was apparently interrupted by the sudden and unexpected arrest of the two apostles (Acts 4), Peter's last words must have filled the hearts of those present with great hope. It was God's plan that Jesus first come to the people of Israel to bless them and turn them away from their sins.

#### **Memorization:**

*Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. . . (Acts 3:19)*

## Key Events of Acts 3:

- Peter and John heal a lame man.
- Peter's second sermon.

## Link to Online Bible Study Tools:

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## The Exposition:

### I. Peter's Second Sermon (Acts 3:1–26)

#### A. The Healing of a Lame Man (Acts 3:1–10)

1. Why would the apostles Peter and John observe the Jewish tradition of going to the Temple at the ninth hour of the day to pray? What time of day would that have been?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why do you think Luke would make a point to mention the lame man in this story had been lame from birth, and that he was carried daily and laid at the gate of the Temple called "Beautiful"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Where was the gate "Beautiful" believed to have been located on the Temple grounds, what was the gate made of, and why this would be a perfect location for someone to ask for alms – gifts of money? (Consult a Bible dictionary or other online resource. Also see illustration on page 24)

4. What is so significant about the following phrases from Peter's statement:
  - a. "In the name of Jesus Christ"
  - b. "Jesus Christ of Nazareth"
  - c. "Rise up and walk"
5. Why do you think Peter helped the man to his feet?
6. What is significant about Luke (the physician) saying, ". . .and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them — walking, leaping, and praising God."
7. Why were the people "filled with wonder and amazement" at what they saw?

**B. Peter Preaches His Second Sermon (Acts 3:4-26)**

1. Why do you believe a miracle preceded Peter's second sermon?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What similar events preceded Peter's first sermon in Acts 2?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Identify the specific verses from Peter's first sermon in Acts 2 that correspond to the following statements from Peter's second sermon in Acts 3:
  - a. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus. . .
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. . . .whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life. . . .
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. . . .whom God raised from the dead. . .
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. . . .of which we are witnesses.

- e. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.
  - f. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. . .
4. Whose faith healed the lame man (Acts 3:16)? Was it the lame man's faith or the faith of Peter and John? Explain your answer.
5. Peter said the people and their rulers put Jesus to death "in ignorance" Acts 3:17). Other verses also speak of this (Luke 23:34; 1 Corinthians 2:7-9). How is it possible that even the rulers did not know Jesus was the Messiah?
6. Read the following passages and explain the difference between sins committed in ignorance (such as sins of omission) verses presumptuous sins (sins of commission).
- a. Leviticus 4:2- 31; 5:17-18:
  - b. Deuteronomy 17:12-13:

- c. Numbers 15:27-31:
7. Why do you think presumptuous sins committed among the Israelites would carry such a harsh penalty, and yet we find nothing of this taught in the New Testament?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  8. What was it Peter said that proved beyond any doubt that the suffering and death of Jesus was not an accident, but was planned by God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  9. Peter's statement in Acts 3:19, "repent therefore and be converted" is more correctly translated "repent and turn" in other versions. Comparing Acts 2:38 with Acts 3:19, answer the following questions:
    - a. What do Acts 2:38 and Acts 3:19 require as a *prerequisite* before one can "turn"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
    - b. What do Acts 2:38 and Acts 3:19 say is the *result* of one who turns?

- c. After considering these prerequisites and results, what would you say is implied in the command to "turn" – meaning to turn from sin and turn to the Lord?
10. Is there a parallel between the "times of refreshing" that "come from the presence of the Lord" in Acts 3:19 with "the gift of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 2:38? (You may want to use Isaiah 28:12; 40:1-2 to help explain your answer.)
11. In addition to having one's sins "blotted out" ("wiped away") and the "times of refreshing," what was another reason Peter gave in Acts 3:19-21 for the need to "repent and turn"?
12. How did Peter define "the times of restoration of all things"? What is this?
13. Who was the prophet of whom God would raise up like Moses? (See Deuteronomy 18:15-19)

14. What did Peter say to imply that if one rejected Jesus Christ he was also rejecting the prophets?

15. According to Peter, to whom did God first send Jesus and for what purpose?

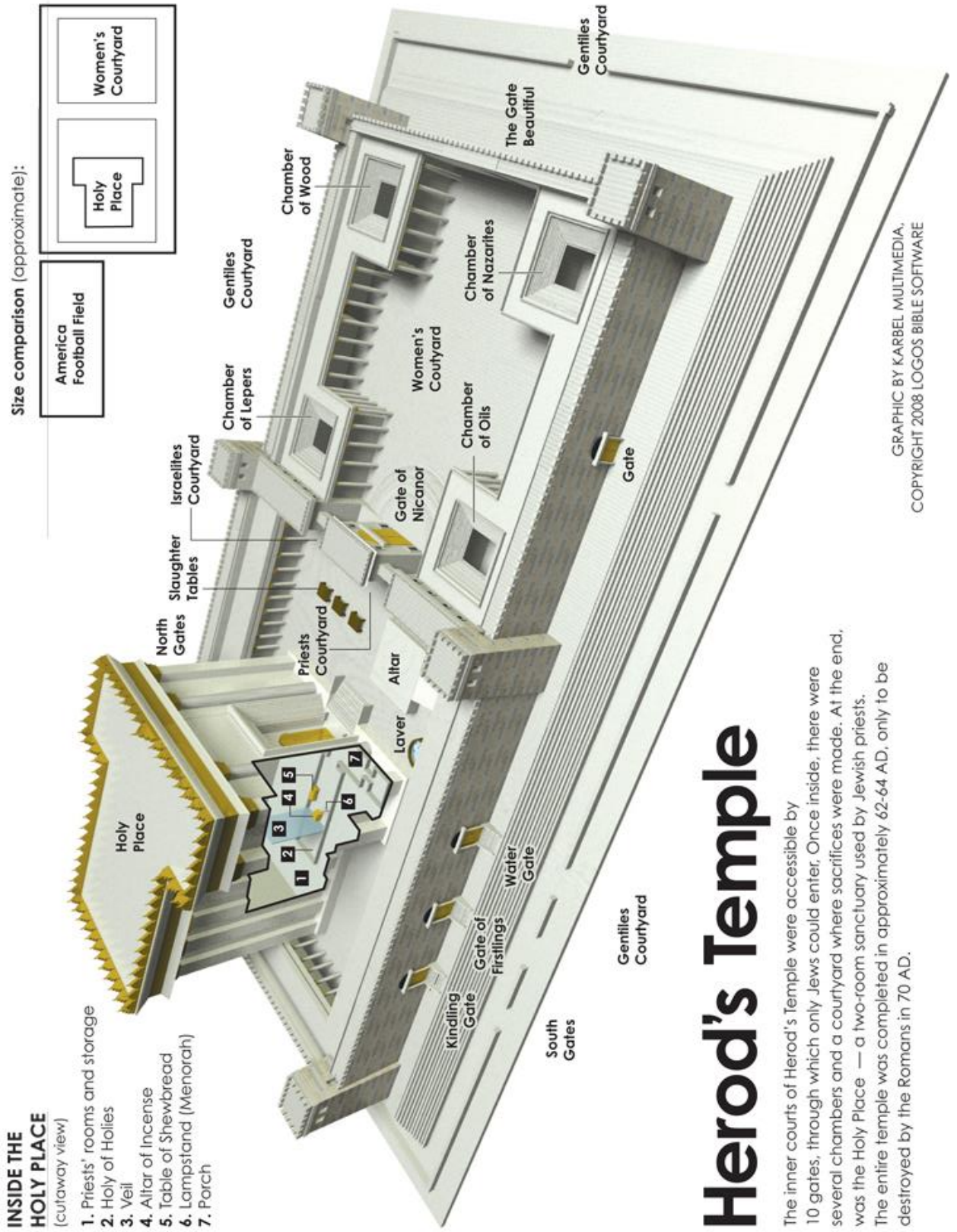
**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.



**INSIDE THE HOLY PLACE**  
(cutaway view)

1. Priests' rooms and storage
2. Holy of Holies
3. Veil
4. Altar of Incense
5. Table of Showbread
6. Lampstand (Menorah)
7. Porch



# Herod's Temple

The inner courts of Herod's Temple were accessible by 10 gates, through which only Jews could enter. Once inside, there were several chambers and a courtyard where sacrifices were made. At the end, was the Holy Place — a two-room sanctuary used by Jewish priests. The entire temple was completed in approximately 62-64 AD, only to be destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

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# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 4 Acts 4:1-37

#### Introduction:

As Peter and John are preaching about Jesus Christ, they are suddenly arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin. The group of men responsible for the arrest was especially troubled by the claim that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead. The Sanhedrin was largely made up of Sadducees who denied there is such a thing as a resurrection from the dead. Many of the Chief Priests, and the High Priest, were also Sadducees. Jesus encountered this group on more than one occasion. During the Lord's final week (before His crucifixion), He had the most memorable encounter of all with the Sadducees.

*The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her." Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. (Matthew 22:23-33)*

The Sanhedrin, before whom Peter and John were summoned, was the same group of men who condemned Jesus to death, and demanded that He be crucified. They were asked by whose authority they had healed the lame man, and had so boldly proclaimed Jesus was the resurrected Christ. Peter's response was simple: *"by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole."* (Acts 4:10)

Powerless to find anything worthy of punishment, yet concerned that the preaching of Jesus would continue, the Sanhedrin could only issue a "cease and desist order" and threats of future punishment in a vain effort to prevent the apostles preaching Jesus.

This simply gave the apostles even more resolve to fulfill their mission to *"go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15). But the apostles obviously realized more intense persecutions were ahead. Therefore they prayed that God would, *"grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus"* (Acts 4:29-30).

As more and more turned to Christ through the preaching of the apostles, the needs of the multitude began to increase. However, motivated by the grace of God, these believers exercised extraordinary benevolence toward one another. Many gladly sold their lands and possessions and brought the money to the apostles to make distribution as anyone had need – including a man whom the apostles named Barnabas. He will play a crucial role in the spread of the gospel during the first century.

### **Memorization:**

*But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:19-20)*

### **Key Events of Acts 4:**

- Peter and John arrested.
- Peter's third sermon.

### **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

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### **The Exposition:**

#### **I. Persecution Begins (Acts 4:1-37)**

##### **A. Peter and John Arrested (Acts 4:1-4)**

1. What had "greatly disturbed. . . the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees"?

2. Explain why each of the following would be "greatly disturbed" by what Peter and John were preaching.
  - a. The priests:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. The captain of the temple:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. The Sadducees:
  
3. Why had the number of the disciples grown?

**B. Peter's Third Sermon (Acts 4:5-12)**

1. What was the Sanhedrin? (Consult a Bible dictionary to find your answer)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Who are the following? (You may need to consult a Bible dictionary or a commentary on Acts)
  - a. The rulers:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. The elders:

- c. The scribes:
  
  - d. Annas:
  
  - e. Caiaphas:
  
  - f. John and Alexander:
3. Why do you think Peter and John were asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this"?
4. What are the three things Peter said about Jesus in response to their question? Explain the significance of each.
- a.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c.

5. What passage was Peter quoting when he said, "This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone'"?
  
6. Why would the members of the Sanhedrin marvel at "the boldness of Peter and John"?
  
7. Why were the members of the Sanhedrin unable to answer Peter's statement?

**C. The Sanhedrin Forbids Preaching Jesus (Acts 4:13-22)**

1. What did they discuss among themselves concerning Peter and John? What was their decision and why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Explain the meaning of Peter's response to the edict of the Sanhedrin.

3. Why did the Sanhedrin simply resort to threats instead of more harsh treatment?

**D. Prayer in the Face of Persecution (Acts 4:23-31)**

1. Who is implied by Peter and John's "companions" (or "company")?
2. What Old Testament Messianic prophecy is quoted in this prayer?
3. How is this prophecy applied to Jesus?
4. Why do we know the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus was all part of God's plan?
5. Why would the apostles pray for boldness?

6. Is this a prayer we should pray today? Explain your answer.

**E. Benevolence Among Believers (Acts 4:32-37)**

1. Describe the oneness of those who believed, and what does this mean?

2. How did those believers display their oneness?

3. How do we know the apostles disregarded the edict against preaching Jesus?

4. Explain how those believers showed "grace" to their fellow believers? Was this done voluntary or involuntary?

5. Who is Joses, and what special name was he given by the apostles? What does this name imply about the character of Joses?



**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.

# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 5

#### Acts 5:1-42

#### Introduction:

The division of chapters at this point is unfortunate, since the events in the opening part of chapter 5 are connected with the events of Acts 4:32-37. An atmosphere of love and concern for the welfare of their brethren continued to prevail in the early church in Jerusalem. Luke wrote, *"Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common"* (Acts 4:32). This attitude of benevolence was so widespread that, *"all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need"* (Acts 4:34-35). One of the most notable examples of goodwill toward others was that of a Levite from Cyprus by the name of Joses (Joseph). Although we know little of his specific act of benevolence, Luke tells us the apostles named him Barnabas, which is translated "Son of Encouragement" or "Son of Consolation." His unselfish act of humble generosity coupled with his comforting and encouraging nature apparently became known throughout the community of believers in Jerusalem. It was certainly an example worth following.

However, the recognition given to some simply because of their humility and generosity is occasionally coveted by others. Some are humble and generous because it is their nature to be so. However, the humility and generosity by those who covet recognition is often counterfeit and merely a guise to gain attention and praise. The motive of the one is pure while the motive of the other is corrupt and self-serving. Such were Ananias and his wife Sapphira. Up to this point, conflict aimed at stopping the growth of the Lord's church came from without. However, beginning with Acts chapter 5, conflict which threatened the peace and unity of the church came from within.

Ananias and his wife Sapphira concocted a plan of deception that would make them appear something they were not. They sold a piece of property and kept back a portion of the sale price for themselves. Ananias and Sapphira had every right to dispose of those funds as they wished. However, they lied about the actual amount they received from the sale. Some have suggested Ananias and Sapphira attempted to deceive the apostles into believing they were so concerned about the welfare of others that they willingly took a loss and sold the land well below market value. Whatever their motive may have been, they had lied to God and paid with their own lives.

The news of this attempted deception and the divine retribution which followed caused an immediate reaction. Luke writes, *"And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women. . ."* (Acts 5:12-14) Through the power of God invested in the apostles, many were healed of diseases and others were cleansed from unclean spirits. Soon multitudes from all the surrounding cities were coming to Jerusalem to be healed.

The fame of the apostles and their message about Jesus Christ spread throughout all the land. This enraged the high priest (Caiaphas and his father-in-law Annas). Therefore, to enforce the previous edict which forbade the apostles from speaking about Jesus, the twelve were immediately arrested and put into prison. However, they were miraculously released from prison during the night and promptly returned to the temple to fulfill their mission to preach Jesus.

After being arrested a second time, the twelve were brought before the Sanhedrin and asked why they had disobeyed the council's decree. Previously, Peter had asked whether it would be acceptable to God for Peter and John to should council them rather than God (Acts 4:19). However, this time Peter confidently proclaimed, *"We ought to obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5:29). Many of those who were outraged began plotting to kill the apostles, but one highly respected member of the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, reasoned with his fellow council members. He suggested if the hand of God was involved in the preaching of the apostles, taking the lives of these men would put the Sanhedrin at odds with God. If, on the other hand, this was not the hand of God, it will eventually come to nothing – as had happened with so many false teachers in the past. The council agreed. However, the apostles would not be permitted to leave without first paying a price for their disobedience. They were all beaten and told once again *"that they should not speak in the name of Jesus"* (Acts 5:40).

The reaction of the twelve was not fear or intimidation. *"So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ"* (Acts 5:41-42).

### **Memorization:**

*And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ"* (Acts 5:42)

### **Key Events of Acts 5:**

- Ananias and Sapphira.
- The apostles are arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin.

## **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

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## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-6)**

#### **A. Ananias (Acts 5:1-4)**

1. What sin did Ananias commit?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. To whom had Ananias lied?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What do the questions of Peter in verse 4 say about our giving?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Compare and contrast Peter's questions in Acts 5:4 with Paul's statement about giving in 2 Corinthians 9:7.

5. Why do you believe Ananias died suddenly, and explain why his death was necessary?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Why do you believe "great fear came upon all those who heard these things" (Acts 5:5)?

**B. Sapphira (Acts 5:7-11)**

1. How had Sapphira and her husband tested the Spirit?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Explain how lying to God the same as lying the Spirit.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why do you believe the death of Sapphira death was necessary?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Explain why her death had such impact on "all the church and upon all who heard these things" (Acts 5:11)

5. What does this example teach us about the necessity of exercising discipline in the Lord's church (withdrawing from those who walk disorderly)?

## **II. Peaceful Growth (Acts 5:12-16)**

### **A. Signs and Wonders Done by the Apostles (Acts 5:12)**

1. Describe the feelings that existed among the disciples of Christ at this time. Explain your answer.
  
2. Where were the disciples meeting at this time?
  
3. Who are "them" mentioned in Acts 5:13, and why do you believe "none of the rest dared join them"?
  
4. What is one of the benefits of a church that does not tolerate sin among its members?

5. How is the specific number of disciples described at this point in the church's history?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How did the people show their belief in the power of the apostles to heal diseases and cast out unclean spirits?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What impact did all this have on neighboring cities around Jerusalem?

### **III. The Apostles Arrested and Tried Before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:17-42)**

#### **A. The Arrest of the Apostles (Acts 5:17-26)**

1. Who was most outraged by the actions of the apostles, and why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What happened during the night while the apostles were in prison?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What were the apostles commanded to do?

4. Explain what is meant by the phrase, "speak to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20)?
  
5. What news about the apostles did the Sanhedrin receive the following morning?
  
6. What was the reaction of the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests upon hearing this news? Explain?
  
7. Why did the captain and his officers bring the apostles before the Sanhedrin "without violence"?

**B. The Apostles Tried Before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:27-42)**

1. What was the question put before the apostles, and who asked it?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What do you believe may have been the apostles' "doctrine" (teaching) that "filled Jerusalem"?



3. Why would this "doctrine" be so upsetting to the high priest and the Sanhedrin?
  
4. Why do you think the high priest was concerned that he and the council were being blamed for the death of Jesus?
  
5. What was the response of Peter and the other apostles?
  
6. What did the apostles accuse the Sanhedrin of doing with regards to the death of Jesus? What is the significance of this accusation?
  
