

Word of Faith Ministries

Bible Study

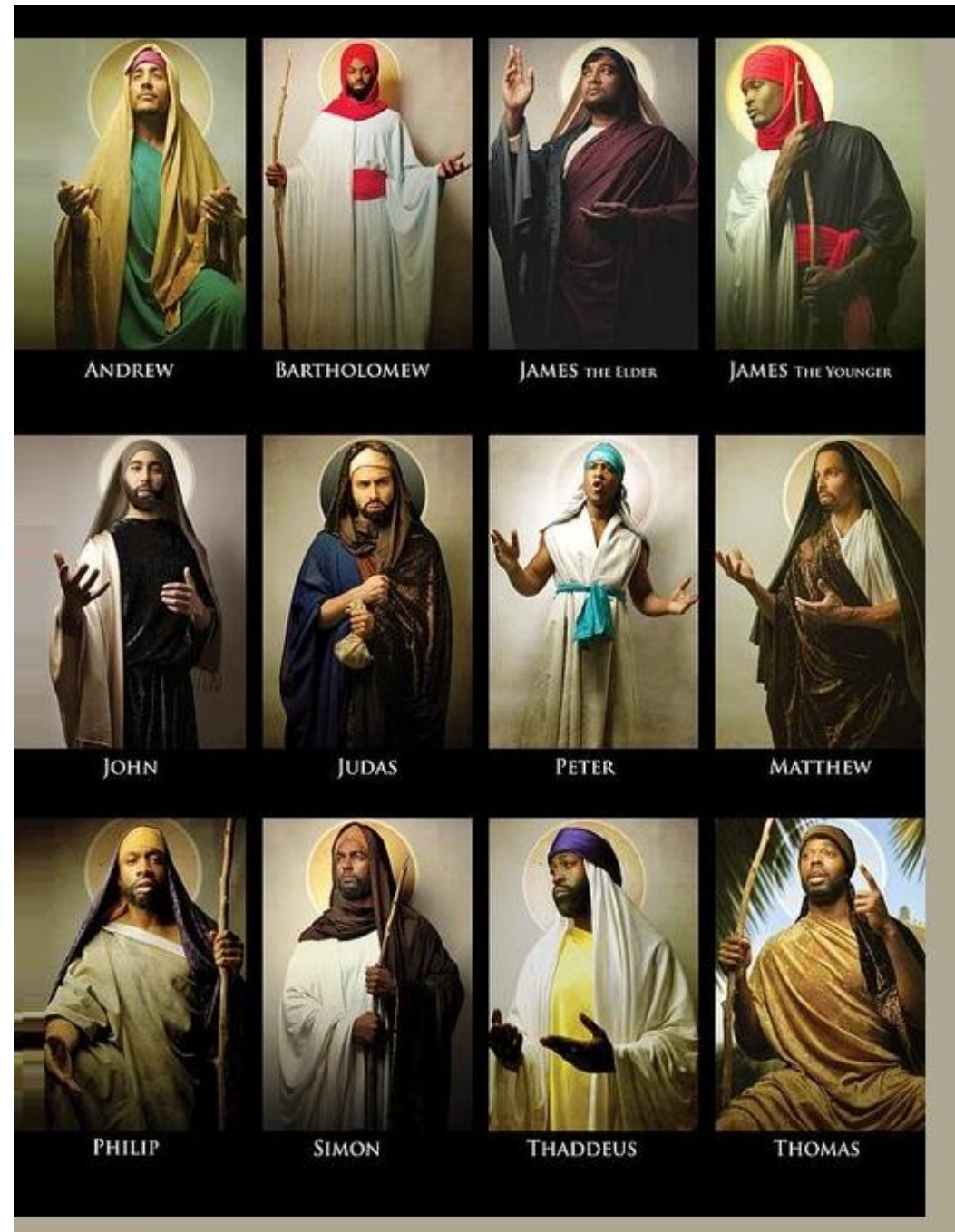


Instructor:
Vicky Juaneta Lewis

Book of Acts

The "**Book of Acts**" is also commonly known as the "**Acts of the Apostles**", detailing the early history of the Christian church following Jesus' ascension, particularly focusing on the activities of the apostles, especially Peter and Paul; it is considered the second part of Luke's writings, following the Gospel of Luke. It was originally intended to be part of a single work with the Gospel of Luke.

The two books are often presented together as a single work called Luke–Acts.



When it was written

The book was likely written between 60 and 90 CE, in Rome, by the physician and historian Luke.

What it covers

The book covers the events that took place in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Asia Minor, and other parts of the Greco-Roman empire. It begins with the ascension of Jesus into heaven and ends with Paul's arrest.

What it includes

The book includes the Day of Pentecost, the expulsion of Christians from Jerusalem, the establishment of the church at Antioch, Paul's conversion, and his three missionary journeys.

What it shows

The book shows how the church grew from a small group of believers in Jerusalem to a movement across the Roman Empire. It also shows how the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to spread the gospel.

What it transitions

The book serves as a transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant.

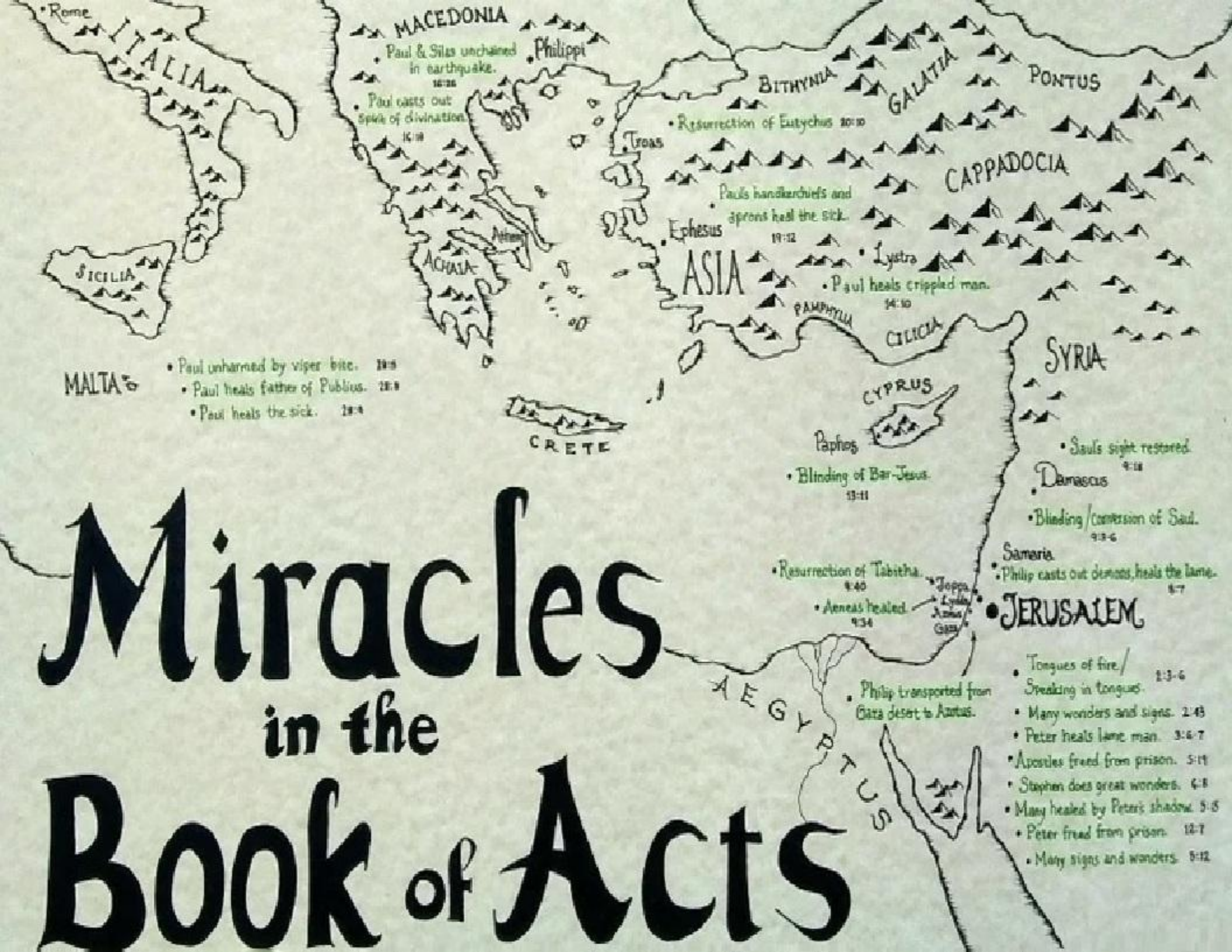
How it's structured

The book is divided into five parts, with each part covering a different period of time

Timeline of the Events in "Acts of the Apostles"

