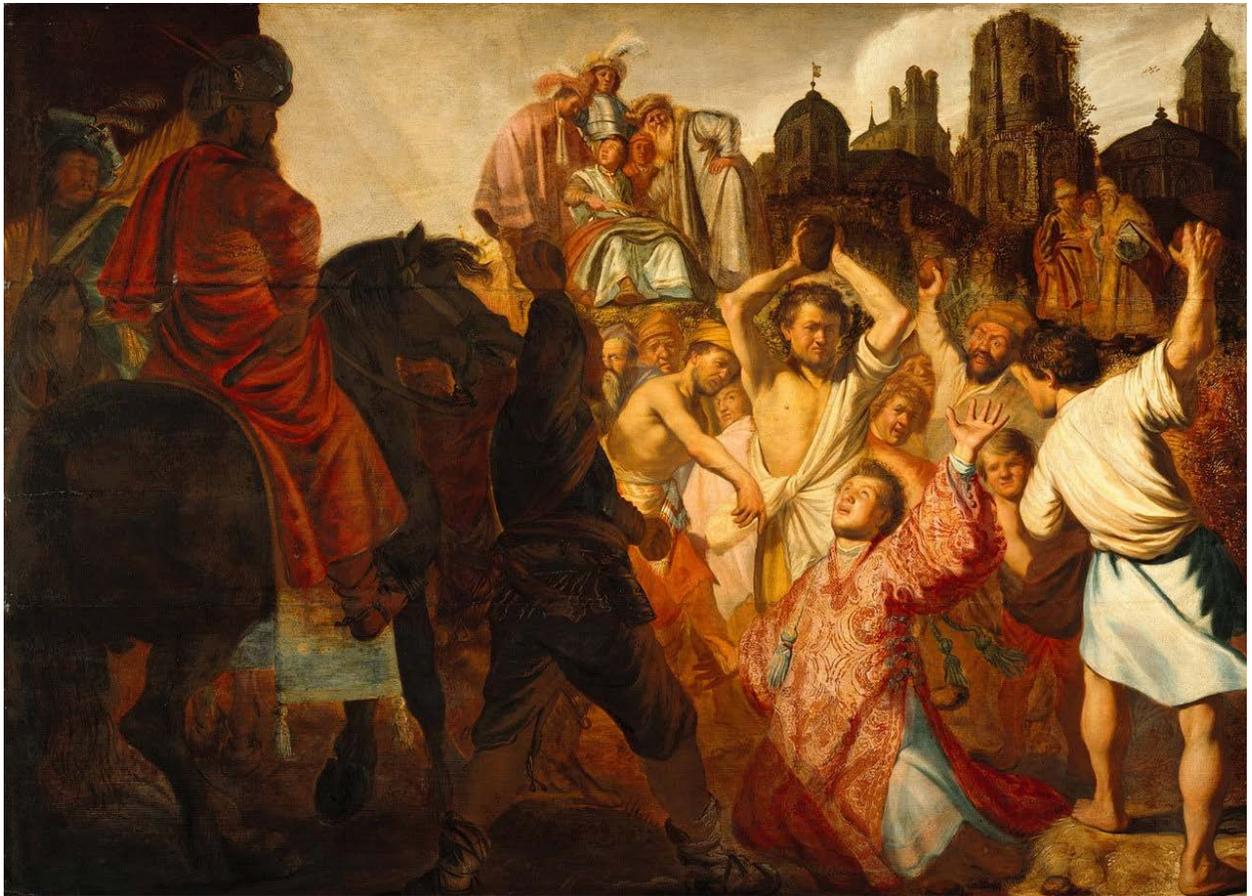


The ACTS of the APOSTLES



Curtis Byers
2020

Front Cover

Rembrandt, *The Stoning of Stephen*, 1625

Oil on oak panel, 35 in x 48 in

Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Stoning_of_Saint_Stephen

Preface

Acts is located in the canon (list) of the New Testament between the Gospels and the Letters. This location was undoubtedly chosen because Acts provides the “historical bridge” between the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of his apostles. Luke can rightly be called the “First Church Historian” (Bruce). Acts is indispensable in understanding the background of early Christianity, as well as the NT Letters.

The original title of the book (if it had one) is unknown, but by the middle of the second century it became identified as *The Acts of the Apostles*. This title (and the similar title *The Acts of All the Apostles* found in one early list of sacred books) is somewhat misleading, because the book is content to restrict itself primarily to Peter and Paul. Even then only some of Peter's and Paul's actions are recorded. Thus Luke's purpose may not be to emphasize the actions of the apostles as such, but rather to highlight the expansion of the church (*The Acts of the Early Church*) or, possibly, to demonstrate the activity of the Holy Spirit (*The Acts of the Holy Spirit*). For our purposes, we will simply use the shortened title *Acts*.

Acts 1:8 serves as a good outline for the entire book; at least, from the viewpoint of the geographical spread of the gospel. At this time, simply note that the gospel is preached first in Jerusalem, then is carried throughout Judea and Samaria, and then into the Roman Empire. The story ends with the Paul preaching the gospel in Rome under house arrest awaiting trial before Nero.

After the first two lessons, which concentrate on the prefaces to Luke and Acts, each study lesson is divided into three parts. Under *Background*, basic information related to the political, cultural, religious, or geographical context will be provided. Under *Text*, questions related to the text of the study will be explored and questions having broader value are considered under *Significance*.

Commentaries can provide a useful service in a study of Acts (primarily in providing background information), but, as always, commentaries must be used cautiously. Theological beliefs of any commentator (or teacher!) should never become our beliefs unless supporting Scriptural arguments can be made. We must never delegate our responsibility to interpret Scripture to someone else. So, it is a good practice to only consult a commentary after first studying the text yourself. Commentaries, which are particularly useful, are those by J.W. McGarvey, Johnnie Stringer, F.F. Bruce, I. Howard Marshall, John Stott, David Williams, Ben Witherington, Craig Keener, and Eckhard Schnabel. F.F. Bruce actually wrote three commentaries on Acts. His first was on the Greek text, then he wrote one on the English text for the New International Commentary series, and then, late in life, he wrote a basic commentary called *Acts: A Bible Study Commentary* (which is readily available on Kindle).

The *English Standard Version* (ESV; Text Edition 2016*) will be used as the basis of this study. On occasion, comparison will be made to the following translations: (listed by date of latest published revision)

KJV	<i>King James Version (1769)</i>	NASU	<i>New American Standard Bible (1995)</i>
ASV	<i>American Standard Version (1901)</i>	NAB	<i>New American Bible (2010)</i>
NJB	<i>New Jerusalem Bible (1985)</i>	CEB	<i>Common English Bible (2010)</i>
NRSV	<i>New Revised Standard Ver. (1989)</i>	NIV	<i>New International Version (2011)</i>
REB	<i>Revised English Bible (1989)</i>	CSB	<i>Christian Standard Bible (2017)</i>
		NET	<i>New English Translation (2019)</i>

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Course Outline

Lesson	Topic
1	The Prefaces to Luke and Acts (I)
2	The Prefaces to Luke and Acts (II)
3	Acts 1:3-26
4	Acts 2 (I)
5	Acts 2 (II)
6	The Holy Spirit in the Gospels and Acts 1 – 2
7	Acts 3 – 4:31 (I)
8	Acts 3 – 4:31 (II)
9	Acts 4:32 – 5
10	Acts 6 – 7 (I)
11	Acts 6 – 7 (II)
12	Acts 8
13	Acts 9:1-31
14	Acts 9:32 – 11:18 (I)
15	Acts 9:32 – 11:18 (II)
16	Acts 11:19 – 12
17	The Roman World
18	Acts 13 – 14 (I)
19	Acts 13 – 14 (II)
20	Acts 15:1-35
21	Acts 15:36 – 18:22 (I)
22	Acts 15:36 – 18:22 (II)
23	Acts 15:36 – 18:22 (III)
24	Chronology of Acts
25	Acts 18:23 – 21:14 (I)
26	Acts 18:23 – 21:14 (II)
27	Acts 18:23 – 21:14 (III)
28	Paul and His Early Letters
29	Acts 21:15 – 23 (I)
30	Acts 21:15 – 23 (II)
31	Acts 24 – 26 (I)
32	Acts 24 – 26 (II)
33	Acts 27 – 28:16
34	Acts 28:16-31 / Paul's Later Ministry and Death
35	Paul's Prison Letters: The Place of Writing
36	The Holy Spirit in Acts
37	Review

Overview

Acts 1

Prologue

inclusio
↓

1:3 *"He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and **speaking about the kingdom of God.**"*

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

IN JERUSALEM

Jesus commissions the Apostles; Holy Spirit Promised
Jesus Ascends to Heaven
The Upper Room Prayer Meeting

1:14 *"All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers."*

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

- 2** Coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost
Peter's First Sermon
3000 Baptized

2:42-47 *"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ... ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."*

- 3** Lame Man Healed by Peter and John
Peter's Second Sermon

- 4** Peter and John Arrested, Threatened and Released
Disciples Pray for Boldness

4:32 *"Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common."*

- 5** Sharing in All Things; Example of Barnabas
Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Holy Spirit

5:14 *"And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ..."*

Apostles Perform Miracles
Apostles Arrested, Released by Angel, Rearrested, Beaten and Released; Speech by Gamaliel

- 6** Seven Men Chosen to Serve

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

- Stephen Preaches in Synagogue
- Stephen Arrested and Falsely Charged
- 7** Stephen's Defense
- Stephen is Stoned
- 8** Church is Persecuted

8:4 *"Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word."*

IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA

Philip Preaches in Samaria

8:12 *"But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about **the kingdom of God** and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."*

- Simon the Sorcerer Converted
- Peter and John Bestows Holy Spirit Upon the Samaritans
- Simon Sins and Urged to Repent

8:25 *"Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans."*

- Philip Preaches to the Ethiopian Eunuch; Eunuch Baptized
- Philip goes to Caesarea
- 9** Saul Converted
- Saul Preaches in Synagogues of Damascus; Escapes Death; Saul's First Trip to Jerusalem; Brought to Apostles by Barnabas
- Saul's Attempted Assassination; Escape to Tarsus.

9:31 *"So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied."*

- Peter heals Aeneas in Lydda
- Peter raises Dorcas in Joppa
- 10** Cornelius Converted
- Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles
- 11** Peter Defends Himself in Jerusalem
- Barnabas and Saul Teach in Antioch (in Syria)
- Prophecy of Famine; Relief Sent to Jerusalem By Barnabas and Saul
- 12** Herod Kills James the brother of John
- Herod Imprisons Peter; Released by Angel
- Herod Stricken Dead

12:24 *"But the word of God grew and multiplied."*

Barnabas and Saul Return to Antioch

TO THE END OF THE EARTH

13 Paul's (and Barnabas') First Missionary Journey

Cyprus: Bar-Jesus (Elymas), Sergius Paulus
Perga in Pamphylia: John Returns to Jerusalem
Antioch in Pisidia

13:49 *"And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region."*

14 Iconium
Lystra
Derbe

14:22 *"... strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter **the kingdom of God.**"*

Return to Antioch (Syria)

15 Conflict in Antioch over circumcision of the Gentiles
Meeting in Jerusalem of the Apostles and Elders
Letter delivered to Antioch by Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and Judas

Paul and Barnabas decide to revisit the brethren
Disagreement over the taking of John Mark
Barnabas and John Mark go to Cyprus

16 Paul's (and Silas') Second Missionary Journey

Syria and Cilicia
Derbe
Lystra: Timothy circumcised and joins Paul

16:5 *"So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily."*

Forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia
Mysia
Forbidden to go into Bithynia
Troas: Paul's vision of man from Macedonia calling for help
Samothrace
Neapolis
Philippi: Lydia converted
Paul and Silas imprisoned after expelling a spirit from a slave girl
Earthquake
Philippian Jailer Converted

↑
"we"
↓

17 Amphipolis
Apollonia
Thessalonians: Preaching in the Synagogue
Assault on Jason's House
Berea
Athens: Paul's Speech to the Court of the Areopagus
Dionysius the Areopagite and Damarius converted

- 18 Corinth: Aquila and Priscilla; Justus; Crispus
Trial before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia
Ephesus: Aquila and Priscilla stay in Ephesus
Caesarea
Jerusalem
Antioch

Paul's Third Missionary Journey

- Galatia and Phrygia
[Apollos preaches at Ephesus; Instructed by Aquila and Priscilla; Departs for Corinth]
19 Ephesus: Twelve Disciples of John Converted

19:8 *"And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about **the kingdom of God.**"*

Preaching in the Synagogue, then the School of Tyrannus

19:9-10 *"... reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."*

Burning of magic books

19:20 *"So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed."*

- 20 Sending of Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia
Riot invoked by silversmiths
Macedonia
Greece
Macedonia (Philippi)
Troas: Assembling on first day of the week
Preaching until midnight; Eutychus
Assos
Mitylene
Chios
Samos
Troyllium
Miletus: Farewell address to Ephesian elders

"we"

20:25 *"And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming **the kingdom** will see my face again."*

- 21 Cos
Rhodes
Patara
Tyre: Disciples urge Paul not to go to Jerusalem
Ptolemais: Greeted the brothers
Caesarea: Stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist
Agabus from Judea prophesies of Paul's capture
Jerusalem

		"we"
	Paul at Jerusalem	↓
	Meeting with James and the Elders; Taking of a vow Temple Riot; Rescued by Roman commander, Claudius Lysias	
22	Paul's Defense to the Jews	
23	Paul's Speech to the Sanhedrin	
	Plot against Paul	
	Paul sent to Felix at Caesarea	
24	Paul at Caesarea	
	Trial before Felix; Felix leaves Paul in prison	
25	Trial before Festus; Paul's appeals to Caesar	
26	Examination before King Agrippa	
27	Paul's Voyage to Rome	↑
	Centurion: Julius of Augustan Cohort	
	Accompanied by Aristarchus	
	Shipwrecked on Malta	
28	Paul bitten by a viper; Healing of Publius' father and others	
	Sailed to Syracuse	
	Rhegium	"we"
	Puteoli: Stayed with the brethren seven days	
	Arrival at Rome: Captain of the Guard permits Paul to dwell alone with personal guard	↓
	Paul at Rome	
	Paul recounts his trials to the Roman Jews	
	Paul testifies of the Kingdom of God and persuades many	
	Paul preaches for two years under house arrest	

↑
inclusio

28:23 *"When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, **testifying to the kingdom of God** and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets."*

28:31 *"(Paul) **proclaiming the kingdom of God** and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance."*

Notes: Two groups of verses are highlighted in the Overview.

- 1) The opening and closing of the book form an *inclusio* (bookends) involving the 'preaching of the kingdom of God.' Those verses along with others which speak of the kingdom of God are included and shown in **bold boxes**.
- 2) C.H. Turner ["Chronology of the New Testament," *Hastings Bible Dictionary*, Vol. I, 421-23] divided the narrative of Acts into six panels with each panel concluding with a progress summary (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31). But other verses also appear to be summary statements of the growth of Christianity. Following Schnabel ["Acts"], these growth summaries are shown in the light boxes. However, Schnabel included two additional passages (19:11-12; 28:7-10) that are not included since they do not appear to me to fit the pattern.

The three "we" sections in the narrative (where Luke accompanies Paul) are indicated.

Lesson 1

Prefaces to Luke and Acts (I)

Acts is the second book written to Theophilus. The first book was the *Gospel of Luke*. Compare both prefaces (prologues):

Luke 1:1-4 *Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.*

Acts 1:1-3 *In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.*

These prefaces raise many important issues that impact our understanding of these books. This lesson focuses on those issues involving the author, the recipient, and the relationship between Luke and Acts.

Author The author does not identify himself. Like the other Gospels, these books are anonymous.* Of course, Theophilus would have known who the author was (do you agree?). The consistent tradition passed down in the early centuries of the church was that Luke was the author.

[*Note: The view that the Gospels are anonymous is commonly held, but may not be correct. Every NT manuscript we have of the Gospels are titled *The Gospel according to Matthew* (or Mark, Luke, John) or, more simply, *According to Matthew*, etc. It is simply assumed that the original manuscripts would not have been titled, but several scholars have noted that untitled ancient manuscripts are very uncommon. Consequently, it may be that from the time the Gospels were written their authors were identified in the title.]

1. What do we learn about Luke and his writings from the early Christian traditions? (see the *Early Christian Writings on the Authorship of Luke-Acts* at the end of this lesson).

Luke and the NT

The Gospel of Luke and Acts combined make up over 25% of the NT, making Luke the most prolific author in the NT Canon. But his contribution may be even more significant. Many believe that Luke is also the author of Hebrews [a full defense of this view is the recent book by David L. Allen (*Lukan Authorship of Hebrews*, B&H Academic, 2010), and others also think it is possible that Luke was Paul's amanuensis for one or more of the Pastoral epistles. What convinces many is that the writing style and vocabulary of Luke-Acts is reflected in Hebrews and the Pastorals. If so, Luke has his fingerprints on a full third of the NT. It would be hard to overestimate Luke's service in the beginning of Christianity.

2. Is it *reasonable* to think that the tradition affirming Luke as the author is true?

But, is it *necessarily* true?

3. Note each of the following references to Luke in Paul's writings:

Colossians 4:11-14 (Is Luke a Jew or a Gentile? Compare KJV with recent translations. Both renderings are grammatically possible [Murray Harris].)

Philemon 24

2 Timothy 4:11

Recipient The "recipient" of both books is named *Theophilus*. Nothing else is known about Theophilus besides what is stated in the prefaces of Luke and Acts.

4. The name Theophilus means 'a friend of God' or 'dear to God'. There are three possibilities:
- 1) Theophilus is the real name of the recipient,
 - 2) Theophilus is not the name of the recipient, but is a description of the recipient's character, or
 - 3) Theophilus is a symbolical name referring to any potential reader and, thus, not to any one person in particular.

Any way of judging which possibility is correct?

5. What title is given to Theophilus in the first book?

What could this title possibly signify? (compare its usage in Acts 23:26; 24:2; 26:25)

6. Is Theophilus a Christian? Other possibilities?

7. To say that Theophilus is the recipient is somewhat of a misnomer. It was often the case that the individual addressed in an ancient historical work was the patron who sponsored the work. Even if not, the intended recipients for a sophisticated work like Luke-Acts would be a much larger audience with Theophilus, perhaps, serving as a representative.

Relationship Between Luke and Acts

8. Two works by the same author can be related in different ways. Which of the following relationships seem right for Luke and Acts?
- 1) The two books are independent of each other in much the same way as 1 and 2 Timothy? (which also were written by the same author to the same recipient).
 - a. If so, there may have been a significant time gap between the writing of the books. Does this seem to be the case with Luke and Acts?
 - b. And, could the books of Luke and Acts have different purposes?
 - 2) The two books form a continuous narrative in much the same way as 1 and 2 Samuel.
 - a. If so, why are there two books instead of just one? [1 and 2 Samuel was one book in the Hebrew Bible; it was divided into two books in the Septuagint (LXX). Why?]
 - b. Would this imply that the books were written essentially at the same time?

- c. Further, would this suggest that a single purpose perhaps motivated the writing of both books?

Note: The books of the Pentateuch along with Joshua and Judges also form a continuous narrative. Since these books were originally on individual scrolls that may not have been titled, there needed to be some way to indicate that the books were intended to be in sequence. For example, compare the last verses of Genesis with the first verses of Exodus (or, the last of Deuteronomy with the first of Joshua). What did the author do to help the reader know that the books were sequential? Now what is noticeable when comparing the last 4 verses of Luke with the first 11 verses of Acts?

- 3) Acts is a *sequel* to Luke – not a continuous narrative, but common themes, common characters, etc. What might this imply about the purpose and time of writing for these books?

Early Christian Writings on the Authorship of Luke-Acts

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* (c. 180)

"Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him." [3.1.1]

"...Luke was inseparable from Paul...As Luke was present at all these occurrences, he carefully noted them down in writing, so that he cannot be convicted of falsehood or boastfulness...That he was not merely a follower, but also a fellow labourer of the apostles, but especially of Paul... Luke, who always preached in company with Paul, and is called by him 'the beloved', and with him performed the work of an evangelist, and was entrusted to hand down to us a Gospel..." [3.14.1]

Anti-Marcionite Prologue (late 2nd Century)

"Luke was an Antiochene of Syria, a physician by profession. He was a disciple of the apostles and later accompanied Paul until the latter's martyrdom. He served the Lord without distraction, having neither wife nor children, and at the age of eighty-four he fell asleep in Boeotia, full of the Holy Spirit." [Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, p.8]

Muratorian Canon (Rome(?); c. 200): "The Muratorian fragment is a Latin list of New Testament books drawn up in Rome towards the end of the second century, a corrupt seventh- or eighth-century manuscript of which was discovered and published by Cardinal L.A. Muratori in 1740." [Bruce, *Paul*, p.449]

"In the third place (we have) the book of the gospel according to Luke. It was composed by Luke the physician after the ascension of Christ. Paul took Luke along with him as his legal expert, so to speak; he wrote in his own name but in accordance with [Paul's] opinion. He himself never saw the Lord in the flesh; therefore, as well as he could ascertain (the facts), he began to tell his story from the nativity of John... The Acts of all the apostles have been written in one book: Luke, addressing 'the most excellent Theophilus,' brings together one by one the things which took place in his presence, as is made evident by the omission of the passion of Peter and also of Paul's departure from the city for Spain." [Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, p.1]

Clement of Alexandria (c. 200)

"...as also Luke in the Acts of the Apostles records that Paul said, 'Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious...' [Strom. 5:12; Foakes-Jackson, *Beginnings*, I.2, p.221]

"...Luke also is recognized to have described with his pen the Acts of the Apostles and to have translated Paul's letter to the Hebrews." [Adumbr. in 1 Petr.; Foakes-Jackson, *Beginnings*, I.2, p.223]

Tertullian, *Against Marcion* (c. 210)

"Of the apostles, therefore, John and Matthew first instil faith into us; whilst of apostolic men, Luke and Mark renew it afterwards." [4. 2]

"For even Luke's form of the Gospel men usually ascribe to Paul. And it may well seem that the works which disciples publish belong to their masters." [4.5]

Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (c. 325)

(Quoting Origen, died 253) "And the third by Luke, the Gospel commended by Paul, and composed for Gentile converts." [6.25.6]

"But Luke, who was of Antiochian parentage and a physician by profession, and who was especially intimate with Paul and well acquainted with the rest of the apostles, has left us, in two inspired books, proofs of that spiritual healing art which he learned from them. One of these books is the Gospel, which he testifies that he wrote as those who were from the beginning eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered unto him, all of whom, as he says, he followed accurately from the first. The other book is the Acts of the Apostles which he composed not from the account of others, but from what he had seen himself. And they say that Paul meant to refer to Luke's Gospel wherever, as if speaking of some gospel of his own, he used the words, 'according to my Gospel.'" [3.4.7-8]

Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 7 (c. 395)

"Luke, a doctor of Antioch, was, as his writings show, not ignorant of the Greek language. The follower of the apostle Paul, and his companion in all his journeying, he wrote the gospel, of which the same Paul says, 'We have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the Gospel through all the churches' and to the Colossians, 'Luke, the beloved doctor, greets you', and to Timothy, 'Only Luke is with me'. He published also another excellent volume which is entitled 'Apostolic Acts'; its story extends as far as the two-year period of Paul's residence in Rome, that is, as far as the fourth year of Nero. From this we learn that the book was composed in that city. We therefore consider that 'The travels of Paul and Thecla', and the whole tale about the baptized lion, belong among the apocryphal writings ... Some suppose that whenever Paul in his epistles says, 'according to my Gospel' he is referring to Luke's book, and that Luke had learned the Gospel not only from the apostle Paul, who had not been with the Lord in the flesh, but also from the other apostles. This he also himself declares, saying at the beginning of his book, 'As they who from the beginning themselves saw and were ministers of the word handed down to us.' The gospel therefore he wrote as he had heard; but the Acts of the Apostles he composed as he had himself seen. He is buried at Constantinople, to which city his bones, with the remains of the apostle Andrew, were translated in the twentieth year of Constantius." [Barrett, C. K., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, p. 32]

All quotations are from the following (unless noted otherwise):

Robertson, Alexander and James Donaldson, ed. *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926.

Schaff, Philip and Henry Wace, ed. *Select Library of the Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers*. Eerdmans, 1952.

Lesson 2

The Prefaces to Luke and Acts (II)

In addition to identifying the recipient, the prefaces (or prologues) to Luke and Acts give additional information that is useful for our understanding of this two-volume work. It is universally agreed that the preface to the Gospel of Luke is 1:1-4 (which is one sentence in the original), but the end of the preface to Acts is debated with arguments made for v.2 (v.1-2 form one sentence in the original), v.3, v.5, v.11, v.14, or v.26 as the ending verse. Some make a distinction between the preface and the introduction (e.g. Keener believes the preface is v.1 or v.1-2, but the introduction ends at v.11). For our purposes, 1:1-3 will be treated as the preface.

Luke 1:1-4 *Inasmuch as many have undertaken^a to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished^b among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers^c of the word have delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past^d, to write an orderly account^e for you, most excellent^f Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty^g concerning the things you have been taught.*

Acts 1:1-3 *In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up^h, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ He presented himself alive to them after his sufferingⁱ by many proofs^j, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.*

- Notes
- a ASV "taken in hand"; NLT "set out to write"
 - b also NASU; KJV "which are most surely believed"; ASV, NJB, NRSV, NAB, NIV, CSB sim., NET "fulfilled"
 - c also KJV, ASV; NRSV, NASU, NIV, CSB, NET "servants"
 - d KJV "having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first"; ASV "having traced the course of all things from the first"; CSB "carefully investigated everything from the very first" (sim. NRSV, NASU, NIV); NET "from the beginning"
 - e also NRSV, NIV, NET; KJV, ASV "in order"; NASU "in consecutive order"; CSB "in an orderly sequence"
 - f CSB "honorable"
 - g NRSV "that you may know the truth"; NASU "exact truth"
 - h NASU, NET adds "to heaven"
 - i KJV, ASV "passion"
 - j also ASV; KJV "infallible proofs"; NRSV, NIV, CSB, NET "convincing proofs"

1. What was Luke's stated purpose in composing the Gospel of Luke for Theophilus?

Does this also serve as Luke's purpose in writing Acts? (Answer may depend on how one views the relationship between Luke and Acts (see Lesson 1, Question 8).

2. Are the sources oral, written, or, perhaps, both?

What/Who are the sources that Luke uses to compose his work?

Does Luke say or imply anything about the accuracy of his sources?

Is it possible that one or more of the other Gospels are part of the "many"?

If Luke's sources are accurate, why would Luke need to write again on these matters?

3. On what two bases does Luke assure Theophilus that his "orderly account" will substantiate the "certainty" of the things in which Theophilus had received instruction?
 - 1)
 - 2)
4. What does Luke mean by the phrase "orderly account"? In what ways might an account be "orderly"? (Compare the other translations in the Notes above.)
5. According to Acts 1:1-2, what did the Gospel of Luke record?
6. What two fundamental proofs does Luke select to illustrate the many "proofs" Jesus used to present himself alive?
 - 1)
 - 2)
7. Since Acts is in some sense a continuation of Luke, would it be reasonable to expect some themes or characteristics prevalent in Luke to be also in Acts?
 - a. For example, Luke's Gospel has been noted as giving attention to the poor and their needs. The following chart includes all the references to "the poor" in the four Gospels (Luke's language is used in the quotations, unless noted otherwise).

Reference to the Poor	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1st Sermon at Nazareth: <i>"anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor"</i>			4:16-21	
Beatitude: Mt: <i>"Blessed are the poor"</i> Lk: <i>"... you who are poor"</i>	5:3		6:20	
Tell John: <i>"the poor have good news preached to them"</i>	11:5		7:22	
Feast: <i>"When you give a feast, invite the poor.."</i>			14:12-24	
Lazarus: <i>"the poor man ... covered with sores ... died ... now he is comforted"</i>			16:19-31	
Rich Ruler: <i>"Sell...distribute to the poor"</i>	19:21	10:21	18:22	
Zacchaeus: <i>"Half my goods I give to the poor"</i>			19:1-10	
Widow with Two Coins		12:42-43	21:2-3	
Woman (Mary) & Oil Flask: Mt: <i>"could have been sold ... and given to the poor"</i>	26:6-13	14:3-9		12:1-8
Judas: Jn: <i>"some thought ... that he should give something to the poor"</i>				13:29

It does seem that Luke directs more attention to the poor. Consequently, we are not surprised when Acts focuses the reader's attention on the needs of the poor. What teachings or incidents related to the poor do you recall in Acts?

In a similar vein, others have noted Luke's emphasis in his Gospel on the role of the Holy Spirit, women, Gentiles, prayer, etc. As we study Acts, note how these continue to receive emphasis in Acts.

- b. As another example, Luke is very fond of making parallels. The following sequence at the beginning of Luke and Acts illustrates this feature, but many other parallels between the two narratives have been suggested.

<i>Luke</i>		<i>Acts</i>	
3:21	Jesus prays before his baptism	1:14	Disciples pray before Spirit baptism
3:21-2	Spirit descends on Jesus	2:1-4	Spirit descends on disciples
4:14-21	Inaugural mission speech	2:14-39	Inaugural mission speech
4:40-41	Healing many, casting out demons	5:14-16	Healing many, casting out demons

Even by looking at this one sequence, what are possible reasons for Luke making these parallels?

The Date of Acts There are only two constraints with regard to how early Acts could have been written. It could not have been written earlier than (1) the writing of the Gospel of Luke, or (2) the end of Paul's first two-year stay in Rome recorded in Acts 28 (which ends around AD 62).

But the real question is how much after AD 62 was it written? And can one determine if it was written before or after the Destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70? No certainty can be had, but a most common opinion in mainstream scholarship is that Acts was written in the 80s. But the more one doubts the reliability of Luke the later the date – hence some skeptical scholars place the time of writing around AD 110 or so. If Luke wrote in the 80s or later, the biggest question to answer is then why didn't Luke tell of Paul's death (and, possibly, his later travels after his first imprisonment)? Paul's death is generally thought to be between AD 64 and 68. Even though we will never know for certain when Acts was written, it is still useful to ponder why Luke ended Acts where he did. To me, the simplest answer is the best: Luke ended it in AD 62 because that is when he wrote Acts. This answer is also finding support among some New Testament scholars, and others are acknowledging that it is at least possible.

The Genre of Acts

Readers usually can determine rather quickly the genre (or type) of writing they are reading. Each genre has its own characteristics and conventions and, by recognizing those, readers form expectations for what they are about to read. This is as much true of ancient writings as it is of modern ones. And like today, ancient authors had a wide variety of established genres available for use – biographies, novels, epics, travel narratives, histories, romances, etc. The boundaries between genres can be fuzzy with overlapping possible.

Readers approaching Luke and Acts for the first time would discern almost immediately from the prefaces to both books that they were reading historical works. Prefaces were the customary way to open historical works and Luke conforms by including the conventional elements – recipient name (dedication), acknowledgement of predecessors, focus upon eyewitness testimony, etc. Similarly, the prologue to Acts (his second volume) refers back to and summarizes the Gospel of Luke (the first volume). Continuing through Luke-Acts, the reader would notice that Luke gives actual dates, numbers for group sizes, length of time elapsed, etc. – the type of information gained only by participants.

While a few scholars do not have a high regard for the reliability of Luke and consequently would assign Luke and Acts to a genre like novels or romances, most acknowledge that at the very least Luke was claiming to write history. But there are various kinds of historiography, and, among the debates, is whether both Luke and Acts are of the same type and, whether, since they are two volumes of the same work, they have to be of the same type.

For example, if Luke was considered by itself apart from Acts, most would conclude that the Gospel of Luke is a biography like the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John. Ancient biographies generally concentrated upon one character – which works for the Gospel of Luke but not for Acts. If Acts, on the other hand, was considered by itself, most would conclude that it is a historical monograph, which, unlike a general history, limits itself to one theme – in the case of Acts the theme would be the expansion of the gospel.

Many scholars leave it there and just accept the fact that Luke and Acts are different genres even though they both form a single work. A few scholars, though, think that it is more reasonable that a multi-volume work all fall within the same genre. So, they have to get creative either by (1) forcing Acts into the biography genre (perhaps by saying that Acts is not a single biography but a collection of biographies (e.g. Peter, Stephen, Philip, Paul), or that the main 'character' is not a person but the church), or (2) somehow force Luke into the historical monograph genre.

But there is another consideration. To understand that Luke was writing history is helpful, but it is also important to know why he was writing history. A few scholars (e.g. Greg Sterling, who draws a parallel with Josephus' *The Jewish War*) have argued that the genre of Luke-Acts belong to subcategory called apologetic historiography. That is, Luke is making an apology (defense). But a defense of what, to whom? As Luke records, by the time Paul reached Rome, it could be said of Christianity "that everywhere it is spoken against" (Acts 28:22). Among the proposals that have been made: (1) defending Christianity to the Greek-Roman world, (2) defending Christianity as not subversive to Roman law, (3) defending Paul's mission to the Gentiles, or, perhaps, (4) just reinforcing the beliefs of Christian converts. In considerations like this, it is not necessary to choose one and reject all other options – there may be multiple purposes at work.

Summary: The discussion of ancient genres is a highly technical and complex endeavor, but it can be said with a high level of confidence that Luke's intent was to provide a reliable historical account of the origins of Christianity – first in the life of Jesus and then in the life of the early church.

Lesson 3

Acts 1:3-26

Background

1:8 – “to the end of the earth”. Many suggest that Rome is the intended reference since Luke’s narrative ends in Rome. Ellis argues that “In classical antiquity the inhabited earth was pictured as a disk surrounded by the ‘Outer Sea’ ... The ends of the earth ... referred ... to the most distant points on the rim of the disk, for example, the Arctic on the North, India on the East, Ethiopia on the South and Spain on the West.” In this view, Rome was at the Center of the earth and would never be envisioned as being an “end of the earth.”

1:12 - Jesus' ascension occurred at the "*mount called Olivet*" (or, the Mount of Olives) which "is a small range of four summits, the highest being 830 m (cb, 2,723 feet), which overlooks Jerusalem and the Temple Mount from the E across the Kidron Valley and the Pool of Siloam." [*New Bible Dictionary*, p.845]

1:12 - The Mount of Olives was located a "*Sabbath day's journey*" from Jerusalem. This distance, 2000 cubits (i.e. about 3/4 miles), was the maximum distance Jews would travel on the Sabbath. This restriction was based on their interpretation of Exodus 16:29 and Numbers 35:5.

1:26 - *Casting lots* was not uncommon in the Old Testament (Josh.18:6,10ff; Lev.16:7; 1 Sam.14:41; 1 Chr.24:5; Esth.3:7; Jon.1:7) with the belief that the Lord determined the outcome of the cast (Prov.16:33). "The precise method used is not known for certain, but it seems to have been the shaking of two stones together in a container, on each of which was written one name (cf. Lev.16:8), until one stone tumbled out." [Williams, p.34] It was a means of decision making also among Greeks and Romans.

