

>>>>>> Introduction <<<<<<<

The Name of the Book

- 1) The name "Acts of the Apostles" was first used by Irenaeus in the late 2nd century.
- 2) It is not known whether this was an existing name for the book or one invented by Irenaeus himself.
- 3) It is clear however that Luke did not give it that name.
 - a) The Greek word *práxeis* which means deeds or acts only appears once in the text (Acts 19:18) and there it refers not to the apostles but to deeds confessed by their followers.

Author

- 1) With Acts, like most, if not all, Biblical writings, there are “scholars” who put forth alternate theories regarding the book’s authorship.
 - a) In this case, they range from saying that “a” person was the inspired writer – just not Luke the physician to claiming that the entire book is a total forgery.
- 2) Within both books, Acts and Luke, the author is anonymous.
- 3) Our assumption (and belief) is and shall be that Luke is the writer of both, his Gospel and Acts.
 - a) There is also some controversy regarding whether Luke and Acts were originally intended as a two-volume set.
 - i) Again, some say yes, others no.
 - ii) If you have an interest, there is a nice commentary on this **“A Theology of Luke and Acts (Biblical Theology of the New Testament)”** by Darrell L. Bock
 - b) The first early writer that we know of today who claimed Luke as the writer was Irenaeus (130 to 202 CE)
 - c) At later dates, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen are other church fathers who also attest to Luke as the author.

Some Facts About Luke

- 4) He was most likely a Gentile convert before he began writing. We know this from his introduction to his gospel.
- 5) There are few who think he may have actually been Jewish.
- 6) He was not one of the apostles, and so far as we know, he was not an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus.
 - a) Again, he seems to say that himself in his introduction to his gospel.

Luke 1:1–4 (NASB 2020)

Introduction

¹Since many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, ²just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, ³it seemed fitting to me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it out* for you in an

orderly sequence, most excellent Theophilus; ⁴so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

7) We can also glean some other facts from these few verses.

- a) There is science here and, from what he says to Theophilus (the original recipient) Luke is:
 - i) a thorough investigator
 - ii) wants to place things in order.
 - iii) wants to be as exact as he can possibly be in accomplishing these things.
- b) His source(s) seem to be the disciples themselves and perhaps others who knew Christ. From verse 2 we see...

“just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.”

8) We know from other sources that Luke was a physician. (Colossians 4:14)

Colossians 4:14 (NASB 2020)

¹⁴Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and Demas *does also*.

9) He is a traveling companion of Paul and is mentioned in the conclusions of three of Paul's letters.

- a) Philemon vs. 24
- b) Colossians 4:14
- c) 2 Timothy 4:11

10) We also know that he was a traveling companion because of the “we” passages in the book of Acts itself.

- a) These particular passages begin in chapter 16.

Date of Writing

1) As with many of the New Testament writings, there are many and varied opinions among scholars as to the date the book was written.

2) Most common accepted date is between 63 and 65 CE.

3) Other dates are as late as 120 CE.

- a) Those that hold to that late date are for the most part the ones that consider Acts to be a forgery.
 - i) Obvious reason – Luke would have passed on by then.
- b) Considering Luke's approximate age, the latest he would likely have authored the book would be around 80 CE.

4) If we conclude that these later dates are wrong (which I definitely do) we can look to the writing itself for some clues as to the earliest and most likely date.

- 5) First, we must assume that Luke would be in his mid to late twenties at the youngest when traveling with Paul.
 - a) Additionally, consider, if you will that he was with Paul when the letters to Philemon, Colossians, (both written around 55-56 CE) and the second letter to Timothy (about 62 CE) were written.
 - b) Finally consider that the closing events of the book of Acts itself deal with Paul's house arrest in Rome – 60-62 CE.
- 6) To me personally, that dates the book with the majority of scholars to the 63 CE to 65 CE time frame.

Target Audience for Acts

- 1) Luke begins both his gospel and the book of Acts indicating a specific name, Theophilus, as the recipient.
- 2) Some scholars do hypothesize that Theophilus is not a real person.
 - a) The name Theophilus in the Greek means “one who loves God.”
 - b) This gives rise to speculation that Theophilus was simply Luke's way of saying it was meant for anyone who was a “lover of God.”
 - c) However, in Luke's Gospel, he makes a statement which I think refutes this claim ...

Luke 1:3 (NASB 2020)

³... it seemed fitting to me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it out* for you in an orderly sequence, ***most excellent Theophilus***.

- d) As we know, we do not have the autograph of the Luke's Gospel.
 - i) We have fragments dating back to as early as 120CE but those fragments do not contain the first few verses.
 - e) However, some of the older and trusted full manuscripts, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, do have these verses and they contain this phrase, “**most excellent Theophilus**.”
 - f) This is a term used normally in Roman culture to address soldiers of rank and others of high standing.
 - g) That being said, I think we are on solid ground considering Theophilus as a real living person and likely a close friend of Luke's.
- 3) Beyond Theophilus, it is also assumed by most that, like all the early writings, they were passed on to as many congregations and people as possible for their reading, saying simply the audience was as broad as possible.

Purpose and Message

- 1) Though not stated as clearly in Acts as it is in his gospel, Luke still gives us a good idea of exactly what he is going to accomplish.
 - a) It will be a continuation relating all the things that take place after Jesus' ascension.

- b) We will see this in the first verses of the book.
- 2) As we proceed on through the study, we will also see two distinct sections:
 - a) The first dealing with the early church, predominately in Jerusalem and the actions of the apostles.
 - b) The second is how the church came to expand outside the area of Palestine and into the whole Roman empire.
 - i) There is an obvious shift in emphasis from the apostles to the apostle Paul, his companions and associate's in ministry.
- 3) Acts is a saga.
 - a) Like most sagas (and this is truly a saga of magnificent proportions) there are ups and downs, highs and lows, drama, heartache, heroes and villains.
 - b) Most importantly, in this saga is the triumph of God's Kingdom as it is established in the known world of that day.
 - c) We can also personally take heart in that triumph since it was and is the foundation for the church as we know it today.
- 4) Acts could be called the story of the early church.
- 5) Bruce Barton and Grant Osborne comment that it could be called "**The Miracle of Changed Lives.**"
Bruce B. Barton and Grant R. Osborne, Acts, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999), x–xi.
- 6) At the end of the Gospels we see the disciples running scared and abandoning their Lord.
- 7) They were disillusioned, even denying their association with Jesus, and truly appear to be lost.
- 8) They have no purpose and, apparently still no complete understanding of what Jesus has been telling them for the past weeks as they approached Jerusalem for the last time.
- 9) What we will see as Acts begins is that these same men have been transformed from cowardly to courageous, from argumentative to articulate, and from selfish to selfless.
- 10) Later, they are then joined by Paul, whom God also miraculously transforms from a persecutor of Christians to a super believer.
- 11) Beyond that, as we unfold Paul's actions in the book of Acts we will see a man who has become **not** a "convert" from Jew to Christian but,
 - a) To a Jew who totally understands the fulfillment of God's Law that he, Paul, loved almost as much as life itself.
 - b) I know that for some, this is a distinction without a difference.
 - c) However, I truly believe that is a significant thing to consider and we will discuss it more as time goes on.
- 12) Setting that aside, we still know that he comes to understand Jesus Christ as the true Messiah and the freedom that this fact brings,

- a) This is not only to his fellow Jews if they would only accept it, but indeed to the entire known world.
 - b) Paul GET'S IT!!!**
- 13) Of course we will deal with Paul and how he changes when we get to that point in the book of Acts.
- 14) Having said all that, we basically have our introduction to the book of Acts.
- a) We know where we are headed –
 - i) The Church is founded by the Apostles and Paul with many trials and tribulations along the way!
- 15) However, as we have discussed, before we begin that journey we need to look at what happens between the garden, crucifixion, resurrection, and Pentecost.
- 16) What actually happened in that time period that made the difference?
- 17) What changed these guys from what we left them as at the end of Mark to these men who were going to change the world?
- a) The first obvious answer is primarily, the gift of the Holy Spirit and all that entails.
 - b) Before that however, I think it was the events of this intervening period that solidified their faith.
 - c) These events brought them to a final understanding of what a crucified and risen Messiah really meant.
 - i) For the disciples, this was what the time after the resurrection was all about interacting with their risen Lord.
- 18) So, next time, we will begin a look at that period - the 40 days the Lord spent here after His resurrection.
- 19) If you have not done so, please read the ends of the Gospels and the short section in 1 Cor 15:
- a) Matthew 28 complete chapter.
 - b) Mark 16:1-8 stop and let that settle in then read 9-20.
 - c) Luke 24 complete chapter.
 - d) John 20 complete chapter.
 - e) 1 Corinthians 15:3–5
- 20) I will include the list in the Prayer List again in case you need it.
- 21) The idea is to look at them from several perspectives:
- a) What things you find that agree AND what things you find that disagree.
 - b) Look for things that indicate they might be responsible for a major change in these men.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 01 <<<<<<<

- 1) Any comments, questions, at all on the 40-day study?
- 2) O.k. we will begin our dive into Acts.
- 3) As I indicated before, I will be for the most part reading from the NIV.
 - a) The edition I will be using was released in 2011. It is the latest.
 - b) NIV was originally released in 1978 with a minor revision in 1984.
 - c) The 2011 revision is considered a “major” revision, so if you are using an earlier edition (1978 or 1984) you may find some differences as we read.
 - d) I have not researched the differences but would not think they would be a problem, however, feel free to bring them up when we encounter them,
 - e) In fact, it will probably be good for discussion.

Acts 1:1–5 (NIV)

- 4) Luke, as we have discussed, opens with a statement of his purpose in writing his Gospel.
 - a) This leads some to call this book, Acts, a sequel to or continuation of that gospel.
- 5) Again, the primary recipient is Theophilus, a friend; and by the title “most excellent” in his introduction to his Gospel, a high ranking official.
 - a) What type of high ranking official, we are not told.
 - b) One comment I read regarding Theophilus was that by Luke’s title, he would have been in a position money wise and authority wise to see that this book and the Gospel for that matter, once completed could be sent to as many churches as they wanted.
 - i) Remember, no internet, email, or social media – copies had to be made by hand (paid for scribes) and then distributed.
 - ii) The Romans at this time had a reasonably sophisticated postal system.
 - iii) This same source alluded to the fact that historically, they were as fast over the distances that were normally covered as our postal service is today. (Makes you wonder, huh?)
- 6) Luke then refers to the period of time – the 40 days – which we just studied and basically ends up with, what might be, the last time the disciples see Jesus before the ascension.
- 7) From Jesus’ comment, this would be “not many days from now” meaning exactly that.
 - a) We know that the apostles had been in Galilee for the better part of a month.
 - b) They had met with Jesus on many occasions and have now returned to Jerusalem for the Pentecost celebration.
- 8) When we look at these verses concerning being baptized with the Holy Spirit, we must remember that Jesus had, before his crucifixion, told the disciples about receiving the Holy Spirit.

John 14:26 (NIV)

26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

- 9) The concept of baptism is to dip or immerse. I'm sure they may have had a question as to exactly what that meant in the literal sense.
- 10) However, the word also carries with it a sub meaning **“to use water in a rite for purpose of renewing or establishing a relationship.”** In this case, the Holy Spirit would be renewing or establishing the relationship.
- 11) None the less, they now know what is coming as far as that part is concerned.
- 12) So, now we are set for the final conversation and Jesus' departure.

Acts 1:6–8 (NIV)

- 12) This then becomes the last big switch for the disciples!
 - a) **When** are you going to **restore the kingdom of Israel**?
 - b) What's the thinking – still earthly? still Israel? still Jewish? ... (definitely not Gentile)!
 - c) Answer – That's not coming now BUT... **“you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and as far as the remotest part of the earth.”**
 - d) In other words you will establish the kingdom that must come first – my kingdom here!
 - e) At this point hearing **“ends of the earth”** I would bet that these guys are thinking Diaspora Jews as the kingdom space.
 - i) They are not really thinking Gentiles/Romans/Egyptians ????
 - f) As we know and will see again, they really don't get that part until Peter's experience and Paul's emergence on the scene.
 - i) And even then, there will be struggles trying to get things right.
 - ii) Even Peter himself on a visit to Antioch tries to slip back into that “Gentile vs. Jew” comparison syndrome.
 - iii) This precipitated an “in your face” confrontation with Paul at one point, several years down the road. (Galatians 2:11–14)
- 13) This is not news, Jonah, as you know was sent to a Gentile people to preach and bring them to repentance.
 - a) After a struggle, he did – but – he also **by his story**, set and example for and prophesied to the people of Israel about their treatment of Gentiles.
 - b) Even after 700 plus years, they still don't seem to get it quite yet.

- 14) O.k. it is time to say so long for now – Jesus has completed his task and now things must take their course as God and He have planned.
- 15) Before we move on, it is important that we get our location straight.
- a) This conversation and what is going to happen next is NOT a continuation of the conversation Luke reported in vs. 4 and 5 where they were eating together.
 - b) This is another occasion and is on a hill (Mount of Olives) in Bethany.

Acts 1:9–11 (NIV)

So, where did Jesus go? Mars? Galaxy HD1? Heaven?

- a) A galaxy named HD1 has been crowned the new farthest object in the cosmos. Located some 13.5 billion light-years away, HD1 existed only about 330 million years after the Big Bang.

So, where is Heaven?

Is Heaven our final home?

13) Moving on

Acts 1:12–14 (NIV)

- 1) I think it is significant for us to realize that what we are now seeing is a coherent group – a group of men and women who now are ready to serve a risen Savior.
- 2) On their return to Jerusalem they assembled as a group and were obviously preparing for what was coming.
 - a) The idea of devoting themselves “with one mind” to prayer along with the women and Jesus’ mother says they are in preparation.
- 3) One comment here regarding the prayers of these gathered together here.
 - a) They were not praying for the Holy Spirit – that had already been promised and they had been told to wait for him.
 - b) They were likely praying prayers of thanksgiving for their risen Lord and what they had experienced over the last 40 days.
 - c) They were also likely praying for guidance in all things that they would be doing until the promised day when the Holy Spirit would come upon them.
 - d) They had to be excited and, at the same time, very uneasy about what was ahead of them.
 - e) Again, “one mind,” “of one accord,” truly in harmony and anxiously awaiting what was to come.
 - f) I would also expect that they were also praying about the situation that we encounter next – the replacement of Judas.

4) Continuing...

Acts 1:15–20 (NIV)

5) Peter seems rather “matter of fact” about the situation with Judas.

6) Many of you may have vs. 18 and 19 in parenthesis.

a) This is indicating that there are some variations in this section of the verses based at least in part on some of the early Latin translations.

b) Additionally, the Balor Handbook of the Greek NT comments here:

The fact that the fate of Judas would not have been new information to the followers of Jesus, and the explicit reference to “their language” in vs. 19 suggest that vv. 18-19 are the narrator’s comments rather than that of Peter.

c) Basically, what they are saying is that this information is being added by Luke, probably for the benefit of Theophilus.

7) Considering this, Peter and the writer Luke are still simply tying this altogether with prophecy and what has actually happened.

a) Additionally, they are showing that there is a prophetic/scriptural reason for replacing Judas at this point.

8) The end result is the same – Judas has to be replaced for them to return to the full strength of the original 12.

Acts 1:15–26 (NIV)

- 1) There are a couple of key thoughts here – ***first***, this is a God ordained situation.
 - a) The fact that they cast lots does NOT make it arbitrary.
 - b) Some think it is but drawing lots in this manner is well known and combined with the hearts and prayers of these men and women regarding the situation there is no doubt this was the correct way to go about it.
 - c) And the correct time.
 - i) Some have speculated that had they waited for the Holy Spirit to arrive, things may have turned out differently.
 - ii) Considering all that is given to us here I personally do not think so.
 - iii) Also, it was probably wise to have that person present and in place when the Holy Spirit did arrive.
- 2) ***Second*** key thought is – the apostles see the need for continuity – for a continuous presence of the 12 from the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry.
 - a) Jesus had chosen the original 12.
 - i) In fact at one point, he tells them plainly that they did not choose him – he chose them.
 - b) There is also an elevated situation of importance associated with this which must be considered.
 - i) The disciples (the 12) were not just 12 guys out of the number of disciples who were involved here.
 - ii) Being chosen by Jesus truly brought an elevated status (if that is the correct idea) to these men.

Matthew 19:28–30 (NIV)

- 3) This is obviously an elevation of the twelve to a special place.
 - a) Setting on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel is a God ordained situation.
- 4) Everyone who follows Jesus will be rewarded as this passage clearly indicates.
- 5) However, it is obvious that everyone will not be setting on thrones judging the 12 tribes.
- 6) So, we can see from this that making this choice is truly an important task these men are undertaking.
 - a) Again, it is not their choice it is God’s choice and they know that.
 - b) It is their responsibility to place before God those who were with Jesus the whole time he was with them as is stated here...

“beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these *must* become a witness with us of His resurrection.” (NIV)

- 7) This set of criteria probably did not produce a large field to choose from.
- 8) In fact, these two men may have been the only ones who met them.
- 9) I would be remiss if I did not at least bring up the fact that some scholars believe that this entire situation was a mistake.
 - a) Matthias should not have been chosen at all.
 - b) Paul should have been the 12th apostle added.
- 10) Many others disagree.
 - i) First, Paul did not meet the any of the criterion set forth here (though he did see Jesus face-to-face)
 - ii) As far as we know, he did not witness the resurrection.
 - iii) He was not with them throughout the entire time from John’s baptism onward.
 - b) Most importantly, God would have intervened at this point had this not been the proper way to proceed.
- 11) I am in this camp. I cannot accept by any stretch that God would have allowed such an error to have taken place.
- 12) To me, Paul’s place is special. Special in a way that we do not know since we are not privy to God’s intention.
- 13) There is also the fact that the paths of the original 12 and Paul are really quite different, as we will see in our study of Acts.
 - a) Both necessary but both different and truly complementary in their results.
- 14) So, back to the process and the outcome.
- 15) The process began or continued with prayer and then, at the appropriate point, the final process of casting lots was performed.
- 16) According to the LABC, the final process of casting the lots was likely done by writing the two names on two stones and then placing them into a container.
 - a) Sort of like drawing names out of a hat.
- 17) The first stone to fall out or be picked from the container would be considered God’s choice.
- 18) From what we know, this practice did not continue after Pentecost.
- 19) There would be no need because the Holy Spirit, will indwell the hearts and minds of God’s people and he would be the guide in all matters like these.
- 20) For example, later the elders would select the leaders at the various churches, but not with lots.

Acts 2:1–4 (NIV)

- 1) The day has come! Jesus did not tell the disciples exactly what day it would be but, here it is – Surprise!
- 2) It was most appropriate for the day to be on this festival day – Pentecost.
 - a) Pentecost was the 50th day after Passover.
 - b) It was an agricultural festival day on which farmers brought the first sheaf of wheat from their crop to be offered to God.
 - i) They also were offering prayers that the remainder of the crop would be good.
 - c) Beyond that, we have to remember the Passover celebrated the exodus from Egypt and the time when the Israelites were saved from the avenging angel.
 - d) Fifty days later after making their escape and passing through the Red Sea into the desert, they arrived at Mount Sinai where Moses received the law.
 - e) Obviously, Pentecost is much more than just a festival day.
 - f) In the mind of the devout Jew, it is about God giving to his redeemed people **the way of life by which they must carry out his purposes.**
 - g) True for Mount Saini and true for this very important God determined day as well!
- 3) The general consensus is that the “all” of “they all gathered together in one place” denoted the 120 followers that were mentioned in 1:15 and were the core group around the 12 disciples.
- 4) What an absolute mind-blowing experience – this loud noise followed by the tongues of fire landing on each of them.
- 5) However, there was not really any time to contemplate the event because the Holy Spirit entered them and the mission began immediately.
- 6) They were all given the ability to speak in different tongues and to speak out.

Acts 2:1–13 (NIV)

- 7) We left last time with the question – is baptism with the Holy Spirit the same as being filled with the Holy Spirit?
- 8) John MacArthur feels that there is a distinction that should be made here.
 - a) Being filled with the Holy Spirit is different than being baptized with the Holy Spirit.
 - b) He makes the point that being baptized with the Holy Spirit is a one-time occurrence which is experienced when we are baptized into the body of Christ. **REF--→**

1 Corinthians 12:13 (NIV)

¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

- a) As to being filled with the Holy Spirit, he points out that there are many instances where scripture tells us of persons being filled with the Holy Spirit on more than one occasion.
He states:

Unlike the baptism with the Spirit, being filled with the Spirit is an experience and should be continuous. Although filled initially on the Day of Pentecost, Peter was filled again in Acts 4:8. Many of the same people filled with the Spirit in Acts 2 were filled again in Acts 4:31. Acts 6:5 describes Stephen as a man “full of faith and the Holy Spirit,” yet Acts 7:55 records his being filled again. Paul was filled with the Spirit in Acts 9:17 and again in Acts 13:9.¹

So, do you agree or disagree with this position – being filled with the Holy Spirit is different than being baptized with the Holy Spirit?

- b) Perhaps this is a difference without distinction but, something to consider.
- c) However, there is definitely something to be said regarding “extra measures” of the Holy Spirit which might be what is happening in these instances.

Have you ever experienced this?

- d) To me the most important aspect of this is being continuously filled with the Holy Spirit.
- e) Continually seeking Him in every situation and in every prayer.
- f) He is our promised helper.
- g) If Paul teaches us nothing else, he is consistent in teaching us that we must live “by the Spirit” not by “flesh.”

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Acts](#), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 41.

- i) In fact, we are to die to the flesh.
 - ii) Obviously, a major transition in our lives that for most is a process taking some time to accomplish.
- 9) I think we covered some of this last week but to get to the next section, let's review just a bit.
- 10) If there was any doubt before, there should not be any now – the sound though not a wind but “like” a wind was real and obviously loud.
- 11) Also, we should note here as well that the tongues of fire were not “literal fire” but again “looked like” fire.
- a) Again, no one would take seriously a group of bald people with their hair burned off.
- 12) There is another transformation that takes place at this point.
- 13) Verse 4 tells us:
- and began to speak with different tongues, as the Spirit was giving them the ability to speak out.
- 14) In this verse, the Holy Spirit gave them the ability to speak in different languages.
- 15) Verses 7 and 8 however, tell us:
- 7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?
- 16) The operative word being in the second case “**hear.**”
- 17) I think this indicates that God, on this day at this point provides the ultimate universal translator.
- a) As the followers of Jesus spoke in “**different tongues,**” it made no difference what language they were speaking, the “hearers” heard them in their “**own language.**”
 - b) The truth is, there are two things going on – disciples are speaking in other languages and the listeners, regardless of that, are hearing in their own language.
 - c) Again, the ultimate universal translator.
 - d) Of course, they could have given their message in Greek.
 - i) Most if not all those present spoke Greek – **that was** the lingua franca of the time (language of the known world at that time).
 - ii) It started some 400 years ago since the time of Alexander the Great.
 - e) But that was not the case.
 - f) One would assume for clarity and best understanding, God in His infinite wisdom provided this “universal translator” so that each person could totally understand what was being said.
- 18) One other important note here is the diversity of nationalities that are represented – all Jews or proselytes but different nationalities.

a) Look back at verse 9 and 10:

⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” (NIV)

19) For the purpose of the scripture we are studying, the list gives us an insight into the miracle of different languages being spoken.

20) However, the diversity of this list should be emphasized and remembered as we proceed for another reason.

21) We must remember that the members added that day came from this group – all 3000 of them!

22) The obvious result is that though many stay in Jerusalem for at least a while, they likely would all return home and this is truly a start at spreading the Word and perhaps even planting churches in all these areas at the outset.

23) Though Paul and the disciples will journey to many of the locals and begin churches some will have probably already been at least started by what happens on this very day.

24) Now, before we begin listening to Peter’s sermon, I want you to change your mindset.

a) Imagine yourself in the crowd.

b) You are a Jew – NOT a Christian so you will connect with all that Peter is saying but, from a Jewish perspective not Christian.

c) You were among those who cried crucify Jesus less than two months ago.

d) You may have also been in the crowd that welcomed him the week before that.

e) You may have even heard him preach and perhaps even seen him perform a miracle.

f) You found that all interesting, but that doesn’t really matter.

g) You have convinced yourself that what happened that day before the Passover was right.

h) You were **right** in calling for this imposter who had been tried by your religious leaders to be crucified –

i) after all, that’s what they were saying needed to be done.

i) You were **right** in calling for the release of Barabbas instead of this criminal.

j) What you are seeing now is just a bunch of drunks speaking gibberish (all be it gibberish that you understand).

k) End of subject!!

l) So, that’s your mindset this morning. However, a word of **caution** you must listen carefully, or you might not get the right message.

So, let’s hear what Peter has to say ...

Acts 2:14–36 (NASB 2020)

25) Looking at all this one could also imagine as part of this crowd these folks...

- a) They could easily have become angry at Peter and the other apostles – angry because they were being accused of the most heinous crime possible – killing the Son of God. (with a caveat)
- b) Human reaction whether we like it or not in circumstances like this is normally that of denial or laying the blame on someone or the circumstance.
 - i) The religious leaders said to do it ...
- c) With the denial comes anger and in many cases violence!
- d) However, if they were listening carefully, they might not see it quite that way. **Back to verse 23.**

As part of the crowd – Honest answer – where are you now?

Ready to walk away.

Ready to throw things at Peter because of what he has accused you of?

Ready to enlist and go to war?

Convicted? Why? Why not?

- 1) There are obviously things that should be considered in this sermon.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 05 <<<<<<<

- 1) To begin, let's go back and look at a couple of key parts of Peter's sermon that would definitely have an impact on how this crowd reacted.

Acts 2:22–24 (NIV)

- 2) Then in verse 31 to 33 speaking of what David as the prophet said:

Acts 2:31–33 (NIV)

- 3) Then Peter's conclusion in verse 36

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

- 4) So, again, think of yourself as part of the crowd and let's look at how they actually react.

Acts 2:37 (NIV)

- 5) Forget what you know Peter says next and let's talk about this statement. I have three questions:

First question – why did the crowd not get angry and want to kill Peter and the others? After all, that was the normal reaction of their leaders, right?

Second question – What were they asking? Perhaps a different way to ask it is... What did they see as the problem they were needing to do something about?

Third question – So, what made the difference? – Why did these people suddenly abandon normal human reactions and behaviors and cry out in anguish “what must we do?”?

Our only logical and plausible explanation is the action of the Holy Spirit!

Acts 2:38–41 (NIV)

- 6) There are two amazing things to really consider here.
 - a) First, as we were just discussing, it is the absolute change of heart of the large group of people.
 - b) The second is a bit more subtle.
 - c) Peter says:

“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;

- 7) Just like us when we are saved – we first must be convicted of our sins and understand the need for salvation.
 - a) Again, the Holy Spirit’s action is to convict us (and them) of sin.
- 8) Peter’s statement then became a gift of huge magnitude to those who were standing there.
 - a) Forgiveness – not just kicking the can on down the road – full and complete forgiveness simply by being baptized (WELL – Maybe not just that?).
 - b) No more priestly requirements, no more day of atonement, everyday they were able to be forgiven directly from God.
 - c) Pretty awesome!
 - d) However, there is much more than just getting wet for them.
 - e) As N.T. Wright points out – it is becoming part of the kingdom-movement that is identified with Jesus, part of the people who claim his life, death and resurrection as the center and foundation of their own.
 - f) This is no small ask especially for these folks.
 - g) However, when we consider where their hearts are and what they have been convicted of it is the only way.
 - h) They are convicted in their hearts of killing the one and only Son of God or at least of taking part in that act.
 - i) I think at this point, they were convicted of more than that – sin in their lives in general.
 - j) And, as we said a moment ago, this was a huge deal for these folks.
 - k) I ran across an interesting quote this morning I share for your thoughts: Oswald Chambers.

Very few of us know anything about conviction of sin; we know the experience of being disturbed because of having done wrong things; but conviction of sin by the Holy Ghost blots out every relationship on earth and leaves one relationship only—“Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned.” When a man is convicted of sin in this way, he knows with every power of his conscience that God dare not forgive him; if God did forgive him, the man would have a stronger sense of justice than God. God does forgive, but it cost the rending of His heart in the death of Christ to enable Him to do so.

Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest: Selections for the Year* (Grand Rapids, MI: Oswald Chambers Publications; Marshall Pickering, 1986).

- l) Last, and definitely not least, was the fact that Jesus was the much-awaited Messiah.
 - m) It was different from their lifelong understanding of it but God’s plan was complete!
- 9) Then he says

and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- a) This must have been like going to buy a Volkswagen and being given a Cadillac instead!
- b) Getting a lot more than they bargained for.
- c) **This is the transformation part – the dying to flesh and being born of the Spirit – the life-giving part of salvation.**

10) One thing that I think is definitely worth noting here is Peter's abilities.

- a) Not only speaking in tongues or in this single speaker's case being heard in various languages, but also, in his ability to put together the words that are this convicting.
- b) I am sure Peter knew the Scripture of the Old Testament reasonably well.
- c) However, in the overall, the Holy Spirit was obviously active in the speaking and translations but, also in the content of what Peter was saying which is exactly what Jesus had promised.

11) Peter continued his urging with many more words.

- a) I wish I knew what else Peter taught that day.
- b) What we do know is that he continued probably for as long as he could and the effect was probably way beyond their expectations.

12) Before we move on, let's talk about the number – 3000 – that's a LOT!!

Curiosity / Opinion question – Does it matter who baptizes you or who takes your confession?

13) The reason I asked the question was just looking at the number – 3000 – it would take a lot of time to baptize that many folks.

- a) If we assume only one minute for each, we are (just doing the arithmetic) we are looking at (3000 / 12) or just a little less than 4.2 hours.
- b) All that comes back to the fact that perhaps, the others of the 120 and even some of the ones who were baptized immediately began baptizing others and so on, and so on, and so on

14) Another curiosity type question would be, were the 12 and the 120 or so who were part of the group at Pentecost already baptized? By whom?

15) Obviously, none of these answers really make a big difference to the outcome of the day – God was the one who added them to their number!

16) This must have been an exciting time for everyone.

- a) I can only imagine how Peter and the rest of the apostles must have felt at the end of the day.
- b) The conversations must have been fantastic – it has really begun – Jesus is truly alive and living among them in the truest sense of the word.
- c) His promises are all true! ALL DOUBT and ANTICIPATION IS GONE!

- 1) Next, we see the initial results from that glorious day.
- 2) Luke let's no moss grow – he moves immediately forward with his next statements.

Acts 2:41–43 (NIV)

- 3) The apostles have over 3 years' worth of learning and being with Jesus that they want to and are sharing with these new Christians.
- 4) The apostles must have shared very quickly Jesus' ideas and desires for prayer and praying in a new way.
- 5) And, of course, the institution of the Lord's Supper. So many and new things to learn and experience.
- 6) This is another of those times when I think I would really have liked to be there and hear the original teachings.
 - a) Some in this group may have heard Jesus speak, maybe even more than once.
 - b) But there is a large transition that must be made from the traditions of the Old Testament Law and the fulfilled law of the new covenant.
 - c) To be sure, the old law, the parts that dictate morality and living as God wanted was still there, however, the traditions of sacrifice, special ceremonies and holidays were no longer required.
 - d) Just to be part of that teaching and transformation would have been a totally wonderful and unique experience.
- 7) From this excitement and, probably out of necessity, we see the next unique feature of this new fledgling congregation of believers. ...

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 06 <<<<<<<

1) To begin, let's look at more of what Luke has to say about this new group of Christians.

Acts 2:42–47 (NIV)

- 2) Of course, by Luke's statement "all believers were together" he does not mean that all of these 3000 plus individuals lived in exactly the same house.
 - a) He is speaking communally – sharing in various ways.
 - b) When we were kids living in our family home, we had all things "in common."
 - c) Normally, if there was milk in the fridge it was there for anyone who wanted to drink it.
 - d) There were probably certain things like your dad's chair but even then, it was not a sacred thing (at least not in most houses). (Archie Bunker's house)
- 3) However, when Luke says they had all things in common, he is indicating something at least a little bit beyond the bottle of milk in the fridge.
- 4) Here was a situation that was unique.
 - a) One must assume that the primary reason all these folks stayed was to learn from the apostles about this new life and to establish firmly their knowledge of the Savior.
 - b) Many of these new converts were not originally from Jerusalem.
 - c) They had to have lodging and food and other necessities that perhaps were not readily available.
 - d) They would have to find work and earn a living.
 - e) So many things to consider and that is what really led to the situation as portrayed here.
- 5) This shared life quickly developed in a particular direction which is both fascinating and controversial.
- 6) No, all these early Christians did not live under one roof – however, they were drawn into an attitude of sharing through their new shared faith, baptism, breaking of bread and teaching.
 - a) All that said, "we are family."
 - b) This brought about the selling of properties and doing whatever was required to "make this situation work."
- 7) What was not unique was the sharing. This was not necessarily new to the disciples and even perhaps the devout followers among the 120 or so larger group.
- 8) In fact, this is really not uncommon for these times at all.
- 9) The Essenes at Qumran also lived in a communal lifestyle – Josephus tells us this.
 - a) One discovery which was made in the excavation of Qumran was two jars filled with over 500 coins of various denominations and from various nations (various nations not uncommon).

- b) Additionally and as further confirmation of the communal lifestyle, no other coins were found anywhere in the settlement.
- 10) In fact, the disciples, as you will recall, had a common purse, to which they likely all contributed and from which they all shared.
- 11) N.T. Wright makes the comment about what this meant to this early church:

When Jesus' followers behave like this, they sometimes find, to their surprise, that they have a new spring in their step. There is an attractiveness, an energy about a life in which we stop clinging on to everything we can get and start sharing it, giving it away, celebrating God's generosity by being generous ourselves. And that attractiveness is one of the things that draws other people in.

Wright, N. T.. Acts for Everyone, Part One: 1 (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 47). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

- 12) This is undoubtedly one of the reasons Luke could conclude this passage with the statement that "the Lord was adding to their number each day."
- 13) Another important thing to note here is that these new Christians were finding favor with all the people.
 - a) They were changed!
 - i) Loving, caring, and so many other attributes that we are to have that when others see them in us, they notice in a good way.
 - b) The Romans, throughout their history with the Christians, though they had issues with their worship and them not worshipping the Roman Gods (at times) always found Christians to be good citizens – good people.

Do we see this model of Christian living being carried out in our churches today?

If yes, HOW?

If no, Why Not?

And

Should it be?

Acts 3:1–10 (NIV)

- 1) The Jewish community had three times a day during which they prayed, morning (9:00 am), afternoon (3:00 pm), and finally, at sunset.
 - a) The fact that Peter and John were going to the temple at the ninth hour (3:00 pm) indicates that they were at least keeping that tradition.
 - b) My guess would be that they were actually still living **for the most part** as obedient Jews regards the law notwithstanding the sacrifices etc..
 - c) The big difference for them was they had the Messiah and the new covenant.
 - d) God was still God and the Temple was still the temple.
 - e) Bottomline – they have much maturing to do.