- 1. Christ appears to the apostles after His resurrection (Acts 1:4-8).*
- 2. Christ ascends to heaven (Acts 1:9-11).*
- 3. Matthias is appointed to replace Judas as the 12th Apostle (Acts 1:15-26).*
- 4. The Holy Spirit comes to the apostles in the form of tongues of fire (Acts 2:1-4).*
- 5. The apostles speak in tongues (Acts 2:5-13).*
- 6. Peter heals a lame man (Acts 3:1-10).*
- 7. Stephen is stoned to death and becomes the first Christian martyr (Acts 6:8- 15, 7:54-60).*
- 8. Saul persecutes the Christians (Acts 8:1-3).*
- 9. Saul has a dramatic encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19).*
- 10. Saul escapes from Damascus in a basket (Acts 9:23-25).*
- 11. Peter raises Dorcas (Tabitha) from the dead (Acts 9:36-43).*
- 12. King Herod Agrippa I orders the execution of the Apostle James (Acts 12:1-2).*
- 13. An angel rescues Peter from prison (Acts 12:3-10).*
- 14. Saul's first missionary journey - Cyprus, Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. Saul becomes known as the Apostle Paul. (12:2 - 14:28)*
- 15. Paul and Peter meet at the Council of Jerusalem to decide if Gentile Christians must observe the Jewish Law and customs (Acts 15:1-20).*

16. *Paul writes his First Letter to the Thessalonians - the earliest New Testament book. (Acts 18:1-18)*
17. *Paul writes his Letter to the Galatians.*
18. *Paul's second missionary journey - Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea, Athens and Corinth (15:36 - 18:22)*
19. *Paul's third missionary journey - Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, Troas, Miletus, Tyre and Caesarea (18:23 - 21:14)*
20. *16-year-old Nero becomes emperor of the Roman Empire.*
21. *Eutychus falls asleep while Paul is preaching and falls out a window (Acts 20:9-12).*
22. *Paul writes his First and Second Letters to the Corinthians.*
23. *Paul writes his Letter to the Romans.*
24. *Paul is arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27-36).*
25. *Paul is taken to Rome for trial and shipwrecked on the way (27:1 - 28:16).*
26. *Nero orders the execution of both Peter and Paul.*
27. *The Roman Army attacks Jerusalem to suppress a Jewish revolt. The city and the temple are destroyed.*



Miracles

in the

Book of Acts

- Paul unharmed by viper bite. 28:9
- Paul heals father of Publius. 28:8
- Paul heals the sick. 28:7

- Paul & Silas unchained in earthquake. 16:26
- Paul casts out spirit of divination. 16:18

Philippi

Troas

- Resurrection of Eutychus 20:10

Ephesus

- Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons heal the sick. 19:12

Lystra

- Paul heals crippled man. 14:10

Pamphylia

Cilicia

Cyprus

Paphos

- Blinding of Bar-Jesus. 13:11

- Resurrection of Tabitha. 9:40

- Aeneas healed. 9:34

Joppa

Lydda

Azotus

Gaza

- Philip transported from Gaza desert to Azotus.

- Saul's sight restored. 9:18

Damascus

- Blinding/conversion of Saul. 9:3-6

Samaria

- Philip casts out demons, heals the lame. 8:7

JERUSALEM

- Tongues of fire/Speaking in tongues. 2:3-4

- Many wonders and signs. 2:43

- Peter heals lame man. 3:4-7

- Apostles freed from prison. 5:19

- Stephen does great wonders. 6:8

- Many healed by Peter's shadow. 5:8

- Peter freed from prison. 12:7

- Many signs and wonders. 5:12

The Book of Acts is typically divided into two main parts, with the first focusing on Peter's ministry primarily in Jerusalem and the second following Paul's missionary journeys throughout the Roman Empire, rather than five distinct parts; however, some scholars may further subdivide the narrative into more sections based on key events and geographic locations.

Key points about the division of Acts:

Part 1 (Acts 1-12):

Covers Peter's ministry centered in Jerusalem and surrounding areas, including the early church and the spread of the gospel to Samaritans.

Part 2 (Acts 13-28):

Follows Paul's missionary journeys to the Gentiles, including his travels throughout the Roman Empire and his eventual arrival in Rome.

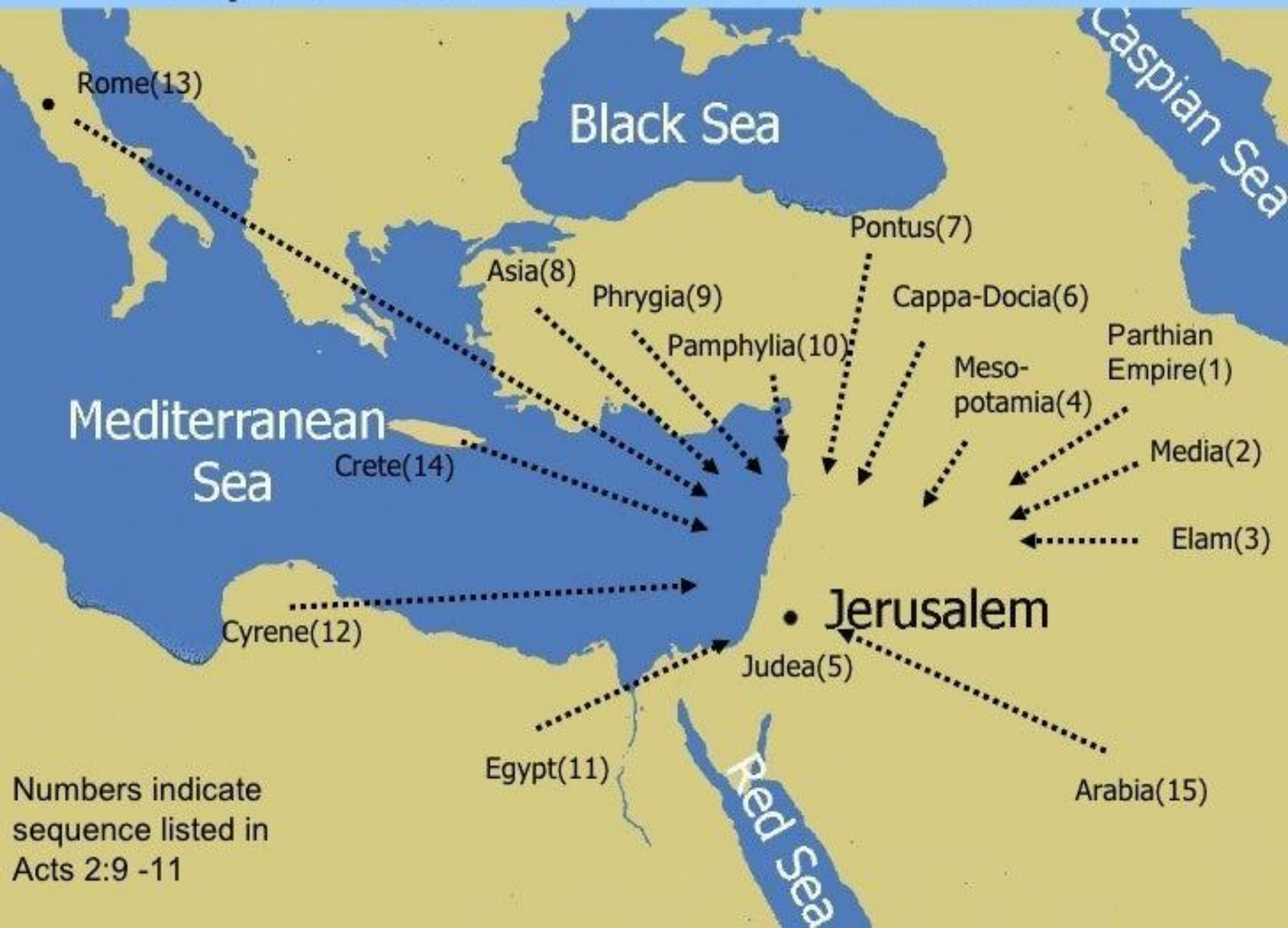
Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: 'Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism/Proselytes); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!' (**Acts 2:7-11**)



NATIONS AT PENTECOST



Diaspora Visitors to Jerusalem at Pentecost



Numbers indicate
sequence listed in
Acts 2:9 -11

The other languages miraculously spoken by the Apostles at that Pentecost to worshipers from different parts of the world were:

Parthia—Parthian, a proto-Aramaic language

Media—a northeastern Iranian language

Elam—a “language esolate” with no relationship to any other

Mesopotamia—Akkadian spoken 2800 BC-500 AD

Judea—Aramaic, Hebrew

Cappadocia—mixed Greek and local dialects

Pontus—Greek and Persian

Asia, a Roman province—Latin

Phrygia—Phrygian until 500’s AD and Greek/Anatolian language

Pamphylia—mainly Greek

Egypt—Coptic

Libya—Berber, Catin and Greek

Rome—Latin

Crete—Cretan Greek

Arabs—Arabic

Acts 1:1-26:

Luke's introduction:

Luke introduces his second volume in **verses 1-2**



Jesus' post-resurrection ministry:

Jesus' final commandment to his followers is described in **verses 3-8**

Note: verse 8, the power of the Holy Spirit would transform the disciples and enable them to preach the gospel, perform miracles, and face opposition. The Greek word for "power" in this verse is *dunamis*, which means "miraculous power". The disciples would be witnesses to Jesus, testifying of his resurrection, ministry, and other accomplishments. The word "witness" means "one who testifies" or "attests something". The gospel would transcend geography and ethnicity, as the church would include people with no Jewish blood.