Text

1. Acts is framed by the *inclusio* "speaking about the kingdom of God" (1:3) and "proclaiming the kingdom of God" (28: 31 – the last verse of Acts). Ancient writers used *inclusios* to mark off related text and to highlight something within the text. In this case, Luke’s *inclusio* suggests that entire book of Acts concerns the speaking/proclaiming of the kingdom of God. Luke had already emphasized the kingdom in his Gospel (Lk.4:43; 8:1, 10; 9:2, 11, 60; 10:9; 16:16).
2. Luke provides two accounts of the Lord's final instructions to the apostles and his ascension in Luke 24:44-53 and Acts 1:2-11 (which, by the way, is also framed by the *inclusio* "taken up" in v.2 and v.11). The repetition signals to the reader that the narrative of Acts is going to pick up where the narrative in Luke ended. Note that the expression "*while staying with them*" (v.6) could be translated "*while eating with them*" (NIV, NJB sim., CEB sim.)
 - a. List the similarities.

Luke 24

Acts 1

- b. Are there any differences between the two accounts?

Luke 24

Acts 1

2. In v.3, Jesus offered "*many proofs*" to show that he was "*alive*", i.e. resurrected from the dead. The word used for "*proofs*" was a technical term for the type of proofs that were irrefutable (Witherington, p. 108). What were some of these proofs? Note all that you find whether they are told to us by Luke or another New Testament writer.

Why would Theophilus need to know about these proofs?

3. In v.3, Jesus instructed the apostles concerning the kingdom of God after his resurrection. But, in v.6, the apostles asked Jesus, "*Lord, will (1) You (2) at this time (3) restore the kingdom to Israel?*" To which of the three components of that question did Jesus respond?

Was it a legitimate question to ask if Jesus was going to restore the kingdom to Israel?

4. Jesus tells the apostles to "*wait for the promise of the Father*" (v.4).
- Where are they to wait?
 - How long were they to wait?
 - What was the promise that they were to receive from the Father?
 - When had they "heard" about this from Jesus previously?
 - What is the 'picture' being conveyed by the word "*baptized*" when Jesus said that the apostles would be "*baptized with the Holy Spirit*"? (v.5)
 - Are there connections between the passing of the Spirit between Moses and Joshua (Dt.34:9) or between Elijah and Elisha (2 Kgs.2:9-15) with this occasion?
5. The primary task of the apostles was to be "*witnesses*" (v. 8).
- Where were they to witness?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - What were they witnesses of? (cf. vs. 3, 22)
6. The apostles see Jesus ascend to heaven in a cloud and are addressed by "*two men ... in white robes*" (v.10).
- Who are these men? (comp. Lk.24:1-6 with Jn.20:11-13)

- b. What truth do these men tell the apostles about Jesus' return?
- c. From where did Jesus ascend?

Does this conflict with Luke 24:50? (cf. Lk.19:29)

7. Luke lists the names of the apostles. Compare Luke's list in Acts to earlier lists given.

Acts 1:13	Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:13-16
Peter (and)	First, Simon called Peter (and)	Simon whom he gave the name Peter	Simon who he named Peter (and)
John (and)	Andrew his brother	James son of Zebedee (and)	Andrew his brother (and)
Janes (and)	James son of Zebedee (and)	John brother of James whom he named Boanerges (Sons of Thunder)	James (and)
Andrew	John his brother	Andrew (and)	John (and)
Philip (and)	Philip (and)	Philip (and)	Philip (and)
Thomas	Bartholomew	Bartholomew (and)	Bartholomew (and)
Bartholomew (and)	Thomas (and)	Matthew (and)	Matthew (and)
Matthew	Matthew the tax collector	Thomas (and)	Thomas (and)
James son of Alphaeus (and)	James son of Alphaeus (and)	James son of Alphaeus (and)	James son of Alphaeus (and)
Simon the Zealot (and)	Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus (and)	Simon called the Zealot (and)
Judas son of James	Simon the Zealot (and)	Simon the Zealot (and)	Judas son of James (and)
	Judas Iscariot who betrayed him	Judas Iscariot who betrayed him	Judas Iscariot who became a traitor

Why does Luke give a list of the apostles in both his Gospel and in Acts?

Does this help inform us about the relationship between Luke and Acts?

- 8. In v.15ff, Peter argues the necessity of replacing Judas.
 - a. What is the basis of his argument?
 - b. Do you think Peter came to this conclusion by simply reading these OT passages (Ps.69:25 and Ps.109:8), or did he have some prior understanding that may have aided his interpretation of these OT passages? (consider Mt.19:28; Lk.22:30)

- c. In v.18-19, Luke interjects a summary of Judas' fate. List the similarities and differences between this summary and the account given in Matthew 27:3-10. Are they irreconcilable?

Matthew 27:3-10

Acts 1:18-19

- d. What is the qualification Peter puts forth for Judas' successor?
9. Luke makes two clarifications in his narrative for Theophilus or any anticipated reader. In v.12, Luke points out that Mount Olivet is "*near Jerusalem*" and, in v.19, he translates the Aramaic word "*Akeldama*". What might this tell us about Theophilus or any anticipated reader?

Significance

10. What is the significance of the apostles receiving the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem and beginning their mission in that city instead of some other city?
11. How does Luke highlight the importance of the apostles? (Note also Lk.6:13.) Is it fair to say that Luke views the apostles as having a unique role and responsibility?
12. What is the significance of angels foretelling the birth of Jesus, his resurrection, and his future return?
13. Does Luke intend for us to see a connection between the forty days Jesus spent with his disciples and the forty days Jesus was tempted by Satan (Lk.4:1-14)?

Luke 24:44-53

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

46 and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,

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

48 You are witnesses of these things.

49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

50 And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them.

51 While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

52 And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,

53 and were continually in the temple blessing God.

Acts 1:3-12

He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me;

5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,

11 and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

Lesson 4

Acts 2 (I)

It is difficult to overestimate the significance of Acts 2 in the unfolding of God's scheme of redemption. This lesson will consider the events leading up to Peter's sermon (v.1-15) and the results of the sermon (v.41-47). Lesson 5 will study the sermon itself (v.16-40). Lesson 6 will look at the role of the Holy Spirit.

Background

2:1 - Pentecost (Gk "fiftieth") was the Greek name of the second of three major Jewish feasts observed in Jerusalem each year. In the OT, it was called *Feast of Harvest* (Ex.23:16), *Feast of Weeks* (Lev.23:15-16; Dt.16:9-12), or, the *Day of the Firstfruits* (Num.28:26; since on that day the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were presented). It was held the day after the seventh Sabbath following the wave offering of the barley sheath (which was during the Feast of Unleavened Bread) (Lev.23:15-16) or "seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain" (Dt.16:9). In New Testament times, the Jews (following the practice of the Sadducees) observed Pentecost on the day following the seventh weekly Sabbath (i.e. the fiftieth day) from the Passover feast. Hence, it occurred on a Sunday. Also referenced in Acts 20:16 and 1 Corinthians 16:8.

The other two major feasts were *Passover/Unleavened Bread* and *Booths* (Lev.23:34; Dt.16:13; also called *Tabernacles* or *Feast of Ingathering* (Ex.23:16)).

2:9-12 - On the map below, note the cities or countries from which the Jews had traveled to Jerusalem. At the least, this demonstrates how widely the Jews had scattered throughout the world by the first century.



Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts, 3rd Ed. (Thomas Nelson) 1996, p.348

2:10 - "A proselyte was a Gentile who undertook to keep the Jewish law in its entirety and was admitted into full fellowship with the people of Israel by a threefold rite: (1) circumcision (for male proselytes), (2) a purificatory self-baptism in the presence of witnesses, and (3) the offering of a sacrifice. Because of the first of these requirements, full proselytization was more common among women than men. Many men were content with that looser attachment to the Jewish religion usually indicated by the term 'God-fearers'." [Bruce, *Book of Acts*, p.64]

2:15 – Jews divided both the day and night into twelve equal "hours"; thus, an hour varied in length throughout the year. The new day began at 6:00 pm.

2:41 – The temple area had numerous pools since Jewish worshippers would immerse themselves prior to entering the temple. Keener notes that we know of 150 such pools, the two larger being the pools of Siloam and Bethesda. The population of Jerusalem has been estimated between 20,000 and 120,000 with 70,000-80,000 being the more commonly accepted today. But during the feasts, the population would swell anywhere between 200,000 and perhaps as high as 500,000.

Text

1. Verse 1 says that when Pentecost arrived, "*they were all together in one place*".
 - a. Three different suggestions have been offered as to who "*they*" refers: the apostles (cf. 1:26), the 120 disciples (cf. 1:15), or the apostles along with the "*the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers*" (cf. 1:14). Give arguments either for or against each of these suggestions.

1) "*they*" = Apostles [Knox, 82]

2) "*they*" = 120 Disciples

3) "*they*" = Apostles+Women+Mary+Brothers

Observations:

1. In Greek (like English), the antecedent of a pronoun is usually the last noun before the pronoun. But since this 'rule' is often broken, the grammar cannot be conclusive. Compare Luke 24:8-13: who are the "*them*" of v.13? The "*apostles*" (v.10) or "*the eleven and all the rest*" (v.9)?
 2. It is argued that "*they*" must be the apostles since they were the ones to whom Jesus gave the promise that they would "*receive power when the Holy Spirit (came) upon (them)*" (Acts 1:8). But, consider Luke 24:29-49: v.49 also records the promise of Jesus, but the "*you*" unto whom the promise is given includes "*the eleven and those who were with them*" plus the two disciples Jesus appeared to on the road to Emmaus (v.33).
 3. It is sometimes argued that "*they*" must be the apostles since it is only the apostles ("*Peter, standing with the eleven*" v.14) that preach on that occasion. First, it is only Peter that is explicitly said to speak, but even if the other eleven apostles also spoke, that does not imply only the apostles received the Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit are not the same for all recipients.
- b. The "place" of meeting is also uncertain: both the "*upper room*" (1:13) where the disciples lodged, and some area surrounding or within the temple (cf. Luke 24:53) have been suggested. It is called the "*house where they were sitting*" (v.2), which is consistent with it being the "upper room", but, given the large number of people who heard Peter speak, a public space like the temple court might be required. Of course, they may have started at a house and then transitioned to a public space.
2. Verses 2-4 describe the coming of the Holy Spirit. What two things were heard or saw at the coming of the Spirit and to what are they compared?

Physical Occurrence

Analogy

1)

2)

3. Those filled with the Spirit "*began to speak in other tongues*" (NRSV "*other languages*").
 - a. From the context can we determine whether these "*tongues*" (Gk *glossais*) were actual languages or just some sort of ecstatic utterances?

What were they saying? (cf. v.11)

- c. It is rather common for some to accept that real languages are involved in this account, but then believe that some ecstatic ('angelic') language is what Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Why? Is there any basis for this?
4. In verses 5-13, the sound associated with the coming of the Spirit attracted a gathering of Jews who were bewildered when they heard the tongue speaking.
 - a. Luke describes these Jews as "*devout men from every nation under heaven.*" Does "*every*" mean every?
 - b. They are also described as "*dwelling in Jerusalem*". Does Luke mean that these Jews were visiting Jerusalem, or that they lived in Jerusalem?

Note: Many (perhaps most) commentators note that the word translated "*dwelling*" indicates a permanent residence and thus think that these are Jews who lived elsewhere but moved to Jerusalem (possibly to retire). Others reply that it could be used also in the sense of an extended temporary residence. So, if Jews had travelled to Jerusalem for the Passover and stayed through Pentecost, their nearly two-month residence could be classified as "*dwelling in Jerusalem.*" Keener comments "Those who did come to Passover and made the the long and time-consuming trip only once during their lives may well have often stayed for Pentecost seven weeks later" [798]. Is there anything in the text that might suggest that these Jews in Acts 2 had also been present for Passover? Besides, the same Greek word is used in v.9 ("*residents*") describing their relationship to their native country; so these Jews are probably pilgrims attending the feast.

- c. What reactions did these men have to what they were witnessing? (v.12-13)
 - 1)
 - 2)
5. Peter's sermon is recorded in v.16-39. In v.41 we are told that "*those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*"
 - a. Are those who received the word, and those who were baptized, and those "*added that day*" all the same group of people? How are they described in v.44?
 - b. Added to whom?
 - c. And Luke is careful to note the Lord continue to add "*to their number day by day those who were being saved*".

6. Verses 41-47 comprise Luke's second "summary" statement of the disciples (the first being in 1:14).
- a. What picture(s) of the early disciples is Luke presenting?
 - b. E. Schnabel (*Acts*, p.175) sees five purposes of these summaries:
 - Historical – Luke reports what happened
 - Literary – Used by Luke to indicate passage of time
 - Theological – Indicates God's presence with the early disciples
 - Ecclesiological – Outlines essential characteristics of the community of disciples
 - Missiological – Records the continued growth and expansion of the church
7. What four things were characteristic of the devotion of those who received Peter's word? (v.42) Note that Luke joins the first two and the last two together with "and".
- 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - 4)
- a. "*apostles' teaching*": The apostles did what the Lord told them to do in the Great Commission (see Mt.28:20). But, the apostles' authority was derivative, i.e. it derived from the Lord. Thus, one might expect Luke to have said the "teaching of the Lord". Similarly, was Peter's "*word*" that was received. Later in Acts preeminent attention will be given to the "*word of the Lord/God*", so why might the apostles be highlighted in this passage?
 - b. "*fellowship*": Gk *koinonia* only translated "*fellowship*" in the passage by the ESV. Basic idea is of '*sharing*' or '*joint participation*' (1 Cor.1:9; 10:16; 2 Cor.6:14; 13:13, Gal.2:9; Eph.3:9; Phil.1:5; 2:1; 3:10; Phile.1:6; 1 Jn.1:3, 6; 3:7). Specifically refers to monetary support on occasion (Rom.15:26; 2 Cor.8:4; 9:13; Heb.13:16). Thus, the fellowship in this passage might be the communal spirit of sharing spoken of in v.44. Others have suggested that the next two items ("*breaking of bread*" and "*prayers*" are given as two examples of fellowship. Any thoughts?
 - c. "*breaking of bread*": both in v.42 and v.46 with the only difference that in v.46 the text literally reads "*the breaking of the bread*". Since the wording is in line with the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper ("*took bread ... broke it*") and similar wording is used in Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 10:16 (both in the context of the Lord's Supper), it is widely assumed that the reference here is also to the Lord's Supper. Of course, not all agree and think it is just referring to common meals. Brethren generally take v.42 to refer to the Lord's Supper and v.46 to common meals. Any justification for this?
8. The sharing of possessions of those in Jerusalem takes a prominent role in the early chapters of Acts. In the latter part of Acts, the church in Jerusalem will be become the recipient of other Christians' generosity. In that case, the need in Jerusalem was the result of famine. Are we told why the first Christians were in need here in Acts 2? Any possible reason(s) comes to mind?

This lesson focuses upon Peter’s recorded sermon in Acts 2:16-40, except that the teaching concerning the Holy Spirit will be studied in next week’s lesson.

Background

2:27 – “Hades” is a transliteration of the Greek word that refers to realm of the dead, and thus, by association, to death itself. It was the word used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew word *Sheol*.

2:30 – The location of David’s “tomb” was apparently still known. According to the OT, it was in the “City of David” (1 Kgs.2:10) and was shared with some of the kings in his lineage (2 Chr.32:33). Its location was also known in Nehemiah’s day (Neh.3:16).

Text

In verses 16-40, Peter preaches the first gospel sermon.

1. Luke first connects the current display of the Spirit with the OT prophecy. His citation of Joel’s prophecy (v.16-21) is rather close to the LXX (which in turn is close to Hebrew Masoretic text (MT)). Here are the differences found in Acts:

The Speeches in Acts

Depending on the criteria used, it has been estimated that the speeches in Acts comprise one-fourth to one-third of the text. Recorded speeches were typical of ancient historiography. Speeches include sermons such as we have in Acts 2 plus also those like Peter’s speech in Acts 1 to the 120 disciples about the necessity of replacing Judas.

The recorded speeches are at best summaries of the actual speeches. We get a sense of that when, at the end of Peter’s recorded sermon in Acts 2, Luke says, “*And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them...*”

Speeches could serve various narrative purposes, but Luke seems to use them to show the meaning of the events that have happened. Hence, it is in the speeches where the speakers interpret OT prophecies or to provide their theological understanding of God’s actions.

Hebrew/LXX	Luke in Acts
2:28 <i>“it shall come to pass afterward”</i> <i>“pour out my Spirit” (MT)</i> <i>“pour out of my Spirit” (LXX)</i> <i>“old men ... young men ...”</i>	2:17 <i>“in the last days it shall be”</i> <i>“pour out of my Spirit” (KJV, ASV sim.)</i> <i>“God declares”</i> <i>“young men ... old men ...”</i>
2:29 <i>“the male and female servants”</i> <i>“pour out my Spirit”</i>	2:18 <i>“my male servants and female servants”</i> <i>“pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy”</i>
2:30 <i>“and on the earth”</i>	2:19 <i>“and signs on the earth below”</i>

- a. Joel simply says that these things will occur “*afterward*”. Peter uses instead the expression “*last days*” (the Greek root word for ‘*last*’ (Gk *eschatos*) is where we get our word ‘*eschatology*’). The expression “*last days*” is not that common: only twice more in the NT – 2 Timothy 3:1 and James 5:3. Similar expressions occur in Hebrews 1:2 (lit. ‘*end of these days*’) and 2 Peter 3:3 (lit. ‘*last of the days*’). Other words that may refer to the same time frame are “*end of the ages*” (1 Cor.10:11; Heb.9:26), “*fulness of time*” (Gal.4:4; Eph.1:10), or “*last times*” (1 Pet.1:20). In the OT, the KJV used “*last days*” twice: Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1. ESV translates these as “*latter days*” as in several other OT prophetic texts (Dt.4:30; Jer.23:20; 30:24; Ez. 38:16; Dan.2:28; 10:14; Hos.3:5).

By using this term, Peter is connecting Joel’s prophecy to the other prophecies in the OT concerning the “*latter days*”, thus placing the events on Pentecost as being part of

the latter days.

- b. What two things does Joel say that God say that he will do?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - c. The Spirit had been given to individuals throughout the OT, so it seems that the universality of the pouring out of the Spirit ("*all flesh*", "*sons...daughters...young men...old men...male servants...female servants*") is what is unique. But, is Peter meaning that every single individual will receive the Spirit?
 - d. The showing of "*wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below*" (v.19-20) is interesting, but confusing. Is this just part of prophetic language hailing some great event, or does it correspond to real, visible signs and wonders? Many believe the expression "*the sun shall be turned to darkness*" was fulfilled on the day of Jesus' death (cf. Lk.23:44). Any thoughts?
 - e. The goal of this outpouring of God's Spirit is that "*everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (v.21). Who is the "*Lord*" in Joel's prophecy? But who does Peter say is Lord now? (cf. v.36)
2. Verses 22-24 record the core of Peter's message and can be summarized as follows:
- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| " <i>Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God</i> " | = Jesus' Life |
| " <i>You crucified, and killed</i> " (according to the plan of God) | = Jesus' Death |
| " <i>God raised him up</i> " | = Jesus' Resurrection |
- a. How was Jesus "*attested ... by God*"?
 - b. What is the meaning and significance that the Jews took Christ by "*hands of lawless men*" ("*hands of those outside the law*", NRSV)?
3. In verses 25-36, Peter makes three arguments for the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.
- 1) Prophecy: David had foretold of the resurrection of the Messiah (v.25-31; cf. Ps.16:8-11 (exact quote of LXX)) and of his ascension (v.34-35; Ps.110:1).
 - 2) Testimony: The apostles were witnesses of his resurrection (v.32).
 - 3) Experience: What the Jews were now seeing and hearing testified to the fact that Jesus had ascended and sent ("*poured out*") the Holy Spirit as God had promised (v.33).
- a. These arguments were conclusive to show that Jesus is both Lord and Christ (Messiah).
 1. Is there any difference in saying that Jesus is Christ and that Jesus is Lord? If so, what?
 2. Which of Peter's arguments specifically demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ and

which demonstrate He is Lord?

- b. Consider the two quotations from Psalms of David.
 1. Although one reading Psalm 16 may think that David is speaking of his son, why must he be speaking of the Messiah?
 2. Psalm 110:1 is the most frequently quoted or alluded Psalm in the NT (110:1 – Mt.22:44//Mk.12:36//Lk.20:42-43; Mk.14:62; 1 Cor.15:25; Eph.1:20; Col.3:1; Heb.1:3,13; 1 Pet.3:22). What is the appeal of this passage?
4. Many of the Jews who heard this message believed it and asked "*What shall we do?*" (v.37).
 - a. What were they told to do?
 - 1)
 - 2)

What was unique, and thus highly significant, about this baptism?
 - b. If they did these, what would they receive?
 - 1)
 - 2)
5. Some have noticed that the language of 1 Peter parallels in many respects the language of Acts 2 (e.g. Lee Martin MacDonald, *Acts*, p.33). After all, Peter is a common denominator.

	<u>Acts</u>	<u>1 Peter</u>
Jesus rejected by His Own	2:23	2:7
Jesus Exaltation to Right Hand	2:33	3:22
Promise of Holy Spirit	2:33	1:12; 4:14
Affirms Christ is Lord	2:36	3:15
The Glory that follows Suffering	2:36	3:15
Salvation and Baptism	2:38	3:21

Also, the word "*foreknowledge*" (Gk. *prognōsis*) is only found in Acts 2:23 and 1 Peter 1:2.

Lesson 6

The Holy Spirit in the Gospels and Acts 1-2

When the Jews on Pentecost heard Peter speak of the Holy Spirit, it is not as if they had no prior knowledge of the Holy Spirit. First, the Spirit was active in OT times and the OT writings often tell of his empowering the leaders of God's people. Second, the prophets (who were also empowered by the Spirit) prophesied of the future work of the Spirit. Third, both John the Baptist and Jesus foretold of the Spirit's work. This lesson will survey each of these three sources of knowledge concerning the Spirit, but especially the teaching of John and Jesus. Most importantly, this lesson notes how all these previous teachings fit with Acts 1-2.

The Holy Spirit in the OT

1. In all cases (or, at least, nearly so), the Spirit was given to leaders of God's people who were to perform some task (e.g. Judges, Kings, Prophets). It is particularly helpful to notice the language used to describe how the Spirit was given:

"upon" or "on"	Moses (Num.11:17), Balaam (Num.24:2), Jephthah (Jud.11:29), Azariah (2 Chr.15:1)
"in" or to "enter in"	Joshua (Num.27:18), Ezekiel (Ezek.2:2; 3:24)
"fills"	Bezalel (Ex.31:3), Micah (Mic.3:8)
"clothes"	Gideon (Jud.6:34), Amasai (1 Chr. 12:18), Zechariah (2 Chr.24:20)
"rushes upon"	Samson (Jud.14:6; 15:14; Saul (1 Sam.10:6, 10; 11:8), David (1 Sam.16:13)

Two observations:

- 1) In all cases, the language seems to be interchangeable. That is, being "*filled*" with Spirit is the same as having the Spirit "*upon*" you or "*in*" you. Not that the exact same empowerment was given, but simply that in each case the Spirit empowered the person for the task at hand.
- 2) Some individuals were empowered multiple times (e.g. Samson, Saul, David) suggesting that the empowerment was not permanent.

Prophetic Foretelling of the Spirit's Coming

2. Isaiah foretells of the Spirit coming upon the *Messiah* (Isa.11:2 ("*rest upon*"); 42:1 ("*put upon*"); 61:1 ("*upon*")).
3. Three prophets foretell of the Spirit coming upon *God's people*:
 - a. The Spirit will be "*poured out*" on them (Isa.32:14-16; 44:1-5; Eze.39:28-29; Joel 2:28-32).
 - b. The Spirit will be put "*within*" them (Eze.36:27)
 - c. Seems in some way to be associated with the New Covenant that he will make with his people (Jer.31:31-34; 32:37-40 (cf. Eze.11:19-20; 36:24-27) – when God writes the law in their hearts, puts a new spirit within them, gives them a new heart, etc.

Observation: Although there are just a few statements about the future coming of the Spirit, the passages seem to be consistent and speaking of essentially the same thing. Note how Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel each speak of the Spirit being "*poured out*" which, to Ezekiel, seems to be the same as placing the Spirit "*within*" God's people.

The Teaching of John the Baptist and Jesus

4. Compare the Gospel accounts that contrast John's baptism to Jesus' baptism.

Matthew 3:5-12

Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ "I baptize you with water for repentance,

but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

- a. To whom is John preaching when he says that they will later be "*baptized with the Holy Spirit*"?

Mark 1:5, 7-8

And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷ And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.

⁸ I have baptized you with water,

but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Luke 3:7-17

He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him,

"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ⁹ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?"

¹¹ And he answered them, ...

¹² Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"

... ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" ...

¹⁵ As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, ¹⁶ John answered them all, saying,

"I baptize you with water,

but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

- b. Do these passages explain what it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit?

In Matthew's and Luke's account, John says that he who is coming will baptize them "*with the Holy Spirit and fire*". What does John mean by the baptism of fire?

[Note the difference in the context in Matthew's and Luke's account as compared to Mark's and John's.]

5. Speaking of Jesus, John the Baptist said, "*for he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure*" (Jn.3:34).
- a. What is the meaning of this passage, especially the last phrase?
- b. When did Jesus receive the Holy Spirit? (Lk.3:22)
- c. How does Luke describe Jesus' relationship with the Holy Spirit? (Lk.4:1, 14, 16-21)
6. In two different sections of his Gospel, John refers to the future work of the Holy Spirit: John 7:37-39 and John 14 – 16.
- a. In John 7:37-39, to whom does John say the Spirit will be given and when?
- b. Note the following verses in John 14 – 16: 14:16-17, 25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7-15.

To whom is Jesus addressing his comments?

When will the Holy Spirit come?

What will the Holy Spirit do?

The Spirit in Acts 1 and 2

7. In Acts 2:17-21, Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32a in which God says "*I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.*" As noted above, three other OT passages mention God pouring out His Spirit: Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; Ezekiel 39:29. According to Peter, what does it mean that the Spirit is poured out?
8. In Luke 24, Acts 1 and 2 several terms are used to describe the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- 24:49 - "*sending the promise of my Father **upon you***", "***clothed** with power from on high*"
- 1:5 - "***baptized** with the Holy Spirit*"
- 1:8 - "*will receive power when the Holy Spirit has **come upon you***"
- 2:4 - "*they were all **filled** with the Holy Spirit*"
- 2:17 - "*I will **pour out** my Spirit on all flesh*"
- a. What impression is given by each of the above terms? "*clothed*", "*baptized*", "*has come upon*", "*filled*", "*pour out*"
- b. Is any one of the terms to be preferred over the others in describing the events of Acts 1 or 2? In other words, are they interchangeable?
9. Throughout Acts 1 and 2 (as well as Luke 24), emphasis is placed upon "*the promise of the Father*" (1:4).
- a. What is "the promise"? (cf. Lk.24:49; Eph.1:13)

Is there any difference in meaning in saying that 'God promised to send the Holy Spirit' and 'God sent his promised Holy Spirit'?

b. Notice the following line of thought:

1:4 The apostles were to "wait for the promise of the Father".

2:1-4 The Holy Spirit (= God's Promise) is given.

2:16-21 Peter quotes the prophet Joel who foretold that God would "pour out" his Spirit. Peter affirms that what is happening on that day is the fulfillment of God's promise.

2:33 Peter says that what his listeners were seeing and hearing was the result of the "promised Holy Spirit" (REB, CEB, NIV, CSB) being "poured out" by Jesus thus proving that Jesus had been exalted. [Note that in v.17 it is God who does the 'pouring' while in v.33 it is Jesus, cf. Jn.15:26.]

2:39 The promise is to all.

This line of thought suggests that the promise mentioned in 2:39 is the same promise discussed in these preceding passages. Consider the implications of this as you study the next question.

10. Consider Peter's charge in 2:38-39: "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.*"

a. The expression "*gift of the Holy Spirit*" can grammatically mean either:

1. A gift which the Holy Spirit gives, or
2. The Holy Spirit is the gift himself.

b. There are three assumptions that are often made in interpreting this passage:

- 1) The gift of the Spirit would be automatically given simultaneously with baptism.
- 2) The gift of the Spirit would be given to all baptized believers.
- 3) The gift of the Spirit will be given to all baptized believers of all time.

Brethren who make these assumptions identify the "*gift of the Holy Spirit*" as either something the Spirit gives (like 'salvation' or 'life') or as being the Holy Spirit himself and thus refers to the 'indwelling of the Holy Spirit'. [But neither of these views fit the context concerning "*the promise*" which involves the speaking in tongues.]

But are these assumptions *demanded* by the text?

- Carefully consider Mark 16:15-18: Do *all "those who believe"* cast out demons, speak with new tongues, take up serpents, drink poisons without harm, and lay hands on the sick? Clearly not, but the passage reads as if that is the case. So how are we to reconcile?
- It could be that we are to understand that although these spiritual gifts (casting out demons, etc.) are only given to some in the community of believers, they are for the benefit of all (which is what Paul explicitly says in 1 Cor.12:7, 27). Thus, it would be proper to say that the Spirit is given to all.
- This understanding is consistent with Joel's prophesy in that it also reads as if all their young men, old men, etc. would have dreams and visions. But most would acknowledge that would have been true of only some of them.
- So, a possibility is the "*gift of the Holy Spirit*" is the Spirit himself, but means that the Spirit empowers certain ones for the benefit of all – thus a 1st century gift.

c. It may be too early in Acts to make a decision as to what Luke means. Fortunately, Luke will be telling us a lot about the Holy Spirit which will help clarify his meaning.

Lesson 7

Acts 3 – 4:31 (I)

Luke gives us one example of the "many wonders and signs (that) were being done through the apostles" (2:43). Although this lesson will deal mainly with chapter 3, read both chapters to see the full context. The next lesson will give attention to chapter 4.

Background

3:1 – "the hour of prayer, the ninth hour": Devout Jews went to the temple to pray three times each day: (1) at daybreak, (2) at the ninth hour, and (3) at sunset.

3:2 – "At the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate": There were many gates that allowed entry to the temple complex (Court of the Gentiles) and then multiple gates leading into the temple courtyards (see plan of the temple complex at the end of this lesson). Since there is no other reference to this "Beautiful Gate" in the ancient literature, it is uncertain which gate is intended. Since the 5th century, the traditional assignment has been to the Sushan Gate, which being located along the eastern wall of the temple complex gave direct access to Solomon's portico where Peter preached (v.11). But most scholars believe the reference is to the famous Nicanor Gate, which, according to Josephus, was constructed of "Corinthian bronze which exceeded in value the other gates that were plated with silver and set in gold" [Finegan, p.130]. The Nicanor Gate either gave entry to the Court of the Women from the east, or was located between the Court of the Women and the Court of Israel (Josephus is not clear).

3:11 – "portico called Solomon's": "Within the temple area and evidently running around it on all four sides were great 'stoas' or porticoes which, Josephus says, were reconstructed by Herod from the foundations. For the most part these consisted of double rows of monolithic marble columns, twenty-five cubits high, with ceilings of cedar panels. On the south side the colonnade known as the Royal Portico was more elaborate still. On the east side the colonnade bore the name of Solomon" [Finegan, p.118]. It was also a place where Jesus taught his disciples (cf. John 10:23).

Text

1. We were told that the disciples attended "the temple together" (2:46) and this is now illustrated for us by Peter and John on this particular occasion. Was it acceptable for Jews who became Christians to still worship in the temple? Which raises the question: would these early Christian Jews have seen themselves as being separated from Judaism?
2. Note the features of the miracle performed by Peter and John that caused it to be viewed with "wonder and amazement"? (cf. 3:9; 4:14-16, 21b-22).
3. Note the similar sequence in chapter 2 and in this section:

	<u>Acts 2</u>	<u>Acts 3, 4</u>
A Miracle Occurs	Speaking in Tongues	Healing of Lame Man
Crowd's Reaction	"amazed and astonished"	"wonder and amazement"
Sermon	Peter Preaches	Peter Preaches
Conversion	3000 Souls	Total of 5000 men

- a. In either episode, was the miracle an end within itself (i.e., was speaking in tongues for the purpose of people understanding what was said, or was the lame man healed only to alleviate his suffering?), or were the miracles performed for another end? [Consider Mk.16:20; Heb.2:3-4.]
- b. In both Acts 2 and 3, how did Peter explain the occurrence they were witnessing?
4. Two other interesting aspects of this miracle.
 - a. In describing why the miracle occurred, Peter ascribes it to faith in the name of Jesus (3:16). Who had the faith? Peter and John or the lame man?
 - b. Upon being healed, the man immediately accompanied Peter and John into the temple to praise God. Leviticus 21:17-20 prohibits those with blemishes (such as lameness) from serving as priests. Many think this restriction would have been extended so that those blemished could not enter the temple (e.g. Jeremias, Jerusalem, p.117, Witherington, Dunn), but certainty is not possible (Keener).
4. Identify the major points of Peter's sermon (3:12-26).
5. Compare this sermon with the one Peter spoke on Pentecost (Acts 2). Note the similarities and differences.
6. Peter uses several titles in his sermon to describe Jesus.
 - a. List the title used in each of the following verses and give a short statement as to its significance.
 - v.13, 26 –
 - v.14 –
 - v.14 –
 - v. 15 –
 - v.18, 20 –
 - v.22 –
 - b. The title "*servant*" (3:13, 26; also 4:27, 30) was translated in the KJV as "*Son*" (in 3:13, 26, but not 4:27, 30). The Greek word *pais* can either refer to a "child" (boy or girl) or "servant", but is not the particular word used for a "son". The same word is used of David in 4:25. That Peter is making a connection between Jesus and the Servant spoken of in Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 is made clearer by the LXX rendering of Isaiah 52:13 which renders "*be very high*" with "*be glorified*".