- f) We see this clearly in the content of many of Paul's letters as he addresses Jews trying to stay Jewish in their way of life.
 - i) As a result, binding traditions on Christians that were not to be bound.
- 2) Of course, the temple was obviously a MISSION SPACE – a place where they could share Christ with others.
- 3) On this day, as Peter and John approached the temple, a beggar asks them for money.
 - a) He may have been in our “today's terms” a homeless person – we just don't know much more.
 - b) The man was also crippled (lame from birth).
- 4) As he proceeded to ask for a handout, Peter and John approached him together and got his attention.
- 5) They had nothing in the way of money to give the man but they simply spoke the words:
“In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!”
- 6) Helping him up, the man began to walk and leap and praise God for the blessing he had received.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 07 <<<<<<<

7) To begin, let's look again at Peter and John's healing of the lame beggar.

Acts 3:1–10 (NIV)

- 8) One of the most important items to note here is that it is the name of Jesus that is displayed so significantly it cannot be ignored.
- a) It was not Peter or John that performed this healing.
 - b) True, they were the physical vehicles. They spoke the words and took the man by the hand, BUT it was thru the power of the name of Jesus that the force of healing came.
 - c) Of course, various names we know carry power in today's world as well, but none have the true power of the name of Jesus Christ the only Son of the Living God.
 - d) Peter makes it clear that they did not do this.
 - e) It is also not some magic word like abracadabra which is spoken.
 - f) Yes it is the name – but in this case, it is the faith of the one proclaiming that name and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that allows it to exhibit the power along with the will of God almighty showing forth that power.
 - g) We can be reasonably sure the man's faith was not the reason either.
- 9) The second blessing that was afforded because of this was, of course, those that saw and recognized what had happened praised God and were amazed.

The last time you were approached by a homeless person – what did you do?

Are there things that you can think of that we should do instead of those negative things, thoughts, and even begrudging giving to them?

- First, safety is always a concern – public place with people? How do you handle it?
 - Obviously we are not endowed with the same powers of healing as the original apostles and therefore, we cannot offer physical healing.
 - If appropriate, however, prayers for healing can be offered.
 - Kind words, blessings, good wishes? (if it is not “be warmed and fed”)
 - The obvious thing might be also to offer to pray for them and their situation.
 - Should we keep a \$1 or \$5 in our pockets with the purpose of giving on these occasions? (the idea being intentional – might change our initial mindset toward the situations)
 - What about a verse of encouragement wrapped inside any money we give?
 - What I do.
- 1) Next, we have the second recorded sermon that Peter gives.

- 2) As he started to speak, he probably didn't think of it in that manner but it does appear that this is what it is (all be it quite short).

Acts 3:11–26 (NIV)

- 1) The first thing one should likely observe here is the similarity of this sermon to Peter's first at Pentecost (at least in the point being made).
 - a) Convicting of sin in the lives of those hearing.
 - i) Letting his hearers know that though they acted in ignorance, they and their leaders were the responsible parties for killing the Son of God.
 - ii) He gives clear indications of how Christ is the Son of God, crucified, risen, and He is the one through whom the man was healed.
 - iii) Equally important is the fact that Jesus is the one through whom their sins can be taken away.
 - iv) In verses 19-21 he also brings to light here the return of Christ when God restores all things.
 - i) This is worth noting because, in the early days of the Church, we see the expected immediate return of Jesus predominate.
 - ii) Paul hints of his belief in Christ's quick return.
 - iii) We see from his letter to the Thessalonians that they also were of that mindset.
 - iv) The other point Peter makes clear here is that at that time, the promised restoration of all things will take place.
- 2) Before we move too much further into this, we need to say a little about verse 3:17.

When you hear someone called ignorant what does that mean to you?

- 3) Though it does have that negative connotation, we must always remember that it simply means without knowledge.
 - a) If I am a new Christian, I may be ignorant of the problems Paul was having with the Corinthian church. I could be ignorant of the fact that he was imprisoned in Rome for some time.
 - b) The reason being that I may not have read or even heard of these things.
 - c) In no way does it make me stupid or bad – it simply says I lack knowledge.
- 4) In many cases, ignorance is equated with stupidity – this is just not the case.
- 5) Stupidity is defined as: behavior that shows a lack of good sense or judgment.
- 6) I have always thought of this situation in this manner – you can fix ignorance. In most cases, you CANNOT fix stupidity.
 - a) Peter claims them to be ignorant because, as we have discussed numerous times, they had anticipated a great ruler, a conquering hero.

- b) When he arrived as a lowly carpenter and then died a criminal's death, they missed it.
- c) They may have acted in ignorance, but now they could understand that Jesus was exactly what the Messiah had been prophesied to be.²
- d) In other words, it is their lack of knowledge or misinterpretation of prophecy that can be fixed!
- e) A point that needs to be made here clearly – ignorance did NOT excuse their sin.
 - i) The good news is that like their ignorance, their sin can also be fixed!

Are we ever in a state of disobedience because of our own ignorance?

If yes, then how?

- Discovering a part of God's word of which we were not aware?
 - Discovering something that we have always thought to be the way God wanted it and then come to realize that that was a wrong way of thinking?
 - Praise God for His grace and mercy, like those we are looking at here, we can be forgiven for our failures of ignorance.
- 7) Two final points on this section of scripture:
- a) First, Peter makes it perfectly clear – this was God's plan!
 - b) Second, we must make sure we understand that – Peter is NOT laying the blame for Christ's death on the nation of Israel.
 - i) His point is that those who are present who did take part in the sanctioning of Christ's death, regardless of their ignorance, do have culpability.
 - ii) N.T. Wright speaks to this point as follows:

Tragically, Christians have sometimes taken passages like this and suggested that they meant that the Jewish people were somehow always to be blamed for what had happened. The reverse is the case. Not only is there no sense, in Acts or elsewhere, that the Jewish people somehow bear guilt or blame beyond the initial people who rejected Jesus himself. There is, on the contrary, the extended invitation, rooted in God's covenant faithfulness, for them to receive forgiveness and refreshment as much as anyone else. The promise of the restoration of all things is, after all, a deeply Jewish promise. None of the first Christians, who were of course all themselves Jewish, would have imagined that God would turn his back on the very people who had carried that promise through so many generations.

Wright, N. T.. Acts for Everyone, Part One: 1 (The New Testament for Everyone) (pp. 60-61). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

² Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 484.

- iii) The area of responsibility is complex in this entire situation.
 - iv) Long these lines, another point that needs to be remembered here is that the Jews did NOT crucify Christ – it was actually the Romans who performed the act.
 - v) The Jewish leadership precipitated the situation by bringing Him up on charges that were in their opinion capital.
 - vi) They continued to force the issue until the Roman authorities gave in.
 - vii) The final decision was Pilate's.
 - viii) The crowd played an important part in this crucifixion as well because of their insistence on going along with the leaders and of course, as Peter points out, demanding Barabbas be released instead of Jesus.
- 8) Though many of those who were listening to Peter might have been present physically during the events that took place, there were others who had not been.
- 9) Without regard for their part in that act, they, like us are all in need of a savior – one who shows us our error and our “wicked ways” and offers us the way out.
- 10) Though Peter talks of the crucifixion and the part some of them and leaders played in it directly, verse 26 disconnects that and brings the true need for salvation into focus.

When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 08 <<<<<<<

- 1) Any comments, or questions, from last time?
- 2) I left you with a couple of questions last time.
- 3) There was obviously a massive change in mindset of these first 5000 or so Christians.
 - a) Their expectations of the Messiah, as we have discussed many times, were totally different from what they walked away with that day.
 - b) They were a people who had suddenly come to the realization that the promises of the God they had worshiped for generations had now been fulfilled.
 - c) There is a lot for these folks to process now.

Again, think about that for a minute.

Do you think that our experience in coming to the Lord is as drastic a change as theirs? Why? Why Not?

Does it make the job of a new Christian easier or harder to be of a lesser mind change than we see them have?

Acts 4:1–4 (NIV)

- 1) Here we have an interesting display of the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) Based on what we are told here, Peter's sermon and he and John's teaching had been going on for 3 to 4 hours by this time.
 - a) They arrived and started at around 3 in the afternoon – prayer time – now it is evening.
- 3) The result was pretty spectacular.
- 4) First, one might think their arrest by the priests, captain of the guard and Sadducees would have been a deterrent to anyone believing but, obviously not!
- 5) Instead, because of this healing and sermon and assumed teaching, as we just discussed, their number grew to 5000.
 - a) We do not know that all these were present but this may be seen as a result of this sermon.
- 1) That's great! However, here comes what maybe their first encounter with real trouble for the apostles.

Acts 4:5–6 (NIV)

- 2) O.k. Peter what are you going to say to these high-ranking officials? You know what they did to Jesus so, what's it going to be? Confrontation or Run for the hills?

- 3) Perhaps he was just going to “wing it” so to speak.
- 4) As I was thinking about this I wondered if Peter remembered what Jesus had told them earlier.
 - a) If perhaps he and John had been discussing it overnight while they were in prison.
- 5) There are two scriptures that give Jesus’ words to them on this they likely were thinking of these as and if they did discuss their appearance in the morning.

Matthew 10:19–20 (NIV)

Luke 21:12–15 (NIV)

- 6) Well, knowing Peter, I doubt if he would be one to run for the hills regardless of whether he remembered what Jesus had said or not.
- 7) He probably, deep down inside knew from the two sermons that he had already preached that it was going to be fine. So, he begins...

Acts 4:8–12 (NIV)

- 8) Well, I guess there is no doubt now how Peter decided to proceed – basically, come on Holy Spirit let’s go! NO HOLDS BARRED NO PUNCHES PULLED!

Acts 4:13–22 (NIV)

- 9) This last comment regarding the man’s age is interesting – from most sources I looked at, the average lifespan in Jesus’ day was 35 years. (much younger than I had always thought)
- 10) There are some interesting facts that can help us get a better picture of the seriousness of what is happening here.
- 11) First, at their arrest, we have the Captain of the Temple Gard, the Sadducees, and the priests.
 - a) As I am sure you recall, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection.
 - b) Additionally, according to at least one commentator they really did not expect or accept the idea of a “real Messiah.”
 - c) They considered the concept to be more of an idea – not a real person who would actually intervene in history.
 - d) We have here also, the Captain of the Temple Gard – he was a Sadducee as well.
 - e) It is likely that the priests were also Sadducees.
- 12) It doesn’t take a lot to understand why Peter and John would have been in deep trouble.

- a) Here they are, standing in the temple proclaiming a resurrected savior.
 - b) They are preaching in total opposition to the teachings of the Sadducees on both counts.
 - c) Not only that, but since these men were obviously at least part of the leaders that Peter was speaking of, he (Peter) was directly blaming them for the death of the Messiah (which they did not believe in to begin with).
- 13) Given all that, it is not a surprise at all that they arrested them in order to silence them immediately.
- 14) So, in jail overnight and off to the Sanhedrin in the morning.
- 15) More folks who would be totally against what they were preaching.
- a) Annas, the Sadducee figure head of the Sanhedrin.
 - b) Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family – again Sadducees.
 - c) Are you starting to see a pattern here?
- 16) Now we get down to it. You would think that in this case, this powerful body would say simply you have broken law XXX and therefore we are sentencing you to YYY.
- 17) But wait a minute – what law XXX – there is none!
- 18) So, it comes down to them deciding they really could do nothing – because of the people, and the fact that they knew the people knew of the miracle.
- 19) So, they put the question to Peter:
- “By what power or what name did you do this?”
- 20) Peter then (if I can paraphrase a bit) gets a little sarcastic and smart mouthed with them:
- “Oh, you mean us being kind to the crippled man and healing him – that thing? In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth – you remember him, the guy you crucified?”
- 21) The reaction of these folks is not unusual, for us or them, if you find somebody that nails you and you have no come back just dismiss them as being ignorant and go on with life.
- 22) This is basically what they do when they decide among themselves...
- 13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.
- 23) Again, they can't really do anything serious. They could beat them, have them flogged, throw them in jail for a while longer but they really see no way that any of that would stop them.
- 24) So - threats, and more threats!
- 25) I personally think we see Peter through the Holy Spirit is at one of his finest points here.
- 26) He knows that they are on the ropes so he takes one last shot in his answer!!!!
- “Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! 20 As

for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

27) These leaders are between the rock and the hard place – no real crime with a defined punishment,

a) Peter and John’s miracle was known, and the people were excited and happy about it.

28) Round one to the “unschooled, ordinary men”!

29) There is a quote attributed to a bishop of, I assume recent times, which I think is very interesting and puts a little perspective on what is happening here and will continue to happen throughout our study of Acts.

30) This bishop complained that he didn’t seem to be having the same impact as the first apostles.

‘Everywhere St Paul went there was a riot. Everywhere I go they serve tea.’

31) This I think speaks volumes regarding the opposition and problems that the early church leaders – the apostles, preachers, teachers, and others faced in their lives.

32) People then were more polarized – threatened – and as such were more likely to react more dramatically or even violently to the Gospel message than today – especially in our environment.

33) Today, we worry about being uncomfortable speaking to people about Christ.

34) Even when we do talk to people about Him, we worry about someone saying, “I’m not interested” and think when that happens we have failed.

35) The entire way these early Christians taught and presented the gospel is totally different from our situation, at least in our communities here in the good old US of A.

Agree / Disagree?

Notwithstanding the miracles, should it be?

We all cannot be Peter, John, or Paul – BUT – honest answer, does this speak into your life – do you feel an urge or a twinge of desire to share more?

If not, for you personally, what is missing – what is the factor that stops us?

Acts 4:23–31 (NIV)

- 1) Prayer! First and foremost at this point for all who were there.
- 2) One must consider, I think, that the reason they were so moved to prayer at this moment was thankfulness.
- 3) However, the thrust of the prayer was entreaty – entreaty to God to allow them to speak and witness even more boldly.
- 4) These men and women were on fire. They obviously were filled with the Holy Spirit and had already informed these leaders that they would not cease preaching and teaching Jesus.

- 5) They knew as surely as they had done this that they would never be able to do it alone.
- 6) They wanted to assure that the mightiest force in the entire universe – God the Father was going to stand with them in their efforts.
- 7) They prayed powerfully for this and it is important to look squarely at what this is:
 - a) First, by praying the verses from Psalm 2 they acknowledged exactly what their situation was.
 - b) Second, there prayer was not for protection from these forces – instead, it was for:
 - i) Boldness – the ability to proclaim boldly what the Lord put on their hearts.
 - ii) Healings, signs, and wonders – they wanted God to, through them, present signs of healings and other miracles – not so they would be glorified but so that people would see God’s power and believe in His Son.
 - iii) All in the name of Jesus!
- 8) If I may be so bold as to say so, verse 31 is God saying AMEN!
- 31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.
- 9) N.T. Wright makes the valid point that the devil is always trying to thwart our Godly plans and efforts.
- 10) We may not have the chief priests and leaders of the Sanhedrin threatening us but we are definitely on Satan’s radar.
- 11) We are absolutely in need of God’s strength and help to fight off Satan’s destructive efforts.

12) Keeping in mind that we are talking about struggles on behalf of Jesus and our witnessing for Him...

Should we pray with this fervor, desire, and conviction?

Do we have circumstances that warrant that?

What are some?

Further, do these struggles have to be about big things?

How about our personal day-to-day struggles on behalf of Jesus?

Acts 4:32–37 (NIV)

- 1) Here, we see a very interesting set of circumstances laid out by Luke.
- 2) He has already told us of the unity of heart and mind of the believers in Jerusalem.
- 3) Obviously, this leads to a communal living situation.
- 4) There are several things we can determine from studying what others have found here.
 - a) First, communal living was not a strange concept to the Jewish mentality.
 - i) One notable example is the community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran.
 - ii) In them, we find a description of a ‘covenant community’ (called the Yahad) which was formed by a person called the “Teacher of Righteousness.”
 - iii) This person probably lived in the first century BCE or somewhat before.
 - iv) As I mentioned a few weeks ago, the general scholarly opinion today is that this was the Essenes though there is still much debate regarding this.
 - v) The true bottom line is that the Christians in Jerusalem did basically the same thing but obviously in the name of Jesus and, for different core reasons.
 - vi) In the case of the Qumran community, the reason was that it was part of their religious beliefs.
 - (1) They were very ascetic in their disciplines and one of their main purposes in establishing this community in this remote area was likely isolation.
 - vii) The Christians, on the other hand, did this out of necessity – the situation dictated that they had to support each other in this manner and it was an act of love for their newfound brothers and sisters.
 - b) This is really the second major item we should see in this passage – we are definitely not dealing with communism – instead, we are dealing with a purely voluntary action on the parts of these believers.
 - i) They did not sell the house in which they were living – if they had done that then they would obviously not have had a place to live.
 - ii) Instead, it was extra properties that were being sold.
 - iii) The idea was taking care of the needs of the members of their community who were in need.
 - c) As we have discussed before, God never asks us to give up everything only share what we have.
 - i) The only time Jesus asks someone to give all they possessed was the rich young ruler and even though he was to give it to the poor, which was not the purpose.
 - (1) The purpose was to remove a stumbling block from the man’s path.

- 5) One point that N.T. Wright makes which I think is really on target. The whole idea here is seeing the needs of others in our community (church if you will) as our needs.
- a) Raising the level of importance of these needs once our attitude adjusts to that concept. To quote:

What you do with money and possessions declares loudly what sort of a community you are, and the statement made by the early church's practice was clear and definite. No wonder they were able to give such powerful testimony to the resurrection of Jesus. They were demonstrating that it was a reality in ways that many Christians today, who often sadly balk at even giving a tithe of their income to the church, can only dream of.

Wright, N. T.. Acts for Everyone, Part One: 1 (The New Testament for Everyone) (pp. 76-77). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

Altamesa has always been known as a generous congregation.

Having said that, do you think our level of awareness and caring for our members reaches the level of these folks?

If our answer is NO, then two other questions:

Do we need to be like that group of Christians in Jerusalem?

Why? Why Not? Perhaps, to what level?

If we do need to be like them what do you see as a way for us to get there?

If our answer is yes, then what are some (or one) examples?

Now, same questions – how about us as individuals?

Do we need to be like that willing to look at others needs as our own?

Why? Why Not? Perhaps, to what level?

If we do what do you see as a way for us to get there?

- 6) One other comment on this before we consider Barnabas in particular.
- a) This communal living was NOT a permanent way of living for the church as a whole.
- b) Within a short while, Stephen would be stoned and the great persecution would break out.
- c) That will cause the church to disperse throughout Judea and basically all parts of the Levant.
- 7) So, let's take a quick look at this mention of Barnabas.
- a) First, the consensus is that this is the same Joseph who is nicknamed Barnabas who is friends with Paul and accompanies him on his missionary journeys.
- b) An interesting fact that may have escaped notice is that he is of the tribe of Levi.

- c) This meant that he could not own property in Israel proper (Levites were forbidden to own land in Israel—see Numbers 18:20–24 and Deuteronomy 10:9; 18:1–2).
 - d) Therefore, the property he sold was likely in Cyprus where he was from, and of course is one of the places he and Paul visit on their journeys.
- 8) As MacArthur points out, Luke is not concerned about where the property was – his point is to show how this “son of encouragement” selflessly gave to the cause being discussed.
- a) Very important to keep this in mind as we proceed on ...

Comments / Questions?

- 9) Well, as with all things involving humans, it doesn’t take long before things get a little messed up. Beginning in 5 verse 1 we read

Acts 5:1–11 (NIV)

- 1) There is definitely a sharp contrast between the actions of these two folks and Barnabas.
- 2) The obvious sin here is that both Ananias and his wife lied regarding the amount of the money.
 - a) They said that the price for the property was X and they gave X.
 - b) In truth, the price they received for the property was Y and they gave X which was only part of Y.
- 3) Now, when we look at this, it is really sad. As Peter points out, they were not required to give any of the proceeds of the property to the apostles.
- 4) They had total control of the property and of the money received through the entire process.
- 5) The truth is, they could have received price Y, said the received price Y but were giving X and all would have been fine – TRUTH IN GIVING!!
- 6) However, the aggregates part of this was two-fold – they lied AND they lied to make themselves look good in the eyes of the apostles and probably their friends in the congregation.
 - a) Lied to the Holy Spirit, to God, and to the congregation of believers.
 - b) Hypocrisy and desire for elevated spiritual status are at the center of their motives.
- 7) Jesus finds hypocrisy to be a most serious sin. He calls attention to this many times in His ministry.

Matthew 6:1–4 (NIV)

- 8) Then later in Matthew, He gets even more pointed in what he says.

Matthew 23:29–33 (NIV)

- 9) It has been almost 900 years (approx. 842 BCE) since the last person was executed by God in the Old Testament.
- a) We read in 2 Chronicles 21:18-19 about King Jehoram who was afflicted by God and died because of his sin.
- 10) The only other directly caused death by God in the New Testament is that of Herod Agrippa.
- a) The people shouted that his was the voice of God not man. His sin was that he did not correct the situation. The sin that caused his demise was he did not correct them. He let them think that.

Acts 12:21–23 (NIV)

- 11) We obviously do not know what the actual cause of death was for Ananias or Sapphira – heart attack, stroke, fright – we just are not told.
- 12) What we can, I think, know for sure is that it was God’s hand that performed the deed.
- 13) About 3 hours later, same song, second verse – Sapphira lies the same way with, we can assume the same intent and, of course with the same outcome – she dies instantly.
- 14) Let’s try to answer a couple of questions here.

The first question in the middle of this is.

We are not God – we cannot make that call for true however, – honest answer – does this seem to you to be a sin deserving of death for both of them?

- What we do know is that in God’s eyes, there are no big vs. little sins – sin is sin!
- 15) Before we get to the next question, here are some things to consider.
- a) We see no room for repentance so it can’t be that.
- b) It is swift and complete for both of them so it can’t be a lesson for Sapphira alone.
- c) N.T. Wright makes the point that holiness is really a part of temple worship.
- d) If we consider this new church as a substitute for that temple, we can see a need for that holiness.
- e) There were strict rules regarding actions in the temple.
- i) Holy of Holies – only entered with many cautions once per year by the high priest.
 - ii) Sign warning Gentiles of the fact they could be executed if they went beyond a certain point.
 - iii) Women were also under strict requirements as to where they could go.
- f) Wright further comments:

Holiness, in other words, is not an optional extra. How God chooses to make that point is in the last analysis up to him, since he is the only one who knows the human heart. But the earliest Christians were quite clear. To name the name of Jesus, and

to invoke the holy spirit, is to claim to be the Temple of the living God, and that is bound to have consequences.

Wright, N. T.. Acts for Everyone, Part One: 1 (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 81). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

16) Questions for the week that we will begin with next time.

So, we have to ask the question then what was God's purpose? Was it strictly punishment?

Is holiness an option? How seriously should we take the idea of being holy as He is holy?

1) Picking up the questions from last time...

So, looking at the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira we have to ask the question then what was God's purpose? Was it strictly punishment or was there possibly another purpose?

- Most likely, it is a life lesson for the church. The closing comment makes it clear that it struck fear in ALL who heard about it – not surprising!
- This action to me gives a clear indication of the seriousness of lying, hypocrisy, and specifically about lying to God and/or the Holy Spirit.
- We live in an age of spin where it is everywhere. We see it in every aspect of our lives from politicians, businessmen, TV ads and even clerks in stores putting things in ways that do not portray the truth – not telling it like it is!

So, is Spin a lie?

- A lie is a lie is a lie!!
- Wright makes what I think, is a very interesting observation here:

The real, deep-level problem about lying is that it misuses, or abuses, the highest faculty we possess: the gift of expressing in clear speech the reality of who we are, what we think, and how we feel. It is, as it were, the opposite of the gift of tongues.

Wright, N. T.. Acts for Everyone, Part One: 1 (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 81). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

2) If we look deeply at the sermon on the mount, we will find that Jesus truly did address this exact thing.

Matthew 5:33–37 (NIV)

- 3) Many times we look at this passage and place the emphasis on not taking oaths. And indeed this is a major part of what He is saying.
- 4) However, the last statement made regarding Yes being Yes and No being No speaks to integrity and what is behind what we say – exactly what Wright is talking about.

Comments / Questions?

Now, to the next question held over from last time...

- a) N.T. Wright makes the point that holiness is really a part of temple worship.
- b) If we consider this new church as a substitute for that temple, we can see a need for that holiness.
- c) Wright further comments:

Holiness, in other words, is not an optional extra. How God chooses to make that point is in the last analysis up to him, since he is the only one who knows the human heart. But the earliest Christians were quite clear. To name the name of Jesus, and to invoke the holy spirit, is to claim to be the Temple of the living God, and that is bound to have consequences.

So, is he correct? Is holiness NOT an option? How serious should we take the idea of being “holy as He is holy”?

1 Peter 1:15–16 (NIV)

- If we don’t get anything else out of this event, we must get that God will not abide these kinds of actions.
- I think Wright’s comment is on point – Holiness is not an option – when we claim Christ as our savior and Lord, we are to become holy as He is holy – there should be no room for intentional sin, greed, or hypocrisy in our lives. EMPHISIS on INTENTIONAL!

Comments / Questions?

1) O.k. – from the good to the bad and now, back to the good ...

Acts 5:12–16 (NIV)

- 2) We must make a point here regarding where the disciples are.
 - a) We need to remember that the temple in Jerusalem was not just a single building.
 - b) We have the various courts etc.
 - c) We also have lodging for priest and others who came to serve when it was their turn.
 - d) Additionally, there was a porch.
 - i) Depending on your translation, this might be called a Colonnade or a Portico.
 - ii) Don’t think of this like a porch on your house – even the big southern wrap around porches we see on the renovation shows.
 - e) Solomon’s Colonnade was an area that stretched the entire length of the temple grounds along the eastern side.
 - f) It was a covered area with many columns supporting the roof.
 - g) Basically on the temple grounds but not “really in” the temple.
- 3) This is the area that we are talking about here where the disciples were basically healing and preaching.
- 4) Again, Wright brings what I think is an interesting parallel here.

This situation would be like a group of ne'er-do-well musicians setting up outside Carnegie Hall all the time, including during the many super concerts that are held there. It probably would not take long for the management to get serious about moving these people out!

- 5) We might consider this to be what is happening here.
- 6) Peter and the rest of the disciples had basically set up shop in this area and were obviously preaching much the same message which they preached on Pentecost and some weeks before at the entry to the temple grounds.
- 7) Not what the local “management” wanted to here!
- 8) There is a curious statement regarding no one wanting to join them. It could possibly mean anyone else who had a message etc.
 - a) There was also likely the remembrance of the Ananias and Sapphira affair of a short time before.
 - b) If you were just curious, you might not be so anxious to associate with this group.
- 9) But Luke hastens to add that many folks were still being added to their number everyday – less folks under the “management” of the temple.
- 10) Next, we look at another one of those unique situations that seem to be occurring during this time – the fact that folks were being healed by even Peter’s shadow passing over them.
- 11) We have another comparable situation with the handkerchiefs of Paul having a healing property as well.
- 12) Obviously, during this time, God is choosing to work in many different miraculous ways – ways unique to this time in the history of the Church.
- 13) The equally obvious reason is to show the power of the risen savior and to bring people to Him.

If you were a passerby here would you stop to listen or would you move quickly by?

How about if someone today approaches you with a Bible in hand – what SHOULD you do? And (honest answer) What WOULD you do?

- Harks back to Micah’s sermon this morning – being personal dealing with contact situations in the way Jesus would.

Acts 5:17–24 (NIV)

- 1) When we look at what happens, we cannot help but see the contrast in our culture and laws and those of the Jews of this time.
 - a) These men (the Sanhedrin and specifically, the Sadducees) simply have the power to arrest all the apostles and throw them in jail without any regard for anything else – guilt or innocence.

- b) We will see here shortly that these kinds of actions do not stop at throwing them in jail.
 - 2) One thing we should take note of here is the reason these men were thrown in jail – Luke tells us that it was **jealousy**.
 - a) The apostles, as we discussed a bit ago were really starting to gather momentum.
 - b) People were believing their teachings and joined the Church in large numbers.
 - c) It appears that the religious leaders were not able to refute them and they became frustrated and jealous because of that inability.
 - d) To say it another way, Peter and the apostles were commanding more respect than they were and this was absolutely not setting well with these guys.
 - 3) Their only recourse is to arrest them and try to shut them up that way so, that's exactly what they did.
 - 4) However, it does not work – God has other plans!
 - 5) Gamaliel in a few verses will be quoted as telling these very men who have made the arrest that they cannot fight against God. In verse 38 and 39 he says ...
- 38 ... for if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. ³⁹ But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.
- a) I think it is important to note here that Gamaliel is a Pharisee, NOT a Sadducee.
 - 6) God's plan comes fully into play later in the evening when He sends an angel to miraculously release the apostles and return them to preaching in the temple court.

Acts 5:21b–23 (NIV)

- 1) The leaders had let the apostles cool their heels in jail overnight.
- 2) Now, it was time to bring this mess to an end with another trial and punishment that would end it for good (so they thought).
- 3) Now, we don't know exactly what they thought they were going to do but, surprise, they don't have anyone in the jail to do it to!
- 4) The reaction of both the chief priests and the temple guards is quite interesting.
 - a) They don't begin by asking who let these men out or even attempting to consider what the guards on the doors might have to say.
 - b) Their question is not – Hey what happened, where did these guys go, or how did this happen?
 - c) Instead it was – Uh Oh! What is this going to lead to?
- 5) To me, the indication is that despite their attempts to deter all this – they saw the miraculous release for exactly what it was – God's hand is in this and “*we are going to have a problem!*”
- 6) And now, their problem is going to become even more acute!
- 7) Moving on to verse 25 we find ...

Acts 5:25–26 (NIV)

- 1) We must note here – the location changes per the angel's command – we are moving to the courts – not outside in the colonnade area as before.
 - a) To stay with our musicians and Carnegie Hall analogy, we are moving from the street outside Carnegie Hall to the lobby – big difference!
- 2) Obviously, this does not sit well with those in charge. The disciples are playing in their sandbox and they do NOT like it one bit.
- 3) So, it doesn't take long for them to get an answer as to “what this is going to come to” – more of the same teachings and problems they have been dealing with.
 - a) In the temple courts, however, this problem is much more serious!
- 4) Of course, their reaction doesn't change – they arrest them again and bring them into the Sanhedrin.
- 5) I find it interesting that the captain and his officers brought the apostles “quietly” because they were afraid of being stoned themselves.
- 6) Obviously, they knew the apostles were teaching what the people wanted to hear.
- 7) It is also obvious that any attempt by the Sanhedrin to squelch the apostles' preaching would also cause a problem with the people – a problem which, at this point anyway, the Sanhedrin did not appear to care about..

8) O.K. – what do we do now? ...

Acts 5:27–28 (NIV)

9) The Sanhedrin is in a state of denial.

10) They have “given orders” for what that’s worth to the apostles NOT to preach in THIS NAME.

a) It appears that they won’t even say the name of Jesus.

11) It is all the apostles’ fault – they are the ones who are filling Jerusalem with their preaching.

12) We might want to notice here that the high priest points to nothing specific about what they are preaching other than...

13) “... determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood” –

a) Again, note, he does NOT say the name of Jesus!

14) The whole idea of this brief summary by the high priest and his counsel was to condemn these men for preaching something radical in a place where it made these guys very uncomfortable.

15) Instead, it simply sounds like they are crying ...

16) “(Boo Hoo), we’ve done nothing wrong and you guys need to stop blaming us.”

17) Weak at best, pathetic at worst – especially when we consider the fact that everyone in that room knew the absolute truth about what was done and by whom!

a) They were absolutely guilty of the death of “this MAN.”

18) So, now, we move from the weak (high priest’s comments) to – “IN YOUR FACE” Strong!!!!

Acts 5:29–33 (NIV)

19) Peter steps immediately into answering each point they have just made.

20) Boldly and clearly, he states emphatically that they are being commanded by God to preach as they are.

21) The fact that what their preaching is disturbing to these religious leaders doesn’t change that fact.

a) What the members of the Sanhedrin want cannot override God’s will.

22) Peter is as bold in stating the truth about his Lord as the high priest was reluctant to even say the name.

23) He clearly states that they, the Sanhedrin and all the men in that room, were the ones who hung Jesus on the cross and killed Him.

a) They might not have lifted him in place or have driven the nails but they were the ones who planned and made the crucifixion happen – it is squarely on them.

24) He is equally clear when he states that God raised Him from the dead.

25) And then, he really lands the final blow!

26) In two simple sentences, Peter delivers to the Sanhedrin the proclamation of true heart of the message they have been preaching to all who would listen throughout Jerusalem.

“³¹ God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. ³² We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

27) How much clearer and more pointed could Peter have been?

28) And, of course, there is not a single hint of change in their reaction – They simply want to kill them just like they did the guy whose name they wouldn’t say.

Multiple Choice Question:

Was Peter?

- A. **Fearless and Confident**
- B. **Calm**
- C. **Arrogant**
- D. **All of the above**

Why?

Do we have that same Fearless, Confident, and/or Calm nature about us when someone challenges our faith?

Why? Why Not?

What about when we have an opportunity to share Christ with others – do we have that same Fearless, Confident, and/or Calm nature?

Why? Why Not?

If NOT then two questions

Do we want it?

How do we get it?

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 12 <<<<<<<

- 1) Last time, we finished with Peter and the rest of the apostles before the Sanhedrin after being arrested (gently) in the Temple Courts.
- 2) They had been asked a series of questions by the Chief Priest and then replied...

Acts 5:29–33 (NIV)

- 3) So, with that, moving on to a little sanity from an unexpected source...

Acts 5:34–39 (NIV)

- 1) Likely Gamaliel had to settle everyone down first before he could reason with them.
- 2) This is the same Gamaliel who was Paul's teacher.
- 3) Though, as a Pharisee there were many differences between Gamaliel and the Sadducees, he is still a very unlikely ally of the apostles.
 - a) In truth, he was probably not, he was only attempting to apply some logic to this chaotic situation.
 - b) I am sure, he did not agree with the apostle's message.
- 4) His idea was really straightforward – since their leader was gone (just like Theudas and the Judas he mentions) they could expect this “preaching” to end shortly.

What do you think Gamaliel is missing? What is the big difference in the followings Judas and Theudas and the followers of the Way at this point?

Number of followers:

Theudas – 400

Judas – no number given. The Scripture simply says, “all who followed him were dispersed” (guess - under a thousand)

- 5) We have no way of knowing if Gamaliel knew the number (probably not) but, at this point the number of Christians was over 5000!
- 6) They were also beginning to return to their home countries and spread the message even further.
- 7) Gamaliel's logical scenario does appear to have had the desired effect.
 - a) Things seem to settle down and the talk of killing them goes away.
 - b) Vs 40 begins by saying: ⁴⁰ His speech persuaded them.
 - c) They must have had at least a small, tiny bit, of an inkling that Gamaliel could be right.