The disciples' question and Jesus' response:

Jesus' response to the disciples' question "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" in **verses 6-11**

Filling the vacancy of Judas:

Matthias is chosen to replace Judas Iscariot as the twelfth disciple in **verses 12-26**

Read: Acts 1:1-14

Note(s): **Acts 1:1**, "In my first book, O ^(a)**Theophilus**, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach," (**Luke 1:1-4**)

a) Strong's Lexicon: G2321

Theophilos: Theophilus Original Word: Θεόφιλος Phonetic Spelling: (theh-of'-il-os)

Meaning: Theophilus, a friend of Luke of equestrian (in ancient Rome, relating or belonging to the wealthy class known as the equites) rank, to whom the Gospel and Acts are dedicated.

Word Origin: Derived from two Greek words: θεός (theos), meaning "God," and φίλος (philos), meaning "friend" or "loved one."

Corresponding Greek / Hebrew Entries: There are no direct Hebrew equivalents for the name Theophilus, as it is a Greek name. However, the concept of being a "friend of God" can be related to Hebrew names like Jedidiah (יְדִידְיָהּ), which means "beloved of the LORD."

Usage: The name Theophilus means "friend of God" or "loved by God." It is used as a proper noun in the New Testament, specifically as the addressee of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Theophilus is thought to be a person of high status or a patron who supported Luke's writings.

Cultural and Historical Background: In the Greco-Roman world, it was common for authors to dedicate their works to patrons or individuals of influence who supported their endeavors. Theophilus may have been a real person, possibly a Roman official or a wealthy individual, who had an interest in the Christian faith. The use of the title "most excellent" in **Luke 1:3** suggests a person of rank or social standing.

*In the Bible, **Acts 1:19** mentions the Valley of Hinnom, also known as the Valley of Gehenna, in connection with the place where Judas Iscariot died. The verse describes how the residents of Jerusalem named the place **Akeldama, which means "Field of Blood"**.*

Explanation:

- **Akeldama** - The name of the place where Judas died, as described in **Acts 1:19**.
- **Valley of Hinnom** - Also known as the Valley of Gehenna, this valley is mentioned in the Bible in connection with Judas's death.
- **Naming places** - In ancient times, it was common to name places after significant events or characteristics.

Location:

Tradition places Akeldama south of Jerusalem at the junction of the Kidron Valley and the Valley of Hinnom.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tt4EpeCm2B0>

“Casting Lots” was a Jewish tradition of using lots to make decisions, which was seen as a way to determine God's will. The practice is mentioned in the Bible, and was used for many purposes, including dividing land, appointing officials, and choosing sacrificial goats.

When was casting lots used?

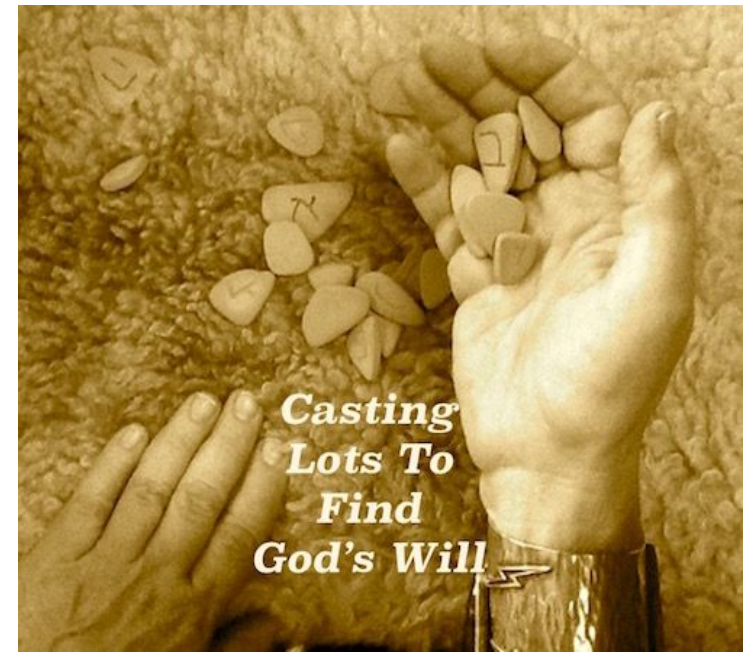
- **Dividing land:** God instructed the Israelites to cast lots to divide land, especially under Joshua
- **Appointing officials:** Priests drew lots to determine who would hold various offices in the temple
- **Choosing sacrificial goats:** Lots were used to select goats for the Yom Kippur sacrifice
- **Choosing apostles:** The apostles cast lots to determine who would replace Judas
- **Determining God's will:** Ancient Jews and Christians believed that casting lots could determine God's will

How were lots used?

- Lots could be sticks, stones, or dice
- The lots were cast and interpreted
- The lots were taken out by hand from a sanctuary

What is the closest modern practice to casting lots?

Flipping a coin is the closest modern practice to casting lots.



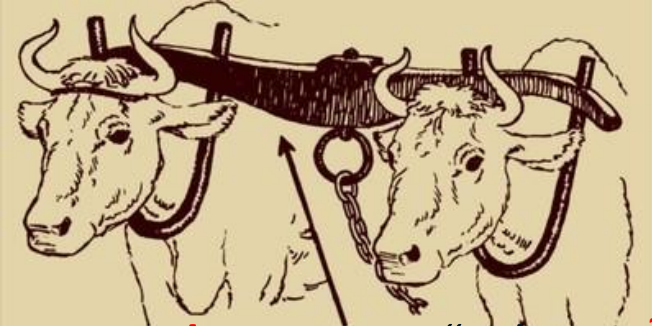
Let's talk...

All three verses mention the Holy Ghost/Spirit, the key difference is the timing and purpose of receiving the Holy Spirit:

*In **John 20:22**, Jesus "breathes" on his disciples symbolically giving the Holy Spirit to the disciples as a promise of future empowerment. ----- "And after He said this, He breathed on them. And He said to them, "Receive the **Ruach ha-Kodesh**! (**Tree of Life Version - TLV**)*

*In **Acts 1:8**, Jesus instructs them to go to Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Ghost/Spirit to come upon them to empower them to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. ----- "But you will receive power when the **Ruach ha-Kodesh** has come upon you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and through all Judah, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (**Tree of Life Version - TLV**)*

*In **Acts 2:4**, is where the Holy Ghost/Spirit is made visible by filling them and empowering to speak in a heavenly language and in different languages to share the Gospel. ----- "They were all filled with the **Ruach ha-Kodesh** and began to speak in other tongues as the **Ruach** enabled them to speak out. (**Tree of Life Version - TLV**)*



Matthew 11:29, “Take my ²²¹⁸yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Strong's Lexicon:

zugos: Yoke Original Word: ζυγός Transliteration: zugos Pronunciation: dzoo-gos'
Phonetic Spelling: (dzoo-gos') Definition: Yoke

Meaning: a yoke; hence met: (a Jewish idea) of a heavy burden, comparable to the heavy yokes resting on the bullocks' necks; a balance, pair of scales.

Word Origin: From the root of ζεύγνυμι (zeugnumi), meaning "to join" or "to yoke."

Corresponding Greek / Hebrew Entries: - H5923 לו (ol): Often translated as "yoke," used in similar contexts to describe burdens or obligations, such as in Jeremiah 28:10.

Usage: The term "zugos" primarily refers to a yoke, a wooden beam used to join two animals, usually oxen, for the purpose of pulling a load or plowing a field. In a broader sense, it symbolizes servitude, burden, or bondage. In the New Testament, it is often used metaphorically to describe the obligations or burdens placed upon individuals, whether by religious law, societal expectations, or spiritual commitments.

God the Father is considered the origin of all creation, the ultimate source of authority, and the one who initiated salvation by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem humanity.

God the Son, or Jesus Christ, is the role of God in human form. Jesus' role is to redeem humanity, reconcile people with God, and teach how to live a Christian life.


God the Holy Ghost, also called the Holy Spirit, is considered the third person of the Trinity and plays a crucial role in guiding, comforting, and empowering believers by revealing truth, convicting of sin, and enabling them to live a life according to God's will; essentially acting as a personal advocate and teacher within a believer's life, allowing them to experience God's presence directly. The word that describes the Holy Ghost "walking beside the believer" is "**Paraclete**" which, in Greek, means "**one who comes alongside**" or "advocate," signifying the Holy Spirit's role as a helper and counselor to believers.