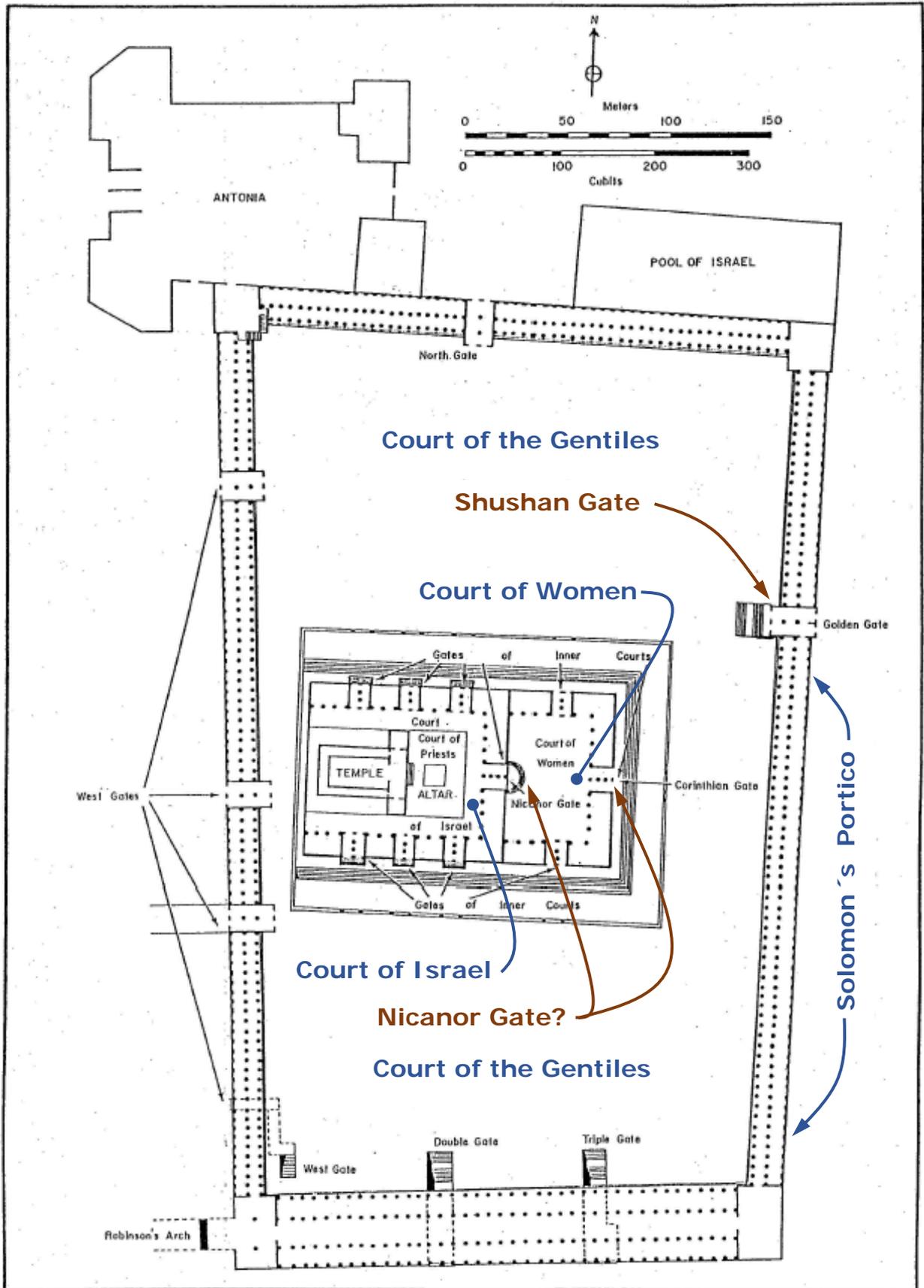
7. Peter anticipates two results if they repent (v.19).
- 1) First, that their sins would be "*blotted out*" (only other occurrence in NT outside Revelation is Col.2: 14). The image is the wiping clean a papyrus of ink.
 - 2) Second, Peter uses two time references, both unique to the NT: "*times of refreshing*" (v.20, so NJB, NRSV, CSB, CEB, but v.19 KJV, ASV, REB, NASU, NIV (!)) and "*the time for restoring of all things*" (v.21).
 - a. "*times of refreshing*" (or NJB "*comfort*", REB "*recovery*", CEB "*relief from the distress of this age*") – The word "*refreshing*" can also mean 'relief' or 'respite' (as from danger) (cf. LXX Ex.8:15). Appears to be indicating blessings that can be enjoyed now. Some would point to Acts 2:38 as parallel and identify "*times of refreshing*" with the "*gift of the Holy Spirit.*" Or, are these times of refreshing synonymous with the time Christ returns?
 - b. "*time for restoring of all things*" - Some take the expression "*restoring of all things*" as meaning the 'salvation of all people' (universalism) or the 'salvation of all Israel' (Witherington; compare Rom.11:26). Others take it to refer to the 'restoration of all creation' (Bock; comp. Rom.8:18-23; NRSV, REB, NAB "universal restoration"). Still others, taking 'restoration' in the sense of 'establishment' (or 'fulfilment') believe the reference is simply to the things foretold by the prophets (Bruce, Stringer; some doubt that the word restoration can take on this meaning (Barrett, Fitzmyer)). In any case, is this referring to the same thing as that which apostles asked Jesus in 1:6?

The Healings of Jesus, Peter and Paul

Luke's narratives often draw parallels between related events. It seems he intentionally reported similar healings performed by Jesus, Peter, and Paul.

- Jesus: L.3:31-32 Jesus prayed prior to receiving the Holy Spirit
Peter: A.1:14 Peter and apostles praying before Spirit poured out on them
Paul: A.9:11 Paul prayed prior to Ananias came and gave him the Spirit
- Jesus: L.5:17-26 Jesus heals a paralytic (lowered thru roof)
Peter: A.3:1-10 Peter heals a man lamed from birth
A.9:33 Peter heals a paralytic (Aeneas)
Paul: A.14:8-10 Paul heals a man crippled from birth
- Jesus: L.7:11-17 Jesus raises widow's son
L.8:41-56 Jesus raises Jairus' daughter
Peter: A.9:36-43 Peter raises widow (Dorcas)
Paul: A.20:9-12 Paul raised Eutychus to life
- Jesus: L.8:43-48 Woman with hemorrhage healed by touching Jesus' garment
Peter: A.5:15-16 People healed by Peter's passing shadow
Paul: A.19:11-12 People healed by handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched Paul

Although we can't be certain, it seems Luke wants us to understand that the same God who worked in Jesus is also at work in Peter and Paul, and by extension, to any of the new community of believers who were empowered by God's Spirit.



Finegan, Jack. The Archeology of the New Testament. Princeton University Press, 1969, p.117

Lesson 8

Acts 3 – 4:31 (II)

Acts 3 reports a healing performed by Peter and John at the temple gate which attracted a great deal of attention. Seizing the opportunity, Peter preaches to the multitude and many respond in belief (4:4). Acts 4 tells the reaction of the Jewish rulers and their first confrontation with the apostles.

Background

4:1 - "*the captain of the temple*": "The highest-ranking priest after the high priest was the captain of the Temple... His office belonged to the permanent complement of the Temple and had only one incumbent at a time. His privileged position is illustrated by the fact that he assisted the high priest in the solemn performance of his ceremonial duties, and therefore had a special place at his right hand." [Jeremias, p.160-161]

4:1 - "*the Sadducees*": "Theologically, [the Sadducees] differed from the Pharisees in their rejection of tradition and exclusive acceptance of the written law ... [T]he Sadducees ... refused the doctrines of bodily resurrection [cf. Mt.22:23; Mk.12:18; Lk.20:27, *cb*] and the allocation of rewards and punishments in a judgment after death ... together with the belief in angelic and demonic hierarchies. As against the predestinarianism of the Pharisees they insisted on man's freedom of choice to determine the course of affairs ... [T]he Sadducees appear to have been confined to a few wealthy families, especially the leading priestly families, while the Pharisees enjoyed the esteem of the people at large." [Bruce, *New Testament History*, p.74, 75]

4:5, 15 - The "*council*" (Gk. *synedrion* = Eng. *Sanhedrin*) was composed of "*rulers and elders and scribes*" and was "the senate and supreme court of the Jewish nation ... It consisted of the high priest, who was president by virtue of his office, and seventy other members. It first appears in history in the Hellenistic period (c.200 B.C.) as the body which regulated the internal affairs of the Jewish nation ... The Sanhedrin at this time included a majority of members from the Sadducean party, supporting the chief-priestly interests, and a powerful minority from the Pharisaic party, to whom most of the scribes or professional exponents of the Law belonged." [Bruce, *Acts*, 97] The Greek term *synedrion* was used by Greeks and Romans to refer to a wide variety of assemblies. So, during the Roman period (including the 1st century) Jewish literature at times used the word to refer to various assemblies, some local (e.g. note how Mt.10:17 and Mk.13:9 uses the word in the plural), but also to the council at Jerusalem headed by the high priest (14 times in Acts). Given its wide meaning, "*council*" may be a preferable translation than using the transliteration "*Sanhedrin*"; hence 'all' major English translations use "*council*."

4:6 - "*Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander and all who were of the high-priestly family*": Strictly speaking, Caiaphas was the high priest at this time (from AD 15-36), but Annas (Caiaphas' father-in-law) was a former high priest (AD 6-15) and still highly respected (compare Lk.3:2; Jn.18:13, 18, 24). Josephus describes Annas as the patriarch of Caiaphas' eighteen-year tenure as high priest [Schanbel, *Jesus*, 77]. Both Annas and Caiaphas were involved in the trial of Jesus. Nothing definite is known about John (unless this is Jonathan, son of Annas, who succeeded Caiaphas as high priest in AD 36) and Alexander.

4:11 - "*stone which the builders rejected*": Archeologists have found a 7th- or 8th-century abandoned rock quarry beneath the site believed to be where Jesus was crucified (Calvary, Golgotha) [Charlesworth, *Jesus Within Judaism*, p.124]. If the 1st century inhabitants of Jerusalem were aware of that it would have given special significance to Peter's allusion.

Text

1. The Jewish rulers are "*greatly annoyed*" (4:2) by the preaching of Peter and John.

- a. What was so annoying about their preaching?

But, like the ruler of the synagogue who was 'indignant' that Jesus healed a woman who was healed of an infirmity she had for 18 years (Lk.13:10-21), the rulers are more annoyed with Peter and John than caring about the suffering that has been alleviated! Luke records two other similar events (Lk 6:6-11 (//Mt.12:9-14//Mk.3:1-6) and 14:1-6) in the ministry of Jesus involving the Pharisees. Another parallel between Luke and Acts.

- b. The Jewish rulers arrest Peter and John. What was the rulers' intent? Did they have a specific charge in mind to bring against them? Did they ask the question "*By what power or by what name did you do this?*" to set the stage for some charge? (Did they already know the answer to their own question?) [Peter's answer will be considered below.]
- c. What prevented the Jewish rulers from punishing Peter and John?

2. Peter's defense to the council (4:8-12) is his fourth speech recorded in Acts.

- a. Luke says Peter was "*filled with the Holy Spirit*". This certainly appears to be that which Jesus promised on three different occasions: Matthew 10:19-20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11-12. Its instructive to note how each of the Gospel passages aid in understanding what it meant for Peter to be "*filled with the Holy Spirit*".
- b. What are the common elements in Peter's speeches on Pentecost, in the temple, and now before the council?

3. Notice the centrality of the "*name of Jesus*" in this structural outline of 4:10-12:

"By the name of Jesus

Christ

of Nazareth,

whom you crucified,

whom God raised from the dead,

- by him this man is standing before you well.

This Jesus is the stone

that was rejected by you

the builders,

which has become the chief cornerstone.

And

there is salvation in no one else,

for there is no other name

under heaven

given among men

by which we must be saved"

- a. What two things were (are) accomplished by the name of Jesus?

1)

2)

- b. Why were healing miracles so appropriate, and hence, so often done by Jesus and the apostles as compared to other possible displays of power?

4. In v.11, Peter quotes Psalms 118:22: "*the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*" But, Peter makes it explicit that the "*builders*" were the Jewish leaders (or, perhaps, the Jewish people). This is in line with Jesus' use of the passage following his Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Mt.21:42//Mk.11:10-10//Lk.20:17).

The Hebrew expression, like the Greek exoressuib used both in the LXX and Acts, literally means "*head of the corner*". Following Jeremias, many have taken this to be a capstone (at the top of a structure) or a keystone (at the head of an arch) [e.g., Longenecker, *Acts*]. Others think that Jeremias' evidence is too late to be relevant to the early 1st century [e.g., Muddle, "Rock," DNTT, p.389f]. All major modern translations translate it "*cornerstone*".

Two other related OT passages speak of a '*stone*': 1) Isaiah 28:16 quoted in Ephesians 2:20 and 1 Peter 2:6, and alluded to in 1 Corinthians 3:11. Uniformly translated "*cornerstone*" the Greek word literally means "the extreme corner". The context of Isaiah and the three NT passages suggest that this a cornerstone of the foundation (although Jeremias argues that this word also refers to a capstone). 2) Isaiah 8:14-15 alluded to in Romans 9:33, Luke 20:18, and 1 Peter 2:8 refers to a "*stone of stumbling and a rock of offence*" upon which those stumble upon will fall and be broken. Clearly, the metaphor is not of a capstone, but not necessarily of a cornerstone either. 1 Peter quotes/alludes to all three passages.

5. After being released by the Jewish authorities, Peter and John "*went to their friends*" (4:23).
- Who are these "*friends*" (Gk. "their own")? The apostles, a larger group of disciples, or both?
 - What was the reaction of the group when they heard the commands issued by the Jewish rulers?
 - What in particular did the group ask God for?
 - In receiving their request, what three things occurred?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)

Could this be considered a baptism of the Spirit? Why, or why not?

Significance

5. A key word throughout this incident is "*boldness*" (4:13, 29, 31). What constitutes boldness?
6. In describing the disciples' prayer to God, the text says that "*they lifted their voices together to God and said ...*" (4:24). Does this mean that everyone of them simultaneously, verbally prayed the same thing?

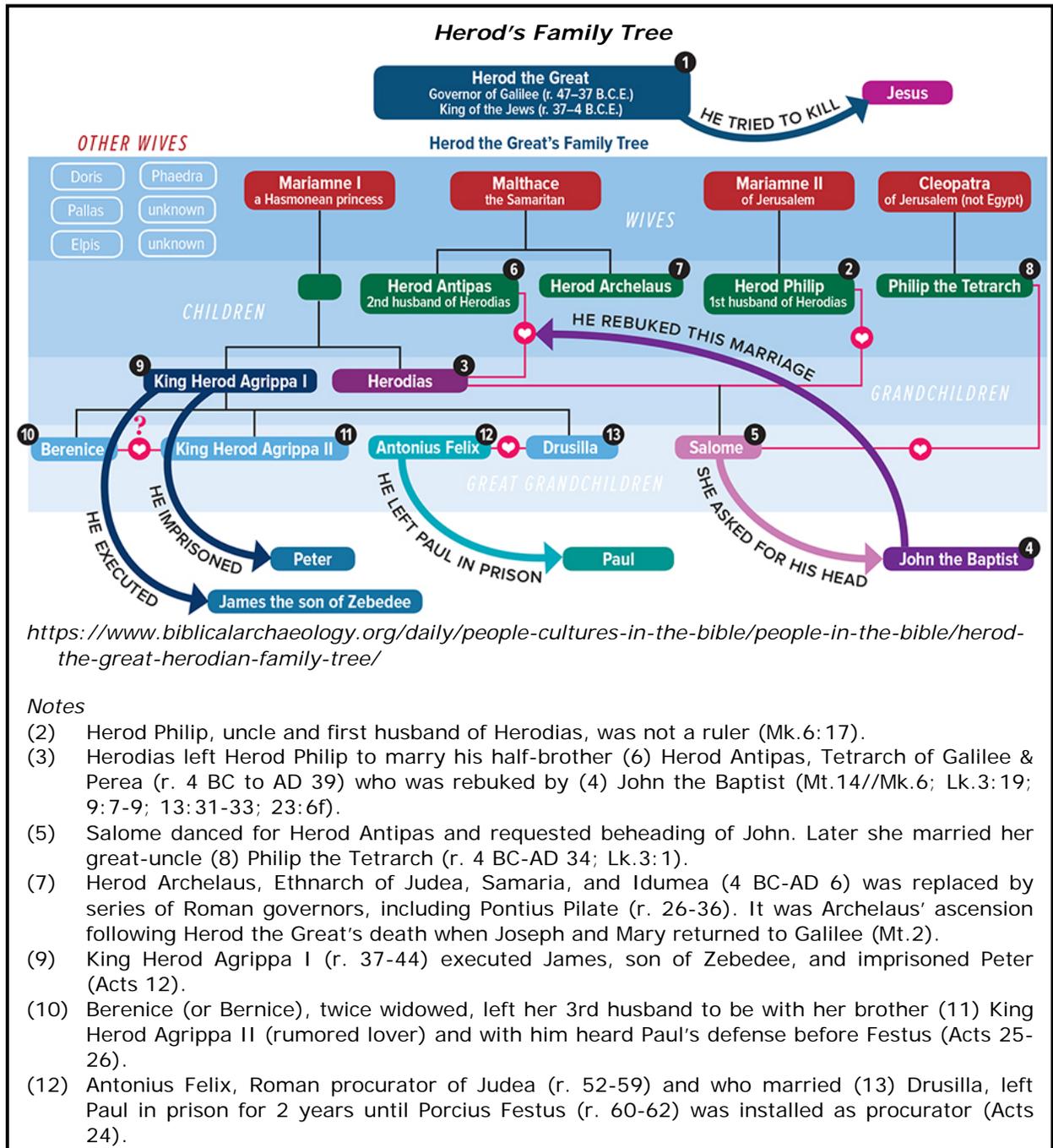
What lesson can be learned about public prayer?

7. The disciples understood that David in Psalm 2 was speaking of those who resisted Jesus (4:25-26). Besides those such as Herod, Pilate, and the Gentiles that one would expect to resist Jesus, who else do the disciples include as resisting Jesus?

Note how the text says that "God said...through the mouth of David...by the Holy Spirit". This illustrates well that the Spirit is the agent that God uses to communicate his words (will, purpose) to men of his choosing.

What does this say as to who are the true Israel of God?

By the way, which Herod is referred to? (It is Luke who tells of Herod and Pilate becoming friends during the trial of Jesus (Lk.23:12).



Lesson 9

Acts 4:32 – 5

Background

4:35 - "*laid it at the apostles' feet*": To bow or place something at the feet of another was an act of submission often seen in the OT and regularly in Luke's writings (Lk.5:8; 8:35, 41; 10:39; 17:16; Acts 7:58; 10:25; 13:25; 22:3).

5:34 - Gamaliel was a doctor of the law and a member of the council. As a disciple of Hillel, he represented the more liberal wing of the sect of the Pharisees (as compared to the more conservative followers of Shammai). Gamaliel "was the first to whom the title Rabban ('our teacher') was given, a title higher than Rab ('teacher') or Rabbi ('my teacher'). Later, it was said of him, 'Since Rabban Gamaliel died there has been no more reverence for the Law, and purity and abstinence died out at the same time.'" [Williams, p.114] Later, in Acts 22:3, the apostle Paul reveals that he was a student of Gamaliel, which makes one wonder whether Paul would have been present at, or at least aware of, these early conflicts between the council and the apostles.

5:34 - The *Pharisees* were a minority sect of the Jews in the first century. They believed in strict adherence to the teaching of the law and the "*tradition of the elders*" (cf. Mark 7:3). It was their traditional teachings that brought criticism from Jesus during his ministry.

5:36,37 - Theudas and Judas of Galilee are given as examples of men who attracted followers during their life, but after their death, their disciples disbanded. Josephus refers to Judas as one who rebelled to the taxation of the Romans when they took direct rule over Palestine in AD 6. Josephus also tells of a man named Theudas who claimed to be a miracle-working prophet during the time of the procurator Fadus (AD 44-46) who was killed by Fadus. Since this Theudas was active after Judas (and probably after this occasion in Acts!), either Josephus was incorrect in his dating of one (or both) of these men, or else Luke is referring to a different Theudas which Josephus does not mention.

Text

1. Acts 4:32-35 summarizes the spirit of the early disciples in Jerusalem.
 - a. Compare this section with 2:42-47. List the similarities.
 - b. Were the disciples compelled to sell their property or did they simply do it out of love for their fellow disciples? And, does the text imply that they sold *all* their property?

"The imperfect verbs suggest not a sale of all property upon conversion but believers selling their property when needs arose..." (Keener, p.1177). Luke may be intentionally portraying the community of disciples in lines with the picture of God's people entering the promise land (Dt.15:4).
 - c. Within this description of the communal sharing, Luke again tells of the work of the apostles in their testifying to the Jesus' resurrection. They did this with great "*power*" (Gk. *dynamis*); a word Luke already has used in connection with these early days (Lk.24:49; Acts 1:8; 3:12; 4:7). To what does this refer? And what is suggested by the phrase "*great grace was upon them all*"?
2. Two examples are given by Luke in 4:36 - 5:11 to illustrate both those who were charitable and those who simply wanted to be thought of as charitable.

The Acts of the Apostles

- a. What does Luke tell us about Joseph, also called Barnabas?
 - c. Specifically, what was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira?
 - d. Does Peter's question to Ananias imply that Satan *caused* Ananias to sin? (ESV "*Satan filled your heart*", REB "*Satan so possessed your mind*").
 - e. Peter asked Ananias and Sapphira why they agreed to "*lie to the Holy Spirit*" (5:3) and to "*test the Spirit of the Lord*" (5:9). Are lying and testing the same thing, or are they different?
3. As a result of the death of Ananias and Sapphira, Luke says that "*great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things*" (5: 11).
- a. Did this "*fear*" keep others from being converted to the Lord?
 - b. However, who is Luke referring to when he says "*None of the rest dared join them*" (NIV "*no one else*", REB "*no one from outside their number ventured to join them*") (5:13)?
4. Verse 12 says that "*many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles*".
- a. Which apostle in particular was known for his ability to work miracles?
 - b. The people apparently believed that Peter's shadow itself had the ability to heal. Did it? What similar belief did some have in Jesus' power?
 - c. What does Luke want us to understand? Is it safe to conclude that all Jerusalem would have seen or heard of the miracles being done?
5. The high priest and Sadducees were "*filled with jealousy*" (5:17) and had the apostles put in prison.
- a. When Peter and John were earlier taken into custody, what word did Luke use to describe the attitude of the priests and Sadducees? (cf. 4:1-2) How is that different than being filled with jealousy.
 - b. What was the cause of their jealousy?
 - c. After answering the charge of the high priest by saying that they had to "*obey God rather than men*" (5:29, which was similar to their earlier statement to the council in 4:19), Peter and the other apostles gave a summary of their teaching. What are the common elements between this sermon and their earlier sermons?

- d. This sermon caused the council to be furious and they would have killed the apostles had Gamaliel not intervened. Summarize Gamaliel's position?
6. Not only were the apostles witnesses of Christ, Peter says that "*so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him*" (5:32).
 - a. How was the Holy Spirit a witness? (compare Mk.16:20; Acts 4:33).
 - b. To whom is the Holy Spirit given?
 - c. Were all those who obeyed God able to work miracles?
 - d. So, what does it mean in this passage for the Holy Spirit to be "*given*" to someone?

Significance

7. The arrest of the apostles gives a case study on the proper attitude of Christians to the governing authorities.
 - a. The apostles' arrest, and their later re-arrest, was done "*not by force*" (v.26). What does this say about the apostles' attitude concerning their being arrested?
 - b. In response to the high priest's questioning as to why they disobeyed the council's previous command, Peter answered that "*We must obey God rather than men*" (5:29). What does this say about the limit imposed upon the authority of men?
8. Was Gamaliel's position correct?

If he was correct, to what point should we follow his example when confronted by those who we believe are teaching false doctrine? In other words, how tolerant should we be of others' teaching?
9. Luke describes the apostles as "*rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name*" (5:41). This trait is to be typical of all Christians. Note the following verses:

Matthew 5:11f -
Romans 5:3f -
2 Corinthians 6:4-10 -
1 Peter 1:6f -
1 Peter 4:13 -
10. Considering the first five chapters of Acts, what are some of the major points Luke is trying to illustrate in his history. In other words, what aspects of the early church is he trying to impress upon Theophilus?

Lesson 10

Acts 6 – 7 (I)

Acts 6 and 7 serves several purposes in Luke's narrative. First, having been told previously of the disciples' care for each other (2:44-45; 4:32, 34-45), we are now told of one group which experienced problems in having their needs met. However, a happy solution is found. Second, we are introduced to two men, Stephen and Philip, who are instrumental in spreading the gospel beyond Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria, thus starting the outward movement of the gospel as foretold by Jesus (cf. Acts 1:8). Third, the death of Stephen brings to a climax the council's earlier threats (4:21) and beatings (5:40).

Background

6:1 – The precise distinction between "*Hellenists*" and "*Hebrews*" is uncertain. It is generally thought that Hellenists (a term that is used for the first time in the ancient literature) were Greek-speaking Jews and Hebrews were Aramaic-speaking Jews (so REB "*those who spoke Greek*" and "*those who spoke the language of the Jews*"), or perhaps making a distinction between those who read the Scriptures in Hebrew or Greek (LXX). However, the distinction may also involve different attitudes toward various aspects of Greek culture.

6:5 – "*Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch*". By the NT times, proselytes were converts to Judaism which required circumcision of male converts, baptism, and an offering in the Temple. (In LXX, some passages use Greek word for proselyte to translate the Hebrew word for "*resident alien*", but it is generally believed that these were not converts to Judaism.) The first written record we have of proselyte baptism is not until AD 80, but most assume that it would have been practiced earlier. An offering in the Temple could only be required if the proselyte could at some point travel to Jerusalem, but such a sacrifice was required of all Jews for purification prior to entering the Temple. Jews' attitude toward proselytes varied greatly. [Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, p.547ff; Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, p.272, 320ff]

6:9 – "*synagogue*": Synagogues probably originated in the Diaspora before becoming common in Palestine. Some have doubted that synagogues would have existed in Palestine prior to AD 70, but archeologists have uncovered three 1st-century Palestinian synagogues (Gamla, Masada, and the Herodium). Besides the Gospels and Acts, Josephus also attests to their presence in Palestine. Later rabbinic tradition said there were 480 synagogues in pre-70 Jerusalem, but that could simply be hyperbole.

6:9 – Stephen's preaching was resisted by those of the "*synagogue of the Freedmen*", one of several synagogues in Jerusalem, comprised of "*Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia*" (so NASV, NKJV, NAB, REB). Alternately, two groups of resisters could be indicated with the Freedmen, Cyrenians, and Alexandrians forming one group and with some from Cilicia and Asia forming the other (so NRSV). Freedmen were former slaves, or sons of former slaves. If their former master was a Roman citizen, they would be granted citizenship.

Text

1. Acts 6:1-6 describes a practical problem that arose in the community of believers in Jerusalem. A certain group of widows were being neglected.
 - a. How did the apostles propose to resolve the problem?
 - b. What four qualifications were required of those to be selected for the task of serving?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - 4)

- c. Specifically, what was the task assigned to those selected?
- d. What is the wisdom of letting the community of believers select the men to be in charge of the distribution as opposed to the apostles making the selection?

Note: The names of the seven men selected (Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus) are Greek names suggesting that all seven were from the group of Hellenists.

2. In particular, the apostles asked that seven men be selected.
 - a. List other occurrences in Scripture where the number seven (or seventy) is used.

 - b. So, is there any significance to the number seven, or is that just how many men the apostles felt were needed to do the job?
3. Verse 7 is a summary statement of the progress of the gospel.
 - a. What are the three principal points contained within this statement?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - b. What is the significance of priests being converted?
 - c. What is the significance of the phrase "*obedient to the faith*" (6:7)? (Similar to Rom.1:5; 16:26?)

Stephen is the principal character of this section of Luke's writing. We are told of:

- 1) 6: 1- 6 – his work in serving the needs of the widows
 - 2) 6: 8-15 – his arrest before the Sanhedrin
 - 3) 7: 1-53 – his speech in his defense
 - 4) 7:54-60 – his death as a martyr
4. Stephen was described as being "*full of the Spirit and of wisdom*" (6:3), "*full of faith and of the Holy Spirit*" (6:5), "*full of grace and power*" (6:8), and "*full of the Holy Spirit*" (7:55). In addition, he was said to speak convincingly with "*the wisdom and the Spirit*" (6:10).
 - a. Based on the context of Acts to this point and the context of these statements, what does it mean to be full of the Holy Spirit?

 - b. The first two descriptions above are given before the apostles "*laid their hands*" (6:6) on Stephen, and the last three are given after Stephen's appointment. Did the laying on of hands have anything to do with Stephen being full of the Holy Spirit, or was it just the manner in which the appointment was publicly made? [Seek other information on the "laying on of hands".]

5. Stephen was accused of speaking "*blasphemous words against Moses and God*" (6:11).
 - a. Specifically, what was he accused of saying which could be construed as blasphemy? (cf. 6:13, 14)
 - b. What similarities are there between the accusations brought Stephen and those brought against Jesus prior to his crucifixion? (cf. Mt.26:57ff; Mk.14:53ff)

Significance

6. One of the seven selected is Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. What significance can be attached to the fact that proselytes were apparently accepted in the community of believers without question? What does this have to do with the later controversy over accepting Gentiles?
7. The seven men were selected to "*serve (diakoneō) tables*" (6:2), hence they could be properly called 'servants' (Gk. *diakonos*). The ESV translates *diakonos* by three words: "*servant*" (e.g. Mt.20:26; Rom.13:4; 15:8), "*minister*" (e.g. Eph.3:7; Col.1:7,23; 2 Cor.3:6), or "*deacon*" (an anglicized transliteration, e.g. Phil.1:1; 1 Tim.3:8, 12).
 - a. What are the advantages/disadvantages of using different English words for the same Greek word?
 - b. In this case, what are the advantages/disadvantages of using the word "*deacon*" to describe the seven?

The Word of God

6:7 "*and the word of God continued to increase ...*"

Luke commonly uses the expression the "*word of God*" (or, "*word of the Lord*") to refer to the message '*spoke*,' '*preached*,' or '*proclaimed*' (4:29, 31; 6:4; 8:4, 25; 11:19; 13:5; etc.) and that was "*received*" (8:14; 11:1; 17:11). Consequently, the word of God "*increased*" (6:7; 12:24; 19:20), "*multiplied*" (12:24), "*spread*" (13:49), and "*prevailed mightily*" (19:20).

Luke's preference can be seen in the relative frequency of God's "*word*" occurring in the Gospels and Acts:

Matthew	1.0
Mark	1.6
Luke	2.2
John	1.9
Acts	3.1

Clearly, the apostles and the Spirit are primary actors in Acts, but, even more so, God through his word is presented as the prime actor driving the growth of the early church.

Lesson 11

Acts 6 – 7 (II)

Although Luke tells us that many priests were converted, the same could not be said of the high priest and the council.

Background

7:2 – *“The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,...”*: Genesis 12:1 records the first communication between God and Abraham as taking place in Harran, though an earlier communication in Ur may be implied in Genesis 15:7 and Nehemiah 9:7.

7:4 – *“And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land...”*: According to the chronology given in Genesis 11:26, 32; 12:4, Terah died 60 years after Abram left Haran. This chronology is the same in both the Hebrew Bible, the LXX, and in Josephus. The Samaritan Pentateuch, however, gives Terah’s age at his death as 145 which would be consistent with Stephen’s statement.

7:6 – *“four hundred years”*: Both the Hebrew text and the LXX (which adds “and in the land of Canaan”) in Exodus 12:40 specifies the length of the time the Israelites were in Egypt as 430 years. Apparently, Stephen is giving a rounded number. [Paul refers to the 430 years in Galatians 3:17, but is he envisioning the same time period?]

7:14 – *“seventy-five persons in all”*: According to the Hebrew text of Genesis 46:27, *“All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy.”* The LXX (regularly used by Luke and Paul), however, has the number as *“seventy-five.”*

7:16 – *“they (Joseph and Jacob) were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb...”*: Jacob was buried at Hebron (Gen.23:16; 49:29-32; 50:13). Joseph was buried at Shechem (Josh.24:32).

7:22 – *“Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians”*: No specifics of Moses’ education are given in the OT, so this might be an inference by Stephen.

7:38, 53 – Although the Hebrew Old Testament account does not mention any angels in connection with the giving of the law, the LXX in Deuteronomy 33:2 mentions angels at his right hand – as assumed also by other NT writers (cf. Gal.3:19; Heb.2:2).

Text

1. Two charges were brought against Stephen and each was expressed in three different ways:

	Charge 1	Charge 2
v.11	Spoke against God	Spoke against Moses
v.13	Spoke against holy place	Spoke against the law
v.14	Spoke that Jesus would destroy <i>“this place”</i>	Spoke that Jesus would change Moses’ customs

The high priest (Annas or Caiaphas?) specifically asks Stephen if these charges are true (7:1). Does Stephen answer his question directly?

3. Note the parallels between the trial and execution of Jesus (as related by Luke in his Gospel) and that of Stephen (Keener, p.1430):

Jesus		Stephen	
22:66	Trial before Council	6:12	Trial before Council
22:69	Announces Son of Man at Right Hand	7:55f	Sees Son of Man at Right Hand
22:70	Condemned for blasphemy from his own testimony	7:56f	Condemned for blasphemy from his own testimony
23:26	Outside the city	7:58	Outside the city
23:46	<i>"into your hands I commit my spirit!"</i>	7:59	<i>"Receive my spirit!"</i>
23:34	<i>"Forgive them"</i>	7:60	<i>"Do not hold this sin against them"</i>

4. At the trial of Jesus, the Jewish leaders affirmed to Pilate that they did not have the legal authority to execute anyone (Jn.18:31). So, how could they lawfully execute Stephen by stoning?

Significance

5. One thing impressive about Luke's account of Stephen's defense is the length he devotes to it. It is the longest recorded speech in Acts. Why is this speech so significant?
6. As the first Christian martyr, Stephen is an example to all of us in the kind of attitude we are to have toward those who would persecute us.
- Did Stephen physically resist his accusers?
 - Did Stephen hold the actions of his persecutors against them personally?

Lesson 12

Acts 8

Acts 8 begins the expansion of the church beyond Jerusalem as foretold by Jesus (Acts 1:8). Unexpectedly, the growth of the church occurs as a result of persecution.

Background

8:1 – Samaritans originated with the intermarriages of Israelites with the foreigners who were imported to northern Israel by the Assyrians. Hostility between Jews and Samaritans began when the Jews who returned under Nehemiah refused the help of the Samaritans in rebuilding the temple. Subsequently, the Samaritans built their own temple in Mt. Gerizim (cf. Jn.4:20). Tensions heightened during the Hasmonaean period when John Hyrcanus captured Shechem and destroyed the temple on Gerizim (c. 128 BC). The apostle John summarizes the situation in the first century when he says "*For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans*" (Jn.4:9).

8:5 – Philip preached in "*the city of Samaria*" (ESV, NRSV, NKJV). Luke may be referring to the city founded by Omri that he made the capital of the northern kingdom (1 Kgs.16:23f). Besides being destroyed by the Assyrians, it was also destroyed by Alexander the Great and John Hycannus. It was rebuilt in part by Pompey, but greatly enhanced by Herod: "Herod [the Great] undertook extensive reconstruction of the city that made it the largest and most magnificent to that time. He rebuilt the walls of the city in beautiful fashion, expanding the city to enclose about 160 acres. In honor of Augustus, Herod changed the name of the city to Sebaste (the Greek name of Augustus), although the Jews continued to call it Samaria." [J.D. Price, "Samaria", in Harrison, *Major Cities*, p.232]. But it was, by all accounts, a Gentile city which does not make it a good candidate for the description in Acts 8. Some manuscripts read "*a city of Samaria*" (RSV, NIV, REB). If so, the exact city is unknown, although Shechem has often been suggested since it was the holy city of the Samaritans.

8:27 – "*Eunuch*" generally refers to a castrated male. While there may be some evidence that the term could simply be used in the sense of "official," it is often used unambiguously of an official who was a genuine eunuch. It is uncertain, though, whether becoming an eunuch would involve dismemberment (it often did). If so, it is generally thought that such a one could not be a proselyte.

8:27 – To Greeks, Ethiopia simply referred to all of Africa south of Egypt. "*Candace*" (KAN-duh-see) was the title of the Queen (or Queen-mother) of the Meroe kingdom (southern Nubia within modern Sudan); 800 BC-AD 350). It is believed that throughout its history, the Candace was the effective ruler of the country.

8:37 – Omitted in most modern translations because it is found only in a few Western manuscripts and, thus, is judged to have been added at a later date. Western manuscripts also have an addition in verse 39: "*the Spirit of the Lord fell on the eunuch and the angel of the Lord carried Philip away...*"

8:40 – Azotus: the OT Philistine city called Ashdod.

Text

1. Verses 1-3 describe a "*great persecution*" against the church.
 - a. Where did the disciples go to escape persecution?
 - b. In particular, we are told of Saul's persecuting efforts. What would have been the Christians offense that merited imprisonment? From whom did he get his authority? (cf. Acts 26:10)

c. Did all the disciples leave Jerusalem? We continued to read of the church in Jerusalem.

2. According to verse 4, what was the effect of this persecution? (compare Acts 1:8)

Some use this to suggest that all Christians should be active in "preaching the word". Is that sense demanded by this verse?

3. As an example of those who preached the word, Luke tells us about the work of Philip.

a. Is this Philip, the apostle (cf. 1:13), or the Philip who was one of the seven selected to serve tables (cf. 6:5)?

b. Where did Philip first go and preach Christ? (v.5)

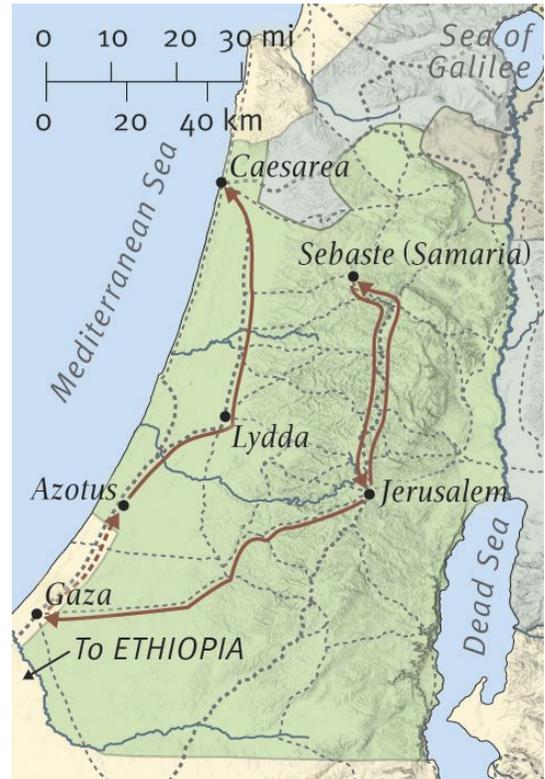
c. What type of divine empowerment did he possess?

d. To whom did an angel of the Lord send Philip next? (v.26f)

e. What were the reactions of those Philip converted? (v.8,39)

f. Where else does Philip preach?

Does this agree with the only other information we later have of Philip in Acts 21:8-7?



ESV Bible Atlas, The Ministry of Philip, 238

4. As usual in Acts, the Holy Spirit plays an important role.

a. Although it is not explicitly stated, how did the Holy Spirit assist in the conversion of the Samaritans? (v.6-7)

b. What role did the Holy Spirit play in the conversion of the eunuch? (v.29)

c. Did the first century disciples automatically receive the Holy Spirit upon being baptized? (v.14-16) Any reason to think that the case of the Samaritans was unique?

d. What does it mean in this passage to "receive the Holy Spirit"?

e. By what means did the Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit?

5. Simon practiced sorcery among the Samaritans before Philip came.

a. Was he convinced that the miracles Philip performed were real and not simply some sort of trickery?

b. Is there any indication in the text that Simon's conversion was insincere?

6. The eunuch was either a proselyte or a 'God-fearer' because the text says that he had gone to Jerusalem to worship (v.27). Either way, his conversion fulfills Psalms 68:31 and Isaiah 56:3-8.
 - a. What text was the eunuch reading when Philip approached his chariot?
 - b. How does this text teach about Jesus?
 - c. In teaching Jesus, Philip apparently also told him about baptism (v.35-36). [Note the similar result when Philip preached the "*kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ*" to the Samaritans (v.12)] What does baptism have to do with Jesus?

Significance

7. Mark's Gospel does not contain any references to the Samaritans and Matthew's Gospel only contains the following command Jesus gave to the Twelve when he sent them out: "*Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" (Mt.10:5b-6). However, Luke's and John's Gospels contains several references to the Samaritans.
 - a. Note the following references in Luke's and John's Gospels:
 - Luke 9:51-56
 - Luke 10:25-37
 - Luke 17:11-19
 - John 4:3-42
 - John 8:48
 - b. What impression of the Samaritans does one get from the above references, especially from Luke's Gospel?
 - c. Why do you think Luke gave more emphasis to Jesus dealings with the Samaritans than the other Gospel writers?
 - d. What is significant about John being sent to the Samaritans (8:14) considering his attitude during Jesus' ministry (cf. Lk.9:54)?

Thought Questions:

1. The Samaritans are the first Christians recorded to have received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. Later in Acts, Paul receives the Spirit by the laying on of Ananias' hands (9:17), and the Ephesians disciples receive the Spirit by the laying on of Paul's hands (19:6). Based on these examples, some brethren conclude that first Century Christians could only receive the Spirit by the laying on the apostles' hands. Is that a necessary conclusion?
2. Ethiopia was universally viewed as being the "end of the earth" (see Lesson 3, *Background*). Since the gospel was just taken to Samaria and then to an Ethiopian, is Luke suggesting that Jesus' command in Acts 1:8 was being fulfilled?
3. In terms of the gospel being advanced, what is the significance of the conversion of the Samaritans and the eunuch?

Lesson 13

Acts 9:1-31

Saul, also called Paul (cf. Acts 13:9), was first introduced by Luke at the stoning of Stephen (7:58; 8:1). His conversion is reported by Luke in chapter 9, but Paul tells his conversion on two later occasions which are also reported by Luke. A comparison of the three accounts will be made when studying chapters 22 and 26.

Background

9:1 – Paul tells his background in Acts 22:3 and Philippians 3:3-6. A Benjaminite born in Tarsus (21:39 “no obscure city”), Paul was educated in Jerusalem as a disciple of Gamaliel. A strict Pharisee, zealous for the law, Paul always acted with a clear conscience (23:1). Paul was born a Roman citizen (24:25-29), which means his father must have been a Roman citizen.

9:2 – Damascus, the current capital of Syria, is one of the oldest cities on earth to be continuously occupied. After the Romans conquered the lands of the Near East, the Jews of Palestine dispersed throughout the territory under Rome’s control, including Damascus. Like elsewhere, the Jews established synagogues in Damascus (cf. 9: 2, 20). Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 11:32 suggests that Damascus, at the time of his conversion, was ruled by a governor (Gk. *ethnarch*, NASU) under Aretas IV, the king of the Nabataeans (from 9 BC to AD 40). “The ethnarch looked after the interests of the many Nabataean subjects who lived in Damascus, and in general acted as King Aretas’ representative in the city” [Bruce, *Acts*, p.192]. It was Aretas’s daughter that Herod Antipas divorced in order to marry Herodias (cf. Mk.6:14ff). For this insult, Aretas later inflicted a major military defeat on Herod.

9:11 – “Perhaps as old as Damascus, Tarsus was the chief city of Cilicia Pedeias...To judge from the extent of its remains, its population in Roman times must have been close to half a million... The city passed into Roman hands from the crumbling Seleucid Empire before 100 B.C.... Under the later Seleucids, it had become one of the three great university cities of the Mediterranean world. Strabo speaks of the Tarsian university as even surpassing, in some respects, those of Athens and Alexandria... [Paul’s] own trade of tent making was an important Cilician industry (cf. 18:3)” [Williams, pp.170-171]

Text

1. The following three expressions are used in this section to describe Christians. What does each expression mean?
 - 1) v.1 “disciples of the Lord”
 - 2) v.2 “any belonging to the Way” (cf. Is.40:3; later in Acts 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22)
 - 3) v.13 “saints” (later in 9;32, 41; 26:10 – earlier Mt.27:52)
 - 4) v.14 “all who call on your name”
2. Paul continued his persecutions of Christians with the blessings of the high priest.
 - a. Was Paul well-known? Why would the high priest use Paul for this task?
 - b. Paul’s teacher Gamaliel had earlier advised leaving Christians alone. Can it be explained why Paul would act contrary to Gamaliel?

3. The Lord made two appearances, one to Paul and one to Ananias, so that Paul could be converted.
 - a. Why was each appearance necessary for the conversion to take place?
 - b. What is significant about the different way in which Paul and Ananias responded to the Lord?
 - c. For what other reason may have it been necessary that the Lord appear to Paul? (cf. 1 Cor.9:1; 15:1-9; Gal.1:1, 15-16)

4. What is implied in the Lord's statement: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Does Jesus only identify with his followers? Consider Matthew 25:34-45.

5. Ananias stands in line with those who protest the Lord's request: Moses (Ex.3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13), Isaiah (Is.6:5), Jeremiah (Jer.1:6), Zechariah (Lk.1:18).
6. The Lord tells Ananias three things about Paul (v.15-16).
 - 1) First, that Paul is a "*chosen instrument*." How does Paul phrase this choice of God in Galatians 1:15-16?
 - 2) What is Paul an "*instrument*" for?
 - 3) What burden would Paul bear as a result of God's choice?
7. Being obedient to the Lord, Ananias goes to Paul.
 - a. According to Ananias, why was he sent to Paul? (v.17)
 - b. What immediately transpired? (v.18)
 - c. What did Ananias mean when he said he came that Paul could "*be filled with the Holy Spirit*"?

Was the Spirit given in the laying on of Ananias' hands before Paul was baptized?

8. According to verses 19ff, the sequence of Paul's actions following his conversion is:
 - 1) Paul spends time ("*some days*") with the disciples in Damascus.
 - 2) Paul "*immediately*" preaches Christ in the synagogues of Damascus.
 - 3) "*When many days had passed*" the Jews plot to kill Paul.

- 4) The disciples help Paul escape Damascus.
- 5) Paul, at some time, goes to Jerusalem.
- 6) Goes to Tarsus.

Paul supplements this account in Galatians 1:15-19 and 2 Corinthians 11:32-33.

- a. Where else did Paul go during this time?
 - b. When did this trip occur in the above sequence?
 - c. Who else besides the Jews in Damascus wanted to apprehend Paul? Why?
 - d. Exactly how did Paul escape "*through a window in the wall*" (2 Cor.11:33) of the city?
 - e. How much time transpired before Paul went to Jerusalem?
9. Verse 31 highlights the progress of the gospel.
- a. What three things did the "*church*" experience?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)Does the "*peace*" the church experienced suggest that the persecution had subsided?
 - b. What two things explain this experience?
 - 1)
 - 2)

Lesson 14

Acts 9:32 - 11:18 (I)

Following the conversion of the Samaritans, it appears that the apostles engage in evangelizing the greater Palestine area, if Peter's example was typical of the group. In Luke's view, it is important to understand the broad acceptance of the gospel. Luke is preparing his readers as the Lord was preparing Peter for the next major milestone – the inclusion of the Gentiles!

Background

9:35 – Lydda was the NT name of the city called Lod in the OT. Founded by a Benjamite (1 Chr.8:12), it was resettled by those returning from the Babylonian captivity (Ezr.2:33; Neh.7:37; 11:35).

9:36 – A city of the tribal area of Dan (Josh.19:46), Joppa was the major seaport serving Judea until Herod rebuilt Caesarea. Both Solomon (2 Chr.2:16) and the returnees under Zerubbabel (Ezr.3:7) transported materials for the temple through Joppa. Jonah boarded a ship at Joppa in an effort to flee from the presence of the Lord (Jonah 1:3).

10:1 – Caesarea was rebuilt by Herod the Great and named in honor of Caesar Augustus. Part of his improvements included an artificial extension of the harbor (using hydraulic cement) that made Caesarea the primary port city for Palestine. It was the headquarters of the Roman administration of the Syrian province. Located about 75 miles from Jerusalem and over 30 miles from Joppa, it had a population in the first century of about 50,000. Archaeological expeditions have uncovered the dedication stone of the theater which bears the name of Pontius Pilate, and the walls of one Jewish synagogue have been found. [A.B. Spencer, "Caesarea Maritima", in Harrison, *Major Cities*]

10:1 – The foundational unit of the Roman army was the century – 100 soldiers commanded by a centurion (but usually 80 during this time period). Five to ten centuries made up a cohort commanded by a tribune. Cohorts were organized into one of the following four groups: (cf. Ferguson, pp.49-42)

- 1) Imperial Guard: Comprised of (a) the Praetorium Guard [9 or 12 cohorts] commanded by two prefects charged with the protection of the emperor and (b) the garrison of Rome [10 cohorts comprised mainly of freedmen] under the city prefect.
- 2) Legions: Commanded by a legate and composed of citizen soldiers [10 cohorts of 6 centuries each] who served 20 years. During the time of Tiberius there were 25 legions distributed throughout select imperial provinces of the empire.
- 3) "*Auxilia*" (auxiliary forces): Commanded by a prefect and composed of men from the native population [10 cohorts of 10 centuries each] who were given citizenship at their discharge after 25 years of service. The "*Italian Cohort*" and the "*Augustan Cohort*" (Acts 27:1) were part of the auxiliary forces.
- 4) Navy

Centurion's were well paid. A soldier received an annual salary of about 225 denari; a centurion's annual salary was 3,750 denari.

Text

1. Luke has already recorded the widely-known ability of Peter to perform healings (cf. 5:12-16). Luke now reports on his missionary work in Lydda, Joppa, and the coastal plain of Sharon (see map on the next page).
 - a. Who are examples of those that Peter healed?

b. What is noteworthy about both of these healings?

c. What was the result of Peter's work in these cities?

d. Luke includes another Simon (the tanner) in this account. Simon (the Greek form of the Hebrew Simeon) was the most common name used among Palestinian Jews in the NT era (followed by Joseph) [Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, p.85]. Curious? How many Simons are there in the NT?

2. Cornelius (a common Roman name) is described as a "devout man who feared God" (v.2). It was not uncommon for Gentiles to have been influenced by the Jewish religion and to come to a knowledge of God.

a. What two other characteristics of Cornelius does Luke mention?

- 1)
- 2)



b. Luke has already introduced two centurions to Theophilus in his Gospel; see Luke 7:1-10 and 23:47. What characteristics do they have in common with Cornelius?

3. Luke is very careful in giving the chronology of the events.

a. List the events which happened on each day.

		<u>Event(s)</u>
Day 1	9 th Hour	(v.3-7)
		(v.7-8)
Day 2	6 th Hour	(v.9)
		(v.17)
Day 3		(v.23)
Day 4		(v.24)

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- b. Why did Cornelius tell Peter that he had the vision of the angel "*four days ago*" (10:30)? Wasn't it three days earlier? (Recall that the ancients typically considered any part of a day to be one day.)
- c. Why does Luke (and Peter, cf. 11:4) go to such length to tell the precise sequence of events?

Note that the phrase "*in order*" is used three times by Luke: Luke 1:3; Acts 11:4; 18:23 (see KJV, ASV). Based on the way the phrase is used in Acts, what is the apparent meaning in Luke 1:3 where Luke tells Theophilus that he is writing "*an orderly account*"?

- 4. Like the case of Paul's conversion, God appeared to both Cornelius and Peter separately so that they would come together.
 - a. Why would Peter not have preached to Cornelius on his own accord? (cf. 10:28; 11:2-3)
 - b. Why would Cornelius not have contacted Peter on his own accord?
 - c. But did God tell either Cornelius or Peter exactly what to expect from the other? (cf. 10:29b)
- 5. Identify the major points of Peter's sermon recorded in 10:34-43. In particular, how does it compare to Peter's sermon on Pentecost?
- 6. As Peter was speaking to Cornelius and his household, "*the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word*" (10:44).
 - a. How could Peter and the other brethren with him know that the Holy Spirit was given to the Gentiles?
 - b. What was the purpose of God in giving the Holy Spirit to Cornelius and his household?
- 7. When Peter went to Cornelius' house, he asked six Jewish brethren to accompany him (11:12). Why was Peter's request a wise one?

Lesson 15

Acts 9:32 - 11:18 (II)

Text

1. God gradually revealed to Peter his will concerning the Gentiles on four separate occasions.
 - a. With each revelation, what truth did Peter learn?

<u>God's Revelation</u>	<u>Truth Peter Understood</u>
The Vision of the Clean and Unclean Animals (10: 10-16)	(10:28)
The Message of the Spirit (10: 19-20)	(10:29a)
The Testimony of Cornelius (10: 29-33)	(10: 34-35)
The Baptism of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles (10: 44-45)	(10:47-48)

Note that Luke's summary of Peter's remarks to the Jerusalem brethren is simply a retelling of these four revelations.

- b. How is God's revelation to Peter on this occasion an illustration of Hebrews 1:1 and 2 Peter 1:20-21?

2. Consider further the Vision of Clean and Unclean Animals which appeared to Peter.
 - a. Did God use this vision to teach Peter that there was no longer a distinction between Clean and Unclean Animals, or was God intending to teach Peter that there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles (cf. 10:28)? Or, both?

 - b. From Paul's writings we also learn that the distinction between Clean and Unclean Meats had been abolished (e.g. Rom.14:14). When was this distinction abolished? (cf. Mk.7:19 in a modern translation).

3. Earlier at the apostles' trial before the Sanhedrin, Peter had stated that the Holy Spirit was a witness to the truth of the gospel (cf. 5:32).
 - a. To what truth did the Spirit serve as witness on this occasion? (cf. 10:44-47; 11:15-18; 15:8-9)

 - b. How did the Spirit make known his will?

4. The giving of the Holy Spirit to Cornelius and his household is represented by the use of the following terms: (Review Lesson 6, Question 8)

10:44 *"Holy Spirit **fell on**"*
 :45 *"the **gift** of the Holy Spirit **was poured out**"*
 :47 *"have **received** the Holy Spirit"*
11:16 *"**baptized with** the Holy Spirit"*
 :17 *"God **gave** the **same gift** to them as he gave to us"*

- a. Are these expressions synonymous in this passage?
- b. The only two places in the New Testament where the phrase "*gift of the Holy Spirit*" occurs is Acts 2:38 and 10:45. As discussed previously (see Lesson 6, Question 10a), this phrase can mean that the Holy Spirit gives something, or that the Holy Spirit himself is the gift. Which of these two meanings is preferred in this instance? (Carefully read 10:44-47; 11:15-17; 15:8)

In either case, to be given the "*gift of the Holy Spirit*" means that they were empowered by the Spirit; in this case, to "*speak with tongues*" (10:46) as on Pentecost. Thus, it refers to the Spirit's empowerment. Since Acts 2:38 is the only other time this expression is used and Peter directly connects the two accounts, should not the presumption be that the phrase has the same meaning in Acts 2:38 as it does here in 10:45, especially since it the same author who is using the phrase?

- c. In describing what occurred, Peter observed that the Gentiles "*received the Holy Spirit just as we have*" (10:47). Who is the "*we*" that Peter refers to? (In answering this, identify those present on that occasion with the pronouns used. Compare Peter's use of the pronoun "*us*" in 11:15 and 15:8-9.)

5. There are eight other passages in the NT that speak of the Holy Spirit being given:

*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father **give the Holy Spirit** to those who ask him!* Luke 11:13

*Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the **Spirit had not been given**, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* John 7:39

*And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the **Holy Spirit, whom God has given** to those who obey him.* Acts 5:32

*Now when Simon saw that the **Holy Spirit was given** through the laying on of apostles' hands, he offered them money...* Acts 8:18

*...and hope does not put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the **Holy Spirit who has been given to us**.* Rom. 5:5

*...and who has also put his seal on us and **given us his Spirit** in our hearts as a guarantee.* 2 Cor. 1:22

*... but **God, who gives his Holy Spirit** to you.* 1 Thessalonians 4:8

*...we know that he abides in us, by the **Spirit whom he has given** us.* 1 John 3:24b

- a. Is it *probable* that *any* of these passages refer to the divine empowerment of the Holy Spirit? That is, which passages seem to refer to the spiritual gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit?

Is it *possible* (which is not the same thing as *probable*) to interpret *all* these passages as referring to the divine empowerment of the Holy Spirit?

- b. Is it *probable* that *any* of these passages refer to what is generally called the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (= the indwelling that presumably takes place at the moment one becomes a Christian)?

Is it *possible* to interpret *all* these passages as referring to what some call the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

6. The same two pair of questions can be asked about the following passages in the NT that speak of the Holy Spirit being received (which is seeing the same transaction from man's perspective):

*Now this he said about the **Spirit**, whom those who believed in him **were to receive**, ...* John 7:39

*... even the **Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive**, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.* John 14:17

*... he breathed on them and said to them, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.**"* John 20:22

*... who came down and prayed for them that they might **receive the Holy Spirit**,...* Acts 8:15

*"Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may **receive the Holy Spirit.**"* Acts 8:19

*And he said to them, "Did you **receive the Holy Spirit** when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." Acts 19:2*

*For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have **received the Spirit of adoption** as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"* Romans 8:15

*Did you **receive the Spirit** by works of the law or by hearing with faith?* Galatians 3:2

*... so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might **receive the promised Spirit** through faith.* Galatians 3:14

*For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you **receive a different spirit from the one you received** ...* 2 Corinthians 11:4 ["a spirit different from the Spirit already given to you" REB]

Significance

7. Luke has purposefully set out to show the expansion of gospel (cf. Acts 1:8). Having already shown the acceptance of the gospel by the Samaritans, Luke gives a great deal of space to the conversion of the first Gentiles.

- a. According to Acts 8:40, Philip had already preached in Caesarea. Why did the God choose Peter instead of Philip to preach to Cornelius? (cf. 15:7)

- b. The date of these events is not precisely known, but the conversion of Cornelius may have been as many as 10 years after the first gospel sermon on Pentecost. Any thoughts as to why God waited "so long" to extend the blessings of the gospel to the Gentiles?

Lesson 16

Acts 11:19 – 12

Background

11:19 - Antioch was the capital city of the Seleucid empire, and, with fall of the Seleucids to Rome in 64 B.C., it became the capital city of the Roman province of Syria. To repay Antioch for their support in the Roman civil war, Julius Caesar began an expansion of public buildings. "During the first Christian century it was, after Rome and Alexandria, the third largest city of the Roman empire, with a population over 500,000" [R.N. Longenecker, "Antioch of Syria", in Harrison, *Major Cities*, p.9].



11:28 – The reign of Claudius (AD 41-54) was noted for severe famines scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Josephus tells of a famine in Judea during AD 41-44.

12:1 – King Herod (Herod Agrippa I) was a grandson of Herod the Great (and a brother to Herodias). Educated in Rome, he gained the favor of the Roman emperors. Caligula granted him the kingship of Iturea in AD 37 and of Galilee and Perea in AD 39. In AD 41, Claudius added Judea and Samaria to his realm thereby making his territory as large as his grandfather's. The occasion and manner of his death (12:20-23) is also recorded by Josephus.

12:12 – John Mark is introduced by Luke and is mentioned in the letters of Paul and Peter (Col.4: 10, where we learn that he is a cousin of Barnabas; Phile.24; 2 Tim.4: 11; 1 Pet.5:13). Tradition presents Mark as an associate of Peter and as the writer of the second Gospel.

Text

1. Luke refers back to the scattering of the disciples following the death of Stephen.
 - a. Initially, the scattered disciples preached the gospel to only Jews (who could rightly be called 'Hellenists'), but later men from Cyprus and Cyrene began to preach to "*Hellenists*" (NKJV, NRSV), "*Greeks*" (ASV, RSV, NJB, NASU, NAB, NIV, CSB; KJV sim.), "*Gentiles*" (REB), or "*Jews who spoke Greek*" (CEB). in Antioch. From the context, do you think that Luke is referring to Greek-speaking Jews or Gentiles?
 - b. Luke provides another summary statement of the growth that was experienced (11:21).
2. The church in Jerusalem upon hearing of the work in Antioch was interested in investigating and sent Barnabas to Antioch.
 - a. On what two earlier occasions did the church in Jerusalem express interest in the work of others outside Jerusalem?

What was the purpose of sending these individuals/delegations? Simply to learn of the work, or perhaps to sanction the work?

- b. What was the result of Barnabas' work? (11:24; cf. 2:47; 5:14)

- c. Why would Barnabas seek Paul's help in this work?
3. Because of the upcoming famine in Judea, the Christians in Antioch decided to send assistance to the Christians in Judea.
 - a. How did each Christian in Antioch decide how much to send? (compare 2 Cor.9:5, 7)
 - b. To whom was the monies delivered for distribution? Why not to the deacons?
4. For some unknown reason, Herod began a persecution against the Christians in Judea. Perhaps he anticipated its approval by the people and thus it was simply a political gesture.
 - a. Herod had James beheaded. Was this James the apostle? If so, he is the first apostle mentioned to be killed for following Jesus.
 - b. Seeing that his action pleased the Jews, Herod planned to kill Peter also, but he decided to wait until after the Passover. However, the Lord miraculously saved Peter. What similarities are there to this rescue of Peter and the earlier rescue of all the apostles (cf. 5:17ff)?
 - c. Are there any indications as to why the Lord saved Peter and not James?
5. Christians may have regularly assembled at "*the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark*" (12:12). In any case, Peter went to her house and found many disciples there. He told them to tell of his release "*to James and to the brothers*" (12:17). Which James is this?
6. What interesting point does Luke seem to make by mentioning the continued growth of the church in 12:24 after telling of the death of Herod in verse 23?

Significance

7. Upon Judas Iscariot's death, it was necessary to find his replacement. Is there any indication that the apostles felt compelled to find a replacement for James? What does this suggest about the office of the apostles?

Acts 11:26 "And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians."

There are two other occasions in the NT where the word "*Christian*" is used: Acts 26:28 on the lips of Agrippa and 1 Peter 4:16 in the context of persecution. Most scholars believe that the term was coined by opponents of Christianity. They note that the word *Christian* (Gk. *Christiani*) is a Latin formulation like others for political parties (*Herodiani, Caesariani, Pompeiani, Neroniani*, etc.) and that the verb "*were called*" suggests it was an identification made by others. In line with this, they note that the Roman historian Tacitus uses the name *Christians* as those blamed by Nero for the great fire in Rome in AD 64.

Perhaps. The NT passages could be seen as compatible with this view, but the problem is that there is no evidence to prove or disprove this suggestion. Hence it is best left alone.

Two things all agree upon are 1) that the origin of the term indicates that the Christians were seen as independent of the Jews, and 2) that Christians did adopt the term to refer to themselves at least by the early 2nd century.

'Motioning with His Hand'

The following passages in Acts all note the speaker signaling the audience of his intent to speak by 'motioning with his hand':

12:17 *But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. ...*

13:15-16 *After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it." So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: "Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen.*

19:33 *Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd.*

21:40 *And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the Hebrew language, saying ...*

26:1 *So Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense ...*

William Schiell [*Reading Acts*] surveyed ancient Greco-Roman writings (esp. Quintilian's first-century rhetorical textbook *Institutio Oratoria*) and artwork (sculpture, paintings, stone reliefs, etc.) and documented the consistent hand gestures used by orators.

In the verses above, the hand motions occur at the beginning of the speech. The standard hand motion to alert the audience that the orator was ready to begin his speech was to extend the right hand with the thumb, index, and middle fingers extended and folding the two other fingers into the palm. If it was first necessary to quiet the crowd (e.g. 12:17), the orator would ask for silence by extending the little finger of the right hand (p.145).

Schiell further suggests that the orator would also indicate each formal division of his speech with a hand gesture. In 13:15, Paul is explicitly asked to give a "word of exhortation." The first section of a speech is called the *exordium* and would have been indicated by placing the middle finger against the thumb with the other three extended (p.92). So, it is uncertain, but Paul may have first given the standard gesture to indicate his intent to speak and then given the gesture indicating the start of the *exordium*.

In 19:33 and 21:40 the orator may have motioned for silence, but the text does not explicitly say that – *contra* the NRSV which incorrectly adds "for silence" in both passages and the NIV that adds "for silence" in 19:33, (p.150). Schiell does not think the orator motioned for silence in either passage. In 19:33, he conjectures that is part of the reason why Alexander is unable to quiet the crowd, and 21:40, since the text says that his intent was to make a defense, he believes Paul would have used the gesture noted above to begin the *exordium*. Of course, Paul could have made both motions.

However, the main thesis of Schiell is that since written works would have been read to those address (given the low literacy rates in the ancient world), the reader (more properly, the lector) would have also used gestures to reinforce the reading. In addition to the hand motions above, he would have used facial gestures, head motions, voice inflection, body positions, etc. to impress the message upon the listener.

Acts 12:25: "returned to Jerusalem"?

The NRSV translates Acts 12:25 as "Then after completing their mission Barnabas and Saul returned to Jerusalem and brought with them John, whose other name was Mark" (NAB, CSB, and NET sim.). The difficulty with this reading is that Paul and Barnabas seem to already be in Jerusalem so the reader would expect to read "Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem" (so KJV, ASV, REB, NASU, CEB, NIV).

The difference in the translations reflects the variation in the manuscripts. The earliest manuscripts have "to (Gk. *eis*) Jerusalem". Some later manuscripts have "from (Gk. *ex* or *apo*) Jerusalem" (although, as Witherington notes, the manuscripts attesting *ex*, are also "good and early"). Textual scholars tend to see the earliest manuscripts as closer to the original, especially when the earlier readings are more difficult, and that later manuscripts at times tended to revised the text to eliminate the difficulty. Thus, the modern Greek critical texts used by all modern translations adopted *eis* as the correct reading (although Metzger notes, in the case of the UBS text, that only "after long and repeated deliberation ... (it was) ... decided that least unsatisfactory decision was to adopt *eis*" [*Textual Commentary*, 2nd Ed., p.352]).

This solution is far from universally accepted, hence why so many of the modern translations noted above use "from" instead of "to". So, another solution has gained some support. By rearranging the word order and having the expression "to Jerusalem" associated with the verb "completing" (or "fulfilling") instead of the verb "returned", one can get a translation like that given by the NJB: "Barnabas and Saul completed their task at Jerusalem and came back, ...". This solution is preferred by Bock (who, by the way, was one of the NET translators), Fitzmyer, Witherington, and perhaps Barrett. Whether this is correct solution or not, it surely gives the correct sense.

Lesson 17**The Roman World**

The ministry of Jesus and of his apostles occurred during the early years of the Roman Empire. Even a rudimentary knowledge of the Roman Empire is helpful in understanding the background to the New Testament books, especially Acts.

Political History The history of Rome falls into three periods.

1. **The Kingship** (703 – 509 BC).
2. **The Republic** (509 – 27 BC). Ruled by the Senate, originally composed only of patricians (the upper class). A struggle for power between patricians and plebeians (the general class of citizens) lasted for about 200 years. Ultimately, the two classes were mixed and the new governing class, called the nobility, was made up of wealthy citizens. The Senate elected two consuls annually.

The Republic began its decline when the Senate was unable to control its more ambitious members. Years of civil war and political unrest ended in the dictatorship of Julius Caesar. Following Caesar's assassination, Octavian, Caesar's grandnephew and heir, eventually seized sole control.

3. **The Empire** (27 BC – AD 476). The beginning of the Empire is dated when Octavian restored (outwardly only) the constitutional government and the Senate, in return, granted him the title Emperor Caesar Augustus. In fact, Augustus was in sole control and the system of government he established is called the *Principate* ("rule by the first citizen") which lasted about 200 years. Coinciding with Augustus' ascension was *Pax Romana* ("the peace of Rome"). The maintenance of peace was the emperor's major objective.

First-Century Emperors*Julio-Claudius Dynasty:*

Augustus	27 BC – AD 14
Tiberius, son of Augustus	14-37
Caligula, great nephew of Tiberius	37-41
Claudius I, uncle of Caligula	41-54
Nero, son of Claudius	54-68

Year of the Four Emperors:

Galba	68-69
Otho	69
Vitellius	69

Flavian Dynasty:

Vespasian	69-79
Titus, son of Vespasian	79-81
Domitian, son of Vespasian	81-96

Social Classes

1. The senatorial class was composed of the descendents of senators (or those deemed worthy by the emperor) and who had sufficient wealth. It was from this class the major administrative posts were filled.

"...Augustus systematized the senatorial career ... in such a way that 20 men were annually elected quaestor, usually about the age of 25, and thereby entered the Senate. Then they might become aedile or tribune, and at about 30, they could stand for praetorship (normally twelve posts a year). Quaestors were mostly concerned with financial matters, aediles with municipal administration, praetors with judicial affairs ... At the age 42, or much sooner for those specially favored by the emperor, a man might aspire to the consulship. The two consuls who took office each year on 1 January were the nominal heads of state ... " [Colin M. Wells, "Roman Empire", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. V, pp.803-804] Former consuls or praetors qualified for governorships in the provinces, or perhaps, even as prefect (governor) of Rome.

2. The equestrian (knights) class was composed of other citizens who met a certain standard of wealth. Several administrative posts, particularly military positions, were available to men of this class.
3. The common class of citizens were called plebians.
4. Freedmen were former slaves who were either able to purchase their freedom or were granted their freedom by their master. If their master was a citizen, the freedman would be granted citizenship along with his freedom. Some freedmen, such as Felix (Acts 24), achieved influential positions.
5. Slaves' status was tied to the status of their master. Consequently, slaves performed every possible task, even highly skilled tasks and high positions of government administration. Although slaves had no personal rights and could be treated any way the master pleased, their treatment varied greatly and most were ultimately set free.

Provinces

1. Senatorial - Under the control of the Roman Senate; governed by a proconsul. During the time of Paul's journeys, Cyprus, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia were senatorial provinces.
2. Imperial - Under the direct control of Caesar; governed by a legate. In the first century, Judea, Syria, and Galatia were among the imperial provinces.

The following map shows the Provinces at the time of Trajan in AD 116. The provinces of Armenia, Assyria (debated whether it was a province), Mesopotamia, Numidia, Arabia Petraea, and Dacia were formed after the time of Paul.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Maps_of_Roman_provinces

Religion

1. Romans, like most of the people they ruled, were polytheists. Part of Rome's governing genius was to allow native peoples to worship their traditional gods, hence they were tolerant and inclusive.
2. In addition, there was a mingling of the civil and religious spheres with senators often

performing the role of priests. The emperor was the chief priest, known as Pontifex Maximus – a title later assumed by the pope.