7. Why had God exalted Jesus to His right hand? Explain.
  
8. Explain the significance of the statement, "we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him" (Acts 5:32).

9. What was the reaction to the apostles' and who intervened on their behalf?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. What would be one reason for Gamaliel coming to the defense of the apostles?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. How did Gamaliel reason with the council?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. Why do you believe Gamaliel would suggest the mission and message of the apostles could possibly be "of God"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
13. What was the decision of the council?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
14. Why would the apostles rejoice over having been beaten? What does this tell us about the value of persecution?

15. What did the apostles do after being released from the council? What does this tell us about the need to preach and teach Jesus Christ?

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.

# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 6

#### Acts 6:1-15

#### Introduction:

Up to this point in the history of the Lord's church persecution had been directed toward the apostles. That persecution had taken the form of threats and a beating. However, things were about to change.

Because of the immense popularity of the apostles, the high priest and the Sanhedrin were unable to persecute these men further without endangering their own safety. The people thronged around the twelve who were healing the sick and casting out evil spirits. Any further attempts by the council to arrest and execute the apostles would most likely touch off a riot that would bring even more Roman troops into the city of Jerusalem. No doubt, this would possibly escalate tensions among the people even more. Therefore, the council needed another way to send their message to the rapidly spreading number of disciples who claimed Jesus Christ as Lord. That opportunity would come when charges were brought against a man by the name of Stephen.

Stephen had been selected as one of seven men to take care of a situation concerning the care of widows among the growing number of disciples. Up to this point the apostles were given the task of administering the care of those in need. However as the number of disciples continued to expand, the apostles were not only distracted from their primary message of preaching the gospel, they were beginning to simply be overwhelmed.

Stephen not only helped care for the needs of widows, but like the other men among the seven, he was one upon whom the apostles had laid their hands. This is the first mention of the apostles laying hands on men to impart certain spiritual gifts. In Stephen's case, we're told he was "*full of faith and power*" and "*did great wonders and signs among the people.*" (Acts 6:8)

#### Memorization:

*"Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."* (Acts 6:3-4)

### **Key Events of Acts 6:**

- Seven men selected to care for widows.
- Stephen is arrested, charged with blasphemy and brought before the council.

### **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

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### **The Exposition:**

#### **I. Issue Concerning Widows (Acts 6:1-7)**

##### **A. Seven men chosen (Acts 6:1-6)**

1. What is the difference between "the Hebrews" and "the Hellenists," and why would the "Hebrews" neglect caring for "Hellenist" widows?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How did this pose a problem for the apostles?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What solution did the apostles recommend?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Who would be responsible for selecting the seven men?

5. What qualifications would these seven men need? Explain what these qualifications meant.

6. Who were the seven men?

7. What did the apostles do after the seven were selected? What does this imply?

**B. The disciples are greatly multiplied (Acts 6:7)**

1. What effect did the word of God have as it began to be spread?

**II. Renewed Persecution (Acts 6:8-15)**

**A. Stephen defends the faith (Acts 6:8-10)**

1. How is Stephen described, and what did he do?

2. Consult a Bible dictionary and explain what the "Synagogue of the Freedmen" was, and why those of that synagogue would dispute with Stephen.

3. Why were the members of the "Synagogue of the Freedmen" unable to answer Stephen? What does this mean?

**B. Stephen accused of blasphemy (Acts 6:11-15)**

1. What plans were made to silence Stephen?

2. What did the enemies of Stephen do to gain support for bringing Stephen before the council?

3. What did the false witnesses testify of?

4. How are the charges brought against Stephen related to the charges that had been brought against Jesus? Compare Acts 6:14 with Matthew 26:59-61 and Mark 14:57-58.
5. What did Jesus mean when He said His enemies could destroy "this temple" and He would raise it up again in three days? (See John 2:19-22).
6. How did Stephen appear to the members of the council as they looked upon him? What do you think this means?

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can be learned from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.



# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 7

#### Acts 7:1-60

#### Introduction:

Resentment toward the apostles and the infant church continued to deepen in the hearts of many members of the Sanhedrin. The apostle's refusal to be intimidated by the council's edicts or obey the council's command to cease preaching Jesus Christ had threatened the Sanhedrin's power and control. The apostles were virtually untouchable due to their enormous popularity among the countless thousands in Jerusalem and the surrounding villages. Any further attempt to arrest and punish the apostles would most certainly lead to riots and the intervention of Roman soldiers. Although Rome governed all Palestine in civil matters, they allowed the high priest and the council to rule the people in religious matters as long as peace was maintained.

Civil disturbances were commonplace throughout Palestine among groups that resented Rome's presence. However, religious uprisings were a direct threat to the high priest and the Sanhedrin. If the high priest and the council could not maintain peace, Rome would demand the removal of the current high priest and the appointment of another. This eventually happened to Caiaphas in 36 AD when he was deposed as high priest. Therefore, the Sanhedrin needed another way to show the people of Jerusalem and Judea they would not tolerate flagrant disobedience and open rebellion among the disciples of the man called Jesus of Nazareth. To do that, the council would turn its attention toward the disciples.

Stephen, a man who was said to be "*full of faith and power*" and who "*did great wonders and signs among the people*" (Acts 6:8) had presented indisputable evidence in local synagogues that Jesus was the Christ. After being falsely accused of blasphemy, Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin to answer the charges that had been brought against him. Rather than deny the trumped up charges, Stephen began his defense by giving a brief history of the people of God from the days of Abraham. He not only outlined God's care for His people, but also provided examples of Israel's disobedience. However, it was the conclusion of this story that enraged the high priest and the other members of the council. Stephen said,

*"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it." (Acts 7:51-53)*

The enraged council would hear no more. The supreme court of the Jews, and the very body of men whose solemn duty it was to act as council for the defense in all capital cases (such as blasphemy), became a violent mob. They took Stephen by force, brought him outside of the city, and there stoned him. The irony of this event is found in verse 58: *and the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul*. The man known as Saul of Tarsus despised the followers of Jesus so much that he personally sent many to their deaths. He would eventually become the man known as the apostle Paul.

### **Memorization:**

*"Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."*  
(Acts 7:52-53)

### **Key Events of Acts 7:**

- Stephen gives his defense before the council.
- Stephen is stoned.
- First mention of Saul (later to be the apostle Paul).

### **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

These websites contain numerous Bible Versions and Translations, Concordances, Dictionaries, Lexicons and many other useful tools: <http://biblos.com/> and <http://www.biblestudytools.com/> (Click on "Our Library" at the top of the home page)

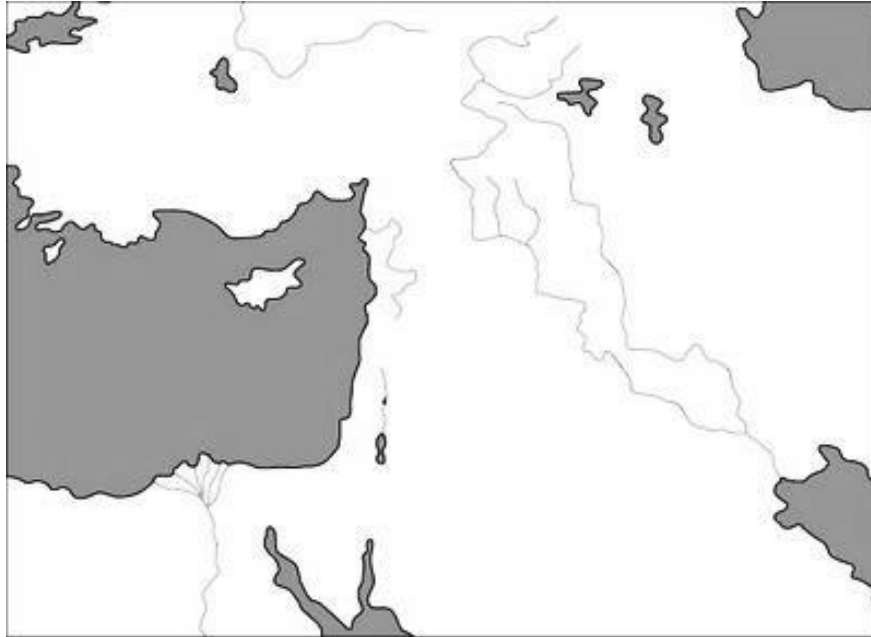
### **The Exposition:**

#### **I. Stephen's defense before the council (Acts 7:1-53)**

##### **A. The call of Abraham (Acts 7:1-8)**

1. How does Stephen address the high priest and the council? What does this say about Stephen?

2. Use the map below to identify Mesopotamia (Land of the Chaldeans), the approximate location of the city of Haran, the land of Canaan and Egypt.



3. What promise did God make regarding the land of Canaan?
4. What promise did God make regarding the descendants of Abraham? What would happen to them, and how long would this occur?
5. What is a covenant, and what was the covenant God made with Abraham?

6. Beginning with Abraham, who are the forefathers of Israel?

**B. The Patriarchs in Egypt (Acts 7:9-16)**

1. Who are the Patriarchs and what did they do?

2. How did God bless Joseph?

3. How many of Joseph's family moved to Egypt?

**C. God delivers Israel (Acts 7:17-36)**

1. What was the "promise" God has sworn to Abraham?

2. What happened to the Israelites after the days of Joseph?

3. Why did Moses live with his family only three months after his birth?

4. What became of Moses?

5. What happened when Moses was forty years old?

6. What happened during the next forty years of Moses' life?

7. How long did the Israelites spend in the wilderness?

#### **D. Israel's rebellion against God (Acts 7:37-43)**

1. What was the prophecy of Moses, and of whom was he speaking? (Compare Deuteronomy 18:15 with Acts 3:22-26)
2. What are "the living oracles" mentioned in Acts 7:38? What does the term "living oracles" imply?
3. How does Stephen describe the "hearts" of the Israelites?
4. What did the Israelites demand of Aaron? Why?
5. What did God do?
6. What prophecy did Stephen quote (where is it found in the Old Testament)?

### E. The tabernacle in the wilderness (Acts 7:44-50)

1. According to whose plan was the tabernacle made? What is the significance of this statement?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did God do with the people of Canaan? Why do you think it is significant to mention God was the one who did this?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How long was the tabernacle in use?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Where does God *not* dwell?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Examine the prophecy of Isaiah mentioned by Stephen (Isaiah 66:1-4) and answer the following:
  - a. What was the spiritual condition of the people in Isaiah's day?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Why do you suppose Stephen quoted this prophecy?

**F. Stephen's charge against the leaders of Israel (Acts 7:51-53)**

1. How did Stephen describe the spiritual condition of the council?
2. How had they resisted the Holy Spirit?
3. What had they done like their fathers before them?
4. What had the council done to the Just One?
5. What did Stephen say about their attitude toward the law?



## **II. Stephen is stoned (Acts 7:54-60)**

### **A. Reaction of the council (Acts 7:54-58a)**

1. What does "they were cut to the heart" and why is this different from a similar expression in Acts 2:37?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did Stephen see in a vision, and what did he say? Do you believe there is any significance in Luke mentioning that Jesus was "standing" at the right hand of God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Explain the council's reaction upon hearing Stephen say he saw Jesus standing by the right hand of God in heaven.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What did they do with Stephen?

### **B. The death of Stephen (Acts 7:58b-60)**

1. What did the witnesses do at the stoning of Stephen?

2. To whom did Stephen pray? Reconcile the fact that he "was calling on God" and prayed "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."
  
3. What are the final words of Stephen, and who prayed a similar prayer?
  
4. What is the significance of saying Stephen "fell asleep"?

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.

# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 8

#### Acts 8:1-40

#### Introduction:

With the death of Stephen and the demoralizing impact it must have had on many of the saints in Jerusalem, the high priest and the Sanhedrin became even more embolden to pursue the course of persecution. The one who would lead the persecution against the Lord's church was a devout Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus. His efforts to eradicate all who proclaimed Jesus as the Christ would result in great harm to the church in Jerusalem. Luke records:

*As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. (Acts 8:3)*

The word "*havoc*" means to cause immense pain and suffering; to ravage or devastate. It is a word used to describe the merciless attack of a wild beast as it tears its prey to pieces. Saul attempted to utterly destroy the Lord's church in Jerusalem by "*entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.*" Although the Sanhedrin had no power to exercise the death penalty under Roman occupation, they had the power to imprison those who were found guilty of crimes against Jewish religious and civil law. However, to keep peace, the Romans would often concede to the demands of the high priest and the council and execute those who were deemed as troublemakers. Anyone who proclaimed Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, and that He had been resurrected from the dead would be charged with blasphemy and inciting civil unrest. Unless they renounced their faith in Christ their fate would be imprisonment and death. From Saul's (Paul's) own words, we find many did renounce their faith.

*"Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities." (Acts 26:9-11)*

It may seem strange that a man like Saul could be so vicious and merciless in persecuting others – especially a man who, as a student of Gamaliel, had been educated to be a gentleman and a scholar. And yet his background as a Pharisee and his fanatical devotion to the traditions of the fathers compelled Saul to eradicate every semblance of Christianity from off the face of the earth.

However, Saul's persecution had just the opposite effect. Rather than destroy the disciples of Jesus Christ, those who fled from Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside would take the message of a risen Savior with them everywhere they went. Saul's persecution against the church did more to spread of Christianity than it did to stamp it out. In fact, Saul single-handedly helped fulfill the prophecy of Jesus Christ:

*" . . . and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)*

The gospel of Christ had already spread throughout the city of Jerusalem and the surrounding towns and villages as the apostles performed great signs and wonders.

*And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed. (Acts 5:14-16)*

The irrefutable message that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead and was now at the right hand of God had persuaded countless thousands, including many of the priests.

*Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)*

And now, with the persecution of Saul, the gospel would be taken into Samaria through the preaching of Philip (Acts 8:4-25), and eventually into all the world beginning with the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, the treasurer of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians (Acts 8:26-40).

### **Memorization:**

*As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. (Acts 8:3-4)*

### **Key Events of Acts 8:**

- Saul persecutes the church in Jerusalem.
- Philip preaches in Samaria.
- Conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch.

## **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

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## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Saul's persecution of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-3)**

#### **A. Burial of Stephen (Acts 8:1-2)**

1. Why do you think the apostles stayed in Jerusalem when others fled? What would have been the impact on other believers if the apostles had also fled Jerusalem?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does the manner of Stephen's burial say about him and those who cared for him?

#### **B. Saul made havoc of the church (Acts 8:3)**

1. In your own words explain why Saul went to such extremes to destroy the Lord's church in Jerusalem? (See: Acts 22:2-5; 23:1; 26:9-11; Philippians 3:3-6)

## II. Philip preaches in Samaria (Acts 8:4-25)

### A. Philip preaches Jesus (Acts 8:4-8)

1. Explain why the disciples would continue to preach the word as they were scattered by persecution? What does this say about them?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. On the map below identify the approximate locations of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the city of Samaria, the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, and the Dead Sea.



3. Give a brief history of Samaria and the Samaritan people, and explain their relationship with others Jews in Palestine. (Consult a Bible dictionary)

#### **B. The impact of Philip's preaching (Acts 8:9-13)**

1. Who is Philip, and where do we first read about him?
  
2. Who is Simon and what was his profession? Do you believe he had the ability to perform miracles as "the great power of God"?
  
3. What were the two things those who were baptized believed? Explain what each implies.
  - a.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b.

4. What else does Acts 8:12 tell us about those who were baptized, and how can this be used to defeat the concept of infant baptism?
  
5. How did Philip confirm the word he preached, and where did he get this power? (Cite the scriptures)
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What makes us think Simon was truly a believer in Christ, and that he was saved?

**C. Laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:14-17)**

1. Why did the apostles in Jerusalem send Peter and John to Samaria?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why had the people of Samaria not yet received the Spirit, despite the fact that they had already been baptized?



3. Does this indicate the "gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38) is different from "Holy Spirit" the people of Samaria received (Acts 8:15-17)? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What does this tell us about the ability to pass on spiritual gifts through the laying on of hands?

**D. Simon the Sorcerer's Sin (Acts 8:18-25)**

1. What was Simon's sin? Explain your answer.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why would Simon have offered money for the ability to pass on spiritual gifts to others?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What did Peter say about the condition of Simon's heart?

4. Explain why Peter told Simon, "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you."
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Explain Simon's spiritual condition at that moment (see Acts 8:23). Was Simon in a lost condition?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Some argue that Simon could not have been saved prior to this sin because they believe it is impossible for those truly converted to Christ to sin so as to be eternally lost. Explain why this would be false.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What did Simon request, and why? Explain your answer.

### **III. Conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)**

#### **A. Philip preached Jesus to him (Acts 8:26-35)**

1. On the map above, identify the area of Gaza.

2. What can we assume about an Ethiopian coming to Jerusalem to worship?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What passage was he reading, and what is so significant about this prophecy?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How did Philip preach Jesus to the eunuch? What did Philip obviously include in his preaching of Jesus?

**B. The eunuch is baptized (Acts 8:36-40)**

1. What does the eunuch's statement (Acts 8:36) tell us about his understanding of the role of baptism in conversion?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is the significance of both Philip and the eunuch going "down into the water" and coming "up out of the water"? Explain how this teaches baptism is by immersion.

3. What was the eunuch's reaction to having been baptized? Why?

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.

# Examples of Conversion

Matthew 28:18-20

Preaching	Believed	Repented	Confessed	Baptized	Saved
Pentecost (Acts 2:14-47)	Cut to Heart (v. 37)	Repent (vs. 37-38)		Baptized (vs. 38-41)	Remission of Sins (vs. 38-47)
Samaritan (Acts 8:5-13)	Believed (v. 12)			Baptized (vs. 12-13)	
Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39)	Believed (vs. 36-37)		Confessed (v. 37)	Baptized (v. 38)	Rejoiced (v. 39)
Saul (Acts 9:1-18)	Fasted and Prayed (vs. 9-11)	Fasted and Prayed (vs. 9-11)		Baptized (v. 18)	Sins Washed Away (22:16)
Cornelius (Acts 10:34-48)	Believed (v. 43)			Baptized (v. 48)	Remission of Sins (v. 43)
Lydia (Acts 16:14-15)	Believed (v. 14)			Baptized (v. 15)	
Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:25-34)	Believed (v. 31)			Baptized (v. 33)	Rejoiced (v. 34)
Preaching Rom. 10:11-17	Faith Heb. 11:6	Repentance Luke 13:3	Confession Matt. 10:32 Rom. 10:10	Baptism Rom. 6:4 1 Pet. 3:21	Salvation Acts 4:12 2 Tim. 2:10

# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 9

#### Acts 9:1-43

#### Introduction:

The most fundamental foundation upon which the faith of every Christian rests is the indisputable fact that Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead. The apostle Paul put it this way in the opening words of his letter to the church at Rome:

*Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. (Romans 1:1-4)*

It's often been said, if someone could be proven beyond any reasonable doubt that Jesus Christ was not resurrected from the dead, then our faith would be useless. Even the apostle Paul agreed with that assessment. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15 Paul wrote:

*And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up — if in fact the dead do not rise. (1 Corinthians 15:14-15)*

*And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. (1 Corinthians 15:17-19)*

There are numerous historical and Biblical proofs that provide ample evidence for believing that Jesus Christ was, in fact, resurrected from the dead. However, one of the most persuasive arguments for believing in the resurrection is found in the radical transformation that took place in the lives of those who knew Jesus.