OL - a Yoke

לע
Ayin Lamed

	Hebrew	Greek		Hebrew	Greek
Master	רַבִּי Rabbi	διδασκαλός Didaskalos		תַּלְמִיד Talmid	μαθητής Mathetes
				Disciple	



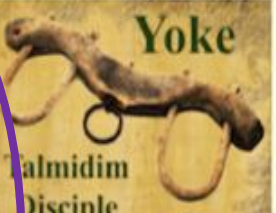
Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me...
Matthew 11:29

על ol
pronounced:
ole or mowl

Rabbi
Teacher
Master

Talmidim
Disciple
Student

For my yoke is easy,
and my burden is light.
Matthew 11:30




Yoke

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• **Talmidim** is a Hebrew word that means "**disciples**". It is used to describe a group of students who follow a rabbi and dedicate their lives to learning from them.




OL - a Yoke


לע

Ayin Lamed






	Hebrew	Greek
Master	רַבִּי Rabbi	διδασκάλος Didaskalos
Disciple	תַּלְמִיד Talmid	μαθητής Mathetes



על ol
pronounced:
ole or mowl

Rabbi
Teacher
Master



Talmidim
Disciple
Student

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me...

Matthew 11:29

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:30

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John 16:7, "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the [a]Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengtheners, Standby) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you [to be in close fellowship with you]."

(Amplified Bible - AMP)

• The "yoke" in **Matthew 11:29** does represent a connection with Jesus and his teachings, it is not explicitly stated as representing the Holy Ghost; instead, it symbolizes the commitment to follow Jesus and live according to his guidance, which is empowered by the Holy Spirit, allowing for a lighter burden and true rest in following him.

The Bible has several parables that discuss growth, including the Parable of the Growing Seed, the Parable of the Mustard Seed, and the Parable of the Sower.

These parables illustrate how growth can happen in the Kingdom of God and in the Christian community.

The Parable of the Growing Seed

- *This parable appears in **Mark 4:26–29**.*
- *It tells of a man who scatters seeds on the ground and lets nature take its course.*
- *The seed grows into a stalk, leaves, head of grain, and eventually fully developed kernels.*
- *The parable emphasizes that the growth happens without the man's help.*



The Spirit Of Pentecost

The day of Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Weeks in the Old Testament and Shavuoth in Hebrew, is a day packed with biblical insight and importance. It's significant in both the Old and New testaments and is a day that Israel, along with the apostles, observed. It represents two essential gifts from our Heavenly Father: the giving of the Torah and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

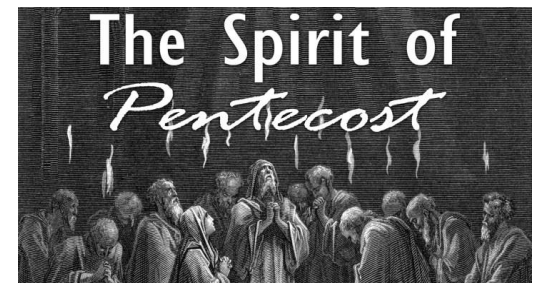
Giving of the Torah:

*The "Giving of the Torah" at Mount Sinai is considered the most significant event in Jewish history, marking the moment when the Israelites received the Torah from God, establishing their identity as a nation bound by divine law and defining the core principles of Judaism through the Ten Commandments; essentially, it is seen as the foundation of Jewish belief and practice. (**Exodus 19–20** and **Deuteronomy 5**)*



Outpouring of the Holy Ghost/Spirit:

***Acts 2:4**, "And they were all filled [that is, diffused throughout their being] with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other [a]tongues (different languages), as the Spirit was giving them the ability to speak out [clearly and appropriately]." (Amplified Bible - AMP)*



613 Commandments in the Old Testament

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-613-mitzvot-commandments>

1050 Commandments in the New Testament

<https://beth-yeshua.nl/1050-commandments-in-the-new-testament/>

Modern Hebrew - TORAH

תורה

תורה to-raw'

Paleo Hebrew = Torah

Hey Resh Vav Tav

Hey	Resh	Vav	Tav
5	200	6	400
Hey	Resh	Vav	Tav
Behold Reveal Breath	Head Authority First	Nail Secure Add/and	Cross Mark/sign Covenant

Understanding the TaNsHh



Torah

*(Instruction, or Law,
also called the
Pentateuch)*

*Bereshit (Genesis)
Shemot (Exodus)
Vayikra (Leviticus)
Bamidbar (Numbers)
Devarim (Deuteronomy)*



Nevi'im

(Prophets)

*Yehoshua (Joshua)
Shoftim (Judges)
Shmuel I (I Samuel)
Shmuel II (II Samuel)
Melachim I (I Kings)
Melachim II (II Kings)
Yeshayahu (Isaiah)
Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah)
Yechezkel (Ezekiel)
Hoshea (Hosea)
Yoel (Joel)
Amos
Ovadiah (Obadiah)
Yonah (Jonah)
Michah (Micah)
Nachum (Nahum)
Chavakuk (Habakkuk)
Tzefaniah (Zephaniah)
Chaggai (Haggai)
Zechariah
Malachi*



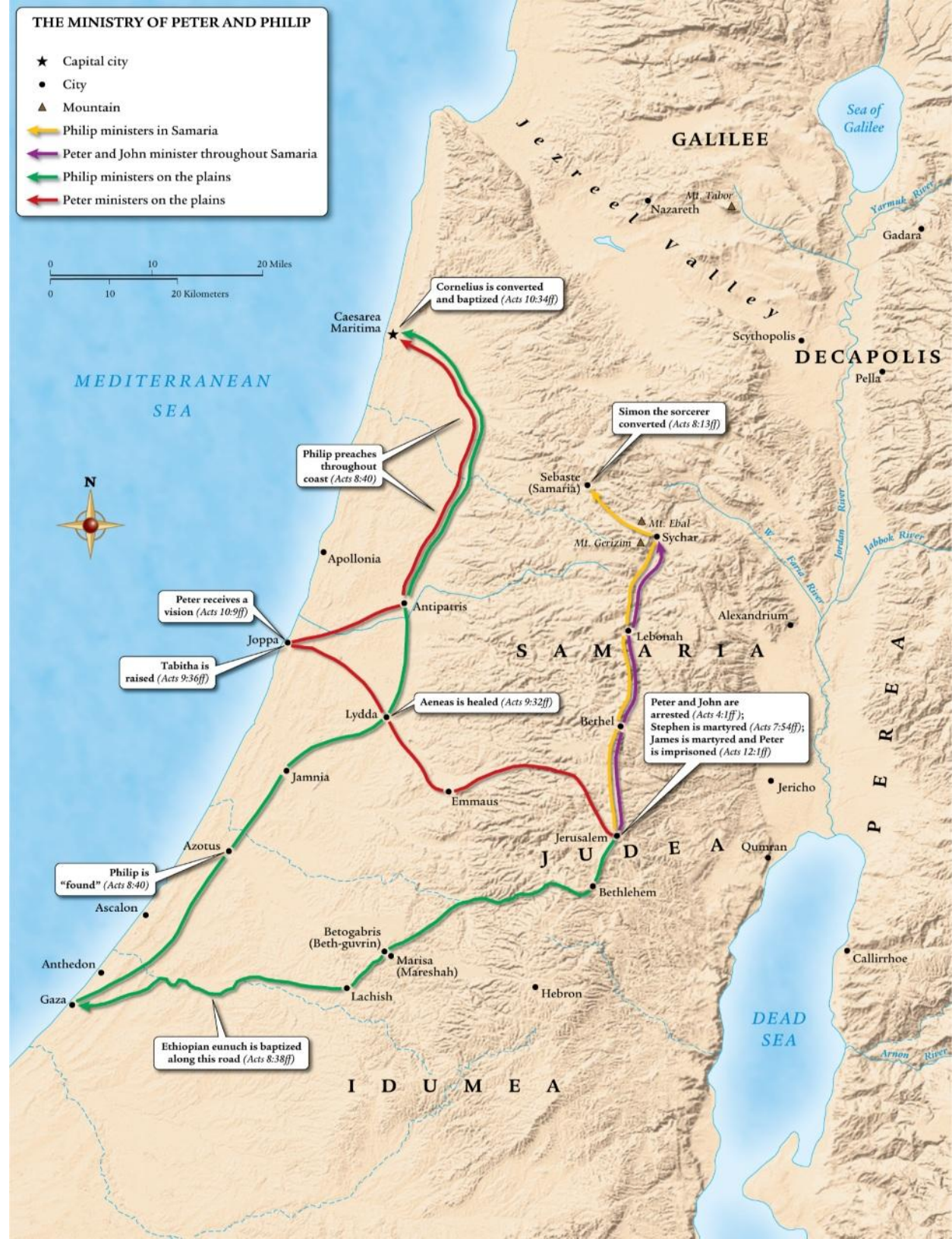
Ketuvim

(Writings)

*Tehillim (Psalms)
Mishlei (Proverbs)
Iyov (Job)
Shir Hashirim (Song of Songs)
Rut (Ruth)
Eichah (Lamentations)
Kohelet (Ecclesiastes)
Esther
Daniel
Ezra
Nechemiah (Nehemiah)
Divrei Hayamim I (Chronicles I)
Divrei Hayamim II (Chronicles II)*

Part 1 (Acts 1-12):

Covers Peter's ministry centered in Jerusalem and surrounding areas, including the early church and the spread of the gospel to Samaritans.