3. The imperial cult actually gave special honor to the emperor, and to some, like Augustus upon his death, they ascribed divinity.

Roads

1. The primary purpose of the Romans in developing an extensive road system was to facilitate military traffic that required all-weather, secure roads. Consequently, roads were usually raised above the surrounding terrain and would go over (or cut through) a hill as opposed to wind around it.
2. The Romans constructed approximately 50,000 miles of roads (which is roughly equivalent to the interstate highway system in the United States).



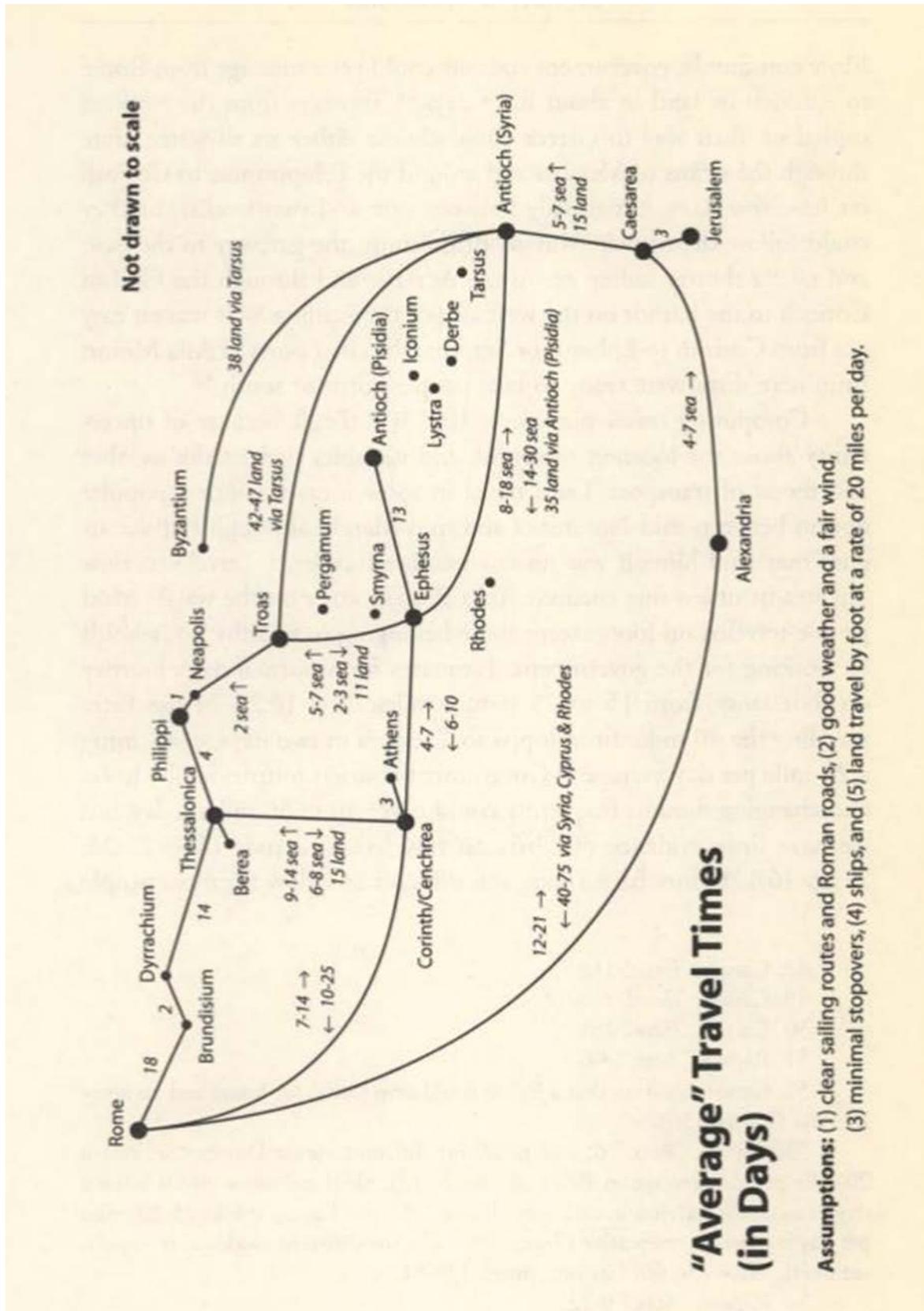
<http://pelagios.org/maps/greco-roman/>

3. The quality of the roads would vary somewhat throughout the empire depending upon the availability of local materials.

“A major, fully paved highway in Italy usually consisted of four or five layers, altogether about 4 feet thick and 6 to 20 feet wide. At the bottom was a layer of sand, mortar, or both. Then came a layer of flat squared stones set in cement or mortar. On top of this was stratum of gravel set in clay or concrete. Then came a layer of rolled sand concrete. On top of all was laid a crowned pavement of large many-sided blocks of hard rock set in concrete and dressed on their upper surfaces.” [de Camp, p. 198]

Testifying to the enduring quality of the Roman roads, it is said that the best roads in Europe during the middle ages were the Roman roads. Even today portions of *Via Appia* are in use.

4. Three side benefits of having good roads were 1) the development of a postal service for use by government officials, 2) the promotion of trade, and 3) the facilitation of travel by all residents in the Empire. The following chart gives the traveling time between major cities.



Reference: Michael B. Thompson, “The Holy Internet: Communication Between Churches in the First Christian Generation,” in *The Gospel for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* ed. By Richard Bauckham. Eerdmans, 1998

ROMAN EMPERORS		PALESTINE			JEWISH HIGH PRIEST
37 BC	JUDEA - SAMARIA - IDUMEA	ITUREA - TRACHONITIS - ETC.	GALILEE - PEREA		
27 B.C.	HEROD THE GREAT (King) Matthew 2, Luke 1:5	HEROD THE GREAT (King) Matthew 2, Luke 1:5	HEROD THE GREAT (King) Matthew 2, Luke 1:5		App. Herod the Great 37-36 Hananel Aristobulus III 36 Hananel* 36-30 Jesus 30-23 Simon 23-5 Matthias 5-4 Joazar 4 App. Archelaus Eleazar 4-3 Jesus 3B.C.-A.D.6 Joazar* 6 App. Quirinius Annas 6-15 App. Valerius Gratus Ishmael 15-16 Eleazar** 16-17 Simon 17-18 Joseph Caiaphas 18-36 (Annas' son-in-law) App. Vitellius Jonathan** 36-37 Theophilus** 37-41 App. Herod Agrippa I Simon 41-42 Matthias** 42-43 Elioenai 43-44 App. Herod of Chalcis Joseph 44-47 Ananias 47-58 App. Herod Agrippa II Ishmael 58-60 Joseph 60-61 Ananias II** 61-62 Jesus 62-63 Jesus 63-65 Matthias*** 65-68 App. by the People Phinebas 68-70
AUGUSTUS (Octavian) Luke 2:1	ARCHELAUS (ethnarch) Matt. 2:22 A.D. 6	PHILIP (tetrarch) Luke 3 A.D. 34	HEROD ANTIPAS (tetrarch) Luke 3, etc. A.D. 39		
A.D. 14	Roman Prefects Coponius 6-9 Marcus Ambivius 9-12 Annius Rufus 12-15 Valerius Gratus 15-26	PHILIP (tetrarch) Luke 3 A.D. 34	HEROD ANTIPAS (tetrarch) Luke 3, etc. A.D. 39		
TIBERIUS Luke 3:1	Pontius Pilate Crucifixion of Jesus Mark 15:1-15 Luke 13:1 John 18:29-19:38 Acts 4:27	HEROD AGRIPPA I (King) Acts 12:1-23 A.D. 44	HEROD AGRIPPA I (King) Acts 12:1-23 A.D. 44		
A.D. 37	Marcellus 37 Marullus 37-41	HEROD AGRIPPA I (King) Acts 12:1-23 A.D. 44	HEROD AGRIPPA I (King) Acts 12:1-23 A.D. 44		
GAIUS (Caligula) A.D. 41		HEROD AGRIPPA I (King) Acts 12:1-23 A.D. 44	HEROD AGRIPPA I (King) Acts 12:1-23 A.D. 44		
CLAUDIUS Acts 11:28 18:2	Procurators Cuspius Fadus 44-45 Tiberius Julius Alexander 45-48 Ventidius Cumanus 48-52 Antonius Felix 52-59 Acts 23:24 - 24:27 Porcius Festus 59-62 Acts 24:27-26:32 Lucecius Albinus 62-65 Gessius Florus 65-66 A.D. 66	HEROD AGRIPPA II (King) Acts 25 A.D. 56 or 61	HEROD AGRIPPA II (King) Acts 25 A.D. 56 or 61		
A.D. 54		HEROD AGRIPPA II (King) Acts 25 A.D. 56 or 61	HEROD AGRIPPA II (King) Acts 25 A.D. 56 or 61		
NERO Acts 25:11f, 21 26:32, 27:24 II Tim. 4:16, 17		HEROD AGRIPPA II (King) Acts 25 A.D. 56 or 61	HEROD AGRIPPA II (King) Acts 25 A.D. 56 or 61		
A.D. 68		HEROD AGRIPPA II (King) Acts 25 A.D. 56 or 61	HEROD AGRIPPA II (King) Acts 25 A.D. 56 or 61		
GALBA, OTHO, VITELLIUS A.D. 69		HEROD AGRIPPA II (King) Acts 25 A.D. 56 or 61	HEROD AGRIPPA II (King) Acts 25 A.D. 56 or 61		
VESPASIAN 69-79 TITUS 79-81 DOMITIAN 81-96 NERVA 96-98 TRAJAN 98-117		HEROD AGRIPPA II (King) Acts 25 A.D. 56 or 61	HEROD AGRIPPA II (King) Acts 25 A.D. 56 or 61		
A.D. 70		HEROD AGRIPPA II (King) Acts 25 A.D. 56 or 61	HEROD AGRIPPA II (King) Acts 25 A.D. 56 or 61		

Lesson 18

Acts 13-14 (I)

Acts 13 and 14 contain the account of Paul's and Barnabas' First Missionary Journey. Trace their path on the map as you read this account. This lesson will provide an overview of the journey and the next lesson will focus on particular incidents or statements within the account.

Background

13:9 – "Saul, who is also called Paul": Roman citizens had three names: a *praenomen*, *nomen*, and *cognomen*. "Paul" would most likely have been his *cognomen*; his other two names are unknown. Compare with the proconsul Sergius Paulus where "Sergius" is the *nomen* and "Paulus" [Latin form of Paul] is the *cognomen*.

Text

1. The church in Antioch had a very diverse membership which is in line with the cosmopolitan nature of the city itself.

a. What was the home country of Barnabas? (cf. 4:36)

b. Simeon is a Jew who also had the Latin name (or description?) Niger which means "black". Thus, he, like Lucius (a common Latin *praenomen*), may have been from Cyrene.

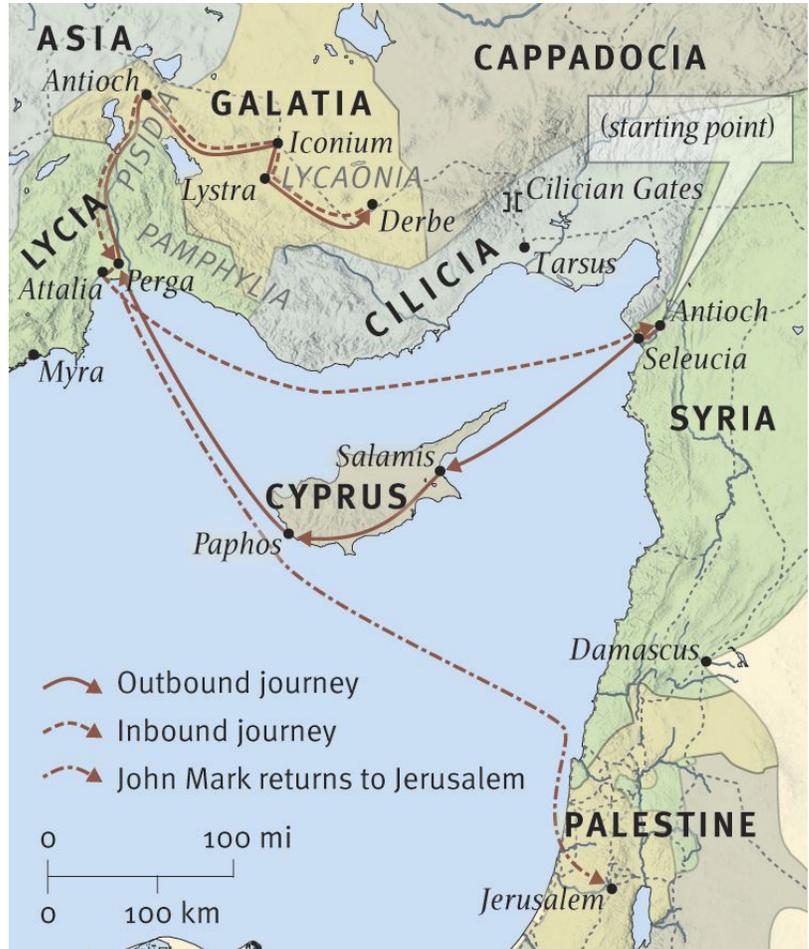
Could this Simeon be the Simon of Luke 23:26?

c. What other connection to Cyrene did the church in Antioch have? (cf. 11:20)

d. Manaen was brought up with Herod the tetrarch. Which Herod is this?

2. Who sent Paul and Barnabas on their journey?

3. What three things did the church do in preparation for Paul and Barnabas' departure?



Paul's First Missionary Journey, ESV Bible Atlas, p.241.

The Acts of the Apostles

1)

2)

3)

4. For each stop on the journey, list the major events which took place.

<u>Region</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Major Events</u>
Cyprus	Salamis	
	Paphos	
Pamphylia	Perga	
Pisidia*	Antioch	
Phrygia	Iconium	
Lycaonia	Lystra	
	Derbe	

*Actually, Antioch was in the region adjoining Pisidia. Later, in AD 295, it became a major city in the expanded province of Pisidia. [cf. Bruce, *Acts*, p. 251-252]

5. Note how Luke refers to Paul and Barnabas throughout this journey in the following verses:

11:30 -

12:25-

13:2-

13:7-

13:13-

13:46-

13:50-

What possible conclusion can one draw from the change of name order?

6. Where did Paul and Barnabas first preach when entering a city? (cf. 13:5,14; 14:1)

Why? (cf. 13:46; Romans 1:16-17)

However, there is one exception to this on their first journey. Where? Why?

7. What two groups of people are mentioned as being in attendance at the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia to hear the preaching of Paul? (13:16)

1)

2)

Who are those in the second group mentioned? (cf. 10:2; 13:42)

8. Upon arriving back in Antioch of Syria, what two things did Paul and Barnabas report?

1)

2)

Luke as Historian

Most all agree that Luke claims to be writing history as he tells the story of the expansion of God's word throughout the Roman world. But it is still debated how reliable Luke is. One aspect of his writing that can be used to help answer that question is his use of Roman official titles. The Roman Empire encompassed multiple national groups that were formerly independent with each having their own political structures. Not only that, those political structures changed over time. The following extended quote from James D.G. Dunn shows that Luke consistently used the correct titles for each of the officials he names.

"A feature worth noting is that examples of these correlations become frequent from the beginning of the 'we' passages onwards. Indeed, since William Ramsay was converted to a high view of the reliability of Acts, students of Acts have regularly been impressed by Luke's historical accuracy on various small details on which a writer with no personal experience of the events he narrates might well have stumbled. Luke knows that Herod Antipas was only titled 'tetrarch' of Galilee (Acts 13.1), whereas Agrippa I and II were both properly titled 'king' (12.1; 25.13), since both were granted the royal title by Gaius and Claudius. He uses the correct title 'proconsul' for the Roman governors of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus (13.7), and of Corinth, Gallio (18.12), the only NT writer to use the proper Greek equivalent (*anthypatos*) of the Latin *proconsul*, governor of a senatorial province, whereas Felix and Festus were only procurators of Judea, governor (*hegemon*) of a minor province (23.24; 26.30). Philippi is correctly described as a 'colony' (*kolonia*, 16.12) and its chief magistrates praetors (*strategoi*, 16.20). The city magistrates of Thessalonica, however, are properly designated 'politarchs' (*politarchai*, 17.6), a title which Luke could not have derived from literary sources, since it is not attested in Greek literature known to us, though we know the title from Macedonian inscriptions. His report of an expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius (18.2) is confirmed by the famous report of Suetonius His knowledge of the several Ephesian officials named in Acts 19 is exact – proconsul (19.38), secretary of state/town clerk (*grammateus*, 19.35), and Asiarchs (*asiarchoi*, 19.31), men of status within the civic administration; and he uses the correct term, *agoraios*, for a provincial assize in Ephesus (19.38). And his knowledge of the rights of Roman citizenship and of judicial procedures reflects the conditions of the middle decades of the first century, not those of the later decades, during which he probably wrote Acts.

Also worth noting is the extent to which Josephus in particular confirms many of Luke's details which otherwise we might attribute to his story-telling imagination: the rebels, Judas of Galilee and Theudas (5.36-37 – even if Luke is confused as to their dates), and the 'Egyptian' (21.38); not only the dating of the procuratorships of Felix and Festus in Judea (23.24; 24.27) and the identity of the high priest Ananias (23.2; 24.1), as well as the names of Felix's wife (Drusilla, 24.24) and of Agrippa II's wife (Bernice, 25.13), but also his characterization of Felix, Festus and Agrippa II." [James D.G. Dunn, *Beginning From Jerusalem*, p.80-81]

Dunn mentions that it was Sir William M. Ramsay who first made these observations. Ramsay was an archaeologist and New Testament scholar who was educated in the tradition that believed that Luke was highly unreliable as a historian. In fact, Ramsay's intent when he began his physical survey of Asia Minor was to demonstrate Luke's unreliability. The exact opposite happened. Consequently, he became a champion of the view that Luke was a historian of the first rank and that Acts could bear the toughest scrutiny. He wrote, what has become a classic, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* to demonstrate Luke's ability as a historian.

Lesson 19

Acts 13 – 14 (II)

Background

13:7 – “*the proconsul, Sergius Paulus*”: Since Cyprus was a senatorial province, Sergius Paulus is correctly called a proconsul. There is no ancient record that collaborates that there was a proconsul of Cyprus named Sergius Paulus at this time. That is not unexpected since we only have records of a few of Cyprus’ proconsuls. There is, however, an inscription that names a Lucius Sergius Paullus who was a senator during the rule of Claudius. Proconsuls were chosen from the class of senators. Many scholars believe this is the same individual encountered by Paul and that he was a member of the aristocratic family of Sergii Paullus in Pisidia. Some conjecture this connection may also be part of the reason Paul and Barnabas proceeded to Pisidia after leaving Cyprus.

13:14; 14:6 – Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, and Lystra were Roman colonies. There were 13 Roman colonies in Galatia; 12 of which were in South Galatia (Keener, n.562, p.2035).

13:20 – “*After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years*”: So reads the KJV and NKJV. However, most translations (based on earlier manuscripts) place the 450-year period before the judges, thus the ESV reads “*... he gave them their land as an inheritance. All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet.*”

13:21 – “*Saul ... [reigned] ... for forty years.*” Whether this is an exact number or a rounded number is uncertain; the Old Testament accounts do not give the number of years he reigned although the original text of 1 Samuel 13:1 may have. The Hebrew manuscripts of this verse literally read as “*Saul was _____ years old when he began to reign; and he reigned _ ____ and two years over Israel*” (NRSV; NJB sim., NAB sim.). The correct numbers to insert in this verse have been lost. Translators give varying numbers for Saul’s age and length of reign: 30 (based on some manuscripts of the LXX) and 42 (NASU, CEB, NIV, CSB); 30 and 22 (REB). On the other hand, some translate the passage so that no numbers need be inserted: “*Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,...*” (KJV) or “*Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years...*” (ESV). In different passages, Josephus gave both 40 and 20 years as the length of Saul’s reign.

Text

1. When the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas on their journey, they fasted, prayed, and laid their hands on them.
 - a. Fasting is sometimes associated with prayer in Scripture. Read and consider the context of Ezra 8:21-23; Daniel 9:3; Luke 2:37; and Acts 14:23. Why do these occur together?

However, the KJV and NKJV, based on later manuscripts, includes “*fasting*” in the following passages: Mark 9:20; Acts 10:30; 1 Corinthians 7:5. Why do you think “*fasting*” was added by copyists to later manuscripts?

- b. The laying on of hands was not uncommon in the OT nor in the Gospels where it was especially connected with Jesus’ healings. Consider the following other NT occurrences: Acts 6:6; 8:17; 9:17; 19:6; 28:8; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:6; Hebrews 6:2. What are the various purposes given in these passages for the laying on of hands?

3. Why would it make sense for the Holy Spirit to first send Barnabas and Saul to Cyprus?

4. While preaching in Cyprus (a senatorial province), Paul and Barnabas are able to preach to the pro-consul, Sergius Paulus.

a. They are resisted by the sorcerer Bar-Jesus (Elymas). To counteract his influence, Paul strikes him blind for an unspecified length of time. Why blindness and not some other punishment?

b. What was astonishing to the proconsul about "the teaching of the Lord" (13:12)?

c. Is Sergius Paulus converted?

5. Luke's account in 13:14ff, along with Luke 4:16-21, gives us our earliest description of a Jewish synagogue service. From these two accounts, identify features of that service?

Note: Other sources suggest that prayer and the reading of the Law/Prophets accompanied by interpretation and exhortation were the main activities during a service. In the Diaspora, synagogues were more commonly called "places of prayer" (Keener, p.1298-99).

6. Traveling north 125 miles (80 miles as the crow flies) to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas had to pass through the highest portions of the Tarsus Mountains. Of the places where they visited on this first journey, only Paul's sermon at Antioch of Pisidia is summarized by Luke with any significant detail (13:16-41).

a. Who specifically does Paul address?

b. Note the emphasis in this sermon upon the action of God. List the various things that God is said to have done.

c. David plays a key role in this sermon. Why was David said to be a "a man after [God's] own heart" (13:22; cf. 1 Sam.13:14)?

d. What was the promise alluded to in 13:23? (cf. 2 Sam.7:12-17; Ps.132:11, 17-18)

And, what is its fulfillment?



Roman Provinces at Time of Paul's Journeys

(Senatorial – Pink; Imperial – Green)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_province

(actually, Cilicia and Syria were one Roman province at this time)

The Acts of the Apostles

- e. What is the main point of this sermon?
 - f. How does content of this sermon compare to the earlier sermons of Peter's and Stephen's? Did they preach the same gospel?
7. Upon leaving Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas "*shook off the dust from their feet*" (13:51).
- a. Compare Jesus' instructions to the Twelve: Matthew 10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5.
 - b. What is the meaning of this idiom? (Note: some translations add at the end of the idiom "*in protest*" (NJB, NRSV, REB, NASU, NAB).
8. In 14:1, the word "*together*" (also, KJV, ASV, RSV, REB, NASU, NAB) could also be translated "*in the same way*" (NJB; NRSV, "*The same thing occurred in Iconium...*"; NIV, CSB "*as usual*"), thus indicating a similarity between what happened in Antioch of Pisidia and Iconium. What is the similarity?
9. Both Paul and Barnabas are called apostles (14:4, 14; cf. 1 Corinthians 9:1, 4-6).
- a. In what sense were they different than the Twelve? (cf. 13:31)
 - b. Were there other apostles even besides the Twelve, Paul and Barnabas? Consider Galatians 1:18-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:57.
10. What two experiences of Paul on this journey are reminiscent of Peter's experiences recorded earlier in Acts?
- 1)
 - 2)
11. In 14:23, Luke records that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the recently formed churches in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.
- a. Is this surprising? Why, or why not?
 - b. Can an argument be made that all NT churches had elders?
12. Paul and Barnabas had to endure persecution in several cities on their journey.
- a. List the persecutions that are recorded by Luke.
 - b. Who were the instigators of this persecution? Why?

- c. What argument did James make? (v.13ff)

 - d. What is the common basis of all three arguments?

 - e. Is there any indication that Paul and Barnabas had to convince Peter, James, or any other of the Jerusalem leaders that Gentiles must be accepted without the imposition of circumcision.
5. The apostles, elders, and brethren wrote their conclusion regarding this question in a letter to the brethren of Antioch. (v.23ff)
- a. To which brethren in particular was the letter addressed? Why was the Jewish brethren in those areas not also addressed?

 - b. What was their conclusion? In particular, what four things are required of the Gentile converts?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - 4)

 - c. Equally important, what was not required of them?

 - d. The letter states that this conclusion "*seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us*" (v.28). How did the brethren know it seemed good to the Holy Spirit?

 - e. Since the things they were told to abstain from are also a part of the law of Moses, why were things such as circumcision not required?

 - f. What was the effect of the letter upon the brethren in Antioch?

 - g. The letter was delivered by Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas. What was the point, perhaps, of sending Judas and Silas along with Paul and Barnabas?

6. Many (probably most) hold that the Jerusalem meeting in Acts 15 is the same meeting that Paul describes in Galatians 2:1-10. It may be. There are, however, several differences between the two accounts that would have to be satisfactorily explained if their identity is to be successfully argued.

a. In Galatians 1 and 2, Paul is trying to establish his independence of the Jerusalem leaders. To demonstrate that, he recounts the visits he has made to Jerusalem. The visit in Galatians 2 is his second visit to Jerusalem, but according to Acts, the visit in Acts 15 is his third visit to Jerusalem. Wouldn't Paul's failure to mention his famine relief visit to Jerusalem (Acts 11) undermine his argument of independence?

b. In Galatians 2:2, Paul said he went to Jerusalem "because of a revelation". Is any such revelation noted in Acts 15? (Of course, there could have been a revelation given that just wasn't recorded by Luke.)

c. Is the meeting described in Acts 15 public or private?

Is the meeting described in Galatians 2 public or private?

c. What is the conclusion and charge given to Paul at the end of the Acts 15 meeting?

What is the conclusion and charge given to Paul at the end of the Galatians 2 meeting?

7. In light of these differences, some think that the Galatians 2 visit is the same as the famine relief visit in Acts 11. So, two alternate understandings are as follows: (a careful examination of these is best reserved for a study of Galatians)

	<u>Acts</u>	=	<u>Galatians</u>	
Paul's Conversion	9:10-19	=	1:15-16	Paul's Conversion
	?	=	1:17	Trip to Arabia
Preaching in Damascus	9:19-22	=	1:17	Return to Damascus
1st Visit to Jerusalem	9:26-30	=	1:18-19	"after three years"
2nd Visit to Jerusalem (Famine Relief Visit)	11:30	=	2:1	"after fourteen years"
			2:11-14	Confronts Peter at Antioch
			OR,	
3rd Visit to Jerusalem (Jerusalem Council)	15:2ff	=	2:1	"after fourteen years"
			2:11-14	Confronts Peter at Antioch

Significance

7. What aspects of this case are examples to us when disagreements between brethren occur?

The Giving of the Spirit as Argument

The Apostles and Jerusalem elders met to decide whether Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to be acceptable to God and, hence, accepted within the church. This meeting was necessitated by the work of some Jewish Christians who were visiting various churches teaching that Gentiles had to be circumcised. Luke, noting that there was "much debate" over this issue, records the arguments of Peter, Paul and Barnabas, and James which led to the decision that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised. It is critical for us to understand their arguments because it becomes a template for Paul (in particular) in reassuring the Gentiles that they have been accepted by God as being part of his people.

Peter recounts the conversion of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. After the Holy Spirit arranged for Peter and Cornelius to meet in Cornelius' home, the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and his household while Peter was telling them the gospel of Jesus Christ. The coming of the Spirit upon them was evident in that they were able to speak in tongues. Peter's conclusion was that "And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith" (15:8-9). Similarly, Paul and Barnabas report their work during their just-completed missionary journey. In each city God approved their work among the Gentiles (which did not involve the Gentiles being circumcised) by enabling them to perform "signs and wonders" (15:12). James quotes OT Scripture (given through the Spirit) foretelling God acceptance of the Gentiles.

The common denominator to these arguments is that the Spirit gave evidence (speaking in tongues, signs and wonders, prophetic revelation) of the Gentiles acceptance and circumcision was not required.

This powerful argument was not only useful in refuting the Judiazers, but also to encourage the Gentiles. The work of the Spirit through his empowerment was evidence they were now part of God's family. They could visibly see, and hence understand, that they were accepted by God. We see Paul making this argument in at least three of his letters.

Paul writes the Galatians to rebuke them for giving ear to the Judiazers. He reminds them of their beginning in Christ. "Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal.3:2-3). Paul's point is that their reception of the Spirit was only on the basis of their faith and not their adherence to points of the Law of Moses. But what does Paul mean when he speaks of them 'receiving the Spirit'? It becomes clear in his parallel expression in verse 5: "Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—..." Paul says they received the Spirit when miracles were worked among them. Verse 14 makes an even stronger connection to the experience of the early Christians we read about in Acts: "so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith". The "promised Spirit" is the same promise Peter preaches on Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21, 33, 38) – the promise of the Spirit being poured out on all flesh.

At the end of Paul's opening doxology in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul speaking to the Gentiles says, "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory" (Eph.1:13-14). To seal something denotes ownership. These Gentiles had been sealed by the "promised Holy Spirit" (i.e. the "poured out" Spirit in Acts 2). This action becomes the "guarantee" (KJV, ASV "earnest"; CSB, NET "down payment"; NIV "deposit

guaranteeing"; NRSV, NASU "pledge"; NAB "first installment") of their inheritance. Paul's point is clear. The Gentiles reception of the Spirit as evidenced by the miraculous empowerment among them served as a visible down payment on their future, unseen inheritance.

In a context where Paul argues that he is simply a worker for God, he says, "And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Cor.1:21-22). The same elements occur here as in Ephesians 1: God's seal and the giving of the Spirit as a guarantee. The giving of the Spirit is more elaborately stated: "given us his Spirit in our hearts". One might think a different type of giving of the Spirit is in view since in this case the Spirit is given "in our hearts". But Paul uses this expression two other times in 2 Corinthians (not in reference to the Spirit) simply to highlight the close connection implied by the expression (4:6; 7:3). More likely this should be taken as shorthand for the fuller statement "and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom.5:5) – another context where Paul is highlighting the assurance his readers had of their inheritance. The giving of the Spirit through his endowments was evidence of God's love, his acceptance, and our inheritance.

Lesson 21

Acts 15:36 – 18:22 (I)

Three lessons will be devoted to a study of Paul's Second Missionary Journey. This lesson gives an overview of the entire journey.



Paul's Second Missionary Journey. *ESV Bible Atlas*, p.242.

Background

16:6 – “the region of Phrygia and Galatia” (also 18:23): Both Phrygia and Galatia could be used to denote a geographic area, but Galatia could also be used to denote the province which included multiple geographic areas including Galatia and part of Phrygia. For example, Antioch of Pisidia was in the area of Phrygia, but was also a part of the Galatian province. Since in the Greek a single definite article precedes Phrygia and Galatia, some scholars follow Ramsey in understanding Luke to mean the Phrygian-Galatian region (that is, the area common to both the geographic area of Phrygia and the province of Galatia). In this case, Luke would be referring to the same area Paul and Barnabas evangelized on the first journey. Others think Luke is referring to areas not yet evangelized. In particular, they see this as suggesting that Paul went to the geographic area of Galatia which was in the far north of the Galatian province. This understanding forms the basis of the “North Galatia” theory for the recipients of the Galatian letter.

18:2 – The expulsion of the Jews by Claudius from Rome is attested by Suetonius, a second-century biographer of the Caesars (c. AD 120): “... because the Jews of Rome were indulging in constant riots at the instigation of Chrestus he expelled them from the city” [*Life of Claudius*, 25.4, quoted by Bruce, *New Testament History*, p.297]. It is generally agreed that the Chrestus

to whom Suetonius refers is Jesus.

18:12 – Gallio was a member of a distinguished Spanish family with high ranking in Rome's society. Originally named M. Annaeus Novatus, he was the natural son of M. Annaeus Seneca (c.50 BC - AD 40), the famous rhetorician. Seneca, the Stoic philosopher and tutor to Nero, was his brother, and Lucan, a poet, was his nephew. When he arrived in Rome, he was adopted by Lucius Junius Gallio and his name was changed to Lucius Junius Annaeus Gallio. Several ancient writers refer to him: his brother Seneca, Statius, Pliny, Tacitus, and Dio Cassius. Nothing detrimental is attributed to him; rather, references are made to his pleasant nature. He left Achaia due to a fever. In AD 65, he and his family became distrusted by Nero and were executed.

Text

1. Five of the cities Paul visited on his second journey were major Roman cities: Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth and Ephesus. Philippi, Corinth, and Troas were Roman colonies.
2. What was Paul's motivation for making a second journey?
3. A disagreement between Paul and Barnabas developed as to whether they should take John Mark with them. (Notice the words used in the text to describe their attitude on this matter.)
 - a. What was basis of their disagreement?
 - b. How did they settle their disagreement?
 - c. Although we may not know the full story, did the cause of Christ seem to suffer as a result of their disagreement?
 - d. Why may it have been appropriate for Barnabas to go to Cyprus and Paul through the region of Syria and Cilicia?
 - e. What is Paul's attitude toward Mark later? (cf. Col.4:10; 2 Tim.4:11)
4. For each stop on the journey, list the major events which took place.

<u>Region</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Major Events</u>
Syria/Cilicia		
Galatia	Derbe Lystra	
Phrygia		

The Acts of the Apostles

Mysia

Troas

Macedonia

Philippi

Thessalonians

Berea

Achaia

Athens

Corinth

Cenchrea

Asia

Ephesus

Judea

Jerusalem

5. Several people accompanied Paul through various portions of his journey.
 - a. Because Paul and Barnabas separated, who accompanied Paul throughout the entire journey?
 - b. Who next joins Paul and Silas in South Galatia?

Was Derbe or Lystra Timothy's hometown?

- c. Who joins Paul and his party at Troas? (16:8-10) (Notice the change of pronouns.)

When and where does Paul leave Luke?

6. Paul and Silas first travel through Syria and Cilicia "*strengthening the churches*" (15:41; see also 16:5). Which churches are these? When would they probably have been formed?

Any significance that the text says "*strengthening the churches*" instead of "*strengthening the brethren*"?

7. As Paul and Silas visited the brethren, they *"delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem"* (16:4).

8. The course of Paul's journey was apparently not totally predetermined by him.
 - a. In what two regions was Paul not permitted by the Spirit to preach?

 - b. Is the *"Spirit of Jesus"* (16:6) the same as the *"Holy Spirit"* (16:5)?

 - b. Conversely, where and by what means did the Lord direct Paul and his companions?

9. Besides the synagogue, where did Paul preach?

10. Only one of Paul's sermons on this journey is recorded by Luke. In what city was this sermon preached, and why, perhaps, was this and no other sermons recorded?

11. It is commonly commented that Luke in both his Gospel and in Acts gives prominence to women. Is this the case in Luke's treatment of Paul's second journey? Illustrate.

Lesson 22

Acts 15:36 - 18:22 (II)

Background

- 16:1 – “*Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.*” So, was Timothy a Jew or a Gentile? Later rabbinic writings clearly “counted as Jewish the son of a Jewish mother and a Gentile man” (Keener, p.2317). It is debated whether that was the case at the time Paul met Timothy, although there is no evidence to the contrary.
- 16:12 – “*Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony*”: Philippi (as all the cities Paul travelled from Neapolis to Berea) was in the province of Macedonia. The capital of Macedonia was Thessalonica. The province was divided into four judicial districts. Philippi was in the district whose capital was Amphipolis (17:1), but Philippi may have been the more prosperous city.
- 16:14 – “*a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God*”: “It was common knowledge that purple (like blue in earlier times) was expensive, rare, and highly valued. Purple symbolized wealth and, for some writers, excessive extravagance. The wealthy paid more than a thousand denarii for a pound of the finest Tyrian wool doubly stained (though just more than a third of that for less valuable purple hues). ... Archaeological evidence attest work in purple dye in Phoenicia as early as 1700 B.C.E.; its use continued into the Christian era... Most educated ancients were aware that Tyrian purple came from ... shellfish. ... Because Lydia was from Thyatira, it is possible that her dye is from the madder plant in Asia Minor rather than from the murex shellfish. As a cheaper, ‘imitation’ dye, this product would have provided less income than the Tyrian variety, though it would have remained a luxury product.” [Keener, p.2399-2401, re-arranged]
- 17:1 – Thessalonica “was founded about 315 BC by Cassander, king of Macedonia, who named it after his wife Thessalonica, daughter of Philip II and half-sister of Alexander the Great. Its original residents were the former inhabitants of Therme and some twenty-five other towns or villages in the area, whom Cassander forcibly settled in his new foundation. When Rome divided Macedonia into four districts in 167 BC, Thessalonica became the capital of the second district; when they made Macedonia a province in 146 BC, Thessalonica became the seat of provincial administration. From 46 BC, it enjoyed the status of a free city, governed by its own politarchs.” [Bruce, *Apostle of the Heart*, p.223]
- 17:6 – “*City authorities*” is the ESV translation of the Gk. *politarchs*. “This title appears to have been peculiar to the chief magistrates of Macedonian cities; it appears nowhere else in Greek literature apart from Acts 17:6, where it is used of the chief magistrates of Thessalonica, but it is amply attested in inscriptions belonging to our period for Thessalonica itself and other Macedonian cities.” [Bruce, *Apostle of the Heart*, p.223]

Text

1. Silas and Timothy, along with Luke, are well-known companions of Paul on his second journey.
 - a. Why was Silas a good choice to accompanied Paul? [There are, at least, three reasons: 15:22, 32; 16:37,38]
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - b. Luke does not explicitly tell us when Timothy was converted (cf. 16:1). Is there any evidence in Scripture to tell us whether Timothy was converted during Paul's first journey

- through Lystra, or if, perhaps, he was converted during the interval between Paul's first and second journey? (cf. 1 Cor.4:14-17; 1 Tim.1:2; 2 Tim.1:2; 3:10-11)
- c. Since Paul understood that circumcision was not necessary for salvation, why did Paul circumcise Timothy? (cf. 16:3) [Especially in view of the fact that one of the purposes of Paul in returning to the cities of Galatia was to deliver the decrees from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.]
2. Earlier Luke recorded the conversion of Cornelius and his "household" (cf. 11:14; compare 10:24).
- a. What two households were converted during the second journey?
- 1)
2)
- b. Supporters of infant baptism often point to these three households as examples where infants were baptized. What is the major problem with this argument?
- c. In particular, is there anything within the text containing the Philippian jailer's conversion to argue against the baptism of infants? (cf. 16:30-34)
3. "As was his custom" (17:2), Paul first went to the synagogue of each city he visited on his second journey.
- a. Which cities on Paul's second journey apparently did not have a synagogue?
- b. Is there evidence in the text that Gentiles attended the synagogue in these cities as they did in the cities of Galatia?
- c. What word does Luke consistently use to describe Paul's preaching in the synagogues? (cf. 17:2, 17; 18:4, 19)
- d. What words does Luke use to describe the people's response to Paul's preaching? (cf. 16:34; 17:4 (KJV), 12, 34; 18:8, 13)
4. In three cities, Paul, Silas, or the brethren are brought before Roman rulers.
- a. List each city, the charge brought against Paul, and the outcome of the trial.
- | <u>City</u> | <u>Charge</u> | <u>Outcome</u> |
|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1) | | |
| 2) | | |
| 3) | | |

- b. What are the titles used of the various rulers in the above cities?
5. Lydia was a "*worshiper of God*" (= 'God-fearer').
- a. Explain: "*The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul* (16:14).
 - b. Any evidence that her occupation as "*a seller of purple goods*" made her a woman of some wealth?
6. Paul's first recorded imprisonment was in Philippi. (cf. 1 Thess. 2:2)
- a. Why did Paul and Silas not tell of their Roman citizenship prior to being beaten?

Is it coincidental that the only city Luke identifies as a Roman colony is also the first city where Paul identifies himself as a Roman citizen?

- b. What charge was given the jailer?
 - c. What did the jailer do to fulfill his charge?
 - d. Was the earthquake providential? That is, was it given by God for the express purpose of releasing the prisoners' chains?
 - e. Note the language: in 16:34 the text says that the jailer and his household rejoiced "*that he had believed in God.*" What does 'belief' seem to include?
7. A very brief summary is given of Paul's preaching in Thessalonica (17:1-4).
- a. Of necessity, what two things did Paul say the Christ had to do?
 - 1)
 - 2)Why was it necessary?
 - b. So, what was Paul's 'proclamation' to the Thessalonians?
 - c. What is the charge brought against Paul? (17:6-7)
 - d. Who is Jason and how does he enter the story?
 - e. Paul received funds from Philippi while in Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16).

Lesson 23

Acts 15:36 - 18:22 (III)

Background

17:18 – Epicureans, "who took their name from their founder Epicurus (341-270 BC), tended to be materialistic in outlook. For them either the gods did not exist, or they were so far removed from the world as to exercise no influence on its affairs ... , and in their ethics they stressed the importance of pleasure and tranquility ... The Stoics, founded by Zeno (340-265 BC), took their name from the stoa or colonnade where he taught. They stressed the importance of Reason as the principle which was inherent in the structuring of the universe and by which men ought to live. They had a pantheistic conception of God as the world-soul, and their ethics stressed individual self-sufficiency and obedience to the dictates of duty." [Marshall, *Acts*, p.300]

17:19 – The Areopagus literally refers to the 'hill of Ares', the Greek god of war [Mars was the Roman god of war, hence the translation of the KJV as Mars' Hill (17:22)]. But the term was used also to refer to the 'Council of the Areopagus'. Thus, it was probably to the council that Paul was brought to explain his teaching.

17:28 – "*for we too are his offspring*" Originally penned by Aratus, a 3rd-century BC Stoic but quoted by Aristobulus, a 2nd-century BC Jewish writer.

18:1 – "The city of Corinth, situated strategically at the southwest end of the isthmus separating the Peloponnese and Attica, minted coins since 600 BC. The city was known for its pottery industry (Corinthian vases), metal manufacture (an alloy known as Corinthian bronze), and carpet weaving. Because Corinth was the center of resistance of the Greek cities against Rome, the Roman Senate decreed that the city must be destroyed, a decision carried out in 146 BC. The city remained virtually deserted for a century. In 44 BC, Julius Caesar refounded the city as a Roman colony (*Colonia Laus Iulia Corinthus*), settling 3,000 freed slaves and veterans in the city. ... When Achaia was organized as a senatorial province separately from Macedonia in AD 44, Corinth became the provincial capital. Strabo describes Corinth as wealthy "because of its commerce" (8.6.20). It is estimated that Roman Corinth had about 80,000 inhabitants; if we include the towns and villages that Corinth controlled, another 20,000 people should be included. The theater could seat 15,000 spectators. The moral depravity of the Corinthian population is exaggerated by ancient authors, whose assertions owe more to Athens' propaganda against a rival city than to the realities of everyday life in Corinth." [Schnabel, *Acts*, p.755]

18:3 – "In Judaism it was not considered proper for a scribe or rabbi to receive payment for his teaching, so many practiced a trade" [Bruce, *Acts*, p.346]. The Mishnah has a section of ethical maxims handed down from the 'fathers': "Rabban Gamaliel said ... Excellent is study of the Law together with worldly occupation, for toil in them both puts sin out of mind. But all study of the Law without [worldly] labour comes to naught at the last and brings sin in its train" [Danby, *The Mishnah*, Aboth 2.2].

18:17 – "*and they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, ...*" In context "they" refers most naturally to the Jews; some manuscripts read "*all the Jews seized Sosthenes ...*". The difficulty of explaining why the Jews would beat one of their own apparently gave rise to other manuscripts reading "*all the Gentiles seized Sosthenes ...*".

Text

1. How were the Jews in Berea more "*noble*" (17:11, ESV, KJV, ASV; "*noble-minded*" NJB, NASU; "*fair-minded*" NKJV, REB, NAB; "*of more noble character*" NIV, CSB; "*receptive*" NRSV; "*more honorable*" CEB) than those in Thessalonica?

2. Jews from Thessalonica, upon learning of Paul's preaching in Berea, went to Berea for the purpose of "*agitating and stirring up the crowds*" (17:13). Paul is evidently the focus of attention of these trouble makers since it is Paul alone that was sent by brethren out of the city. What is suggested by the fact that Silas and Timothy remain in Berea?

3. Paul arrives in Athens alone. His sermon in Athens before the Areopagus (17:16-34) is the only sermon on the Second Missionary Journey that is recorded by Luke.
 - a. What is the main focus of Paul's sermon?

 - b. What does this sermon have in common with the message Paul preached to the people of Lystra? (cf. 14:14-17)

 - c. What is different about this sermon compare to Paul's sermons in the synagogues?

 - d. Why, does Paul say, did God make the world and mankind?

 - e. Explain: "*The times of ignorance God overlooked ...*" (17:30) Compare 14:16.

 - f. What other truth finds support in the resurrection of Jesus? (cf.17:31)

4. Paul apparently travels to Corinth alone (cf.18:5). By his own words, Paul says he was in Corinth with "*weakness and in fear and much trembling*" (1 Cor.2:3). Consequently, we are told that the Lord appears to him in a vision to encourage him and to assure him that there are "*many in this city who are my people*" (18:10). So how long does Paul stay in Corinth?

5. Aquila and Priscilla, Jews recently moved from Rome due to Claudius' edit, have set up shop in Corinth as tentmakers. The text simply says that Paul "*went to see them, and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade*" (18:2-3). Any evidence whether Aquila and Priscilla were already Christians at the time of their first meeting Paul?

6. Paul's approach is similar as in previous cities. He reasons in the synagogue. At some point, the Jews resist Paul's teaching forcing Paul to "*go to the Gentiles*" (18:6). But Paul's efforts are fruitful: Titius Justus (a God-fearer), Crispus (the ruler of the synagogue) and his household, and "*many of the Corinthians ... believed and were baptized*" (18:8). Paul apparently personally baptized Crispus (1 Cor.1:14).
 - a. Does it appear that the Jews brought Paul before Gallio soon after Gallio begun his procounsulship (which would have lasted one year)?
 - b. What is the charge brought against Paul?
 - c. On what basis does Gallio give his ruling?
 - d. What benefit, unintended by the Jews, accrued to Paul by being brought before Gallio? (18:18).
7. When Paul leaves Corinth, Priscilla and Aquila join him.
 - a. They first stop in Cenchreae, which was the port city for Corinth. At some point a church is established there – perhaps already during the 18 months Paul was in Corinth (Rom.16:1). Paul cuts his hair there due to a vow.
 - b. They then sail to Ephesus. Paul briefly reasons with the Jews in the synagogue. Priscilla and Aquila stay there.
 - c. Paul completes his journey by sailing to Caesarea, apparently visits the church in Jerusalem (he "*went up*" to greet the church and then "*went down*"). He returns to Antioch.

Significance

8. Many see Paul's speech in Athens as a guide to how Christians today should engage their culture. On the other hand, many others have suggested that Paul's attempt to engage the Athenians on their own terms was a failure. They see Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 as his acknowledgment that his attempt in Athens was ill-founded (consequently his decision not to take that path when he next traveled to Corinth). What do you think?

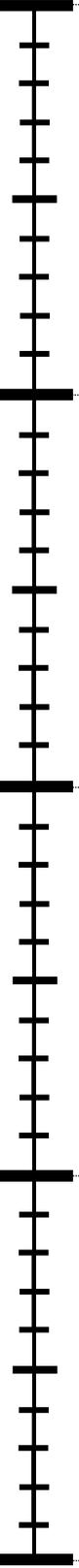
Lesson 24

Chronology of Acts

Acts is a work of history. People and events recorded by Luke often coincide with other records from the first century. The following events can be dated with some certainty. [An excellent study of the chronology in Acts is F.F. Bruce, "Chronological Questions in the Acts of the Apostles," *A Mind for What Matters*, Eerdmans, 1990.]

1. The Ascension of Jesus and the Beginning of the Church – Acts 1,2
 - a. Jesus ascended about 40 days following his crucifixion (Acts 1:3) and the Church began on Pentecost about 10 days later (Acts 2:1).
 - b. Jesus crucifixion occurred during the period Pilate was prefect of Judea (AD 26-37), and nearly every year within this period has been suggested as the year in which Jesus was crucified.
 - c. To determine the correct year of Jesus' crucifixion, proper consideration has to be given to several references within the Gospels, but assuming the majority views (1) that Jesus was crucified on Friday, and (2) that this occurred on the first day of unleavened bread (Nisan 14), astronomical calculations have shown that Nisan 14 fell on a Friday only in the years AD 30, 33, and 36.
 - d. Most accept either AD 30 or AD 33 as the year of Jesus' death and the beginning of the Church. [AD 30 is perhaps more consistent with Luke's statement Jesus was "about thirty years of age" (Lk.3:23) when he began his ministry, assuming that Jesus was born about 4 BC and his ministry lasted about three years.]
2. The Escape of Paul from Damascus – Acts 9:23-25
 - a. Escape took place during the reign of King Aretas IV (2 Cor.11:32) who ruled from about 9 BC to AD 40.
 - b. Consequently, Paul's conversion must have taken place before AD 40 at the latest and probably at least 1-2 years earlier than depending upon the length of time Paul was in Arabia.
3. The Reign and Death of Herod Agrippa I – Acts 12:1
 - a. Herod ruled Judea for only three years (AD 41-44) prior to his death in AD 44.
 - b. Thus, James was beheaded and Peter imprisoned between AD 41 and 44.
 - c. But Herod died before the Passover in AD 44, so it was either the Passover of 42 or 43 when Peter was arrested.
 - d. From the sequence in Acts it would appear that the conversion of Cornelius was prior to the beheading of James, thus before the early AD 40s.
4. The Famine Under Claudius – Acts 11:28
 - a. The Roman historian Suetonius notes that Claudius' reign was marked by a series of droughts. Other writers tell of famines in Rome, Greece, and Egypt.
 - b. Josephus says that Judea was hit with a famine during the procuratorship of Tiberius Julius Alexander (c. AD 45-48). The famine is often dated in AD 46-47.

5. Expulsion of Jews from Rome by Claudius – Acts 18:2
 - a. Such an action was not unprecedented. Tiberius expelled the Jews from Rome in AD 19 and Dio Cassius refers to an occasion when Claudius, at the beginning of his rule (AD 41), “did not indeed expel them, but forbade them to meet in their ancestral way.”
 - b. Suetonius mentions an occasion when Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome for rioting “at the instigation of Chrestus” (refer to Lesson 21). Although this is generally regarded as a reference to Jesus and, presumably, disputes resulting from the growth of Christianity in Rome, Suetonius does not date this expulsion.
 - c. Orosius, a contemporary of Augustine, places the expulsion in Claudius' ninth year (AD 49-50). Although it is uncertain how much trust can be placed in his statement, this date agrees well with Paul's ministry in Corinth (refer to the next event).
6. The Proconsulship of Gallio in Achaia – Acts 18:12 [Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*]
 - a. Proconsuls served for a term of one year, beginning in the spring or early summer.
 - b. An inscription found at Delphi (located across the Gulf of Corinth from Corinth) records a statement of Claudius following his 26th imperial acclamation (which must be dated in the first half of AD 52) concerning “Gallio my friend and proconsul” using language suggesting that Gallio was no longer proconsul. Thus, Gallio was proconsul from about Spring, AD 51 to Spring, AD 52.
 - c. Presuming that Acts 18:12 suggests that Paul was brought before Gallio shortly after Gallio arrived in Achaia, Paul's appearance before Gallio would have occurred in the Summer, AD 51.
 - d. Acts 18:11 records that Paul stayed in Corinth for 18 months. But it is uncertain whether that is the total length of his stay or is the length of his stay prior to being brought before Gallio (cf. Acts 18:12). In either case, Paul's stay in Corinth would be dated within the period between AD 50 and AD 52. This dating is almost universally accepted by scholars.
7. The High Priesthood of Ananias – Acts 23:2
 - a. Ananias was high priest from about AD 47 to 58 or 59. [Keener, p.3268]
 - b. Thus, Paul's last visit to Jerusalem and the beginning of his following two-year custody in Caesarea must have been before AD 58 or 59.
8. The Procuratorships of Felix and Festus – Acts 23:26ff; 25:1ff
 - a. There are no records that explicitly tell the years of Felix's and Festus' rule.
 - b. Using assorted indirect evidence, the best estimate for the year when Festus replaced Felix is AD 59.
9. The Reign of Herod Agrippa II – Acts 25:13
 - a. Agrippa was a ruler from about AD 48 until his death in AD 100.
 - b. Bernice, Agrippa's sister, left her third husband around AD 55 (the first two died soon after their marriage). Following that she lived with her brother until the mid-60s. It was during this period when Paul appeared before Agrippa and Bernice.

	Roman History	Acts
<p>AD 30</p> 	<p>Crucifixion of Jesus under Pilate (AD 30 or 33)</p>	<p>Beginning of the Church</p> <p>Stephen martyred</p> <p>Paul converted</p> <p>Paul escaped Damascus</p> <p>Conversion of Cornelius</p>
<p>40</p>	<p>King Aretas IV died</p> <p>Herod Agrippa I rules Judea</p> <p>Herod dies</p> <p>Famine in Judea</p>	<p>James beheaded</p> <p>Antioch sends relief to Jerusalem</p> <p>1st Journey</p>
<p>50</p>	<p>Caligula expels Jews from Rome</p> <p>Gallio, proconsul of Achaia</p>	<p>Jerusalem Council</p> <p>Paul at Corinth</p> <p>2nd Journey</p> <p>3rd Journey</p>
<p>60</p> <p>70</p>	<p>Festus replaces Felix</p>	<p>Paul in custody at Caesarea</p> <p>Voyage to Rome</p> <p>Paul in custody at Rome</p>

Lesson 25

Acts 18:23 - 21:14 (I)

Three lessons will be devoted to a study of Paul's Third Missionary Journey. Like his earlier journeys, Paul starts from the city of Antioch of Syria. However, assigning an end to his journey is somewhat arbitrary. For our purposes, we will consider Caesarea as the last city on this journey. This lesson will help provide an overview of the entire journey.



Paul's Third Missionary Journey, ESV Bible Atlas, p.147.

Text

1. For each stop on the journey, list the major events which took place.

<u>Region</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Major Events</u>
Galatia Phrygia		
Asia	Ephesus	
Macedonia		
Greece		

The Acts of the Apostles

Macedonia	Philippi
Asia	Troas
	Miletus
Syria	Tyre
	Ptolemais
Judea	Caesarea

2. As evidenced by the chart above, Luke does not give equal space to each of the cities Paul visited.
 - a. Which cities does Luke provide the longest record of Paul activities?
 - b. Why?

3. As usual, Paul had companions to accompany him on all or part of his journey. List each traveling companion and identify the portion of the journey on which they accompanied Paul. [Do not forget the companion implied by the use of the pronoun "we" (e.g. 20:6, etc.)!]

<i>Scripture Reference</i>	<i>Companion</i>	<i>City/Province of Residence</i>	<i>Portion of Journey Traveled with Paul</i>

4. In 18:23, the text says that Paul "*went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia.*" Which "places" do you think Luke intends to be understood?

5. Luke introduces us to one new character and reintroduces two who appeared earlier in his account.

a. Who arrives on the scene at Ephesus? (18:24)

List the eight things Luke tells us about this person.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

What does this suggest about the Jewish community in Alexandria?

What does it mean that he was "*instructed in the way of the Lord*"?

However, in what was he deficient and who helped in his further instruction?

When the text says that Apollos "*knew only the baptism of John*", does that suggest he had been baptized by John or one of John's disciples? Was he baptized again in the name of Christ?

The text says that Apollos "*greatly helped those who through grace had believed.*" How does Paul's letter of 1 Corinthians confirm this? (1 Cor.1:12; 3:4-9).

b. What two characters are reintroduced by Luke? Is the picture we are given of them at this time consistent with that given on their earlier appearance in the book?

How is their example valuable for us today?

6. Although Luke does not tell us how many months or years Paul spent on this journey, he does give us some time references.

a. How long did Paul stay in Ephesus? (compare 19:8-10 with 20:31)

b. How long did Paul stay in Greece?

In which city, do you think?

- c. Paul spent the "*days of Unleavened Bread*" (20:6) at Philippi. But he wanted to be "*at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost*" (20:16). Thus, how many days did Paul have to make the trip from Philippi to Jerusalem?

Of those days, how many can be accounted for according to Luke's record? Use the following more detailed itinerary of Paul's travels.

Macedonia	Philippi
Asia	Troas
	Assos
	Mitylene
	Opposite Chios
	Samos
	Miletus
	Cos
Rhodes	Rhodes
Lycia	Patara
Syria	Tyre
	Ptolemais
Judea	Caesarea

7. It is interesting to see how Paul's understanding of his future fate grew throughout his journey.

- a. What was Paul's future plans toward the end of his stay in Ephesus? (19:21)

At this time, is Paul aware of any particular danger awaiting him (that is, besides the "normal" persecution perpetrated by the Jews)?

- b. By the time he returns from his journey in Macedonia and Achaia, of what is Paul aware? (20:22-25)

Is he aware of the specifics of this danger?

How serious does he perceive this danger?

- c. What further revelation is given Paul at Caesarea? (21:10-14)

Lesson 26

Acts 18:23 - 21:14 (II)

Luke's record of Paul's Third Journey focuses upon two aspects: (1) Paul's work in Ephesus and (2) Paul's desire to go to Jerusalem. This lesson concerns his ministry at Ephesus.

Background

19:1 – “When Rome established the province of Asia Minor in 133 BC, Ephesus was granted the status of a free city. In 30-29 BC, Augustus made Ephesus the seat of the provincial governor (*proconsul*). A new governmental quarter was built, which included a Sebasteion (temple of Augustus) and a Bouleuteion (council building). The political status of the city and its harbor, the largest in Asia Minor, contributed to the economic growth of Ephesus. With 200,000 inhabitants in the first century, Ephesus was one of the largest cities of the empire. The theater could hold 24,000 spectators, who were seated according to civic status, association, and guild.” [Schnabel, Acts, p.783]

19:9 – “*hall of Tyrannus*” – A place either where Tyrannus lectured or a place he owned.

19:12 – “*handkerchiefs*” (also KJV, ASV, NJB, NRSV, REB, NASU, NIV), “*facecloths*” (NAB, CSB), “*small towels*” (CEB)

19:19 – “*fifty thousand pieces of silver*” – “presumably drachmas, and thus fifty thousand days’ pay for a pay laborer” [Witherington, Acts, p.582; Schnabel concurs, Acts, p.799].

19:24 – “*Artemis*” was the Greek goddess identified with the Roman goddess “*Diana*” (KJV, ASV). In Greek mythology, Artemis was the goddess of the moon and hunting. In Ephesus, Artemis also took on the attributes of a fertility goddess. The temple built for her at Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world; it was four times larger than the Parthenon.

19:31 – “The Asiarchs were the leading men of the province ..., members of the noblest and wealthiest local families who among other things were current or former holders of important offices in the league of Asian cities, and more importantly it appears that from their ranks was annually elected the high priest of the imperial cult. Their main task was to promote the cult of the emperor and of Roma, and secure allegiance to Rome.” [Witherington, Acts, p.595]

19:35,39 – Asian cities of this period were ruled by a council which was headed by a magistrate and the “*town clerk*” or the ‘people’s clerk’. At times, the town clerk had more power than the magistrate. Cities also had a second clerk, the “*clerk of the council*”, but he was significantly less powerful. Decisions of the council had to be ratified by the people in a “*regular assembly*”.

Text

1. Upon arriving in Ephesus, Paul encountered some disciples (19:17).
 - a. Did Paul think that these disciples were believers baptized into Christ?
 - b. If so, doesn’t this imply that in Paul’s mind it is possible for believers not to have received the Holy Spirit?

(That this is the case, is further indicated by the Holy Spirit being given through Paul laying his hands on them, not simultaneous with their baptism.)

In this passage, what does it mean to receive the Holy Spirit?

- c. According to Paul's statement in verse 4, what was expected of those who had been baptized with John's baptism?

Upon hearing this, what did these disciples do?

- d. Any indication that these disciples had been taught by Apollos?
 - e. So, was it required that all those who had been baptized with John's baptism be rebaptized into the name of Jesus Christ? Why, or why not?
2. Who is not mentioned in this account of Paul's visit to Ephesus that we might have expected to have been?
 3. Paul often encountered opposition to his preaching. Ephesus is last city where Luke provides the particulars of the opposition.
 - a. Who were Paul's opponents at Ephesus?
 - b. In reviewing the other cities where Paul was opposed, what is unique about the opposition at Ephesus?
 4. Despite the opposition, Paul was successful in preaching the gospel at Ephesus.
 - a. List the indications of success given in the text.
 - b. 19:10 "*all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks*" – What were some other cities of Asia where we know the word was preached and accepted?

Does this necessarily mean that Paul personally travelled throughout Asia at this time? (Consider Col. 1:4, 7; 2:1.)
 5. Luke notes that "*God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul*" (19:11).
 - a. What was unusual about these miracles?
 - b. Impressed by Paul's miracles, the seven sons of Sceva attempted to exorcise evil spirits in the name of Jesus. What does their failure have to say about the role of miracles?

- c. What was the result of God working with Paul? (19:17-20)
-
6. The controversy begun by Demetrius quickly engulfed the whole city.
 - a. Demetrius' speech is made to what group of people?
 - b. What are his two major points?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - c. As a result of Demetrius' incitement, who are the "*they*" that dragged Gaius and Aristarchus into the theater? (19:29)

Why?

Who are Gaius and Aristarchus?
 - d. Why, do you think, was Alexander "*put forward*" by the Jews? (19:33)
-
7. The "*town clerk*" (19:35) offers four reasons why Gaius and Aristarchus should not be harmed. Summarize each reason.
 - 1) (v.35-36)
 - 2) (v.37)
 - 3) (v.38-39)
 - 4) (v.40)

Significance

8. Luke's gives a couple of "progress reports" concerning the growth of the church and spread of the gospel in Ephesus (19:8-10, 20). What is the point of these progress reports?

Lesson 27

Acts 18:23 – 21:14 (III)

After leaving Troas, Luke informs us of Paul's desire to get to Jerusalem by the Day of Pentecost (20:16). Having already observed the Passover feast at Philippi (20:6), Paul and his companions had less than 50 days to make the journey. Thus, Paul was very restricted in the amount of missionary work he could do.

Background

21:1 – "*Rhodes*" is an island (45 miles long and 22 miles wide) in the SE Aegean Sea between Crete and Asia Minor; Rhodes is also the name of the island's capital city. "A number of classical sources ... extol the achievements of Rhodes in politics, economics, and culture. ... Considerable quantities of grain, fruit and vegetables, olives, honey, wine, and crafted wares were exported from the island." There were multiple temples on the island including one to Aphrodite. It also was home to the famous *Colossus of Rhodes*, a 90-foot-tall bronze statue, that was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world; but it had already been significantly damaged by earthquakes long before Paul's visit. [Carroll, "Rhodes" in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, Vol. V, p.719f]

Text

1. Paul's desire to go to Jerusalem is expressed three times (19:21; 20:16, 22). On the first occasion, the ESV text says "*Paul resolved in the Spirit...*" and on the third occasion, the ESV text says "*constrained by the Spirit*"; in both instances Spirit is capitalized (also NRSV, NASU, CEB, CSB). In 19:21, several translations either use a lower case "s" (KJV, ASV) or omit the phrase "*in the Spirit*" (NJB, REB, NAB, NIV, NET) suggesting that Paul simply decided within himself. In 20:22, the KJV, ASV, and NASU still use the lower case "s", but all the other translations above use an upper case "S".
 - a. Which do you think makes the most sense in 19:21 and 20:22 – "*Spirit*" or "*spirit*"?
 - b. Now, what does the text mean in a later passage when it says "*And through the Spirit they (the disciples at Tyre, cb) were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem*" (21:4)? Does it necessarily mean that the Spirit told Paul not to go to Jerusalem?
2. After Paul leaves Ephesus, Luke quickly summarizes Paul's travels through Macedonia and Achaia (Greece) (20:2-3a). Evidently, Luke's intent at this point is to tell of Paul's journey to Jerusalem. What two things does he relate which are relevant to Paul's journey to Jerusalem? (20:3b-4)
 - 1)
 - 2)
3. In his prior account of Paul's journeys, Luke's primary concern was to document Paul's preaching to the Jews and Gentiles that he encountered in the various cities. In what way is Luke's account of Paul's final journey to Jerusalem different?

One possible reason why this account takes on a different color is that Luke is accompanying Paul on this journey. Are there any other indications in the text of this final journey that possibly suggests the author was present?

4. Having arrived at Troas, Paul and his companions stay with the disciples seven days.
 - a. What two significant things take place *"on the first day of the week"* (20:7)?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - b. It has often been debated whether Luke is using Jewish or Roman time reckoning when referring to *"the first day of the week"*. According to Jewish practice, the day began at sunset, but according to Roman practice, the day began at sunrise. Is there any indication within the text which suggests Luke's use of either the Jewish or Roman reckoning?

5. Not having time to go to Ephesus himself, Paul sent for the elders of the Ephesian church to join him at Miletus.
 - a. Paul first reminds the elders of his work with them. What was Paul's attitude in teaching the Ephesians?

Where did he teach them?

Who did he teach?

What did he teach? (20:20, 21, 25, 27)
 - b. Paul then encourages them for the future. What does Paul see in his future?

Consequently, what did Paul *"know"* about his relationship with these elders? (20:25)

[If Paul wrote 1 Timothy after his first Roman custody, he was mistaken (1 Tim.1:13). However, a case can be made that Paul had already written 1 Timothy.]
 - c. What two dangers does he foresee in their future?
 - 1)
 - 2)

6. As Paul gets closer to Jerusalem, Luke emphasizes the impending danger for Paul at Jerusalem. Although Paul stays *"seven days"* at Tyre and *"many days"* at Caesarea, what is the only thing Luke reports about both those stays?

Lesson 28

Paul and His Early Letters

Six of Paul's letters are almost universally agreed by scholars to have been written by the time Paul concluded his Third Missionary Journey. It is interesting (actually puzzling) that Luke never notes Paul's letter writing in Acts. Even so, the study of the letters themselves give indications when the letters were written and where Paul was at the time of their writing. In addition, the letters provide supplemental information concerning Paul and his churches to that given by Luke in Acts.

Paul's seven other letters (called the *Prison Letters* (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) and the *Pastorals* (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus)) are believed by most to have been written after Paul is in Roman custody. We will consider those in a later lesson.

Galatians

1. Debate continues over two issues about the letter to the Galatians: 1) Where are "*the churches of Galatia*" (1:2) that Paul is writing, and 2) When did Paul write the letter? There are two main views:
 - 1) *North Galatia Theory*: The churches of Galatia were located in the northern portion of the Roman province of Galatia. In this view, these churches were founded on the 2nd and 3rd Missionary Journeys (Acts 16:6 and 18:23) and that Paul wrote this letter sometime on the 3rd Journey either from Ephesus or Corinth (mid-50s). Uniformly, those who hold this view generally believe that the Jerusalem council meeting in Acts 15 is the same meeting Paul references in Galatians 2.
 - 2) *South Galatia Theory*: The churches of Galatia were those churches in the southern part of the Roman province that Paul established on his 1st Missionary Journey (Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe). With regard to the time of writing, there are two variants: a) Most think that Paul is writing shortly after the completion of the 1st Journey and before the Jerusalem council (AD 49; hence, the visit to Jerusalem in Galatians 2 is the same as the famine relief visit of Acts 11), or b) Some think Paul is writing after (possibly soon after) the Jerusalem council (hence the visit to Jerusalem in Galatians 2 is to be equated with the Jerusalem council meeting of Acts 15).
2. Paul is writing these brethren with urgency – they were "*so quickly deserting him*" (i.e. Christ; 1:6). Apparently, Paul is writing not long after their conversion, but '*quickly*' does not lend itself to an exact time frame.
3. The issue Paul addresses is whether Gentile converts must be subjected to the Law of Moses, circumcision in particular (5:1-6). This is the same issue that arose in Antioch which precipitated the council meeting in Jerusalem (Acts 15). Hence, according to the South Galatia theory, the churches in south Galatia were being affected by the teaching of the Judaizers at essentially the same time as those in Antioch. According to the North Galatia theory, the churches in North Galatia were not affected until about 5 years after the Antioch church.
4. Points of correspondence with Acts:
 - 1) Paul mentions his work in Damascus (1:17 = Acts 9:8-25), his subsequent visit to Jerusalem (1:18-20 "*after three years*" = Acts 9:26-30), and his following to Tarsus (1:30 = Acts 9:21 "*the regions of Syria and Cilicia*"). In Galatians, Paul tells of his trip to Arabia following his conversion (1:17) which is not told us by Luke.
 - 2) Luke also does not mention Paul suffering any illness when he first visited Galatia (4:13-15).
 - 3) In addition to his first visit to Jerusalem, Paul also mentions a subsequent visit where he met with James, Peter, and John (2:1-10). As noted above, adherents to the North

Galatia view and the South Galatia view differ as to which visit in Acts corresponds to this visit (see also Lesson 20, Questions 6 and 7). Paul mentions Barnabas and Titus as accompanying him to Jerusalem (2:1, 3). According to Acts, Barnabas was with Paul on both his 2nd and 3rd visit to Jerusalem (hence, compatible with either the North or South Galatia view). Titus is never mentioned in Acts.