One such example is that of the brothers of Jesus. We're told, "*For even His brothers did not believe in Him*" (John 7:5), and were probably among those of His own family who concluded, "*He is out of His mind*" (Mark 3:21). And yet, in the days following the crucifixion of Jesus a radical transformation took place. We find these same brothers of Jesus mentioned among the 120 disciples of the Lord (Acts 1:12-14). James, the Lord's brother wrote what is said to have been the first letter circulated among Christians (the book of James). Along with Peter and John, James is also referred to as one of the

"pillars" among the disciples in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19; 2:9 compared to Acts 15:13). Jude, the brother of James, wrote another epistle in which he boldly asserted that we must, "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). What could have made such a dramatic change in the lives of these men – transforming them from scoffers and unbelievers, into some of the most devoted disciples of the Lord? The answer? The indisputable evidence that Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead and ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God.

But perhaps the most amazing transformation of all is that of the man known as Saul of Tarsus. Saul was a devout Pharisee, and a fierce persecutor of the Lord's disciples. We're told; *"he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison"* (Acts 8:3). As we learned from the previous lesson, the word *"havoc"* means to cause immense pain and suffering; to ravage or devastate. It is a word used to describe the merciless attack of a wild beast as it tears its prey to pieces. It seems strange that Saul, a student of Gamaliel, and a man educated to be a gentleman and a scholar, could be so vicious and merciless in persecuting others. And yet, he did more to completely eradicate the infant church than perhaps any other man of his time.

When we come to the ninth chapter of Acts we find Saul, *"still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord"* (Acts 9:1). He had set out for the city of Damascus, with letters from the high priest, to purge the synagogues there of every man or woman who was of *"the Way."* His purpose was to bring them bound back to Jerusalem where they would stand trial and face an almost certain death. However, Saul never completed his mission.

Jesus, whom Saul had believed was just another messianic imposter, spoke to him from a blinding light out of heaven, proclaiming *"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting"* (Acts 9:5). We can only imagine the thoughts that must have raced through Saul's mind at that moment. He came face to face with the Savior whom he had denied, and whose disciples he had sought to annihilate. Despite the claims made by many in the denominational world, Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus. He was told to go into the city of Damascus and there he would be told what he must do. But there is no disputing the fact that in one brief moment of time, Saul went from unbeliever to believer.

Three days later Saul met Ananias, a disciple of the Lord, who told the former enemy of Christ what he must do to be saved. There was no need to tell Saul to believe or repent. His encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus was clearly enough to produce faith in Jesus was the Christ. And the fact that he had neither eaten nor drank for three days suggests the immense depth of Saul's sorrow – godly sorrow that would lead any man to repentance. All Ananias need to say to Saul was, *"Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16).

From an enemy of Christ to a man destined to become one of the Lord's most influential apostles, the story of that fateful trip to Damascus ends with these words:

*Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. (Acts 9:19-22)*

If Saul's encounter with Jesus Christ was not enough to convince a skeptic that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead, the events at the close of chapter nine would offer additional undeniable proof. Her name was Tabitha, which is also translated Dorcus. She was known for her good works of charity. When her friends heard that the apostle Peter was in the vicinity, they called for him.

Upon arriving and seeing how many were weeping over the passing of their friend, Peter sent them out of the room, knelt down to pray, and then said, "Tabitha, arise" (Acts 9:40). She did. The impact was immediate and widespread – "many believed on the Lord" (Acts 9:42). Tabitha was living, walking, and talking proof of the power of the resurrection. And more than that, she was evidence that the power of the resurrected Christ had been bestowed on His apostles.

### **Memorization:**

*Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." (Acts 9:4-5)*

### **Key Events of Acts 9:**

- The Lord appears to Saul on the road to Damascus.
- Saul is baptized.
- Tabitha (Dorcus) was raised from the dead.

### **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

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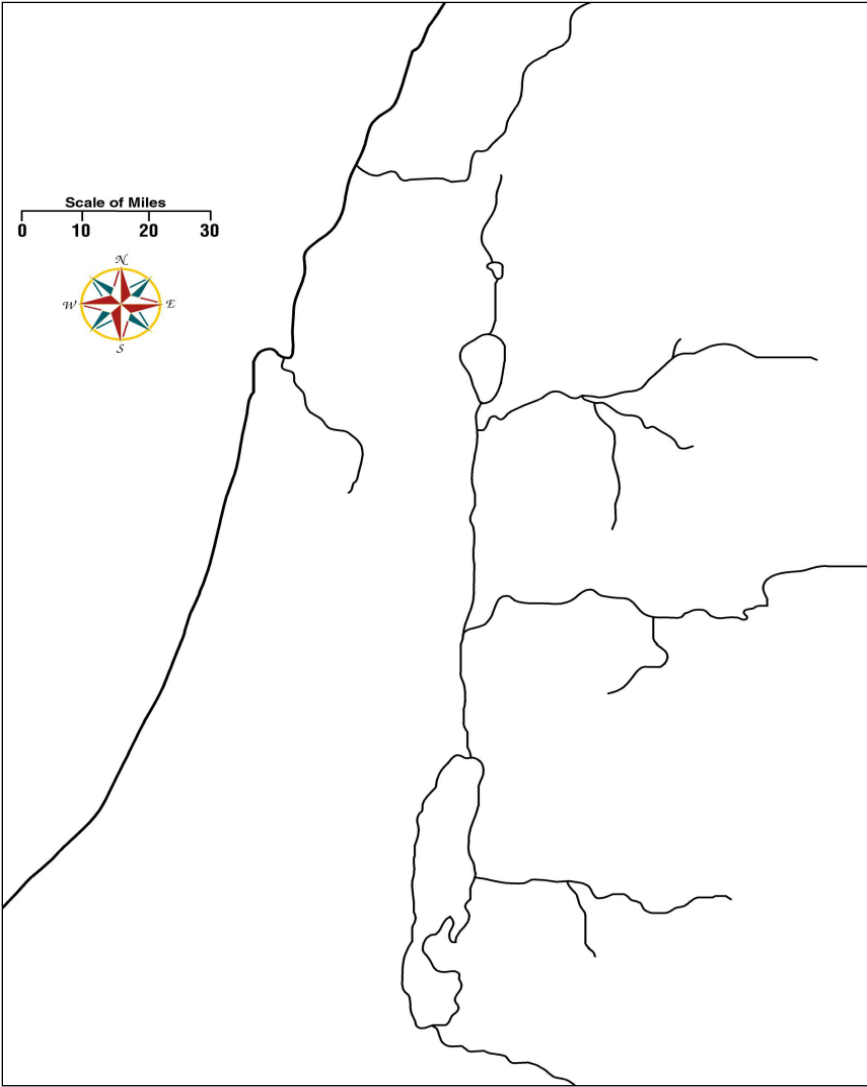


**The Exposition:**

**I. Saul's still actively persecuting the Lord's church (Acts 9:1-9)**

**A. Saul's journey to Damascus (Acts 9:1-2)**

- 1. Describe Saul's attitude toward the disciples of the Lord. What does this tell you about Saul?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. Using the map below, identify the approximate location of Jerusalem, Damascus, Caesarea, Lydda and Joppa.



3. Use a Bible dictionary to give a brief history of Damascus up to the time of the apostles.

4. Why do you suppose Saul would look for disciples of the Lord in the synagogues of Damascus?

**B. The Lord appears to Saul (Acts 9:3-9)**

1. How was Saul persecuting Jesus (v. 3)? Explain your answer.

2. Explain the meaning of Jesus' statement in verse 5.

3. Explain Saul's state of mind at this moment. Do you think Saul had any doubts that Jesus was in heaven? Explain your answer.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What do you think might have been going through Saul's mind at the moment, and why would he ask this question, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What was the Lord's response?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What was Saul's physical condition after the Lord appeared to him?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What in verses 3 through 9 indicate Saul was deeply troubled and remorseful from his encounter with Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Is there anything in verses 3 through 9 that would indicate Saul was actually saved on the road to Damascus?

9. What in these verses would indicate that Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Skeptics claim there is a discrepancy in Luke's account between Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:9. How would you explain this alleged discrepancy?

## **II. Ananias and Saul (Acts 9:10-19)**

### **A. Ananias (Acts 9:10-16)**

1. What does the name Ananias mean?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How is Ananias described by Luke?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What did the Lord ask Ananias to do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What was Ananias' reaction?

5. Read the Lord's reply in Acts 9:15-16 and answer the following questions.
  - a. Compare these verses with Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2:5-7. What is implied by Saul being a "chosen vessel"?
  
  - b. How did the Lord describe Saul's mission?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. What would be the consequences of Saul's mission?

#### **B. Ananias and Saul (Acts 9:17-19)**

1. How did Ananias explain his visit to Saul?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. From what we learned in Acts 8:14-19, how do you think Ananias received the power to lay hands on Saul and restore his sight?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Since Ananias was not an apostle and could not impart the power of the Holy Spirit to Saul, how do you think Saul became "filled with the Holy Spirit"?

4. Compare Acts 9:18 with Acts 22:16. Why was Saul baptized?

5. What did Saul do immediately after he was baptized?

### **III. Saul preaches Christ (Acts 9:20-31; Galatians 1:13-24)**

#### **A. Saul in Damascus (Acts 9:20-22)**

1. What did Saul do immediately after he was baptized?

2. What was the reaction of those hearing Saul's preaching?

#### **B. A three year interlude (Galatians 1:13-17)**

1. Although Luke does not mention this three year interlude, the apostle Paul does. Where did Paul go during this time?

#### **C. Saul Returns to Damascus (Acts 9:23-25)**

1. Why would the Jews have sought to kill Saul?

2. How did he escape?

**D. Saul in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-31; Galatians 1:18-24)**

1. What was the reaction among disciples of the Lord in Jerusalem over Saul's conversion?
2. Who vouched for Saul, and what did he say about Saul? Where do we first read about this man?
3. According to Galatians 1:18-20, who did Saul see while in Jerusalem and with whom did he stay?
4. According to Acts 9:29, what was the reaction in Jerusalem to Saul's preaching?
5. What did the brethren do?
6. According to Galatians 1:21 where did Saul go after leaving?

7. What is one of the principle cities of Cilicia, and why would Saul go there?  
(See the map on page 82)

8. According to Acts 9:31 and Galatians 1:22-24, what was the impact of Saul's conversion on the church in Judea, Galilee and Samaria?

#### **IV. Peter performs miracles (Acts 9:32-43)**

##### **A. Aeneas (Acts 9:32-35)**

1. Where was Peter at this time?
2. What did he do there?
3. What was the impact of what Peter did?

##### **B. Tabitha (Acts 9:36-43)**

1. Who is Tabitha and what was she known for doing?



2. What could have been the reasons for the disciples asking Peter to come immediately?
  
3. What did the widows show Peter? What does this suggest about the kind of "good works and charitable deeds" Tabitha did?
  
4. What did Peter ask the people in the room to do? Why do you think he might have done this? Can you think of another example where someone did something similar?
  
5. What did Peter do?
  
6. What was the impact of what Peter did?
  
7. Where did Peter stay?

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.

**PAUL'S CONVERSION AND EARLY MINISTRY**  
 ACTS 9:1-30; 11:19-30; 12:24-25  
 GAL. 1:11-24

- City
- ▲ Mountain peak
- ) ( Pass
- ← Paul sent to Damascus
- ←···· Paul spends time in Arabia
- ←- Paul returns to Jerusalem
- ←· Paul flees from Hellenists
- ←· Paul and Barnabas travel to Antioch
- ←· Paul and Barnabas sent to Jerusalem
- ←· Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch
- Kingdom of Agrippa I



# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 10

#### Acts 10:1-48

#### Introduction:

Up to this time in the history of the early church the disciples of Jesus Christ had only been Jews or Jewish proselytes (Gentiles who converted to Judaism). However, there are numerous prophecies in the Old Testament, as well as a number of teachings of Jesus that point to a time when Gentiles will become part of the family of God. Many Jews who read these Old Testament prophecies assumed it meant Gentiles would convert to Judaism when the Messiah came to establish a kingdom on earth – which was a common misconception among Jews during the last two centuries leading up to the time of Christ. The kingdom for which many Jews hoped for was an earthly kingdom over which the Messiah would rule from His throne in Jerusalem, and that He would subdue all the nations, and they would convert to Judaism. Jesus did not come to establish that kind of kingdom (John 18:36). His kingdom was purely spiritual in nature. The kingdom would be within the heart of every man and woman in whom Jesus Christ reigned as Lord of lords, and King of kings (Luke 17:20-21).

One of the most prominent prophecies concerning all nations of the earth coming to "the Lord's house" is found in the familiar prophecy of Isaiah.

*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. (Isaiah 2:2-4)*

Another prophecy of Isaiah speaks of Christ becoming the light to the Gentiles to open their blinded eyes and free them from the imprisonment of their sins.

*"I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house." (Isaiah 42:6-7)*

When the parents of the infant Jesus brought Him to the Temple to offer gifts according to the Law, they were approached by a man named Simeon. When he saw Jesus he took Him in his arms and prayed the following prayer, proclaiming this Child was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

*"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." (Luke 2:29-32)*

In His famous discourse about the Good Shepherd (John 10), Jesus made a veiled reference to Gentiles who would soon become part of His sheepfold, and over which He would be the True Shepherd.

*"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd." (John 10:16)*

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven He gave His apostles the great commission to preach the gospel to all nations – to Jews first and then to Gentiles.

*Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:46-49)*

On the day of Pentecost, when the gospel of Christ was first preached, Peter's sermon included prophecies that speak of "all flesh" – including the Gentiles who were "afar off" – receiving the promises of God through Jesus Christ.

*"But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. . . And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'" (Acts 2:17-21; from Joel 2:28-32)*

*Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:38-39; see Ephesians 2:14-22)*

However, it's not until we come to the tenth chapter of the book of Acts do we find the fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning the conversion of Gentiles. Peter would be the man whom God chose to take this message to the household of a prominent God-fearing Gentile, Cornelius – a Roman centurion. However, to prepare Peter for this mission, the Lord revealed to Peter in a vision that nothing the Lord has "cleansed" from this time forward shall be considered "unclean" – whether foods or men. Peter soon realized:

*"In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him." (Acts 10:34-35)*

### **Memorization:**

*"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. (Acts 10:47-48)*

### **Key Events of Acts 10:**

- The vision of Peter on the housetop.
- The conversion of Cornelius and his household.

### **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

These websites contain numerous Bible Versions and Translations, Concordances, Dictionaries, Lexicons and many other useful tools: <http://biblos.com/> and <http://www.biblestudytools.com/> (Click on "Our Library" at the top of the home page)

### **The Exposition:**

#### **I. The Lord prepares Peter to preach the gospel to a Gentile (Acts 10:1-23)**

##### **A. Cornelius (Acts 10:1-8)**

1. What was Cornelius' occupation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How does Luke describe the character of Cornelius?

3. Why would Cornelius be praying at the ninth hour in a manner customary to Jews?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What did the angel of the Lord tell Cornelius about his prayers? What does this suggest about the character of the man?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What did the angel tell Cornelius to do? Where do we read a similar statement concerning the conversion of Saul?

**B. Peter's vision (Acts 10:9-15)**

1. Where was Peter at the time he fell into a trance, and what was he doing?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did Peter see, and what did the voice tell him to do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What was Peter's reply?

4. What did the voice say in response?
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What foods were "unclean" according to Leviticus 11:2-47?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How many times did this vision occur?

**C. Peter is summoned to Caesarea (Acts 10:17-23)**

1. Did Peter immediately grasp the meaning of this vision?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did the Spirit say to Peter regarding the men who were seeking him?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How do the men describe Cornelius?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What is implied by the statement that Cornelius was "one who fears God"?



5. Although we are not told, can you think of some reasons why Peter would have wanted to take brethren from Joppa along with him?

## **II. The conversion of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:24-48)**

### **A. Peter and Cornelius meet (Acts 10:24-33)**

1. What is it in verse 24 that indicates Cornelius was eager to hear Peter?
2. What did Cornelius do when he first met Peter?
3. What did Peter do, and what did he say?
4. Read the following passages and explain in what ways it was "unlawful" for Jews to associate with Gentiles? (Leviticus 18:24-30; Deuteronomy 7:3-12; Ezra 9:10-12)
5. When does it seem that Peter finally understood the meaning of the vision he had the day before?

6. What had Cornelius been doing for four days since the angel of the Lord appeared to him? Why do you think he was doing this?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. How did Cornelius describe the purpose for his relatives and friends assembling together on this occasion?

**B. Peter preaches Christ (Acts 10:34-43)**

1. What fundamental fact does Peter establish at the beginning of his lesson?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. According to Peter, who does God accept?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How does Peter describe Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. According to Peter, how did Cornelius know about Jesus Christ prior to this occasion?

5. When did Peter say the preaching of the gospel of Christ began? Compare Matthew 11:13 and Luke 16:16.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What is the first piece of evidence Peter offers to prove that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? Where is the first time Peter offered this same evidence?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What is the second piece of evidence Peter offers to prove that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? Where is the first time Peter offered this same evidence?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What evidence does Peter offer to prove he and the others who saw Jesus resurrected from the dead weren't simply seeing a vision?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How does Peter summarize the mission Jesus gave to Peter and the other apostles?

10. What had all the prophets testified about Jesus?

**C. The Holy Spirit is poured out on Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48)**

1. Who did the Holy Spirit fall upon?
  
2. How does Luke describe those who had come with Peter, and what was their reaction?
  
3. How did those of "the circumcision" know that God had poured out His Spirit on these Gentiles?
  
4. What was the question Peter posed to the group (those of the "circumcision")?
  
5. What is meant by the statement, "who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have"?

6. What did Peter command?
  
7. In Acts 10:48 Peter commanded them to be baptized "in the name of the Lord." In Acts 2:38 Peter commanded the people at Pentecost to be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ." Is there a difference? Explain your answer?
  