What part of Gamaliel's argument do you think persuaded them?

If from God they would be unable to stop them? Or

Fear of standing against God Or

That it might just “go away”?

- d) After all, they knew that Jesus' life witnessed to the fact that He was of God.
 - i) Though they might try to deny it, somewhere inside themselves, they had to acquiesce to that truth.
- 8) Regardless, as we continue, we see, they could not just follow Gamaliel's final words and let them go – they had to do something.

Acts 5:40b–42 (NIV)

- 1) I am sure that in this situation as in most, there were those members of the Sanhedrin that still wanted to kill them all. (Likely some of the Sadducees in particular)
- 2) The next best thing in the way of a compromise was to flog them and release them.
- 3) I'm sure they had a slim hope that their command not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus" would work or that Gamaliel was right and this would come to nothing.
- 4) WRONG in either case!!!.
- 5) The Romans had at least two types of whips for flogging.
 - a) The more serious of the two had a handle with leather straps attached to it.
 - b) Knots were tied into the straps with bone or sharp metal bits tied onto them.
 - c) This was the device used prior to crucifixion.
 - d) The second type was basically the same but without the bone or metal fragments.
 - e) This was the type used on those about to be crucified – it hastened their deaths.
 - f) This is the kind of punishment Jesus anticipated when he spoke to the disciples about their final trip to Jerusalem, and it is what he received prior to his crucifixion (Matt 20:19; 27:26; Mark 10:34; 15:15; John 19:1).
- 6) Most likely, the Jewish instrument for flogging was like the second one.
 - a) It would cause lots of pain but would not kill the victim.
- 7) As we proceed through our study, Paul will be flogged numerous times and, in all likelihood, with the second type of whip.
- 8) Getting back to this incident, the disciples after being flogged, left the Sanhedrin "rejoicing" having suffered dishonor or embarrassment for the name of Jesus!
- 9) Knowing these guys were in tremendous pain – yet they were able to rejoice and we can assume share that rejoicing with all their brothers and sisters.
- 10) Verse 42 says a lot with a very few words:
⁴² Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.
 - a) What we see here is **first**, they did not obey the command or the Sanhedrin. AND they did it right where they were doing it when this last incident started – in the temple courts.
 - i) Obeying the angel and God rather than the Sanhedrin.
 - b) **Second**, they were also teaching in houses.

- i) Likely, these were gatherings where folks would come to hear what one of the apostles had to say concerning Jesus and the Way.

Questions or Comments?

- 11) Looking at Acts timelines, there could be as much as two years between the floggings and what we are about to read next – the choosing of the first 7 deacons.
- 12) Regardless of the amount of time, the problem was one of growth – we know that the Church had grown to over 5000 by this time.
- 13) One would assume that over this period of time, their numbers in Jerusalem were growing at a tremendous rate.
- 14) One might also assume that many of the original believers had returned to their hometowns throughout Judea and the rest of the world and were continuing to spread the Gospel there.
- 15) Basically, things were beginning to settle down some.

Acts 6:1–7 (NIV)

- 1) We need to look, at least briefly, at the potential underlying cause of this problem. It is actually two-fold.
 - a) **First**, as with any group that is growing and which consists of individuals from many and varied backgrounds, there will be differences regardless of the hearts involved.
 - i) Especially hearts that are as young in the faith as these were.
 - ii) We have the Hellenistic Jews and the Hebraic Jews.
 - (1) Hellenistic Jews were mainly those who were NOT living in Jerusalem.
 - (a) They actually came from the diaspora – those who for one reason or another had left the homeland and settled throughout the Roman Empire then, returned.
 - (b) They likely spoke Aramaic and Hebrew and were likely fluent in Greek as well.
 - (2) The Hebraic Jews on the other hand were native Israelites living in the homeland and not part of the diaspora.
 - (a) They probably spoke some Greek but were not as fluent as the Hellenistic Jews.
 - (b) They also spoke Aramaic and Hebrew.
 - (3) Obviously, there are some if not a lot of cultural differences here.
 - iii) The **Second** part of the problem was a little more subtle.
 - (1) Normally, the families would care for the needs of their widowed relatives.
 - (2) However, we need to remember that in many cases, those normal family ties may have been cut when the widow would become a member of the Way.
 - (3) The same thing is still happening in many parts of the world today. If you become a Christian, you become dead to the rest of your family.

- iv) On the good side of this was that the new family of believers had to take on the responsibilities of the missing family.
- 2) This problem was probably NOT a true matter of neglect.
- 3) It was also likely not the whole group against the whole group – it was more specifically those who were responsible for the distribution of the food and the widows that were being overlooked.
- 4) My guess would be that it was simply a matter of organization – not having enough people to do the necessary tasks to ensure that all the widows were taken care of.
 - a) This would be especially true if the disciples were the only ones involved at this point.
- 5) We need a solution!
 - a) Apostles, hit the road and deliver food to these widow ladies.
 - i) As stated – Not a really good idea.
 - ii) Why – because, as with most of us, we have ministries for which we are chosen.
 - (1) God has given us talents (or whatever other terminology we might use) for these ministries.
 - iii) If we are suddenly forced (due to expediency or any other factor) to abandon or not give our whole effort to that ministry, that ministry will suffer.
 - iv) Before we ever embark on such a change, much prayer and consideration must be given.
 - (1) We can never assume that any given path is what God wants without prayer and consideration.
 - (2) Not every open door has been opened by God!
 - (3) In this case, I am sure the prayer and consideration did take place.
 - (4) The obvious thing that would suffer without a solution would be the daily teaching of the Gospel and healing of the sick etc. which was being done by the apostles.
- 6) The solution here was of course, to appoint deacons (7) to handle the task that was not being handled.
 - a) Now, as to whether they were the “boots on the ground” folks actually taking the food to the widows or they could have been the organizers – getting others involved to actually do the distribution – is not clear.
 - b) My guess would be perhaps a little of both – we really do not know how many widows were involved in this distribution.
 - c) Either way, it appears to be the solution that was needed.
- 7) Of the seven, Luke makes a special note regarding Stephen – “man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.”
- 8) As we will see in a moment, just how true that is.

9) Before we get to that, we need to be sure we note the results of this decision clearly. In vs. 7, Luke states:

⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

10) Due to the apostles preaching and more than normal prayer, we see a significant result:

- a) Word is spread – I would observe that this was likely not only the apostles but men like Stephen as well.
- b) Both of those items I think could be expected given the situation – however, the final note here is that a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.
- c) I think we need to recall, there is always an undercurrent in the Sanhedrin, and among the leaders in general that have doubts about what they were attempting to do.
- d) There were those who as, Gamliel pointed out, would really like not to be found fighting against God if the Way was of God.
- e) Obviously, as time has passed, many of those who did perhaps feel that way decided that it was time to stop fighting them and join them – so, they did.

Questions / Comments?

Acts 6:8–10 (NIV)

- 1) As we begin this reading, we can see where and why Luke made the comment he made about Stephen.
- 2) There are some extraordinary characteristics given here regarding Stephen that we really need to look at.
 - a) Full of God's grace and power.
 - i) The assumption here is that he was extraordinary in his speaking and talking about the salvation offered through the Lord.
 - ii) I think we must assume that he was what we might call "a cut above" the average disciple.
 - b) Performed great wonders and signs among the people.
 - i) One would assume this meant healings and possibly other miraculous signs – perhaps not unlike the apostles.
 - c) Very much Greek speaking – dispute with:
 - i) Jews of Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia all of whom would be Greek speakers as well.
 - ii) Collectively, this was probably a group of Jewish slaves and children of Jewish slaves who had been freed by Rome.
 - iii) They had formed their own synagogue in Jerusalem.

- 3) Now, as to the argument – we are not told any details regarding what it was about.
 - a) We do know that it stemmed from the opposition these men had to Stephen's message.
 - b) Likely, it was concerning the teachings of Jesus, and Jesus himself as the Son of God and Messiah.
- 4) We also do not know exactly where and why these arguments started.
 - a) A possibility would be that Stephen was attempting to teach (not unlike the apostles) in this synagogue of the Freedmen.
- 5) The major point is that Stephen basically out gunned them – they and their arguments were no match for his wisdom and the Holy Spirit supplied by God – so...

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 13 <<<<<<<

1) Let's begin with a quick review of where Stephen is and how he got there...

Acts 6:8–10 (NIV)

- 2) As we begin this reading, we can see where and why Luke made the comment he made about Stephen.
- 3) There are some extraordinary characteristics given here regarding Stephen that we really need to look at.
 - a) Full of God's grace and power.
 - i) The assumption here is that he was extraordinary in his speaking and talking about the salvation offered through the Lord.
 - ii) I think we must assume that he was what we might call "a cut above" the average disciple (member).
 - b) Performed great wonders and signs among the people.
 - i) One would assume this meant healings and possibly other miraculous signs – perhaps not unlike the apostles themselves.
 - c) He was very much Greek speaking person in order to be able to dispute with:
 - i) Jews of Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia all of whom would be Greek speakers as well.
 - ii) Collectively, this was probably a group of Jewish slaves and children of Jewish slaves who had been freed by Rome.
 - iii) They had formed their own synagogue in Jerusalem.
- 4) Now, as to what their exact opposition was – we are not told any details.
 - a) We do know that it stemmed from the opposition these men had to Stephen's message.
 - b) Likely, it was concerning the teachings of Jesus, and/or Jesus himself as the Son of God and Messiah.
- 5) We also do not know exactly where and why these arguments started.
 - a) A possibility would be that Stephen was attempting to teach (not unlike the apostles) in this synagogue of the Freedmen.
- 6) The major point is that Stephen basically out gunned them – they and their arguments were no match for his wisdom supplied by the Holy Spirit and by God – so...

Acts 6:11–15 (NIV)

- 1) Sound familiar? Same song second verse!
- 2) This is a situation where they made up everything they could and put it in front of the Sanhedrin to see if any of it would get Stephen in deep trouble.
 - a) Blasphemous words against Moses – is that even a thing?

- b) Blasphemous words against God – what words?
 - c) Oh yes, and the dead Jesus they are preaching is going to destroy the temple and change the customs of Moses.
 - d) Not exactly a strong set of arguments.
 - i) The Sanhedrin for sure could and would NOT admit that Jesus was alive so that's a problem immediately.
- 3) Then, to make matters worse, ALL who were in the Sanhedrin saw that Stephen's face was like that of an angel.
- a) Not sure what that really meant and we are not told anything further.
 - b) However, N.T. Wright states what I think is probably a reasonable conclusion regarding this statement.

“Now I have no idea how you know, in advance as it were, what an angel's face looks like. I doubt if the Assembly could have told you, either. But perhaps what we are meant to understand is that there was a kind of light, illuminating Stephen from the inside. A kind of serenity, humble and unostentatious, but confident and assured. In the middle of arguments, controversies, false accusations, and now a serious charge before the highest court, he found himself standing, as the Temple claimed to stand, at the overlap of heaven and earth. The speech he was about to make, and the death he was about to suffer, were simply the final stages in his own travelling, his journey of witness to the risen Jesus, and to the word of God which provided the explanation of what Jesus was all about.”

Wright, N. T.. Acts for Everyone, Part One: 1 (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 106). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

- 4) At any rate, the Sanhedrin at least had to hear what Stephen had to say so ...

Acts 7:1 (NIV)

- 5) This is a case where we might speculate that if Stephen had of said “No – of course not” the Sanhedrin might have simply let him go and nothing else would have happened.
- 6) However, that was not his reply – instead, he takes an opportunity to layout what will prove to be a simple history.
- 7) The bottom line of this history is not the history as they know it but of the truth about the history as God brought it about culminating in the sending of His Son into the world.
- 8) NOTE – at this point, please read the entire section covering Stephen's speech paying particular attention to the closing verses. Keep that in mind as you read the rest of the notes.

Acts 7:2–7:53 (NIV)

- 9) I cannot help but think what Jesus told his disciples applies equally to Stephen in this very case:

Matthew 10:19–20 (NASB 2020)

10) Stephen has done the same thing Christ himself did on numerous occasions.

11) He took the sorted history and failings of the Jewish nation over the centuries and showed clearly that they had done the EXACT SAME THING in killing and rejecting Jesus that their ancestors had in killing and rejecting the prophets!

12) A true “point the finger directly in their face” moment!

13) Again, N.T. Wright’s commentary he says:

He (Stephen) could simply have waved the charges away ... Instead, he takes the bull by the horns and goes for the big picture. What you need, he says, is to rework your run-up. Tell the story again from the very beginning and get it right this time. Pace out the whole journey, from Abraham onwards, so that you arrive at the present moment at exactly the right speed and from exactly the right angle. Then, and only then, will you understand who Jesus is, and what I and my friends, who believe in him, have and haven’t been saying.

Wright, N. T.. Acts for Everyone, Part One: 1 (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 108). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

14) That, of course, is exactly what Stephen has done!

15) Without hesitation, the Sanhedrin reacts ... Not to the history but the conclusion.

Acts 7:54–56 (NIV)

16) I really have to say I like Wright’s translation of vs. 54:

54 What Stephen said was a blow right to the heart. When they heard it, they gnashed their teeth against him.

Wright, N. T.. Acts for Everyone, Part One: 1 (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 120). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

17) They were angry before but now Stephen really pushed the wrong button!

Acts 7:57–8:1 (NIV)

18) What happens here is a serious (to say the least) offence by the Sanhedrin.

19) This is in essence what they had wanted to do to Peter and John and the rest of the apostles when they captured them and threw them in jail.

20) Gamaliel’s logical assessment of the situation was the only thing that prevented them from doing just that.

21) He evidently was not there or was not able to prevail this time.

22) Bonnie brought up an interesting question regarding how the Sanhedrin got by with this.

23) There are several factors that may play into it.

a) First, we don’t really know if they did get by with this.

i) Annas was removed from the high priest position for murdering for cause without permission, and also just generally being hard to get along with.

From Religion Wiki

Annas officially served as High Priest for ten years (6–15 AD), when at the age of 36 he was deposed by the procurator {Valerius} Gratus 'for imposing and executing capital sentences which had been forbidden by the imperial government.'[3]. Yet while having been officially removed from office, he remained as one of the nations most influential political & social individuals, aided greatly by the use of his five sons and his son-in-law as puppet High Priests[4] till his assassination in 66 AD for advocating peace with Rome.

in: Easton's Bible Dictionary, Articles with content from Wikipedia, High Priests of Israel, and 3 more

- b) This action took place outside the city so it may not have been so well known.
 - c) Second, the Romans may not have really wanted to do anything about it even if they knew it.
 - d) One other thought I had was that after the crucifixion of Jesus, the Romans may have, for whatever reason been a little more “hands off” in this area.
- 24) I guess the answer to Bonnie’s question is honestly, we really don’t know.
- a) As we just pointed out, there are several ways this could have gone.
- 25) If I ever found myself in a situation like Stephen is in here, I would hope and pray that I had his courage.
- a) Courage to look to the heavens and see what he saw and say it out loud and strong.
 - b) Courage to think of my attackers with love and ask for them to be forgiven.
- 26) The courage was not misplaced – he truly had that courage and did with it exactly as he should have.
- 27) How we get this is exactly and precisely the way Stephen did – he had learned it from the teachings of Jesus, who made loving one’s enemies central and non-negotiable.
- 28) We know this not only by His teaching but from His example. On the cross Jesus himself prayed that those driving the nails might be forgiven.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 14 <<<<<<<

1) Let's begin by looking back at Stephen's death and in particular, the part Saul played in it.

Acts 7:57–8:1 (NIV)

- 2) First,, it will be obvious from what we read next, that Stephen's love for them and his courage was truly lost on all those who were participating in this heinous crime.
- 3) In fact, if anything, the crime itself emboldened them to continue their persecution but on a larger scale.
- 4) Of course, to state the obvious here, Luke makes two mentions of a young Jew named Saul.
 - a) First, he held their cloaks.
 - b) Second, he approved of the killing.
- 5) There are possibly some telling things here that we might find in the from of a couple of unanswered questions:

a) **Question 1: Why was Saul not in the thick of the stone throwing?**

- i) Saul was a Pharisee though very likely not a member of the Sanhedrin.
- ii) He was taught by Gamaliel – perhaps he felt at that point that this might have been the wrong thing to do – and yet we have to ask question 2...

b) **Question 2: Why did he approve the killing?**

- i) We are told that he was an official witness against Stephen.
- ii) It strikes me interesting that if Saul was (as he claims) a “Hebrew of Hebrews” – totally devout to the law in everyway – then would not one assume he would not be part of the corruption and general mess of the Jewish leadership at this time.
- c) Two other possible questions here – **First**, as an official witness, was he part of the lies?

Acts 6:11(NIV)

- d) **Second**, why would he have approved of this violent and illegal act?
- e) I think N.T. Wright may really have come to the correct conclusion.
 - i) Gamaliel took a “live and let live” approach to movements such as the one being delt with here.
 - ii) However, it may be that his young student Saul was not satisfied with that approach.
 - iii) For whatever deep-seated reason within his core, Saul felt this “movement” was a pure and definite threat to his beliefs and the Jewish religious system as a whole.
 - iv) Saul was, to use his own words, zealous for the faith.

Galatians 1:14 (NIV)

- 6) We will be speaking a lot to Saul and then Paul in just a while – what the transition is and how it comes about.

- 7) However, for now, and with all that in mind, it is not at all surprising to see what happens next
.....

Acts 8:1b–8:3 (NIV)

- 1) So much for a happy church home life in Jerusalem.
- 2) The Christian community had grown to well over 5000 at a point prior to this.
- 3) We are not told of any real persecution against them before this other than the skirmishes between the apostles and the Sanhedrin.
- 4) This day changed all that – and, if I were to venture a guess, this was likely the very day that Saul changed as well.
- 5) All the prior incidents of the apostles being arrested and harassed by the Jewish leadership now are overshadowed by the cruel murder of one of their beloved members.
- 6) Their mourning would have to, however, be short lived for Saul evidently began his campaign to destroy the church that very day.
 - a) We can't know for sure since we are not told.
- 7) Of course, at this point the Sanhedrin was more than happy to go along with Saul's persecution.
- 8) I can't imagine what it would have been like for these Christians to be sitting in their homes and someone break in and simply grab you and your wife and haul you off to prison without a trial or even so much as a question.
- 9) As horrific as this sudden persecution was for those living in Jerusalem, it was perhaps a benefit for the Church from a divine perspective.
- 10) These young Christians were now forced out of the Jerusalem community and into the remainder of Judea and Samaria and for that matter, probably the rest of the known world.
 - a) One interesting statistic here is the word **ALL**.
 - b) Taken at face value, it seems like the persecution basically wiped out the Jerusalem Church.
 - i) The only ones left were the apostles.
 - c) Sometimes, if we won't do something on our own, God has His way of seeing that we do it anyway.

Ever have that happen to you?

- d) They wound up planting churches and the spreading the Gospel.
 - i) In this situation, this was inevitable.
 - e) If the Sanhedrin, the Jewish leaders were to look back on this 10 years down the road, they would probably have considered it a big mistake.
 - f) Instead of curing the problem they caused it to spread and lost any hope of controlling it.
- 1) Now that the Christian community is scattered because of this persecution, let's look at our first incident that arises from this.

Acts 8:4–7 (NIV)

- 2) First, I think it is important to get the picture of what these folks did. This innocuous verse 4 speaks volumes when we consider the circumstances.
 - a) These folks “scattered” because of a “great persecution.”
 - b) That being said, you would think that when they got to wherever they were fleeing to that they would have laid low so to speak.
 - c) Not so! – They jumped right in and started preaching the word, obviously at quite a risk to their own safety.
- 3) Next, we look at Philip who went to an unspecified city in Samaria.
 - a) This is Philip the evangelist – one of the seven chosen for the food distribution earlier – not Philip the apostle.
 - b) As we will see, this is not his home – one might have assumed that he would go there as the persecution began and indeed, he may have been on his way there.
 - c) However, we see him in Samaria and he begins to proclaim the Messiah.
 - d) Then, he went about healing all kinds of illnesses and casting out demons.
 - e) We definitely should note that “they all paid close attention to what he said” ... and ... “there was great joy in that city.”
 - f) I cannot help but believe that Luke included this as what we might consider a typical response to the message that these men and women brought wherever they went.
- 4) As we will see as we continue, Philip might have been on his way home but, God has quite an adventure in store for him at this point in his life.

Acts 8:9–13 (NIV)

- 1) O.k. Simon did become a believer; however it appears that along with his belief, came some misunderstanding of what was happening.
 - a) Perhaps some unhealthy curiosity.
- 2) Simon was somewhat unique – he made claims about himself and obviously convinced at least some of the people that he was “the Great Power of God.”
 - a) He was a sorcerer so he was able to amaze the people but he was not from God so he could not do any of the miraculous things that Philip was doing, thru the Holy Spirit.
 - b) According to one commentary, at this time, sorcerers and magicians were numerous and influential.
 - i) They did perform healings and exorcisms, and practiced astrology, but they utilized the power of Satan for anything that was truly miraculous.
- 3) Simon was amazed by what the Holy Spirit was doing through Philip and, as we will see, it caused a very inappropriate action on his part.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 15 <<<<<<<

- 1) Let's begin by looking at this unique situation with the Holy Spirit not coming immediately to the Samaritans.

Acts 8:14–17 (NIV)

- 2) Philip becomes the ground breaker here.
 - a) Jesus had commanded that they go to the Samaritans but Philip, as far as we know, is the first.
 - b) The Samaritans had at one time been idol worshipers but by this time that was over and they worshiped the true God.
 - c) However, they were not on the same page as the Jews because they were not totally accepting of the scriptures – only the first 5 books.
 - d) We must add however, they were looking for a Messiah just like the rest of the Jews.
 - i) But, without the understanding of the details provided by the prophets.
 - e) Additionally, there was much animosity – actually hate – between the Jews and the Samaritans.
 - f) All of these factors fed into the need which the apostles felt to go to see if they were truly believers.
- 3) We also have an interesting twist here in another way.
 - a) Scripture tells us that they (the apostles) wanted to assure that they received the Holy Spirit since they had only “been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”
 - b) This situation is unique in that except for those who had been baptized with John's baptism, others appear to have received the Holy Spirit at their baptism.
 - c) If we go back to Acts 2, we see this:

Acts 2:38–39 (NIV)

- d) From this, we can imply that the Samaritans had **not** experienced the gift of the Holy Spirit in the same way as the believers on the day of Pentecost.
- e) Barton in the LABC says:

Many scholars believe that God chose to have a dramatic filling of his Spirit as a sign at this special moment in history—a “Samaritan Pentecost” paralleling the Pentecost that the apostles had experienced in chapter 2.

Bruce Barton et al., *Life Application New Testament Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 501.

- f) Though Luke does not give specifics, we must conclude that this “laying on of hands” did deliver the Holy Spirit to these new members and that proofs were seen by all.
- 4) Now, back to our sorcerer friend Simon who we started talking about last time ...

Acts 8:18–24 (NIV)

- 1) There are two basic ways one can look at Simon at this point.

2) We are told in vs. 13 that:

¹³ Simon himself believed and was baptized.

3) **So, either** he did believe and was baptized and probably even received the gift of the Holy Spirit himself by the laying on of the apostles' hands.

4) **Or** he believed but was up to no good from the very point he was baptized.

5) John MacArthur takes this later view as do some others.

a) Even some of the early church fathers attributed a man named Simon (a Samaritan) with being one who was a gnostic and actually claimed to be God incarnate.

i) (from my brief dive into this, he may or may not be the same Simon)

6) One other commentator put forth that Simon foolishly believed that Peter and John were in the same business as he was.

7) All that said, however, if we deal with what Luke tells us here, though Simon does mess up badly, I think he really was a believer.

a) First, we really need to note that he does NOT want the gift of the Holy Spirit to endow him with supper powers.

i) Yes, he was amazed at the powers that Philip had, the miracles, and signs he performed.

ii) However, what Simon desires is: “this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”

b) Now, here is probably the place where he goes bad – why does he want this ability?

i) For the good of those on whom he lays his hands or to gain more accolades for himself?

ii) Perhaps to sell the gift of the Holy Spirit for money?

c) Whatever the reason, Peter is obviously appalled by his request and sees it for the sinful act that is in his heart.

d) Again, we are not privy to Simon's heart at the level God is however, we cannot ignore what his attitude is when Peter confronts him directly.

8) What I think we must conclude here is that the problem was what Simon tried to do.

“May your money perish with you, because you thought you could ***buy the gift of God with money!***”

9) To bring this perhaps into a little clearer focus, N.T. Wright comments:

any attempt to bring the spirit under human control is a nonsense and to be rejected outright.³

³ Tom Wright, [*Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12*](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 130.

10) His heart was wrong – and I think of some importance is that Peter challenges him to repentance.

- a) Some commentators seem to think that Peter even ousts him from the community with his comment.

You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God.

11) Peter does make one further comment that should be considered:

For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.

So, what say you – Simon a total bad guy or just a believer that made a mistake?

12) We really don't have the final answer so...

13) As an aside here, if you have ever heard the word simony, it means the buying or selling of pardons, benefices, and other ecclesiastical privileges and it comes from Simon and what he did.

Acts 8:25 (NIV)

- 1) A little restatement and review here might add some perspective.
- 2) Remember the Samaritans were Jews (of a sort).
- 3) Samaritans kept to a form of Judaism but with significant elements changed.
- 4) Not liked by the average Jew – remember the Samaritan woman at the well and Jesus' conversation with her and the disciples' reactions to her.
- 5) To say it clearly, these 3 guys (Peter, John, and Philip) were definitely outside their comfort zones and breaking new ground.
- 6) This was definitely part of what Jesus had explicitly told them to do.

Acts 1:8 (NIV)

- 7) This might be a baby step for what God is going to call on Peter to do shortly.
- 8) Now, Philip's adventure continues with (as we will see) a couple of drastic changes in location.

Acts 8:26–38 (NIV)

- 1) Before we get started discussing this, we need to address the status of verse 37.
 - a) Verse 37 is likely left out of some of your later translations.
 - b) It will be in the KJV.
 - c) The reason is that it is not found in earlier manuscripts meaning that it was likely added by a well-meaning scribe at some later time.
 - d) The verse reads:

[And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."]

- 2) O.k. looking at this passage ...
- 3) The first thing to note here is that God is sending Philip in the opposite direction from his home in Caesarea.
- 4) Also, God, thru the angel is in charge of setting up this meeting and the subsequent conversion.
- 5) There are many scholarly opinions regarding the actual status of the of the eunuch.
 - a) Jew, Gentile, God fearer, proselyte, or something in between all these.
- 6) If we look at the facts given us in this scripture, we can get a picture that is as complete as we need without missing the major point which we will get to in a moment.
 - a) **Fact 1** – he had been in Jerusalem worshiping.
 - b) Given Fact 1, we must conclude **Fact 2** – he is either a proselyte or a God fearer.
 - c) **Fact 3** – he is seeking knowledge about the scriptures and is at least aware of the coming Messiah.
 - d) **Fact 4** – Gentile, proselyte, God fearer, or something in between, he is NOT a native Jew. He is Ethiopian and by that of a different race AND conversely, he must be a Gentile from that perspective.
 - e) He could not have been a proselyte because he was a eunuch and would not be allowed in the temple.
 - f) N.T. Wright comments here:

But there was something about the Jewish God and the Jewish way of life which had attracted him, as it did with many in the ancient world (if you think of the kind of gods that were worshipped by other nations, and of the kind of practices that were often associated with them, you might well see Judaism as a wonderful oasis of clean, calm wisdom).

- 7) There are a few more things we need to look at about this incident.
 - a) The eunuch had a scroll of at least the book of Isaiah.
 - i) In this time, one could not run to their local Barns & Noble and purchase a copy of this scroll.
 - ii) To have one's own personal copy, would require hiring a scribe and having that scribe transcribe a copy for you.
 - iii) Even if you could find one already written out it would not be cheap. Either way – not an inexpensive thing to have.
 - b) He was reading the scroll.
 - i) He either knew Hebrew and had a Hebraic copy or he knew Greek and had a copy of the Septuagint.
 - ii) Bottom line – he was a learned person.
- 8) From Philip's side of this, he is sent down a road with really no idea as to why.

- 9) He meets the eunuch and only at that point is he given further directions – simply – “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”
- 10) From that point, Philip is on his own – he sees, he hears, and without hesitation, he acts.
- 11) Philip gets into the chariot with the man and explains the Gospel to him based on his reading and question.
- 12) Final result is that the man is baptized and becomes a believer in God’s Son.
- 13) From all this, I think we can conclude that **God’s point here is Jew, Gentile, Samaritan, or WHATEVER!!** Take my Gospel to them.
- 14) Again and truly, it makes no difference what real label we put on this man.
 - a) He is NOT someone that the apostles would have considered a major or even minor part of their “target audience” – but he is part of God’s “target audience.”

O.k. – A democrat, a republican, a Palestinian, a Russian and a Ukrainian are all in a chariot reading Isaiah – What would you do?

In all seriousness, if you found yourself in a situation where someone needed help understanding scripture, what would you do?

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 16 <<<<<<<

- 1) When we left last time, we were talking about Philip's adventure.
- 2) Continuing, it looks like it is not over ...

Acts 8:39–40 (NIV)

- 3) As we said, Philip is on quite the adventure.
 - a) Heads for home from Jerusalem and winds up in a ministry in Samaria.
 - b) Leaves a successful ministry in Samaria at the behest of an angel.
 - c) Heads back to Jerusalem and a road south of there with no concrete knowledge of why in sight.
 - d) Converts and baptizes a total stranger.
 - e) Then without any warning he is suddenly and miraculously placed in Azotus.
 - i) Azotus would be about 4 to 20 miles away from the desert road depending on where they had stopped to baptize the eunuch .
 - ii) Azotus is about 30 mi. north of the Gaza border.
- 4) Given these happenings in my life personally, I would be absolutely flabbergasted!
 - a) I might even be frozen in place afraid to move not knowing what to expect next.
- 5) However, not Philip – his mission doesn't change no matter what his circumstances.
- 6) He simply strikes out walking and preaching the gospel wherever he goes.
- 7) Turns out, he heads from Azotus (current name of the Philistine capital Ashdod) and winds up in Caesarea his home.
- 8) We don't hear about him again until Acts chapter 21.
- 9) Luke and some others meet Paul and travel to Meletus who are on their way to Jerusalem. After sending for the elders from Ephesus and saying goodbye to them they continue their voyage.

Acts 21:7–9 (NIV)

- 10) Philp is still well known and loved as an evangelist and has likely not ceased working for the Lord from that early adventure beginning in Samaria until now.
- 11) Philip is truly a dedicated and submissive disciple of our Lord. When one considers what he is enduring, it is nothing short of amazing (and somewhat intimidating).

Paul, the Beginning Years Explained

- 1) Now, enters our next famous character in the narrative of Acts – Saul the persecutor soon to become Paul the Apostle.

Acts 9:1–9 (NIV)

- 2) Let's look at the facts to get a perspective here.
- a) First, when Saul first sees the light, closes his eyes, and hears the voice, he does not know who it is.
 - i) There is no indication that Christ appears bodily at this point. The men heard the sound but did not see anyone.
 - b) Then, Jesus tells him plainly – **I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting!**
 - c) At that moment, we must consider what would be going through Saul's mind.
 - d) He knew many facts about Jesus but he also had an obviously strong opinion about who He was:
 - i) He knew that Jesus was a preacher, perhaps a prophet and miracle worker, popular with many of his fellow Jews (obviously since he was pursuing them to put them in prison).
 - ii) He knew in detail what those he was pursuing believed about Jesus and, to say the least, he did not accept it or agree with it.
 - iii) Most importantly, he knew the claim of Jesus' followers was that he was the long-awaited Messiah – indeed the very one Saul himself was waiting on.
 - (1) Of course, he had a completely different take on what that meant! AND JESUS WAS NOT IT!
 - iv) I think it is important to remember that Saul also knew that Jesus and His followers were absolutely claiming that He was the Son of God!
 - v) Though he did not believe the conclusions being drawn by his soon to be brothers and sisters, he absolutely knew the prophecies and law on which they were based.
 - vi) As with most other Jews, the thing that kept him from even considering it was expectations – what he expected and what he saw did not match up in his heart and mind.
 - e) And YET, HERE WE ARE!!
 - f) The transformation of Saul of Tarsus to Paul the apostle begins over the next three days as he sits in that room in Damascus, blind and so shook to his foundation that he cannot even eat or drink.
 - g) The transformation likely continues for many months and perhaps even years.
 - h) He must come to grips with how this all fits together.
 - i) It is the same God he has been serving his entire life.
 - ii) It is the same foundational beliefs that he has always had in the Law and the Prophets.
 - iii) It is the same country and people that he has always known.

- iv) BUT – the point in history he was waiting for has arrived and it is absolutely NOT what he was expecting.
 - v) In fact, as stated earlier, he saw this entire situation as not only a contradiction but as a threat to his very core beliefs – his fundamentals.
- 3) All of this is what leads me to say that from my perspective, Saul, and for that matter, any Jew who came to believe in Jesus as the Son of God **is not “converted.”**
- a) Instead, I think they simply come to a different understanding and knowledge of their God’s plan and accept it.
 - b) Saul as well as any other Jew believes in the same one true God of the universe – the transformation that takes place is an acceptance of Jesus as the fulfillment of that one true God’s plan AND promise.
- 4) While, on the other hand, pagans, Gentiles, Romans, any and all polytheists and nonbelievers must:
- a) FIRST come to a belief in the one true God which also demands them giving up what they had worshiped in the past.
 - b) and THEN accept His son and all that comes with that newfound belief system – the Law, the Prophets, the design of a new way of life.
 - c) THAT’s a CONVERSION!
 - d) Perhaps this is a ***Difference without Distinction?***
 - e) Just my opinion on this subject and perhaps some FUN food for thought.
- 5) Continuing, let’s look at Jesus’ answer. I find it interesting in two ways:
- a) First, He indicates that He personally is being persecuted – not His followers.
 - b) Second another subtle but important Greek reference – Jesus uses the term *ἐγώ εἰμι*.
 - i) When translated literally, the phrase means “I I am” – It is used other places in the Bible by God stating that He is God – the Great I am!
 - c) Saul would have recognized this phrase without doubt and with that phrase Jesus claims truth to the very last impossible thing Saul must come to believe – Jesus is the Son of God.

Acts 9:10–19a (NIV)

- 1) This is a typical discourse framework we see between the Lord and a prophet or someone He is giving instructions to go on a mission.
 - a) The Lord gives the instruction, the person gives a reason or excuse not to go and then the Lord reassures the person and things move on.
- 2) Ananias was very dubious of Saul and with good reason.
- 3) However, Jesus assures him that it is the thing that is needed.