Who is Apostle Peter? Simon was originally from Bethsaida (**John 1:44**) and lived in Capernaum (**Mark 1:29**), both cities on the coast of the Sea of Galilee. He was married (**1 Corinthians 9:5**). He, James and John were partners in a profitable fishing business (**Luke 5:10**). Simon met Jesus through his brother Andrew, who had followed Jesus after hearing John the Baptist proclaim that Jesus was the Lamb of God (**John 1:35-36**). Andrew immediately went to find his brother to bring him to Jesus. Upon meeting Simon, Jesus gave him a new name: Cephas (Aramaic) or Peter (Greek), which means “**rock**” (**John 1:40-42**). Later, Jesus officially called Peter to follow Him, producing a miraculous catch of fish (**Luke 5:1-7**). Immediately, Peter left everything behind to follow the Lord (**verse 11**).

For the next three years, Peter lived as a disciple of the Lord Jesus. Being a natural-born leader, Peter became the spokesman for the Twelve (**Matthew 15:15, 18:21, 19:27; Mark 11:21; Luke 8:45, 12:41; John 6:68, 13:6-9, 36**). More significantly, it was Peter who first confessed Jesus as “**the Christ, the Son of the living God**” a truth which Jesus said was divinely revealed to Peter (**Matthew 16:16-17**).

Peter

Dictionary: πέτρα, -ας, ἡ

Greek transliteration: *petra*

Simplified transliteration: *petra*

Strong's Greek Dictionary: 4073

Greek Number: 4376

Definition: rock, bedrock, rocky crag, or other large rock formation, in contrast to individual stones, with a focus that this is a suitable, solid foundation, a rock, **Mt. 7:24-25; Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:8**; crags, clefts, **Rev. 6:15-16**; stony ground, **Lk. 8:6, 13**



Rock

Matthew 16:18

(Tree of Life Version (TLV))

“And I also tell you that you are Peter, and upon this **rock I will build My community; and the gates of Sheol will not overpower it.”**

Acts 2 through Acts 12 describes the travels of Apostle Peter in Jerusalem, Samaria, Lydda, Joppa, Caesarea, and Egypt. Peter's travels include spreading the Gospel, healing people, and being arrested.

Acts 2:14-41, Peter spreads the Good News in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost in 30AD. Three thousand who hear his message become believers.

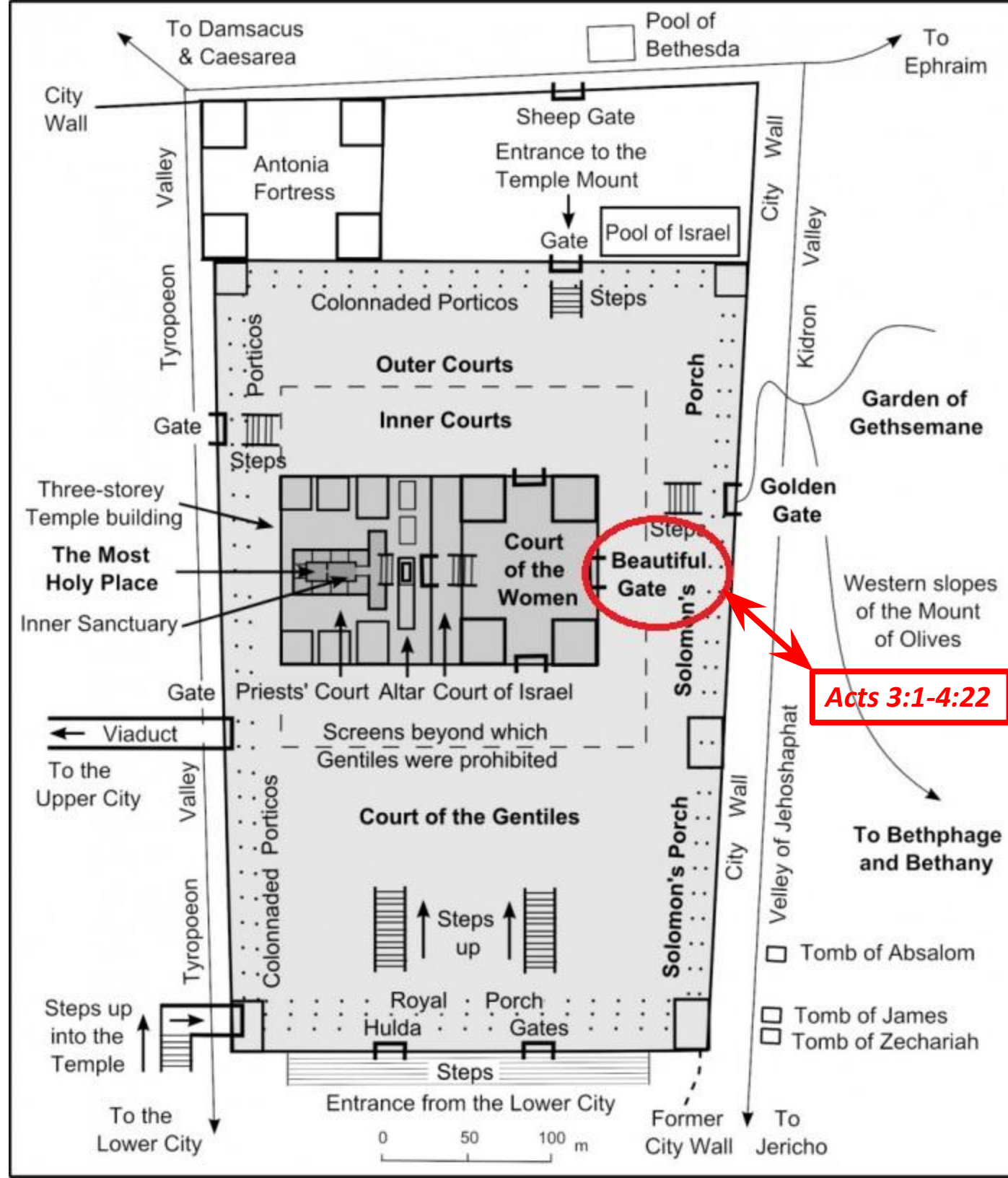
Acts 3:1-4:22, Peter heals a lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple (***See next two slides, [Herod's Temple](#) & [The Gate called, Beautiful](#)***). He and John are arrested by the temple guards and told not to preach.

Acts 5:1-16, As the leader of the church in Jerusalem over the next few years, Peter rebukes Ananias and Sapphira when they lie about the money they have received from selling some land.

Acts 5:17-42, Peter is the spokesperson when he and another apostle are arrested in Jerusalem. The leader of the Sanhedrin who spoke up during the discussion about the apostles was Gamaliel who was a Pharisee and teacher of the law advised the council to be cautious about persecuting the apostles, arguing that if their movement was of God, it could not be stopped.

Acts 8:14-24, Peter and John go to Sebaste in Samaria in 35AD and pray for the new Samaritan believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Mk 11:15-19 Meanwhile, on the Monday morning, Jesus enters the outer courtyard of the Temple (**Malachi 3:1**) and begins driving out the merchants who are selling birds to be offered as sacrifices. His symbolic actions – destroying the sacrificial system of the Temple for a short time – point towards the coming destruction of the Temple. With the ultimate sacrifice about to be paid by the death of Jesus – the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (**John 1:29**) – the Temple has outlived its purpose as the place where Jews offered sacrifices to gain God’s favour.





The Gate Called, “Beautiful”

(Acts 3:1-11 - Healing the Lame Beggar)

The Temple Mount, a holy site in the Old City of Jerusalem, contains twelve gates. One of the gates, Bab as-Sarai gate is

*also known as the New Gate was the gate that provided an escape route during difficult times and symbolizes hope and resilience is currently closed to the public but was open under **Ottoman Rule** (The Ottoman’s were Sunni Turks who became very powerful religiously and politically. Osman I, the founder of the Ottoman Empire, was a visionary leader who laid the foundation for one of the most significant empires in world history. (**Daniel 11:14-19**)). There are also six other sealed gates. The entrance to the Temple itself was on its eastern side through the Beautiful gate (**Acts 3:10**), near the Golden Gate recently found beneath the city eastern wall. On the north, the principal gateway (Damascus Gate) opened onto the Damascus Road. Seven gates now allow entrance to the old city of Jerusalem.*

The Temple Mount has 15 gates leading into the al-Aqsa Mosque compound, ten of which are open while the remaining five are currently closed. All the gates of the Temple were 20 cubits high and ten cubits wide, and their doors were overlaid in gold. The gates of the Court (including the open space inside of the gate) had the same level of sanctity as the Court, with the exception of Nikanor Gate.