8. If baptism "in the name of the Lord" is baptism in water (Acts 10:47-48), how do we know baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38) is also baptism in water? Explain your answer.

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.

# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 11

#### Acts 11:1-30

#### Introduction:

With the conversion of Cornelius and his household, remission of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ was clearly for Jew and non-Jew (Gentile) alike. Now it was time to take the soul-saving message of the gospel of Christ into the world.

Before His ascension into heaven, Jesus gave His disciples the great commission to take the gospel to all nations.

*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)*

*And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." (Mark 16:15-18)*

*Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:46-49)*

However, the Lord intended for the spread of the gospel to follow a logical progression from Jerusalem, into Judea and Samaria, and then into the whole world.

*And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which*

*the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:4-8)*

The gospel was first preached to those who were most familiar with the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah – the Jews. They had been God's chosen people and had been entrusted with the Law of Moses which God used as a tutor to bring the nation of Israel to Christ. However, as Paul told the Galatians, after the Law brought the Jews to Christ it would have served its purpose and would no longer be needed.

*But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (Galatians 3:23-25)*

Now that countless numbers of Jews had been converted to Christ through the gospel, and the infant church was rapidly spreading into Jewish communities throughout the world, it was now time to share that message with Gentiles.

While Acts chapter 8 detailed the preaching of the gospel to the Samaritans, and Acts chapter 10 provided the account of the first Gentile converts, Acts chapter 11 sets the stage for the work of Saul of Tarsus (Paul) – the man whom God had chosen to take the message of Jesus Christ into the world of Greeks and Romans.

### **Memorization:**

*And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. (Acts 11:26b)*

### **Key Events of Acts 11:**

- Peter defends the conversion of Cornelius and his household
- Barnabas and Saul preach in Antioch
- Relief sent to needy saints in Judea

### **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

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## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Peter defends the conversion of Cornelius and his household (Acts 11:1-18)**

#### **A. Controversy arose over Peter going to a Gentile (Acts 11:1-3)**

1. Who are "those of the circumcision"?
2. Why did they contend with Peter?
3. How would you use this controversy to show Peter was not considered a Pope (the Vicar of Christ upon earth)?

#### **B. Peter defends the preaching of the gospel to Gentiles (Acts 11:4-18)**

1. What is the first evidence Peter offers to prove this was all from God?
2. How does Peter use the Holy Spirit as further evidence to prove this was approved of God?



3. What is the third piece of evidence Peter offers to prove he has witnesses to back up his testimony?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What evidence does Peter offer from the testimony of Cornelius to prove this was all from God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What is the final evidence Peter offers to conclude that God intended for Cornelius and his household to be baptized?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Where did the Lord say, "John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What was the specific "gift" of the Holy Spirit that was given to the apostles and to the household of Cornelius alike?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Is this the "gift of the Holy Spirit" promised to all who repent and are baptized (Acts 2:38)? Why or why not?

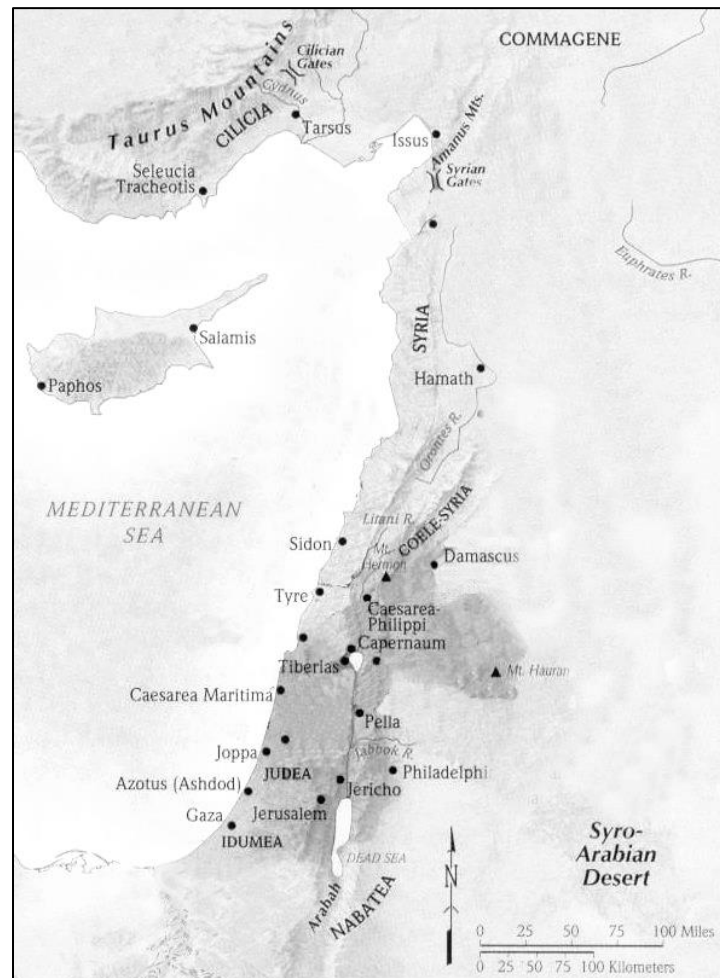
9. What did Peter say in conclusion that would make it difficult for anyone to refuse to accept Gentiles as fellow believers?

10. What was the reaction of those who heard Peter's story?

## II. Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:19-26)

### A. Antioch (Acts 11:19-24)

1. Identify the following locations on the map below: Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch.



2. Where is Cyrene located and where is the first time this place is mentioned in Acts?
  
3. Who are the Hellenists and where did the name originate?
  
4. What was the effect of preaching "the Lord Jesus" to the Hellenists in Antioch?
  
5. Why did the church in Jerusalem send Barnabas to Antioch and what did he do there?
  
6. How does Luke describe Barnabas?

**B Barnabas and Saul in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26)**

1. Where did Barnabas go after leaving Antioch and what was his purpose?
  
2. How long did Barnabas and Saul assemble with the church in Antioch and what did they do during this time.

3. What were the disciples called in Antioch?

### **III. Relief sent to needy saints in Judea (Acts 11:27-30)**

#### **A. Agabus (Acts 11:27-28)**

1. What is a prophet and what kind of work did they do?

2. How did one become a prophet? (See: Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; 13:2, 8; 14:3, 5, 24)

3. Based on the passages above do we still have these same kinds of prophets in the church today? Explain your answer.

4. What did Agabus prophesy and when was this to occur?

5. Consult a reference source to give the approximate years when this may have occurred.

## **B. Sending relief to Judea (Acts 11:29-30)**

1. What were the disciples in Antioch determined to do?
2. Who were the intended recipients of this "relief"? (Also consider 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:1, 12)
3. Who would be excluded by this "relief" and why?
4. What does Galatians 6:10 teach about doing good "to all, especially to those who are the household of faith"?
5. Was Paul speaking of benevolence by churches in Galatians 6:10 or by individual Christians? Consider the context of Galatians 6:1-10 to explain your answer.
6. Where were "the elders" located to whom Barnabas and Saul delivered the "relief" from the church in Antioch?



10. What are some differences between the examples of benevolence in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and the one mentioned here in Acts 11:29-30?

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can be learned from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.

# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 12

#### Acts 12:1-25

#### Introduction:

Persecution against the Lord's church had become relatively commonplace to the disciples of Christ in the first century. In fact, Jesus had repeatedly warned His disciples to expect it.

*"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12)*

*"And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another." (Matthew 10:22-23)*

*"Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation." (Luke 11:49-51)*

*"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also." (John 15:18-20)*

Stephen had been the first to die for the faith (Acts 7:57-60), and nameless others had suffered the same fate at the hands of Saul (Acts 8:1-3; 26:10). However, following Saul's conversion, persecution against the church ceased temporarily. The Sanhedrin no longer had the firebrand zealot they had enjoyed in Saul. He would do anything he could, and go to any extreme necessary, to stamp out what he believed was pure heresy and a disease that threatened his precious Jewish faith and heritage. However, while persecution by the Jewish religious leaders had been quelled, it would find new life at the hands of a man appointed by Caesar to serve as king of the Jews in Palestine. His name was Herod Agrippa.



Herod Agrippa was the grandson of the notorious Herod the Great. When Herod the Great died his kingdom was divided between his three surviving sons: Archelaus, Philip and Antipas, all of whom served Rome as tetrarchs over the region. Archelaus had been given Judea, Idumea, and Samaria; Antipas was awarded Galilee and Perea; and Philip was left with Iturea and Trachonitis. However, Archelaus, a violent man, was charged with cruelty in the manner in which he governed Judea and was subsequently banished by Caesar Augustus to Gaul. When Philip died, his region was granted by Emperor Caligula to the young up-and-coming Herod Agrippa. Soon after, Herod Antipas was likewise forced into exile for misdeeds and his tetrarchy was also awarded to Herod Agrippa.

As fate would have it, Herod Agrippa was visiting Rome at the time Caligula was assassinated. Herod's loyalty to Rome had won him many friends there, and had brought him to the attention of Claudius Caesar. To reward him for his loyalty, Claudius gave Herod the territories of Judea, Idumea, and Samaria, making the kingdom of Herod Agrippa nearly as large as the kingdom of his grandfather, Herod the Great.

Like his grandfather, Herod Agrippa was Idumean (Edomite) – a descendent of those who had been the enemies of the Israelites in the days of Joshua and the judges. However, also like his grandfather, Herod Agrippa had adopted the religion of the Jews, more for political purposes than out of a devotion to the God of Israel. History had shown that the Jews of Palestine resented being under the rule of someone who had no knowledge of, or respect for, their religious beliefs. Therefore, to keep the peace, Rome found it expedient to appoint rulers who were both loyal to Rome and who would be least objectionable to Jewish religious and political leaders. Rome found these leaders in Herod the Great and his family.

Herod the Great had not only sought to appease the Jews by adopting their religion, but also through building projects that included significantly enlarging and adorning the Temple in Jerusalem. However, it was an uneasy, fragile peace that was constantly being threatened by Jewish zealots who wanted a Jewish king like Saul, David and Solomon. Uprisings were common. Therefore, Herod and his sons after him, had to walk a delicate balance between aggressively quelling these uprisings, while not going so far as to incur the displeasure of Rome.

The rapid spread of Christianity throughout Judea and Samaria had become a real threat to Judaism, especially since Gentiles had also become disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. This created a unique opportunity for Herod Agrippa. Herod realized he could win the favor of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem by arresting and putting to death the leaders of the church. This act would also appease Jewish zealots and nationalists who were likewise troubled by the rapid growth of Christianity. By eliminating the leaders of the church, Herod could create for himself a real win-win situation. He would appease the Jews, maintain peace in Palestine, and ensure his kingdom by demonstrating his effective leadership to Rome.

However, the Lord had other plans for Herod. Gamaliel had once given his fellow rulers in the Sanhedrin sound advice concerning doing no harm to the apostles of Jesus. After detailing a long history of men who had claimed to be the Messiah, Gamaliel concluded:

*"And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it — lest you even be found to fight against God." (Acts 5:38-39)*

Gamaliel advised his fellow leaders to consider the consequences if this were indeed the work of God. If Jesus were somehow the Messiah, then to fight against His apostles would mean fighting against God. That would not only be futile, but it would bring down the wrath of Jehovah God Himself. While the members of the Sanhedrin were not convinced this movement was of God, they at least had the wisdom to refrain from putting the apostles to death.

Herod Agrippa didn't have a Gamaliel to advise him, and it is most likely that such advice would have done little good. Herod had the power of Rome behind him. What could the men who followed the crucified Jesus do to him? Unfortunately for Herod, he failed to realize Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. Herod became a friend of the Jews by executing the leaders of the Lord's church, but he also set himself up as an enemy of God – and for that, he would pay with his own life.

### **Memorization:**

*But the word of God grew and multiplied. (Acts 12:19)*

### **Key Events of Acts 12:**

- Herod kills James, the brother of John
- Peter is arrested and freed from prison
- Herod is stuck dead by God

### **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

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## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Renewed persecution against the church (Acts 12:1-19)**

#### **A. Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1-4)**

1. When did Herod Agrippa reign – during what Roman Emperor?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did Herod do to the church?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What was the first thing Herod did that pleased the Jews? Why do you think he might have wanted to win their favor?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What was the next thing Herod did to please the Jews?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What time of year in the Jewish calendar was Peter arrested?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How many soldiers would be in "four squads?"

7. Why do you think Herod wanted to wait until after Passover to deliver Peter to the people?

**B. Peter freed from prison (Acts 12:5-19)**

1. What was the church doing while Peter was in prison?
2. To what extent did the prison guards go to ensure Peter would not escape?
3. Who appeared to Peter and what did he tell him to do?
4. What was Peter's reaction to all this?
5. In your opinion, how was Peter able to get past all the guards without being seen? Was there a miracle here?
6. After the angel brought Peter out of the prison and departed, what was Peter's reaction?

7. Where did Peter go, and who was there?
  
8. What did Peter do when he arrived, and who did he meet first?
  
9. What did she do? What was the reaction of those in the house?
  
10. What was Peter doing all this time?
  
11. What was their reaction when they saw Peter? Why would they have reacted this way?
  
12. What did Peter tell them to do?
  
13. What happened the next day? What was Herod's response?

14. Where did Herod go next?

## **II. The word of God grew and multiplied (Acts 12:20-25)**

### **A. Herod's violent death (Acts 12:20-24)**

1. Where are Tyre and Sidon, and why would Herod have been angry with the people there?
2. What did they do to restore peace between themselves and Herod? Why was this so important?
3. When Herod gave his oration, how did the people respond?
4. What happened to Herod, and why?
5. What was the result of Herod's death?

**B. Barnabas, Saul and John Mark (Acts 12:25)**

1. Why had Barnabas and Saul gone to Jerusalem?
2. Where did they go when they left Jerusalem, and who did they take with them?
3. Who was John Mark and who was he related to? (Consult a Bible dictionary or commentary).

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can be learned from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.

# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 13

#### Acts 13:1 – 14:28

#### Introduction:

In the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Acts we read of the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas. This journey will cover a period of approximately two to three years. After departing from Antioch of Syria, Paul and Barnabas travel to Cyprus where they preach the gospel of Christ in Salamis and Paphos. From there, they sail to the mainland of Asia Minor where they travel through Perga to preach the gospel in the cities of Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.

During this missionary journey several notable events occur:

- Salamis
  - Preached to the Jews in Synagogue
- Paphos
  - Sergius Paulus desired to hear the word of God
  - Elymas tries to turn him away from the faith
  - Saul is referred to as Paul for the first time
  - Now it is "Paul and Barnabas" not "Barnabas and Saul"
- Perga
  - John Mark (writer of Mark) turned back and returned to Jerusalem
- Antioch Pisidia
  - Paul preached at least two Sabbaths
  - Paul's 1st recorded sermon
  - Sermons of Peter and Stephen had the same theme
- Iconium
  - Departed from Antioch because of severe persecution
  - Paul preached in the synagogue
  - Jews and Gentiles converted
  - Unbelievers tried to stone Paul and Barnabas
- Lystra
  - Lame man healed
  - People of city thought Paul and Barnabas were gods
  - Jews from Antioch and Iconium came and stirred up trouble – Paul was stoned, left for dead



- Derbe
  - Many disciples added
  - Farthest point of travel on first missionary journey

In all, Paul and Barnabas traveled approximately 1,200 miles (480 miles by sea) and established at least seven congregations in the process. However, it was a missionary journey during which Paul would pay a heavy price for his faithfulness. In his final letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul sought to encourage the young evangelist by recalling some of the events that took place during this first missionary journey.

*But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra — what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:10-12)*

This would not be the last time Paul would suffer persecution for his work as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He will suffer from an undisclosed illness, be beaten and put in prison, threatened with the loss of his life, and be repeatedly accused by his enemies everywhere he went.

### **Memorization:**

*"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22)*

### **Key Events of Acts 13-14:**

- First missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas
- Paul is stoned and left for dead in Lystra

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## **The Exposition:**

### **I. First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1 – 14:28)**

#### **A. Barnabas and Saul Called (Acts 13:1-3)**

1. Where were Barnabas and Saul when called by the Holy Spirit?
2. What do you think the purpose for fasting and praying on this occasion would be?
3. What would be the purpose for laying hands on Barnabas and Saul? Consider a similar event in 1 Timothy 4:14.

#### **B. Preaching in Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12)**

1. Where was the first place Barnabas and Saul preached?
2. Why would they choose to preach in the synagogues there? Explain.
3. Who was with Barnabas and Saul?

4. Where did Barnabas and Saul go next and what happened there?

**C. Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:13-50)**

1. List the cities Paul and Barnabas traveled through up to this point on their way to Antioch Pisidia.
2. Who deserted Paul and Barnabas at Perga in Pamphylia and where did he go?
3. Where did Paul and Barnabas go when they arrived in Antioch in Pisidia and what did they do?
4. According to Paul, who was the "seed" of David whom God raised up?
5. Who preached the baptism of repentance before Jesus?

6. According to Paul, how did the rulers in Jerusalem fulfill the voices of the prophets?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What proofs does Paul offer to show Jesus was resurrected from the dead?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Paul showed that the two psalms of David concerning the resurrection could not have been speaking of David. Where was the first time this same argument was made?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What would the preaching of Christ do for those who had been under the Law of Moses?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. After the Jews left the synagogue, who approached Paul and Barnabas and what did they want?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. Why would Paul and Barnabas choose to preach again on the following Sabbath? Were they keeping the Sabbath as a day of worship?

12. What was the reaction of the Jews?

13. What did Paul say in response?

14. What was the reaction of the Gentiles?

15. As the word of God spread throughout the region what did the Jews do?

**D. Iconium (Acts 13:51 – 14:7)**

1. Where did Paul and Barnabas go upon arrival in Iconium, what did they do there and what was the result?

2. What did the unbelieving Jews do?

3. What did Paul and Barnabas do, and what was the response of the people of Iconium?

4. What prompted Paul and Barnabas to flee from Iconium?

5. Where did Paul and Barnabas go next?

**E. Lystra (Acts 14:8-20)**

1. What was the first thing Paul did upon arriving in Lystra?

2. What was the reaction of the people, and who did they believe Paul and Barnabas were?

3. What was the reaction of Paul and Barnabas?

4. What did Paul want the people to turn from, and what did he urge them to turn to?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What happened to Paul in Iconium and who was responsible?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Where did Paul and Barnabas go next?