- 4) We need to note here a couple of things:
 - a) Many times we get the impression that Paul was “the apostle to the Gentiles.” However, Jesus states clearly here that he is also to go to the people of Israel.
 - b) We must not forget that.
 - c) It is obvious that much of Paul’s ministry was to areas where Gentiles were predominant but, as we will see, in most cases, he begins with the Jewish part of the communities first and then the Gentiles.
 - d) Along with this comes a major point in much of his ministry – **reconciliation** – getting Jews and Gentiles to come to the same point in their new faith.
 - e) Of course, as we will also see, he gives his message before kings and the elite at every opportunity.
 - f) Another thing that we need to note here is Jesus’ concluding remark. “**I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.**”
 - g) To me, there is an indication in this that Jesus is going to spend time with Saul to bring him fully into a knowledge of what it is he is to be doing.
- 5) In this next passage, we are going to enter another of those areas where we really do not have the total picture of the timeline.
- 6) I am going to spend some time attempting to bring all the pieces together.
- 7) Mainly, because what we see in this is the fledgling efforts of Saul the new believer in the Messiah dealing with the inevitable trials one would expect.
- 8) We also see where he ends up after this period and his disappearance from the mainstream for a number of years.
- 9) All of this is important in gaining an understanding for Saul as he becomes Paul the apostle.
- 1) We will start in Damascus with, what one must assume are the first enthusiastic efforts of this new Christian / former Christian hater and persecutor.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 17 <<<<<<<

- 1) Last time, we began discussing Paul's beginning years.
- 2) Continuing along those lines, let's begin by looking at what happens immediately after his baptism in Damascus ...

Acts 9:19b–25 (NIV)

- 3) Saul goes immediately to the place he knows best – the synagogues.
- 4) And what is his message at this point? – that Jesus is the Son of God.
- 5) Verse 22 tells us that he was proving that Jesus was the Messiah.
- 6) In this case, once the dots have been connected, it would seem to me to be an easy thing for a man of Saul's knowledge and training in the prophecies of the Old Testament to prove his case.
- 7) Saul stays in Damascus for "many days" (undefined as to how long "many days" is).
- 8) In essence, there is a gap between vs. 22 and 23 which we need to fill in.
- 9) Now, we have to start filling in the missing pieces. To do this we start in Galatians 1:11.

Galatians 1:11–17 (NASB 2020)

¹¹ For I would have you know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel which was preached by me is not of human invention. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

¹³ For you have heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; ¹⁴ and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. ¹⁵ But when He who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

- 1) There are a several things we must NOT miss here.
 - a) God revealed His Son to Saul so that he would be able to preach Him among the Gentiles.
 - i) We must ask ourselves a question at this point; What does "preach Him" mean?
 - ii) I think we can infer with reasonable certainty that it was NOT just to convince people Jesus was God's Son – part of it – no doubt – all of it No!
 - iii) Paul preaches a Gospel and, he states clearly that it is NOT "of human invention."
 - (1) Not from man.
 - (2) He was not "taught" it.

- 2) So, Jesus is gone – as we discussed earlier we can be assured that Paul was NOT a follower of Jesus while he was alive.
- 3) So, Paul has a need for knowledge – knowledge of what Jesus was all about.
- 4) He really only has one choice – go to Jerusalem and get with the men who had spent 3 years with Jesus and figure it out that way.
 - a) He tells the Galatians in vs. 12, that was not what he did – he “received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”
- 5) Ok we have the how of the gospel he is preaching, what about the when and where?
- 6) As Paul occasionally does, he gets distracted for a moment telling them the reason he has to get this gospel – basically his Pharisaism.
- 7) But then he gets to the when and where

I went away to Arabia and returned once more to Damascus.

- 8) Now, we might ask, why Arabia?
- 9) First, if you Google “where is Arabia in biblical times” you will see that there is considerable scholarly debate about where it was.
- 10) Paul, however, makes it quite clear where he thinks it is...

Galatians 4:24–25 (NASB 2020)

²⁴ This is speaking allegorically, for these *women* are two covenants: one *coming* from Mount Sinai giving birth to children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. ²⁵ Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is enslaved with her children.

- 11) Bottom line – Arabia is where mount Sinai is!
- 12) Now, as you might expect, there is a scholarly debate about where mount Sinai was as well.
- 13) IT DOES NOT MATTER!
- 14) Paul connects the two in his mind and whether we know where they are or not – HE DOES!
 - a) N.T. Wright compares this trip to that of Elijah to Mt Horeb (close to or perhaps another name for Mt. Sinai) after his victory over the prophets of Baal.
 - i) In this Elijah complains to God about his situation and is then told to return to Damascus.
 - ii) Wright’s idea is that Saul goes there with the idea of making that same connection.
 - iii) Saul’s zeal being tied to that of Phinehas and his need that of the equally zealous Elijah.
 - iv) Wright spends a considerable amount of time in his paper on the subject developing those arguments.
 - v) However, that refocusing of Saul’s zeal still does not explain sufficiently (in my opinion), how Paul came to his Gospel.

15) So, back to the why question.

- a) Another commentator, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, suggests he went there to begin his mission to pagans or Gentiles.
- b) He further suggests that while there (for only a short time) he got crossways with the people and king of the area and was forced to return to Damascus.

16) However, if we look a little closer, perhaps even between the lines a little, we may see another possible explanation.

17) He went there for training by Jesus himself:

“received it (the gospel he has preached to the Galatians) through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Looking at the Galatian passage, why do you think it seems so important to Paul to clearly define the source of his gospel?

18) Now, please just bear with me for a minute and you can make up your own mind as to how plausible this may be.

- a) **Item 1** – Jesus has already told Ananias that He would be personally interfacing with Saul.
“I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”
- b) **Item 2** – as I indicated earlier, Saul probably had little if any knowledge of the detailed teachings of Jesus. HE KNEW OF Jesus NOT Jesus.
- c) **Item 3** – he did not consult with any human being.
- d) **Item 4** – God has revealed His Son to Saul but we don't know what else at this point.
- e) **Item 5** – in the Galatian letter, Paul is defending his gospel as NOT coming from the ones who were apostles before him or from any human being.

19) Given all that, we cannot know how this revelation was made. However, there are some things we do know that may have bearing on this:

- a) We know that Jesus appeared to Paul personally. In 1 Corinthians 15:8 we read.

⁸and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

- i) Paul here is speaking of the appearances of the “bodily resurrected” Jesus.
- ii) I don't believe this is the event on the Damascus Road.
 - (1) There Jesus spoke to him but there is no indication that he actually saw Jesus.
 - (2) In fact, the first thing that happens is that he closes his eyes when the light that occurs – when he opens them he is blind.

20) I must hasten to add here that this theory does not negate in any way the others I mentioned.

- a) He definitely could have felt the need to make the trek just to get his mind straight and talk with God as did Elijah.

- b) He absolutely could have and in any case probably did preach to the pagans of that country while there.
- i) That unto itself could have gotten him in trouble.

21) Obviously, Paul interfacing with and being taught by Jesus during this time is strictly my opinion and you can take it or leave it.

22) After Arabia, Saul is back in Damascus for the remainder of the “many days” Luke refers to.

23) He has been there long enough to make some folks very mad.

24) It is for sure that he was there long enough to convince at least some of the Jews in the community that he was also a threat and, like Jesus, needed to be eliminated!

25) Now picking up the story at Saul’s exit from Damascus.

- a) Obviously, a forced exit because of the hostilities and threats.

Acts 9:23–25 (NIV)

26) To get this in what I think is the correct sequence we have to listen to what Paul tells the Galatians once more.

Galatians 1:18–19 (NASB 2020)

¹⁸ Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him for fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I did not see another one of the apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.

27) To my way of thinking, Paul is telling the Galatians where he went on leaving Damascus in a basket.

28) Back in acts, Luke, I think, completes and lends a little more detail to, the story of Saul’s visit ...

Acts 9:26–29 (NIV)

29) Even though Saul stays with Peter for 15 days, Peter may have been suspicious along with the others.

30) So, along comes Barnabas to vouch for Saul and back up his story of the past 3 years.

31) Everything works out and he stays with them for a while – specifically with Peter for 15 days.

32) During this time, I think, again supposition on my part, that Saul, though he is moving around freely in Jerusalem and speaking boldly, he is not very effective because of the fear the local Christians have of him.

33) In Acts 22, I think Paul NOW relates more information about this situation:

Acts 22:17–21 (NASB2020)

¹⁷ “It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, ¹⁸ and I saw Him saying to me, ‘**Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.**’ ¹⁹ And I said, ‘Lord,

they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. ²⁰ And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing nearby and approving, and watching over the cloaks of those who were killing him.’ ²¹ And He said to me, ‘Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’ ”

34) I believe that when Paul says he returned to Jerusalem, he is speaking again of his initial return to Jerusalem from Damascus – some three years after heading to Damascus to arrest Christians.

35) We reach the end of this situation as we move back into chapter 9.

Acts 9:30–31 (NIV)

36) John MacArthur sums up the situation at this point like this:

With Saul the firebrand gone from the scene, both as the persecutor of the church and the chief target of the Christ-haters, things quieted down in Palestine. Luke again summarizes the progress of the church by stating that the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and, going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase⁴

37) From this point in the Acts chronicle, Saul is not mentioned again until the end of chapter 11 when Barnabas travels to Tarsus to find him.

38) To get a glimpse of what happens between now and that point, we have to continue with the rest of what he relates to the Galatians.

Galatians 1:21–2:2 (NASB2020)

²¹ Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. ²² I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³ They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” ²⁴ And they praised God because of me.

2 Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. ² It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but *I did so* in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that somehow I might be running, or had run, in vain.

⁴ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Acts](#), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 278.

39) During this period (about 10 years), N.T. Wright believes that Saul was mostly in Tarsus.

40) His take is that Saul is grappling with what his true mission is and how to proceed.

41) Obviously, as we will see, he was also preaching and teaching during this period.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 18 <<<<<<<

- 1) At this point, we now move back to the apostles in Jerusalem, specifically, some highlights of Peter's continuing ministry.
- 2) I make this comment to draw attention to the fact that we see these incidences but we must realize that they are not all that Peter did.
- 3) There are I am sure, many, many things that not only Peter but all of the apostles accomplished in these early days that are not reported in what we have here.
- 4) I think it would be good if we could think of these incidents as examples – important as they are, they are not the whole story.

Acts 9:32–35 (NIV)

- 1) This was a time after the dispersal of the Church caused by the stoning of Stephen and the persecution which followed.
 - 2) Peter was traveling about the area checking on the various members of the church who had relocated because of that.
 - 3) These two instances take place in Lydda and Jappa.
 - 4) Lydda was a fairly large town and commercial center.
 - a) Predominantly Gentile in population.
 - b) It was at an intersection of highways connecting Egypt to Syria and Joppa, on the Mediterranean coast, to Jerusalem.
 - 5) We really don't know anything else about the man Aeneas beyond his condition and Peter's healing.
 - 6) As with many of these healings and miracles performed by the apostles, large numbers of folks were brought to the Lord because of them.
-
- 1) The next thing that apparently occurs on Peter's trip is the raising of one of the disciples (a woman by the name of Dorcus or Tabitha) who lived in Jappa.

Acts 9:36–43 (NIV)

- 2) Jappa is about 10 miles from Lydda. This means the trip for those coming to get Peter and the return journey would be about 6 to 10 hours each way on foot.
- 3) These folks had prepared her body for burial since it was customary for the body to be buried before sundown, there was a real stretch of faith in their eyes when they called for Peter.
- 4) This is interesting also from the perspective that, as far as we know, to this point in the life of the church, there has been no one raised from the dead.
 - a) There were incidents in Jesus' time here but, none that we know of since.
- 5) Again, one wonders what Peter was thinking as he approached the situation.
 - a) He simply prays, addresses the woman, and then after she opens her eyes and looks at him he takes her by the hand and presents her, back alive to her friends and loved ones.

- b) A true miracle showing the power of the Trinity working through the apostles and what was happening in this early time of the Church.
- 6) Once again, we see the indirect results of the miracle – the coming of many to the Lord.
- 7) Peter stays in Joppa, one assumes, working with, and teaching those who had just been added.
- 8) It is interesting to note here exactly who Peter is staying with.
 - a) The man named Simon was a tanner.
 - b) As a tanner, he was basically in a continuous state of uncleanness due to his contact with dead animals.
 - c) Bruce Barton comments on this:

This occupation involved contact with dead animals, and Jewish law considered it an “unclean” job. Peter was already beginning to break down his prejudice against people who were not of his kind and customs that did not adhere to Jewish religious traditions. This would set the stage for what is reported in the next chapter.

- 9) Of course, what Barton is referring to in this last statement is the famous incident of Peter going to Cornelius’ family as directed by God.
- 1) So, the stage is set for the next big item in the early church’s history – the bringing of Gentiles into the church.

Acts 10:1–8 (NIV)

- 2) Cornelius was first, as Luke describes, a “God fearing man.”
- 3) Not only he himself, but his family as well.
- 4) He was generous giving to those in need.
- 5) As I studied this, it was unclear at first if he is a “proselyte” or not.
 - a) If he was, then he is likely following the Jewish traditions to the best of his ability.
 - b) Again – not really known??
 - c) There were/are two types of proselytes:

A ***"righteous proselyte"*** is a gentile who has converted to Judaism, is bound to all the doctrines and precepts of the Jewish religion, and is considered a full member of the Jewish people. The proselyte is circumcised as an adult (*milah l'shem giur*), if male, and immerses in a *mikvah* to formally effect the conversion.

A ***"gate proselyte"*** is a resident alien who lives in the Land of Israel and follows some of the Jewish customs.^[10] They are not required to be circumcised nor to comply with the whole of the Torah. They are bound only to conform to the Seven Laws of Noah (do not worship idols, do not blaspheme God's name, do not murder, do not commit fornication (immoral sexual acts), do not steal, do not tear the limb

from a living animal, and do not fail to establish rule of law) to be assured of a place in the world to come.

- d) According to sources I read the Righteous Proselyte was considered to a Jew in every way.
 - e) However, it is unclear whether the Gate Proselyte was still considered a Gentile or not.
 - f) Other possible examples of “Gate Proselytes” might be.
 - i) Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:29-38
 - ii) The Canaanite woman in Mt. 15:22-28
 - g) As we will see in a bit (Ch10:28), Peter, on entering Cornelius’ house still considers him to be a Gentile – God fearing or not – Gate Proselyte or not!
- 6) One must of course wonder how his faith came about.
- a) The only reasonable explanation is that he had in some way been searching for something beyond the polytheistic norm of the Roman society.
 - b) Perhaps, despite the normal animosity between the Jews and the occupying Roman soldiers, he had gotten to know a devout Jew and had come to know God through that connection.
 - c) Obviously only speculation, however, the facts are what they are.
 - i) Not only he but his family were believers in the one true God.
 - ii) And he was living a life that proved he understood what God wanted of him.
 - d) As to how long he had been of this persuasion, we have no way of knowing.
 - e) Long enough to get God’s attention in the best sort of way.
- 7) Cornelius, whom God was about to bring to a knowledge of His Son, lived in Caesarea.
- 8) To help us understand a bit more about Cornelius and his position in life, we need to look a little closer at Caesarea.
- a) It was the capital of the Roman province of Judea.
 - b) It was an important city located about thirty miles north of Joppa.
 - c) Being an important city and the home of the procurator, it demanded a large Roman garrison for protection and control.
 - d) A legion consisting of 6000 men at full strength was stationed there.
 - i) The legion was divided into 10 cohorts of 600 men each.
 - ii) Each cohort consisted of 6 units and a centurion was in charge of each of these 6 units of 100 men each.
 - iii) Cornelius was one of these 60 centurions.
 - iv) These centurions were considered the backbone of the Roman army.
 - v) All that being said, we can see that Cornelius was not a major figure.

- (1) Probably could consider him basically a working man.
- (2) However, in his position, his sphere of influence was large.
- (3) One would have to assume that if God noticed the way Cornelius was living and was truly pleased then others perhaps noticed his way of life as well.
- vi) Once he knew God, he was called to be different in the same way we are in our lives as God's children.
- 9) As Cornelius experienced this encounter with the angel, it is very short and puzzling.
 - a) Since it was three in the afternoon, we might assume Cornelius may have been in prayer.
 - b) As we look at Cornelius' response, it was almost like, in his eyes, the angel was considered a superior officer.
 - i) The angel simply gives him directions and without hesitation and without so much as a question of any kind, he carries out those directions.
 - ii) This is absolutely the military way – “mine is not to reason why it is but to do or die!” as the old saying goes.
 - c) So, off his three designated persons go – one soldier and two trusted servants.
 - i) From the timeline we see in the next section of scripture, they were likely walking.
 - ii) This distance would take about 11 hours in each direction.

1) Meanwhile, in Joppa we have other things happening...

Acts 10:9–16 (NIV)

- 2) Peter was hungry so, naturally, this was a good time for the Lord to bring this vision to him.
- 3) Here is a situation that absolutely says that Peter, and for that matter, probably the rest of the Jews who had become believers were still keeping many of the traditions of the law.
 - a) They were obviously believers in the Christ the one true Messiah but, they were still seeing themselves as Law abiding Jews – believing and practicing the Law as they had known it throughout their lives.
 - b) The dietary requirements were a part of that Law which are brought into focus here.
 - c) Evidently, only the animals that God had, at the writing of the Law, considered unclean for the Jewish people are Shown in this sheet like affair.
 - d) This is of course what brings Peter's reaction.
- 4) Verses 14 and 15 are a pivot point in the life of the Christian community as it was at that time.
- 5) 14 clearly states that what Peter sees is what God had declared “impure or unclean.”
- 6) – 15 with equal clarity is saying that God is declaring all these things “clean” thus removing the need for Peter to be concerned about eating them.
- 7) Did Peter immediately get up and go out and find a ham sandwich to eat – NO!

- 8) Even with the vision being repeated 3 times, he was trying to figure out exactly what all this really meant.
 - a) Even if he did totally understand, he would likely not immediately be comfortable eating any of these previously “unclean” things.
- 9) God set these dietary rules forth in Lev for a reason.
 - a) Obviously, in some cases it was health concern but He clearly states in Lev 20, the exact reason and, that reason will also have a bearing on exactly what is getting ready to happen.

Leviticus 20:25–26 (NASB 2020)

²⁵ You are therefore to make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and you shall not make yourselves detestable by animal or by bird, or by anything that crawls on the ground, which I have distinguished for you as unclean. ²⁶ So you are to be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy; and I have singled you out from the peoples to be Mine.

- 10) There are two key phrases in this passage:

“you shall not make yourselves detestable.”

and

“I have singled you out from the peoples to be Mine.”

- 11) From the first phrase, the real reason for the dietary regulations was that of keeping themselves from becoming detestable to God.
- 12) By the second phrase, this idea carries over to keeping themselves separate from other peoples of the world.
 - a) Something God has always emphasized to the Jewish people. The broad overarching category of the “other people” was simply the Gentiles.
- 13) So, with that in mind, we can see that very quickly, the vision takes on even a more significant meaning than just food.
 - a) We are looking at a change in the way the Jew looks at themselves – as unique and set apart.
- 14) In my mind, this could have been very disconcerting to the Jew.
 - a) This was one concrete marker of differentiation.
 - b) With these restrictions gone, the idea of “I have singled you out from the peoples to be Mine” might have been gone.
 - c) Purely supposition on my part but this melding, loss of uniqueness, could have been one of the reasons there was such a push by the Jewish brethren to force the Gentiles to follow the Laws of circumcision and the like.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 19 <<<<<<<

- 1) Last time, we dealt with Peter's vision and Cornelius' encounter with the angel.
- 2) Now we begin with Peter continuing his thoughts about the vision and the events that come next.

Acts 10:17–23 (NIV)

- 3) So, the men that Cornelius sent have now arrived in Jappa and are at Simon the Tanner's house.
 - a) A point to remember here is that, though the Spirit did not actually tell Peter, these men were also likely Gentiles – Cornelius chose:
“Two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants.”
- 4) Peter is now going to understand the true meaning of the vision – these three Gentiles are now at the door and he has been told – go with them without hesitation.
 - a) That doesn't appear too much of a stretch right?
 - b) Oh, wait a minute, where is he going? To Caesarea to meet with even more Gentiles and to share with them.
- 5) Ok, we get a little more information and maybe this is going to be all right.
 - a) Cornelius is a God-fearing man, respected by the Jewish people.
- 6) Then, surprise, Peter does a “one up” on the Spirit – he invites these three men into the house to be his guests.
- 7) I think he's got it – the vision now makes sense, albeit disconcerting.

Acts 10:23b-24 (NIV)

- 8) After these men from Caesarea had stayed the night with Peter at Simon the Tanner's house, they depart for Cornelius' home.
- 9) Peter has probably been made more pliable by his experience with the Samaritan Pentecost that we discussed some time back.
 - a) He has also preached in “many” Samaritan towns on his way back to Jerusalem.
 - b) He is staying in a house where his desire to keep the Law would have previously even prevented him from entering.
 - c) Now, he invites these men to stay over night.
- 10) Again I think he gets it and I think he also knows what is about to happen in Caesarea.
 - a) All he has been told is that Cornelius wants “to hear what he has to say.”
- 11) We can possibly get a clue that he knows what is coming in the fact that he takes 6 believers with him to Cornelius' house.
 - a) We are told this in chapter 11 verse 12.

- b) If what he suspects is going to happen actually happens it would be wise to have believing and trusted witnesses with him to verify the situation.

12) Bruce Barton makes another comment here that highlights another important point:

The eagerness and expectation of Cornelius was obvious, for he **called together his relatives and close friends**, probably many, considering Cornelius's reputation for kindness and piety.

Bruce Barton et al., Life Application New Testament Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 508.

13) Continuing, we see what happens when they all arrive ...

Acts 10:25-29 (NIV)

14) Peter begins here with what I see as a note of caution.

15) He could have easily assumed that what Cornelius wanted was to come to Jesus and begin his Christian life.

- a) After all, he has been described as a “God fearing man and one well respected” so, such an assumption might indeed be warranted.
- b) However, we nor Peter really know what if anything Cornelius expects.
- c) He is simply following the instructions of the angel in his vision of a day or so before.
- d) We know that he wanted to hear what Peter had to say but really not much beyond that.
- e) When Peter begins to speak to him, we will see that Cornelius does know about Jesus and the things that have taken place in that regard.

16) Looking at Peter's perspective and ours for that matter, N.T. Wright makes a point here which I think is valid:

This is the point at which we have to be extremely careful. It would be all too easy, following precisely our own late-Western, postmodern prejudices, to imagine that the whole episode to do with Cornelius was simply about getting rid of all distinctions and being ‘tolerant’ of everyone. That would be a bad mistake. If what Peter had discovered was that God simply accepts everyone the way they are, what was the fuss for Cornelius to be devout and god-fearing? Why bother sending for Peter to come and tell him about Jesus?

Tom Wright, Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12 (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 164.

17) Wright goes on to point out that God does accept us but, NOT as we are. Instead, he invites us as we are.

Agree / Disagree?

- a) That invitation must be accepted and, it always involves the complete transforming act consisting of repentance, forgiveness, baptism, and the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

18) That is, bottom line, exactly why Peter is here in Cornelius' house – to complete that very invitation and the transforming which takes place.

19) Now, we are going to connect all the dots for Cornelius, Peter, and all those present ...

Acts 10:25-24 (NIV)

20) Clearly, Cornelius understood what God wanted to bring Peter there.

21) He did not know the exact words or even the message that Peter was to bring.

22) However he knew from what God had told him that this was important and he was anxious for himself, his family, and his friends to hear it.

23) We begin next looking at what Peter says to the gathering – vs. 34-43 then, finally, at the spectacular and to somewhat surprising results ...

Acts 10:34-38 (NIV)

24) So, what do we see here?

25) First, we can without doubt see that Peter gets what God was showing him in the vision.

26) And I think we can also know that even though he pointed out to Cornelius and the rest of those present that by Jewish Law he should not be there – that has ended in God's view.

a) I am equally sure that the believers that came with him were not as convinced at that moment as he was.

b) This I think becomes clear when we see the final outcome of this visit.

27) I think it is worth noting here the massive number of assumptions that Peter makes (vs36-38) about the knowledge that Cornelius has regarding the life and times of Jesus.

a) In this case, I believe that the Holy Spirit would **not have** led him to these assumptions were they not true.

b) Without that knowledge, Cornelius and his family would probably have been terribly confused with what would occur next.

28) Then, in vs 39 through 43, Peter puts the ribbon on the package.

a) Where he leaves Cornelius in vs 38 is without the conclusion that is so vital.

b) He then fills in the glorious conclusion of Jesus' story and confirms beyond doubt that he is a living witness to that conclusion.

29) Now, we get to the exciting part ...

Acts 10:44-48 (NIV)

30) WOW! What an amazing outcome!

31) I cannot imagine that there was anyone in that gathering including Peter that was not surprised when the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and his family.

a) Peter is in the middle of speaking.

- b) God and the Holy Spirit interrupt him saying (at least in my opinion) they get it! It is time to show everyone what this is truly all about!

32) O.k. let's take a breath and look at a contrast.

- a) First – let's go back to the very beginning ...

Acts 2:38 (NASB 2020)

³⁸ Peter *said* to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

33) Next, recall from a couple of weeks back, the Samaritan conversion with Philip ...

Acts 8:14–16 (NASB 2020)

¹⁴ Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, ¹⁵ who came down and prayed for them that they would receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ (For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

34) Finally, let's flip this thing one more time ...

35) Peter is still speaking and NO ONE has been baptized – YET – here comes the Holy Spirit.

36) WOW – surprise!

37) This is such a beautiful statement of how God works in the moment – in every situation to bring the message that is so necessary for everyone involved to hear!

38) Those who came with Peter (and well they did) were astonished but they see the proof of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit for themselves.

39) And of course, Peter, in his normal “never let any grass grow” attitude wants to baptize them immediately.

- a) No questions, or concerns, simply – let's complete this and make these people our brothers and sisters.

40) Salvation has now come to the Gentiles for real – or has it?

Acts 11:1–3 (NIV)

and ate with them.”

41) I think the first thing we need to note here is we are still dealing with issues of the “Law.”

- a) Circumcised vs. non- circumcised.
- b) Gentile vs. Jew.

- c) Clean vs. unclean.

42) When we start dealing with this issue here, we need to gain a couple of perspectives.

43) FIRST

- a) As far as I was able to tell, Jesus himself was circumcised at 8 days old but, He never mentions it in all of the gospels.
- b) One comment I read makes it abundantly clear that as a whole, the New Testament has a specific idea regarding it – it states:

In fact, the New Testament is clearly hostile to those who encourage circumcision and opposes rather than encourages the procedure.

44) SECOND perspective

- a) Jesus had told the apostles and first disciples that they were to go into all the world and that they must do it before His return.

Matthew 28:19–20 (NASB 2020)

¹⁹ Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Mark 13:10 (NASB 2020)

¹⁰ And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.

Luke 24:47 (NASB 2020)

⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

- b) Do you think there could be any doubt as to what he meant?
- c) Yet here we are – 10 years later and what do we have (documented at any rate).
 - i) The Ethiopian Eunuch. No mention of any reaction to that conversion.
 - ii) Some Samaritans – not really Gentiles – just a different type of Jews so to speak.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 20 <<<<<<<

- 1) Last time we ended while discussing the fact that the early Christians – those in the first 10 years might not have been very open to accepting Gentiles into their numbers.
- 2) We'll be brought back to this in a shortly – however, continuing with the Acts narrative, we find Peter explaining to the Jews in Jerusalem what had happened at the house of Cornelius.

Acts 11:4–18 (NIV)

- 3) In verse 12, Peter mentions the six men.
 - a) They had obviously accompanied him back to Jerusalem rather than going home to Jappa.
 - b) Perhaps another indication of how serious this situation might have been.
 - c) Another indicator is the fact that there were 6 witnesses – remember, the Law only required two.
- 4) Of course, the big indicator here is the fact that Peter is telling the story in detail – virtually a repeat of Luke's original narrative.
- 5) There are some differences in the two accounts but, first;

Why to you think Peter is telling the story at all? Should it not have been sufficient to simply tell these folks; “hey, let’s rejoice and be glad, the Holy Spirit has come on the Gentiles”?

What is actually happening here?

- 6) To really get the right answer, we have to go back to 11:1-3

Acts 11:1–3 (NASB 2020)

¹Now the apostles and the brothers *and sisters* who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ²And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, the Jewish *believers* took issue with him, ³saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

- 7) Do we here the echoes of the Pharisees when they were making accusations during Jesus' ministry? ABSOLUTELY!
- 8) But now, it is Peter who is being accused – **not** by the Pharisees but by his Jewish Christian brothers.
- 9) What should be happening is rejoicing over more of Jesus' desires and mission being fulfilled.
- 10) Instead, we are being concerned about eating with unclean folks – oh yes and, by the way – Just like Jesus had done.
- 11) Wright makes a point here about this repetition that I really think is worth mentioning and something we should keep in mind as we continue our Acts study.

The other obvious example is the triple repetition of the story of Paul's **conversion**. Significantly, both cases have to do with remarkable acts of God in doing new and unexpected things in people's lives, especially in extending the **gospel** to the

Gentiles. Significantly, too, in both cases a story is repeated because it is needed in defense of the person concerned.⁵

12) Before we move on, we need to look at the differences in these two telling's of this event.

13) There are a few small but significant details which Luke has added.

- a) **First**, Peter's report now includes that the angel had said to Cornelius that Peter's message would result in him and his household 'being saved.'
 - i) This is a clear indication that Luke does not suppose that Cornelius was 'saved' already.
 - (1) He was a God-fearing man but not saved.
- b) **Second**, Peter tells these folks that the Holy Spirit fell on the assembled company 'as I began to speak.'
 - i) Originally, Luke said "while he was speaking."
 - ii) Again, I have to agree with Wright here, Peter is clearly wanting to emphasize the sovereignty, and the surprising activity, of the Holy Spirit.
- c) **Third**, and very significantly to this conversation he is having, Peter tells them that he had remembered some very important words of Jesus. Beginning in vs. 16 we read.

Acts 11:16–17 (NASB 2020)

¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, '**John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.**' ¹⁷ Therefore, if God gave them the same gift as *He* also gave to us after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

14) Truly a "CORRECT" perspective on Peter's part and an "INCORRECT" perspective for his listeners.

15) The closing verse here is rendered in the NIV as "they had no further objections and praised God."

16) The NASB2020 however renders it a little closer to the Greek:

Acts 11:18 (NASB 2020)

¹⁸ When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has also granted to the Gentiles the repentance *that leads* to life."

17) I think this rendering most likely captures the actual feeling better.

18) "Quieted down" is a little different than "having no further objections" – just my opinion.

⁵ Tom Wright, [*Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12*](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 173.

19) I personally think the real feelings here are not so much an immediate reversal and joy on the part of the “circumcised believers” who are criticizing Peter but perhaps an acceptance with reservations.

20) At any rate, all’s well that end’s well – Right???

21) At least for now, it does seem that way.

22) The LABC sums up what I think is a reasonable synopsis of what the early believers thought about this:

Most **Jewish believers** thought that God offered salvation only to the Jews because God had given his law to them (Exodus 19–20). A group in Jerusalem believed that **Gentiles** could be saved, but only if they followed all the Jewish laws and traditions—in essence, if they became Jews before they became Christians (this would be the topic of discussion at the Jerusalem council—chapter 15). Thus, when **Peter arrived back in Jerusalem**, he was **criticized** for entering a Gentile home and then eating a meal with Gentiles. Both practices were terribly offensive to devout Jews who feared accidentally breaking one of their strict dietary regulations.⁶

23) Paul has likely been preaching to the Gentiles during this period.

24) However, the bottom line is not much progress has been made toward what Jesus had commanded.

25) So as we discussed, perhaps, this situation with Cornelius is God choosing to kick start this – I really wonder if He was really not so well pleased with this situation at this point.

26) And of course it is obvious from this reading, everyone was still NOT onboard with this.

27) Every time I let this situation settle into my brain, I find it amazing!

a) Jesus in His teaching, His interactions with Gentiles, and I think in virtually every way possible, made it clear that this was His command and desire – NOT AN OPTION!!!.

b) Yet, the resistance is obviously here and in a truly vehement way.

c) AND we must point out that even though what we have just discussed seems to move us past this we will find as we continue our study of Acts that we have not.

d) In fact, as we pointed out last time, one of the major items that Paul deals with throughout his ministry is the reconciliation and relationships of Jewish and Gentile Christians.

28) Unfortunately, history shows us that his efforts along with many other factors were not sufficient to accomplish perhaps the end goal of all Jews accepting Jesus as Messiah.

a) For all intents and purposes, by the mid second century, Christianity would actually become a predominately Gentile religion.

⁶ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 510–511.

- b) If you google “the first gentile church” you will find a consensus regarding this and, most feel that the church at Antioch which we are going to look at next was a predominant leader in that gentile church.
- c) Additionally, there was a hypothetical [Council of Jamnia](#) c. 85.
 - i) It is often stated that it condemned all who claimed the Messiah had already come, and Christianity in particular, excluding them from attending synagogue.
 - ii) Wikipedia comments on this:

The destruction of Jerusalem and the consequent dispersion of Jews and Jewish Christians from the city (after the Bar Kokhba revolt) ended any pre-eminence of the Jewish-Christian leadership in Jerusalem. Early Christianity grew further apart from Judaism to establish itself as a predominantly Gentile religion, and Antioch became the first Gentile Christian community with stature.

Acts 11:19–21 (NIV)

- 1) As we begin this reading, everything seemed perfectly normal and moving along quiet nicely.
- 2) We should make note here of the two Antioch’s – this is Syrian Antioch NOT Antioch in Pisidia where we will find Paul in chapter 13. Just something to keep in mind.
 - a) Pisidia Antioch is in amongst the cities of Phrygia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe all are far west and north of Tarsus where Syrian Antioch is east and south of Tarsus and straight north of Caesarea on that coastline.
- 3) Syrian Antioch was a wonderful place to go for those fleeing the persecution after Stephen’s death.
 - a) It was 300 miles north of Jerusalem – a long way away.
 - b) Important commercial center so jobs would be available.
 - c) Third largest city in the Roman empire (500,000) – easy to hide there.
 - d) Also, a large Jewish community.
- 4) Of course, the gospel would be brought with those fleeing and so it would spread there.
- 5) The first thing Luke tells us here really highlights what we were saying a bit ago – there is an isolation of Gentiles rather than an inclusion.
 - a) The gospel was only being shared with other Jews.
 - b) Again, really not what Jesus wanted in all that He taught.
- 6) At the risk of judging too harshly perhaps we should consider that this was a personal internal conflict.
 - a) I don’t want to make excuses for these folks but at the same time, I can see their struggle.
 - b) These were people who wanted more than anything else to please God and to be what He wanted them to be.