1 and 2 Thessalonians

1. Paul visited Thessalonica on both his 2nd and 3rd Missionary Journey (twice on his 3rd Journey), so Paul would have written these letters after his 1st visit at least, and possibly after his 2nd or 3rd visit.
2. To determine the time of writing, it is helpful to consider the references to Paul's companions.
 - a. Who is mentioned along with Paul in the opening salutation to both letters?
 - b. Were Silas and Timothy with Paul on his initial visit to Thessalonica? His visits during the 3rd Journey?
 - c. What has transpired since Paul was in Thessalonica? (1 Thess.1:7-8)
 - d. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17 – 3:6 along with Acts 17:10-16; 18:1-5 and put the sequence of events together concerning Timothy.
 - e. Are there any indications in 2 Thessalonians as to how soon it was written after 1 Thessalonians?
 - f. So when do you think these letters were written?
3. Note the events referred to in the following passages from 1 Thessalonians. Are they consistent with Acts, or how is our knowledge of Paul's visit to Thessalonica supplemented?

<u>1 Thessalonians</u>	<u>Acts</u>
1:5	
1:9	
2:2	
2:9	
2:14	
5:12	

1 and 2 Corinthians

1. According to Acts, Paul visited Corinth the first time on his 2nd Missionary Journey and once more on his 3rd Missionary Journey.
2. Where was Paul when he wrote 1 Corinthians? (cf. 1 Cor.16:8, 19)
 - a. From Acts we know of two times Paul was at Ephesus: (1) On the return trip on the Second Journey, and (2) For the three-year stay on his Third Journey. (1 Cor.16:5-12) During which of these two occasions did Paul write 1 Corinthians?
 - b. What two other individuals are mentioned in this section? Are the references to them consistent with Acts. (Compare 1 Cor.1:12; 4:17)

3. What indications are given in 2 Corinthians as to when it was written? (Review the following passages.)

1:1

1:8f

1:15, 16

2:12-13

7:5-6, 13-15

Incidentally, how do the above passages supplement Acts by increasing our knowledge of Paul's Third Journey? In other words, what does Paul tell us that Luke did not?

4. What other activity of the apostle Paul is alluded to in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4?

Is this mentioned by Luke in Acts?

What additional information concerning this is given in 2 Corinthians? (cf. 8:1-15; 9:1-5)

How does this explain the large number of companions with Paul that are mentioned in Acts 20:4?

5. Review the chart at the end of this lesson. Agree?

Romans

1. Had Paul visited Rome prior to writing them? (cf. Rom 1:8-15)
2. Where is Paul when he writes this letter? (cf. Rom.15:25-26; 16:1-2, 23; compare 1 Cor.1:14)

[By the way, how many men named Gaius are mentioned in the New Testament?]

3. Where does Paul ultimately want to go? Is this consistent with Acts? (Rom.15:24)
4. Prior to writing this letter, where has Paul preached? (Rom.15:18-19)

Where is Illyricum, and does Acts record Paul's preaching there?

When may have Paul gone there?

5. Where are Priscilla and Aquila at the time of this letter? (Rom.16:3)

Paul's Contacts with the Church at Corinth

Visits	Correspondence	
	Sent	Received
First Visit – 2 nd Missionary Journey (Acts 18)	'Previous Letter' (1 Corinthians 5:9)	News from Chloe's Household (1 Corinthians 1:11)
		Letter from Church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 7:1; Possibly delivered By Stephanas, etc. – 1 Corinthians 16:17)
	Paul sends Timothy toward Corinth (Acts 19:22; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10) Unknown if he gets there or not.	
	1 Corinthians – Sent from Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:8, 19)	
Second ('Painful') Visit (?) (2 Corinthians 2:1; 12:14; 13:1)	'Severe Letter' (?) (2 Corinthians 2:4; 7:8) Probably taken by Titus from Ephesus (2 Corinthians 2:12-13)	
		Heard from Titus of Good Response to 'Severe Letter' (2 Corinthians 7:6ff)
	2 Corinthians – Sent from Macedonia (2 Corinthians 7:5; 8:1; 9:2,4). Timothy is with Paul (2 Corinthians 1:1).	
Last (Third?) Visit – 3 rd Missionary Journey (Acts 20:2; cf. 2 Corinthians 12:14; 13:1)		

Lesson 29

Acts 21:15 – 23 (I)

Having completed his Third Journey, Paul arrives in Jerusalem for what may be his last visit. Although Luke does tell of Paul's contacts with the Jerusalem brethren, his emphasis from this point until the end of the book is upon Paul's arrest and subsequent trials.

Background

21:28 – Gentiles were not permitted within the inner courts of the temple. According to Josephus, Jews were permitted by the Romans to kill even a Roman citizen who violated this Jewish law.

21:31 – The Roman "*cohort*" in Jerusalem was stationed in the fortress of Antonia which was located at the north-west corner of the temple and was directly connected by two sets of steps to the Court of the Gentiles. (See the Plan of the Temple, Lesson 7)

Text

1. Although he always preached the gospel to the Jews first, Paul was widely known for his work among the Gentiles.
 - a. How was Paul received by the Jerusalem brethren? (21:17)

 - b. What does this say about their attitude toward his work among the Gentiles? (21:19-20a,25)

2. James and the elders in Jerusalem warned Paul of some Jews who would not be sympathetic to Paul (cf.21:20b-24).
 - a. Are these Jews Christians?

 - b. What had these Jews heard about Paul's preaching?

 - c. Was it true what they heard?

 - d. To win the support of these Jews, what proposal did James and the elders make?

3. While in the temple, Jews from Asia recognized Paul and began to make public accusations against him.
 - a. Are these Jews Christians?

 - b. Why are they in Jerusalem?

- c. What two charges do they make against Paul?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - d. Which of these two charges was the most serious?
4. "*All Jerusalem was in confusion*" (21:31) with these accusations. Paul surely would have been beaten to death had not the Roman commander immediately intervened. What is commendable about the commander's action throughout this episode? (cf. 21:34; 22:30)
5. In giving a "defense" to the Jews, Paul first tells them of his Jewish background and then tells them of his conversion and his subsequent visit to Jerusalem.
- a. What five things does Paul identify about his Jewish background?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - 4)
 - 5)
 - b. In relating his conversion experience and his visit to Jerusalem, there seems to be three essential parts.
 - 1) What was significant about God appearing to Paul and sending Ananias to him? (cf. 22:14-15)
 - 2) After his conversion, where did Paul go and who did he try to convert?

What was their reaction?
 - 3) Thus, to whom did God send Paul?

6. Carefully compare the two accounts of Paul's conversion in 9:1-22 and 22:4-16.
- a. List any points which are unique in each account. (In other words, what points are told to us in chapter 9 that are not told in chapter 22, and vice versa.)

Chapter 9

Chapter 22

- b. Paul tells two things about Ananias which are not explicitly stated in chapter 9. What are these things and why are they relevant to Paul's defense?
 - c. Why did God choose Paul? (22:15)
 - d. What three prerequisites are given by Ananias which God accomplished in Paul? (22:14)
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
7. Carefully compare the two accounts of Paul's first visit to Jerusalem in 9:26-30 and 22:17-21. Why are these accounts so different?

Lesson 30

Acts 21:15 - 23 (II)

Background

21:38 – “the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out of the wilderness”: “Josephus complains (War 2.261-62) of an Egyptian false prophet who led some thirty thousand followers from the desert to the Mount of Olives, preparing to attack Jerusalem’s Roman garrison and make himself king... Josephus claims that most of the Egyptian’s followers were killed or taken captive but the Egyptian remained at large” (Keener, *Acts*, p.3174). This attack may have been just about a year before Paul was in Jerusalem. To the best of our knowledge, the “Assassins” were not associated with the Egyptian. They were known for their daylight stabbings of pro-Roman sympathizers within temple/Jerusalem; they had killed the former high priest. Of course, the term “assassins” may have been used more generally for any terrorist.

23:2 – Ananias was high priest between AD 47-58 and is only mentioned in connection with the trial of Paul (cf. 24:1). He was killed in 66 by Zealots because of his pro-Roman leanings.

23:23 – The Romans divided the night into 12 hours. Thus, the “third hour of the night” would be about 9 p.m.

23:31 – Antipatris was about 25 miles south of Caesarea (which was about 60 miles north of Jerusalem) and was built by Herod the Great in honor of his father Antipater. The region between Antipatris and Caesarea was occupied mainly by Gentiles.

Text

1. As Paul presents his defense (22: 1-21), the Jews listen carefully.
 - a. Paul seeks to gain a hearing by telling of his background. Compare with Phil. 3:4-6.

 - b. For what reason do they begin to assault Paul again?

2. The Roman commander is portrayed three times trying to seek out the true reason why Paul is being attacked by the Jews (21:34; 22:24, 30; cf. 23:28)
 - a. Does he ever discover the essence of their dispute?

 - b. How serious does he perceive the dispute to be?

 - c. In one instance, he determined to seek the truth by having Paul scourged. What stopped him?

3. Paul appeared before the “council” (i.e. Sanhedrin) at the commander's request.
 - a. What was improper about the high priest having Paul struck on the mouth?

 - b. Why did Paul not recognize the high priest?

- c. In Paul's view, what was the central issue over which he was being judged?
4. Luke informs his reader(s) as to the main differences in belief between the Pharisees and Sadducees.
 - a. What does this say about the background of Luke's reader(s)?
 - b. What were the two main differences recorded by Luke?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - c. The Sadducees disbelief in angels and spirits is not recorded in any other source. Why is it important to Paul's defense?
 5. Upon learning of the Jewish plot to kill Paul, the Roman commander immediately sends Paul to Caesarea under heavy guard.
 - a. Note the form of the letter that the commander sends to Felix.

How does it compare to the letters of Paul?

- b. Is the commander's letter precisely accurate? Why not?

Significance

6. Many people have noticed the similarities between Paul's final visit to Jerusalem and Jesus' final visit. List similarities you see.
7. Consider the following statement: "A Sadducee could not become a Christian without abandoning a distinctive theological tenet of his party; a Pharisee could become a Christian and remain a Pharisee – in the apostolic age at least." [Bruce, *Acts*, p.428]
 - a. Is this statement true?
 - b. How is this illustrated in Acts? In other words, how are the Pharisees and Sadducees portrayed in Acts?

Lesson 31

Acts 24 - 26 (I)

Having been transported to Caesarea, Paul will stand before the Roman procurators, Felix and Festus, and King Herod Agrippa II.

Background

23:24 – Felix and his brother Pallas were freedman, i.e. former slaves. Pallas was very influential in Rome during the reigns of Claudius and Nero and assisted Felix's rise to the procuratorship of Judea in AD 52 which was normally reserved for one of equestrian rank. "... (H)is three successive wives were all of royal birth, according to Suetonius. The first of three was a granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra; the third was Drusilla, youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I" (Bruce, *Acts*, p.437). Unfortunately, he was not well-suited for ruling. Tacitus said of him that "he exercised the power of a king with the mind of a slave" (Bruce, p.437). "The occasion of Felix's recall from his office was an outbreak of civil strife between the Jewish and Gentile inhabitants of Caesarea, in which Felix intervened with troops in such a way as to cause much bloodshed among the Jewish faction. On his return to Rome he would have faced a severe penalty, Josephus informs us, had it not been for the advocacy of his brother Pallas" (Bruce, p.448-9).

24:6b-8a – Text given in the KJV that is omitted in modern versions: "..., and would have judged according to our law. 7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, 8 commanding his accusers to come unto thee: ..."

24:27 – The date that Festus replaced Felix is uncertain; it is thought to be about AD 59. The only contemporary historian to speak of him was Josephus who generally says that he refrained from the excesses of Felix. After his death in AD 62, Festus was succeeded as procurator by Albinus.

Text

1. After heaping praise upon Felix (as would have been expected), what are the two basic accusations that Tertullus brings against Paul? (Or, are there three charges?)

1)

2)

Do you think Tertullus is a Jew? Tertullus is a Latin name, but that does not necessarily preclude him from being a Jew?

2. In his opening remarks before Felix, Paul notes that it has not been twelve days since he arrived in Jerusalem. Is this consistent with Luke's record? (cf. 21:27, 24:1)

3. What specific points does Paul make to refute his Jewish accusers? Does he respond to both of Tertullus' charges?

4. Paul did confess certain beliefs and practices. List the four things Paul mentions.
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - 4)
5. In Paul's view, why was he accused by the Jews? (24: 21; compare 23:6)

6. It's interesting that Felix had "*a rather accurate knowledge of the Way*" (24:22). His interest (and his desire for money!) prompted him often to discuss with Paul "*about faith in Christ*" (24:24).
 - a. What the content of Paul's message in these discussions with Felix?

 - b. What was Felix's response?

7. Felix's failure to act on Paul's case caused Paul to be held until Festus was made procurator. Within two weeks of arriving in Judea, Festus heard Paul's case.
 - a. As evidenced by Paul's reply (25:8), what was the nature of the "*serious charges*" brought by the Jews against Paul?

 - b. Festus was inclined "*to do the Jews a favor*". Why? (compare 12:3; 24:7; 25:1; and the background note above on Felix)

 - c. Resisting Festus' suggestion of being tried in Jerusalem, Paul appeals to Caesar. Why? (cf. 23:11)

Lesson 32

Acts 24-26 (II)

Background

25:13 – Herod Agrippa II, son of Herod Agrippa I (cf 12:1), was born in AD 27, but he was too young to assume the entire realm of his father at the time of his father's death (AD 44). After his uncle, Herod, king of Chalcis, died in AD 48, Claudius gave Agrippa II that kingdom in AD 50. In AD 53, Claudius gave him instead the larger territory formerly ruled by Herod Philip (Iturea, etc.). Nero also added to his territory so that he ultimately ruled the north-east section of Palestine (Galilee, Perea, Iturea, etc.). Agrippa II was loyal to Rome during the Jewish revolt of AD 66-70 and was rewarded with further territories and the rank of praetorian. He died about AD 100.

25:13 – Bernice (born AD 28) was the sister of Agrippa II and Drusilla (who was married to Felix). Married at age 13, her first husband died shortly after the marriage. She married again at age 16 to her uncle, Herod of Chalcis; they had two sons before his death in AD 48. Bernice then lived with her brother, Agrippa II. Rumors of incest may have prompted her to marry her third husband, Polemo of Cilicia; she soon left him and returned to Agrippa II. It is during this period she hears Paul's defense. Later, she becomes romantically involved with Titus, son of Vespasian, and the general who destroys Jerusalem in AD 70. She moves to Rome in AD 75 where it was rumored that she was to marry Titus, but Titus (giving in to political pressure not to marry a Jew) dismissed her from Rome upon his ascension to the throne in AD 79. [*Bernice*, Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol.I, pp.677-678]

25:21, 25 – The term translated "*emperor*" (ESV; NRSV "*Imperial Majesty*") in these two verses is actually the Greek title equivalent to the Latin "*Augustus*" (KJV), which became a general title conferred upon the emperors.

Text

1. As before, Paul contends that he is "*on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers*" (26:6). What, in particular, is the hope that Paul refers to? (cf.23:6; 26:8)

2. Paul's defense before Agrippa is the third time Paul's conversion account is recorded in Acts.
 - a. Notice that each account provides additional details which together gives a fuller picture of what took place. For' example, compare the three accounts in their description of the light which Paul saw.
 - 9:3 –
 - 22:6 –
 - 26:13 –
 - b. What other interesting details are given in this account?

 - c. Is there anything within this account which differs with the earlier accounts? Explain.

3. Paul twice relayed his conversion experience in defending himself against the Jews' charges; once before the Jewish crowd outside the temple and, on this occasion, before Agrippa.
 - a. How did this contribute to his defense?

 - b. Why on these occasions and not before Felix or Festus? [Of course, there is the possibility that Paul did tell Felix and Festus about his conversion and Luke did not record it.]

4. As a result of his conversion, Paul began to preach to both Jews and Gentiles.
 - a. What was there about the message Paul preached which provided him another defense? (26:22)

 - b. What three things did the "*prophets and Moses*" (26:22) say would happen? (cf. 17:2-3)
 - 1)

 - 2)

 - 3)

5. Summarize the opinion of each of the three Roman rulers (Felix, Festus, and Agrippa II) and the tribune Lysias regarding the guilt or innocence of Paul.

Significance

8. This account suggests three avenues for defending a belief in Jesus and his resurrection:
 - 1) The Old Testament scriptures ("*Moses and the prophets*") foretell of Jesus, his suffering, and resurrection.

 - 2) That "*this had not been done in a corner*" (26:26) implies that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are valid subjects of historical investigation.

 - 3) But, perhaps most of all, "*why is it thought incredible ... that God raises the dead?*" (26:8). Is not the God who gave man life powerful enough to raise him back to life? A denial of the resurrection (or miracles in general) is a denial of God's omnipotence.

Lesson 33

Acts 27 - 28:16

Luke records an extended account of Paul's voyage to Rome. Follow the path of his journey on the map as you study.



Paul's Journey to Rome, ESV Bible Atlas, p.249.

Background

27:1 – Julius is the fourth centurion mentioned by Luke in his letters to Theophilus (Luke 7: 1-10; 23:47; Acts 10:1; cf. Lesson 14, Question 2b). Julius belongs to the Augustan Regiment (cf. Lesson 14, Background Note on 10:1 regarding Roman 'century').

27:4, 7, 16 – "sailed under the lee of Cyprus"; "... of Crete"; "... of a small island called Cauda": To "sail under the lee" means to use the land mass as a barrier to the wind.

27:6 – "a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy": The exact nature of this ship and its purpose is unknown, but since Rome imported one-third of its grain (wheat or barley) from Egypt [Schnabel, 1035] and Myra was well-known as a major port for the grain vessels traveling toward Rome, it was probably a cargo ship carrying Egyptian wheat (27:38). "Good weather normally allowed the voyage from Rome to Alexandria in ten to thirteen days...; in worse weather the voyage to Alexandria might take up to three weeks. By contrast, the voyage from Alexandria to Rome (as here) was more difficult, in rough weather requiring forty-five days" [Keener, 3585].

27:9 – The "Fast" is the Day of Atonement which fell on 10th day of the Jewish month Tirshi. Since the Jewish calendar was a lunar calendar, the day of our year on which this fell would depend on knowing the year of Paul's travel. Luke's reference to the Fast is in connection with that time of year that voyage was considered "dangerous". The Roman military writer

Vegetius identified September 15th to November 11th as the period of dangerous navigation and that within the four-month period from November 11 to March 10 that no navigation occurred, although other writers said that sailing could commence as early as February if the weather permitted [cf. Marshall, p.406]. The significance of this is that within the years AD 57-62, only in the year AD 59 is the Fast (October 5th) within the period of 'dangerous' navigation. Thus, there is a good degree of probability that Paul's voyage begins in the fall of AD 59. [Bruce, Acts, 481]

27:27 – “we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea”: In modern usage, the Adriatic Sea only extends as far south as the southern tip of Italy. But, in some ancient literature it extended as south as far as Sicily and Crete, and even in some to the northern part of Africa [Keener, 3635-3636].

28:1 – On the island of Malta is a bay called St. Paul's Bay (which is also the name of the adjoining city) which tradition asserts is the place where Paul's ship wrecked. Since the features of this bay agree with those identified in the text, it is probably the correct bay.



Malta, Wikipedia

28:7 – “the chief man of the island named Publius”: Although many believe his name implies that he is a Roman citizen, there is no agreement on what the term “chief man” implies. Since it seems that Malta and the small neighboring island of Gaulos were ruled at this time by a Roman procurator, it probably simply means that he was a leading civic leader on the island, possibly the first to make certain benefactions.

28:11 – “we set sail on a ship ... with the twin gods as a figurehead”: “Twin gods” should be translated “twin brothers” (ASV, NRSV, NASU). Castor and Pollux (jointly called the *Dioscuri*) were twin half-brothers – Pollux was the son of Zeus and Castor the son of a mortal, but both having the same mother Leda. By the first century both were deified by the Romans and worshipped throughout the Empire. Sailors viewed them as providing protection at sea [Keener, 3696]. In sculpture and art, they are usually shown with horses reflecting the Roman belief that the twins also aided them on the battlefield [Wikipedia].

28:13 – “Puteoli”, on the north side of the Gulf of Naples, was the major trade port serving Rome along the western coast; the closer port of Ostia could not handle the large grain ships. One could see Mt. Vesuvius from the port (which was about 18 miles to the west; it was the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in AD 79 that buried Pompey (located 6 miles to the southeast) with volcanic ash). Travel to Rome first went west along the *Via Campana*, then north along the *Via Appia* for a total of 130 miles. The “*Forum of Appius*” was a marketplace about 45 miles south of Rome, and “*Three Taverns*” was a town about 33 miles south of Rome – both along the *Via Appia*.



<http://octavianchronicles.com/ancient-maps/ancient-italy-map/>

Text

1. Who are Paul's companions on this trip to Rome?

Review the two earlier sections in Acts where Luke is present as indicated by his use of "we": 16:10ff; 20:5ff. What feature do these sections have in common with this section in chapter 27?

2. Luke's account of Paul's voyage has been called one of most informative accounts of ancient sailing techniques. List the references within this account to the various techniques used by the sailors.
3. Paul makes two statements regarding the future of their journey (27:10, 22).
 - a. The two statements contradict each other: the first says that there will be loss of life, the second says there won't be any loss of life. Explain.
 - b. The angel told Paul that "*God has granted you all those who sail with you*" (27:24) meaning that God would spare their lives. What does that statement imply regarding Paul?
 - c. The angel also told Paul that he "*must stand before Caesar*" (27:24). How does this supplement what the Lord told Paul while he was in prison in Jerusalem (cf. 23:11)?
4. Leaving Fair Havens, the ship encountered a storm called "*Euroclydon*" (KJV, 27:14). Euroclydon is a compound word: *euros* "east wind" + *clydon* "wave". However, earlier manuscripts call the storm Euroaquilo (ASV, NASU, = euros "east wind" + aquilo "north wind") indicating a wind from the northeast (hence translated "northeaster", ESV, NRSV, etc.). Thus, considering the direction of the prevailing wind, why was Phoenix a better place to winter than Fair Havens?
5. List the references showing the increasing confidence that the centurion Julius placed in Paul.

Significance

6. In 2 Corinthians 11:25 (which was written about three years earlier than Paul's voyage to Rome), Paul mentions that he had been shipwrecked three times. Luke does not tell us anything about those prior shipwrecks (nor much detail about any of Paul's ship voyages), so why do you think Luke gives so much detail about this particular voyage with its shipwreck?

Lesson 34

Acts 28:16-31 / Paul's Later Ministry and Death

Finally in Rome, Paul is permitted the same type of freedom he had in Caesarea (cf. 24:23). The book of Acts ends with Paul using that liberty "*proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ*" (28:31).

Background

28:16 – Luke simply reports that "*the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.*" The process would have involved Paul appearing before a Roman official (although it is uncertain which official). Paul's unusually light custody may have either been out of respect for his status as a Roman citizen, or that the papers delivered along with Paul from Festus gave indication that Paul was probably innocent of the charges. Rapske thinks the latter was more probable and that suggests that Paul would have been released once his trial was held [*Paul in Custody*, p.191]. Bruce notes that even when Paul was put on trial, it would probably would not have been before Nero, who had the practice of delegating that responsibility to others [Bruce, *NT History*, p.362].

28:17 – Jews probably arrived in Rome as early as the second century BC. By the time of Christ, it has been estimated that there were between 40,000 and 60,000 Jews in Rome. Inscriptions from this period tell of at least eleven synagogues in Rome. Twice in the first century, the Jews stole a gift to be sent to the Jerusalem temple, and in AD 49 by Claudius for rioting involving (most likely) Christians (cf. Lesson 21, Background Note on 18:2) [Bruce, *Paul*, p. 379f].

28:29 – The KJV includes this verse: "*And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves*" – earlier manuscripts omit, but nothing in the verse is unreasonable.

Text

1. Within three days of arriving in Rome, Paul asks to meet with the Jewish leaders.
 - a. Why is he anxious to speak with them?
 - b. Although the Jewish leaders had not heard of Paul from the Jews in Jerusalem, what did they want to learn of him?
 - c. Were there Christians already in Rome at this time?

If so, then why hadn't the Jews already learned of Christianity?

2. The Jews set aside a day ("*from morning to evening*", v.23) to hear Paul.
 - a. In talking to the Jews about the kingdom of God, what is the basis for Paul's arguments concerning Jesus?

- b. What was their response (which is the same response we have consistently seen throughout Acts)?
 - c. Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 ("*ears...eyes...heart*") as a final indictment against the Jews who would not believe. Interestingly, the only other time we have recorded where Paul quotes this passage is in his letter to the Roman brethren several years earlier (read Rom.10:1-3; 11:1-10). Implied in God's rejection of the unbelieving Jews is God's acceptance of whom? (cf. Rom.11:11)
3. Both the first and last sentence in the book refers to the "*kingdom of God*" (compare 1:1-3 and 28:30-31), thus forming an *inclusio* – suggesting the Luke's second volume was concerned with the "*kingdom of God*".
- a. Note what is common in both these passages regarding the use of this phrase.
 - b. The "*kingdom of God*" is mentioned in several occurrences throughout the book. From these occurrences what can we learn about the kingdom of God?
8:12 –
14:22 –
19:8 –
20: 25 –
28: 23 –

Paul's Later Ministry and Death

If our assumption about the timing of Paul's voyage to Rome is correct (see Lesson 33, Background Note on 27:9), Paul would have arrived in Rome in February or March, AD 60. Luke concludes his account of Acts by informing his readers that Paul remained in custody in Rome for two years (28:30), that is, until sometime in AD 62. So, the natural question is: What happened to Paul after that?

There are three possible sources of information: 1) a statement of Tacitus, 2) the writings of early Christians who lived in the first, second, and third centuries, and 3) the Pastoral letters.

In the summer of AD 64, much of Rome burned to the ground. Nero, the emperor since AD 54, was suspected of starting the fire, perhaps to remake it according to his desires. The Roman historian Tacitus (c. AD56 – c. 120) wrote a history of Nero around AD 116. He says concerning the aftermath of the fire:

But neither human help, nor imperial munificence, nor all the modes of placating Heaven, could stifle scandal or dispel the belief that the fire had taken place by order. Therefore, to scotch the rumour, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the

utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judaea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue. First, then, the confessed members of the sect were arrested; next, on their disclosures, vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race. And derision accompanied their end: they were covered with wild beasts' skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed were burned to serve as lamps by night. Nero had offered his Gardens for the spectacle, and gave an exhibition in his Circus, mixing with the crowd in the habit of a charioteer, or mounted on his car. Hence, in spite of a guilt which had earned the most exemplary punishment, there arose a sentiment of pity, due to the impression that they were being sacrificed not for the welfare of the state but to the ferocity of a single man. [Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44; https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Tacitus/Annals/15B*.html]

It is not known exactly how quickly the rumors arose, or when the persecution of Christians began, but Nero died in AD 68, so it could not have been too long after the fire. This is the first persecution of Christians by the Romans that we know of. Could Paul had been left in custody only to be killed during this persecution?

The first early Christian to speak to this is Clement of Rome who died around AD 100. In his letter to the church at Corinth around AD 96, he says:

But, to leave the examples of former days, let us come to those who were athletes in the days nearest to our own. Through jealousy and envy the greatest and most righteous pillars of the church were persecuted, and maintained their athletic contest unto death. Let us set before our eyes the good apostles. Peter, on account of unrighteous jealousy, underwent not one or two but many toils and, having thus borne witness, he made his way to his allotted place of glory. Paul, on account of jealousy and strife, showed the way to the prize of endurance, seven times he wore letters, he was exiled, he was stoned, he was a herald both in the east and in the west, he gained the noble renown of his faith, he taught righteousness throughout the whole world and, having reached the limit of the west, he bore testimony before the rulers, and so departed from the world and was taken up into the holy place – the greatest example of endurance. To these men of holy life was gathered together a great multitude of the elect, who through their endurance amid many indignities and tortures because of jealousy presented to us a noble example ... [1 Clement 5:1-6:1, as quoted by Bruce, *Apostle of the Heart*, p.447, 448]

The question is what Clement meant by saying that Paul “reached the limit of the west”. Since Paul in his letter to the Romans had expressed his desire to evangelize Spain (Rom.15:24), many believe that Clement was referring to Spain – the westernmost part of the Roman Empire. And the last sentence is generally understood as referring to the persecution under Nero. If these understandings are correct, then Paul would have been released in AD 62 (or sometime thereafter), travelled to Spain, and was killed at some later date (perhaps between AD 64 and 68).

A similar statement is made in the Muratorian Fragment, which is a Latin list of NT books written at the end of the second century. Speaking about Acts, it says:

Then the "Acts of all the Apostles" were written in one book. Luke tells the "most excellent Theophilus" that the various incidents took place in his presence, and indeed he makes this quite clear by omitting the Passion of Peter, as well as Paul's journey when he sets out from Rome for Spain. [As quoted by Bruce, *Apostle of the Heart*, p.449]

Later Christian writers are more explicit. Ignatius, (*Epistle to the Ephesians*, early 2nd century) says that Paul was martyred, Tertullian (c.AD 200) and Peter of Alexandria (AD 306) say Paul was beheaded (which was the norm for a Roman citizen), Lactantius (c.AD 315) says that Nero killed Paul (and Peter), and Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* (c.AD 325) quotes Papias (c.AD130-140) and Dionysius of Corinth (c.AD 170) to the effect that Nero crucified Peter and beheaded Paul.

The tradition throughout the first couple of centuries grew, but was consistent: Paul (and also Peter) was killed in Rome by Nero although no specific date is given. A later writer, John Chrysostom (c.AD 375), reports that Nero killed Paul because he had converted his concubine and cupbearer, which suggests it may not have been in connection with the great fire in Rome. Jerome (c.AD 390) reports that both Peter and Paul died on the same day in the last year of Nero's reign (AD 68). How much confidence can be placed in these later traditions is debated. [Note: The information in the previous two paragraphs are from Eastman, *The Ancient Martyrdom Accounts of Peter and Paul*.]

Besides a possible journey to Spain following his first Roman custody, the Pastoral Letters (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus) may suggest that Paul made more journeys in the East – the area of his journeys recorded in Acts. The Pastoral Letters, a description first used in the 18th century, form a natural group within the New Testament canon. Written by Paul to two trusted co-workers and containing admonitions appropriate for younger leaders in the church, there is much that is similar in these letters. However, each was written at a particular time for a particular purpose, so each should be interpreted on its own terms.

The primary difficulty relevant to understanding the last days of Paul is that it is hard to fit the events relayed in the Pastoral letters within the chronology of Paul as given in Acts. The traditional solution is to accept that Paul was released from his first custody in Rome, that he returned to his former mission fields, that he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus while working in those areas, and that he wrote 2 Timothy shortly before his death after being again placed in custody in Rome. It is helpful to take a brief look at each of the three letters to understand the nature of the difficulty.

1 Timothy The content of the letter could have been appropriately written at any time, so it does not cause any difficulty in dating the letter. It is Paul's statement in 1:3 that does: "*As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any difficult doctrine...*". In Acts, we do not read of a time where Paul left Ephesus to go to Macedonia and left Timothy in Ephesus. We do read when, on the Third Journey, Paul sent Timothy to Macedonia while he remained in Ephesus (19:22).

If Paul was released from his first custody in Rome, it is certainly possible that he made a trip to Ephesus and Macedonia that is consistent with his statement in 1:3. But, it is not necessary. Paul was in Ephesus for about three years on his, and we know that during that time he made a trip to Corinth and back that is not recorded in Acts. Paul could have easily made a short visit to Macedonia that is also not recorded in Acts.

Titus Like 1 Timothy, the content of the letter could have been written at any time. In fact, it is very similar to 1 Timothy. But there are two travel references that may support the

view that Paul made an additional journey following his first Roman custody. In 1:5, Paul says he left Titus in Crete, and in 3:12, he says that he had decided to winter in Nicopolis. Neither event can be convincingly argued to have taken place prior to his first custody in Rome.

2 Timothy There are a few things in 2 Timothy that do seem to require additional journeys of Paul. From 2 Timothy 1:17, we know either that Paul was in Rome, or had been in Rome. Paul is expecting Timothy to come to him (4:9, 13), but remarks that *"At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me (4:16)*. His *"first defense"* could refer to his first Roman custody, thus implying that he was released at that time, but now awaiting a 'second defense'. This understanding is consistent with Paul having some, what appears recent, trips where he went to Corinth and Miletus (4:20) – trips that are difficult to fit into Luke's chronology in Acts. But many believe it is the tone of the letter that suggests this is Paul's second and final defense that is upcoming.

4:6-8 *"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing."*

4:16-18 *"At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen"*

In his Prison Letters (Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon – which many believe were written in his first Roman custody), Paul was very optimistic that he would be released. The above statements in 2 Timothy are more pessimistic, which may suggest a separate custody.

My conclusion (which has little value) is that Paul was released from his first Roman custody, possibly (but not certain) made a trip to Spain, made another journey in the eastern areas he had already travelled, wrote Titus during these travels (having already written 1 Timothy on his Third Journey), was at some point placed in custody again in Rome, and wrote 2 Timothy while awaiting his execution by Nero. The date of his death is uncertain, but assuming a release from his first custody around AD 62 and making allowance for his further journeys, it is reasonable that his death occurred after the fire in Rome in AD 64. Hence, his death could have been alongside the many Christians who died at the hands of Nero.

Plus, there is one other piece of information that (at least to me) makes it more likely that 1 Timothy was written during the Third Journey than following his first Roman custody. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul tells Timothy to "Let no one despise you for your youth ...". Timothy started traveling with Paul in AD 50 (at the start of his Second Journey (Acts 16:3)). We do not know how young Timothy was at the time, but let's say 20 years old. If 1 Timothy was written after Paul's first Roman custody, say in AD 63 or 64, Timothy would have been 33 or 34 years old – not a young man by ancient standards. A 30-year old man could be a rabbi among the Jews. But, if 1 Timothy was written during Paul's three-year stay in Ephesus on the Second Journey (say the years AD 53-55), Timothy would have been 23 to 25 years old – much more consistent with Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 1:3. So, for me, 1 Timothy does not require that Paul took additional journeys following his first Roman custody.

Lesson 35

Paul's Prison Letters: The Place of Writing

Introduction Four of Paul's letters have been generally grouped together and called his 'Prison Letters' – Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. All have traditionally been held to have been written from Rome during the two years of his house arrest recorded at the end of Acts (28:30-31). However, the tradition is not based on any conclusive evidence from the New Testament or irrefutable evidence from the early Christian writers of the second or third century. Consequently, various places of writing have been argued, but the majority of scholars still think Rome is the place of writing. [A fifth letter, 2 Timothy, was also written from prison, but, as noted in Lesson 34, is generally believed to have been from a presumed second Roman imprisonment.] This lesson will look at the NT evidence related to the place where these letters were written.