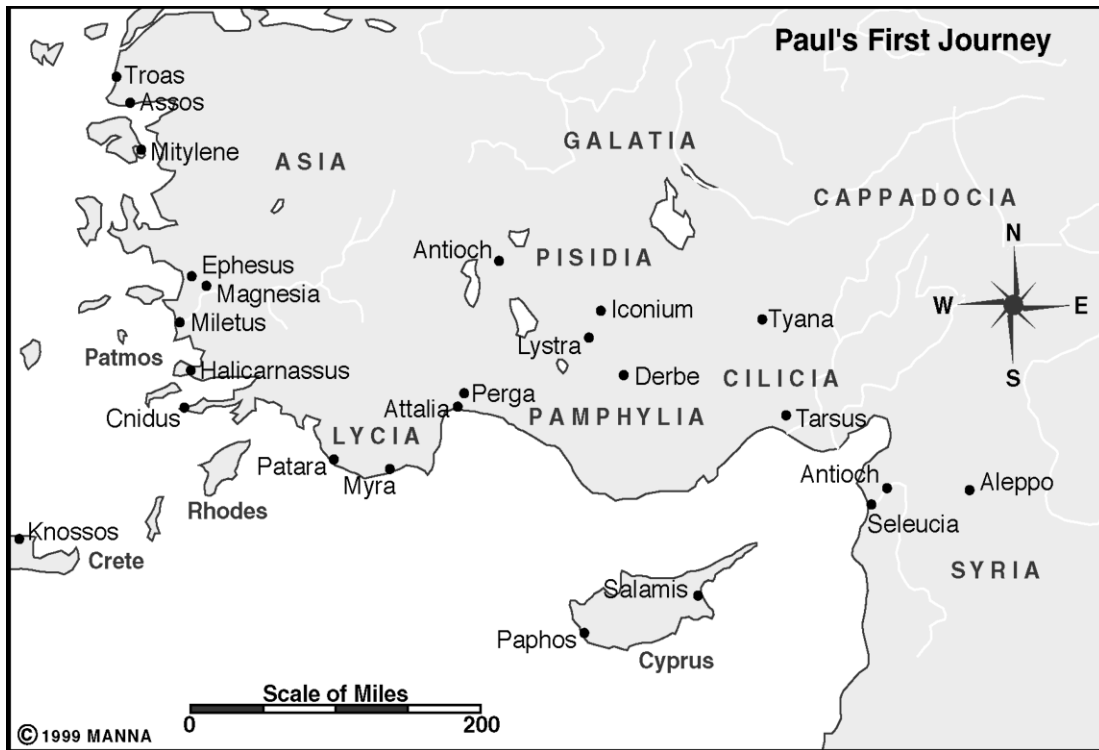
**F. Derbe (Acts 14:21)**

1. What was the result of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas in Derbe?

**G. Return Trip (Acts 14:21-28)**

1. What cities did Paul and Barnabas go through on their return trip and what did they do in each city?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did Paul and Barnabas do upon their arrival in Antioch of Syria?

3. Trace the journey of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey.



**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can be learned from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.



# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 14

#### Acts 15:1–29

#### Introduction:

The practice of circumcision was instituted as a means of ratifying the covenant between God and Abraham. God had promised to bless Abraham by making him the father of a great nation of people, and by eventually giving his descendants the land wherein Abraham dwelled.

*"I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant." (Genesis 17:6-14).*

Essentially, the covenant required every male child to be circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, including male slaves of Hebrews and their male offspring. One purpose for this procedure was to make Israelites distinctly different from the heathen nations around them. Therefore, failure to comply with this command would result in excommunication or death, perhaps even both.

However, during the time when the Israelites were enslaved in the land of Egypt, circumcision had either been forbidden by the Egyptians or had fallen out of practice among the Israelites. Therefore, in keeping with the covenant God made with Abraham, Moses insisted that his son be circumcised to appease the anger of God (Exodus 4:24-26). The Law of Moses also specifically forbade any male from participating in the celebration of Passover unless he had been circumcised (Exodus 12:48). These are

among the reasons why God commanded Joshua to have all Israelite men who had come out of Egypt be circumcised (Joshua 5:2-9) to roll away the *"reproach of Egypt."*

In the New Testament circumcision was faithfully practiced by devout Jews as recognition of God's continuing covenant with Israel. Both John the Baptist (Luke 1:59) and Jesus (Luke 2:21) were circumcised. However, controversy over circumcision soon divided the early church which now included believers from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. A crisis erupted in the church at Antioch when believers from Judea taught the brethren, *"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved"* (Acts 15:1-2). In effect, the men insisted that a believer from a non-Jewish background (Gentile) must first become a Jew ceremonially (by being circumcised) before he could be admitted into the fellowship of Jewish believers.

To address the matter, the apostles and elders convened in Jerusalem to resolve the issue (Acts 15:6-29). Among those attending were Paul, Barnabas, Simon Peter, and James. Peter argued that to insist on circumcision for the Gentiles would amount to a burdensome yoke for Gentiles to keep the entire Law of Moses (Acts 15:10). Therefore, it was the decision of those presiding over this matter to not bind Gentile converts to the practice of circumcision, thus effectively enabling the church to break with Judaism and Jewish practices and commandments contained in the Law of Moses.

### **Memorization:**

*But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."* (Acts 15:5)

### **Key Events of Acts 15:**

- Conflict arose over the need for Gentile converts to be circumcised
- The apostles and elders in Jerusalem come together to consider the matter of circumcision for Gentile

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## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Controversy Over Circumcision (Acts 15:1-5)**

#### **A. Paul and Barnabas dispute with Judaizing teachers (Acts 15:1-2)**

1. Where were Paul and Barnabas at this time?
2. What were those who had come from Judea teaching, and why would they teach this?
3. What was the reaction of Paul and Barnabas?
4. Why do you think Paul and Barnabas decided to take this matter to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem?

#### **B. Journey to Jerusalem (Acts 15:3-5)**

1. What territories did Paul and Barnabas pass through on their way to Jerusalem and what did they do?
2. What was the reaction of the brethren?

3. What did Paul and Barnabas do when they arrived in Jerusalem?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What did the Pharisee believers say about circumcision, and why would they be so insistent on requiring Gentiles to keep the Law of Moses?

## **II. Apostles and Jerusalem elders consider the matter of circumcision of Gentiles (Acts 15:6-29)**

### **A. The discussion (Acts 15:6-21)**

1. Why would the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem be the ones to consider this matter? (Read Matthew 18:18-20; Galatians 2:7-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Who was Peter speaking about in verses 7-9? Cite the specific verses in Acts.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What proof did Peter offer to show that God accepted Gentiles without requiring them to be circumcised?



9. What prophecy does James quote, and how does it support the claim that God accepts Gentiles?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. How does James use this prophecy to show the timeframe when the Gentiles will be called by the Lord's name?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What does James propose, and why would he admonish Gentiles to abstain from these things? (Consider 1 Corinthians 8:10-13)

**A. The decision (Acts 15:22-29)**

1. What did the apostles and elders do, with the approval of the whole church?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Who accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Antioch?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Who was the letter from and to whom was it addressed?

4. What command had the apostles and elders in Jerusalem *not* given?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How are Paul and Barnabas described? What specific events would James be speaking about? Cite the verses.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Why did the apostles and elders in Jerusalem want to send certain men to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, Syria and Cilicia?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What is implied by the statement, "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Again, what were Gentile brethren told to abstain from, and what would be the result?

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.



# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 15

#### Acts 15:30 – 17:14

#### Introduction:

The second missionary journey of the apostle Paul begins with the events following the meeting in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-29), and ends with his return to Antioch in Syria (Acts 18:22). In the next two lessons (Paul's Second Missionary Journey Part 1 and Part 2) we will be taking a close look at Paul's work as an apostle of Jesus Christ as he takes the gospel throughout Asia Minor and finally into Europe (beginning with Thessalonica and ending with Corinth). This journey will take approximately three years (ca. AD 50-53) and cover a distance of about 2,700 miles (1,290 by sea, 1,410 by land). During this time Paul, working with Silas, established a number of congregations of the Lord's church throughout Asia and Europe, and wrote two letters to the church at Thessalonica while in Corinth (AD 52-53).

Paul's Second Missionary Journey – Part 1 includes the following significant events:

- Antioch
  - Paul and Barnabas separate over the issue of John Mark
  - Paul and Silas leave for Tarsus
  - Barnabas and Mark go to Cyprus
- Derbe and Lystra
  - Timothy joins Paul and Silas
- Phrygia and Galatia
  - Decree from Jerusalem delivered
  - Paul stricken with sickness
  - Forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go into the Roman Province of Asia
- Troas
  - Paul received the "Macedonian call"
  - Luke joins Paul and Silas
- Philippi
  - Conversion of Lydia
  - Paul and Silas imprisoned
  - Conversion of the Philippian jailer and his household
- Thessalonica
  - Reasoned in the Jewish synagogue
  - Paul accused of treason (his life is in danger)
  - Brethren send Paul and Silas away

- Berea
  - Jews from Thessalonica come to Berea and stir up trouble
  - Brethren send Paul away by sea

## **Memorization:**

*These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11)*

## **Key Events of Acts 15-17:**

- Paul and Barnabas separate over John Mark (Paul takes Silas, Barnabas takes Mark)
- Paul receives the "Macedonian call"
- Churches established in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth

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## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:30 – 41)**

#### **A. Antioch (Acts 15:30-35)**

1. What was the reaction of the Antioch church over the letter from the apostles in Jerusalem?
2. How are Judas and Silas described, and what did they do?

3. What are some of the things prophets did in the early days of the Lord's church? (See: Acts 11:27-29; 13:1-3; 15:32; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; 14:1-5, 22, 24-25, 29-33; Ephesians 4:11-16)

4. What did Paul and Barnabas and others do while they remained in Antioch?

**B. Division over John Mark (Acts 15:35-41)**

1. What did Paul propose to Barnabas?
2. Whom did Barnabas want to take with them?
3. What was Paul's reaction, and why did he react this way?
4. Do you think Paul's objections were justified? Explain why or why not.

5. What was the outcome of the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas?

## **II. Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 16:1-10)**

### **A. Timothy joins Paul and Silas (Acts 16:1-3)**

1. How does Luke describe Timothy?
2. Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised?
3. In light of the letter from the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, how do you think Paul justified requiring Timothy to be circumcised?

### **B. Derbe, Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:4-5)**

1. What did Paul, Silas and Timothy do through the cities in that region?
2. What was the effect of that they did?

## **III. Asia (Acts 16:6-10)**

### **A. Forbidden to preach (Acts 16:6-8)**

1. When Paul and those with him arrived in the province of Asia what did the Holy Spirit do?

**B. Macedonian call (Acts 16:9-10)**

1. Where was Paul when he had a vision?
2. What was the vision Paul had?
3. What did Paul do?

**IV. Philippi (Acts 16:11-40)**

**A. Conversion of Lydia and her household (Acts 16:11-15)**

1. What cities did Paul pass through on his way to Philippi?
2. What did Paul and those with him do on the Sabbath? Why do you think they would they chose to do this on the Sabbath?
3. Who did they meet at the riverside, what was her occupation, and where was she from?
4. How did she and her household respond to Paul's preaching?

**B. Paul and Silas arrested and imprisoned (Acts 16:16-24)**

1. What happened when Paul and the others went to prayer?
2. What is the "spirit of divination"? (Consult a Bible commentary or dictionary)
3. What was this slave girl saying about Paul and the others, and why would this disturb Paul?
4. What did Paul do, and what was the reaction of the slave girl's masters?
5. What were the charges brought against Paul and Silas, and what was the reaction of the magistrates?
6. How were Paul and Silas punished?

### **C. Conversion of the Philippian jailer and his household (Acts 16:25-34)**

1. What were Paul and Silas doing at midnight? What does this say about their conviction?
2. What happened when the earthquake struck?
3. What was the keeper of the prison about to do when he thought the prisoners had escaped?
4. What was the question the jailer asked Paul and Silas, and why do you think he would ask this?
5. What answer did Paul and Silas give the jailer?
6. Does the reply to the jailer teach salvation by faith alone – meaning baptism is not essential to salvation? Explain your answer.

7. What did Paul and Silas do to "him and to all who were in his house"?
  
8. What does the jailer and his family do immediately upon hearing the word of the Lord? What time of day would this have been?
  
9. Some who believe in sprinkling and pouring as acceptable forms of baptism argue that the jailer was baptized in this manner. Where do you think the jailer and his family were baptized, and why? Explain your answer.
  
10. What was the reaction of the jailer and his family after "having believed in God"?

**D. Paul and Silas refuse to depart secretly (Acts 16:35-40)**

1. What did the magistrates want to do the following morning, and what was Paul and Silas' reaction?
  
2. What was the reaction of the magistrates, and why did they react this way?



3. Where did Paul and Silas go after being released and what did they do?

## **V. Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9)**

### **A. Paul reasons from the scriptures in the synagogue (Acts 17:1-4)**

1. What cities did Paul and those with him go through on their way to Thessalonica?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did Paul do for the next three Sabbaths and why was it "his custom"? Does this mean Paul kept the Sabbath?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What was the initial reaction of Paul's preaching that Jesus is the Christ?

### **B. Mob reaction to Paul's preaching (Acts 17:5-9)**

1. What was the reaction of the Jews who were not persuaded by Paul's preaching, and what did they do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What specific charges did these Jews bring against Paul and Silas?

3. How did the rulers of the city resolve the conflict?

## **VI. Berea (Acts 17:10-15)**

### **A. Reception of the gospel by the Bereans (Acts 17:10-12)**

1. Under what conditions did Paul and Silas leave Thessalonica and where did they go?
  
2. What did Paul and Silas do upon arriving in Berea?
  
3. How does Luke describe the Bereans reception to the things Paul preached?
  
4. What "Scriptures" would they have been searching to verify if the things Paul preached were true? How would the "Scriptures" have proven Paul was preaching the truth?
  
5. What was the initial reaction of Paul's preaching?

## B. Trouble in Berea (Acts 17:13-15)

1. Who came to Berea from Thessalonica and what did they do?
2. What did the brethren do with Paul and where did they send him?
3. Who stayed behind?
4. Upon Paul's arrival in Athens, what did Paul request of those who accompanied him?

## VII. Paul's Second Missionary Journey – Part 1

1. Identify the cities during the first part of Paul's journey (Antioch to Athens).



**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.

# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 16

#### Acts 17:15 – 18:22

#### Introduction:

The second half of Paul's second missionary journey begins with the apostle traveling to Athens, Corinth and Ephesus, and ends with his return to Antioch in Syria where he remains briefly before leaving for Galatia and Phrygia to strengthen the disciples. During this part of his second missionary journey Paul will meet Aquila and Priscilla who will play a major role in helping to ground the church in Corinth, and whom Paul will take with him to Ephesus and leave there to help that newly established church.

Paul's Second Missionary Journey – Part 2 includes the following significant events:

- Athens
  - Paul taught to all who would listen in synagogues, in market places, and Mars Hill
- Corinth
  - Stayed with Aquila and Priscilla (worked as a tentmaker)
  - Paul preached in the synagogue every Sabbath
  - Timothy and Silas join Paul bringing good news from Macedonia
  - Justus converted
  - Crispus and his household converted
  - 1 & 2 Thessalonians written to church in Thessalonica
  - Paul remained in Corinth 1 ½ years
  - Jews accuse Paul of persuading men "to worship God contrary to the law"
- Ephesus
  - Paul preached briefly in the synagogue
  - Left Priscilla and Aquila at Ephesus
- Sailed to Caesarea (possibly went to Jerusalem to celebrate "feast")
- Antioch in Syria
  - Remained in Antioch for a time before leaving for Galatia and Phrygia to strengthen the disciples

## **Memorization:**

*Acts 18:9-10 – Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."*

## **Key Events of Acts 17-18:**

- Paul's sermon on Mars Hill
- The establishment of the church at Corinth and Ephesus

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## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Athens (Acts 17:16-32)**

#### **A. A city given to idolatry (Acts 17:16-21)**

1. Who was Paul expecting to join him in Athens?
2. What was Paul's reaction to the idolatry of the Athenians?
3. What was the first thing Paul did upon his arrival in Athens?
4. Where else did Paul reason with people?
5. From a Bible dictionary or other source briefly explain the philosophies of the Epicureans and the Stoics.

6. Why did the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers consider Paul a "babbling" while others considered him to be "a proclaimer of foreign gods"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. From a Bible dictionary or other source where is the Areopagus, what is the meaning of the name, and what generally happened there? (The Romans called this place Mars Hill)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What was Paul asked to do there, and why?

**B. Paul's sermon on Mars Hill (Acts 17:22-31)**

1. Why do you think Paul began his sermon with a compliment?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Rather than begin by condemning their idolatry, what did Paul say to pique their interest?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How does Paul establish the supremacy of the one true God over the false gods of the Greeks?

4. Where does the God of heaven *not* dwell?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Why is the one true God *not* worshipped with things created by the hands of men?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What subtle message to these Greeks was Paul trying to get across in verse 26?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. The gods of the Greeks were considered to be detached from the concerns of humankind and unapproachable. What does Paul say in verses 27-28 about the nature of the one true God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Why would "something shaped by art and man's devising" not be able to capture the true "Divine Nature" of God – even though it was formed by gold, silver or stone?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What is the meaning of the phrase "these times of ignorance God overlooked"? What did God overlook and why?



10. What does God now require of all men, and why?

11. What assurance did Paul give of a time when the world will be judged?

12. Who was Paul speaking about?

**C. The reaction to Paul's preaching (Acts 17:32-34)**

1. Why would some mock Paul upon hearing about the resurrection of the dead?

2. What was the reaction of others to Paul's preaching?

3. From a Bible dictionary or other source explain the meaning of the word Areopagite.

**II. Corinth (Acts 18:1-17)**

**A. Preaching in Corinth (Acts 18:1-11)**

1. Who were the first people Paul met in Corinth and what did they share in common?

2. To whom did Paul do most of his preaching during the early days in Corinth?
  
3. Who joined Paul in the work at Corinth?
  
4. When the Jews opposed Paul for preaching that "Jesus is the Christ" what did he do, and how did this change his mission as an apostle?
  
5. What was the effect of the conversion of Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, and his household?
  
6. What did the Lord mean by the phrase "I have many people in this city", and what should this tell us about our own city?
  
7. How long did Paul work with the church in Corinth, and what did he do there?

8. Read the following passages and answer the questions below: 1 Corinthians 9:1-18; 2 Corinthians 11:5-10; Philippians 4:10-20.
- a. What arguments does Paul make to justify being financially supported to preach the gospel? (1 Corinthians 9:7-13)
  
  - b. What did Paul mean by the statement, "If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things." (1 Corinthians 9:11)
  
  - c. Why did Paul and those with him refuse financial support from the church at Corinth while working with the church there? (1 Corinthians 9:12, 15, 18; 2 Corinthians 11:7-9)
  
  - d. Explain the statement, "the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:14)
  
  - e. What was Paul's attitude toward preaching the gospel – whether or not he received financial support for doing so? (1 Corinthians 9:16-17)

- f. How does Paul describe the financial support he received from the church at Philippi? (Philippians 4:15-18)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- g. What was Paul's prayer concerning the gift he received from the Philippians? (Philippians 4:19)

### **B. Opposition in Corinth (Acts 18:12-17)**

1. What were the charges against Paul that the Jews brought before Gallio, proconsul of Achaia? Were these charges true? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What was Gallio's response?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Who was Sosthenes and what happened to him? Where else do we read about this man?

### **III. Paul's return trip (Acts 18:18-23)**

#### **A. Ephesus (Acts 18:18-21)**

1. Who did Paul take with him when he left Corinth?

2. Why did Paul cut off his hair while in Cenchrea?
  
3. It is believed that Paul was keeping a Nazarite vow. What was the Nazarite vow and what was the purpose for making this vow? (Consult a commentary, Bible dictionary or some other source)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Who did Paul leave in Ephesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Where did Paul go to reason with the Jews?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Paul did not stay long in Ephesus because he wanted to return to Jerusalem for a "feast" (probably Passover). If Paul was not keeping the Law of Moses why do you think he was eager to keep the Passover?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What promise did Paul make to the Ephesians?

**B. Caesarea, Antioch of Syria and the regions of Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:22-23)**

1. What did Paul do in Caesarea before returning to Antioch?
2. Why did Paul return to the regions of Galatia and Phrygia?

**VI. Paul's Second Missionary Journey – Part 2**

2. Identify the cities during the second part of Paul's journey (Athens to Antioch).



**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can be learned from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.

# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 17

#### Acts 18:23 – 19:41

#### Introduction:

Upon his return from his second missionary journey, the apostle Paul wasted no time in launching into his third trip. We are told:

*And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch. After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. (Acts 18:22-23)*

Several commentators have suggested that Paul's brief stay in Antioch of Syria was due to the fact that Paul had learned that false teachers had been sent to Corinth and to the churches in Galatia with letters of commendation (2 Cor 3:1), and preaching another gospel (Gal 1:6; 2 Cor 1:4). They were Judaizing teachers who were preaching the necessity of holding to certain aspects of the Law of Moses (such as circumcision and the keeping of certain holy days) to be acceptable to God. Despite the fact that this issue had been settled during the meeting of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (Acts 15), and that Paul and Silas had personally delivered letters confirming this decision to the churches in Derbe, Listra and Iconium, it is only reasonable to assume some of these Judaizing teachers were not ready to surrender to the apostles' decision.

Therefore, Paul's primary purpose during this third journey will be to strengthen the brethren in the churches he has already helped to establish. During this time Paul will also write letters to the church in Corinth (1 and 2 Corinthians), the churches in Galatia (Galatians), and the church in Rome (Romans). These three letters will carry a common theme of stressing faithful obedience to the gospel of Christ, and the need to recognize that Christians are no longer subject to the Law of Moses.

It seems that Paul sets out on this third journey alone, with the possibility that he was also accompanied by Timothy. The only evidence suggesting Timothy was with Paul is that the two are together again in Ephesus (Acts 19:22). What became of Silas? The truth is that we are uncertain where Silas may have been during the latter part of Paul's second missionary journey as well as during his third journey. The narrative in Acts implies that Paul may have left Athens and reached Corinth before Timothy and Silas were able to join him there. Their arrival in Corinth is implied by Paul's statement concerning "the brethren who came from Macedonia" (2 Cor 11:9). It is also implied by Acts 18:18 that Silas did not leave Corinth at the same time as Paul, but what became of Silas after that point is unclear. If Silas is Silvanus, which virtually every

commentator agrees, then he is mentioned along with Paul and Timothy as having preached Christ among the Corinthians (compare 2 Cor 1:19 with Acts 18:5). In 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians Silvanus was apparently known by the brethren in Thessalonica because all three send greetings to the church there (1 Thess 1:1, and 2 Thess 1:1; compare to Acts 17:1-9). In 1<sup>st</sup> Peter Silvanus is mentioned as a "faithful brother" who took Peter's letter to the churches of the Dispersion (1 Pet 1:1; 5:12). Other than those references we have no further indication of what became of Silas (Silvanus).

During Paul's third journey we read "he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples" (Acts 18:23). Luke also adds "Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus" (Acts 19:1). The ministry of Apollos in Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28) had taken place before Paul arrived, and while Aquila and Priscilla were still there. From there Apollos went Corinth to work with the church there (perhaps with the recommendation of Aquila and Priscilla). But after becoming innocently embroiled in the strife there (1 Cor 1-4), Apollos left Corinth and refused to return even after Paul's request (1 Cor 16:12).

There are several key events that take place in Ephesus during the first part of Paul's four year-long third missionary journey (AD 54-58):

- Paul finds disciples of John the Baptist who were ignorant of John's teaching about repentance, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and baptism (Acts 19:2-7).
- Paul's preaching Christ in the synagogue for three months resulted in having to move to the school of Tyrannus where he preached for 2 years (Acts 19:8-10)
- The impact of Paul's work in Ephesus was that "all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). This would result in the founding of the church at Colossae and the other churches of Asia mentioned in Revelation 1:11.
- Paul's miracles and preaching also led to the wholesale rejection of magical arts and burning of magic books (Acts 19:11-20)
- Paul's preaching of Jesus Christ led to a riot in Ephesus (the center of the worship of Diana) prompted by Demetrius and other craftsmen of the city who were losing money from their trade of manufacturing shrines and statues of the goddess (Acts 19:23-41).

### **Memorization:**

*Acts 19:4-5 – Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

### **Key Events of Acts 18-19:**

- Paul returns to strengthen churches previously established
- Apollos and his meeting with Aquila and Priscilla
- Paul finding those who knew only the baptism of John



- The effect of Paul's preaching spreads throughout all Asia
- The riot in Ephesus over Paul's preaching against idolatry

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### **The Exposition:**

#### **I. During Paul's journey to Ephesus (Acts 18:23-28)**

##### **A. Paul strengthens the brethren (Acts 18:23)**

1. What were the regions through which Paul traveled to strengthen the brethren?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What would most likely be the principle cities of these regions?

##### **B. Apollos (Acts 18:23-28)**

1. Who was Apollos and how does Luke describe him?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What was his understanding about baptism and what would that imply?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What did Aquila and Priscilla do?

4. Where did Apollos want to go to preach? What specific city would be implied?
  
5. Who wrote exhorting the disciples to receive Apollos? Why do you think this was necessary? Explain your answer.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What did Apollos do when he arrived, and how did he refute the Jews?

## **II. Paul's time in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41)**

### **A. Disciples who knew only the baptism of John (Acts 19:1-7)**

1. What was the question Paul posed to some of the disciples he found in Ephesus? What is implied by this question?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did they know about the Holy Spirit?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How did Paul explain the purpose of John's baptism?

4. When these disciples understood they needed to accept Jesus Christ what did they do? What does this suggest one should do when they realized they were baptized for the wrong reasons?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What did Paul do after he baptized them and what were they able to do as a result?

**B. Paul begins preaching (Acts 19:8-10)**

1. Where was the first place Paul went to preach and how long did he preach there?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. We're told Paul was "reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God." What is implied by the phrase "the kingdom of God"? (Compare Acts 19:8 with Acts 8:12) Explain your answer.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What was the reaction of some to Paul's preaching?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What words does Luke use to describe those who are believers in Jesus Christ?

5. Where did Paul go to preach after leaving the synagogue and how long was he there?
  
6. What was the impact of Paul's preaching in Asia?
  
7. From what you read in the introduction, what churches would have been established in Asia as a result of Paul's preaching in Ephesus?

**C. Paul performs many miracles (Acts 19:11-20)**

1. What were some of the "unusual" miracles that were done by the hands of Paul?
  
2. Who are "itinerant Jewish exorcists" and what did they do, including the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest?
  
3. What did the evil spirit say in response, and what happened then?
  
4. What was the impact of this incident on the Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus?

5. What did those who practiced magical arts do?
6. What impact did all this have on the spread of the gospel?

**C. The riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:21-41)**

1. Where was Paul planning to go before returning to Jerusalem, and where did he eventually want to go?
2. What was the "great commotion about the Way" that rose up at that time?
3. What was the reaction of the residents of Ephesus?
4. What did Paul want to do and why was he restrained?
5. Who did the Jews want to address the confused crowd and what was their reaction?

6. What did the city clerk say to the crowd about their belief concerning Diana?
  
7. What did he propose the craftsmen of the city do to resolve this situation and why did he offer this proposal?

### III. Paul's Third Missionary Journey – Part 1

1. Identify the cities during the first part of Paul's journey (Antioch to Ephesus).



**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how those lessons can be applied to present-day situations.

# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 18

#### Acts 20:1 – 21:16

#### Introduction:

During Paul's 3-year stay in Ephesus he did much to spread the gospel throughout that region of Asia. But despite his successes there, he remained deeply concerned for the welfare of the churches he had helped to establish in Macedonia and Achaia. Therefore, Paul sent Timothy to Macedonia to encourage the brethren there, and he wrote a letter to the church in Corinth, and another to the churches of Galatia. The letter to the Corinthians was not only a scathing rebuke of the division that threatened the future of the church there, but also addressed a series of questions the brethren had sent to Paul on a wide range of troubling issues. In addition to the letter, Paul also felt it was necessary to send Titus to Corinth on a two-fold mission: first, to begin collecting money for the needy saints in Jerusalem (1Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-6; 12:17-18), and second, to report on how his letter to the Corinthians had been received (2 Corinthians 7:5-15).

Eager to hear from Titus, Paul departs Ephesus and travels to Troas to preach the gospel there and to meet Titus. However, when Titus did not arrive at the expected time, Paul sailed to Macedonia where he found Titus and learned the encouraging news Titus brought concerning the affairs in Corinth (2 Corinthians 2:12-13; cf. 7:5-15). While in Macedonia Paul wrote a second letter to the church in Corinth praising them for the progress they've made, and to address other concerns. From Macedonia, Paul travels to Greece where he most likely spends most of the next 3 months in Corinth before leaving due to the Jewish plot against him (Acts 20:3). While in Corinth Paul writes his letter to the church in Rome (The epistle to the Romans, ca. 58 AD).

It seems those Jews who had plotted against Paul knew of his plans to sail to Syria. Apparently they had plans to capture him as he departed. Therefore, Paul abruptly changes his plans and travels back to Macedonia where he stays for a brief time. While in Philippi, Paul is joined by Luke who stays with him there, but sends other brethren ahead to meet him in Troas (Luke once again uses the words "us" and "we"). Luke will remain with the apostle Paul from this time until his final days in Rome (Acts 28:16; 2 Timothy 4:11).

After Passover (Acts 20:6), Paul sails to Troas where he remains with the brethren there for 7 days. After meeting with the saints in Troas on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7), Paul sails to Miletus where he calls for the elders of the church in Ephesus to come meet him (Miletus is approximately 28 miles south of Ephesus by land). It is here that Paul gives the Ephesian elders his final exhortation.



After sailing to Tyre, Paul found some brethren there who warned him "through the Spirit" not to return to Jerusalem. When Paul arrived in Caesarea he stayed briefly in the home of Philip the evangelist. The warning against returning to Jerusalem was given one more time by a certain prophet named Agabus who warned the apostle that he would be bound and delivered to the Gentiles. Despite the passionate pleas of the brethren to persuade Paul against returning to Jerusalem, the apostle replied "For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 20:13)

## **Memorization:**

*Acts 20:7 – Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.*

## **Key Events of Acts 20-21:**

- Paul returns briefly to Macedonia and Greece (Corinth)
- While in Corinth Paul writes Romans
- Paul's final exhortation to the Ephesian elders
- Meets with the brethren in Troas on the first day of the week to break bread
- Warned twice against returning to Jerusalem

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## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Paul's journey into Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 20:1-6)**

#### **A. Paul strengthens the brethren (Acts 20:1-2)**

1. What was the "uproar" mentioned in Acts 20:1?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Where did Paul go next, and what did he do there?

3. From what we learned in the *Introduction*, what was one of Paul's primary reasons for going to Macedonia?

## **B. Paul in Greece (Acts 20:2)**

1. How long did Paul spend in Greece (Corinth).
2. From what we learned in the Introduction, what letter did Paul write during this brief stay?
3. What caused Paul to leave so soon and to abruptly change his plans to sail to Syria?
4. Where did Paul go from Greece, and who were those whom he sent ahead to Troas?
5. What do we know about the following persons?
  - a. Sopater: (Romans 16:21)
  - b. Aristarchus: (Acts 19:29; 27:2; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24)

- c. Gaius: (1 Corinthians 1:14; Romans 16:23; 3 John 1)
  
- d. Tychicus: (Ephesians 6:21-22; Colossians 4:7; Titus 3:12; 2 Timothy 4:12)
  
- e. Trophimus: (Acts 21:29; 2 Timothy 4:20)

6. Paul and Luke sail to Troas following what holy days?

## **II. Paul's return trip from Troas to Jerusalem (Acts 20:7 – 21:16)**

### **A. Paul in Troas (Acts 20:7-12)**

1. On what day of the week did the disciples come together to "break bread"?
  
2. The terms "break bread," "breaking bread," "breaking of bread" or "broken bread" can either refer to a common meal or to the Lord's Supper. The only way to determine how these phrases are being used is to consider them in their context. From the following examples, how are these terms being used? Explain your answer.
  - a. "Breaking of bread" (Luke 24:35; Acts 2:42)
  
  - b. "Breaking bread" (Acts 2:46)

- c. "Break bread" (Acts 20:7)
  
  - d. "Broken bread" (Acts 20:11)
- 
- 3. Judging from the context of Acts 20:7-12 what time of day did these disciples assemble on the first day of the week to "break bread"?
  
  - 4. Why do you think these brethren met on the first day of the week at this time of day?
  
  - 5. Who is Eutychus and what happened to him?
  
  - 6. What did Paul do after restoring life to Eutychus?

**B. From Troas to Miletus (Acts 20:13-16)**

- 1. How did Paul make the 20 mile journey from Troas to Assos?

2. What did Paul do when he arrived in Assos?

3. Why did Paul decide to sail past Ephesus?

**C. Paul in Miletus (Acts 20:13-38)**

1. Who did Paul call for immediately after arriving at Miletus?

2. How does Paul describe his work among the Ephesians?

3. What was Paul expecting would happen to him upon returning to Jerusalem?

4. Why did Paul not fear for his life?

5. Why did Paul consider himself to "innocent of the blood of all men"?

6. If we fail to "declare... the whole counsel of God" to others what does that say about the blood of those whom we have failed to teach? (Compare: Ezekiel 33:7-9)
  
7. What limitation dose Acts 20:28 place on the jurisdiction of elders?
  
  
  
8. From where would false teachers arise, and what would their intentions be? Explain how this applies to us today.
  
  
  
  
  
9. How long had Paul worked with the church at Ephesus?
  
  
  
  
  
10. How did Paul provide for his needs while working with the church in Ephesus?
  
  
  
  
  
11. Why was Paul's departure from these elders so emotional?

**D. From Miletus to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-16)**

1. How long did Paul stay in Tyre and what warning did they give?
2. When arriving in Caesarea where did Paul stay?
3. What is said about Philip's daughters? How could they use this gift without violating what Paul taught in 2 Timothy 2:12? (See: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16)
4. Who is Agabus and what did he prophesy?
5. How did Paul comfort those who pleaded with him to not return to Jerusalem?
6. What was the attitude of those who pleaded with Paul when they saw he could not be persuaded?

7. Who journeyed with Paul to Jerusalem?

**III. Paul's Third Missionary Journey – Part 2**

1. Identify the cities during the last part of Paul's journey (Ephesus to Macedonia and Greece, and then to Jerusalem).



**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how these lessons can be applied to present-day situations.



# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 19

#### Acts 21:17 – 23:35

#### Introduction:

Upon Paul's arrival in Jerusalem he immediately reports the good news of "those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry." But Paul's success had not been just among the Gentiles. Untold numbers of devout Jews had become believers as well. Unfortunately, the false accusations that had plagued Paul during his three missionary journeys were still a source of contention and posed an imminent threat to the apostle. His enemies had completely distorted his teachings, especially those concerning circumcision. It was said of Paul that, "you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs" (Acts 21:21). While Paul had vigorously contended that circumcision should not be required of Gentile believers in Jesus Christ, he had never insisted that Jewish believers forsake the practice of circumcising their children in accordance with Jewish law, nor had he forbade them from practicing their customs. In fact, Paul had kept many of these customs himself.

Paul knew that during the conversion of Cornelius and his household, Peter and those with him had witnessed the Holy Spirit being poured out on uncircumcised Gentiles (Acts 10). Furthermore, the matter of circumcision had been brought before the apostles and elders in Jerusalem following Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 15). The conclusion of that gathering, which was expressed in a letter to be circulated among Gentile Christians, was unmistakably clear: ". . . we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying 'You must be circumcised and keep the law' – to whom we have no such commandment . . ." (Acts 15:24).

However, to appease Paul's critics, James and the elders who were with him urged the apostle to openly demonstrate his love for the law by publicly keeping the Nazarite vow along with four other Jewish believers. But despite Paul's efforts, certain Jews from Asia saw him in the Temple and quickly stirred up the crowd. He was falsely accused of defiling the Temple by bringing Gentiles into the holy place. Had he not been rescued by the commander of the Roman garrison and placed in protective custody, Paul would have most certainly met with an untimely death. After being granted permission to address the mob in his own defense, Paul told the dramatic story of his conversion. But the crowd once again became enraged, shouting "Away with him!" As the commander prepared to "examine" Paul by scourging, the apostle quickly revealed that he was a Roman citizen and entitled to all the legal protection afforded citizens.

The following day the Roman commander ordered the chief priests and the council (the Sanhedrin) to appear before him in hopes of learning why the Jews were so intent on harming Paul. However, as soon as Paul said, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged," the members of the council began arguing among themselves. The Pharisees in the council, who naturally believed in the resurrection of the dead, were immediately set at odds against the Sadducees who denied any claims of resurrection.

Paul's success at setting the members of the council against one another so enraged his enemies that a plot was immediately formed to kill him. Some even vowed "we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul" (Acts 23:14). When word of the plot reached the Roman commander, he ordered that Paul to be taken to Caesarea during the night under heavy armed guard. Paul would not only be protected there, but also be permitted to plead his case before the governor, Felix.

### **Memorization:**

*Acts 22:16 – "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."*

### **Key Events of Acts 21:17 - 23:35**

- Paul returns to Jerusalem
- Arrest at the Temple and Paul's defense before the mob
- Jews in Jerusalem plot to kill Paul
- Paul sent to Felix in Caesarea

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### **The Exposition:**

#### **I. Paul returns to Jerusalem (Acts 21:17 – 22:30)**

##### **A. Paul's reception by the church (Acts 21:17-26)**

1. With whom did Paul meet the day after returning to Jerusalem, and what was their reaction to his work?

2. What warning and advice was Paul given?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why would Paul be urged to show the Jews in Jerusalem that he walked "orderly" and kept "the law"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What did Paul do?

**B. Paul arrested in the Temple (Acts 21:27-36)**

1. Who were those that stirred up the crowd and brought false accusations against Paul?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did they accuse him of doing? What led them to make this accusation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How was Paul saved from death?

**C. Paul's defends himself before the mob in Jerusalem (Acts 21:37-22:21)**

1. Who did the commander think Paul was, and how does Paul identify himself?

2. Use a Bible dictionary or other resource to explain why the city of Tarsus in Cilicia was such a well-known and well-respected city among Romans.
  
3. What things did Paul say to the crowd that captured their attention, and why would these things be important?
  
4. What did Paul say about his opposition to "this Way", and why do you think that would impress the crowd?
  
5. How does Paul describe his encounter with Jesus Christ?
  
6. How does Paul describe Ananias?

7. What did Ananias command Paul to do upon receiving his sight, and why was it so important that Paul not wait?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What does this statement of Ananias say about the purpose and importance of baptism?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What warning had the Lord previously given Paul?

**D. The mob's response and Paul imprisoned (Acts 22:22-30)**

1. What did Paul say to the crowd that stirred up their wrath again?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What was the commander of the garrison going to do with Paul, and what stopped him?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How did the commander gain his citizenship compared to how Paul gained his?





**B. The letter (Acts 23:25-30)**

1. How did the commander, Claudius Lysias, explain the plot against Paul and his reason for sending the apostle to Felix?

**C. Paul delivered to Felix (Acts 23:31-35)**

1. What were the soldiers guarding Paul ordered to do after arriving in Antipatris, and who was left to guard Paul?
  
2. After Paul arrived in Caesarea, what did Felix do upon reading the letter from Claudius Lysias?

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can be learned from these events, and how these lessons can be applied to present-day situations.



# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 20

#### Acts 24:1 – 25:27

#### Introduction:

When the apostle Paul appears before the governor Felix he makes a passionate defense against the charges leveled against him. Those charges include being "a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5). In addition, Paul was charged once again with having defiled the temple. However, according to Paul, his accusers "neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city" (Acts 24:12). Paul did freely admit to being a follower of Jesus Christ who had been resurrected from the dead. Therefore, Felix decides to postpone any decision until Lysias the commander comes to testify. This allowed Paul a certain amount of freedom, and an opportunity to receive visitors and friends.

When Felix and his wife Drusilla (who was Jewish) asked to hear Paul speak again, "he reason about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come" (Acts 24:25a). Felix was terrified by the things Paul said, and asked that the apostle "Go away for now; when I have a more convenient time I will call for you" (Acts 24:25b). Felix had hoped Paul would offer a bribe for his freedom, but when that failed to materialize, Felix seemed to befriend Paul and talked with him often over the next two years.

Felix was eventually replaced as governor by Porcius Festus. Wanting to appease to the Jews, Festus refused to grant Paul's freedom. Meanwhile, the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem asked Festus to bring Paul back to Jerusalem to answer the charges against him in their courts. Their plan, however, was to ambush Paul before he arrived and kill him once and for all. Instead, Festus insisted that Paul's accusers to come to Caesarea to state their case. And when they arrived, the once again accused Paul of things they could not prove. Festus knew the Jews wanted to adjudicate this matter in Jerusalem, and so he asked Paul if he would have any issues with going there to answer for himself. However, Paul knew this would most likely result in his untimely death, and therefore appealed to have his case heard by Caesar himself in Rome.

Since Festus would need to have the charges against Paul well documented and clarified, he asks for King Agrippa and Bernice to hear Paul's defense of the chargers brought against him.

## Memorization:

Acts 24:25 – *Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."*

## Key Events of Acts 24:1 - 25:27

- Paul appears before Felix
- Felix delays judgment for two years
- Paul appeals to Caesar
- Paul appears before King Agrippa

## Link to Online Bible Study Tools:

These websites contain numerous Bible Versions and Translations, Concordances, Dictionaries, Lexicons and many other useful tools: <http://biblos.com/> and <http://www.biblestudytools.com/> (Click on "Our Library" at the top of the home page)

## The Exposition:

### I. Paul appears before Felix (Acts 24:1-27)

#### A. The charges brought against Paul (Acts 24:1-9)

1. Who did Ananias the high priest and the elders bring to represent their case before Felix? Why do you think they selected this man?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How did this orator begin his speech, and why do you think he said these things?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What are the specific charges they made against Paul"?

4. How does Tertullus describe the purpose of the Jews for ceasing Paul in the temple, and what interrupted those plans?

**B. Paul defense before Felix (Acts 24:10-21)**

1. How does Paul acknowledge the authority of Felix?
2. What does Paul say in his defense concerning the events that took place in the temple some twelve days earlier?
3. What does Paul admit to?
4. How does Paul use "the Law" and "the Prophets" to defend his actions?
5. What does Paul say concerning the resurrection?
6. How does Paul describe his purpose for coming to Jerusalem?

7. Where did Paul say his accusers should have gone to seek legal action against him? Why do you think he said this?
  
8. What does Paul say is the reason for him being judged before Felix?

**C. The reaction of Felix (Acts 24:22-27)**

1. What decision did Felix make concerning these matters?
  
2. In the meantime, how was Paul treated?
  
3. Why did Felix and Drusilla ask for Paul to speak to them?
  
4. What was it that frightened Felix? Why do you think this troubled Felix so?
  
5. What did Felix say in response to Paul's sermon?

6. What advice would you give to someone who gives the same response to the message of the gospel? Why?

7. What was Felix hoping to receive from Paul?

8. How does Luke describe the on-going relationship between Felix in Paul?

## **II. Paul appears before Festus (Acts 25:1-12)**

### **A. Festus in Jerusalem (Acts 25:1-5)**

1. Who informed Festus about Paul?

2. What did the Jews ask Festus to do, and what was their motive?

3. How did Festus respond? Why do you think Festus made this decision?

## **B. Paul appeals to Caesar (Acts 25:6-12)**

1. How long had Festus remained in Jerusalem, and what did he do immediately upon his return?
2. How does Luke describe the charges the Jews made against Paul on this occasion?
3. What did Paul say in his defense?
4. What did Festus ask of Paul? Why do you think Festus wanted to do this?
5. How did Paul respond, and why would he insist his case be tried before a Roman official?
6. What did Paul request to guarantee that his case would be tried under Roman law?

7. What was Festus' response?

### **III. Paul appears before Agrippa (Acts 25:13-27)**

#### **A. The purpose for this occasion (Acts 25:13-21)**

1. Who is King Agrippa? (Use a Bible dictionary or other online source to answer the question)

2. Who is Bernice? (Use a Bible dictionary or other online source to answer the question).

3. What are the principle points Festus brought out concerning Paul's case?

#### **B. King Agrippa's reply (Acts 25:22-27)**

1. What was Agrippa's response?

2. How does Luke describe the proceedings the next day?
  
3. How does Festus describe the charges against Paul?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Had Festus found anything in Paul that made him worthy of death?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How does Festus describe the purpose for this meeting before Agrippa?

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how these lessons can be applied to present-day situations.



# **Acts of the Apostles**

## **A Study of New Testament History**

### **Lesson 21**

#### **Acts 26:1-32**

#### **Paul's Defense Before King Agrippa**

##### **Introduction:**

In Palestine, a part of the Roman Empire known for frequent uprisings, there was virtually no tolerance among Roman officials toward those who were charged with disturbing the peace. Therefore, the charges brought against the apostle Paul were serious enough to demand immediate attention. His enemies had accused him of being "a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." It was said he, "even tried to profane the temple" (Acts 24:5-6). The only so-called crime to which Paul would freely admit was that he was a follower of Jesus Christ who had been resurrected from the dead and had ascended to the Father in heaven. Despite all the false allegations made against Paul, Roman officials found no evidence that would make him worthy of death.

During times when tensions rose in Palestine between Jews and Romans, peace was often maintained by each side doing what they could to appease the other. In most instances Jewish courts were allowed to hand down judgment in civil and criminal cases with little or no interference from Rome. However, Rome reserved the right to intervene in Jewish legal affairs when it came to capital cases (cases demanding the death sentence), or when serious criminal charges were brought against a citizen of Rome. If the accused was a Roman citizen who was also a Jew, he was given the option of having his case tried in either a Jewish or Roman court. However, Paul knew there was virtually no chance of receiving a fair trial before the Jewish Supreme Court – the Sanhedrin. This was the same body of men who had condemned Jesus to die; who had repeatedly threatened the apostles for preaching a resurrected Christ; who had murdered Stephen without a fair trial; and who had given Saul of Tarsus (Paul) permission to arrest disciples of Jesus in the synagogues of Damascus and bring them bound to Jerusalem to face certain death.

Following the disturbance in the temple, during which Paul was nearly killed by an angry mob, he was taken into protective custody by the Roman commander, Claudius Lysias. That, however, provided Paul with little comfort. He continued receiving death threats from his enemies who had vowed to neither eat nor drink until the apostle was dead. For his own safety, Paul was taken during the night under heavy armed guard to Roman provincial capital, Caesarea, where his case would be brought before the Roman governor, Felix. Despite Paul's innocence, and despite being terrified by Paul's message of "righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come," Felix chose to

leave the apostle under house arrest for the next two years as a favor to the Jews (Acts 24:25-27).

When Porcius Festus succeeded Felix as governor he also sought to appease the Jews by asking Paul if he would consent to having his trial transferred back to Jerusalem (Acts 25:9). It was becoming increasingly clear to Paul that he would have difficulty finding justice in even a Roman court in Palestine. Therefore, since Paul had a legal right as a Roman citizen to have his case heard by Caesar, and since he had been reassured by the Lord that he would bear witness of Jesus Christ at Rome as he had done in Jerusalem (Acts 23:11), Paul appealed to Caesar. He told Festus, "For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar" (Acts 25:1).

All that remained was for Festus to prepare a legal brief in which the charges against Paul would be detailed, and which would argue for either Paul's conviction or acquittal based on the evidence. However, to prepare this brief Festus needed to understand the allegations brought against Paul so that he could judge the merit of those allegations based on Roman law. To assist him in the matter Felix sought the council of King Agrippa, a descendant of Herod the Great and son of Herod Agrippa I. Although King Agrippa was not a Jew by birth, he had adopted the religion of the Jews as his forefathers had done, and faithfully governed large portions of Palestine by appointment of Caesar. Despite Agrippa's lavish and immoral lifestyle, and his incestuous relationship with his sister Bernice, he was well acquainted with the Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah. For the first time since Paul's arrest in Jerusalem two years earlier, it appeared he would finally be able to present his defense before a man who was as loyal to Rome as he was to the religion and beliefs of the Jews.

### **Memorization:**

Acts 26:28 – *Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."*

### **Key Events of Acts 26:1-32**

- Paul speaks of his early life as a Pharisee and his opposition to Jesus and His followers
- Paul recounts the story of his conversion
- Paul explains why he was falsely accused
- The exchange between Festus, Paul and Agrippa

## **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

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## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Paul's defense before King Agrippa (Acts 26:1-32)**

#### **A. Paul speaks of his early life as a Pharisee (Acts 26:1-10)**

1. Why was Paul "happy" to have his case heard by King Agrippa?
  
2. What does Paul say about his own reputation among the Jews, and of his beliefs as a Pharisee?
  
3. What is "the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers" and the "promise" Israel "hoped to attain"? (See: Acts 28:20) Support your answer with Scriptures from the Old Testament.
  
4. Why would it not be "incredible" to Agrippa "that God raises the dead"? Explain your answer.

5. List some of the Old Testament prophecies quoted in Acts that foretold the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Why did Paul feel he "must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. List some of the things Paul did "contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

**B. Paul explains his conversion (Acts 26:12-18)**

1. What do you think Paul hoped to accomplish by first explaining his zeal against "the saints"? Explain your answer.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does Paul mean by the phrase "while thus occupied" (Acts 26:12)?

3. How does Paul describe his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus?

4. In your own words explain what the Lord meant by the following statements:

a. "To make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you."

b. "I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you."

c. "To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God."

d. "That they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."

### **C. Paul speaks of his life as an apostle of Jesus Christ (Acts 26:19-23)**

1. How do verses 19-20 correspond with what Jesus told His apostles in Acts 1:8?
2. Paul said his mission was to declare to both Jews and Gentiles "that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance." Using Paul's words, where would baptism for the remission of sins fit into this mission?
3. What does the phrase "do works befitting repentance" suggest?
4. What are the "reasons" Paul mentions here for the Jews seizing him and trying to kill him?
5. List some of the ways Paul "obtained help from God" up to that moment?
6. Provide some passages from the Law of Moses and the Prophets that show "Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

**D. The final exchange between Festus, Paul and Agrippa (Acts 26:24-32)**

1. What would prompt Festus to think Paul was insane (beside himself)?
  
2. How did Paul respond to Festus, and how would this prove Paul was not insane?
  
3. Why would the things of which Paul spoke be "words of truth and reason"?
  
4. What was Paul convinced of regarding King Agrippa?
  
5. What was Agrippa's response?
  
6. Commentators have debated whether Agrippa was sincere in his reply to Paul, or was merely saying this in jest.
  - a. Which do you believe? Explain your answer.
  
  - b. What evidence might others offer who take the opposite view?

7. Regardless of Agrippa's sincerity, what was it that Paul hoped would come from his testimony that day.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What conclusion did Agrippa, the governor, and Bernice reach concerning the charges against Paul?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What did Agrippa say to Festus regarding Paul's appeal to Caesar?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Do you think Paul was too hasty, or perhaps showed a momentary lack of faith, in making his appeal to Caesar? Explain your answer.

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how these lessons can be applied to present-day situations.



# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 22

#### Acts 27:1-44

#### Introduction:

The story of Paul's voyage is unlike any other story in the Bible. This section of Luke's treatise does not deal with deep spiritual teachings or acts of devotion, but rather the everyday life one normally experienced at sea during that period of history. Luke gave us a detailed account of all the islands, towns and harbors along the journey. However, what makes this account of the journey of Paul so unique is that Luke gave us a description of first century ships and seamanship that surpasses any other voyage recorded in ancient Greek or Roman literature. In many ways it stands as a descriptive masterpiece of what it was like to navigate the treacherous Mediterranean Sea in wooden sailing ships. It reads more like a fascinating adventure than Scripture.

Throughout the book of Acts Luke has presented the apostles as mere men. He seemed to intentionally avoid describing these men as superheroes of the faith. Instead he describes them as men devoted to the single, holy purpose of preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, that does not lessen the fact that these were also men of great courage and unwavering faith – men who bravely faced hardships, the constant threat of persecution, and even death.

When reading the account of Paul's voyage to Rome, one thing becomes clear. Paul is a man among men. He began the voyage as a prisoner among other prisoners, but gradually assumed a position of respect and even command. His cool courage, common sense, and resourcefulness set him apart again and again under increasingly dangerous circumstances. Even though he acknowledged God as the source of every blessing, and despite completing the journey still a prisoner that does not diminish the fact that Paul was still a hero of the faith. He proved himself to be the best kind of man to have in an emergency.

The journey of Paul to Rome covered approximately 2,250 miles – all but the last 150 miles were spent at sea. The journey occurred around AD 60-61 and took the better part of 18 months to complete. Fortunately for Paul, he was not alone during this journey. Some commentators note that this section of Acts is the longest "we" section in the book, meaning Luke was Paul's companion throughout the entire journey. Although Luke and Paul were separated for a time following the apostle's arrest in Jerusalem at the conclusion of his third missionary journey, they were together again during the journey to Rome. Whether Luke made this journey at his own expense or, as some have suggested, at the expense of the Roman government, is not stated. Some suggest Luke was allowed to accompany Paul as an attendant or servant of the apostle,

which was apparently a common practice in that day. One commentator even suggests that Luke, as a physician, would have been a welcomed passenger on the voyage and may have even served as the ship's physician. However, all this is merely conjecture, albeit quite feasible.

Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, also journeyed with Paul to Rome. While imprisoned in Rome, the apostle Paul referred to Aristarchus as a "fellow prisoner" (Col 4:10). If the term "fellow prisoner" is taken literally, as many commentators seem to think, then Aristarchus had also been arrested at some point and had also been sent to Rome (perhaps having also appealed to Caesar). If, however, the term "fellow prisoner" is taken figuratively, then perhaps Aristarchus left Paul at some point during the journey only to rejoin Paul later in Rome. The reasoning behind this latter theory is that Aristarchus is only mentioned at the beginning of the voyage. However, the "we" Luke uses throughout this portion of Acts could have easily included Aristarchus as well.

### **Memorization:**

*Acts 27:22 – "And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship."*

### **Key Events of Acts 27:1-44**

- Paul sets sail accompanied by Luke and Aristarchus
- Paul's warnings ignored
- The storm at sea
- The shipwreck

### **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

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### **The Exposition:**

#### **I. Paul begins his journey to Rome (Acts 27:1-12)**

##### **A. Paul sets sail with Luke and Aristarchus (Acts 27:1-7)**

1. Who is the Roman centurion in charge of Paul and the other prisoners?

2. Where did Paul and the others board the first ship?
  
3. Using a Bible dictionary or other reference, give a brief biography of Aristarchus and list the passages where he is mentioned.
  