- c) I can see where it would be difficult to change their ingrained attitudes toward Gentiles.
 - d) After all, it was God who had set them apart and made them separate from the rest of the nations (Gentiles) from the very start.
 - e) Perhaps God is really understanding what is going on.
 - f) And perhaps this is why He is setting these events – the Syrian conversions, Cornelius, and now those from Cyprus and Cyrene to get this moving as He needed.
 - g) I'm only guessing here – perhaps giving an alternative way to look at this whole issue.
- 7) This idea could be supported as well by the next set of events we see unfolding.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 21 <<<<<<<

- 1) We finished last time discussing the Church at Antioch, how it was started and the differences in the Jews and Gentiles at this start.
- 2) We will pick up with the introductory remarks Luke makes and then continue to the reaction of the church in Jerusalem.

Acts 11:19–26 (NIV)

- 3) First, it would be good to know – why did the church in Jerusalem send Barnabas to Antioch?
- 4) Scripture really doesn't say – only they heard about the situation and sent Barnabas.
- 5) The LABC pretty much states the obvious:

Word of the happenings in Antioch prompted the leaders of the Jerusalem church to send someone to investigate.

- 6) Also, even with the Ethiopian Eunuch, Cornelius, and even the Samaritans, it appears that the perhaps the leaders “Jews of the circumcision” were not ready for the considerable number of Gentiles being added at Antioch.
- 7) Perhaps, their hope was that he would find something wrong so they could stop the Gentile growth.
- 8) Of course, Barnabas was a well-known figure in the Church at that time. Remember when we first learned about him:

Acts 4:36-37 (NASB 2020)

³⁶Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), ³⁷owned a tract of land. So he sold it, brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

- 9) So, when Barnabas gets to Antioch, he finds nothing wrong, in fact, things are great.
 - a) He sees the work of the Holy Spirit there and he jumps right in and begins work.
- 10) The congregation grew and, one might assume, there were some difficulties.
 - a) As one might also expect, there was likely the typical “standoffishness” between the Gentile Christians and the Jewish Christians.
- 11) Not to mention the sheer number of new converts.
- 12) So, it appears that Barnabas feels that he needs some help.
- 13) So, let's go get an old friend who is really able to help with all this.
 - a) And who is better for this job than Saul!
- 14) Of course, we recall that Saul had been sent away to Tarsus from Jerusalem in order to save his life.

Acts 9:26–30 (NASB 2020)

²⁶When he came to Jerusalem, he tried *repeatedly* to associate with the disciples;

and yet they were all afraid of him, as they did not believe that he was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus at Damascus. ²⁸ And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. ²⁹ And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic *Jews*; but they were attempting to put him to death. ³⁰ Now when the brothers learned *of it*, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

15) So, Barnabas sets off to fetch Saul to help him.

- a) Again, no phones, may not have even had an address.
- b) Not to mention the fact that Saul was traveling throughout the region teaching and planting churches during this time.
- c) Quite an undertaking on the part of Barnabas.

16) However, with success, Barnabas returns to Antioch with Saul and they spend the next year building the church there.

17) What a fantastic and exciting time it must have been for them.

18) John MacArthur brings out a point here that I think is really valid and important.

19) It tells us what was happening there in Antioch with Saul and Barnabas and what is *not* happening in many of our churches today.

These two gifted men formed a powerful ministry team. They faced the daunting task of shepherding a large number of new believers in a hostile pagan environment. Their solution was **for an entire year** to meet **with the church**, during which time **they taught considerable numbers**. Unlike many in today's church, they knew the **most urgent need** of those new Christians was to **be taught the Word of God**. In mass meetings of the Antioch believers, Barnabas and Saul did just that.⁷

Do you feel that our churches today are getting “Word” teaching?

Acts 11:27–30 (NIV)

- 1) Agabus was a prophet. We will meet him again in chapter 21:10 with another not so uplifting prophesy.
- 2) Historically, this famine is hard to pin down.

⁷ John F. MacArthur Jr., [Acts](#), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 315.

- 3) In fact, according to at least one source, the famine that he refers to here is really not just one great famine but a series of famines which occur between 41 and 54 C.E. during the reign of Claudius as scripture indicates.
- 4) I would like to bring something out here that speaks to a philosophy of scriptural study in general.
 - a) Many times, we will get into comments like this one which Luke makes.
 - b) Rather than spend a tremendous amount of time trying to figure out why he stated this as he did, we need to concentrate on the larger point that is being made.
- 5) In this case, the real point is not whether there is a single “severe famine over the entire Roman empire” or many famines over a longer period of time (same result).
 - a) In the end, we really don’t even care if the famine occurred or not.
- 6) The real point is what effect this prophesy had on the disciples in Antioch.
 - a) It brought about a spontaneous generosity that was exhibited in preparing a gift for the mother church in Jerusalem.
 - b) God’s lesson for us is not the history of the famine but the effect the prophesy had on the believers.
- 7) As we read and study scripture, we must be open to ways that allow us to hear God speak to us.
 - a) Again, it is the lessons we find that we can apply to our lives to become more pleasing to God – not the arguments we might get in about the minute details.
 - b) Now, that might seem a little odd coming from me since I am a detail guy.
 - c) However, what I want to say here that First, I try to keep a balance in detail and big picture meaning.
 - i) Second, is that the reason I delve into the details as much as I do is **not** to cause conflict or disagreement.
 - ii) Rather it is my hope that by sharing these details, the scripture will become more alive to us and we will enjoy studying it more.
 - iii) We must NEVER forget that behind all the events and coming and goings of what we read in God’s word were PEOPLE!
 - (1) People who had lives, hurts, and wants and hunger and pain.
 - d) It is an effort to take us back many times to where these folks were and let us see what they are really dealing with every day.
 - e) “The Chosen” comments.
- 8) Next, we are back in Jerusalem and we find that things are starting to get a little dicey for the Christians.

Acts 12:1–5 (NIV)

- 1) This was King Herod Agrippa I, the son of Aristobulus and grandson of Herod the Great.
- 2) His sister was Herodias, who had been responsible for the death of John the Baptist.
- 3) Herod Agrippa I was partly Jewish.
 - a) The Romans had appointed him to rule over most of Palestine, including the territories of Galilee, Perea, Judea, and Samaria.
- 4) He began to persecute the Christians in order to please the Jewish leaders who opposed them, hoping to solidify his position.
- 5) Agrippa I is mentioned in the Bible only in this chapter. He died suddenly in A.D. 44. We will get to that shortly.
 - a) His death is also recorded by the historian Josephus.

Above comments from LABC - Bruce Barton et al., Life Application New Testament Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 513.

- 6) Bad stuff is happening! The Sons of Thunder are no more!
 - a) This must have had a tremendous impact on John. I can't imagine how he dealt with this.
- 7) As we look at this situation with Herod and Peter, perhaps we see that same hypocrisy creep in – just like when the chief priests and members of the council were dealing with Jesus.
 - a) Passover is here and we can't do anything to upset the people.
- 8) On the other hand, this may have been a strategic move on Herod's part.
 - a) Since it was Passover, more Jews were in the city than usual.
 - b) By arresting Peter and trying him immediately **after** the Passover, Herod could impress the most Jews and by waiting he is assured of not causing problems.
- 9) I personally think that his final intent with the trial was to convict Peter publicly and execute him as he had James.
- 10) Of course, he had enough knowledge of the miraculous events surrounding the apostles that he was going to assure (so he thought) that Peter did not escape – WRONG!

Acts 12:6–17 (NIV)

- 1) There are lots of interesting points in this event.
- 2) The first I think is Peter's attitude.
 - a) I cannot under any circumstances believe that he was not totally aware of what his fate was likely to be come the conclusion of the Passover.
 - b) He would be tried and killed just as James had been.
 - c) Yet, he is so soundly sleeping that the angel actually has to punch him in his side to get him up.
 - d) Even then, he is still in that sleep state like we all get in occasionally where we have a dream and when we first wake up we think it was real.

- e) Peter is functioning but he still thinks he is dreaming.
- f) Once he walks away down one of the streets and the angel leaves him he comes to that everything is real and indeed, he is now really free – but where to go?
- 3) The next interesting thing might be Rodah – in this almost comic like situation where she gets so excited she leaves Peter standing at the outer entrance.
- 4) Finally, there is the whole group. I must confess, I have to agree with N.T. Wright here.
 - a) It gives us a little insight into the true nature of these early Christians.
 - b) They are all not superheroes – even though they were praying fervently for Peter’s release, when it happens, the last thing they do is believe that their prayers had been answered.
- 5) They don’t believe it.
 - a) They think Rodah is crazy! Or,
 - b) They think Peter is already dead and this is his angel – that’s a big question all unto itself?
- 6) At any rate, once the mess settles down, Peter just delivers the message – he is out of here!!
 - a) Don’t know where but gone – a definite indication that he knew that he would be killed if he stayed in Jerusalem.
 - b) One comment indicated that some, those who suppose that Peter was the first Pope, say he went to Rome.
 - c) This is highly unlikely since we see him back in Jerusalem shortly after Herod’s death.
 - d) We do know that this is really the last truly deep look we get at Peter in and his activities in Acts.
 - i) We see him again in chap 15 but really nothing more.

Acts 12:18–19 (NIV)

- 7) Not such a good outcome for the guards – sixteen men executed!
- 8) Turns out it is not going to end well for Herod either.

Acts 12:20–24 (NIV)

- 1) As horrible as this scene is, it is pretty straightforward.
- 2) However, having said that, here is one of those situations where, in translation, context must rule.
- 3) The word for god is θεός and regardless, it is not unique to God the Father.
- 4) So, when we look at this sentence, one has to consider the fact that the people are listening to Herod speak.
- 5) Therefore, there is no way that they could be thinking that it was God the Father and thus, we must translate the sentence ... a god not a man! and not ... God and not a man!.

- 6) The problem is that in Herod's mind they were praising him as a god and the issue is that he did not say that he wasn't.
- 7) The LABC comments here:

The reason for this judgment was that Herod accepted the people's worship instead of giving the glory to God. God knew what was going on in Herod's heart and refused to share his glory with any earthly potentate. Pride is a serious sin. God chose to punish Herod's pride immediately.⁸

Do we ever take the praise of others for ourselves when God is the one that should be receiving the praise?

⁸ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 516.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 22 <<<<<<<

- 1) James' death and Peter's capture and miraculous release from jail could almost be considered an interruption in Luke's narrative.
- 2) Basically this portion of the narrative was set up by the church at Antioch sending Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem with famine relief.
- 3) It was probably to show the tumultuous times in Jerusalem.
- 4) As a reminder before we proceed, we need to go back and read 11:27 and ff.

Acts 11:27–30 (NIV)

- 5) So, the assumption is that Barnabas and Saul may have been in Jerusalem at the same time as the incident with Peter took place.
- 6) In fact, verse 1 of chapter 12 which is the James and Peter section basically says this:
¹ It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them.

- a) However, looking at various timelines one gets multiple opinions in this regard.
 - i) A definite word of caution however is, as we read 12:25 and then move to the events of 13:1 thru 5 there are varying opinions as to the time between Saul and Barnabas's return to Antioch and the sending out of Paul, Barnabas and John Mark on the first missionary journey.
 - ii) Likely at least a year perhaps even 2 or 3 years.
- 7) Now, picking up in verse 25 of chapter 12 we read ...

Acts 12:25–13:5 (NIV)

- 1) Luke introduces the church in Antioch with a bit of personnel name dropping.
 - a) We might call this the who's who list of teachers and prophets.
 - b) And, having all these is like a trifecta. In 2 Cor we are told:

1 Corinthians 12:28 (NASB 2020)

- ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *and various* kinds of tongues.
- 2) At this point, one can assume that Antioch was on the way to becoming a second major center of Christian faith second only to Jerusalem itself.
 - 3) Its leadership team was well known, with Barnabas and Saul among them.
 - 4) Wright comments that
“We get a fascinating glimpse of their regular devotional life: fasting and prayer surrounding the worship of the Lord, waiting for the spirit to give fresh direction.

Whether they had been expecting something like this, we don't know. But to be told, suddenly, that two of the main leaders were wanted elsewhere must have come as something of a blow."

Tom Wright, *Acts for Everyone*, Part 2: Chapters 13-28 (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 3-4..

- 5) From vs. 5, obviously, we are off to a great start but, as we are about to see, things are destined to turn a little off pretty quickly.

Acts 13:6-12 (NIV)

- 1) Paphos was the seat of government on the island of Cyprus.
- 2) It is important to see the interplay here as we meet these characters.
 - a) First, Bar-Jesus – the magician (sorcerer).
 - i) Jewish name meaning "son of Jesus" or, said another way "son of salvation."
 - (1) Interesting twist to say the least.
 - ii) He was also called by the name Elymas which in some way means magician (not in the Greek) (some controversy over the phrasing of the parenthetical expression here)
 - iii) He was a Jewish man who was "with" (actual Greek) the proconsul. (NIV uses attendant?)
 - (1) Either way, it basically means he had the proconsul's ear.
 - iv) This was bad for two reasons – he was a magician and perhaps more importantly, a false prophet.
- 3) Elymas opposed Saul and Barnabas which simply means he was doing all he could to keep the proconsul (governor) from becoming a believer in Jesus.
 - a) One must assume that this is because once the proconsul did become a believer he would see Elymas for what he was and no longer associate with or need him.
- 4) Paul clearly states what Elymas truly was:

¹⁰ "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?"
- 5) (here is the point at which Luke loses the name Saul and uses the name Paul for the remainder of his narrative)
- 6) Paul then pronounces the hand of the Lord against the man and he becomes blind for a time.
- 7) Though this blindness might be a temporary punishment for Elymas, the more important outcome of the sentence was the proconsul's reaction.

When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

8) The dynamic trio (soon to be duo) continue their journey.

Acts 13:13–20a (NIV)

- 1) Of course, we will return to the leaving of John Mark at this point in the journey a little later.
- 2) For now, they proceed on to Pisidian Antioch and enter the synagogue there.
- 3) Two things of interest here:
 - a) First, unlike the temple, evidently, Gentiles who worshiped God were allowed in the synagogue with the Jews.
 - i) Remember, synagogues were not all “totally Jewish” they were in many cases simply town meeting places.
 - b) Second, apparently these folks were very much wanting (at least at this point) to hear what Paul and Barnabas had to say.
 - i) As we will see, this is not going to last very long.
- 4) All that being said, here is another of those long readings similar to the speech of Stephen before he was stoned.

Acts 13:20b–42 (NIV)

- 5) Obviously a much better outcome than Stephen’s speech.
- 6) Continuing on, we see the initial reactions – still favorable.

Acts 13:43–44 (NIV)

- 7) As we will see, this quickly changes.

Acts 13:45–47 (NIV)

- 8) Over the past few lessons, we have talked about the fact that Jesus absolutely told the disciples to go to the Gentiles.
 - a) As we have seen, this has been a challenge – individually and as congregations.
 - b) Now, I think we can see the root of the problem.
- 9) It is time for us to seriously look back at God’s plan.
- 10) God had planned from the beginning that the entire world would come to know Him.
- 11) In Genesis 12, God speaks directly to this:

Genesis 12:3 (NASB 2020)

³ And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

- 12) There can be no doubt that when He says, “families of the earth” He means all nations.
- 13) Then, there is the quote Paul makes in this very passage from Isaiah 49:6.

Isaiah 49:6 (NASB 2020)

I will also make You a light of the nations.

So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

14) One very interesting part of this verse which Paul does not quote is the very first phrase.

⁶He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the protected ones of Israel.

15) When I hear this I think what God is saying is Israel – the Jewish nation – has a much bigger role as His chosen people.

a) In essence, He is saying that the relationship He has established with Israel – His chosen people – He will establish with the rest of the nation of the world.

b) And, most importantly, Israel will be the instrument by which that relationship is established – “Light of the nations”!

c) So, instead of being jealous and so self-centered, they should have rejoiced that God had chosen them for such a monumental task.

d) It may sound a bit odd, but to put this in a little different perspective.

i) God has the sovereign right to be jealous of other gods (who aren’t really gods at all) **but**

ii) His chosen people do not have the right to be jealous of other nations whom God chooses to bless through them.

16) The more I contemplate this scripture and the situation it so explicitly defines I believe it is the absolute core problem of the Jew / Gentile relational problems throughout the New Testament.

a) Not treating them equally – not eating with them etc.

b) Forcing them into obedience of the Law – circumcision – becoming Jew first before being accepted as Christian brothers.

c) All stem from Jealousy!

17) In this, Israel had forsaken the task that God had given them.

18) As Paul explains, in light of this, he still had the responsibility to offer the Gospel to the Jew first then to the Gentile but, as the LABC asserts:

“But Israel had forsaken that task, so it was given to the church to carry out.”⁹

⁹ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 520–521.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 23 <<<<<<<

- 1) Last time, we left with a few questions on the table that you were to think about.
- 2) So, let's start by reading the scripture that prompts the first question again.

Acts 13:45–48 (NIV)

- 3) Here, we see the contrasting reactions of Jews and the Gentiles.
- 4) The Gentiles were glad – not that the Jews had rejected the word of the Lord but that they had received it.
- 5) So, here is the question regarding the last portion of verse 48:

“and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.”

When you read this statement, (particularly zeroing in on the word “appointed”) what does it say to you – what do you think it means?

- 6) The root of the Greek word for “appointed” here is *tasso*. It means, in its basic lexical form “designated.”
- 7) The form of the verb here is in the passive, which means it is something that has been done to the subject – i.e., they have been designated or appointed.
- 8) In this case I think it refers to that subgroup of rejoicing Gentiles who not only “honored the word of the Lord” but believed.
 - a) Of course, what they were appointed to or designated for was eternal life.
- 9) I will say in conclusion on this, I do not believe this indicates any inference to “predestination.”
 - a) To be honest, in the Greek or the English, it is an awkward sentence.
 - b) Truly, we are speaking again of an emphasis on the fact that the Gentiles have always been destined or appointed to eternal life if they believe.
- 10) If we return to the Genesis and Isaiah quotes that we looked at last time, I think we can easily make the connection.

Genesis 12:3 (NASB 2020)

³ And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you ***all the families of the earth*** will be blessed.”

Isaiah 49:6 (NASB 2020)

I will also make You ***a light of the nations***.
So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

- 11) God is sovereign! He has known from the beginning whose names are in the book of life.
- 12) That fact does not mean that anyone, Jew or Gentile was predestined – i.e., had no choice, it simply means that God knew the choice we would make before we existed.
- 13) And, as we just established, that choice is not that we would turn to Him but that we would finally give in to His pursuit of us.

14) In this case I think it is a distinction with a definite difference!

15) Now, in light of all that, here's a second question for us that is related: ***(Multiple Choice)***

How do we describe our role in our salvation?

- a) ***'coming to Christ.'***
- b) ***'accepting Christ.'***
- c) ***'making a decision for Christ.'***
- d) ***All of the above***
- e) ***None of the above***

Why?

16) Tod Vogt in his writeup for "Listening to God through Scripture, Prayer, and Mission" called "Sanctification: Self-Control or Spirit-Control?" says this:

God created each of us, and God has been pursuing each of us our entire life. ... the truth is, at best we gave-up our attempts to flee from God. These descriptions of our role ***[what I listed as a, b, and c]*** place the initiative on us instead of on God. The initiative is always God's. God laid claim to us long before we accepted that claim¹⁰. It was not our pursuit of God but God's pursuit of us that leads to our salvation.¹¹

17) We must never lose sight of the fact that God's plan has been since the fall of Adam in the Garden to bring us back to that perfect relationship.

18) Living in His kingdom that was established in Christ is the last step before the final renewing of all things.

19) When we finally see what God is doing, stop in our tracks, and accept His love, mercy and salvation through Christ that has been there all along we become part of this present kingdom and are guaranteed a place in the final kingdom that will come with the renewing of all things.

Acts 13:49–52 (NIV)

20) The Jews reject, the Gentiles respond in great numbers, and, in turn, the Jews become belligerent and often physically violent against Paul, his companions, and other Christians.

21) In this particular case, we see the Jews are using their contacts in high places to force Paul and Barnabas out of town.

22) It is interesting, and perhaps significant here that first listed are "influential religious women."

- a) Followed, of course, by the leaders of the city.

¹⁰ Keith Beasley-Topliffe

¹¹ Alive, Mission; Shaffer, Stephen; Carrizal, Steven; Hoover, Jeremy; Vogt, Tod K.; Howard, Lantz. Mission Alive Discipleship Cohorts: Listening to God through Scripture, Prayer, and Mission (p. 34). Mission Alive. Kindle Edition. Ronald E. McDaniel

23) The result is that Paul and Barnabas are driven out of this part of the country.

24) The LABC comments that

“these women and men may have feared that Paul would disturb their fragile relationship with the Roman government.”

25) This was a sad moment: those so desperately in need of salvation driving from their city the bearers of the Good News—news of forgiveness, of justification before God.

26) As a conclusion to this episode, we have Paul and Barnabas doing something that was a fairly common practice – shaking the dust from their feet.

a) In fact, Jesus had told his disciples to do the same thing when He sent them out back in Mark 6:11.

Mark 6:11 (NASB 2020)

¹¹ Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet as a testimony against them.”

b) This is a symbol of cleansing – cleansing from these folks who did not accept God’s son.

c) The disciples nor Paul and Barnabas were to blame if the gospel was rejected.

i) They had faithfully presented it, that was obvious.

27) In contrast to the paranoid, politicking Jews working hard to rid themselves of the gospel messengers, the believers, most of whom were Gentiles, were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

28) I love the description of being “filled with joy” that the LABC gives ...

“the kind of inexplicable and overflowing joy of one freshly filled with the loving, forgiving Spirit of God.”¹²

¹² Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 521.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 24 <<<<<<<

- 1) Distance wise we are a little over halfway through the outbound trip on Paul's first missionary journey.
- 2) They came into the Galatian provinces at Perga, went on to Pisidian Antioch and are now entering Iconium.

Acts 14:1–7 (NIV)

- 3) Here is our pattern again.
 - a) In this case a great number of Jews and Gentiles respond.
 - b) But, as the pattern goes, the Jews who do not accept Paul's message along with some Gentiles do all in their power to stop Paul and Barnabas.
- 4) Despite their best (or worst) efforts, Paul and Barnabas were able to stay in Iconium for time and because of the Lord's power through the Spirit they were able to preach the Gospel with good results.
- 5) Finally, there was a plot against them and they were forced to flee Iconium and head for Lystra.
- 6) So, they are done with that threat (maybe????)

Acts 14:8–13 (NIV)

- 1) First, we need to note that evidently, Paul is speaking to a non-Jewish crowd.
 - a) Now, we are not told if there is a synagogue in the town or not or even if Paul started there this time.
- 2) Whatever the case, it sort of looks like we have a new and quite different problem.
- 3) Paul and Barnabas, because of Paul's healing of the man lame from birth, are being immediately considered gods.
- 4) And not just any gods – Zeus the most powerful – king of the gods and Hermes – the most popular.
- 5) From the World History Encyclopedia we get the following descriptions of these two:

Zeus was the king of the 12 Olympian gods and the supreme god in Greek religion. Zeus is often referred to as the Father, as the god of thunder, and the 'cloud-gatherer'. Zeus controlled the weather and offered signs and omens. Zeus generally dispensed justice, guaranteeing order amongst both the gods and humanity from his seat high on Mt. Olympus.¹³

¹³ Cartwright, M. (2013, May 25). **Zeus**. *World History Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldhistory.org/zeus/>

Hermes was the ancient Greek god of trade, wealth, luck, fertility, animal husbandry, sleep, language, **thieves**, and travel. One of the cleverest and most mischievous of the 12 Olympian gods, Hermes was their herald and messenger. In that position, he came to symbolize the crossing of boundaries in his role as a guide between the two realms of gods and humanity.

Hermes was known for his impish behavior and curiosity. He invented the lyre, the alphabet, and dice. The latter explains why the god was beloved by gamblers. Hermes was the patron of shepherds and invented the panpipes they used to call their flock. To the Romans, the god was known as Mercury.¹⁴

- 6) One comment I wanted to make here is designations of gods.
 - a) As you can see from these descriptions, gods had specific areas that they were responsible for.
 - b) The one here that really stood out was Hermes was the god of thieves.
 - c) That's a truly different concept!!
- 7) One further note here before we continue. Lystra and these towns we are dealing with now are all in the province known as Galatia.
 - a) So, Paul's letter to the Churches of Galatia later on is obviously addressed to them.
 - b) I bring this up only to say, when you now read Galatians, you will know the gods that these folks, at least in Lystra, were worshiping before becoming Christians.
- 8) Obviously, being called gods does not set well with Paul and Barnabas.... Continuing...

Acts 14:14–18 (NIV)

- 1) Since the initial exclamation of Paul and Barnabas as gods was in the Lycaonian language, they probably did not get it right away.
- 2) However, when they do become aware, to show their extreme horror and perhaps sorrow at what is happening, using a common Jewish custom, they tore their cloths.
- 3) These citizens of Lystra are obviously sincere believers in at least these two gods of the Greeks and perhaps others who were gods of nature as were these.
 - a) I think we should take note here that there are likely no Jews involved in this situation – either in the crowd or Paul's teaching.
- 4) Realizing this, Paul must take a different approach to introduce them to the one true God of the universe.
- 5) LABC comment:

¹⁴ Cartwright, M. (2019, August 28). **Hermes**. *World History Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldhistory.org/Hermes/>

The first witness these people should have noticed was the reminders that God had made and had given abundantly to all—the rain, the good crops, food, and even joyful hearts. This general revelation was in place to encourage all observers to seek God.¹⁵

- 6) Even with this approach, the Lycaonians were still wanting to sacrifice to them.
 - a) This is really an indicator that their success here in Lystra was at best limited but, as we will see, later, there is enough success that a church was founded there.
 - b) If the sacrifice was not allowed and indeed these two were “just men” then who were these guys?
 - c) What were they doing and how?
 - d) I’m sure Paul was explaining all this to these folks and trying to get them on the right path.
- 7) This limited success is obvious from what happens next ...

Acts 14:19–20 (NIV)

- 1) The Antioch referred to here is obviously Pisidian Antioch – just two cities back from where they are now in their first missionary journey.
 - a) This is where Paul and Barnabas shook the dust from their feet as they left after the jealous Jews had turned the prominent women and men against them.
 - b) Evidently some of these folks wanted to pursue the issue further and came to Iconium, picked up some other supporters against Paul and Barnabas and then travelled immediately to Lystra.
- 2) I find it interesting that the Jewish contingent from Antioch and Iconium made it a point to and were successful at winning over this crowd.
 - a) Again, we can assume that there were no Jews in the crowds wanting to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas as Zeus and Hermes.
 - b) But we really do not know if there were any Jews in crowds in Lystra at the start. Again, Paul’s approach says no.
 - c) That being said, those from Antioch and Iconium may have enlisted the help of any Jews that may have been in Lystra to help in winning over the crowd.
- 3) As we just said, any success they had before these folks arrived was mostly if not completely wiped out and the crowd – men from Antioch, Iconium, and from Lystra drag Paul outside the city and stone him.

¹⁵ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 523.

- 4) We don't know what, if anything, happened to Barnabas at this point.
- 5) What we do know is that we have either a miracle or Paul is one tough dude.
- 6) I think it is interesting that, as I indicated when I read Paul's speech, unlike Steven's, he at least was not stoned.
 - a) However, the truth is this stoning is an indirect result of that very speech.
- 7) So, he is stoned to the point that they think he is dead, dragged outside the city.
 - a) Now, to me, a person would have to be in really bad condition and unconscious to be dragged for a distance and mistaken for dead after a stoning.
 - b) We would be talking about lots of bruises, lacerations, and perhaps even broken bones.
 - c) Yet, after the disciples, (assuming those with Paul and Barnabas and perhaps some converts in Lystra if there were any) surrounded him he gets up, dusts himself off, and goes back into the city.
- 8) Miracle or tough dude? You judge.
- 9) They all leave for Derbe on the next day.
 - a) By the way, speaking of miracle or tough dude, Derbe is a 75 miles trip from Lystra.
 - b) Not a trivial undertaking after being stoned?

Acts 14:21–28 (NIV)

- 1) These verses complete the first missionary journey.
 - a) Started with Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark – finished with Paul and Barnabas.
 - b) Many churches were planted and established.
 - c) Again, they had success in all of the towns mentioned – even Lystra with the predominant to exclusive Gentile population.
 - d) The only sources I could find on the entire length of this journey vary from an absolute minimum of 4 months (unlikely) to 18 months (much more inline with the activities and distances)
- 2) One of those trivia things is that they returned from Attalia.
 - a) There is no record of a church being established there but I could definitely see Paul and Barnabas preaching there before they departed for Antioch.
- 3) It is also curious that they do not go back to Paphos and across the island of Cyprus as they did on the outbound journey.
- 4) In fact, there is no record of Paul ever returning to Cyprus however, as we will see, Barnabas and John Mark do.
 - a) Unlike today, it may have been that there was just no available transport at the time that was going to Paphos.

- 5) We should note for sure that as they began their return trip, they appointed elders in these churches as they stopped to encourage them.
 - a) This was perhaps a special challenge in Lystra considering the lack of Jewish Christians.
 - b) One of the requirements of course, being Scriptural knowledge which a Jewish Christian would have and the pagans would not.
- 6) On the return journey, there was either no trouble encountered or Luke chose not to report it in his narrative.
- 7) If I were to assume here, I would say that they were spending their time encouraging the disciples whom they had left and spending very little time on evangelizing.
 - a) They really stay out of trouble when they don't try to present the gospel to new folks so perhaps there was no trouble to report on the return path.
 - b) And, as the first paragraph of this passage indicates their objectives were:
 - i) strengthening the disciples
 - ii) encouraging them to remain true to the faith.
 - iii) appointing elders
 - c) All of which takes time and effort.
 - d) Plus, if these churches are truly planted and growing as indicated and now have functioning elders, it will truly become their mission to continue the evangelization.
- 8) Two other notes before we move on:
 - a) First, when they return to Syrian Antioch, they share the details with the folks who had sent them out months before.
 - b) This must have been rewarding for both they themselves and those who were hearing the report.
 - c) Second, they stayed in Antioch a long time.
 - i) Actually, this is somewhere between 1 and 2 years before the Jerusalem council which we will study next.
 - d) The journey ends in 48 CE (est.). The council is in 49 or 50 CE (est.)

Acts 15:1–4 (NIV)

- 1) Well, here we are again back to the circumcision problem – can't be saved unless you are circumcised.
 - a) We **MUST** be absolutely clear on one point here – SALVATION.
 - b) Circumcision is not a requirement for salvation which is what the issue was in Antioch.
- 2) In studying this passage, I ran across another comment that was really clarifying in this ongoing effort to understand where these "Judaizers" were coming from.

- a) This just adds to what we have been saying over the past few weeks:

The Judaizers concluded that Christianity was not intended to **bypass** Judaism but to **build** on it. Judaism, with its centuries of history and tradition, was the prerequisite. They saw Jesus (and his message) as the final step in the long process. The Judaizers were afraid that soon there would be more Gentile than Jewish Christians. Also, they were afraid that moral standards among believers would be weakened if they did not follow Jewish laws.¹⁶

- 3) As N.T. Wright points out, this is not simply a matter of whose right or wrong.
4) The truth is this whole thing was theoretically dealt with – it has already been laid to rest back in chapter 11.
5) So, at this point – knowing we haven’t gone very far into this what is your opinion?

Does it sound like we are dealing with tradition verses innovation?

- 6) As we will see, we are NOT really, we are really dealing with tradition or innovation!
7) What we are dealing with is God’s “new” (if you want to call it that) reality.

¹⁶ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 524–525.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 25 <<<<<<<

- 1) Let's jump in and start with rereading the introductory passage to the Jerusalem Council once more.

Acts 15:1–4 (NIV)

- 2) As we discussed last time, we are back at the circumcision problem – can't be saved unless you are circumcised.
 - a) The key issue is tying circumcision to salvation.
 - b) Circumcision is not a requirement for salvation which is what the issue was in Antioch.
- 3) I would also like to read again the comment that was really clarifying in this ongoing effort to understand where these "Judaizers" were coming from.

The Judaizers concluded that Christianity was not intended to **bypass** Judaism but to **build** on it. Judaism, with its centuries of history and tradition, was the prerequisite. They saw Jesus (and his message) as the final step in the long process. The Judaizers were afraid that soon there would be more Gentile than Jewish Christians. Also, they were afraid that moral standards among believers would be weakened if they did not follow Jewish laws.¹⁷

- 4) As N.T. Wright points out, this is not simply a matter of whose right or wrong.
- 5) The truth is that we are dealing with is God's "new" (if you want to call it that) reality.
 - a) That reality was the fact that the Gentiles were part of God's plan and now on equal footing with the people of Israel – a fact that they had missed completely.
- 6) There is obviously **no** resolution among the parties in Antioch by themselves.
- 7) They must get some input and frankly I think the point is they must argue their case before the apostles in Jerusalem in order to have any hope of a real resolution.
- 8) So, off to Jerusalem to get the matter resolved – the famous (not in their time) but to us, Jerusalem Council.
- 9) Before we address all that, there is a background thing happening here in these verses that is also interesting and probably has a definite bearing on the outcome.
 - a) If we step back and take notice before the onset of this situation the only folks who really know of the 1st missionary journey and the successes Paul and Barnabas had among the Gentiles are the folks in Antioch.
 - b) Also, as we are told, the folks along the journey route as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria.

¹⁷ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 524–525.

- c) It seems that it is only on this trip that the word is spread further.
 - d) And, of special note, this would also appear to be the first time the apostles and elders in Jerusalem have heard of this particular success.
 - e) We are perhaps looking at as much as 3 years passing since Saul and Barnabas came to Jerusalem from Antioch with the famine relief.
- 10) So, it would seem like the first order of business is to let the church and apostles and elders in Jerusalem know what has been happening across Galatia and in Antioch.
- a) If you think about this in a big picture mode, you can see that the answer to the question that is about to be posed will have far reaching consequences.
 - b) If the council decides to agree with the group that had come to Antioch then not only will the church at Antioch be affected, indeed, all the churches that Paul and Barnabas have started will be affected.
 - c) It appears that the telling of the successes etc. actually takes place twice.
 - i) First, in verse 4 of the passage we just read:
- ⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.
- ii) Then, in in the middle of the discussions – 15:12 which we will get to shortly.
- 11) At this point we should probably address another one of those “scholarly issues” which you can file away for future use.
- 12) Some scholars are of the opinion that the trip to Jerusalem in Gal 2 is the Jerusalem Council.
- a) Others see Paul’s discussions in Gal 2 as referring to something else that happened when Paul and Barnabas brought the offering for famine relief to Jerusalem from Antioch.
- 13) If you are using the NASB, and you look at Gal 2, you will find the heading for the chapter to read “The Council at Jerusalem”.
- 14) Other translations have different headings there.
- a) Keep in mind, ALL these headings are supplied for our benefit by the translators and are NOT part of the original text.
 - b) Examples are:
 - i) NIV / ESV – Paul Accepted by the Apostles
 - ii) CSB – Paul Defends His Gospel and Jerusalem
 - iii) NET – Confirmation from the Jerusalem Apostles
- 15) On this point, I do NOT agree with the NASB – I do **not** think Gal 2 is referring to the Jerusalem Council.
- a) There are several reasons for this:
 - i) Galatians only mentions two trips to Jerusalem.
 - (1) Acts mentions 3.
 - ii) Galatians says they went as a result of a revelation.

- (1) I believe this refers to Agabus and the famine revelation.
- iii) In Galatians Paul presents his gospel privately to those esteemed leaders.
- iv) At the council:
 - (1) On arrival, they share with the church and all the apostles and elders. Vs 15:4
 - (2) Then in the council again they share with all the leaders and apostles. Vs 15:12
 - (3) Both (1) and (2) are very public.
- v) In Galatians, it appears that whatever debate is had, it is because Paul started it.
- vi) At the council, the debate was already going on – that was the whole purpose.
- vii) In the Galatian account, Paul and Barnabas are central and the “righthand of fellowship” is extended to them. The outcome is directed to them and the result is about Paul’s continuing ministry.

Galatians 2:9–10 (NASB 2020)

⁹ and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James, Cephas, and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we *might go* to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ *They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.*

- viii) At the conclusion of the council, the result is a letter to the church at Antioch with some very specific instructions. Truly, a different problem is solved.
 - ix) What happens with Peter at Antioch after the Galatian report of the Jerusalem meeting would likely not have taken place after the Jerusalem Council. Same with Barnabas being drawn into the hypocrisy.
- 16) The major point of difference to consider in context is the difference in the situation after the first missionary journey as opposed to before.
- a) Before this, there were not so many Gentiles converted as now.
 - b) They were not so widespread either.
- 17) We should also notice that Paul’s participation in the actual discussion of the council (as reported by Luke anyway) is really minimal.
- a) Again, 15:12 which we will get to shortly is the only mention of Paul and Barnabas participation in the council proper.

Questions / Comments before we move on?

- 1) Ok, looking at the next couple of verses, we get into the real crux of the problem at this moment.

Acts 15:5–6 (NIV)

- 2) The first thing to notice is that this is indeed a step beyond the circumcision question that was originally raised.
 - a) In Antioch, the question was one of circumcision (or at least that is what Luke reports)
 - i) And, that circumcision was a matter of salvation.

- b) Here, we have an added requirement – keeping the Law of Moses!
 - i) And again one would have to assume the requirement would be linked to salvation.
- 3) One commentator makes the point that this group of believers who stood up at the beginning may not have been exactly all of the same mind:

Probably some were sincere believers in the resurrection of Christ and his claim to be the Messiah (though obviously confused about the relationship between law and grace). Others likely were blindly trusting in their own moralistic efforts to make them acceptable to God. Still others may have been infiltrators with evil motives. Whatever these believers' individual status before God, the common concern of all in the Judaizer camp was that all Gentile converts **be required to follow the law of Moses**, especially regarding circumcision.¹⁸

- 4) Ok looking at the start of this again, we first hear from Peter then from James the brother of Jesus.

Acts 15:5–21 (NIV)

- 1) The first thing we see that we must take note of is “after much discussion.”
 - a) An absolute given here is this is not a unanimous decision.
 - b) There are folks on both sides of the issue and the discussion most likely got pretty heated and deep.
 - c) And, as we will also see, even after this council resolution, the issue will plague the church throughout its infancy.
- 2) With that being said, we need to look at what Peter and James have to say.
- 3) There are two major points here – **first from Peter**:
- 4) Peter ties back to his first being sent to the Gentile Cornelius and his household.
 - a) Here we need to remember that there were several things about that situation that have great importance to this entire conversation.
 - b) As Peter points out, the major item is that the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit “as they had” and as you recall, even before Peter had completed his message.
 - c) Then, before that, we must also remember how that entire episode began.
 - i) In a vision, Peter was shown that God no longer considered unclean many of the things which the Jews had for centuries considered unclean and unacceptable to eat.

¹⁸ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 525.

- d) In the question at hand, this has a major impact – to keep the Law of Moses would require everyone who was a Christian to return to those dietary laws that were in essence set aside in Peter's vision.
 - e) He further states in vs. 10 regarding the Law in its entirety,
“a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear.”
 - f) The key here is the realization that it was not the Law that was unreasonable, it was man's failure – his absolute inability – to keep it that was the failure.
 - g) Bottom line is, for Peter, Gentile acceptance was a given.
- 5) Barnabas and Paul then address the council and explain where their ministry is and what has been accomplished by the Lord.
- a) Even though they had been over this before (when they first arrived) they probably felt it was necessary here as a refocusing point before any final decisions were made.
 - b) Again, any decision that was made would have a major impact on all the new gentile believers.
- 6) Finally, **James speaks** up and brings to the forefront the fact that prophecies speak of this very fact.
- a) As we have discussed just a bit ago, this goes all the way back to Genesis.
 - b) Wright comments here on James' use of Amos 9:11-15

James goes for the centre of the passage and draws the conclusion that the Gentiles are indeed welcome as they are, on the basis of God's grace and with faith in Jesus as their only badge of membership.¹⁹

- 7) James makes one final point here which we need to consider.

²¹ For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.

- 8) In other words, both Jew and Gentile can hear and learn the Law of Moses every Sabbath in the synagogue.
- 9) This is pertinent for several reasons assuming that the Gentiles were attending synagogue meetings:
- a) First, they would not become morally destitute as though they were left on their own without any knowledge of what God considered morally correct.
 - b) Second, it would give these new converts a true respect for their Jewish Christian Brothers.
 - c) Even if they were not attending directly we would know that the elders that were chosen by Paul and Barnabas in all these churches would be sharing that morality with these new

¹⁹ Tom Wright, [*Acts for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 13-28*](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 45.

converts – which – stems from the teaching that has been taking place the synagogues for centuries.

- 10) Basically, James and Peter are singing the same song as Paul and Barnabas – and that is that this returning to the Law at the level which it is being suggested cannot be allowed to happen.
- 11) If you have been reading Galatians along as Micah has requested, I am sure you are hearing in your mind right now how appalled Paul is that the Galatians are trying to go back and start keeping the Law of Moses.
 - a) For the gentiles to whom he is speaking it is not them necessarily trying to be “Jewish first” but rather as Paul points out in chapter 4:8-11 they are trying to become slaves again.

Galatians 4:8–11 (NASB 2020)

⁸ However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles, to which you want to be enslaved all over again? ¹⁰ You meticulously observe days and months and seasons and years. ¹¹ I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

- i) They were slaves to worship of idols before and to turn to the Law would make them slaves to it as surly as they were slaves to those idols before.
- b) For the Jews who read the Galatian letter, he is probably saying that they would be come slaves to the Law again – the Law that he has clearly stated cannot be kept in its entirety and which does not lead to redemption and eternal life.

- 1) Well, we have heard from Peter and James, and Paul and Barnabas.
- 2) Deliberations have taken place.
- 3) So, what is the verdict?

Acts 15:22-35 (NIV)

The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers

²² Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, men who were leaders among the believers. ²³ With them they sent the following letter:

The apostles and elders, your brothers,

To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia:

Greetings.

²⁴ We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. ²⁵ So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul—²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. ²⁸ It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹ You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.

Farewell.

³⁰ So the men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. ³¹ The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. ³² Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. ³³ After spending some time there, they were sent off by the believers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them. ^[34] ³⁵ But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.

- 4) Let's spend a few minutes discussing this letter.
- 5) However, before we get started, let's hit a couple of items:
 - a) As far as we are told, this letter which was produced by the Jerusalem Council was not circulated beyond the churches in Syria and Cilicia. However, I believe it probably was.

- i) As we proceed, we will see that Paul on his second missionary journey tells the churches in Galatia of the results of the council (16:4).
 - (1) Barnabas and Mark probably also told the churches in Cyprus.
- ii) Considering the importance of the decision and proclamation it makes they would have been remiss not to get it to the other churches.
- b) During these past two discussions, we have gone back several times to the Galatian letter.
- c) That being said, we should probably make sure we know where it fits in this discussion.
 - i) To be perfectly clear, we do not know the date of Paul's letter to the Galatians.
 - ii) If you attempt to google it you will find it many varying opinions.
 - (1) Truthfully, all dates around this period are murky.
 - iii) My take is that it was obviously written after the 1st missionary journey (no churches to write to). I also believe it was written before the Jerusalem council.
- iv) REASONS:
 - (1) First, if it were written after the council, it would have undoubtedly contained reference to the findings and results of that council.
 - (a) Perhaps even a copy of the letter produced by the council itself.
 - (2) Second, as discussed in the last lesson, the trip to Jerusalem of Galatians 2 was, in my opinion, definitely NOT a reference to the Jerusalem council.
 - (a) Ref Acts lesson 25, page 109 item 15 a) and following.
 - (3) I also believe the tone of the conclusion of the meeting of Galatians 2 paved the way for the Antioch church to send Barnabas and Saul on the first missionary journey.
 - (4) Finally, as I mentioned a moment ago, we will see in chapter 16:4 that one of the things Paul, Silas, and Timothy do on the second missionary journey is to deliver the results of the council.
- 6) So, all that being said, we probably have a reasonable perspective on the dispersion of the results. So, ...

What do you find encouraging about the letter?

- 7) Personally:
 - a) First, the apostles and elders own up to the fact that these men that started this were not authorized by them to go to Antioch.
 - i) It also appears that after hearing about this, despite Luke's saying they were from Judea (non-specific), the indication here is that they were from the church in Jerusalem – not authorized but, from that group anyway.
 - ii) All of this is tacitly saying that they (the apostles and elders) did not agree with what these men were teaching.

- b) Second, they recognize the value and work of Paul and Barnabas.
 - c) Finally, the apostles and elders definitely want some backup for what Paul and Barnabas will say and for the validity of the letter itself. This will be through the voices of Judas and Silas.
- 8) One interesting fact that came out in the initial Antioch situation was that they not only sent Paul and Barnabas but vs. 2 of chapter 15 indicates others as well.

Acts 15:2 (NASB 2020)

² And after Paul and Barnabas had a heated argument and debate with them, *the brothers* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

- a) When I first read this I thought that it was perhaps a mixture of those on both sides of the issue.
- b) However, considering that the council was sending Judas and Silas along with the letter, the group that came to Jerusalem may have all been of Paul and Barnabas' persuasion and so verification from the apostles and elders would be in order on the return trip.

What, if anything, do you find disturbing about the letter?

- 9) Personally:
- a) The first thing I see that is a bit disturbing is that the actual issue – circumcision as a requirement for salvation – is NOT directly addressed.
 - b) By omission, the default position would be that it was not required. Just found it is a bit strange that it was not mentioned directly.
 - c) I found the requirements they did set forth in the letter a bit strange when taken at face value.
 - i) abstain from food sacrificed to idols.
 - ii) from blood.
 - iii) from the meat of strangled animals.
 - iv) and from sexual immorality.
- 10) So, I did a bit of research into what scholars seem to think this portion of the letter from the council really means and why it was phrased as it was.
- 11) First, Luke does not tell us what these 4 requirements are based on.
- a) Two common theories are:
 - i) Noachian laws – these are actually a part of the Talmud which was written well after this letter. (more on that in a minute).
 - ii) Lev. 17-18 which can be correlated to all four prohibitions.
 - b) The seven Noahide or Noachian laws as traditionally enumerated in the Babylonian Talmud:
 - (1) Not to worship idols.

- (2) Not to curse God.
 - (3) Not to commit murder.
 - (4) Not to commit adultery or sexual immorality.
 - (5) Not to steal.
 - (6) Not to eat flesh torn from a living animal.
 - (7) To establish courts of justice.
- 12) *All that being said, we still can trust the overarching conclusion and what is happening big picture wise.
- a) Paul and Barnabas and others in Antioch have taught properly.
 - b) The absolute regarding those from Judea was, from the first line of the letter, those who were “troubling your minds by what they said” were not from the Jerusalem church, the elders or the apostles.
 - c) In other words, their teaching was NOT to be accepted!
- 13) Also, we really need to address the go forward position we should have regarding the 613 Laws of Moses.
- a) As a body of work, it is the Torah.
- 14) Let’s first take a look at what Jesus himself said about the Law.

Matthew 5:17–19 (NASB 2020)

¹⁷ “Do not presume that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke of a letter shall pass from the Law, until all is accomplished! ¹⁹ Therefore, whoever nullifies one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

²⁰ “For I say to you that unless your righteousness far surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

15) The NLT adds, I think, some clarity to this passage:

Matthew 5:17–20 (NLT)

Teaching about the Law

¹⁷ “Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. ¹⁹ So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

²⁰ “But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

16) Okay, let’s tackle three questions from this passage.

First – Is Jesus speaking only of the Law of Moses? To ask it perhaps another way, what is included when he says, “Law or the Prophets”?

17) This is actually, according to most, a reference to the entire Old Testament.

What does he mean when he says **until all is accomplished** or **until its purpose is achieved**? When will this happen or when did it happen?

18) The accomplishment or achieving of purpose was Christ Himself.

19) This is summed up in Romans when Paul attests to it in Romans 10:4.

Romans 10:4 (NASB 2020)

⁴For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

20) Christ fulfilled the Law and Prophets in three distinct ways:

- a) Obviously, He fulfilled the predictions of the Prophets concerning the Messiah from His manner and place of birth thorough and including His death, burial, and resurrection.
 - i) In fact, everything God had ever said about Him.
- b) He upheld the standards of the Law by living a perfect life.
 - i) He was the epitome of living a life that exceeded the righteousness of the Pharisees.
 - ii) In that, he fulfilled the keeping of the Law which had never been done before.
- c) Finally, He fulfilled the entire ceremonial system by making the ultimate sacrifice.
 - i) The perfect unblemished lamb – the Son of God – was sacrificed so that sin could be conquered through faith in Him once and for all.
 - ii) No more sacrifices of any kind were necessary.

21) The Hebrew writer brings this final point into focus for us.

Hebrews 9:11–14 (NASB 2020)

¹¹But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things having come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made by hands, that is, not of this creation; ¹²and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all *time*, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

22) In fact, much of Hebrews before and after these verses attest to the fulfilling of the Law by Jesus our ultimate High Priest and the ultimate Sacrifice.

23) Then, of course, there is Galatians.

- a) Paul absolutely makes it clear that we are no longer under the Law.

Galatians 3:23–25 (NASB 2020)

²³ But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the Law, being confined for the faith that was destined to be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our guardian *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

24) So, what can we conclude from all this?

We can just do whatever we want when we want right???

NOT!!!!

So, how does this fit where we are and where the Apostles, elders, and church should have been?

25) Bottom line is, we live by the Spirit not the flesh. Christ showed us how we should live.

- a) We no longer need the “checklist” of the Law.
- b) The Law showed us what sin was – Jesus showed us that sin resided in our hearts and that to live by the Spirit we must replace the sin in our hearts with the intent of the Law.
- c) When we do that, we are free from the Law and able to live as God intends.

26) We won’t read this now but if you go back and look at the Matthew passage 5:21 ff.

- a) As you read beyond where we stopped, you will see that Jesus is really giving examples of how their (and our) righteousness should exceed that of the Pharisees.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 27 <<<<<<<

- 1) Paul and Barnabas and the rest of those who went with them to Jerusalem for the Council are now back in Antioch.
- 2) They have probably shared the results of the council with all churches along the way back to Antioch and finally of course with the church in Antioch.
- 3) Things have settled down and those who were sent to Antioch along with Paul and Barnabas have returned home with the possible exception of Silas.
- 4) So, moving on, let's see what happens next.

Acts 15:36-41 (NIV)

- 5) Okay, “Houston, we have a problem”!!
- 6) Again, we really do not know why John Mark left Saul and Barnabas at Pamphylia on the first missionary journey.
- 7) There is much speculation regarding this – I even shared a new one I came across a couple of weeks ago. (See **NOTE - Tom Davis Lecture** at the end of this lesson PDF)
- 8) One way or the other, Paul will have none of this and he and Barnabas part ways.
- 9) We also do not know if this disagreement was private or not but it appears that the result was that Paul and Silas got the blessing of the believers there as they departed.
 - a) From what I was able to gather, this is the same Silas that came from Jerusalem to Antioch after the council.
- 10) We don't know how the church felt about Barnabas and Mark and there going a different way.
 - a) Of course, again, Cyprus was Barnabas' home and was also where he and Paul had planted some churches.
 - b) Obviously, he would have wanted to share the results of the council with them if nothing else.
 - c) As far as where else they may have gone, we have no evidence that Barnabas and Mark went anywhere other than Cyprus at this time.

Acts 16:1-5 (NIV)

- 1) So, here we meet Timothy.
- 2) Timothy was evidently already a believer – Christian.
 - a) Well thought of by the church at Lystra and Iconium.
- 3) Now, Paul wants to take him along as they go from “town to town” so, he circumcises him which may seem a little inconsistent on Paul's part.

- 4) In order to understand all this we need to look at some background.
 - a) Now, Timothy was considered a Jew from birth.
 - b) The Jewish way of looking at heritage was the mother was an absolute.
 - i) Under Jewish rabbinic law, since his mother was Jewish, Timothy was Jewish and needed to have fulfilled the covenant – i.e., circumcision under the Law.
 - c) The father was not necessarily a determining factor so it really made no difference to Timothy's religious heritage that his father was Greek.
- 5) So, the problem here is that he was obviously not circumcised by custom when he was eight days old.
- 6) This is one of those passages that, if one does not consider context – in this case, Paul's normal mode of operation, Paul could be considered as making a **bad** compromise here.
 - a) Of course, the context here consists of several facts that must be considered:
 - i) Paul's normal mode of operation was to go to the Jews first in their synagogues.
 - ii) Since it was well known throughout the region that Timothy's father was Greek and his mother was Jewish, this brought in some doubt as to his status.
 - iii) By this, since Timothy was being considered a Jew his not being circumcised was a problem.
 - b) Bruce Barton sums this situation up quite nicely:

Paul may appear to be inconsistent here with his teaching in Galatians 2:3–5, where he refused to let Titus be circumcised. This is easily resolved when considering the difference in the circumstances of the two situations. In Galatia, circumcision was being proclaimed (heretically!) as a method of justification. Paul wanted to clarify that it was not, so he intentionally left Titus uncircumcised to make his point. Here in Lystra, early on in his evangelistic endeavors, Paul was more intent on avoiding any potential offense that might hinder the spread of the gospel (see Romans 9:32–33; 1 Peter 2:8; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 9:19–23). Although the Jerusalem council had just ruled that circumcision was not necessary for Gentiles, Paul apparently thought that Timothy's mixed religious background might hinder his effectiveness. So, because Timothy was partly Jewish, he was circumcised. This was merely for effectiveness in spreading the gospel, not as a prerequisite for salvation.²⁰

Acts 16:6-10 (NIV)

²⁰ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 529.

- 1) Basically, Paul and the others leave Pisidia Antioch and want to head south into the province of Asia.
- 2) I call this God playing bumper pool with Paul.
- 3) Paul is making decisions one after another and God is saying no,
- 4) As to going south to Asia, He is probably saying “Paul that’s not what I want you to do.” (at least for now).
 - a) God says no – they are “kept out by the Holy Spirit.”
 - b) God has a plan for Asia but not now.
 - c) We know that He does because we know at least some of the major churches that Paul founds there later:
 - i) Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.
(1) Hold on to the Thyatira church in your mind for a few minutes.
- 5) O.k. we can’t go to Asia, so, let’s go north to Bithynia and Pontus.
 - a) Get to Mysia and OH NO!! – “Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.” go into Bithynia.
- 6) O.k. – Let’s go on down to Troas on the coast and see what we can do there.
- 7) They get to Troas and they get put on the right track.
 - a) Paul has a vision and it is off to Macedonia as quickly as possible.
 - b) The vision, as we will see, is not taken literally – i.e., Paul is not headed there to search for a particular man.
 - c) He understands clearly that this is where God wants them to go to continue their missionary work.
 - d) Aha! – Finally a plan.
- 8) As I was thinking about this whole episode in Paul’s journey, I wondered what the roadblocks were that the Spirit threw in front of him.
- 9) Were they actual “roadblocks” or was he just in tune with the Spirit enough that he knew that he was not to go where he had planned?

Have you ever had an experience where God was playing bumper pool with you – forcing you down a path that you really did not plan to go down?

In hindsight, do you think you have ever missed God’s leading?

Why do you think you may have?

- 10) Here’s one of those subtle things we probably need to take note of.
- 11) Looks like Troas is where Luke actually joins Paul, Silas, and Timothy in their journey.

- a) It is here that the pronoun usage changes from “they” to “we” as they proceed from Troas on into Macedonia.
- b) We actually see the “we” pronoun for the first time in verse 10.

Acts 16:11-15 (NIV)

- 1) This is obviously a two-day voyage from Troas to Neapolis.
 - a) Samothrace is an island (one of a group of 4) which is about halfway between Troas and the Macedonian mainland.
- 2) Once they arrive in Macedonia, they are, we assume, led by the Spirit to continue on to Philippi to begin their work.
 - a) Philippi is a major city and trade center – not the capital but very important.
- 3) I have always found this passage very compelling.
- 4) Paul goes to the river for a place to pray – no mention of a synagogue which is his normal mode.
- 5) The consensus is that there was simply not a Synagogue in Philippi.
 - a) There are at least two possible reasons for this:
 - i) First, there may not have been enough Jewish men in the city to form a synagogue.
 - (1) The requirement was to have at least 10 Jewish men in the location in order to have a Jewish synagogue.
 - ii) Second, there is reported to have been a sign inscribed on the city gates that prohibited bringing unknown religions into the city.
 - (1) With this lack of a Jewish presence, the “Jewish religion” may not have been established.
- 6) So, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke probably heard that there were some Jewish believers who were meeting for prayer outside of town near the river.
 - a) As Luke says, they expected to find a place of prayer.
 - b) Once they arrive, Paul begins sharing the Gospel with the women who are gathered there and the first person who receives Paul’s message is Lydia.
 - c) Lydia is most likely a Gentile woman who, as Luke puts it, “was a worshiper of God.”
 - i) We are not told anything about her background. How she became a “worshiper of God.”
 - ii) Remember, I asked you to hang on the Thyatira, one of the seven churches in Asia – well now you see why – Lydia is from there.
 - (1) Obviously now living and working in Philippi.

- d) Several commentaries place significance on Lydia's situation.
 - i) As a head of household, the assumption is that she was single.
 - (1) She may have been widowed or divorced – again, we just are not told.
 - (2) If she had had a husband, he would have most likely been Gentile as well.
 - (3) Obviously, she is smart, strong, and capable.
 - e) She and her household were baptized which must mean that they were likely believers and worshipers of God as well. Again, an assumption but probably valid.
 - f) Finally, asking Paul and his group to stay with her while in Philippi, indicates she had a good-sized home – probably a villa.
- 7) The reason we needed to look at this at this detail was simply this – Lydia and her household is the true foundation of the Church at Philippi.
- 8) As we will soon see, the next individuals becoming part of the church there are also Gentiles.
- 9) Even if there are Jews there, it appears that this church will be predominantly Gentile from the very beginning.
- 10) So, continuing on, we are still in Philippi and, it appears we are still meeting at “the place of prayer” (likely still the river).
- 11) We have to assume that the word is spreading and more and more folks are coming to the Lord as they continue to teach.

Acts 16:16-18 (NIV)

- 1) There are several interesting questions we might ask about this situation.

First, the spirit, evil or good?

- 2) Evil because it was dealing in fortune telling.
- 3) Perhaps good in that it was speaking the truth about who Paul and the others were and what their message contained.

Second, was Paul annoyed at the spirit or the girl?

- 4) I have to think it was the spirit – the girl was just a vehicle and may not have even been able to control or understand what was happening as she said these things.
- 5) We can probably assume that the slave girl is o.k. after the ejection of the spirit but this does pose a problem.

Acts 16:19-24 (NIV)

- 6) The first thing we might want to note here is that the effect is not immediate.

- a) It likely takes a while for the owners to realize they have lost their cash cow.
- 7) However, once they do, revenge is the answer!
- 8) I guess there was no real law against what Paul did as far as casting the spirit out of the slave girl and also no way to recover their lost livelihood.
- 9) So, they have to say something to get Paul and Silas in trouble.
- 10) The charge was not that they had performed an exorcism on a slave girl, but rather that these men were Jews and were teaching the people to do things that are against Roman customs.
- 11) As we said, the church there was probably growing so this was a real concern.
- 12) These magistrates would have two primary goals, **one** to keep the peace and **two** to stop foreign religions from “corrupting” their citizenry.
- 13) Both charges, false or true, were exactly what was needed to get the job done.
 - a) Throwing the city into an uproar – definitely not keeping the peace!
 - b) Advocating unlawful customs – definitely not in keeping with the religious order!
- 14) Then, the coupe de gras – the crowd joined in the fray.
- 15) The magistrates then did what they knew would settle the situation for now.
 - a) They had them beaten (turns out this was only one of 3 different times Paul gets this treatment in his ministry (2 Cor 11:25))
 - b) Likely, Silas and Timothy were either not present for this particular incident or, if they were, Luke being Greek and Timothy partially Greek, they may have been spared.
- 16) Okay! Beating over – off to jail – and in stocks!

Acts 16:25-28 (NIV)

- 1) The jailer had obviously fallen asleep either because of Paul and Silas’ praying and singing or in spite of it.
- 2) An earthquake will normally get your attention and obviously this time it did get his.
- 3) Now, this was probably a pretty quick set of events but, the jailer did not actually realize that the doors were likely just opened so no one had escaped yet.
- 4) He knew instinctively that he was going to be executed because all his prisoners had escaped – it made no difference why – only that they had and, it would be obvious also that he was asleep on duty.
- 5) So, he decides immediately to kill himself rather than face that punishment.
- 6) Paul of course stops him.

- 1) ***NOTE - Tom Davis Lecture*** – most interesting opinion was on Mark's reason for leaving Saul and Barnabas at Paphos. The church at Antioch was founded (Gentile side) by Cypriot and north African disciples. His contention is that the original plan for the journey was to cross Cyprus and continue then to Alexandria to bring the Gospel to north Africa. What may have happened is when Paul and Barnabas decided to head north to Attalia and Galatia, Mark may have seen that as a betrayal of the original planned mission.
 - a) Davis brought to the forefront of the picture that Cyprus was indeed very much dual cultural. The East was very much Hellenistic, which Paul would have been very much comfortable with. However, the West was very much Roman which caused Paul to switch up his methods and basically, the roles of Saul and Barnabas swapped. From the beginning to Paphos, Luke uses Barnabas and Saul – from Paphos on, it becomes Saul and Barnabas then Paul and Barnabas. John Mark could have seen this as a betrayal of his uncle in that case.
 - b) This is further supported by the fact that once the split takes place at the beginning of the second missionary journey, Barnabas and Mark actually do go to North Africa as was the possible first plan.
 - c) In truth, this is one of the best if not the best explanations for this split and the original defection that I have ever encountered.
- 2) Further, Dr. Davis indicated that Paul and Barnabas may have been carried to Attalia on a ship belonging to Sergius Paulos. He had relatives in Pisidian Antioch and was likely at least one of the reasons for the mission going there.
 - a) I asked the question but it was too late to get it answered – why did they not return to Cyprus on the return journey?
 - i) Combination of two things is possible in my mind: first, if indeed the trade route was really from Cyprus to Alexandria as indicated then what I had proposed in my comments on Acts may have been true – there was just no available transport. This could be doubly true based on Sergius supplying the initial transport to Attalia.

From June 19, 2024, Biblical Archeology

In February 2023, southern Turkey and northern Syria were hit by a series of powerful earthquakes that laid waste to much of the region. The loss to life, livelihoods, and property has been nearly incalculable: The earthquakes killed tens of thousands, displaced millions, and leveled entire cities and towns.

The city of Antakya, built on the ruins of Antioch, one of the greatest cities of the Roman world and an early home to nascent Christianity, suffered irreparable damage to its deep history and rich religious traditions.

- 1) The jailer had obviously fallen asleep either because of Paul and Silas' praying and singing or in spite of it.
- 2) An earthquake will normally get your attention and obviously this time it did get his.
- 3) Now, this was probably a pretty quick set of events but, the jailer did not actually realize that the doors were likely just opened so no one had escaped yet.
- 4) He knew instinctively that he was going to be executed because all his prisoners had escaped – it made no difference why – only that they had and, it would be obvious also that he was asleep on duty.
- 5) So, he decides immediately to kill himself rather than face that punishment.
- 6) Paul of course stops him.

Acts 16:29-34 (NIV)

- 7) This is a really interesting turn of events.
- 8) If I were the jailer, I would have immediately locked the doors, went back to my post and pretended like nothing had happened – being really thankful that I had escaped what would have been my demise.

So, what can you come up with that would have led the jailer not only to have not done that but, to bring these two prisoners out and ask the apparently off the wall question “what must I do to be saved”?

- a) He was not asking how he could be saved from the situation.
 - b) The prisoners were all still there and if he simply locked the doors again he would be fine.
 - c) This was indeed a question about salvation.
 - d) It could have been Paul and Silas' singing and praying (before he went to sleep)
- 9) Personally, I think there was likely some pre-knowledge at play here just based on the apparent connection that is made to God and the fact that he realizes he is unsaved.

- a) Perhaps the jailer had heard Paul and/or Silas speak at some point?
 - b) He could possibly have even attended some of the prayer sessions by the river.
 - c) Perhaps he was already leaning toward a belief in the one true God?
- 10) The other thing that leads me to think that there was pre-knowledge was that the jailer was apparently concerned about the salvation of his family as well.
- 11) I also find it interesting that even though the jailer was afraid for his life when he thought the prisoners had escaped, he was willing and able to take Paul and Silas out of the prison to his home for a meal before he knew of their release.

Problems with verse 31

- ³¹ They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”
- 12) This is one of those verses that can be a little troubling if taken out of context.
- 13) If we were to take this as one verse and try to apply it without the rest of this passage and for that matter, the rest of scripture it would be absolutely BAD theology!
- 14) This, if taken literally (out of context) could be construed to say that Paul was telling the jailer if he believed, the rest of his household would be saved automatically – simply not true.
- 15) As we see, Paul teaches him and the members of his household about the Lord.
- 16) Then he and his household were baptized.

Acts 16:35-40 (NIV)

- 1) The jailer is probably very happy at this point and is glad to report to Paul and Silas that they were free to go.
- 2) He was also probably quite surprised at Paul’s reaction to the news.
- 3) There was a point to be made here and it was important – Paul and Silas were Roman citizens!
- 4) It is important for us to get the big picture here.
 - a) The Roman empire included, as you realize, many countries and nationalities.
 - b) However, just because you were conquered and part of the Roman empire, did not mean you were Roman citizens.
 - c) Remember, Paul was from Tarsus and he gained his citizenship through a special dispensation.
 - d) Silas evidently was a Roman citizen through some other means – perhaps naturally.
- 5) So, what was the affect of this announcement?
 - a) **First**, the magistrates were alarmed – Rome would not take kindly to the violation of their citizen’s rights in this manner by these magistrates.

- i) It was illegal to flog Roman citizens – ***they were beaten then flogged.***
- ii) Every citizen had the right to a fair trial – ***they did not give them a trial at all.***
- iii) Roman citizens were allowed to travel throughout the Empire under Rome’s protection.
 - (1) They ***were not subject to local legislation or local legislators!***
 - (a) In this case, the rules about foreign religious practices were likely local and therefore Paul and Silas would not be subject to them.
 - b) **Second**, they knew they had no legal grounds for expelling two Roman citizens from their city who were not guilty of a crime (no trial, no verdict, no crime).
 - i) However, if Paul and Silas stayed in Philippi it would probably cause further trouble and likely violence.
- 6) They had no choice but to beg Paul and Silas to leave the city and hope they would comply.
- 7) They did, but on their own terms.
 - a) They went to Lydia’s house to encourage the brethren and probably introduce the jailer and his family to the church there.
 - b) Then they left.
- 8) We should note that Luke returns to the third person “they” in this verse.
- 9) This ends the first “we” section of Acts.
 - a) This could indicate that Luke stayed behind in Philippi to continue the work while Paul and Silas moved on toward Athens.
 - b) Or perhaps he returned to Troas – we just do not know.
 - c) The next “we” section begins at 20:5.

Acts 17:1–4 (NIV)

- 1) We commented last time regarding there being no synagogue in Philippi – when we see that there is a synagogue here in Thessalonica and what Paul does, it really supports that claim.
- 2) Obviously, from what we see here, there are God fearing Greeks who were attending the synagogue along with the Jews.
- 3) Likely, the prominent women that are mentioned were also attending.
- 4) Remember, we made note some weeks back that the synagogue rules were somewhat different than that of the temple.
 - a) Temple requirements said that in order for a Greek proselyte to be in the temple with the rest of the Jews, he must have become fully Jewish.
 - b) Women were also treated differently in these areas.

- 5) It is very interesting to me that Luke again makes a point of mentioning the prominent women.
 - a) I personally think there have been some seriously flawed assumptions made about Paul's attitude toward women.
- 6) All be it tentative, it does appear that we have the start of a church here.

Acts 17:5–9 (NIV)

- 1) Jealousy rears its ugly head again.
- 2) Remember back in chapter 13, we had a similar situation.

Acts 13:45 (NIV)

⁴⁵ When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him.

- 3) In this situation however, it is not only Paul and his companions who are catching the brunt of the problem it is also the brother, Jason, with whom they are staying.
- 4) They can't find Paul and Silas so they grab Jason and some other brothers and take them before the city officials.
- 5) As always it seems, if you don't have a legitimate charge – just make up one that will get the job done.
- 6) The one charge here, however, that was most serious was that of saying there was another king other than Caesar.
- 7) That will get you killed – ask Jesus – that is the very charge that got Him crucified.
- 8) It is the opinion of some that this is actually what got Paul executed – he refused to worship Caesar.
- 9) One way or the other, once Jason and the brothers were forced to pay a bond to be released, Paul, Silas, and Timothy had no choice but to leave.
 - a) If they did not, and there was more trouble the bond would probably have to be forfeited.

Acts 17:10–15 (NIV)

- 1) Berea was about 45 miles south of Thessalonica.
- 2) And here we have that famous statement about the Jews in Berea – they were more noble than the Thessalonian Jews – two reasons:
 - a) First – they were eager to receive Paul's message about the Messiah.