Ananias and Sapphira

*This event reveals the seriousness of malicious deception, especially among God's people. This story of Ananias and Sapphira alludes back to **Joshua 7**. After the fall of Jericho, Achan, an Israelite, "kept back" (this same word is used in the Greek Old Testament) a portion of the spoils from Jericho and hid it under his tent (**Achan's Guilt - Joshua 7:16-21**). Following this cunning move, Israel went into battle against Ai, and the Israelite army was utterly defeated*

*(**Joshua 7:4-6**). God revealed Achan's sin and he and his family were put to death (**Joshua 7:22-26**). Scripture everywhere pronounces harsh warnings about this kind of malicious deception (see **Ex. 20:16; Prov. 12:22; Zech. 8:16; Eph. 4:15; James 5:12**) because it often reveals a lack of genuine faith (**Ps. 5:6; 1 John 1:6; Rev. 21:8**) and it damages the witness of the people of God in the world (**Ps. 15:2-3; Matt. 5:16**). God's people cannot serve Him when their lives are couched in deception. Perhaps this is why Paul states that those in submission to authority ought not to "keep back" anything for themselves with selfish intent, but rather they ought to show good faith to adorn their godly confession with godly practice (**Titus 2:10**).*

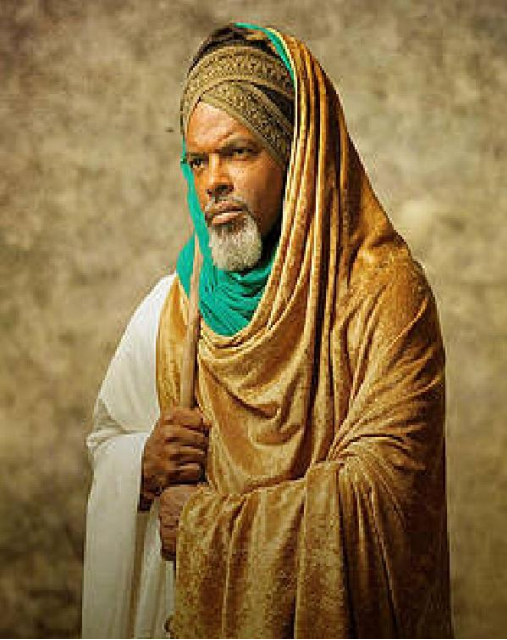
Let's talk...

Say What??? Blasphemy

Blasphemy, in a religious sense, refers to great disrespect shown to God or to something holy, or to something said or done that shows this kind of disrespect; heresy refers a belief or opinion that does not agree with the official belief or opinion of a particular religion. Both words are also sometimes used in general, not necessarily religious, contexts.

Does blasphemy have to be spoken?

Although in certain senses of the word it may be more common to use blasphemy in reference to speech, it may also be applied to writing. The word has broadened in meaning beyond "the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God"; it is now also used with the meaning "irreverence toward something considered sacred or inviolable."



Gamaliel

*Gamaliel is known to the Christian world as the Pharisaic leader who saved the disciples from death in a story in the Book of Acts, in which he is quoted as saying, "If their purpose or activity is of human it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men" (**Acts 5:38**). He is the only leader of the first century to be in both the Jewish and the Christian traditions.*

In Jewish Tradition:

*Even though few of his actual teachings have been preserved, Gamaliel, held a reputation as one of the greatest teachers in the annals of Judaism. The **Mishnah** (**Sotah 9:15**) pays tribute to this quality, saying: "**Since Rabban Gamaliel the Elder died, there has been no more reverence for the Torah, and purity and abstinence died out at the same time**".*

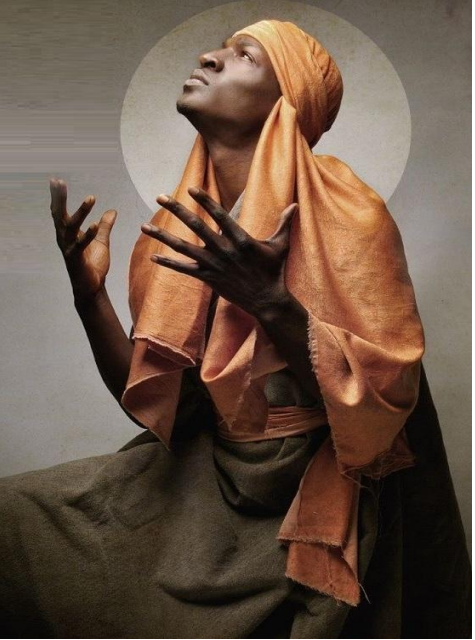
Deacons in the Church

Acts 6:1-6

*Luke records the establishment of Deacons in the church (transliterated from the Greek "diákonos," meaning "servant"). The church of believers in Jesus was growing rapidly in Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost, 3000 people were added to the number of believers (**Acts 2:41**), and not long afterward the number grew to 5000 (**Acts 4:4**). Luke reports elsewhere in more general terms that the believers' numbers grew daily.*

This started the office of Deacon (Greek "diákonos," meaning "servant") who are to assess and direct the care of widows and orphans, assess and direct benevolence requests, and serve where needed or requested in the body.





Stephen

Acts 6:5, "...Stephen, a man full of faith [in Christ Jesus], and [filled with and led by] the Holy Spirit..."

Stephen debates with certain enemies of the gospel of Jesus. These enemies, the Freedmen, cannot stand against Stephen's wisdom, so they hire men to lie about Stephen. He is arrested for the charge of committing blasphemy, for supposedly saying that Jesus will destroy the Temple and change Moses's Law. Stephen is brought before the Council of religious leaders.

*It is not known exactly what the Synagogue of the Freedmen was, but evidently they opposed the gospel of Jesus the Nazarene, that He was the Messiah, and that He had died and resurrected for the sins of the world. Luke does tell us what the countries of origin were for these Freedmen. They were Cyrenians from the city of Cyrene in Libya, almost due west of Jerusalem if sailing along the Mediterranean Sea. Notably, the man who carried Jesus's cross was Simon of Cyrene (**Luke 23:26**). Also among the Freedmen were Alexandrians, men from Alexandria, Egypt, another city west of Jerusalem on the coast of the Mediterranean, founded by Alexander the Great and the place of origin for the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Other members of the Freedmen were from Cilicia and Asia, both Roman provinces in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). It is possible that these Freedmen were former slaves who had been set free, who then formed a Jewish synagogue, but this is speculation. (**Acts 6:9**)*

Acts 7:1-8: The Sanhedrin Council

The council of 70 Pharisees and Sadducees and the High Priest asks Stephen if he is an enemy against the Temple and Moses. He begins his defense by teaching the history of Israel to the Jewish leaders. God appeared to Abraham and told him to go to a land which He would give him. God told Abraham that before his descendants would inherit the land, they would be enslaved for 400 years. As commanded, Abraham circumcised his son, Isaac, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Acts 7:9-19: Joseph Sold by the Patriarchs

Stephen teaches how Joseph, the son of Jacob, was sold into slavery by his brothers. Joseph rose to power in Egypt, stored food for a coming famine, and was able to help his family who had rejected him. Jacob and his household moved to Egypt to be with Joseph.

Acts 7:20-50: Through Moses GOD Delivered Israel

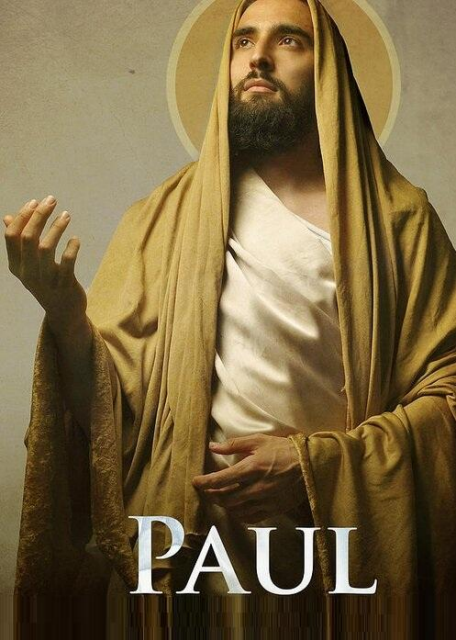
Stephen continues his sermon recounting the history of his people. The time of the Hebrews' bondage had come. A Pharaoh rose to power and feared these people, so he enslaved them. Moses, a Hebrew raised in the Egyptian court, tried to help the Hebrews when he saw an Egyptian abusing them. He killed the Egyptian in defense of the Hebrews. But the Hebrews rejected Moses, so he fled east to Midian and started a family there. God appeared to Moses in the form of an angel standing in a burning thorn bush. God reveals Himself as the God of the patriarchs of the Hebrews: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The time has come to rescue the Hebrews from their slavery in Egypt.

Moses, who was rejected by his people, returned to Egypt as a deliverer. He performed wonders and signs to show God's power in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. He prophesied that God would send a second prophet like him, which was Jesus. Moses received the Law from God on Mt. Sinai, while the Hebrews made a golden calf to worship down in the camp. This was the pattern of Israel. God sent them a savior, they rejected the savior, and worshipped false gods.