I. Paul's 'Prison Letters'

- A. Ephesians – 3:1 "*a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles*"; 3:13 "*I am suffering for you*"; 4:1 "*a prisoner for the Lord*"; 6:20 "*I am an ambassador in chains*"
- B. Philippians – 1:7 "*in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel*"; 1:13 "*it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ*"; 1:14, 17 "*my imprisonment*"; 1:30 "*engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have*"
- C. Colossians – 4:3 "*on account of which I am in prison*"; 4:18 "*Remember my chains*"
- D. Philemon – 1 "*a prisoner for Christ Jesus*"; 9 "*an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus*"; 13 "*my imprisonment for the gospel*"

II. Paul in Custody

- A. The book of Acts records Paul being in custody on four occasions: Philippi (Acts 16), Jerusalem (Acts 21-23), Caesarea (Acts 23-25), and Rome (Acts 28). The custodies in Philippi and Jerusalem were of too short duration to allow for the events mentioned in the letters.
- B. Paul was in custody in Caesarea for two years (Acts 24:27), and given that Paul was given significant freedom and access to his associates (24:23, it seems Paul would have ample opportunity to have written letters during this period of confinement.
- C. Paul was also in Roman custody for at least two years (Acts 28:30). There also he was afforded freedoms and companions that would have been conducive to letter writing.
- D. But Paul was apparently in custody on other occasions not recorded by Luke. In 2 Corinthians 11:23, Paul says that compared to others he was in "*far more imprisonments*". Yet, when Paul wrote this, he had been retained only in Philippi according to Luke.
- E. Many scholars think it is reasonable that Paul was retained in Ephesus. In 1 Corinthians 15:32, Paul says "*What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'*" Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians during his three-year stay in Ephesus on his Third Journey. Is Paul implying that he had been arrested in Ephesus and faced the possibility of being thrown into the arena with wild beasts? (See also 2 Cor.1:8-10.) Or, is Paul just putting forth a particularly dreaded hypothetical possibility? While there is no direct evidence of Paul being imprisoned in Ephesus, many scholars think it makes better sense that Ephesus was the city from which he wrote his 'Prison Letters'.
- F. So, the three cities we will consider as possible candidates from which Paul wrote these letters are: Ephesus, Caesarea, and Rome.

III. Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon

- A. The Close Relationship between these Letters

1. Geographical Proximity
 - a. Ephesus and Colossae, both in Asia Minor, are within two hundred miles of each other.
 - 1) Ephesus may have been the destination of Ephesians, although it is probable that it was a "circular" letter written to several of the congregations in the area of Ephesus.
 - a) The words "*at Ephesus*" are omitted in some of the earliest manuscripts of Ephesians 1:1.
 - b) Since Paul has worked for an extended time in Ephesus it is unusual to find expressions of unfamiliarity (1:15; 3:2; 4:21) and the lack of any personal greetings.
 - c) Marcion (not the most reliable source) stated that Ephesians was actually the Letter to the Laodiceans (cf. Col.4:16).
 - 2) Colossae was the destination of Colossians and Philemon.
 - b. Paul presumably also wrote to the church at Laodicea (Col.4:16), which was a neighboring city of Colossae [or, if Ephesians was a circular letter, could it be that Paul knew that letter would be coming to Colossae by way of Laodicea?].
2. Common Letter Bearers
 - a. Ephesians and Colossians were delivered by Tychicus (Eph.6:21; Col.4:7-8).
 - b. Tychicus was accompanied to Colossae by Onesimus, a runaway slave, who delivered a letter from Paul to his master, Philemon (Phm.10ff).
3. Similarities between Colossians and Philemon.
 - a. Timothy is included with Paul in both greetings (Col.1:1; Phm.1).
 - b. Several of Paul's associates are with him at the time of writing of both letters - Aristarchus, Mark, Epaphras, Luke, and Demas (Col.4:10-14; Phm.23, 24).
 - c. Paul directs comments to Archippus in both letters (Col.4:17; Phm.2)
4. Conclusion: Colossians and Philemon, at least, were both sent at the same time from the same imprisonment, and the commonalities noted above is consistent with Ephesians having also been written at the same time. This conclusion is generally agreed upon.

[However, in 2 Timothy 4:12, Tychicus is still in service to Paul and has been sent to Ephesus. Could Ephesians have been sent during the Paul's second Roman custody? Or, is this evidence (as argued by Bo Reicke, *Re-examining Paul's Letters*) that 2 Timothy should be seen as having also been written during same custody he wrote Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon.]

B. Chronological Data from the Letters

1. Associates of Paul with him at the time of writing: Tychicus (Eph.6:21; Col.4:7); Timothy (Col.1:1; Phm.1); Epaphras (Col.1:7; 4:12; Phm.23); Onesimus (Col.4:9; Phm.10); Aristarchus, Mark (Col.4:10; Phm.24); Justus (Col.4:11); Luke and Demas (Col.4:14; Phm.24).
2. Aristarchus (Col.4:10) and Epaphras (Phm.23) are both described as "*fellow prisoner(s)*" (but, interestingly, Aristarchus is called a "*fellow worker*" in Philemon 24 and Epaphras a "*fellow servant*" in Colossians 1:7).
3. Onesimus, Philemon's slave, has run away and, perhaps, took some money belonging to Philemon (Phm.15, 18-19 "*If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything*"). Upon arriving in the city of Paul's custody, he came into contact with Paul and was converted (Phm.10, 16). [It is debated whether Onesimus stumbled upon Paul by accident, or if Onesimus was intentionally looking for Paul. The latter seems more reasonable to me.] There he ministers unto Paul until he was sent back by Paul to Philemon (Phm.11-13).
4. Paul asks Philemon to prepare a place of lodging for him (Phm.22). This, along with the tone of all three letters, would suggest that Paul anticipates being released soon.

C. Possible Imprisonments

1. Ephesus

a. Pros:

- 1) Assuming an imprisonment did take place in Ephesus on Paul's third missionary journey, the geographical proximity of Ephesus to Colossae could favor an Ephesian dispatch. Onesimus, in running away from Philemon, would not have to travel a great distance and Paul's request in Philemon 22 would be natural if Paul expected to be released soon and if he planned to go to Colossae.
- 2) From Acts, Timothy (Acts 19:22) and Aristarchus (Acts 19:29) were with Paul during at least part of Paul's stay in Ephesus. Since Timothy and Erastus depart for Macedonia (Acts 19:22) leaving Paul in Asia, the imprisonment must have been before their leaving.

b. Cons:

- 1) Luke doesn't join Paul until later in Macedonia (cf. Acts 20:5).
- 2) The fact that the church at Ephesus would at least be among the churches addressed in Ephesians would cast doubt on an Ephesian dispatch for that letter.
- 3) The fact that Ephesus is close to Colossae does not necessarily mean that Onesimus would go there. If he is a runaway slave, it is just as likely that he would travel to Caesarea or Rome because they were far away.
- 4) Luke does not record an Ephesian custody nor a trip to Colossae during Paul's ministry in Asia.

2. Caesarea

a. Pros:

- 1) From Acts 20:4, Paul companions on his Third Journey included Timothy, Tychicus, Aristarchus, and Luke ("we" section). It may be presumed that these like Trophimus (Acts 21:29) would have continued with him to Jerusalem and remained with him during some of his stay in Caesarea. In fact, Aristarchus and Luke were with him in Caesarea when he sets out for Rome (Acts 27:2).
- 2) A major theme in Ephesians and Colossians is the reconciliation of the Jews and Gentiles in Christ. Although, Paul could have written this from other places, it would take special meaning if written in the context of the Caesarean imprisonment. One of the charges against Paul was that he had taken a Gentile into the Temple (Acts 21:28-29). In Ephesians 2:14, Paul speaks of Christ breaking down "*the dividing wall of hostility*" (KJV "*middle wall of partition*"). There have been discovered inscriptions which were placed on the walls of the Temple between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Women which threatened death to any foreigner who entered.

b. Cons:

- 1) Paul's request for Philemon to prepare him lodging does not seem to fit his circumstances in Caesarea. He had already indicated a desire to go to Rome (Rom. 1:10; 15:19ff). However, he could have planned to stop in Colossae on his way to Rome. Also, would Paul have realized the necessity of appealing to Caesar to obtain his release before the end of his custody in Caesarea?

3. Rome

a. Pros:

- 1) The traditional position has been that these letters were written from Rome.
- 2) Aristarchus and Luke accompanied Paul to Rome (Acts 27:2). Also, the early traditions associate Mark with Peter in Rome.
- 3) Paul's imprisonment at Rome was not prohibitive to his teaching (Acts 28:30, 31). This fits with so many of Paul's associates being with him and with some of his statements in the letter to Colossians (Col. 4:4:3ff).

b. Cons:

- 1) Paul had earlier indicated (Rom. 15:28) a desire to go to Spain after visiting Rome instead of going back east to Asia Minor, so why is he telling Philemon to prepare a place for him?

- 2) Epaphras had apparently come to Paul with news from the church of Colossae (Col.1: 7ff). But Paul later describes him as a fellow-prisoner (Phm.23). If Paul is in Rome, why would Epaphras or Aristarchus (Col.4: 10) been arrested?
4. Observations:
 - a. A major difficulty with trying to assign a place of dispatch for these prison letters is that we do not know that much about any of the possible imprisonments. Paul was in both Caesarea and Rome for at least two years. During that time several things we are unaware of could have transpired.
 - b. Statements by Paul of possible future plans should not be taken as definite; flexibility must be given to Paul to adapt his plans to current needs, e.g., although Paul had expressed a desire to go to Rome or Spain does not mean he did not plan to go to other cities such as Colossae.
 - c. It is inappropriate for us today to pass judgment against possible travels of Paul or his associates because those travels seem to us to be too long or difficult, e.g., since it is possible for Onesimus to travel to Rome or Caesarea, we should not conclude that he went to Ephesus because the other cities were too far.

IV. Philippians

A. Chronological Data from the Letter

1. Timothy is with Paul at the time of the writing (1:1) and Paul expects to send him to Philippi before long (2:19). Paul also states that he has no other brethren with him whose main concern is Christ (2:20, 21).
2. Paul's preaching has spread "*in the whole Praetorium*" (lit.trans., 1:13). This could be used in two ways, either:
 - a. The Praetorium, i.e., the building which housed the governor, guards, etc. (so KJV "*palace*", also NJB, NAB). It is used this way in every other occurrence in the N.T. – Mt.27:27; Mk.15:16; Jn.18:28, 33; 19:9; Acts 23:25.
 - b. The praetorium guards. This personal sense is perhaps supported by Paul's next phrase "*and to all the rest*" (so ASV, NRSV, REB, NASU, CEB, NIV, ESV, CSB, NET).
3. It appears as if Paul is facing (or has faced) the possibility of death (1:20f) although he does expect to be released (2:24).
4. The custody must have been of sufficient length for the Philippian church to have heard of his custody, sent Epaphroditus to him with aid, then for Epaphroditus to have recovered from a near fatal illness of which they had received news, then Paul to learn of their distress over Epaphroditus, and then for Epaphroditus to carry the letter to Philippi (2:25ff). Also, Timothy is shortly to travel to Philippi and report back to Paul of their condition.
5. Paul's converts included some in "*Caesar's household*" (4:22). This term could refer to the family of Caesar, but some scholars suggest that it could also refer to civil servants of Rome scattered throughout the empire.

B. Possible Imprisonments

1. Ephesus
 - a. Pros:
 - 1) The events mentioned in Philippians fit nicely into the Acts framework. Paul stating that he wishes to send Timothy to them and of him following him later (2:19ff) agrees with Acts account of Paul's Ephesian ministry (Acts 19:22). This would then correspond to Paul's later remarks in 1 Corinthians 16:5ff.
 - 2) The length of the custody as indicated by IV.A.4 above would not need to be of long duration to accommodate the necessary journeys between Ephesus and Philippi.
 - b. Cons:
 - 1) Paul's statement in Philippians 2:20, 21 seems to be inconsistent with Acts 19 where it appears that other faithful men are with him, e.g., Gaius and

Aristarchus, and also in 1 Corinthians 16 he indicates other faithful brethren with him, including Apollos.

- 2) The "*imperial guard*" existed in Rome or in imperial provinces where the governor had military units under his command. There is no known instance of imperial guards being stationed in senatorial provinces such as Asia.
- 3) There is no direct reference to an Ephesian custody. Although the custody need not be long to account for the indicated travels, it must be of sufficient time to allow for the evangelizing of Paul described in Philippians 1:13ff. And if it was such a major event in Ephesus, why doesn't Luke record it?
- 4) There is no indication in the letter of Paul's collection for the poor in Jerusalem. This was very much on his mind at this time as indicated by his letter to Corinth (1 Cor.16:1-4). Of course, it could be that Paul knew the Philippian brethren would gladly contribute once he arrived there in person (which they did, cf. 2 Cor.8).

2. Caesarea

a. Pros:

- 1) In Acts 23:25, Paul is explicitly stated as being kept in the praetorium (Herod's palace).
- 2) If the third chapter of Philippians is warning against Jews as opposed to Judaizing Christians, this would concur with the Jewish opposition that Paul was presently encountering in Caesarea. But it must be noted, that Paul was opposed by Jews wherever he was.

b. Cons:

- 1) Paul's statement concerning the lack of faithful brethren with him does not seem to agree with the Acts account; Luke was with him and he had a very special interest in the Philippian church.
- 2) The possible finality of which Paul speaks would not seem to fit with a Caesarean imprisonment (or an Ephesian one) since he always had the option of appealing to Caesar. However, Paul clearly was the target of a Jewish attempt to kill him before, and even during, his Caesarean imprisonment

3. Rome

a. Pros:

- 1) The traditional view.
- 2) Paul's statement in Philippians 2:20, 21 could fit a Roman custody if Luke and his other assistants had left by this time.
- 3) Paul truly did face the possibility of death in Rome.
- 4) Most agree that the references to the "*praetorium*" and "*Caesar's household*" seem to favor Rome.
- 5) The length of Paul's imprisonment in Rome would give enough time for the necessary journeys.

b. Cons:

- 1) Some have argued that too many trips are required in too short of time. However, it is generally agreed that all the trips would only take about 6 months of time, thus capable of being made during a two-year imprisonment.
- 2) Paul's statement that he will visit Philippi, if possible, is thought to conflict with his earlier stated plans of going to Spain (Rom.15).
- 3) However, both these objections cannot decide the matter - see II.C.5 above.

V. Conclusion

- A. The arguments appear weak for an Ephesian imprisonment as being the time these letters were written – especially for the letter to the Philippians.
- B. Considering only the NT evidence, the arguments for Caesarea as being the place of dispatch are as strong as the arguments for Rome.

Lesson 36

The Holy Spirit in Acts

The Gospels and Acts are the primary sources for learning about the activity of the Holy Spirit in the early church. This lesson summarizes the teaching in the Gospels and, in particular, Acts concerning the Spirit. A statement of Scriptural truth (as understood by this teacher) will be presented in the form of a thesis, and supporting arguments from Scripture will be provided. This approach builds a fuller understanding of the Spirit one step at a time. Based upon these, a series of conclusions will be drawn. But, first, review the work of the Spirit in the early church as recorded in Acts.

The Spirit's Work in Acts

1. Jesus promised to give the Spirit to the apostles as foretold by John (1:4-8; Lk.24:49)
2. Spirit spoke through the prophets (1:16; 4:25; 28:25).
3. Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost as prophesied (2:1-4, 16-18, 32-33).
4. Gift of the Spirit promised to believers (2:38).
5. Peter spoke by the Spirit (4:8).
6. Spirit filled the disciples (apostles?) (4:31).
7. Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Spirit (5:3, 9).
8. Spirit is a witness to Jesus (5:32).
9. The seven to be selected were to be full of the Spirit (6:3).
10. Stephen was full of the Spirit (6:5, [8], 10; 7:55).
11. Jews resisted the Spirit (7:51).
12. Peter and John impart the Spirit to the Samaritans (8:17-18).
13. Spirit directs Philip to and from the eunuch (8:29, 39).
14. Ananias sent to Paul so he would be filled with the Spirit (9:17).
15. Churches of Judea, etc. were comforted by the Spirit (9:31).
16. Spirit directs Peter to go with Cornelius' servants (10:19; 11:12).
17. God had anointed Jesus with the Spirit (10:38).
18. Gift of the Spirit (= Holy Spirit) fell upon Cornelius and household (10:44f; 11:15; 15:8).
19. Barnabas was full of the Spirit (11:24).
20. Spirit through Agabus told of the coming famine (11:28).
21. Spirit separated Barnabas and Paul for a work (13:2, 4).
22. Paul, filled with the Spirit, blinded Elymas (13:8-11).
23. Disciples in Iconium were filled with joy and the Spirit (13:52).
24. Spirit did not burden the Gentiles with Jewish laws (15:28).
25. Paul not permitted to preach in Asia, etc. by the Spirit (16:6f).
26. Paul was constrained by the Spirit in Corinth (18:5).
27. John's disciples in Ephesus had not heard of the Spirit (19:2).
28. Paul imparted the Spirit to the former disciples of John (19:6).
29. Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem (19:21).
30. Paul goes bound in the Spirit (spirit?) to Jerusalem (20:22).
31. Spirit testified of the tribulations awaiting Paul (20:23).
32. Spirit made the Ephesian elders overseers of the flock (20:28).
33. Disciples told Paul by the Spirit not to go to Jerusalem (21:4).
34. Agabus by the Spirit tells of Paul's impending capture (21:11).

Summary: *The Spirit directed, instructed, and empowered the early church as they preached the gospel.*

Thesis #1: *The Holy Spirit was promised to believers in Christ.*

1. The promise of John the Baptist that "*He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire*" (Mt.3:5-17; Mk.1:4-11; Lk.3:15-18; Jn.1:19-34) was made to the multitudes, not to a limited number of believers. [see Lesson 6, Question 4]
2. John (the apostle) interprets Jesus' promise concerning "*living waters*" as referring to "*the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive*" (Jn.7:37-39; compare Is.44:3). [see Lesson 6, Question 6]
3. The Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of the Spirit to the people of God (Is.32:15; 44:3; Ezek.37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28f).

Note: Many contend that since Jesus specifically promises the apostles that they will be "*baptized*" with the Holy Spirit (Lk.24:49; Acts 1:4f) that John also only had reference to the apostles when he made the statement recorded in Matthew 3:5f, etc. This is not a valid principle of interpretation. Jesus' specific promise to the apostles cannot completely fulfill, negate, or restrict the more general promise to believers. Consider this: In the Isaiah passages referenced above (32:15; 44:3), a general outpouring of the Spirit is promised. But Isaiah also specifically states that God's Servant (i.e. Jesus) will receive the Spirit (42:1), and in the Gospels we read of Jesus receiving the Spirit at his baptism. Now, was the specific promise to Jesus the complete fulfillment of the general promise made to God's people? No, for Peter says that what the apostles received on Pentecost was also in fulfillment of the general promise. Thus, the specific promise to Jesus was made to highlight his special task. Similarly, the specific promise of baptism with the Holy Spirit was made to the apostles to highlight their special work, not to suggest that they would be the only ones to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Thesis #2: *The Holy Spirit would come after Jesus' ascension (i.e. glorification).*

1. In speaking specifically to the apostles, Jesus said he would send the Holy Spirit after his ascension (Jn.14:25f; 15:26; 16:7f).
2. John, writing after the ascension, says that the Spirit was not given to believers during the ministry of Jesus, "*because Jesus was not yet glorified*" (Jn.7:39).
3. In fact, as Acts records, the Spirit came only after Jesus ascended (Acts 1 and 2, especially 2:33).

Thesis #3: *To be "baptized" with the Spirit means the same thing as to be "filled" with the Spirit, to have the Spirit "come upon" you, to have the Spirit "poured out" on you, or to have the Spirit "fall" on you. The image conveyed by these figurative expressions suggests the extent to which the Spirit is given. Other terms carrying the same image: engulf, overwhelm, imbue. However, these expressions do not tell what actually takes place when one is "baptized", etc.*

1. The phrase "*baptized with the Holy Spirit*" only occurs four times in the Gospels (see above) and twice in Acts (1:5; 11:16), but every occurrence relates directly to John's contrast between his baptizing with water and Jesus "*baptizing*" with the Spirit. Obviously, Jesus was not going to physically immerse believers in the Spirit like John did in water. Rather, the term is a figurative expression which only has meaning in comparison to John's baptism.
2. In Acts 1:5, Jesus quotes John's promise to refer to Pentecost. In Acts 1 and 2, it is synonymous with these expressions: [see Lesson 6, Question 8]
 - 1:8 "*[Y]ou shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.*"
 - 2:4 "*[T]hey were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*"
 - 2:16-17 "*This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel...That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh...*"
3. In Acts 11:16, Peter quotes John's promise to describe what happened at Cornelius'

household. These other expressions are also used in Acts 10 and 11 to describe this event: [see Lesson 15, Question 4]

10:44 "[T]he Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word."

11:15 "[T]he Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning."

4. This same variety of expressions are used in the OT to refer to the Spirit empowering certain ones for a special task. [see Lesson 6, Question 1]

Thesis #4: *The above figurative expressions describing the promise of the Holy Spirit (baptize, poured out, etc.) are also synonymous with the expressions describing the "gift of the Holy Spirit" which God (and Jesus) had "given" and which, conversely, believers have "received".*

1. This is most clearly seen in the account of Cornelius' household receiving the Spirit. Notice how the following expressions are used in the same context as those noted earlier:

10:45 "[T]he gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also, for they heard them speak with tongues..." (which is just another way of saying that the Spirit had been poured out, Acts 2:16-17).

10:47 "...who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

11:17 "God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ."

2. Consider the Samaritans:

8:15f "[Peter and John] prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet he had fallen upon none of them."

3. Cf. John 7:37-39 quoted above.

Thesis #5: *To receive the Spirit (i.e., to be baptized with, etc.) simply means to be empowered by the Spirit either to reveal the truth of God or to demonstrate its truthfulness by the working of miracles. Note the following cases from the first ten chapters of Acts:*

1. In Acts 2, when the apostles were "baptized", "filled", etc. with the Spirit, they were given the gift of tongues (2:4ff).
2. Joel's prophecy quoted in Acts 2 says that those on whom God would pour out his Spirit would "prophesy", "see visions", and "dream dreams" (2:17-18).
3. When the apostles (disciples?) were filled with Spirit, "they spoke the word of God with boldness" (4:31) and "with great power ...gave witness to the resurrection" (4:31,33).
4. The Spirit also witnesses to the resurrection (by the working of miracles) and is "given to those who obey him" (5:32).
5. Stephen was "full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (6:5), but it is also said that he was "full of faith and power" (6:8). He spoke by "the Spirit" (6:10) and "he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (7:55).
6. The Samaritans "received" the Spirit, but this implies that they receive some sort of miraculous powers, particularly considering Simon the sorcerer's anxiousness to have the same ability as the apostles (8:13-19).
7. Peter says that Jesus also was "anointed...with the Holy Spirit and with power... healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (10:38).
8. Peter was amazed that "the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God" (10:45-46).

Thesis #6: To say that the Spirit is given to believers (as is argued above), does not require that every individual believer was given miraculous powers. Rather, the miraculous empowerment (to prophesy, heal, etc.) of one (or more) member in the congregation of believers would be to benefit of all members.

1. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul is specifically discussing the diversities of the gifts of the Spirit. Read 1 Corinthians 12 and note these statements:

12:7 "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all."

12:27 "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually."

The main point of this chapter is that there is a oneness to the body, or, in other words, a corporate identity. Gifts given to one benefit everyone; thus, it can be said that the gifts are "given" to everyone.

2. In Acts 5:32 ("And we are witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him"), the context clearly indicates that it is the miraculous works of the Spirit which witness. But notice that the text says that these works were given to those who obey Him. Assuming that not everyone did in fact have miraculous abilities, it must be understood that the whole body was considered the recipient of the gift of the Spirit even though only some particular members had the ability.
3. The same is true of Mark 16:15-18. The text says that "*these signs will follow those who believe...*" Although it does not say "*only some of those who believe*", it can be interpreted that way since any member performing signs is considered the same as the whole body performing signs.

Thesis #7: Acts 15 provides the lens through which many other NT passages concerning the Holy Spirit is made clearer. (Or, to use another metaphor, it is the hermeneutical key that unlocks the meaning of other NT passages concerning the Holy Spirit.)

1. The meeting in Acts 15 was necessitated by the work of some Jewish Christians who were visiting various churches teaching that Gentiles had to be circumcised.
2. Arguments against the understanding that Gentiles had to be circumcised were given by Peter, Paul and Barnabas, and James.
 - a. Peter recounts the conversion of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. After the Holy Spirit arranged for Peter and Cornelius to meet in Cornelius' home, the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and his household while Peter was telling them the gospel of Jesus Christ. The coming of the Spirit upon them was evident in that they were able to speak in tongues. Peter's conclusion was that "*And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith*" (15:8-9).
 - b. Paul and Barnabas report their work during their just-completed missionary journey. In each city God approved their work among the Gentiles (which did not involve the Gentiles being circumcised) by enabling them to perform "*signs and wonders*" (15:12).
 - c. James quotes OT Scripture (given through the Spirit) foretelling God acceptance of the Gentiles.
 - d. The common denominator to these arguments is that the Spirit gave evidence (speaking in tongues, signs and wonders, prophetic revelation) of the Gentiles acceptance and circumcision was not required.
3. This powerful argument was not only useful in refuting the Judiazers, but also to encourage the Gentiles. The work of the Spirit through his empowerment was evidence they were now part of God's family. They could visibly see, and hence understand, that they were accepted by God. We see Paul making this argument in at least three of his letters.
 - a. Paul writes the Galatians to rebuke them for giving ear to the Judiazers. He reminds them of their beginning in Christ. "*Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works*

- of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal.3:2-3). Paul's point is that their reception of the Spirit was only on the basis of their faith and not their adherence to points of the Law of Moses. But what does Paul mean when he speaks of them 'receiving the Spirit'? It becomes clear in his parallel expression in verse 5: "Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—..." Paul says they received the Spirit when miracles were worked among them. Verse 14 makes an even stronger connection to the experience of the early Christians we read about in Acts: "so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith". The "promised Spirit" is the same promise Peter preaches on Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21, 33, 38) – the promise of the Spirit being poured out on all flesh.
- b. At the end of Paul's opening doxology in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul speaking to the Gentiles says, "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory" (Eph.1:13-14). To seal something denotes ownership. These Gentiles had been sealed by the "promised Holy Spirit" (i.e. the "poured out" Spirit in Acts 2). This action becomes the "guarantee" (KJV, ASV "earnest"; CSB, NET "down payment"; NIV "deposit guaranteeing"; NRSV, NASU "pledge"; NAB "first installment") of their inheritance. Paul's point is clear. The Gentiles reception of the Spirit as evidenced by the miraculous empowerment among them served as a visible down payment on their future, unseen inheritance.
- c. In a context where Paul argues that he is simply a worker for God, he says, "And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Cor.1:21-22). The same elements occur here as in Ephesians 1: God's seal and the giving of the Spirit as a guarantee. The giving of the Spirit is more elaborately stated: "given us his Spirit in our hearts". One might think a different type of giving of the Spirit is in view since in this case the Spirit is given "in our hearts". But Paul uses this expression two other times in 2 Corinthians (not in reference to the Spirit) simply to highlight the close connection implied by the expression (4:6; 7:3). More likely this should be taken as shorthand for the fuller statement "and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom.5:5) – another context where Paul is highlighting the assurance his readers had of their inheritance. The giving of the Spirit through his endowments was evidence of God's love, his acceptance, and our inheritance.

Thesis #8: Every reference to the Holy Spirit in Acts being given to a person includes the empowering works of the Spirit.

1. The truth of this statement can be tested by reviewing the list of references in Acts to the Spirit given at the first of this lesson.
2. Only two passages are usually debated: Acts 2:38 ("the gift of the Holy Spirit") and Acts 6:3-4 (the qualification that the men be "full of the Holy Spirit"). If one is not willing to concede that these also refer to the Spirit's empowerment, then the thesis can be changed to "The vast majority of references ...". But, then, a proposal has to be given what is meant concerning the Spirit in these two passages that does justice to the context.
3. In Acts 6, there is nothing in the text to suggest one way or the other that these men had miraculous gifts. However, since the expression "full of the Holy Spirit" is uniformly used elsewhere in Acts in reference to miraculous empowerment, it is natural to believe that is the case here also.
4. The "gift of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 2:38 is best understood as referring to the whole work of the Spirit, including the miraculous. In addition to the other theses above, consider the following:

- a. The context of Acts 1 and 2 is about the promise of the Spirit (as foretold by Joel) being fulfilled. In Acts 2:33, Peter says the promise is fulfilled. Thus, the promise of v.39 is most naturally linked with the promise of the Spirit. [see Lesson 6, Question 9]
- b. The only other time the expression "*gift of the Holy Spirit*" is used is in Acts 10:45 which refers to the Gentiles speaking in tongues.
- c. The expression "*gift of the Holy Spirit*" is best understood as '*the Holy Spirit is the gift*' which simply means that the Holy Spirit will be given to believers (cf. *Thesis #6* above, Acts 5:32; 11:17, etc.).

Conclusion

This is the age of the Spirit (2 Cor.3:8). In New Testament times, as Acts attests, this meant that the Spirit was given to believers to prophesy and perform signs (miracles). The Spirit was given to both confirm the message that was being preached and to give assurance that the one upon whom the Spirit came was acceptable to God. Presumably not everyone had these gifts, but the whole church profited from those who did. To any outside observer, it was the corporate body of Christ who was empowered by the Spirit.

First century Christians would naturally associate prophecy and miracles with work of the Spirit. Only after miracles had ceased would Christians distinguish between the miraculous and non-miraculous works of the Spirit. We should keep that in mind when reading the New Testament.

Observations

1. At times it is as important to see what Scripture does not say as what it does say. Within the Reformed (Calvinist) tradition, there are two prevalent views concerning the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - 1) Since all people are depraved due to original sin and thus incapable of responding to God, it is necessary that the Holy Spirit regenerates a person for them to have the ability to heed God's call in the gospel.
 - 2) Since even the regenerate person is incapable of doing God's will on his own accord, it is necessary for the Holy Spirit to sanctify the child of God over his lifetime, i.e. to gradually enable him to do good works.

There is not one passage in Acts (or, even in the entire NT in my view) that even partially supports either one of these views. In Acts, the Holy Spirit empowers the speaker to speak God's word and to perform deeds of confirmation – he never empowers (i.e. miraculously induce) the sinner to obey the gospel or a Christian to live a godly life.

2. Some brethren divide the work of the Spirit into independent activities intended for different people. For example, some believe the expression "*baptized with the Holy Spirit*" refers to one work of the Spirit that is applicable only to the apostles and Cornelius and his household, the expression "*filled with Spirit*" refers to another work for those other Christians who were empowered by the Spirit, and the expression "*gift of the Holy Spirit*" refers to the indwelling of the Spirit in all Christians. Such distinctions are difficult to maintain when the language used, for example, in Acts 1, 2, 10, and 11 indicates that these expressions are synonymous (i.e., can be used interchangeably) (see *Theses #3* and *#4*).
3. Brethren who do not understand the expression "*gift of the Holy Spirit*" to refer to the empowerment of the Spirit (as is argued above) either understand it to refer to something that the Holy Spirit gives (something like 'salvation' or 'life') or to refer to what is generally called the indwelling of the Spirit. The most obvious weakness of either view is that none of these brethren would argue that the same expression "*gift of the Holy Spirit*" in Acts 10:45 means the same thing they believe it does in Acts 2:38. A further weakness of the indwelling view is that there is no other passage in Acts (which has a lot to say about the Spirit) that refers to the indwelling of the Spirit.

Lesson 37

Review

Answer as many questions as possible without referring to the Biblical text or previous lessons.

1. In which chapter are the following persons first mentioned by Luke?

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| _____ a. Saul (Paul) | _____ h. John Mark |
| _____ b. Barnabas | _____ i. Timothy |
| _____ c. Julius | _____ j. Tabitha (Dorcas) |
| _____ d. Stephen | _____ k. Silas |
| _____ e. Cornelius | _____ l. Felix |
| _____ f. Lydia | _____ m. Gamaliel |
| _____ g. Pricilla and Aquila | _____ n. James (the elder) |

2. In which chapter are the following persons last mentioned by Luke?

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| _____ a. Paul | _____ f. John Mark |
| _____ b. Barnabas | _____ g. Timothy |
| _____ c. Pricilla and Aquila | _____ h. Cornelius |
| _____ d. Philip | _____ i. Silas |

3. In which chapter are the following events recorded?

- _____ a. The Jerusalem meeting concerning circumcision of the Gentiles
- _____ b. Paul's final farewell to the Ephesian elders
- _____ c. Paul's shipwreck on Malta
- _____ d. The separation of Paul and Barnabas over John Mark
- _____ e. Conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch
- _____ f. Paul preaching in the synagogue at Thessalonica
- _____ g. Paul appearing before King Agrippa II
- _____ h. Conversion of the Jailer

4. Which chapters record Paul's First Missionary Journey?

List the following cities in the order Paul visited them on his First Missionary Journey.

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| _____ Perga | _____ Salamis |
| _____ Lystra | _____ Antioch of Pisidia |
| _____ Paphos | _____ Derbe |
| _____ Iconium | |

5. Which chapters record Paul's Second Missionary Journey?

List the following cities in the order Paul visited them on his Second Missionary Journey.

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| _____ Corinth | _____ Philippi |
| _____ Jerusalem | _____ Berea |
| _____ Derbe | _____ Cenchrea |
| _____ Troas | _____ Thessalonica |
| _____ Athens | _____ Lystra |
| _____ Ephesus | |

6. What chapters record Paul's Third Missionary Journey?

List the following regions in the order Paul visited them on his Third Missionary Journey.

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| _____ Macedonia | _____ Phrygia |
| _____ Asia | _____ Greece |
| _____ Galatia | |

True (T) or False (F)

- _____ 7. Paul only taught in the synagogue.
- _____ 8. Acts provides a complete record of Paul's missionary work.
- _____ 9. Barnabas was an apostle.
- _____ 10. Timothy accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey.
- _____ 11. Paul's conversion is recorded three times within Acts.

Short Answer

12. What was Luke's purpose in writing to Theophilus? In other words, what was the main thing that Luke wanted Theophilus to know?

13. Which letters did Paul write during the Second Missionary Journey?

14. Which letters did Paul write during the Third Missionary Journey?

15. Paul suffered persecution many times. Paul lists his sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11:23-33. How many of these persecutions can be found in Acts? (Remember that 2 Corinthians was written during the Third Missionary Journey.)

16. List the occasions that Paul appears before government officials. Give the name of the officials, if known.

17. Acts is our main source of information as to the practice of the early church. Where, in Acts, is information provided regarding the following?

People were baptized for remission of sins -

Baptism was by immersion -

Appointment of elders and deacons -

Sphere of elders authority -

Christians assembled on the first day of the week -

How to resolve disputes between Christians -

Necessity and manner of providing for needy saints -

Sending letters of commendation -

18. What have you learned from this study that you did not know before?

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