- b) Second – they did not take it at face value but looked at it in light of the scriptures to see that what he was teaching was true.
- 3) That being said, I have always wondered why the Berean church was not more prominent in the rest of Scripture.
- 4) Again Luke mentions the women here, actually, before the Greek men.
- 5) Being chased and harassed again just like in Lystra, Paul has no choice but to leave.
- 6) Evidently, he feels safe in leaving Silas and Timothy there and he moves on to Athens.

Acts 17:16–21 (NIV)

- 1) The city of Athens was named for the Goddess Athena and actually had individual temples for all the gods of the Greek Pantheon.
- 2) Athens was the center for Greek culture, philosophy, and education.
- 3) In its hey day, Athens had been the home of men such as Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Epicurus, Zeno.
- 4) This was 400 years or so prior to Paul's time.
- 5) In the city as Paul finds it, the philosophers and educated people were always ready to hear something new.
- 6) As one commentator puts it:
“When Paul arrived, it was a small town (ten thousand or so residents), reliving the glory days and filled with intellectuals spending their days philosophizing.”
- 7) Others believe that, even though it was no longer the large commercial/political center that it once was, it was still the cultural and educational center of Greece.
- 8) Either way, at this point it was academia at its finest hour.
- 9) This explains (at least to some) their openness to hear Paul speak at their meeting in the Areopagus.
- 10) To really understand what Paul is up against, we need to understand at least generally, what the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were all about. John MacArthur says the following regarding these two groups:

Epicurean philosophy was the teaching that pleasure and the avoidance of pain are the chief end of man. They were materialists, who, while not denying the existence of the gods, believed they did not intervene in the affairs of men. They taught that, at death, the body and soul (both composed of atoms) disintegrate; there is no afterlife.

The Stoic philosophers, on the other hand, saw self-mastery as the greatest virtue.

They believed self-mastery comes from being indifferent to both pleasure and pain, reaching the place where one feels nothing. In contrast to the practical atheism of the Epicureans, the Stoics were *pantheists*.²¹

11) Stoics were the Star Trek Vulcans of Paul's day.

12) *Pantheism* is a doctrine which identifies God with the universe.

- a) It regards the universe as a manifestation of God.
- b) It admits or tolerates all gods.

13) The Stoics incorporated the theory of eternal recurrence into their natural philosophy.

14) According to Stoic physics, the universe is periodically destroyed in an immense conflagration, and then experiences a rebirth.

15) These cycles continue for eternity, and the same events are repeated in every cycle.

16) Now, let's talk about the real situation here.

- a) First, the Areopagus was a court not just a place where the intellectuals gathered.
- b) The power of that it had fluctuated over the centuries but in Roman times was still considerable.
- c) Though Paul was brought before them, he was not formally tried for anything.
- d) But he was informally required to give an account of his teaching.
- e) They open with a straightforward question:

“May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; we want to know therefore what these things mean.”

17) To be clear, they had no real interest in believing what he had to say, it was only curiosity at this point.

²¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., Acts, vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 131.

1) As we said last time, to really understand what Paul is up against with these philosophers at the Areopagus, we need to understand at least generally, what the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were all about.

2) Here are the quotes from John MacArthur again:

Epicurean philosophy was the teaching that pleasure and the avoidance of pain are the chief end of man. They were materialists, who, while not denying the existence of the gods, believed they did not intervene in the affairs of men. They taught that, at death, the body and soul (both composed of atoms) disintegrate; there is no afterlife.

The Stoic philosophers, on the other hand, saw self-mastery as the greatest virtue. They believed self-mastery comes from being indifferent to both pleasure and pain, reaching the place where one feels nothing. In contrast to the practical atheism of the Epicureans, the Stoics were *pantheists*.²² (identifies God with the universe).

3) Stoics were the Vulcans of Paul's day.

4) The Stoics incorporated the theory of eternal recurrence into their natural philosophy.

5) According to Stoic physics, the universe is periodically destroyed in an immense all-consuming fire, and then experiences a rebirth.

6) These cycles continue for eternity, and the same events are repeated in every cycle.

a) Paul is now in front of these Epicureans and Stoics and has been asked one straightforward question:

“May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; we want to know therefore what these things mean.”

7) As we indicated last time, they had no real interest in believing what he had to say, it was only curiosity at this point.

8) So, let's hear what Paul has to say.

Acts 17:22–34 (NIV)

1) Paul really pulls no punches with these folks – he is his normal “straight to the point” self.

2) He locks in on the “unknown god” and in some not so kind words, tells them:

²² John F. MacArthur Jr., Acts, vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 131.

So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

- 3) Calling attention to someone's ignorance two time is probably not the best way to win friends and influence people but it does appear to get the job done.
- 4) Actually, turns out God has provided this as a brilliant strategy.
- 5) He is able to springboard this into an explanation of the worthlessness of their many gods and the supreme and wonderful difference exhibited by his one true God.
- 6) He asserts that God made the world and everything in it.
- 7) This was an upsetting truth for some of these folks to hear but also to many today as well. Again, MacArthur weighs in on this:

The truth that God is the creator of the universe and all it contains is just as unpopular in our day. The prevailing explanation by the ungodly for the origin of all things is evolution. It is taught dogmatically by its zealous adherents (including, sadly, many Christians) as a scientific fact as firmly established as the law of gravity. Yet evolution is not even a scientific theory (since it is not observable, repeatable, or testable), let alone an established fact.

He further states that ... :

Even Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard University, perhaps the most well-known contemporary defender of evolution, candidly admits, The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology. The evolutionary trees that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches; the rest is inference, however reasonable, not the evidence of fossils. ("Evolution's Erratic Pace," *Natural History* LXXXVI [May 1977]: 14) ²³

- 8) However, getting back to Athens, and specifically, Paul's message.
- 9) This announcement was likely upsetting to these folks in several ways.
 - a) To the Epicureans it ran contrary to their belief that matter was eternal and did not have a creator.
 - i) They would have also taken exception to the idea of resurrection since they believed that there was no afterlife – only dust.
 - b) To the Stoics who were pantheists and believed everything was part of God, this meant that He would have created Himself so that surely did not work.

²³ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Acts*, vol. 2, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 131.

- i) They would have also had a problem with the resurrection resulting in eternal life since it would have messed up their cyclical universe theory.
- 10) After all was said and done, in vs 34, we see the very expectable and God ordained conclusion was that:
 - ³⁴ Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.
- 11) We are not told directly that a Church forms in Athens but with these results, one would think that it must have.
- 12) At any rate, Paul moves on to a new destination to plant a Church that there is no doubt exists – Corinth.

Corinth

- 1) We should begin with at least a little background on the city of Corinth.
- 2) Knowing what the city of Corinth was like at this time gives us a tremendous insight into why they suffered from the sins that seem to be so much apart of what Paul addresses in his letters to them.
- 3) At the time, Corinth had replaced Athens as the leading political and commercial center.
 - a) Corinth was a wicked city even compared to the larger cities of the empire at this time.
 - b) Its population was primarily mobile and consisted of seaman, businessmen, and government officials.
 - c) The very term “Corinthian” came to mean a profligate or wicked person.
 - d) “To Corinthianize,” meant to practice whoredom.
- 4) The Acropolis (a high outcrop) rises above Corinth and on top of that was the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love.
- 5) There were one thousand priestesses, who were ritual prostitutes.
- 6) Each evening they would descend into the city to provide their services.
- 7) There are other stories and examples of the debauchery that went on in Corinth which we will not go into.
- 8) So, now that we see where Paul is going, let’s continue...

Acts 18:1–4 (NIV)

- 9) So the next chapter in this journey begins – new town but same wonderful and glorious message.
- 10) Also, there are two new people in Paul’s life – Aquila and Priscilla.

- 11) This becomes a friendship and partnership in ministry that will last many years.
- 12) This short introduction to Paul's arrival in Corinth brings out another fact that we should make sure to take note of – the Jews being expelled from Rome.
 - a) Claudius reigned from 41 to 54CE.
 - b) Looking at other factors, the expulsion likely took place in the 49CE to 50CE time frame.
 - c) Paul's arrival in Corinth at this point is also estimated to be around 49CE so perhaps at the beginning of the expulsion.
 - d) The major point is that the Jews are forced out of Rome and likely are not allowed to return until Claudius dies and is replaced by Nero in 54CE.
 - i) We really don't know what, if any, role Nero played in the return – likely none.
 - ii) Roman law sometimes treated such decrees as tied to the emperor who issued them.
 - iii) The Jewish population likely trickled back to Rome after Claudius' death without a specific emperor's permission.
 - e) We know that there is some Jewish presence when Paul writes to the Church at Rome.
 - i) We also know that Aquila and Priscilla were back in Rome at the time of the Letter to the Romans. (Rom 16:3)
 - ii) This letter was written in approximately 57CE.

Acts 18:5–11 (NIV)

- 1) Evidently, when Silas and Timothy arrive, Paul's situation changed for some reason which allowed him to stop working as a tent maker and devote full time to preaching.
- 2) Obviously a good thing with a not so good outcome – the Jews in the synagogue became opposed and abusive to Paul.
- 3) So, he shakes out his clothes in protest.
 - a) This is different from shaking the dust off his feet.
 - b) Shaking the dust off of your feet signifies rejection.

Matthew 10:14 (NASB 2020)

- ¹⁴ And whoever does not receive you nor listen to your words, as you leave that house or city, shake the dust off your feet.
- c) This implies a judgment on those who rejected the message.
 - 4) Shaking out his clothes according to one source is:
 - a) A way of saying "I'm done with you" or "I reject what you're doing."
 - b) It doesn't necessarily carry the same weight of judgment as shaking the dust off their feet.

- c) It focuses more on the individual's reaction to the situation. This is clear in Paul's final statement:

“Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

Understanding and considering Paul's situation, do we have the same (responsibility) privilege of doing either of these things?

If so, what would be the circumstances?

- 5) Paul continues but I think we can read between the lines here and realize he is discouraged and perhaps ready to leave Corinth.
 - a) However, the Lord intervenes in a vision after which Paul stays there another year and a half.
- 6) Given the moral condition of the Corinthian populus and the content of the letters that are subsequently written to them, we can easily see the importance of this extended stay.
- 7) Moving on, we see that the Jews were not willing to let Paul alone.

Acts 18:12–17 (NIV)

- 1) This is another of those very feeble attempts at causing trouble.
 - a) The Jews try to get the Roman proconsul involved but he refuses because what they are charging is strictly a matter of Jewish law and violations – not Roman law at all.
- 2) Sosthenes is identified in 1 Cor 1:1 as a co-greeter in Paul's first letter to the Corinthian Church.
 - a) So, at that time, he most likely was a Christian and from what the crowd does here in this passage, we probably can assume he was then as well.
- 3) This is a case of jealousy, frustration, anger, and possibly hate resulting in loss of self control on the part of those who turn on Sosthenes.
- 4) If I may be candid, I personally think we have a greater amount of that type mentality today than I have witnessed at any point in my life.
- 5) We as beloved sons and daughters of God and servants of Jesus Christ must guard ourselves carefully to be sure we do not fall into this type of behavior in the climate we live in today.

>>>>>> *Acts - Lesson 30* <<<<<<<

- 1) As we concluded last time, after being told by the Lord in a vision, Paul remains in Corinth teaching and preaching.
- 2) Paul was then dragged before Gallio the proconsul of Achaia by Jews from Corinth on some very weak charges.
- 3) Gallio summarily dismissed the attempt because they were dealing with matters pertaining to the Jewish religion and this was nothing that he wanted anything to do with.
- 4) Additionally, Sosthenes was beaten by the crowd for no really apparent reason.
- 5) That incident being complete, we continue...

Acts 18:18–22 (NIV)

- 6) Paul spends some more time in Corinth and then decides to return to Antioch.
- 7) He, Aquila and Priscilla set sail from Cenchrea to Ephesus where he leaves the husband-and-wife duo to continue the work there.
 - a) Remember they had been forced out of Rome because of a decree of Claudius. (18:1-4)
 - b) They evidently remain there several years because, as we will see, they are there when Paul writes to the church in Rome.

1 Corinthians 16:19 (NASB 2020)

¹⁹The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

- 8) In this passage, Luke makes a side mention of Paul getting his head shaved at Cenchreae because of a vow.
 - a) We really don't know exactly what precipitated this. There are at least two possibilities.
 - i) It may have been a temporary Nazirite vow, which would end with shaving the head and offering the hair as a sacrifice (Numbers 6:18).
 - ii) Or, it could have been personal vow of thanksgiving, offered in light of God's providential protection while in Corinth.
- 9) While in Ephesus, as usual, he enters the synagogue and presents the message.
 - a) Even though they are receptive to the message and ask him to stay, he apparently sees a greater need to go to Jerusalem and then to Antioch so he declines.
- 10) The voyage to Caesarea is 500 miles.
- 11) Once there, he goes up to Jerusalem, reports on all that he has been doing then goes down to Antioch – back to home base again.
- 12) With that, the second missionary journey is complete.

Acts 18:23 (NIV)

²³ After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

13) Luke tells us that he spent “some time” in Antioch.

a) Scholars estimate this to be a few weeks to a few months – definitely not a long time.

14) So we are off again going through the churches encouraging and teaching.

15) This is obviously the start of the third missionary journey.

16) As this trip unfolds, we will see that there is not as much specificity regarding stays in each town as there has been in the first two missionary journeys.

a) We will also note that he stays longer in several of these locations.

Acts 18:24-28 (NIV)

1) Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria.

a) Alexandria Egypt was the second most influential city in the Roman empire at this time.

b) It was also a major hub for philosophy and rhetoric – a true university atmosphere.

c) Also had a large Jewish population.

d) All that said, we can see why Luke comments that he was a “learned man with a thorough knowledge of Scriptures.”

2) We are not given the source of his knowledge of the “**way of the Lord**” but, we do know that it was not complete – “knew only the baptism of John.”

3) Priscilla and Aquila hear him speaking and “explain the way of God more adequately.”

a) One must assume here that they baptized him and he received the Holy Spirit as would be normal.

b) Apollos taught Jesus accurately so beyond that, they may not have been able to add much to his knowledge of Jesus.

4) Continuing, he was obviously very effective in his teaching and reasoning with the Jews of Ephesus.

5) He then departs for Achaia and winds up in Corinth.

Acts 19:1–12 (NIV)

1) At first glance, this situation is a little bit complicated and has a lot of moving parts so let’s do a quick recap to get all the pieces put together in our minds.

a) When Paul decides to end the second missionary journey at Corinth

i) he sets sail first to Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila.

ii) vs. 19 of this chapter, we find that Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila arrive in Ephesus.

- ¹⁹ They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.
- iii) Paul preaches in the synagogue at Ephesus as usual.
 - iv) He then takes his leave of them promising to return (vs. 21).
 - v) Off to Caesarea then Jerusalem and finally home at Antioch.
- b) Meanwhile, Apollos shows up in Ephesus speaking “boldly in the synagogue”; he is taught “more perfectly” by Priscilla and Aquila and then leaves for Corinth.
- c) Somewhere in this time frame Paul begins third missionary journey.
- d) As part of the third missionary journey, Paul arrives back at Ephesus and finds some Christians there who had still only been baptized with John’s baptism and did not know of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) An oddity here is that Paul, coming some time later would find this situation since this was in essence the problem that Priscilla and Aquila addressed with Apollos before he left for Corinth.
- a) One thing that we really need to be keep in mind here is that we are not told that the synagogue where Apollos taught was the same synagogue where Paul had taught before.
 - b) Archeology shows us that there was a large Jewish presence in Ephesus at this time so there indeed could have been multiple synagogues.
- 3) In other words, this could just be a case of these 12 disciples basically “falling through the cracks” so to speak in all this.
- 4) At any rate, the problem is solved, Paul teaches them, they are baptized and receive the Holy Spirit.
- 5) So, everybody is in their places and we proceed with Paul teaching in Ephesus on the 3rd missionary journey.

Acts 19:8–12 (NIV)

- 1) Again some of the Jews reject Paul’s message and this time, after 3 months, he stops preaching in the synagogue(s) and moves to the lecture hall of Tyrannus.
- a) There is some debate about what this actually was. There are two possibilities.
 - b) One suggestion is that it was a school and that Tyrannus was a teacher, possibly a rhetorician or perhaps even a Jewish rabbi.
 - c) A second possibility was that it was simply a building named after a man name Tyrannus.
 - i) This would be similar to how a university building might be named after a historical figure.
- 2) Either way, it functioned as a place for learning and discussion, making it a suitable venue for Apostle Paul's purposes.
- 3) So, he takes the disciples he has made and moves to that location.

- 4) These 3 months was perhaps the longest time Paul ever spent teaching in a given synagogue.
 - a) Evidently, some of the members of the synagogue became discontented with Paul and his teaching and made a big enough stink about it (maligned the Way), Paul simply decided to move on.
- 5) Obviously from what Luke says here, folks either come from all over the province of Asia to hear him or he is going throughout the region preaching.
 - a) If indeed the hall of Tyrannus was a school, one possibility is that he was getting exposure through it as he taught there.
 - b) Then, those he taught were spreading the word throughout the province.
- 6) In actuality, Paul stays almost three years in Ephesus ministering and forming the church there.
- 7) And of course, here we have the famous passage about the handkerchiefs and aprons the acquiring healing properties.

Acts 19:13–20 (NIV)

- 1) According to at least one source, these Jews were actually making a living by claiming to heal and drive out demons.
- 2) Often such people would recite a list of names in their incantation to be sure of including the right deity. Here they were trying to use Jesus' name in an effort to match Paul's power.
 - a) We will see that many Ephesians engaged in exorcism and occult practices for profit.
 - b) This is spelled out in verses 18 and 19 of this passage.
- 3) These particular Jews, the sons of Sceva, were evidently impressed by Paul's work but failed to see that Paul's power to drive out demons came from God's Holy Spirit, not from incantations and magic formulas.
- 4) They decided to emulate Paul and call on the name of Jesus without knowing him personally.
- 5) One evil spirit who they tried to cast out said he knew Jesus and knew about Paul but not them.
 - a) Notice the distinction – knew Jesus but only knew about Paul – another sign of Christ divinity.
- 6) The man who had the evil spirit then attacks and badly injures them .
 - a) Hollywood at its best usually doesn't have 7 bad guys beat up by one.
- 7) If you ever need an incident which shows clearly that knowing about Jesus is not the same as knowing him, this is it.
- 8) Once this news got out, the name of the Lord Jesus came to be viewed as the most powerful name and not one to be taken lightly.
- 9) As we continue with vs. 18–20 we see Ephesus was a center for black magic and other occult practices.

- 10) Superstition and sorcery were commonplace and even many of the Ephesian converts had been involved in these dark arts.
- 11) However, the demonstrated power of the name of Jesus over evil spirits became the impetus for a spiritual spring cleaning in the lives of many of the new believers in Ephesus.
- 12) They renounced their fascination with all occult practices.
- 13) They brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bonfire.
- 14) This made a costly but clean break with the sin that was in their lives.
 - a) A drachma was considered a skilled worker's daily wage. So, 50,000 drachmas could represent over 138 years of such wages.

Acts 19:21–22 (NIV)

- ²¹ After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. “After I have been there,” he said, “I must visit Rome also.”
- ²² He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.
- 15) Having been in Ephesus for 3 years now, it is time for Paul to move on.
 - 16) He states his intent clearly here – go to Jerusalem and then to Rome.
 - a) This will effectively end the third missionary journey.
 - 17) As you have probably noticed if you have looked at any maps of Paul’s missionary journeys, they are ever expanding westward.
 - 18) He also states clearly in the letter to the Romans that this is his intent.
 - 19) One curious thing about this plan is that Macedonia and Achaia are in the opposite direction from Jerusalem.
 - 20) He tells us the reason for this seemly out-of-the-way travel in the same Romans passage that he tells them of his desire to come to them.

Romans 15:22–26 (NASB 2020)

- ²² For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; ²³ but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you ²⁴ whenever I go to Spain—for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—²⁵ but now, I am going to Jerusalem, serving the saints. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.
- 21) So we can see from this that the reason for the travel to Macedonia and Achaia was to gather the contribution that were going to provide and then proceed to Jerusalem.

22) Meanwhile, back in Ephesus there is trouble brewing with a capital T!

Acts 19:23–31 (NIV)

- 1) Artemis was the Greek goddess of the hunt also, the wilderness, wild animals, nature, vegetation, childbirth, care of children and chastity.
- 2) The Roman equivalent goddess was Diana.
- 3) The Artemis of the Ephesians was that same goddess but the emphasis was on her being the goddess of fertility. (different form of the idol)
 - a) Curious thing here is that the Ephesian goddess statue was totally different from other idols that I found pictures of.
 - b) I could not find (quickly anyway) any other examples of two different representations of the same god or goddess.
- 4) Though Demetrius is a maker of statues of Artemis, we need to notice that his argument is beyond that.
- 5) Indeed, it appears that he has gathered many if not all the craftsmen who have anything to do with creating the idols used in the city.
- 6) Basic complaint – Paul is causing them to lose customers with his message.
 - a) Loss of customers equals loss of income for everyone.
- 7) It has been my experience (and I am sure yours as well) that you can mess with a lot of things but when you stick your hand in someone's pocket you will normally get a reaction very quickly and normally in a very emphatic way.
- 8) Obviously, that is the case here.
- 9) And, oh by the way, if that doesn't work he appeals to there sense of the sacredness.

the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty
- 10) This sets the whole city in an uproar and so they seize Gaius and Aristarchus and carry them into the amphitheater.
- 11) Paul attempts to go there to perhaps reason with the crowd and free Gaius and Aristarchus.
- 12) His own disciples would not let him go presumably because of the danger, and even some of his friends who were officials of the province sent word for him not to go there.
 - a) This does indicate that this riot went on for some time – don't know for how long – at least several hours.
- 13) These officials of the province were the most prominent men of the province of Asia, responsible for the religious and political order of the region.

14) Paul's message had evidently reached all levels of society crossing all social barriers and giving Paul these friends in high places.

Acts 19:32–41 (NIV)

- 1) There were some Jews in the crowd and they pushed a man by the name of Alexander to the front in hopes of quieting the mob.
- 2) Did NOT work – the crowd saw that he was a Jew and would not listen to him.
 - a) One commentator notes that the Jews might have hoped that this Alexander would be a spokesperson to explain that the Jews were distinct from the new religion that was causing economic problems for the silversmiths.
 - b) However, they seemed not to care – Christian or Jew – they were to blame.
- 3) Finally, insteps the mayor (city clerk) to calm the situation.
 - a) A little bit of logic and common sense seems to go a long way this time and the crowd disperses.

>>>>>> ***Acts - Lesson 31*** <<<<<<<

- 1) We pick up in chapter 20 as he begins saying goodbye to churches and people.
- 2) The third missionary journey is over and Paul and several companions from the churches who are providing relief to the poor in Jerusalem are headed there.

Acts 20:1–6 (NIV)

- 3) The riot in Ephesus is over and the crowd has been dispersed.
 - a) One can truly say here that all is well that ends well.
- 4) Luke sets the incident aside with no further comment and proceeds to describe the beginnings of the end of this missionary journey and the trip to Jerusalem.
- 5) After encouraging those precious members of the church there in Ephesus, Paul begins his trek.
- 6) Before we go further, there are some things we need to unpack in this passage.
- 7) First, the men who are traveling with Paul.
 - a) They are representatives of all the churches in the various areas where one assumes the donations originated.
 - i) Sopater, Aristarchus and Secundus represent the Macedonian Churches.
 - ii) Gaius and Timothy represent the Galatian Churches
 - iii) Tychicus and Trophimus are from the Asian Churches.
 - b) These men probably served two other purposes:
 - i) First, having the them deliver the gifts to Jerusalem gave the gifts a personal touch and strengthened the unity of the universal church.
 - ii) Second, security. Paul is traveling in perilous times compared to today. Always threats of robberies etc. so here we would have strength in numbers for sure.
 - iii) Here is a link to a paper from the Biblical Archaeology Society on the perils and other interesting facts about traveling in the Roman Empire during the first century.
 - iv) Link to ***“On the Road and on the Sea with St. Paul”***
<https://library.biblicalarchaeology.org/article/on-the-road-and-on-the-sea-with-st-paul/>
- 8) Next, we should make note of letters that were written in this period.
 - a) The letter to the Romans (as we mentioned last time).
 - b) The second letter to the Corinthians.
 - i) In this letter Paul definitely pushes the Corinthians to get their donation together before he arrives there. This is covered in 2 Cor 8:1-9:15.

- c) We also learn from the second Corinthian letter some of the details of the trouble he is having during this portion of the trip. Here's a couple of passages...

2 Corinthians 2:12–13 (NASB 2020)

¹² Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, ¹³ I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but saying goodbye to them, I went on to Macedonia.

2 Corinthians 7:5–7 (NASB 2020)

⁵ For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts on the outside, fears inside. ⁶ But God, who comforts the discouraged, comforted us by the arrival of Titus; ⁷ and not only by his arrival, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted among you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.

- 9) We should also note that Paul does visit Corinth on this trip and actually stays there three months. (20:2-3)
- 10) This also brings in view the timeline we are dealing with.
- a) Paul stays in Corinth 3 months then goes on to Philippi.
 - b) Now, obviously based on verse 6, they left after the Feast of Unleavened bread.
 - c) This puts them about 40 days (give or take) from the day of Pentecost which, we will see that it is Paul's goal to be in Jerusalem before that.
 - d) Rather a tight schedule.
- 11) We must also note that it is at this point that Luke rejoins the group.
- a) As you may recall, we left him in Philippi back in chapter 16.
 - b) We cannot be sure that he stayed in Philippi this entire time but we do know that he is back there now.
- 12) So, he rejoins the group as they sail from Philippi to Troas.

Acts 20:7–12 (NIV)

- 1) Of course, no one (besides me) has ever fallen asleep during a sermon so it is probably hard for us to identify with Eutychus.
- 2) I will say that there are certain preachers/teachers I have known that I would really not have sat in a window if they were speaking.
- 3) All joking aside, Paul was, as the NIV puts it, “talking on and on.”
- 4) After the fall, the young man is definitely dead but Paul was able, undoubtedly with God's help, to raise him from that state.
- 5) Paul had much to say to these folks because as the passage says, even after breaking bread and eating, he continued to talk until daylight.

- 6) Something to keep in mind as we go through this section of Acts is that Paul suspects this will be the last time he will see these folks.
- 7) This is stated clearly when Paul meets with the Ephesian elders in this next passage.

Acts 20:13–16 (NIV)

- 1) Here is another of these little tidbits that I mentioned last time – little facts that the Holy Spirit and Luke insert with no real explanation as to the why of the circumstances.
 - a) Paul travels on foot to Assos – about 20 mi. south and east of Troas.
 - b) There are several possible reasons he might have preferred to do this: (Information from Gemini AI app)
 - i) The journey would have given Paul solitude for introspection and prayer.
 - ii) Some scholars suggest Paul may have received a message about future imprisonment, making him want time for reflection.
 - iii) Walking could have been quicker than the ship depending on wind conditions, allowing Paul more time for ministry in Troas.
- 2) Regardless of the reason, once he meets the ship, they sail on past Ephesus to Miletus.
 - a) Two reasons why Paul sails past Ephesus – first as stated here – “to avoid spending time in Asia”.
 - i) But, also, we must recall that Paul had just left Ephesus about 3 months before after preaching and teaching there for almost three years.

Acts 20:17–21 (NIV)

- 3) Paul calls for the Ephesian elders and begins by reminding them of how he had served.
 - a) Humility – to me in this case absolutely not a boast only a reminder to think about his character.
 - b) Standing up to the tests that were presented to him by his own Jewish brothers.
 - i) We don’t often think of it or talk about it but you know that Paul had to feel the pain of the rejection by the very people he had claimed to be his religious family all his life.
 - ii) Those very people he wanted to help first and foremost to see his glorious Messiah whom he loved so dearly.
- 4) Without saying so in a direct way, I also think Paul is trying to explain to these men how they should now be preaching and teaching if they were not already doing so.
 - a) In public – in their communal gatherings
 - b) From house to house – as the opportunity presented itself, in one-on-one sessions in homes or perhaps house churches, or elsewhere.

5) One commentator had this evaluation of where Paul was really going with this:

Paul had **one message** for all. Both **Jews and Gentiles** alike were included in his mission, and both needed the central message of **turning from sin and turning to God**.²⁴

Do you think this is the overarching message of the church today?

Should it be? In other words, has the mission of the church changed?

How about you and me?

Acts 20:22–24 (NIV)

- 1) This is one of those passages that we wish the Greek of the New Testament was written using capital and lower-case letters instead of originally in all caps – assuming, of course, that they would have capitalized Spirit meaning Holy Spirit.
- 2) The question arises here as to what or who is directing Paul so strongly to go to Jerusalem.
- 3) Most translations do capitalize the first occurrence of Spirit in this passage indicating of course that it is the Holy Spirit is binding or compelling Paul to go to Jerusalem.
- 4) However, John MacArthur in his translation does not capitalize the word spirit.

And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.²⁵

- 5) His take is that Paul is committed in his own spirit to go to Jerusalem – not by the Holy Spirit directly.
- 6) In MacArthur's commentary he writes:

As an excellent servant of Jesus Christ, Paul had a single-minded devotion to his one life's purpose. He described himself as **bound in spirit** by his strong compulsion to fulfill his ministry ... Paul's sense of duty and responsibility to his Master drove him on his **way to Jerusalem, not knowing** specifically **what would happen to him** once he arrived **there**. He did know, however, that the **Holy Spirit solemnly testified to him in every city** he visited **that bonds and afflictions** awaited him (cf. Rom. 15:31). It was revealed to Paul that he faced persecution in Jerusalem, though what that specifically would entail had not yet been disclosed. That would later be made

²⁴ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 546.

²⁵ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Acts*](#), vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 217.

clear to him by the prophet Agabus when he arrived in Palestine (21:10–11).²⁶

- 7) If we assume the first reference is a direct reference to the Holy Spirit then we have the Holy Spirit commanding Paul to go.
- 8) Then, in the second, we hear in this passage something we do not often if ever hear – the Holy Spirit directly leading one to a situation that He knows will result in “prison and hardships.”
- 9) Taken at face value, this would be a mixed message.
 - a) At a minimum, a little odd.
- 10) So, is it simply the Holy Spirit being straight up with Paul and what he is headed for?
- 11) This would beg the question – why is He (the Holy Spirit) telling Paul repeatedly?
 - a) Not to mention the several warnings which we will see later in Acts 21 – both of which are, according to Luke, directly from the Holy Spirit.
 - b) And, as pointed out by MacArthur, the one from Agabus is even visual and very graphic – a true prophesy.
- 12) There is I think a slightly different way to look at this which may clarify matters.
- 13) If we consider MacArthur’s comment:

“He (Paul) described himself as **bound in spirit** by his strong compulsion to fulfill his ministry”
- 14) This could mean simply that Paul was committed to going to Jerusalem because he felt it was what the Lord wanted him to do – simply put, he was living the Spirit filled life that he has always preached.
- 15) In that case, the decision to go to Jerusalem despite the warnings could be no different than his compulsion on the second missionary journey to go into Asia or Bithynia.
 - a) In both cases, he was stopped – by the Holy Spirit and by the Spirit of Jesus.
 - b) Again, we do NOT know how he was stopped.
- 16) The idea I am attempting to convey here is that this does NOT have to be a contradiction.
- 17) Paul can be truly convicted with all good motives that he needs to go to Jerusalem without being directed specifically to do so by the Holy Spirit.
- 18) The difference here is that instead of being stopped as in the cases of Asia or Bithynia he is being told and warned of what lies ahead.
- 19) In this situation, the Holy Spirit could be giving Paul an out so to speak but, not really saying don’t go!

²⁶ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Acts*](#), vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 217–218.

20) If we think about this in a big picture manner, Paul's decision here and the Holy Spirit's not stopping him in this plan, absolutely determines what the rest of his life will be.

21) This is basically the beginning for the rest of the book of Acts.

Was this all the Holy Spirit telling Paul to go to Jerusalem or was it really Paul's idea?

Have you ever felt like you were given such a message of warning from the Holy Spirit?

22) Perhaps, we might best look at this as a situation similar to what Joseph describes to his brothers in the end.

Genesis 50:19–20 (NASB 2020)

¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to keep many people alive.

23) In this case, though there could have been a different outcome to all this, perhaps, the Holy Spirit was allowing Paul to pick this one – meaning it for good as well.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 32 <<<<<<<

- 1) From last time, you recall that Paul was speaking to the elders from Ephesus.
- 2) We pick up now at the conclusion of that goodbye.

Acts 20:25–35 (NIV)

- 3) This is the real tear jerk moment in this meeting.
- 4) Paul is saying that they will never see him again.
 - a) He is very final in his wording. There is no room for suppositions or maybes.
- 5) I have had only a few of those moments in my life but when I think deeply about them, I can still feel the knot in my throat and the hurt.
- 6) Paul makes what at first appears to be an odd statement in the NIV.

Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you.

- 7) In the NASB the verse is rendered slightly different:

Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all people.

- 8) I think this is a more reasonable translation and it truly fits with his next statement.

For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

- 9) Paul then describes an ominous warning regarding the responsibilities the elders will face in the coming times.
 - a) Their flocks will be attacked by evil forces from without and from within and it will be their responsibility to guard against those forces and keep the flock safe.
 - b) This must have added even more pain to the moment to think that some of this evil will actually come from among their own ranks.
- 10) One other point to be made here is that these elders are becoming painfully aware that they are on their own.
 - a) God of course will always be there for them but Paul will not be.
 - b) This is like taking the training wheels off the bicycle.
- 11) And finally, he is reminding them that this should not be something new – he has been telling them about the dangers for the last 3 years.

Do our elders have to deal with the issues today that Paul is warning these men against?

In what ways?

- 12) Paul concludes his admonitions to these elders by simply saying to continue to work hard, remember his example regarding money and other matters and continue to support the poor among them.

13) Finally, we read...

Acts 20:36–38 (NIV)

14) Again, a very emotional goodbye for all of them.

Acts 21:1–6 (NIV)

15) As mentioned earlier, here is another time that, through these disciples at Tyre, Paul is being warned (urged) not to continue on to Jerusalem.

a) It is important to note that this was by or through the Spirit.

Acts 21:7–16 (NIV)

1) The Philip spoken of here of course is the Philip of Ethiopian eunuch fame from back in chapter 8.

2) Agabus, the prophet, comes from Judea and by way of prophesy of the Holy Spirit, he clearly tells Paul of the plight that awaits him.

a) As mentioned previously, this is the same prophet who prophesied about the famine in Antioch.

3) This is indeed the last chance anyone has to talk Paul out of this – the next stop on the journey is Jerusalem.

4) The people then plead with Paul not to continue on to Jerusalem, all to no avail.

5) Paul's first response is interesting. He says:

“Why are you weeping and breaking my heart?”

Why do you think their response and weeping is breaking Paul's heart?

6) Let's refocus for just a moment.

a) Paul is on a mission to deliver the contribution for the poor in Jerusalem.

b) In the truth of the situation, this is really the only “given” reason for this journey.

i) We also know that there are others who are with him who can accomplish this task so truly, that is not a very solid reason in and of itself to continue the journey.

c) Paul obviously has something in mind but, beyond his being willing to suffer the consequences of his actions and beyond we do not know what it is.

d) He states this again here very emphatically:

“I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

e) We really do not know the exact reason for his absolute insistence.

7) I think we need to wrestle a little more with several questions here.

First, what normally happens when a person or persons ignore God's prophets?

Why does this not apply to Paul – or does it?

What are some reasons you might think Paul has for being this committed to this path?

Can you think of a reason(s) that the Holy Spirit is acting as He is in this particular situation – so many warnings, even prophetic and graphic, and yet He appears unwilling to stop Paul?

Acts 21:15–22 a (NIV)

- 8) We begin here with a situation that could be considered a surprise.
- 9) If, the output of the Jerusalem conference was taken seriously by the very men who created it, Why would there be problem like this?
- 10) Paul obviously does not do what they are saying that he is.
 - a) He is not telling (I think the implication here is “forcing”) the Jews living among the Gentiles to abandon the Law.
 - b) I think the phrase “living among the Gentiles” also has some significance in that it implies that Paul is promoting a dual standard.
- 11) What he is clearly saying to the believing Jews is that those rituals and other requirements of the Law are no longer “required”.
 - a) If they choose, they may keep them but they are now only a ritual – not something that God looks at as a requirement or prerequisite to be one of His children.
 - b) Yet here we are back to the same issue again with just a little different take.
- 12) My thought on this is that these “thousands” of Jews who are Christians are of the opinion that we discussed some weeks back.
 - a) Their mindset is that one must be a Jew first and always before one can be a Christian bringing the requirement of circumcision with it.
 - b) If indeed, they did understand the freedom in Christ and the fulfillment of the Law as it truly is then this would be a non-issue.
- 13) And, to make matters worse, it appears that these men are **not** willing to stand up and attempt to set them straight.
- 14) And here comes the really bad part. Continuing, we read ...

Acts 21:22b–26 (NIV)

- 1) These verses actually say and affirm several things about the situation.

- a) First, James and all the elders are wanting Paul to reaffirm his Judaism through participation in this purification ritual.
 - i) Their reasoning is that by Paul's participation in the ritual, he will be considered a "true Jew" keeping the Law and therefore would not be teaching what the reports were saying.
 - ii) Don't miss the connection here and the simultaneous disconnection!
 - (1) Connection – because you are living as a Law-Abiding Jew – you would not teach such a heresy.
 - (a) To say this another way, "if you do what we are asking, you will be seen as a Jew who is a Christian" and not one who WAS a Jew and is now a Christian.
 - (2) Disconnection – just because Paul is living and keeping the Law in most ways does NOT mean he doesn't understand the fact that the Law has been fulfilled and is not binding in the way it once was.
- b) The next affirmation in all this is that they (elders and James) still are disconnecting Jews and Gentiles.
 - i) The reference to the letter written to the Gentiles back in Acts 15 is clearly not (as it should have been) a disavowing of a dual standard – in truth, in this context, it is exactly the opposite – an affirmation that there is a double standard.
 - (1) The only thing that was changed was that the Law was not to be bound on the Gentile – not that the Law had been fulfilled and was no longer binding on the Jew as well.
- 2) Paul goes along with their desires I personally think to more defuse the situation than to buy into or agree with the assumptions that these men are making.
- 3) This falls squarely inline with Paul's statements regarding becoming all things to all people that he might win a few.

1 Corinthians 9:19–23 (NASB 2020)

¹⁹ For though I am free from all people, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may gain more. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might gain Jews; to those who are under the Law, *I became* as *one* under the Law, though not being under the Law myself, so that I might gain those who are under the Law; ²¹ to those who are without the Law, *I became* as one without the Law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might gain those who are without the Law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak; I have become all things to all people, so that I may by all means save some. ²³ I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

- 4) Here is another one of those opinions – if this is allowed to stand as is among the elders in the Jerusalem church, I see no way this can ever be reconciled.

- 5) I further suggest that history bears this out in that within the next 100 to 300 years, the Christian religion becomes primarily Gentile.
- a) In fact, orthodoxy of the “Christian” church in the 4th century outlawed practice of most of the rituals of the original Jewish law.
 - b) According to James Dunn in his book the Parting of the Ways.

“There was a post-Nicene "double rejection" of the Jewish Christians by both Gentile Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. The true end of ancient Jewish Christianity occurred only in the 5th century.”

>>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 33 <<<<<<<

- 1) As you may recall from last time, we discussed the fact that Paul was being wrongly accused of teaching the Jews to abandon Moses and the Law.
- 2) Again, as I said last time the implication here is that Paul is forcing the Jews to abandon Moses and the Law in order to become a Christian.
 - a) This is the antithesis of what the Judaizers were promoting – circumcision and following the Law was required before one could become a Christian.
- 3) Looking further at this, I wanted to bring another scripture to bear here that I think has a really important message from Paul himself in this regard.

Romans 2:25–29 (NASB 2020)

²⁵ For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a violator of the Law, your circumcision has turned into uncircumcision. ²⁶ So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will his uncircumcision not be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷ And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter *of the Law* and circumcision are a violator of the Law? ²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from people, but from God.

- 4) I truly believe that Paul is saying here as clearly as one could that no one has to abandon Moses (meaning abandoning the Law).
- 5) To the contrary, what he is saying is that Jew or Gentile, physical circumcision or uncircumcision does not matter.
- 6) It is only circumcision of the heart by the Spirit that matters.
- 7) It is not the rituals or the keeping of the ritualistic practices that make one a “true” Jew or, for the matter a “true” Christian.
- 8) It is living by the Law fulfilled – taking it into our hearts and living it out everyday that is the bottom line of being what God wants us to be.
- 9) Nowhere in this does he say that one is required not to obey the Law – only be transformed to what the Law intended to begin with.
- 10) Moving on ...

- 1) We finished last time with Paul being convinced that he should take part in the purification rites and pay the expenses, for the four men involved.
- 2) The end result is supposed to be that the dissenting Jews will see him as a faithful keeper of the Law and therefore he would not be espousing the heresies he was being accused of.
- 3) We pick up where that ritual is at its end ...

Acts 21:27–29 (NIV)

- 4) Looks like that idea did not work so well.
- 5) We really do not know who the Jews from the province of Asia were or even what city they came from.
 - a) We can surmise they were from Ephesus because they recognized Trophimus but that is as close as we can come.
 - b) Virtually any place where Paul had established a church, there would be Jews who were not happy with him and were more than ready to cause him trouble.
 - c) So, here we go again with lies, lies, lies...
 - i) They say that he teaches everyone everywhere against our people.
 - (1) Paul had never taught anything derogatory against the Jews. To the contrary, he wanted more than anything to save them.
 - ii) That he teaches against the Law.
 - (1) All Paul ever tried to do is explain the Law and how it had been fulfilled in Christ. He kept the upmost respect for the Law in all his teaching.
 - iii) He teaches against this place.
 - (1) The assumption here is that they were speaking of the temple. Again, to our knowledge, this would totally be a lie.
 - (2) In his teaching, the temple has no real significance because he absolutely understands and states that we are now the temple – God lives in us.
 - (3) Out of respect, he would never say anything against the temple if for no other reason than it was still the place of worship for the Jews.
 - iv) Finally, he brought someone into the temple who was a Gentile.
 - (1) They saw him with Trophimus and assumed he had taken him into the temple – then, stated it as fact.
 - (2) In other words, an assumption that turns into a lie.
- 6) For a moment, I would like to give these folks the benefit of the doubt.
 - a) Motives, good or bad, can cause us to see things and jump to conclusions.
 - b) It is what we do next that makes all the difference.

What would have been a proper next step in this case for these men before they began inciting this crowd?

- 7) Obviously, these same next steps should apply to us as well when we find ourselves in a judging situation.

- 8) The results of our not doing so can cause great pain and suffering to a brother and sister who might be on the receiving end because of our bad handling of a given situation.

Acts 21:30–36 (NIV)

What do you see as odd in the commander's actions in the situation?

- 9) He arrested Paul rather than those who were beating him.
- a) In a situation like that today, we would expect the police to save us (us being Paul) rather than arrest us.
 - b) It almost indicates another bad assumption – the commander must have assumed that since the crowd was beating Paul to death, he must have done something wrong.
 - c) Truth is the word arrested here can also mean took hold of or taken into custody. NASB translates it that way.
 - d) The chains and the fact that he is going to attempt to flog Paul shortly says that probably it started out as seizing him to save him but actually ended up in an arrest.

Acts 21:37–22:22 (NIV)

What is the thing that we have talked about over the past few weeks that is clearly stated here in these folk's response to him going to the Gentiles?

- 10) I think this is just one more place where it is clear that the Jew is shown to have missed their mission statement!
- 11) Again, they have been told from the very beginning that they were going to be the light to the Gentiles. They were to be the ones through whom all creation would be blessed.
- 12) When Paul says he was sent to the Gentiles, that was it! They were back against him!

Acts 22:23–29 (NIV)

- 13) These folks were truly upset with Paul's last comment which led the commander to do what he thought perhaps was necessary to calm the crowd.
- 14) This really strikes me as odd that he would conclude that Paul needed to be flogged before he interrogates him.
- 15) Here again, we see the Roman citizen card being played ***and*** the stark contrast between how the authorities (Romans) treated Jews or for matter any other nationality compared to how they were to treat their own citizens.
- 16) This of course caused the whole situation to change.
- 17) Those who were going to flog and interrogate him withdrew and the commander goes into panic mode (for good reason).

>>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 34 <<<<<<<<

- 1) Paul has returned to Jerusalem, participated in a vow at the insistence of the elders and James, and has been attacked by the crowd because of false things that have been said about him.
- 2) Well we are in the middle of the mess and the commander still does not really get what Paul is being accused of.
- 3) That's were we're going to pick up.

Acts 22:30-23:11 (NIV)

- 4) As usual, the hardness of heart and despicable acts of the Sanhedrin do not disappoint.
- 5) From the very first statement, Paul becomes a challenge for them.
- 6) The LABC comments on his statement regarding his fulfilling his duty to God in good conscience.

He was ready to stand before God and be accountable for his choices and actions. Inherent in Paul's statement, of course, was the challenge: were **they** ready?²⁷

- 7) This was obviously taken as an offence to the chief priest Ananias so he has Paul slapped.
- 8) Josephus describes Ananias as profane, greedy, and hot-tempered.
 - a) He was hated by many of his Jewish contemporaries because of his pro-Roman policies.
- 9) With words reminiscent of Jesus' comment to this group years before Paul lashes out because of this unjust and humiliating slap which was ordered by Ananias.
- 10) It is interesting to me that Paul commented that he did not realize that Ananias was the high priest.
- 11) I think Bruce Barton's comment on this really sums it up – you can pick the reason you might think from among those he gives:

Paul may not have recognized Ananias as the high priest because of poor eyesight. Or perhaps his words were ironic, expressing his amazement that one who would behave so badly (and illegally!) toward him could be the high priest. Most likely, Paul simply did not know who the high priest was or even that he was present at the trial.²⁸

- 12) Paul, however, sees a way to use this group's differences to his advantage by inciting them to an argument about resurrection.
- 13) He first identifies himself as a Pharisee. This had the possibility of accomplishing several things.

²⁷ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 553.

²⁸ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 554.

- a) First, it allowed an opening, should the opportunity present itself, to talk about the resurrected Messiah Jesus Christ.
 - b) Second, at least part of the council would have had some sympathy or empathy for him as a Pharisee.
 - c) Finally, however, the item that takes center stage is his comment which surfaced the controversy between the Sadducees and the Pharisees regarding resurrection.
- 14) Though legitimate, neither of the first two items came into play because of the all-out war that broke out between the two factions of the council.
- 15) Paul is then whisked away by the troops on the order of Claudius Lysias the commander and taken back to the barracks.
- 16) I think the final verse of this section is very important:
- ¹¹ The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, **“Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”**
- 17) As I thought about this, it came to me that this is perhaps what Paul knew all the while on the journey to get here.
- 18) The Holy Spirit was not stopping him because it was not His purpose to stop him – His purpose was simply to warn Paul and to prepare him for the perils ahead and at that, He was obviously successful!!

Acts 23:12–15 (NIV)

- 1) I must say here that I still stand amazed at this group of people.
- 2) The Pharisees, Sadducees, the Sanhedrin and now over forty Jewish men all involved in a plot to kill a man who has not been tried or convicted of any crime whatsoever.
- 3) To the contrary, the only charge that has really been brought against him is that he was assumed to have brought a Gentile into the temple.
- 4) Beyond that, he has only been accused of accidentally insulting the high priest.
- 5) At any rate, moving on we see that God is still in charge.

Acts 23:16–22 (NIV)

- 6) We begin this section of the passage with a unique reference to Paul’s family.
 - a) This is the only place in scripture where his family is mentioned.
 - b) It has been put forth by several scholars that they believe that Paul’s family had disowned him when he became a Christian.
- 7) That being said, it appears that at least his sister and nephew knew him, were in contact with him, and in this situation cared enough to inject themselves into the situation in order to save Paul’s life.

- a) The possibility is that Paul's sister discovered the plot and had her son go to present the findings to Paul and the commander.
- b) As we see, the nephew is seemingly quite young – perhaps too young to have discovered all this on his own.
- 8) Once Paul hears the story, he sends him directly to the commander Claudius Lysias because, of course, he knew that he was the only one who could truly prevent this plot from taking place.
 - a) This is especially true since the plot indirectly involved the commander himself – he would have been an unknowing pawn in this plan.
- 9) So, on to what the commander will do about it...

Acts 23:23–35 (NIV)

- 1) The commander decides that he will have no part in this plot so his plan is to send this entire mess off to the governor Felix his superior.
 - 2) To state the obvious here, he absolutely will not allow anything to happen to Paul under his watch.
 - a) Basically 200 infantrymen, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen – a 470-man army!
 - b) I would say that the 40 men who had decided to make this vow were going to get mighty hungry and thirsty before they penetrated that group.
 - 3) It's a bit ironic that this is the second time that Paul has been sent off to Caesarea to save his life.
 - a) The first time by his brothers in Jerusalem many years before and now by this commander.
 - 10) Felix was the Roman governor or procurator of Judea from A.D. 52 to 59.
 - 11) He was in the same position that Pontius Pilate was when Jesus was crucified.
 - a) We will talk some more about Felix shortly.
 - 12) Here is one of those cases where history helps us put a pin in a biblical event.
 - a) In verse 27 of chap 24 we find
- ²⁷ When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.
- b) So, since we know this fact, we can determine that this incident in Jerusalem took place in AD 57.
- 13) We might ask how Luke knew what was written in the letter from Claudius Lysias?
 - a) This letter was probably read aloud in court when Paul came before Felix.
 - b) Also, a copy may have been given to Paul because he was a Roman citizen.
 - 14) It is interesting to note that the letter is almost correct.

- a) The first big discrepancy we see is that Lysias claims to have rescued Paul “because” he was a Roman citizen – not true.
 - b) The events were, however, carefully rearranged in their order.
 - c) Also, the fact that Claudius Lysias had placed Paul in chains and was going to have him flogged is left out.
 - d) Just a little bit of a coverup by “omission” – lie of omission is a lie none the less?
- 15) Though the commander had stated that Paul was guilty of “no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment.” Felix decides to hold him over under guard until the Jews from Jerusalem who were accusing him arrived.

Acts 24:1–9 (NIV)

- 1) Tertullus was probably a Hellenistic Jew. Some think he may have been a Gentile but that is much less likely.
- 2) He was absolutely the designated spokesperson for the group.
 - a) One assumes that the Jewish leaders decided that needed a lawyer to speak to Felix for them so they either hired Tertullus or he volunteered.
- 3) He begins by trying to ingratiate himself and the Jews to Felix.
- 4) Then he launches into the set of lies he has been programmed to spout.
 - a) Paul is a troublemaker.
 - b) Stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. (some truth in this but the Jews are normally the ones revolting and rioting not Paul)
 - c) He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect.
 - d) Tried to desecrate the temple.
- 5) Ananias and the rest of the Jews join in backing up his accusations.

16) >>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 35 <<<<<<<<

- 1) We left last time as Paul was on trial before Felix.
 - a) Tertullus had completed his spiel and the Jews had joined in in the accusations against Paul.
 - b) Now it is Paul's time to speak in his own defense.

Acts 24:10–23 (NIV)

- 2) Felix motions for Paul to speak.
- 3) As he speaks, he does not address his accusers – he really speaks to Felix directly clearly defining the fact that what charges they have brought are indeed without any substance.
- 4) He also brings to the table all the other important facts that they were omitting.
 - a) He was ceremonially clean when this arrest took place.
 - b) He was not arguing with anyone at the temple.
 - c) He was not stirring up a crowd in the synagogues.
- 5) It is also important to note the he clarifies the point regarding their claim that he was a ringleader of the Nazarene sect.
 - a) The statement by Tertullus was to cast Paul as an insurrectionist – a leader of a sect that was causing trouble for Rome and the Jews.
 - b) Thankfully, as Luke indicates, Felix was well acquainted with the Way so that argument did not hold much validity.
- 6) Finally, he challenges them through Felix to bring the Jews from the Province of Asia here to Caesarea to state the crimes of which they think he is guilty.
- 7) Now, we have to consider carefully this next section.
 - a) Felix tells Paul that when Lysias the commander comes he will decide Paul's case.
 - b) Here is the important part – we are not told that he asked anyone to have Lysias come to Caesarea.
 - c) If Felix had indeed requested Lysias to come, I think there is no doubt that he would have.
 - d) At a minimum, since Felix was his superior, Lysias would have had to reply in some fashion or another. Possibilities are:
 - i) Lysias remained in Jerusalem: He might have sent a written report or delegation to Felix.
 - ii) A visit was planned but didn't happen – Circumstances might have prevented Lysias from traveling to Caesarea.
 - e) Of course, this could have been simply a delaying tactic – Felix might have used Lysias as a pretext to postpone a decision.

- 8) Bottomline is that Lysias is never reported to have come to Caesarea – no Lysias – no decision.
– and as we will see next, 2 years of confinement for Paul.

Acts 24:24–27 (NIV)

- 1) Looking a little bit deeper at Felix, we can see the reason for some of this.
- 2) Felix was a man of low birth who rose to power through the influence of his well-connected brother Pallas.
- 3) He married and used that to expedite his political career.
 - a) Drusilla was a sister of Herod Agrippa II who we will meet in in chapter 25.
 - b) He also married the granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra.
- 4) Tacitus the historian described Felix’s career as clearly self serving.

“He exercised the power of a king with the mind of a slave.”
- 5) He was regarded as a poor governor, dispensed justice arbitrarily, and served his own ends.
- 6) In this particular case, Felix was more interested in maintaining peace with the Jewish community than in seeking justice.
 - a) He used Paul as a political pawn to appease the Jewish leaders.
- 7) Despite the lack of evidence Paul was held in custody for two years.
- 8) He also had truly not been convicted of any crime whatsoever which I think made this illegal.
 - a) Felix repeatedly postponed the trial, hoping to extract a bribe from Paul.
 - b) One of those questions to ponder – Who would have held Felix accountable?
- 9) We don’t know the exact conditions of Paul’s imprisonment. However, it’s reasonable to assume he faced limitations on his movement and social interactions.
- 10) As always, Paul regardless of the circumstances would look for opportunities to share the gospel.
 - a) He had multiple meetings with Felix, during which he testified about Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God.
 - b) Paul’s witness likely influenced not only Felix but also others who came into contact with him during this period.
- 11) Felix’s response to Paul’s message was fear. Fear of the judgement to come.

Should fear figure into our salvation?

Is it sufficient to base our salvation only on fear?

- 12) By rights, Paul should have been freed when Felix was replaced by Porcius Festus but, Felix being the bad guy he was, did not. (Por chus)

Acts 25:1–12 (NIV)

- 1) Well, it has been a little over two years and obviously, the Jews have not forgotten Paul.
 - a) In fact, from Luke’s comment here, it appears that they may have created even more false charges against him.
 - b) But their end game was not changed – they have every intention of killing Paul.
 - c) This could almost be considered borderline obsession to have held on to the desire to kill Paul for this length of time and to have gone to these extremes.
 - 2) Although it is very short, Paul makes his defense here again.
 - 3) One thing to keep in mind here is that, unlike Felix, Festus knows little if anything about Jewish laws and customs.
 - 4) So, Festus then puts Paul in a very bad position.
 - a) Since he still wants to keep in favor with the Jews from Jerusalem, he asks Paul directly if he is willing to go to Jerusalem to stand trial before him there.
 - b) Paul’s initial response is really a point of Roman law.
 - i) He is pointing out that there is no reason for him and Festus to go to Jerusalem for Paul to stand trial – Festus is the court in this case regardless of where he is.
 - ii) Beyond that, Paul knows that if he is sent back to Jerusalem he will most likely be killed before the trial would begin.
 - 5) In response, Paul then makes a statement which seals his fate in this situation.
 - a) With the Jews being more adamant than ever to take him to trial in Jerusalem, he undoubtedly knows that they are still going to try to kill him – by murder or by conviction on false charges just as they did Jesus.
 - b) He is really in a position where there only two choices for him.
 - c) He can take his chances that Festus will let him go since there are no charges against him which, as a Roman, he can be tried for.
 - i) That’s probably out of the question since Festus has brought the trial in Jerusalem into the picture.
 - d) The other is to appeal to Caesar. He probably feels this is his only way out.
 - e) If he agreed to go to trial in Jerusalem, it was obvious what the outcome would be if he even made it to Jerusalem alive.
 - f) Probably, in all likelihood, Paul, remembering his Lord’s words back in chapter 23 verse 11 sees this as the way this should be accomplished.
- ¹¹ ... **“Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”**
- g) What better way to get to Rome and the fulfillment of what the Lord had said.

- h) He must escape this situation and the only way that is a for sure option is for him as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar.
- 6) Even this is not without its own set of problems.
 - a) For Festus, he has to have some charge against Paul before he can do this.
 - b) For Paul, it means staying longer in custody.

Acts 25:13–22 (NIV)

- 1) Agrippa and Festus had a professional and diplomatic relationship
 - a) Agrippa II was a client king under Roman rule, ruling over a portion of Judea.
 - b) As we have discussed, Porcius Festus was the Roman procurator (governor) of Judea.
- 2) As we said a moment ago, Festus was not familiar with Jews and their Laws and customs however, Agrippa was.
- 3) When Festus faced a difficult case involving Paul, he decided to consult Agrippa.
 - a) It obviously will give Festus some answers but also, this shows a respect for Agrippa's position and wisdom.
- 4) So, Agrippa acted as an advisor to Festus, offering his perspective on the case. He also served as a witness to Paul's defense, adding weight to the proceedings.
- 5) As the text shows, Festus addresses Agrippa with respect, and Agrippa listens attentively to the case as it is explained.
- 6) The conclusion is that Agrippa wants to hear the case personally.

Acts 25:23–27 (NIV)

- 1) With much ado, Paul is brought before this very august assembly – high ranking military, leaders of the city of Caesarea, the governor and of course, the King.
- 2) Festus begins by clearly stating that he finds nothing in all this that says Paul should be put to death.
- 3) What he is looking for from the group, especially Agrippa, is a charge that he might put in a letter to Rome as he sends him to the Emperor.

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 36 <<<<<<<

- 1) As we finished last time, Agrippa, Bernice, Festus, high ranking men of the city, and military officers were all gathered.
- 2) Festus has Paul brought in and explains his position regarding sending him to Rome.
- 3) Now, Agrippa wants to hear from Paul himself. So, here we go ...
- 4) **NOTE** – if you have not downloaded the map from the biblical-matters.com website, it would be super helpful if you did before you continue. Once we start the journey to Rome, it is much easier to keep up with what's happening and where they are if you are looking at the map. It is located under Papers | Paul's Journey to Rome.

Acts 26:1–24 (NIV)

- 5) Festus is obviously listening to all that Paul is saying but he really does not understand – thus the abrupt stop to what Paul is saying.
- 6) The message of this suffering Messiah was one thing, but to actually believe that he had been killed by his own people was more than Festus could take.
- 7) And then to say he had been raised from the dead as a light to the world was too much for the humanistic mind of the Roman governor.
- 8) All of this causes Festus to simply decide that Paul must be insane.

Acts 26:25–32 (NIV)

- 1) The obvious thing that continues to be seen here is that Paul had done absolutely nothing deserving of death or even imprisonment.
 - a) Yet, he has been held for over two years now and is, because of his own appeal to Caesar, going to Rome to stand trial.
- 1) We are not told of the actual charge that was sent with Paul to Rome.
 - a) One source seems to think that sedition and blasphemy were the charges.
 - b) More specifically, the religious leaders accused him of:
 - i) Sedition: Stirring up rebellion against Roman rule.
 - ii) Blasphemy: Insulting or dishonoring the Jewish religion and God.
 - c) If these were the charges sent with him to Rome, the blasphemy charge would not be of any great importance. (Concerned only the Jewish religion.)
- 2) However, from my perspective, the sedition charge could be extremely difficult for Paul to defend against in Rome.
 - a) No witnesses for or against would be readily available.

- b) Paul's defense before a Roman court – unlike before Festus, would not be seen as viable.
- 3) Well Paul is finally going to board a ship which has the destination of Rome.
- 4) These next verses outline a situation that must fall into the category – Nothing is ever easy!

Acts 27:1–12 (NIV)

- 5) One quick comment here. Of course, they are leaving from Caesarea.
 - a) The ship is from Adramyttium. If you look it up on your map, you will **not** find it.
 - b) However, it is located in that inlet between Troas and Pergamum (about where the map shows MYSIA).
- 6) There are several things we should consider here to get the real picture of what is happening.
 - a) First, this is probably in the month of October of 59CE – this was too late in the fall to be on the open seas so an attempt is made to skirt the coastline.
 - i) Also to be considered here are the prevailing winds.
 - (1) In the summer and early fall, the winds were coming from the west and northwest and this is another reason for the ship to follow the mainland shoreline north of Cyprus.
 - b) Paul's traveling companions are Luke and Aristarchus at a minimum. From the tone of Luke's comment, there could have been others who were not named.
 - i) Just as a reminder and to make the connection, Aristarchus is the man who had been dragged into the amphitheater in Ephesus during the riots there.
 - c) Julius the centurion also figures significantly into this situation.
 - i) We are not told whether he is a Christian or not but he will be a great protector of Paul during this voyage.
 - d) Even though Paul warns the crew and the centurion about the pending danger, the decision is made to press on.
 - i) Basically, everyone knows that they are not going to make Italy now and they have to winter in at some port.
 - ii) Evidently, Fair Havens is not that port so they attempt to go the short distance from Fair Havens to Pheonix.
 - iii) Seems like a good plan but the season and weather have a different idea.
- 7) So... The Storm

Acts 27:13–20 (NIV)

- 1) Well, the very thing they did not want to happen because of the season happened anyway.

- 2) As they attempted to sail the short distance from Fair Havens to Pheonix they were basically blown out to sea.
- 3) They pass to the south of the island of Clauda and are caught in a storm and cannot turn back into the wind to get back to Phoenix.
- 4) We really do not know exactly where they are when this next passage takes place. Obviously somewhere along the course one might draw from the south of Clauda to MALTA (Melita).
 - a) Most likely toward the end of the storm.

Acts 27:21–26 (NIV)

- 1) Not exactly the way I would have started that conversation “I told you so...” but at least Paul has good news beyond that.
- 2) We are looking at a serious storm and perilous situation as Paul indicates, the ship is going to be lost.
- 3) But the good news is everyone will live.
- 4) In normal conditions, the trip from Crete to Malta would have taken perhaps 3-5 days depending on currents, winds, type of ship etc.
- 5) As we will see here from Luke’s account that the voyage was much longer than that.
- 6) Once again, continuing...

Acts 27:27–44 (NIV)

- 1) Well, after 14 or 15 days, the ordeal is almost over.
- 2) All that the angel had revealed to Paul had come to pass and everyone is safe on shore.
- 3) There are a few interesting facts in the passage we should at least be sure we acknowledge.
 - a) First, 276 people onboard is a very good indicator that this was quite a large ship.
 - b) This would also indicate that the cargo was quite large and worth major dollars for this day or any day for that matter.
 - c) As we mentioned at the start, Paul was not the only prisoner onboard.
 - d) As always, one might assume that if prisoners escape, those in charge were in deep trouble so, to prevent their escape the soldiers decide to kill them.
 - i) Interesting way to handle the problem.
 - e) Here Julius the centurion intervenes and prevents the killing of all of them which would of course have included Paul.
- 4) So, everyone has made it to shore but what shore?

>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 37 <<<<<<<

- 1) Well, we are at the island of Malta, everyone is safe on shore after the storm and shipwreck.
- 2) So, we continue...

Acts 28:1–6 (NIV)

- 1) Malta is about 470 miles from Fair Havens – 60 miles south of Sicily – 320 miles from Rome.
- 2) The islanders there were of Phoenician ancestry and had given the island its name (taken from the Canaanite word for “refuge”).
- 3) Malta had excellent harbors and was ideally located for trade.
- 4) Bruce Barton makes an interesting introductory comment here:

Detailed plots on his life, angry mobs, storms at sea, shipwrecks—all the forces of hell seemed to have been intensifying their efforts to keep Paul from reaching Rome. Now, on the island of Malta, the attack continued – Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake.²⁹

- 5) When the islanders see Paul bitten by the snake, they make some pretty serious assumptions.
 - a) First, he is a murder and will die.
 - b) Then when he doesn’t die, he must be a god.
 - c) Of course, we must assume that Paul deflected the comments about him as he had back in Lystra (chapter 14) when they attempted to say that Barnabas was Zeus and he was Hermes.
- 6) If you are using the NIV, the word Justice is capitalized making it a proper name and indicating it is the name of a goddess.
 - a) The word goddess used in the NIV is not part of the Greek text so the NASB does not capitalize the word.
 - b) However, the consensus is that the NIV is correct here the word Dike (meaning justice) is considered a personification of a deity in this case.
- 7) Continuing ...

Acts 28:7–11 (NIV)

- 1) One assumes here that the “us” that Publius welcomed into his home was Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus and, possibly the ship’s captain and Julius.
 - a) I think even the chief official of the island would not be able to welcome 276 people to his home.

²⁹ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 567.

- b) The rest of the crew and passengers on the ship must have been housed by others on the island.
- c) There are also some unanswered questions:
 - i) After the 3 days, where did these folks all stay? Remember, there were 276 in all who were saved from the wreck.
 - ii) Where were the other prisoners housed?
- 2) Paul basically never stops.
- 3) He begins by healing the official's father then, everyone else on the island who was sick came to Paul and was cured as well.
- 4) We are not told much about the ship that these folks were put on to finish their journey.
 - a) Most likely, the same size as the one that was lost in order to accommodate all the people.
- 5) It would be safe to assume that it was not a luxury liner so, the provisions that the islanders provided for them as they departed probably made it possible to travel this way.
- 6) Still, after wintering there for 3 months, it was off to complete the rest of the journey.

Acts 28:12–16 (NIV)

- 1) At this time of the year, we have a completely different picture when it comes to the conditions for sailing.
 - a) They make Syracuse then after three days sailed again for Rhegium.
 - b) Now things really get good – a good south wind pushes them swiftly to Puteoli.
- 2) At this point, the sea voyage part of the journey is over.
- 3) They spend a week there and then overland the rest of the way to Rome.
- 4) It is interesting to consider here that Paul was under guard as a prisoner this whole time and yet he was allowed to spend a week with the brothers at Puteoli.
- 5) Luke doesn't tell us anything in particular about the rest of the trip. He simply concludes vs. 14 with the comment "And so we came to Rome."
- 6) However, Luke does tell us of meetings they had with believers as they proceeded from Puteoli.
 - a) Here we have a true case of one's reputation preceding them.
 - b) People come from all over to meet Paul as he travels through Forum of Appius and Three Taverns.
 - c) The route that Paul takes from Puteoli to Rome is the Appian Way.
 - i) The Appius Forum and Three Taverns were rest stops – inns if you will – along the way.
- 7) The entire trip to Rome was on this road was about 100 miles.
- 8) Once Paul arrives in Rome, he is allowed to live by himself with a fulltime guard.

- 9) One source indicates that this was actually a round-the-clock guarding in 4-hour shifts.
 - a) As we are told in Philippians, these guards were perhaps members of the Praetorian—or palace – guard.
 - b) Paul had much more freedom than a typical prisoner.
- 10) We will see in verse 30 that Paul’s private lodging was a rented house. Now, who paid for that is a mystery.
 - a) I doubt that it was the Roman government but perhaps it was the local brothers and sisters in the Roman congregations.

Acts 28:17–31 (NIV)

- 1) It has been 11 years since Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome so the leadership was back by now.
- 2) After getting some rest, Paul’s first order of business is to call these Jewish leaders together.
- 3) Obviously, he cannot go to the synagogues as he has in the past so he calls them together for two purposes:
 - a) First, to declare his innocence of the charges that have brought him to Rome and this house arrest.
 - b) Second, as always, he wants to present the Gospel of Jesus to his brothers first.
- 4) On the first count, Paul surprisingly (to me anyway) takes a very broad-brush approach to telling of the problems and woes which brought him to this point.
 - a) Perhaps, it was simply the fact that he wanted to concentrate more on the explanation of his final point – **“It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.”**
- 5) And interestingly enough, that approach will work great in this situation because, according to the leaders, they have not been informed of these charges or the reasons he is here.
 - a) However, they have heard of what Paul is promoting and what he is a part of :

“But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect.”

- 6) So, it begins, Paul’s normal sharing of the Gospel of Christ.
- 7) And, as usual, he has mixed reactions from his brothers.

He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus. ²⁴ Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe.

- 8) We need to comment on vs. 29.
 - a) You likely do not have vs. 29 in your translation. Many later manuscripts have the verse and it says:

When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.

9) This is another one of Textual Criticism issues where some manuscripts have it and others (in this case earlier) do not have it.

10) There is nothing I can say that better concludes this study than what Luke himself concludes with:

³⁰ For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. ³¹ He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!

11) As to what happens after this to Paul, one source gives a very concise summary.

There is no direct information in the Bible about what happens to Paul after the end of Acts. From 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and church traditions, many scholars have surmised that Paul was released from prison after two years, then actively evangelized for another five years before being martyred by Nero.

12) We can rest assured that for the rest of his life, Paul continued to do the exact same thing no matter where he went – preach Christ the savior and Lord of all.