4. How did the Roman centurion treat Paul when they arrived the next day at Sidon.
  
5. What happened at their next port-of-call in Myra, a city of Lycia?
  
6. What slowed the journey during this part of the voyage?

**B. Paul's warnings ignored (Acts 27:9-12)**

1. Consulting a commentary, what "Fast" would Luke be referring to in verse 9, and why did that indicate the sailing season was now dangerous?

2. What prediction did Paul give concerning the voyage if they sailed at this time?

3. Why was his warning ignored?

## **II. The Storm at Sea (Acts 27:13-38)**

### **A. Smooth sailing at first (Acts 27:13-14)**

1. How did this part of the voyage begin?

2. What happened after sailing past Crete? Use a Bible dictionary or some other source to define "Euroclydon."

### **B. Sailing into the storm (Acts 27:15-38)**

1. What did they do during the first day of the storm?

2. What did they do on the second day?

3. What did they do on the third day?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What did Paul say to encourage the crew and passengers?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How did Paul say the voyage would end?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What happened on the "fourteenth night" of the storm?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What were the sailors trying to do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What did Paul say to the centurion and the soldiers, and what did they do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What did Paul do as the "day was about to dawn"?

10. What assurance did Paul give the crew and passengers, and what did he do to encourage them to eat?

11. How many were aboard the ship?

12. What did the crew do next?

### **III. The shipwreck (Acts 27:39-44)**

#### **A. Heading for shore (Acts 27:39-41)**

1. When they saw a bay with a beach what did the crew purpose to do?

2. What steps did they take to run the ship aground?

3. What happened to the ship after it ran aground some distance from shore?

**B. The centurion intervened to save the lives of Paul and the other prisoners (Acts 27:42-44)**

1. What did the soldiers plan to do with the prisoners, and why?
2. What did the centurion do?
3. How did everyone reach shore?
4. Use the map below to trace the journey to this point.



**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how these lessons can be applied to present-day situations.



# Acts of the Apostles

## A Study of New Testament History

### Lesson 23

#### Acts 28:1-31

#### Introduction:

The journey of the apostle Paul to Rome is certainly one of the most thrilling stories recorded in the Scriptures. Following the harrowing experience of a terrible storm on the Mediterranean Sea, and the final frightful moments leading up to the shipwreck on some unknown island, Paul and all those aboard made it safely to land. The weather had been especially harsh in those final days, not only from the storm but also from the bone-chilling rain. It was winter – not only a bad time of the year to travel on the sea, and also a terrible time of the year to be shipwrecked.

Although Paul and his companions did not immediately know where they were, they were immediately greeted by local inhabitants who may have witnessed the shipwreck. Luke tells us, "And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold" (Acts 28:2).

The site of the shipwreck was the island of Malta (called *Mileta* by the Romans), the largest of three islands in the Maltese group, just 58 nautical miles south of Sicily and 158 miles from the Italian mainland. No one knows the exact location of the shipwreck. However, since most of the island is surrounded by cliffs with few beaches, the traditional site of the wreck was said to be a large bay on the northeast part of the island, since named St. Paul's Bay.

Over the years historians began to question the accuracy of this location since it does not fit with Luke's description of the bay (Acts 27:39-44). The first clue comes from the fact that the sailors did not recognize the land prior to their attempt to beach the ship. During the Roman era Malta was well-known to all sea-going merchants. Because of its strategic location, the island had been the site of several maritime battles between Carthaginian and Roman fleets that fought for control of Malta. The island was also populated with large towns and villages, and had one of the best harbors in the region. For Paul's ship to arrive at a bay on the northeast portion of the island, they would have sailed past these familiar landmarks, and past a well-known harbor.

Recent historical and archeological research has discovered a more feasible location for the shipwreck on the southeast corner of the island known today as St. Thomas' Bay. Not only is there a large undersea sandbar near the entrance of the bay, which may have been the sandbar where Paul's ship ran aground, there have also been archeological discoveries that give further credibility to this location.



In the late 1960's Maltese fishermen diving in the area around St. Thomas' Bay unearthed four massive iron anchors dating back to the Roman era.

While there is no way to confirm that these are the same four anchors that

were cut loose from Paul's ship, the location where they were discovered fits well with Luke's account (Acts 27:40). Those anchors, along with other artifacts, are currently on display at the Malta Maritime Museum.



During the three months Paul spent on Malta he was provided with several opportunities to demonstrate the mercy and power of God. The first incident came when Paul was bitten by a deadly viper as he was laying wood on a fire. The local inhabitants of the island assumed he must have committed some terrible crime, such as murder, and was receiving just punishment for his crimes. But when Paul suffered no harm, they quickly came to think of him as a god. The second opportunity came when Paul healed the father of Publius, a leading citizen of Malta who had welcomed Paul and his companions to stay at his estate. News of this event quickly spread among the inhabitants of the island who also came to Paul to be healed of diseases.

After finally leaving Malta and arriving on Italian soil, Paul made his way to Rome. Along the way he found brethren from whom Luke says Paul "took courage." When he arrived in Rome he was placed under house arrest, and was allowed to live by himself with a soldier to guard him. Three days later Paul called for the leaders of the Jews in Rome and gave a passionate defense of the charges that had been made against him, and "solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets" (Acts 28:23).

For the next two years Paul lived "in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him" (Acts 28:30-31).

Although the record in Acts ends two years after Paul's arrival in Rome (AD 60-62), the Biblical record and tradition suggest Paul lived another four years. During this time it is said Paul was briefly released from prison and made additional travels before being imprisoned a second time and executed during the reign of Nero (AD 66). Critics of this view claim there is no record in Acts to support Paul's later release and additional travels. However, the record of Acts simply ends prior to the time Paul would have been released.

Among the letters Paul wrote during the six years from his first to second imprisonment (AD 60-66) are Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy and Titus. When Paul wrote Philippians and Philemon (AD 61-62), Timothy was with him in Rome. However, in the Philippian letter Paul wrote he was sending Timothy to encourage the

brethren in Philippi, with hopes of also joining them "as soon as I see how it goes with me" (Philippians 2:19-24). This seems to indicate Paul's appeal to Caesar was being heard, and the apostle was expecting a favorable outcome and to soon be released.

The letter of 1st Timothy (ca. AD 62) was apparently written while Paul was in Macedonia, after Timothy had returned to Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). Paul planned to join Timothy in Ephesus, and urged the young evangelist, "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13). During this time Paul also wrote the letter to Titus (AD 65), whom he had left in Crete to "set in order the things that were lacking" in the churches there (Titus 1:5). However, in that letter Paul urged Titus to join him as soon as possible in Nicopolis (in Macedonia), where the apostle had chosen to spend the winter (Titus 3:12).

However, when Paul wrote 2nd Timothy (AD 66), he had once again been imprisoned. This time Paul was not placed under house arrest, but suffered under far worse conditions – suffering "as an evildoer, even to the point of chains" (2 Timothy 2:9).

Tradition says Paul had been interred in the infamous Mamertine Prison in Rome – a dark, cold dungeon reserved for the worst criminals.



A dungeon cell in the Mamertine Prison, Rome

In his final letter, Paul urged Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, and to bring the cloak and some of the books he had left in Troas (2 Timothy 4:13). Feeling deserted and all alone, except for Luke, his constant companion, Paul urged Timothy to come without delay from Ephesus and bring with him Mark, whom Paul felt would be useful to him "for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:9-11). Eusebius of Caesarea, who wrote in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, stated that Paul was beheaded in Rome during the reign of the Emperor Nero (AD

66), approximately two years after Nero burned Rome (AD 64), blaming Christians for the terrible destruction.

## Memorization:

Acts 28:28 – "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

## Key Events of Acts 28:1-31

- Paul shipwrecked on Malta
- Paul is bitten by a viper with no harm, and heals those with diseases
- Placed under house arrest in Rome
- Delivers a passionate defense of his faith in Jesus Christ

## **Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

These websites contain numerous Bible Versions and Translations, Concordances, Dictionaries, Lexicons and many other useful tools: <http://biblos.com/> and <http://www.biblestudytools.com/> (Click on "Our Library" at the top of the home page)

## **The Exposition:**

### **I. Paul on Malta (Acts 28:1-10)**

#### **A. Paul survives the shipwreck (Acts 28:1-6)**

1. How did the inhabitants of Malta treat the survivors of the shipwreck?
2. What happened to Paul as he lay wood on the fire, and what did he do?
3. What was the initial reaction of the inhabitants of Malta, and why did they make this assumption about Paul?
4. What did the inhabitants conclude when Paul showed no symptoms?

#### **B. Paul heals the father of Publius and others on Malta (Acts 28:7-10)**

1. How does Luke describe Publius? What does the name Publius mean?

2. How were Paul and his companions treated by this man?
  
3. What member of his household was sick, what did Paul do, and what was the result?
  
4. In general, how were Paul and the others treated by the inhabitants of Malta from that time until their departure?

## **II. The final part of Paul's journey to Rome (Acts 28:11-16)**

### **A. Strengthened by brethren (Acts 28:11-15)**

1. How long had Paul been on Malta, and where did they find transportation to take them on their journey to Rome?
  
2. Use a Bible dictionary or commentary explain who the "Twin Brothers" were, and explain why these images would be on a ship's figurehead.
  
3. When Paul arrived at Puteoli, Luke says "we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days." What could be the significance of the brethren inviting Paul to remain with them seven days? (Compare to Acts 20:6-7)

4. As Paul and his companions traveled toward Rome who greeted them on the way, and how was Paul affected by this?

**B. Arrival in Rome (Acts 28:16)**

1. What was Paul allowed to do upon his arrival in Rome?

**III. Paul's ministry in Rome (Acts 28:17-31)**

**A. Paul calls for the leading Jews of the city (Acts 28:17-22)**

1. After Paul called together the leading Jews in Rome, what explanation did he give concerning his reason for coming to Rome?

2. What was the reply of the leading Jews to Paul's statement?

**B. Paul boldly testified of the kingdom of God, and concerning Jesus Christ (Acts 28:23-29)**

1. When Paul met with these men again, what was the main theme of his message, and what all would this imply?

2. How did Paul persuade them concerning Jesus?
  
3. What was the reaction to Paul's message?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What was the final message Paul gave to those who did not believe?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What other person quoted from this same prophecy of Isaiah, and what were the circumstances?

**C. Paul's next two years in Rome (Acts 28:30-31)**

1. Where did Paul stay during the next two years?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. To whom did Paul preach during this period of time and what was the theme of his message?

3. What opposition did Paul receive to his preaching?

**Application:**

Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how these lessons can be applied to present-day situations.



## Timeline of the Apostle Paul

### Disclaimer:

The dates below are not certain and are based on AD 30 as the date of the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 2) and the establishment of the church (Acts 2:47). Luke did not provide detailed information about when the events in Acts occurred. The approximate dates come from the events recorded by Luke and by comparing those events with secular history. Even though immense research has been done to arrive at these dates in the chronology of Paul's life, "scholars" do not entirely agree.

Year	The Apostle Paul's Life
AD 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Born an Israelite in Tarsus of Cilicia (Acts 22:3; Philippians 3:5)</li> <li>- A Roman citizen by birthright (Acts 22:28)</li> </ul>
c. 15-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At the school of Galaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3)</li> </ul>
c. 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Became a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5)</li> </ul>
32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Present at Stephen's stoning (Acts 7:58-8:1)</li> </ul>
33-34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Persecutor of the church (Acts 8:1-3; Philippians 3:6)</li> </ul>
34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19)</li> </ul>
34-37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Traveled to Arabia and remained there (Galatians 1:17)</li> </ul>
37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Returned to Damascus (Galatians 1:17; Acts 9:20-25; 2 Corinthians 11:32-33)</li> <li>- Went to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-29; Galatians 1:18)</li> <li>- Returned to Tarsus for safety (Acts 9:30)</li> </ul>
37-46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In Tarsus</li> </ul>
46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Barnabas traveled to Tarsus to seek Paul (Acts 11:25)</li> </ul>
47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Went to Antioch with Barnabas teaching many people (Acts 11:26) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agabus prophesied of a famine (Acts 11:27-28)</li> <li>- Aid sent to Jerusalem through Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:29-30)</li> <li>- Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch with John Mark (Acts 12:25)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Barnabas and Saul sent out – John Mark was with them (Acts 12:25 – 13:2-3)</li> </ul>
<b>First Missionary Journey</b>	
47-48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Traveled from Antioch to Seleucia, then to Cyprus (Acts 13:4)</li> <li>- While on Cyprus they went to Salamis and Paphos (Acts 13:5-12)</li> <li>- From Paphos they went to Perga of Pamphylia where John Mark departed for home (Acts 13:13)</li> <li>- Ministry in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14-50)</li> <li>- At Iconium (Acts 13:51 – 14:6)</li> <li>- Fled to Lystra and Derbe, preaching the gospel (Acts 14:6-7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In Lystra Paul and Barnabas are mistaken for gods (Acts 14:19-20)</li> <li>- Stoned at Lystra, supposed to be dead, but re-entered the city (Acts 14:19-20)</li> <li>- Departed with Barnabas to Derbe, preaching the gospel (Acts 14:20-21)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch to strengthen disciples and appoint elders (Acts 14:21-24)</li> <li>- From Pisidia they returned to Antioch of Syria and reported their journey to the church (Acts 14:24-28)</li> </ul>

<b>Interlude</b>	
49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Went to the Jerusalem council with Barnabas (Acts 15:1-29; Galatians 2:1)</li> <li>- Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch of Syria, teaching and preaching (Acts 15:30-35; Galatians 2:11-14)</li> <li>- Contention over John Mark cause Barnabas and Paul to separate, Barnabas and John Mark sailed to Cyprus (Acts 15:36-39)</li> </ul>
<b>Second Missionary Journey</b>	
49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul and Silas depart and went through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches (Acts 15:40-41)</li> <li>- Went to Derbe and Lystra and picked up Timothy, strengthening the churches (Acts 16:1-5)</li> <li>- Went to Troas where Paul saw a vision of a Macedonian man (Acts 16:16-25)</li> <li>- Sailed from Troas to Neapolis (Acts 16:11)</li> <li>- Went to Philippi where Paul meets Lydia (Acts 16:12-15)</li> <li>- Paul and Silas imprisoned after casting demon out of a slave girl (Acts 16:16-25)</li> <li>- Prison doors opened miraculously and jailer and his family were baptized (Acts 16:25-34)</li> <li>- Departed from Philippi (Acts 16:35-40)</li> <li>- They passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia (Acts 17:1)</li> <li>- At Thessalonica they preached Christ, but had to flee (Acts 17:1-10)</li> <li>- At Berea where Paul left Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:1-17)</li> <li>- At Corinth and rejoined with Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:1-17)</li> <li>- Spent 1 ½ years working with the church in Corinth</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">Wrote Galatians 1 &amp; 2 Thessalonians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Returned to Antioch after stopping at Ephesus, Caesarea and Jerusalem (Acts 18:18-22)</li> </ul>
<b>Third Missionary Journey</b>	
53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Traveled through Galatia and Phrygia strengthening the disciples (Acts 18:23)</li> <li>- Passed through the upper regions on his way to Ephesus (Acts 19:1)</li> </ul>
53-56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">Wrote 1 Corinthians</p>
56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Went to Macedonia (Acts 20:1)</li> <li>- Traveled to Greece (Acts 20:2)</li> <li>- Returned to Macedonia (Acts 20:3)</li> <li>- Went to Troas to break bread with disciples on first day of the week (Acts 20:4-12)</li> <li>- Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Togyllium (Acts 20:13-15)</li> <li>- Paul exhorted the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts 20:15-28)</li> <li>- Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Phoenicia (Acts 21:1-2)</li> <li>- At Tyre (Acts 21:3-6)</li> <li>- At Ptolemais (Acts 21:7)</li> <li>- At Caesarea (Acts 21:8-14)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">Wrote 2 Corinthians Romans</p>

<b>Arrest and Imprisonment</b>	
57	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At Jerusalem (Acts 21:15-25)</li> <li>- Paul was arrested in the temple and beaten by mob (Acts 21:26-36)</li> <li>- Addressed the mob (Acts 21:37-22:21)</li> <li>- Paul's citizenship saved him from scourging (Acts 22:22-29)</li> <li>- Before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30-23-10)</li> <li>- Jesus told Paul he will bear witness of Him in Rome (Acts 23:11)</li> <li>- The plot against Paul's life (Acts 23:12-22)</li> <li>- Sent safely to Felix the governor (Acts 23:23-35)</li> <li>- Paul before Felix (Acts 24:1-27)</li> </ul>
59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul before Festus (Acts 25:1-12)</li> <li>- Paul appeals to Caesar (Acts 25:11-12)</li> <li>- Paul before Agrippa (Acts 25:13-26:32)</li> </ul>
<b>Journey to Rome</b>	
59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul departed for Rome and sailed to Myra (Acts 27:1-5)</li> <li>- Sailed to Fair Havens on Crete (Acts 27:6-8)</li> <li>- Rather than winter at Fair Havens, sailed on despite Paul's warning (Acts 27:9-12)</li> <li>- During a terrible storm they took measures to save the ship but eventually shipwrecked on the island of Malta (Acts 27:13-28:1)</li> <li>- On Malta 3 months (Acts 28:2-10)</li> <li>- Sailed to Syracuse (Acts 28:11-12)</li> <li>- Sailed to Rhegium then Puteoli and met brethren on his way to Rome (Acts 28:13)</li> </ul>
<b>First Imprisonment at Rome</b>	
60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Arrived in Rome (Acts 28:14-16)</li> <li>- Met with leading Jews (Acts 28:17-29)</li> </ul>
61-61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preached the gospel without hindrance for 2 years in his own rented house (Acts 28:30-31)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">Wrote Philemon Colossians Ephesians Philippians 1 Timothy Titus</p>
<b>Interlude</b>	
63-65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Released from imprisonment</li> <li>- Further missionary work</li> </ul>
<b>Second Imprisonment at Rome</b>	
66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Imprisoned again (possibly Mamertine Prison in Rome)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">Wrote 2 Timothy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Martyred (history says Paul was beheaded by Nero)</li> </ul>





# Acts of the Apostles®

By David Webb

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