Stephen changes subjects to the Temple, because he has been accused of being an enemy of the Temple. He describes the history of the tabernacle, designed by God to reflect Heaven, which eventually became the Temple in Jerusalem. But Stephen points out that God is not contained to the Temple. God is God; His throne is Heaven. He is above all things. He made all things. The man-made Temple is not the point. It's our hearts He desires.

Acts 7:51-60: Stephen Accuses His Accusers and His Stoning

Stephen concludes his sermon by turning his focus on the Sanhedrin. They are just like the sinful Israelites who kept rejecting their deliverers, rejecting the will of God, and worshipping idols instead. Stephen compares them to the Israelites from the past who killed the prophets for prophesying about the Messiah. And when Jesus the Messiah came, they killed him too. The Sanhedrin proves Stephen's point and stones him to death. He has a vision of Heaven, and asks God to forgive the men stoning him. A young pharisee named Saul is present for this episode and approves of the execution. This is Luke's first introduction of the man who will become the Apostle Paul.



Here Comes Saul, the Persecutor

Acts 8:1-3

After Stephen's execution, severe persecution begins against the church in Jerusalem, leading to a scattering of believers throughout Judea and Samaria. Saul is noted as one who approves of Stephen's death and contributes greatly to the persecution. Stephen is buried and mourned.

Saul's campaign is relentless.

*These **verses 1-3**, recounts a significant turning point in the early church's history, marked by intense persecution and the subsequent dispersion of believers. This passage serves as a critical bridge between the martyrdom of Stephen in **Acts 7** and the subsequent spread of the gospel to new regions.*

Here Comes Philip the Evangelist

Part 1 (Acts 8-21):



Philip's energetic preaching earned him the title of Philip the Evangelist which led him to minister successfully in Samaria, in Palestine, where he converted, among others, the famous magician Simon Magus (**Acts 8:9–13**). Later, on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza, he instructed and baptized a court official from Ethiopia. Philip's missionary journey ended at Caesarea (**Acts 8**), where he raised his four daughters, who were prophetess. About AD 58, he entertained the Apostle Paul and his companions on their last journey to Jerusalem (**Acts 21:8**). According to Greek tradition, he became bishop of Tralles (modern Aydin, Tur).



One of Philip's notable journeys took him to Samaria, a region that had long been marginalized and despised by the Jews. Despite the cultural and religious barriers, Philip fearlessly proclaimed the gospel, bringing hope and healing to the Samaritans.

Acts 8:4-8, *During the persecution in 35AD, Philip, one of the seven Greek-speaking 'deacons' chosen by the church in Jerusalem, travels north with those who have fled to Sebaste, the principal city of Samaria.*

Acts 8:9-13, *Many Samaritans are healed in Sebaste (Samaria) and Simon the 'magician' believes and is baptized.*

Acts 8:14-25, *Peter and John arrive in Samaria from Jerusalem and pray that the new Samaritan believers will be filled with the Holy Spirit. Simon (an arrogant man who boasts about his 'magical' powers) tries to buy the ability to anoint people with the Holy Spirit. He is strongly rebuked by Peter.*

Amazed that even Samaritans (whom the Jews hated) are being blessed by God and filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter and John return to Jerusalem, spreading the Good News of Jesus in many Samaritan villages en route.

Acts 8:26, *Philip then travels south on the desert road leading from Jerusalem down to the coastal town of Gaza.*

Philip shares the good news with an Ethiopian

Acts 8:27-38, On the way to Gaza, Philip meets a Jewish official from the court of the Queen of Ethiopia (whose kingdom stretched north along the River Nile into what is now northern Sudan).

*The Ethiopian eunuch represents a significant figure in the narrative, as he is a Gentile and a high-ranking official. Ethiopia, in biblical times, referred to the region south of Egypt, often associated with the ancient kingdom of Cush. Eunuchs were often employed in royal courts due to their perceived trustworthiness and inability to establish a competing dynasty. This encounter signifies the expanding reach of the Gospel beyond Jewish boundaries, aligning with the prophecy in **Isaiah 56:3-5** about eunuchs being included in God's people.*

*The title "Candace" was not a personal name but a dynastic title for the queen mothers of Ethiopia, similar to "Pharaoh" in Egypt. The eunuch's role as a treasurer indicates his high status and influence. This detail underscores the fulfillment of the Great Commission (**Acts 1:8**), as the Gospel begins to reach the ends of the earth, symbolized by Ethiopia, considered a distant land.*

*This phrase suggests that the eunuch was a God-fearer or a proselyte, someone who revered the God of Israel and followed certain Jewish practices. His journey to Jerusalem for worship indicates a deep spiritual hunger and devotion, despite the limitations he would have faced in the temple due to his status as a eunuch (**Deuteronomy 23:1**). This moment foreshadows the breaking down of barriers between Jews and Gentiles, as seen in **Ephesians 2:14-18**, where Christ is described as our peace, who has made the two groups one.*

*Philip explains how the prophet Isaiah spoke about Jesus who was “like a sheep being led to be killed” (**Acts 8:32**) (see **Isaiah 53:7-8**). The Ethiopian official believes in Jesus and is baptized.*

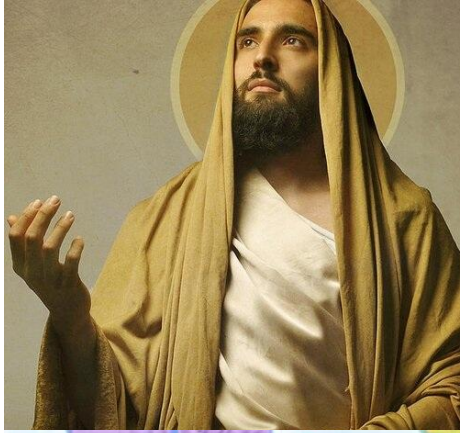
Acts 8:39, *The Holy Spirit takes Philip further north to Azotus (Ashdod).*

Philip in Caesarea

Acts 8:40, Philip spreads the Good News of Jesus in all the coastal towns he passes through before reaching Caesarea on the coast of Samaria.

Caesarea was an important Roman port, and the headquarters of the Roman administration in Judaea and Samaria. Herod the Great had built the harbour (and a palace for himself) and had named the city after the Roman emperor Augustus Caesar.

*Philip (a Greek-speaking Jew) settles in Caesarea (where there are very few Hebraic Jews to persecute his family) and is visited here over twenty years later by Paul in 57AD (see ***Acts 21:8***). (See the feature on Caesarea in ***Chapter 12***). At the outbreak of the Romano-Jewish War in 66AD, Philip and his four daughters escape to Hierapolis where a church celebrating his martyrdom can still be seen today.*



Part 2 (Acts 13-28):

Follows Paul's missionary journeys to the Gentiles, including his travels throughout the Roman Empire and his eventual arrival in Rome.



Who is Apostle Paul? In **Philippians 3:4-5**, Paul argues his point further by temporarily adopting the position of his adversaries for rhetorical effect. Paul states that, compared with most Jewish Christians, he actually did have considerable grounds for putting confidence in his Jewish heritage and traditions. Furthermore, his impressive Jewish credentials give Paul “the right to speak” on this issue.

Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews

“. . . circumcised on the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews . . .”

*Paul was not a proselyte (a convert to Judaism); he had been born a Jew and was circumcised when he was eight days old, as prescribed in **Leviticus 12:3**. He belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, a fact that Paul, whose Hebrew name was Saul, proudly announced on a few occasions (**Acts 13:31; Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5**). Of all the tribes of Israel, only Benjamin was loyal to the house of Judah when it split from the northern ten tribes. Benjamin was the only son of Jacob to be born in the Promised Land, and he was a son of Jacob’s favourite wife, Rachel. Israel’s first king (who had*

the same Hebrew name as Saul) was a Benjamite, as was Mordecai a respected figure in Jewish history. Moreover, the Holy City, Jerusalem, is situated on land that has been allocated to the tribe of Benjamin.

*Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews. His Hebrew ancestry probably came from both his father and mother's side. His family lived outside of Israel, in Tarsus, the capital city of the Roman province of Cilicia, and yet they had maintained elements of Jewish culture. Paul could speak Hebrew or Aramaic, the ancestral Jewish languages, as well as Greek, the lingua franca of the first-century Roman Empire (**Acts 21:40, 22:2-3**).*

Paul was a Pharisee

“... in regard to the law, a Pharisee . . .”

*Paul had been an enthusiastic member of one of the stricter Jewish sects, the Pharisees (**Acts 22:3, 23:6, 26:5**). The word “Pharisees” means “separated ones.” Luke tells us that Paul had studied and trained under the famous and highly respected Rabban Gamaliel (**Acts 22:3 cf. Acts 5:4**).¹ Paul's father had also been a Pharisee (**Acts 23:6**). Paul had devoted his life,*

separated himself, to the rigorous observance of the Old Testament Law taught and practised by the Pharisees.

*Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme judicial and ecclesiastical council of ancient Jerusalem. ²Paul emphasised his Hebrew credentials: here in **Philippians 3:4-6** and also in **Acts 22:3; 23:6; 26:4-5; Romans 11:1; 2 Corinthians 11:22**; and **Galatians 1:13-14**.*

Footnotes:

¹*The title of “rabban” is a rare and exceptional honour. Gamaliel’s father (or grandfather) was Hillel, also a famous and highly respected rabbi.*

²*Sanhedrin was a Jewish court and legislative assembly that existed in the ancient Land of Israel. The word "Sanhedrin" comes from the Greek word synedrion, which means "council" or "assembly", which was made up of 70 elders, and was led by a High Priest, the av beit din ("father of the court"), and the nasi ("prince"). The function of the Sanhedrin was to address religious, civil, and criminal jurisdiction issues. It judged accused lawbreakers, but could not initiate arrests.*

What is the difference between a letter and an epistle?

Most people who write a letter do not imagine that the correspondence will be read by anyone other than those to whom it is addressed. An “epistle” is a public treatise that uses the letter format to present an essay or homily intended for general reading.

Why are Paul's letters called epistles?

The ennobling word "epistle" is used partly because these were all written in Greek, in a time period close to when the epistles of the New Testament were written, and thus "epistle" lends additional weight of authority.

Paul's letters, known as the Pauline epistles, are some of the earliest Christian documents and are foundational to Christian theology and ethics.

*The **Pauline pistles** include Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.*

*The **General Epistles** include Hebrew, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude.*

Chronology of Paul

5 AD - Acts 22:3; Acts 22:28; Phil 3:4-6

Born a Jew in the City of Tarsus as a Roman citizen

Studied at the school of Gamaliel in Jerusalem; a Pharisee.

Roman Emperor: Augustus 27 BC- 14 AD

29 AD - Acts 7:58

Present at Stephen's stoning

29-32 AD - Acts 8:1-3

Persecutor of the Christian church

32 AD - Acts 9:1-19; Acts 22:3-21; Acts 27:12-18

Paul converted on the road to Damascus

Roman Emperor: Tiberius (14-37 AD)

32-35 AD - Gal 1:15-17; Acts 9:20-25; 2 Cor 11:32-33

Travels to Arabia and remains there

Returns to Damascus

35 AD - Acts 9:26-30; Gal 1:18

1st visit to Jerusalem with Barnabas

interacts briefly with Peter & James

Returns to Tarsus via Caesarea

Roman Emperor: Caligula (37-41 AD)

44 AD - Acts 11:19-26

Barnabas brings Paul to Antioch

Roman Emperor: Claudius (41-54 AD)

Famine in Rome (42 AD)

46 AD - Acts 11:27-30

2nd visit to Jerusalem

Barnabas & Paul take famine relief to Jerusalem (14 years after conversion)

46-48 AD - Acts 13-14

First Journey ([Map](#))

Travels with Barnabas and John Mark;

Returns to Antioch

49 AD - **Acts 15:1-35**

Jerusalem council

*Writes: **Galatians** (49 AD after journey, before council)*

Claudius expels Jews from Rome (49 AD)

49-52 AD - **Acts 15:36 -18:22**

Second Journey ([Map](#))

Travels with Silas and later Timothy

*Writes: **1 & 2 Thessalonians** (50ish)*

Rise of the Zealots (50 AD)

53-57 AD - **Acts 18:23 -21:16**

Third Journey ([Map](#))

*Writes: **1 Corinthians** (55); **2 Corthinians** (56); **Romans** (57)*

Roman Emperor: Nero (54-68 AD)

57-59 AD - Acts 21:17 -26:32

Roman arrest in Jerusalem

Taken to Felix at Caesarea

59 AD - Acts 27:1 -28:16

Journey to Rome ([Map](#))

60-62 AD - Acts 28:17-31

1st Roman imprisonment

*Writes: **Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians***

63 AD - Released from prison

*Writes: **1 Timothy; Titus***

65-66 AD - 2nd Roman imprisonment & execution

*Writes: **2 Timothy***

Fire at Rome (64 AD)

Persecution under Nero

Paul's missionary journeys took him through present-day Greece, Turkey, Syria, and Israel, and he traveled over 10,000 miles. He established at least 14 churches and his travels were crucial to the development of the early Christian church.

*Paul's journeys were dangerous, with many dangers along the way, including bandits, shipwrecks, and exposure to the elements. Paul's goal was to glorify God, and he listed many of his hardships in **2 Corinthians 11:23-29**.*

The Apostle Paul's missionary journeys were a series of travels across the ancient world to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ:

First missionary journey ([Slide #54-55](#))

Paul and Barnabas traveled together on this journey, which likely lasted 1 to 2 years. It began in Antioch, Syria, and took Paul through Cyprus, Asia Minor, Iconium, and Lystra.

Second missionary journey ([Slide #56-57](#))

Paul traveled with Silas, and later Timothy, on this journey, which lasted 2.5 to 3 years. Paul visited Macedonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and Caesarea.

Third missionary journey ([Slide #58-59](#))

Paul traveled on this journey for more than 4 years, spending 3 years in Ephesus. He also visited Macedonia, Greece, and Troas.

Fourth missionary journey ([Slide #60](#))

Some scholars believe Paul took a fourth missionary journey, based on New Testament references to travels that may have taken place after the events in Acts.

THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY OF PAUL

ACTS 13:4-14; 28

• City

← Paul's routes

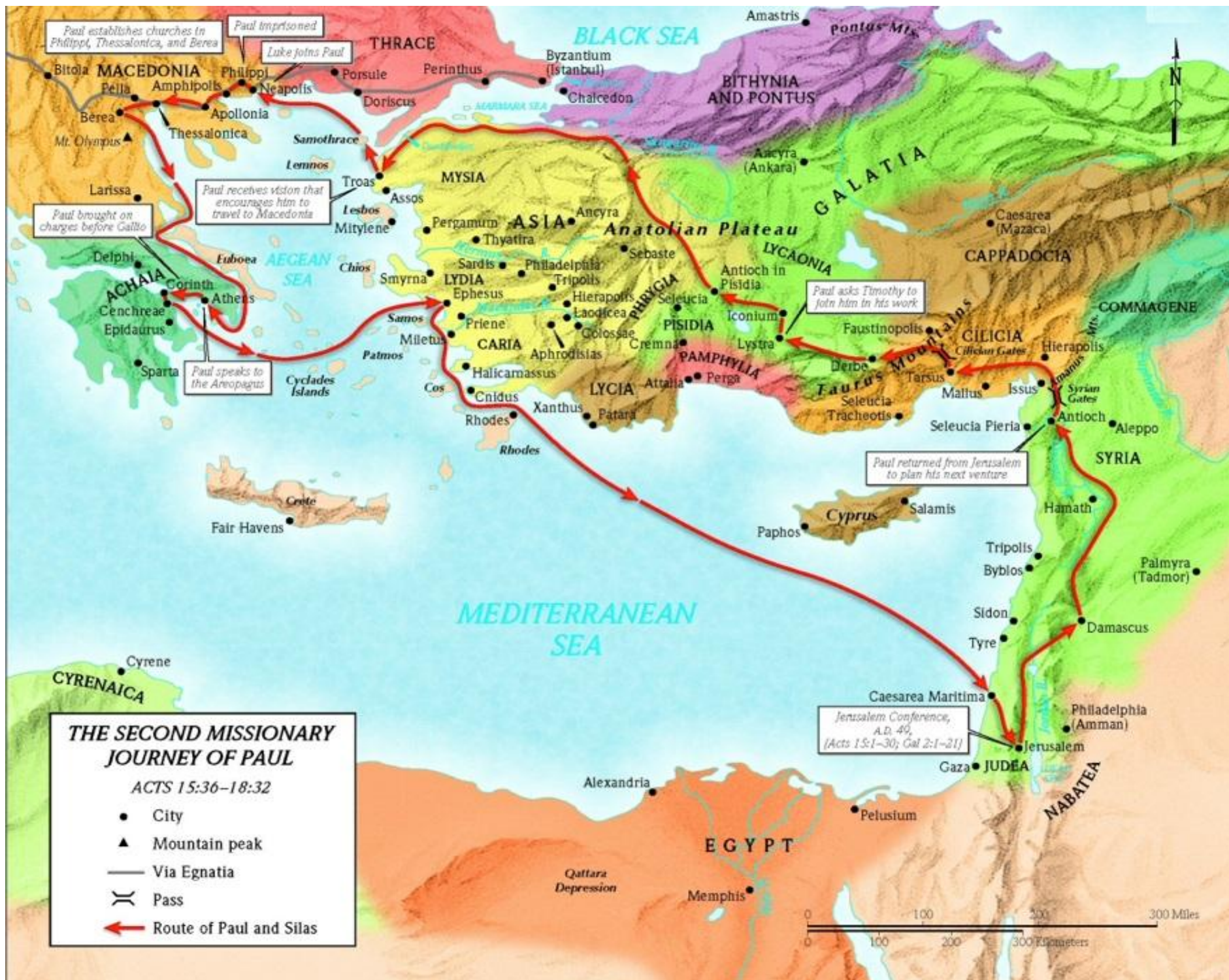
— Via Sebaste



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Resources:

