



FAITH BIBLE COLLEGE

2 Timothy 2:15

*"Study to show thyself approved unto God,
a workman that needs not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth."*

The Book of Acts

“The Power & Demonstration of the Holy Spirit”



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the task and others who sniff it, wants to be like them"*

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& that Function pulls you to its Position
& the Position determines your Title"*

*Blessings & Graceful Studying
Professor Ronnie Moodley*

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THE INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ACTS

The book of Acts is known as "The Acts of the Apostles" because it records the activities of those Apostles whom Jesus Christ ordained to carry out His Divine intention and work. Yet, this name is not exactly accurate, for Acts records not the works of man, but the works of the Holy Spirit. In every instance, the Person who was distinctly the same in all the lives and ministries of these early apostles was the Person of the Holy Spirit. Thus the book of Acts should rightly be called - "The Acts of the Holy Spirit."

Even in the first verses of the Book of Acts we see how Jesus encouraged the early disciples to wait for the promise that He would send once He had ascended into Heaven. Without this Person, the book of Acts would not have been filled with the power of God. The acts and the ministry of the Apostles would have been powerless. It was only through the baptism and the infilling of the Holy Spirit that these ordinary men and women of God were given the power required to work the same works that Jesus had done whilst He was on earth.

Acts 1:8 "But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

THE AUTHOR

Although the author does not name himself, evidence outside the Scriptures and inferences from the book itself lead to the conclusion that it was Luke who was the author.

Within the Book we see clues as to who had written this book:

- **Luke was a companion of Paul:**

In certain of the descriptions within this book we see the term “we” being used by the author. We also see how the author includes himself as a companion of Paul during his travels. For example:

Acts 16:10-17 “So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, for we could only conclude that God was calling us to preach the Good News there. We boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis. From there we reached Philippi, a major city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony; we stayed there several days. On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we supposed that some people met for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had come together.”

Acts 20:5-8 “They went ahead and waited for us at Troas. As soon as the Passover season ended, we boarded a ship at Philippi in Macedonia and five days later arrived in Troas, where we stayed a week. On the first day of the week, we gathered to observe the Lord's Supper. Paul was preaching; and since he was leaving the next day, he talked until midnight.

Acts 27:16 “We sailed behind a small island named Cauda, where with great difficulty we hoisted aboard the lifeboat that was being towed behind us.”

2 Tim. 4:11 “Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you when you come, for he will be helpful to me.”

- **Luke was a physician**

There is proof in the vocabulary and words that are used in this book that reflect that the author was educated as a physician. Acts 28:6 "The people waited for him to swell up or suddenly drop dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and decided he was a god."

There are also some usages in Luke-Acts that seem to suggest that a medical man wrote this book. In Colossians 4:14 Paul uses the term "doctor" when he was describing Paul. Colossians 4:14 "Dear Doctor Luke sends his greetings, and so does Demas."

THE RECIPIENT

This book is in some sense a sequel to what had been written in the Gospel of Luke and is therefore addressed to the same unknown person, Theophilus. His name meant "one who loves God". The use of the term "most excellent one" with the name, indicates an individual who was a Roman officer, or at least of a high position and wealth. He was possibly Luke's patron, responsible for seeing that the writings were copied and distributed.

THE DATE WHEN IT WAS WRITTEN

There are two possible dates in which the book of Acts could have been written. The earliest date for the book of Acts is the two year imprisonment which is recorded in Acts 28:30-31 which would have been around A.D. 60 and 61. The latest date would be AD70 or later.

The earlier date has been more supported in that:

- **There was silence on events that took place later on in history:**

The Neronian persecution of A.D. 64/65 probably had not taken place by the time the book was written. There is no evidence of oppression by Rome. There is also no indication of oppression in Rome (Acts 28).

The Jewish revolt of A.D. 66 and / or the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is/are not indicated in the book of Acts. This leads many to date the book no later than A.D. 70.

- **There was no outcome in Paul's trial:**

There is no mention of the outcome of the trial that Paul had been waiting for in Acts 28:30.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

The book of Acts is located between the Gospels and the Epistles that were written to the Church. Because of its position we are able to see a bridge from the writings of the Gospels to the Epistles. In the Gospels we see the ministry of Christ whilst He was on earth and how He chose men to carry out His ministry on earth. Through His teachings and the Great commission these men were prepared to carry on this great task that was given to them. In the Book of Acts we see how these men, who now were filled with the power of God, began to minister in power and thus the Church was birthed. It was thus to this Church, the Body of Christ that the Epistles were written.

The book of Acts, then, is a transitional book. Through this book we can see how the gap was bridged between:

- **The way God dealt with people:**

In the Gospels we see how God's dealings were primarily and almost exclusively with the Jews. Through the Book of Acts we see how this changed and therefore included the Gentile nations. In the latter part of the book of Acts we see God's dealings primarily and almost exclusively with the Gentiles.

- **The way in which the people worshipped:**

In the Gospels God's people still worshipped according to the Mosaic Law with its tithes, sacrifices, and temple; in the epistles, God's people are the church, meeting and worshipping outside the temple and apart from the Mosaic Law. The book of Acts shows us how this transition took place.

- **The way the believer lived:**

In the book of Acts we see a transition between how the believer's lived before the Pentecost and how they lived after the Pentecost.

THE BOOK OF ACTS – SEQUEL TO LUKE

The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts are written as companion volumes. They are part one and part two of the work of Jesus.

Luke	Acts
The ministry of Jesus as He was on earth	The ministry of Jesus from heaven
Teachings of Jesus	Teachings of the apostles
Introduction of the Gospel	Progress of the Gospel
Christ revealed historically	Christ revealed mystically
Christ for us	Christ in us
Begins with the events surrounding the coming of Christ to earth.	Begins with the ascension of Christ into heaven
Ends with the disciples in Jerusalem	Ends with the apostle Paul in Rome

THE PURPOSES OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

The main purposes of this book are:

- **To present a history:**

The primary purpose of the author was to give an account of the teachings of the apostles and those who came after Jesus. It is therefore a historical account of the events that took place in the early church starting with its origin and then moving on to its expansion.

- **To give a defense:**

It is a defense that is given to both the Jews (4:8-12) and the Gentiles (25:8-11) and has an underlying purpose to bring people to conversion. It shows how the early church coped with pagan and Jewish thought, the Roman government and the Hellenistic society.

- **To depict a triumphant Church in the midst of persecution:**

The Book of Acts reveals to us a triumphant group of believers, the Church of God, who were able to grow in faith despite the persecution that they were faced with. From this account of history we see how despite man's opposition, God's work cannot be thwarted.

Acts 5:35-39 "Then he addressed his colleagues as follows: "Men of Israel, take care what you are planning to do to these men! Some time ago there was that fellow Theudas, who pretended to be someone great. About four hundred others joined him, but he was killed, and his followers went their various ways. The whole movement came to nothing. After him, at the time of the census, there was Judas of Galilee. He got some people to follow him, but he was killed, too, and all his followers were scattered. "So my advice is, leave these men alone. If they are teaching and doing these things merely on their own, it will soon be overthrown. But if it is of God, you will not be able to stop them. You may even find yourselves fighting against God."

THE THEOLOGY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

WHAT IS THEOLOGY?

Webster's dictionary defines theology as "The science of God or of religion; the science which treats of the existence, character, and attributes of God, his laws and government, the doctrines we are to believe, and the duties we are to practice. . . the science of Christian faith and life."

Charles Ryrie, the popular dispensationalist theologian, says theology is "thinking about God and expressing those thoughts in some way." (Basic Theology, Charles Ryrie).

Millard Erickson, a modern Baptist theologian says that theology is simply "the study or science of God." (Christian Theology by Millard Erickson)

Theology is thus the study of God. It comes from the word "*theos*" which is Greek for "God," and "-ology" which is from the Greek word *logos* meaning "word." Most literally then the word theology means "words about God" or "the study of God." Theology is a belief system.

THE THEOLOGY OF GOD

Unlike most history books, Acts is filled with references to God. The story simply wouldn't have been possible without God. He started it, motivated it and gave it direction, energy, purpose, message and protection.

The word "God" appears in 158 verses in the book of Acts. As God, He is praised, worshiped, obeyed and prayed to. Luke tells us repeatedly that God sent Jesus Christ, raised Him from the dead, glorified Him and gave Him authority. God is the One who calls people to repentance, who gives the Holy Spirit, who directs the mission. It is His work — the message is about "the kingdom of God," "the word of God," the gospel of "the grace of God."

Here are some of the ways in which God has been revealed throughout this book.

HE IS THE CREATOR

- Acts 4:24 "Then all the believers were united as they lifted their voices in prayer: "O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—
- Acts 14:15 "Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings like yourselves! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them."

HE IS THE SOVEREIGN

God as being sovereign is said to have supreme rule. He is the One who has the ultimate authority and say in things that happen. We see this sovereignty in:

- His selection of leaders within the Church: Acts 1:23-26 "So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then they all prayed for the right man to be chosen. "O Lord," they said, "you know every heart. Show us which of these men you have chosen as an apostle to replace Judas the traitor in this ministry, for he has deserted us and gone where he belongs." Then they cast lots, and in this way Matthias was chosen and became an apostle with the other eleven."
- His bestowing of the Holy Spirit on believers: Acts 2:2-4 "Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm in the skies above them, and it filled the house where they were meeting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability."
- His salvation of grace: God will save those whom He chooses to, even those who are in man's eyes least deserving. A great example of this is seen in the conversion of Saul to Paul (Acts 9:1-9). Another example is seen in how the Book of Acts describes the purpose of God to save the Gentiles through Israel.

- His guidance and direction: Acts 16:6-10 "Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had told them not to go into the province of Asia at that time. Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed for the province of Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus did not let them go. So instead, they went on through Mysia to the city of Troas. That night Paul had a vision. He saw a man from Macedonia in northern Greece, pleading with him, "Come over here and help us." So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, for we could only conclude that God was calling us to preach the Good News there."

HE IS OMNISCIENT

The Omniscience of God is seen in His foreknowledge of things that are yet to come. Acts 15:18 "He who made these things known long ago." Another example of His all knowledge is in the account of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5).

HE IS OMNIPOTENT

The word "omnipotence" means to have the power to do anything. The Omnipotence of God is seen in His great power to heal those who are sick (Acts 3, 5:12-16), to deliver those who are oppressed, to bring salvation to a multitude (Acts 2) and to deliver men from jail (Acts 12, 16:25-34).

CHRISTOLOGY

The term "Christology" (from Greek Christos meaning "anointed one" or "Christ") refers to the study of Christ. In the Book of Acts Christ is revealed as:

- **JESUS CHRIST WAS MAN:**

Acts 3:22 "Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up a Prophet like me from among your own people. Listen carefully to everything he tells you.'

- **JESUS CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED:**

Acts 2:23 "But you followed God's prearranged plan. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to the cross and murdered him."

Acts 4:10 "Let me clearly state to you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed in the name and power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth, the man you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead.

- **JESUS CHRIST WAS RESURRECTED:**

Acts 1:3 "During the forty days after his crucifixion, he appeared to the apostles from time to time and proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. On these occasions he talked to them about the Kingdom of God."

- **JESUS CHRIST ASCENDED:**

Acts 1:11 "They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing here staring at the sky? Jesus has been taken away from you into heaven. And someday, just as you saw him go, he will return!"

- **JESUS IS THE SAVIOUR:**

Acts 5:31 "Then God put him in the place of honor at his right hand as Prince and Savior. He did this to give the people of Israel an opportunity to turn from their sins and turn to God so their sins would be forgiven."

PNEUMATOLOGY

Pneumatology is the study of the Person and the work of the Holy Spirit. There is much that we are able to learn about the Holy Spirit throughout the book of Acts:

- **HE BAPTIZES BELIEVERS:**

Acts 2:4 "And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability."

- **HE DIRECTS AND COMMANDS:**

Acts 8:29 "The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage."

Acts 10:19-21 “Meanwhile, as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, “Three men have come looking for you. Go down and go with them without hesitation. All is well, for I have sent them.” So Peter went down and said, “I’m the man you are looking for. Why have you come?”

- **HE PERFORMS MIRACLES:**

Acts 8:39 “When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing.”

- **HE CALLS AND SENDS PEOPLE TO SERVICE:**

Acts 13:2-4 “One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work I have for them.” So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way. Sent out by the Holy Spirit, Saul and Barnabas went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus.”

- **HE CAN BE LIED TO:**

Acts 5:3 “Then Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself.

- **HE CAN BE RESISTED:**

Acts 7:51 “You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? But your ancestors did, and so do you!”

- **HE GIVES US BOLDNESS TO WITNESS**

The Holy Spirit enables us to be a witness. Acts 1:8 “But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

By being filled with the Holy Spirit, we can speak with power. Acts 4:33 “And the apostles gave powerful witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God’s great favor was upon them all.” Acts 4:31 “After this prayer, the building where

they were meeting shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And they preached God's message with boldness." Acts 6:10 "None of them was able to stand against the wisdom and Spirit by which Stephen spoke."

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel according to Luke

The angel Gabriel says of John the Baptist: "Even before his birth, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit" (1:15); he will act "with the *spirit and power* of [the prophet] Elijah" (1:17); later, the child grows and becomes "*strong in spirit*" (1:80). After the birth of John the Baptist, his father Zechariah is "filled with the Holy Spirit" and utters a prophecy (1:67).

Gabriel tells Mary how she will conceive Jesus: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (1:35). When Mary visits her pregnant older cousin, Elizabeth is "filled with the Holy Spirit" (1:41). In her song of praise (the Magnificat), Mary proclaims, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and *my spirit rejoices* in God my Savior" (1:46-47).

In Jerusalem, "the Holy Spirit rested on" a righteous man named Simeon (2:25); the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die before seeing the Messiah (2:26); so one day, the Spirit guides Simeon to the Temple, where he encounters the infant Jesus and his parents (2:27).

John the Baptist distinguishes between himself and Jesus: "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (3:16).

After Jesus is baptized, "the Holy Spirit descended upon him *in bodily form like a dove*" (3:22).

Before beginning his public ministry, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness" (4:1), where he is tempted by the devil. After withstanding the devil's temptations in the desert, Jesus returns to Galilee "filled with the power of the Spirit" (4:14).

In the synagogue at Nazareth, his hometown, Jesus reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (4:18); after finishing the reading, Jesus declares, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (4:21), implying that he is indeed the Messiah, enlivened by God's Spirit.

Soon after the seventy disciples return from their mission, Jesus "rejoiced in the Holy Spirit" and thanks God for hiding things from the wise but revealing them to infants (10:21).

While teaching his disciples about prayer, Jesus says, "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!" (11:13).

In response to criticism from his opponents, Jesus tells his disciples, "Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven" (12:10).

Jesus tells his disciples not to worry if they are arrested or put on trial, "for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say" (12:12).

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles

Jesus instructs the apostles "through the Holy Spirit" (1:2).

The first disciples are "baptized with the Holy Spirit" at Pentecost (1:5, 8; 2:1-4; 11:15-16).

The apostles are "full of" or "filled with" the Holy Spirit, especially when they preach (1:8; 2:4; 4:8, 31; 11:24; 13:9, 52).

Similarly, the Holy Spirit spoke through King David and the prophets in ancient Israel (1:16; 4:25; 28:25).

God "will pour out" his Spirit on all people and all nations in the last days (2:17-18, 33; 10:45).

Believers, including Gentiles, receive the Holy Spirit when they repent and are baptized (2:38; 15:8; 19:5-6).

Sometimes the reception of the Holy Spirit even precedes baptism (10:44-48).

Some people "test" or "lie to" or "oppose" the Holy Spirit, with dire consequences (5:1-11; 7:51).

Deacons and other ministers must also be "full of the Spirit" (6:1-6), especially when they prophesy (6:10; 7:55-59; 11:28; 21:4).

The Spirit is conferred through the "laying on of hands" (8:17-19; 9:17; 19:6).

The Spirit "speaks to" the apostles and prophets (8:29; 10:19; 11:12; 13:1-4; 21:11).

The Spirit leads and guides the decisions and actions of the Christian leaders (15:28; 16:6-7; 19:21; 20:22-23).

ANGELOGY

In the book of Acts there is mention of angels 20 times in 20 different verses. In these references listed below we see that angels in the book of Acts were used as ministers of God to perform His sovereign will and purpose.

- Acts 5:19 "But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,"
- Acts 8:26 "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.
- Acts 10:3 "He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.
- Acts 10:7 "And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;"
- Acts 10:22 "And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee."
- Acts 11:13 "And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;
- Acts 12:7 "And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands.
- Acts 12:23 "And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."

- Acts 27:23 "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,"

SATANOLOGY AND DEMONOLOGY

In the book of Acts we see mention of both Satan and demons.

Satan:

- Is revealed to be a liar: Acts 5:3 "Then Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself.
- Is revealed as being darkness: Acts 26:18 "to open their eyes so they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in me.'
- Is the oppressor: Acts 10:38 "And no doubt you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the Devil, for God was with him."
- Is an enemy of God (in opposition to: Acts 13:10 ""You son of the Devil, full of every sort of trickery and villainy, enemy of all that is good, will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord?"

Demons:

- Work evil: Acts 19:13-16 "A team of Jews who were traveling from town to town casting out evil spirits tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus. The incantation they used was this: "I command you by Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!" Seven sons of Sceva, a leading priest, were doing this. But when they tried it on a man possessed by an evil spirit, the spirit replied, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul. But who are you?" And he leaped on them and attacked them with such violence that they fled from the house, naked and badly injured."

- Bring disease: Acts 5:16 "There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one." Acts 8:7 "For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed."

SOTERIOLOGY

Acts 2:38 "Peter replied, "Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Soteriology is the doctrine of salvation. In the Book of Acts there are 5 direct mentions to the term salvation. From these verses we are able to learn:

- **THERE IS SALVATION ONLY IN JESUS:**

Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

- **SALVATION WAS GIVEN TO THE ISRAELITES (JEWS):**

Acts 13:26 "Men *and* brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent."

Acts 13:47 "For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."

- **SALVATION WAS GIVEN TO THE GENTILES:**

Acts 28:28 "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it."

- **SALVATION COMES WHEN WE BELIEVE IN THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL:**

Acts 8:12-13 "But now the people believed Philip's message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself believed and was baptized. He began following Philip wherever he went, and he was amazed by the great miracles and signs Philip performed."

- **SALVATION COMES AFTER REPENTANCE:**

Acts 2:38-41 "Peter replied, "Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ... Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this generation that has gone astray!" Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church—about three thousand in all."

Word	Reference
Repent	Acts 2:38 "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 3:19 "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;" Acts 8:22 "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Acts 17:30 "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:" Acts 26:20 "But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and <i>then</i> to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

Repentance	Acts 5:31 “ Him hath God exalted with his right hand <i>to be</i> a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” Acts 11:18 “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” Acts 13:24 “When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.” Acts 19:4 “Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” Acts 20:21 “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Acts 26:20 “But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and <i>then</i> to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.”
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THE MAIN THEMES FOUND IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

The book of Acts is one of the books of the Bible that provide examples on how the early Apostles preached. In looking at the two leaders of this book, Peter and Paul, we note that their sermons had specific themes and emphasis. For example:

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Acts 1:3 "During the forty days after his crucifixion, he appeared to the apostles from time to time and proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. On these occasions he talked to them about the Kingdom of God."

The phrase "kingdom of God" is used eight times throughout the Book of Acts:

- Jesus taught about the kingdom of God (1:3).
- The disciples asked about the kingdom (1:8).
- Philip taught the Samaritans about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (8:12).
- Paul and Barnabas told the Christians in Antioch that we enter the kingdom of God through many hardships (14:22).
- Paul argued in the synagogue for three months about the kingdom of God (19:8).
- Paul told the Ephesus elders that he had preached the kingdom (20:25).
- To Roman Jews, Paul preached "the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus" (28:23).
- In Rome, Paul "preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ" (28:31). Here, a message about the kingdom is solidly linked to a message about Jesus Christ.

Although Jews believed in the coming kingdom of God and had the Old Testament prophecies of it, Paul argued about the kingdom for three months in the Ephesus synagogue. His concept of the kingdom must have been considerably different than what the Ephesus Jews believed. Paul's message

about the kingdom was coupled with a message about Jesus and grace and faith.

What is the message of the Kingdom of God?

For 40 days after the resurrection of Jesus, Jesus taught the disciples about the kingdom. What did this entail?

Luke 24:27 "Then Jesus quoted passages from the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining what all the Scriptures said"

Luke 24:46-47 "And he said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah must suffer and die and rise again from the dead on the third day. With my authority, take this message of repentance to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who turn to me.'"

This is the kingdom message. George Ladd wrote, "In the days after Jesus' resurrection, He continued to teach them about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). We are undoubtedly to understand this to mean that He was instructing them in the relationship between His proclamation of the Kingdom of God and His death and resurrection (George Eldon Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*).

BEING A WITNESS:

Acts 1:8 "But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus told His disciples that they would be His witnesses on earth. This word "witness" is an important word throughout the book of Acts. It comes in several forms, both verbs and nouns, all built on the root "*martur*". It refers to a witness in a courtroom, or the testimony that a witness gives in court. We get the English word *martyr* from this Greek root.

Who were the disciples to be witnesses of?

- Acts 1:8 — witnesses of Jesus Christ
- Acts 1:22 — witness of Jesus' resurrection
- Acts 2:32 — witness of His resurrection
- Acts 3:15 — witness of His resurrection

- Acts 4:33 — they testified to the resurrection
- Acts 5:32 — witnesses of His resurrection, exaltation and forgiveness
- Acts 10:39 — witnesses of everything Jesus did
- Acts 10:41 — the resurrected Jesus was seen by witnesses
- Acts 10:43 — all the prophets testify about Him and forgiveness
- Acts 13:31 — those who saw the resurrected Jesus are His witnesses
- Acts 14:3 — the Lord confirmed the message of His grace
- Acts 22:15 — Paul will be Jesus' witness of what He saw and heard
- Acts 22:18 — they will not accept Paul's testimony about the Lord
- Acts 23:11 — Paul testified about Jesus in Jerusalem and Rome
- Acts 26:16 — Paul was appointed a witness of what he saw of the Lord
- Acts 26:22 — Paul testified, saying that the Scriptures predicted that the Christ would suffer, rise from the dead, and proclaim light to Jews and Gentiles.

The focus of the apostles' testimony is Jesus, His resurrection, and the fact that grace or forgiveness is available.

THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST:

- **Peter's sermon: Acts 2**

"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs.... This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you...put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead" (Acts 2:22-24).

As a result of this sermon 3000 people were saved and they "...devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (2:42).

- **Peter's sermon: Acts 3**

Peter's second sermon in Acts is reported in chapter 3. It is also given to a crowd of Jews at the temple, and it has some basic similarities to Peter's first sermon.

Acts 3:19 "Now turn from your sins and turn to God, so you can be cleansed of your sins."

- **Peter's witness to the Sanhedrin: Acts 4**

Acts 4:9-12 "are we being questioned because we've done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed? Let me clearly state to you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed in the name and power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth, the man you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead. For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says, 'The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.' There is salvation in no one else! There is no other name in all of heaven for people to call on to save them."

- **Phillip's message: Acts 8**

Acts 8:35 "So Philip began with this same Scripture and then used many others to tell him the Good News about Jesus."

- **Paul's message to the Church:**

Acts 13:24-26 "But before he came, John the Baptist preached the need for everyone in Israel to turn from sin and turn to God and be baptized. As John was finishing his ministry he asked, 'Do you think I am the Messiah? No! But he is coming soon—and I am not even worthy to be his slave.' "Brothers—you sons of Abraham, and also all of you devout Gentiles who fear the God of Israel—this salvation is for us!"

Acts 14:15 "Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings like yourselves! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them."

Acts 16:31 "They replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with your entire household."

Acts 17:2-3 "As was Paul's custom, he went to the synagogue service, and for three Sabbaths in a row he interpreted the Scriptures to the people. He was explaining and proving the prophecies about the sufferings of the Messiah and his rising from the dead. He said, "This Jesus I'm telling you about is the Messiah."

Acts 17:30-31 "God overlooked people's former ignorance about these things, but now he commands everyone everywhere to turn away from idols and turn to him. For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead."

Acts 20:21 "I have had one message for Jews and Gentiles alike—the necessity of turning from sin and turning to God, and of faith in our Lord Jesus."

OUTLINE

There are two main outlines that can be used when discussing the book of Acts. The geographical and the character outlines. For example:

Geographical Outline:

- Witnessing in Jerusalem—Chapter 1-7
- Witnessing in Judea—Chapter 8-12
- Witnessing in the uttermost parts—chapter 13-28

Character Outline:

- Peter: Beginning of the Church (Acts 1-12)
- Paul: Expansion of the Church (Acts 12-28)

Outline for this study:

Through the study of this course we will be looking at a combination of both of these outlines:

PART ONE: PETER, THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH

The last days of Jesus (Acts 1)

Final Commission

His Ascension

The Disciples before Pentecost

The witness in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-8:4)

The day of Pentecost (Acts 2)

The Birth of the Early church (Acts 2)

The witness of Peter and John (Acts 3-4)

The state of the Church (Acts 4-5)

The life of Stephen (Acts 6-7)

The witness in Samaria (Acts 8:5-25)

The dispersion (Acts 8:1-4)

The witness of Phillip (Acts 8:4-25)

The witness in Judea (Acts 8:26-12:25)

The salvation of Paul (Acts 8)

The witness of Peter (Acts 9:32 – 11:18)

The Church in Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

The Persecution of the Church (Acts 12)

PART TWO: PAUL, THE EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH

The witness to the uttermost part of the Earth (Acts 13:1-20:38)

Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-14:28)

The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)

Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)

Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-20:38)

Paul in prison (Acts 21-28)

The misunderstood missionary (Acts 21-22)

Paul the prisoner (Acts 22-23)

Paul the witness (Acts 24)

Paul the defender (Acts 25-26)

Paul arrives in Rome (Acts 27-28)

TWO PROMINENT LEADERS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

In the book of Acts we see that there are two prominent men who preached the Gospel and had a great impact on the beginning and the expansion of the Church. These men are Peter and Paul.

When we look at these men we note that there are certain similarities in their life and their ministry.

PETER	PAUL
Began with the power of God (Acts 2:1-14)	Began with the Power of God (Acts 9:1-19)
First sermon (Acts 2:1)	First sermon (Acts 13)
Lame healed (Acts 3)	Lame healed (Acts 14)
Success caused Jewish jealousy (Acts 5:17)	Success caused Jewish jealousy (Acts 13:45)
Released from prison supernaturally (Acts 5:19)	Released from prison supernaturally (Acts 16:25-26)
Dealt with Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8)	Dealt with Elymas (Chapter 13)
Healing through unusual ways – shadow (Acts 5)	Healing through unusual ways – handkerchief (Acts 19)
Imparted the Holy Spirit by that laying on of hands (Acts 8)	Imparting of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands (Acts 19)
Peter worshipped (Acts 10)	Paul worshipped (Acts 14)
Tabitha (Acts 9)	Eutychus (Acts 20:9)
Saw a vision directing him to go to the Gentiles (Acts 10:9-16)	Saw a vision directing him to Europe (Acts 16:6-10)
Defended God's grace (Acts 11:1-18)	Defended God's grace (Acts 15:2)
Peter in Prison (Acts 12)	Paul in prison (Acts 28)

WHO WAS PETER?

Peter's given name was "Symeon or Simon" which means "hearing". He was known as Peter, which means "rock or stone". Peter became a pillar (apostle) in the early Church. He was a man who eventually displayed great character.

His father's name was Jonah (Matthew 16:17, John 1:42). His brother was Andrew, the disciple who introduced him to Christ. They were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee and were probably in partnership with James and John, the sons of Zebedee (Luke 5:10). He was married, as there is mention in the Bible of his mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14-15). The apostle Paul later mentioned that Peter took his wife on his missionary travels (1 Corinthians 9:5). He was a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:35-42).

Ministry and spiritual life:

- He was called by God: Peter received a call from Jesus that changed his life (Luke 5:8).
- He was a disciple of Jesus: Jesus apparently gathered His followers in two stages: First as disciples (learners or apprentices) and later as apostles (commissioned representatives). He was the most prominent disciple of Jesus. The New Testament gives a more complete picture of Peter than any other disciple.
- He was the first among the apostles: He was the first apostle to be mentioned (Mark 3:14-16). His name heads every list of the Twelve in the New Testament. He was apparently the strongest individual in the band. He frequently served as representative for the disciples and was recognized as their leader (Mark 1:36, Luke 22:32).
- He was taught a lesson of obedience before he was called to be a fisher of men (Mark 1:14-20, Luke 5:1-11): When the four fishermen had finished fishing and caught nothing, they were told by Jesus to cast their nets for a catch. Peter had fished in these waters and knew that if he had toiled all night, then there would be no fish now. Yet, he needed to learn in this experience to heed to the voice of God because through obedience, the impossible would happen. He could have refused listening to Jesus (mere Carpenter by trade) and thereby missed an abundant supply, but he did not. What was Peter's response? "nevertheless at Your Word I will let down the net". To yield obedience is to enter on a vast and lasting inheritance. His will must rule although it seems contradictory to the traditions and beliefs of man.

- He was called to be a fisher of men (Luke 5:8-11, Matt 4:19). The call of Peter came while he was engaged in his usual trade. He was a fisherman and was therefore called to be a fisher of men. David was a shepherd and was called to shepherd the chosen race. Paul was called from making goat's hair tents to build the kingdom of God.
- He became one of the three disciples that were closest to Jesus: He became the leader of this trio, which consisted of, Peter, James and John. These three were present with Jesus on numerous occasions: They witnessed the raising of the young girl who was dead (Mark 5:37, Luke 8:51). They were present at Jesus' transfiguration (Matt 17:1-2). They were present in Jesus' agony in Gethsemane (Matt 26:37, Mark 14:33). Two of the three, Peter and John, were sent to make preparation for their last meal together (Luke 22:8)
- He became the first apostle to recognize Jesus as the Messiah: The purpose of Jesus' existence in the flesh was that people would come to a true picture of who God is and what He has done for man's salvation. Peter was the first person to recognize this. He confessed Jesus as Lord in the region of Caesarea, Philippi (Matt 16:13-17). It was here that his name was changed from "Simon" to "Peter". He was now to be known as a rock. Some of the character flaws that were going to be changed were: His natural impulsiveness (Matt 14:28, 17:4) His ability to have spiritual insight (John 6:68), yet his slowness to apprehend some deeper truths (Matt 15:15-16) His courage in confession, yet his guilt of cowardly denial (Matt 16:16). His self sacrifice yet his self seeking nature (Matt 19:27) His presumptuousness (Matt 16:22, John 13:8, 18:10)
- He denied Jesus on the night of His arrest (Matt 26:17-20, Mark 14:12-17, Luke 22:7-16, John 13:1-20). Although Peter denied Jesus, he sought forgiveness (unlike Judas) and therefore was restored.
- He was the first apostle to witness the resurrection: The same person who had denied Jesus was the one who saw Jesus first. According to Luke 24:34 and 1 Corinthians 15:5, Peter was the first apostle to see the risen Lord.
- He was re-commissioned (John 21).
- He was the first apostle to preach the Good news after Pentecost: The first eleven chapters of Acts are built around the leadership and the ministry of Peter.
- He was the first apostle to proclaim the salvation to the Gentiles (Acts 11-12).
- He performed signs and wonders (Acts 3:7, 5:5, 5:10, 5:15, 9:34, 9:40)

- He often failed, yet in spite of this, he was used by God. Why? He was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ and was willing to be a proud proclaimer of the Gospel of Christ (Acts 2).

F.B. Meyer said the following, "Peter comes nearer to us than any of his fellow apostles. We revere James, the brother of our Lord, for his austere saintliness. We strain our eyes in the effort to follow John to the serene heights where his eagle wings carried him in rapture and revelation. But Peter is so human, so like ourselves in his down moments and glorious moments, so entangled with weaknesses, that we are encouraged to hope that perhaps the Great Potter may be able to make something even of our common clay..."

WHO WAS PAUL?

Paul's original name was Saul, which means "asked for". This name was probably given to him by his father, a Benjamite, in remembrance of King Saul. After his conversion, he received a name change and became known as Paul. Paul means "little" (Acts 13:9). Paul had to be "little" so that God could be much. It was Paul who said, "I die daily".

His father was a Pharisee and of the Jewish dispersion. This meant that Paul from birth was to become a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). His father must have been a man of considerable position or he would not have possessed the coveted birthright of a Roman citizen. Paul therefore became a Roman citizen as well (Acts 21:39, 22:3, 28, 25:26). Unlike many other Jews who were scattered abroad throughout the world, he and his family did not become assimilated to the Gentile way of life that surrounded them. This is suggested when Paul describes himself as "a Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Philippians 3:5). His mother was unknown. His sister lived in Jerusalem and later her son helped in aiding Paul (Acts 23:16). His birthplace was Tarsus (Acts 22:3). This city had a mixed population and whose capital was Cilicia.

Ministry and Spiritual life:

- He received a good education in the Law: He was circumcised according to Jewish custom (Philippians 3:5). As a child, he would learn by heart Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Psalms 113-118. The years of his childhood would have passed like this: at the age of five, he would begin reading the Scriptures. At the age of six, he would be sent to the school of a neighboring rabbi. At the age of ten, he would be instructed in the oral law. At thirteen, he would become, by a kind of confirmation, a son of the law. Between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, he would have been sent to Jerusalem to pursue his training for the office of a rabbi. This was an easy accomplishment as his sister was married and living in Jerusalem. He therefore stayed with her when he was attending classes "I am brought up in this city..." (Acts 22:3). He received good education from Gamaliel (Acts 22:3, Acts 5:34).
- He also acquired a trade, generally that of his father. He became a tent maker by trade (Acts 18:3). This work was useful to him in the ministry as it meant that he did not need to impose himself or be a burden to anyone when he was preaching the free Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:16-19).

- He was called and separated from birth: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son to me, that I might preach Him among the heathen" (Galatians 1:15-16).
- He was the arch persecutor of the early Christian Church: Paul was an apt student of Gamaliel and had great enthusiasm for his ancestral tradition and zeal for the Law. This zeal found its outlet in his onslaught of the infant church of Jerusalem. The church presented a threat to all that Paul had held most dear. Its worst offense was its proclamation of one who had suffered a death cursed by the Jewish Law as Lord and Messiah (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). The survival of Israel therefore demanded that the followers of Jesus be wiped out (Acts 9:1-3, 22:4). This took the form of violent persecutions (Acts 8:1-4, 9:1, 1 Corinthians 15:9) which lead to Stephen's stoning (7:58).
- He was converted near Damascus: The Christian persecutor became a believer (Acts 9:3-9, 22:6-11, 26:12-18). "And as he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven" (Acts 9:3). It was in the glory of the light that Paul became convinced of the truth of Christianity (Acts 9:27) and received a revelation of Jesus (Acts 22:6-8). It was here that he was given a new destiny to which Paul responded by being obedient. "Then Saul arose from the ground but they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus" (v8). Here in Damascus he fasted, prayed (9:9-11), was taught by Ananias (v11-12) and was baptized (v18).
- He was called to minister the truth: See Galatians 1:15-24.
- He was a teacher: Paul was the most influential teacher of Christianity. More than any other disciple or apostle, Paul was given the opportunity to set forth and explain the revelation of Jesus Christ. Because Paul was called to teach the Gentiles rather than the Jews, he was in the unique position of confronting and answering problems that could only be presented by those completely unfamiliar with Jewish tradition. Two of the main themes from his writings are:
 - ❑ Christ was the Son of God: He knew that the One who had appeared to him on the road to Damascus was the risen Christ. "Last of all He was seen by me also" (1 Corinthians 15:8). His whole outlook and the Gospel that he preached stemmed from this revelation. Christ is presented by Paul as the One, "through whom are all things, and through whom we live" (1 Corinthians 8:6) and through whom and for whom, "all things were created" (Colossians 1:16).

- The displacement of the Law: After his conversion, Paul said, "to me, to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21). Before he was converted, he probably said, "to be, to live is law". In his mind he had judged Christ according to the Jewish law, finding Him condemned by it (Deuteronomy 21:23, Galatians 3:13). Paul took the side of the law and agreed that both Christ and His people were accursed. After his conversion, he recognized the continuing validity of the Scripture. He realized that the Law could not provide anyone with righteous standing before God, however carefully he had kept it. He knew that his life, under the law stood condemned in the light of the Damascus experience. According to Paul, the law was a temporary provision introduced by God to bring latent sin into the open. Christ is the end "of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4).
- He had a sure insight into the message of Jesus: His message was specifically addressed to sinners. He brought the news to outsiders. This was the assurance that they were not outsiders, but men and women whom He lovingly accepted. He preached to the Jews at Antioch (Acts 13:16-41), and the Gentiles in Athens (17:22-23). What were his teachings: All have sinned, Christ crucified, justification by grace through faith, life through the Spirit and life after death. Although he was an Apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:3), he always started his journeys in the synagogues (Galatians 2:8, 1 Timothy 2:7).
- He was a great missionary and Church builder. He was sent on missionary trips where he preached in many cities and established many churches. He was known as the chief missionary of early Christianity.
- He was driven with a purpose to do the will of God (John 6:38, Acts 21:13-14). With the same zeal and fervor that he had used to attack and persecute the early Church, he used his energies to tell people about Christ.
- He was a gifted writer: He is documented to have written thirteen of the New Testament books. Many people believe that he was also the author of Hebrews. In these Epistles, he was able to write down all that he had received as revelation from God so that the future generations could be taught the doctrines and theological treatise of God.
- He was persecuted for what he believed and preached. See Acts 9:29, 13:50, 18:12, 21:36, 23:10, 1 Corinthians 4:12, 2 Corinthians 4:9, 2 Timothy 2:9, 3:11, Colossians 4:3, 2 Timothy 2:9, Ephesians 3:1).

PART TWO: THE STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

PETER: THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH

The last days of Jesus (Acts 1)

- His final Commission
- His ascension
- The Disciples before Pentecost

The witness in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-8:4)

- The Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)
- The Birth of the Early Church (Acts 2)
- The Witness of Peter and John (Acts 3:1-4:31)
- The state of the Church (Acts 4:32-5:11)
- The life of Stephen (Acts 6-7)

The witness in Samaria (Acts 8:5-25)

- Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9-13)

The witness in Judea (Acts 8:26-12:25)

- The witness of Phillip (Acts 8)
- The salvation of Paul (Acts 9)
- The witness of Peter (Acts 9:32-11:18)
- The Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)
- The persecution of the Church (Acts 12)

PAUL: THE EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH

The witness to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 13:1-20:38)

- First missionary journey (Acts 13:1-14:28)
- The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)
- The Second missionary journey (Acts 15:36 – 18:22)
- The Third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-20:38)

Paul in prison (Acts 21:1-28:31)

- The journey to Jerusalem (Acts 21)
- Jerusalem (Acts 21-23)
- The Arrest (Acts 22)
- Paul's defense (Acts 22-23)
- Ceasarea (Acts 23-26)
- Journey to Rome (Acts 27-28)
- Rome (Acts 28)

PART ONE: PETER: THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH

THE LAST DAYS OF JESUS – ACTS 1

- His final Commission
- His ascension
- The Disciples before Pentecost

1. THE FINAL COMMISSION (ACTS 1:1-8)

THE PILLARS OF POWER OF THE GOSPEL: ACTS 1:1-3

Acts 1:1-3 "Dear Theophilus: In my first book I told you about everything Jesus began to do and teach until the day he ascended to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions from the Holy Spirit. During the forty days after His crucifixion, He appeared to the apostles from time to time and proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. On these occasions he talked to them about the Kingdom of God."

The first three verses of Acts reveal the pillars upon which the Christian faith rests.

- The Word became flesh: "All that Jesus began to do..." (Acts 1:1). When Jesus was born He lived amongst man and ministered to man. He was the Son of God who came as a representative of the Father. John 1:1 "In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God." John 1:14 "So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father."
- The Word became guidance: Acts 1:1-2 "...Jesus began to do and teach until the day He ascended to heaven after giving His chosen apostles further instructions from the Holy Spirit." John 14:6 "Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.'"
- The Word became vicarious (taking the place of another person or thing; acting or serving as a substitute): "... After His suffering..." (Acts 1:3). 1 Peter 2:24 "He personally carried away our sins in his own body on the cross so we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. You have been healed by his wounds!"

- The Word became victorious: "...He showed Himself alive..." (Acts 1:3) Romans 6:8-11 "And since we died with Christ, we know we will also share his new life. We are sure of this because Christ rose from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. He died once to defeat sin, and now he lives for the glory of God. So you should consider yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus." 1 Peter 1:3 "All honor to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is by his boundless mercy that God has given us the privilege of being born again. Now we live with a wonderful expectation because Jesus Christ rose again from the dead.
- The Word was exalted: "Until the day in which He was taken up, being by the right hand of God exalted..."(Acts 1:2). Acts 2:33 "Now He sits on the throne of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as He had promised, gave Him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today." Philippians 2:9 "Because of this, God raised Him up to the heights of heaven and gave Him a name that is above every other name,"

THE COMMISSION: ACTS 1:1-4-8

Acts 1:4-8 "In one of these meetings as he was eating a meal with them, he told them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you what he promised. Remember, I have told you about this before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." When the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, are you going to free Israel now and restore our kingdom?" "The Father sets those dates," he replied, "and they are not for you to know. But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The promise of the Father:

"But you shall receive power ("dunamis") - ability, efficiency and might - when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends - the very bounds - of the earth" (Acts 1:8, Amplified).

"Now to Him Who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or conceive, by the power ("dunamis") which is at work among us . . ." (Ephesians 3:20, NEB).

“Dunamis” is a Greek word and means:

- “act of power” (Young’s);
- “miraculous power, ability” (Strong’s);
- “natural capability, inherent power; capability of anything, ability to perform anything; then, absolutely, not merely power capable of action, but, power in action” (Bullinger’s).

The word “dunamis” is used 121 times in the New Testament and translated into the following English words:

Word - Dunamis	Occurrence in Scripture
Ability	1
abundance	1
meaning	1
might	4
mighty deed	1
Power	77
Strength	7
violence	1
Virtue	3
mighty work	11
miracle	8
wonderful work	1
worker of miracles	1
Mighty	4

What was the purpose of this promise?

- It was for the beginning of a new organism:

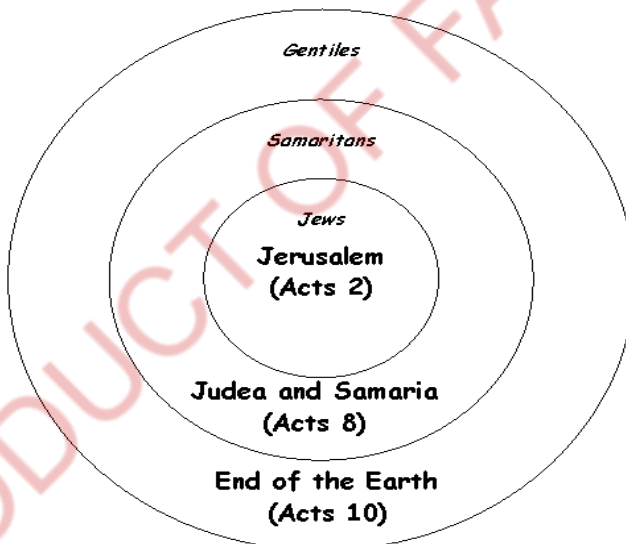
With the baptism of the Holy Spirit the disciples became unified as one and therefore were no longer disciples on their own but part of an organism – the church.

John 17:21-23 "My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one, Father—that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you sent me. "I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are— I in them and you in me, all being perfected into one. Then the world will know that you sent me and will understand that you love them as much as you love me."

Acts 2:44 "And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had."

Through the baptism and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, the Church was birthed.

The Coming of the Spirit (Acts 1:4–8)



Regions and People Groups

Sequence	Date	Region (Acts 1:8)	People	Passage	Theme
1	Pentecost	Jerusalem	Jews	Acts 2	To the Jew first (Rom. 1:16).
2	Pentecost + 3 yrs	Judea and Samaria	Samaritans	Acts 8	Salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22).
3	Pentecost + 7-10 yrs	End of the Earth	Gentiles	Acts 10	I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation... a foolish nation (Rom. 10:19).

- It was the beginning of a new dispensation:

John 14:16 “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, who will never leave you.”

John 16:13 “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not be presenting his own ideas; he will be telling you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.”

Up to this point the disciples had not experienced the indwelling and infilling of the Holy Spirit. Even in the times of the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit did not indwell the children of Israel, but rather fell upon them at specific times to perform specific functions. Now a new dispensation was about to take place - a dispensation in which the Holy Spirit would dwell in the believer.

The contrasting themes in Acts 1:4-8:

Together	Scattering
They were “assembled together” in verse 4 and in verse 6 they “come together”. One of the traits of the Church was their unity. From this unity we see the expansion of the Church	Jesus says they will go “to all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” This was a foretaste of where the believers of the church would go.
The Wait	The Time
Jesus tells them to “wait” in Jerusalem for the Promise of the Father.	This is contrasted with the Apostle’s desire to know the “time” of Israel’s restoration. Observing this contrast helps us to see that the Apostles did not fully understand what they were waiting for. They thought their stay in Jerusalem would be the time in which the Jewish nation of Israel would be restored. They thought the restoration of a Jewish nation was the coming Promise of the Father. But the Father’s Promise was <i>not</i> a restoration of a Jewish Israel within a Jewish Jerusalem. The Father’s promise was a re-creation of Israel through the Holy Spirit that would expand throughout the world, including believing Jews and Gentiles
Know a Season	Ignorance of Seasons
In the first statement Christ says, “not many days from now” they will be baptized. He is saying that very soon, in a near season, they will be baptized by the Holy Spirit. In the first statement Christ seems to give them a season, telling them when they will be baptized.	In the second statement (v.7) Christ says “it is not for you to know times and seasons”. In the second statement Christ says they are not to know the seasons that the Father has put under His own authority

2. THE ASCENSION OF JESUS (ACTS 1:9-11)

Acts 1:9-11 "It was not long after he said this that he was taken up into the sky while they were watching, and he disappeared into a cloud. As they were straining their eyes to see him, two white-robed men suddenly stood there among them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing here staring at the sky? Jesus has been taken away from you into heaven. And someday, just as you saw him go, he will return!"

THE ANTICIPATION OF THE ASCENSION

The Ascension of Christ was anticipated in both the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus.

- **Anticipated in the Psalms**

The Ascension of Christ is anticipated in the Psalms in the Old Testament (2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 61, 72, 89, 110 and 132). They looked forward to the exaltation of David's greater Son. The apostle Peter quotes Psalms 110:1 in Acts 2:34 as part of his great Pentecost sermon. Compare also Psalm 110:1 with Hebrews 1:13; 10:12, 13; Psalm 16:8-11 with Acts 2:25-33; and Psalm 68:18 with Ephesians 4:8.

- **Anticipated in the Gospels**

The Ascension of Christ was anticipated by Christ (Luke. 9:31, 51; John 6:62; 7:33; 12:32; 14:12, 28; 16:5, 10, 17, 28; 10:17). Jesus' ascension is implied in the allusions to His coming to earth on clouds of heaven when He returns (Matthew 24:30; 26:64). To His disciples Jesus said, "What if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?" (John. 6:62). Jesus said to Mary, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God' " (John 20:17).

Jesus said, "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you" (John 16:7). It is by means of the Holy Spirit's indwelling in us that Jesus makes His life available to each of us so intimately and personally.

THE EARLY LEADERS SPOKE ABOUT THE ASCENSION IN THE BOOK OF ACTS AND OTHER WRITINGS:

- **The apostle Peter**

The apostle Peter says in Acts 2:33 Jesus was “exalted to the right hand of God.” The epistles of Paul tell us Christ will be in heaven until He returns (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Acts 3:21). The glorification of believers is guaranteed “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been made subjected to Him” (1 Peter 3:21-22).

- **Stephen**

Stephen who lay dying by stoning as the first Christian martyr “gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God’” (Acts 7:55-56).

- **The apostle Paul**

Saul of Tarsus was persecuting Christians on the road to Damascus when he suddenly saw “a light from heaven” and “heard a voice.” When Saul inquired the origin the voice from heaven told him, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:3-5).

The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 8:34, “Christ is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”

Paul placed strong emphasis on the Ascension of Christ in his letters. Ephesians 1:20-21 says God “raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion . . .” There Christ is sovereign over all and “head over all thing to the church” (v. 22). We believers are raised up with Him and “Seated” with Him “in the heavenly places” (2:6). “He who descended is Himself also who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things” (Ephesians 4:10).

Christ was exalted after the extreme humiliation of the crucifixion (Philippians 2:6-11). "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name." "Our citizenship (or commonwealth) is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (3:20). Christ is in heaven and He is coming for us (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16-18). Christ who was "revealed in the flesh" was "taken up in glory," writes the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 3:16.

- **The writer to the Hebrews**

The writer of Hebrews tells us more about the ascension than any other part of the New Testament. "When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). Christ enjoys a position of authority in heaven as the Son of God (1:4-13). All things are subjected to Him (2:8).

Jesus has been "crowned with glory and honor" (2:9). Our "great high priest" has "passed through the heavens" (perfect tense). He has entered within the veil for us and serves there on our behalf. "He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently" (7:24) "since He always lives to make intercession for them" (v. 25). He is "exalted above the heavens" (v. 26) because He is "a Son, made perfect forever" (v. 28).

What is the central idea in Hebrews? "Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man" (8:1-2). He ministers in "the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation. . . . in heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (9:12, 24). Jesus, "having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God" (10:12). In order to win the Christian race we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus who "sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (12:20).

- **The apostle John**

Our Advocate in heaven (1 John 2:1) is “coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him . . .” (Revelations 1:7). He is the “Lamb standing, as if slain” at the throne in heaven (Revelations 5:5-6) who took the scroll, and they sang a new song in heaven saying, “Worthy is the Lamb” (v 5-14). “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion, forever and ever” (v. 13). Such exaltation of our Lord in heaven necessarily involves His prior Ascension.

THE APPLICATION OF THE ASCENSION:

The Ascension of Jesus takes centre stage in this first chapter of the book of Acts. From these verses we can show the reference and application that the ascension of Christ had for every believer:

- **Separation:**

When Jesus ascended into Heaven He was bodily separated from His followers and disciples. However the ascension is not a time for mourning and tears because although Christ had ascended into Heaven and would no longer walk on the earth with His followers, they had been told about the promise of a Comforter who was in like manner as Jesus. It was Christ's departure which inaugurated a time of even greater intimacy through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

- **Consummation:**

The ascension symbolized that the work which our Lord was sent to accomplish in His physical body on earth had been finished. "... when He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3).

- **Glorification.**

When He returned to the Father it was in splendor and glory. While His glory was somewhat veiled by His humble surroundings at His incarnation, His return was with even greater glory and honor because of the work He had accomplished. "Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9).

- **Confirmation.**

The ascension was, in part, a confirmation of Christ's person and work. He returned to the Father. In this His claim to have come from the Father was vindicated. While no one could actually witness the actual incarnation of Christ in the virgin birth, His return was visible to His followers. The ascension of Christ is also a confirmation of our faith and assurance in Christ: "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 6:19-20).

- **Transition**

The ascension serves as a connecting link: between the work of Christ in salvation and that in our sanctification; between the gospels and the epistles; between what has been accomplished by Christ and what is still being done through His Spirit. It is even a transition in the ministry of Christ as well. Having completed His work on the cross in His flesh, He now intercedes for us as a sympathetic High Priest, as One Who has experienced our afflictions:

"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 5:14-16).

- **Anticipation**

The ascension also creates in our hearts a sense of expectation as we realize that He will return, just as He departed: "... This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into Heaven" (Acts 1:11).

ABIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

- We are always in the presence of Christ. We are never out of His sight, and therefore out of His mind. There are no earthly limitations of space and time with our ascended Lord and Savior. We can draw near and dwell in His presence. "Lo, I am with you always" (Matthews 28:20). Christ is living and in His life we live and have our being (Galatians 2:20). In His life we enjoy fellowship with God and victory in the Christian life. We have free access through grace into God's presence and we can draw near and keep near to Him.
- The ascension is the demonstration of the all-sufficiency of the righteousness of Christ on behalf of the believer. The atoning sacrifice of Christ has removed our sin and guilt, and His righteousness has provided our acceptance with the Father (2 Corinthians 5:21). The atonement of Christ was a "once for all" complete and perfect atonement. Jesus Christ is a human and divine High Priest who is able to sympathize, comfort and save the sinner (Hebrews 9:12; 4:15; 2:18; 7:25).
- Because He ascended into heaven, Christ is the Head and Lord of His church (Ephesians 1:22; 4:10, 15; Col. 2:19).
- Our ascended High Priest is the perfect mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:6) and advocate with the Father (1 John. 2:1). The very presence of Christ at the right hand of the Father pleads on our behalf. He pleads by His presence on His Father's throne, and He is able to save to the uttermost through His intercession, because of His perpetual life and His priesthood (Hebrews. 7:24-25).

- When Jesus ascended into heaven He did not go to some distant planet in space. Heaven is not several billion light-years away. Instead, Jesus simply stepped into a different dimension of existence. There is an invisible spiritual kingdom which surrounds us on every side. Jesus is not far away, and neither is the throne of God and the greatness of His power. He is right here with us right now. The invisible spiritual life is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit who came as a result of Christ's leaving this earth. Because Jesus ascended into heaven you and I can have all of Him right now.

3. THE DISCIPLES BEFORE PENTECOST (ACTS 1:12-26)

Once Jesus had ascended into heaven the disciples, the women, Mary, the mother of Jesus and His brothers returned to Jerusalem where they continued in prayer (Acts 1:14). These disciples were few, numbering about 120 (v15). Peter stood before these disciples and told them that the scripture was to be fulfilled where Judas (one of the 12 disciples of Jesus) would be replaced.

Who was Judas and why was he replaced?

Acts 1:16-19 "Brothers, it was necessary for the Scriptures to be fulfilled concerning Judas, who guided the Temple police to arrest Jesus. This was predicted long ago by the Holy Spirit, speaking through King David. Judas was one of us, chosen to share in the ministry with us." (Judas bought a field with the money he received for his treachery, and falling there, he burst open, spilling out his intestines. The news of his death spread rapidly among all the people of Jerusalem, and they gave the place the Aramaic name Akeldama, which means "Field of Blood.")

Who was to be his replacement?

Acts 1:21-26 "So now we must choose another man to take Judas's place. It must be someone who has been with us all the time that we were with the Lord Jesus— from the time he was baptized by John until the day he was taken from us into heaven. Whoever is chosen will join us as a witness of Jesus' resurrection." So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then they all prayed for the right man to be chosen. "O Lord," they said, "you know every heart. Show us which of these men you have chosen as an apostle to replace Judas the traitor in this ministry, for he has deserted us

and gone where he belongs." Then they cast lots, and in this way Matthias was chosen and became an apostle with the other eleven."

The requirements that were set forth for the replacement of Judas were as such:

- He must be a man who was following the disciples (Matthews 3; Luke 3 to Acts 1:10).
- He must have seen the resurrected Christ (vs. 22) according to the statements of (1 Corinthians 15:5-12).

Two men were proposed, lots were cast, and prayers went to God. God, through His providence, selected Matthias to replace Judas and therefore the disciples were once again 12. The number twelve has spiritual significance. In other words, God used this number to show us some spiritual truth in its application. Twelve is a perfect number, signifying perfection of government, or of governmental perfection. In the Bible we see this significance in the 12 sons of Israel, the 12 disciples that were chosen by Jesus, the 12 foundations in the heavenly Jerusalem, the 12 gates, the 12 pearls etc

THE BELIEF OF THE DISCIPLES:

In this Chapter, we discover some of the things the disciples believed in:

- **They believed in the Risen Christ (1:1-11)**

The reality of His resurrection is the power and center of every sermon in Acts. There would be no Book of Acts, no Christianity, no Salvation, no signs or wonders, without the resurrected Christ.

- **They believed in God's Leading (1:16-23)**

The Word of God and prayer formed the foundation for the ministry of the Church as recorded in the Book of Acts.

- **They believed in the power of Prayer (1:15)**

Prayer plays a significant role in the story of the church as recorded in the Book of Acts. We see that they:

- Prayed for guidance in decision-making (1:15-26)
- Prayed for courage to witness (4:23-31)
- Stephen prayed whilst being stoned (7:55-60)
- Peter and John prayed for the Samaritans (8:14-17)
- Saul of Tarsus prayed after his conversion (9:11)
- Peter prayed before he raised Dorcas from the dead (9:36-43)
- Cornelius prayed for his salvation (10:1-4)
- Believers prayed for Peter in prison (12:1-11)
- Church at Antioch prayed and fasted before sending out Barnabas and Paul (13:1-3)
- Lydia's heart was opened through a prayer meeting at Philippi (16:13)
- Prison doors opened (16:25)
- Paul prayed for friends before leaving them (20:36; 21:5)

THE WITNESS IN JERUSALEM (ACTS 2:1-8:4)

- The Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)
- The Birth of the Early Church (Acts 2)
- The Witness of Peter and John (Acts 3:1-4:31)
- The state of the Church (Acts 4:32-5:11)
- The life of Stephen (Acts 6-7)

1. THE DAY OF PENTECOST (ACTS 2: 1-4)

Acts 2:1-4 "On the day of Pentecost, seven weeks after Jesus' resurrection, the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm in the skies above them, and it filled the house where they were meeting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability."

Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is God, He had most certainly been present in the world before the Day of Pentecost mentioned in Acts 2:1. The Spirit had been active in the lives of Old Testament characters, but He was active only to fill and supply a definite need at a specific time in the lives of very few. Never in the Old Testament do we find the Spirit being poured out upon all people; only chosen leaders received His power and this was temporary. When the need was met and the crisis over, the Spirit departed. For example:

- Moses appointed seventy elders to assist in the work of judging Israel (Numbers 11:25)
- Gideon was called to deliver Israel (Judges 6:34)
- Samson the strong (Judges 14:6)
- Saul the King of Israel (1 Samuel 10:10)
- David the Shepherd King (1 Samuel 16:13)

All these were leaders of God's people some upon whom the Spirit must have remained for years, (David), and some upon whom the Spirit remained only a short time.

However on the Day of Pentecost there was a change in the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PENTECOST

Pentecost means 50th and was the Greek name given to the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16) which occurred 50 days from the Feast of Firstfruits which occurred the day after the Sabbath of Passover.

The Day of Pentecost that is recorded in the book of Acts occurred 50 days after His resurrection, the feast of Firstfruit. 1 Corinthians 15:20 "But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again."

WHO DID THE HOLY SPIRIT COME UPON?

Acts 2:3 "Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them."

During the events recorded in the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit did not come to leaders only (the 12 disciples whom Jesus had chosen), but to all those assembled in the upper room.

WHAT DID THE HOLY SPIRIT DO?

These people were not merely "touched" by the Spirit for a crisis task, but "they were all FILLED" with the Holy Spirit. Where in the Old Testament the Law of God had been written on tablets of stone, now the laws of God were written on the hearts of man. Hebrews 8:10 "But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds so they will understand them, and I will write them on their hearts so they will obey them. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

HOW DID THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MANIFEST?

There are three supernatural manifestations that took place with the baptism of the Holy Spirit:

- **Mighty Wind:** Acts 2:2 "Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm in the skies above them, and it filled the house where they were meeting." This wind signified the breath of God. Ezekiel 37:9 "Then he said to me, 'Speak to the winds and say: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, O breath, from the four winds! Breathe into these dead bodies so that they may live again.' "
- **Fire:** Acts 2:3 "Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them." Matthew 3:11-12 "'I baptize with water those who turn from their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is far greater than I am—so much greater that I am not even worthy to be his slave. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He is ready to separate the chaff from the grain with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, storing the grain in his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire."
- **Speaking in other tongues:** Acts 2:4 "And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability." Mark 16:17 "These signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak new languages.'

2. THE BIRTH OF THE EARLY CHURCH (ACTS 2:5-47)

Acts 2:41 “Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church—about three thousand in all.”

From a group of 120 disciples who had met in the upper room in Jerusalem, here we see an amazing 3000 people being added to the assembly. What was it that caused such an expansion and explosion and brought a revival to the once small group of believers?

PETER: STOOD UP

Acts 2:14 “Then Peter stepped forward”

Previously, before the ascension, Jesus had promised that when the Holy Spirit came upon them they would receive “power” and as a result of this power they would begin to be witnesses of Him.

Now, on the Day of Pentecost we see the evidence of this promise on the life of Peter. Here, even though having a prominent role in the group of believer’s (Acts 1:15), Peter boldly stands before people who were questioning and mocking what was happening and he boldly declared to them the Gospel of Christ.

Hebrews 13:6 “That is why we can say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”

PETER: BEGAN TO PREACH

Acts 2:14 “Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, “Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this.”

What did Peter preach?

- It was a message of conviction: Acts 2:22 “People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus of Nazareth by doing wonderful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know.” Acts 2:37 “Peter’s words convicted

them deeply, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

- It was a message of the cross: Acts 2:23 "But you followed God's prearranged plan. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to the cross and murdered him.
- It was a message of the resurrection: Acts 2:24 "However, God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life again, for death could not keep him in its grip."
- It was a message concerning repentance: Acts 2:38 "Peter replied, "Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

ANALYSIS OF PETER'S SERMON	
Addressed the problems (Acts 2:14-15) Peter began by cutting down the barriers to his message	Sensationalism: The audience had been drawn to the sensational event that had just occurred. Peter directs their attention to his words "v14) Prejudice and skepticism: Peter uses the Old Testament prophecies to counter the prejudice that the people had against the men and women speaking in tongues (v15)
Provides them with evidence (Acts 2:16-22) by proving them with proof from the Bible	Prophecies: The prophecies make up half of the sermon (v17-21, 25-28, 34-35) Miracles: Jesus was accredited by His miracles.
Truths (v23-36): Here Peter proclaims two of the most basic truths of the Gospel. This is reinstated in v36 again.	The Cross: The cross was not a victory for Christ's enemies but it was the plan of God The resurrection: God has raised Him from the dead.

Essentials (Acts 2:37-38):	Repentance Baptism
Rewards (Acts 2:38-39): These promises were to "all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (v39).	Forgiveness Gifts of the Holy Spirit

WHAT WERE THE EFFECTS OF PETER'S PREACHING?

Acts 2:41 "Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church—about three thousand in all."

It is interesting to note that when the gospel was given 3000 were saved. In Exodus 32 when Moses returned from the mountain of God to the people of Israel who had made the golden calf, he threw down the tablets of the Ten Commandments where 3000 people died. When the law was given 3000 perished; when the gospel was given 3000 were saved.

THE MARKS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

From the Day of Pentecost we see a pattern begin to emerge concerning the marks of this early Church and what was required in order to have membership or be a part of this early church.

Acts 2:41-47 "Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church—about three thousand in all. They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord's Supper and in prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved."

THE ACTION OF EACH MEMBER:

They are six actions of which members of a church should always be a part.

1. Baptism.

Baptism serves as the rite of initiation into the church. There are a number of different types of baptism described in the Bible. Each one of them carries the idea of identification.

Type	Scripture	Implication
Baptism of John the Baptist	Matthew 3:6	People repenting and being identified with the promise of the coming kingdom
Jesus was Baptized	Matthew 3:13-16	Jesus identified Himself with John's message and ministry
Jesus' Disciples Baptized	John 4:2	People repented and were identified with the ministry and preaching of Jesus
Christian Baptism	Acts 2:41	Believers repent and are identified with Jesus in his death, burial and resurrection
Baptism of the Spirit	1 Corinthians 12:12-13	Believers are identified and united with Christ through the ministry of the Spirit
Baptism of Moses	1 Corinthians 10:2	Israelites coming out of Egypt were identified with Moses and with his God.

2. Devotion to the Apostles' Teaching

The Apostles' teaching would have been taken both from the Old Testament Scriptures as well as from the teachings of Jesus. These teachings were to bring the believer from a place of infancy into maturity in Christ.

Peter says, "You must crave pure spiritual milk so that you can grow into the fullness of your salvation. Cry out for this nourishment as a baby cries for milk,..." (1 Peter 2:2).

Hebrews 5:12-6:3 “You have been Christians a long time now, and you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things a beginner must learn about the Scriptures. You are like babies who drink only milk and cannot eat solid food. And a person who is living on milk isn't very far along in the Christian life and doesn't know much about doing what is right. Solid food is for those who are mature, who have trained themselves to recognize the difference between right and wrong and then do what is right. So let us stop going over the basics of Christianity again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start all over again with the importance of turning away from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding.”

1 Timothy 4:16 says “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

3. Fellowship

The word "fellowship" is translated from the Greek word *koinania*, which describes "the sharing of things in common." Fellowship is the sharing of that which we have in common with one another. The people who stood and watched what was happening on the Day of Pentecost were not all alike. They were different in their financial position, in their education, in their culture – yet there was One thing that drew them together after they had been saved – they had one thing in common, Jesus Christ. He is the basis of our fellowship.

These believers practiced Christian community as a way of life. They “were together” (v 44), and they “took their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart” (v 46).

1 Corinthians 1:10 “Now, dear brothers and sisters, I appeal to you by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so there won't be divisions in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.”

Hebrews 10:24-25 “Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people

do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near.”

4. Breaking of Bread

The Lord's Supper had been instituted by Jesus at the Passover prior to His crucifixion. The Passover was only observed once a year. But Jesus had told His disciples to celebrate the Lord's Supper on a more regular basis.

1 Corinthians 10:16-17 “When we bless the cup at the Lord's Table, aren't we sharing in the benefits of the blood of Christ? And when we break the loaf of bread, aren't we sharing in the benefits of the body of Christ? And we all eat from one loaf, showing that we are one body.”

1 Corinthians 11:23 “For this is what the Lord himself said, and I pass it on to you just as I received it. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant between God and you, sealed by the shedding of my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it.” For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.”

5. Prayer

They also continuously devoted themselves to “prayer.” These people had been personally reconciled to God and were excited about the privilege of being accepted as his beloved children.

Ephesians 6:18 “Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere.”

Colossians 4:2-4 “Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. Don't forget to pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to preach about his secret plan—that Christ is also for you Gentiles. That is why I am here in chains. Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should.”

6. Witnessing:

Acts 2:47 “all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.”

PRODUCT OF FAITH BIBLE COLLEGE

THE ATTITUDE OF EACH MEMEBER

1. Awe:

Acts 2:43 "A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders."

2. Love:

Acts 2:44-45 "And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need."

The selling of their goods in order to help one another was a true measure of the work that the Holy Spirit had wrought in the hearts of those who had been saved. These people were moved in compassion to help those who had nothing. Those who were of a financial means were able to help those who had nothing – they were able to be the hand of God on earth. Through their giving they were able to see God's provision being made evident to those who lacked.

What happened in the church was a new Pentecost. This was not communism. It was stewardship. Possessions were recognized as belonging to the Lord and were therefore used to meet the needs of the people within the church. We notice that:

- The sale of goods was voluntary: There is no indication of this taking place by compulsion. We see this later in Acts 5:4 when Peter told Ananias that the property he sold was his to do with as he likes.
- The sale of goods took place spontaneously and not in some orchestrated way.
- The giving seemed to have been done directly, from the donor to one in need. This is no intermediary mentioned here, no "middle man."
- This was giving to meet the needs of people within the church.

3. THE WITNESS OF PETER AND JOHN (ACTS 3-4)

THE HEALING OF THE PARALYTIC AT THE GATE BEAUTIFUL (ACTS 3:1-11)

The third chapter of the book of Acts begins with the power of the Holy Spirit. In the second chapter we read about the power of the Holy Spirit to bring salvation to those who believe. Here in this chapter we see how the power of the Holy Spirit moved in the lives of the early church believer's in signs and wonders.

Commissioned by Jesus to preach the gospel to all the earth (Mt. 28:18-20), the apostles had His authority. Miracles such as healing the sick, liberating the demon possessed, and even raising the dead highlighted their ministries. These supernatural signs authenticated the message being preached and drew people to the Savior.

THE BEGGAR'S NEED:

Acts 3:1-3 "Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money."

We see from this passage that this man was a cripple, not by accident, but from birth. As a result of his disability he was a beggar, unable to work for his sustenance and therefore relied on the alms that he received from the people walking by. He was laid daily at the gate Beautiful by his friends.

PETER AND JOHN, GOD'S WILLING DISCIPLES SEE THE NEED:

Peter and John on their way to a prayer service saw the need of the beggar. They looked past his request for money and his immediate need of money in order to buy food for the day and they looked to his greater need, that which was keeping him from working and gaining money through an income or occupation – they saw his need for healing.

Acts 3:4-6 "Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, "Look at us!" The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting a gift. But Peter said, "I don't have any money for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!"

HEALING IN THE NAME OF JESUS

The method in which this man received his healing was "in the Name of Jesus" (v6).

Mark 16:15-18 "And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere. Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak new languages. They will be able to handle snakes with safety, and if they drink anything poisonous, it won't hurt them. They will be able to place their hands on the sick and heal them."

Jesus told His disciples that they were to use His name:

- John 16:23 "At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. The truth is, you can go directly to the Father and ask him, and he will grant your request because you use my name."
- Colossians 3:17 "And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, all the while giving thanks through him to God the Father."
- John 14:13 "You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, because the work of the Son brings glory to the Father."

Why did Jesus say we were to do everything in His Name?

There is power in the name of Jesus. Philippians 2:9-11 "Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Ephesians 1:17-23 "asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and

understanding, so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the wonderful future he has promised to those he called. I want you to realize what a rich and glorious inheritance he has given to his people. I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come. And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this authority for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is filled by Christ, who fills everything everywhere with his presence."

THE EFFECTS OF THIS HEALING

Acts 3:10-11 "When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded! They all rushed out to Solomon's Colonnade, where he was holding tightly to Peter and John. Everyone stood there in awe of the wonderful thing that had happened."

The people who were about were amazed at what had happened. They were fully satisfied that the miracle was in fact real, for they saw the beggar daily and yet here he was walking, leaping and praising God. Once again people were drawn to the miraculous power of God. Some gathered to gratify their curiosity and some wanted to see more and to hear the ministry which would follow, just as on the Day of Pentecost.

PETER'S SERMONS (ACTS 3- 4)

In this part of the book of Acts we see Peter coming forward again and speaking to those who were standing about. This is the second of five messages of Peter that are recorded in the book of Acts. This miracle leads to the arrest of Peter and John, and once again we read the message that Peter speaks to the rulers (4:8-12).

Let us look at these five messages in more details:

Message	Audience and Context
Pentecost (Acts 2:14-39)	Peter is preaching to a Jewish audience on the day of Pentecost. The miracle of tongues had just occurred
Onlookers after the healing of the Temple Beggar (Acts 3:11-4:4)	The location is the temple, with a Jewish audience. Peter and John have just healed a man lame from birth
First arrest of Peter (Acts 4:8-12)	The rulers have arrested Peter and John, who now address the Sanhedrin
Second arrest of Peter (Acts 5:29-32)	Having been freed miraculously by an angel, once again they are before the council because they refuse to stop preaching.
Cornelius (Acts 10:34-43)	Peter has gone to Caesarea as a result of a series of supernatural events, and Cornelius has just reported his vision to Peter. His friends and close relatives (Gentiles) are gathered.

OUTLINE:

The crucifixion of Jesus: “You crucified Jesus,”

Message	Reference
Pentecost (Acts 2:14-39)	Acts 2:22 – 23
Onlookers after the healing of the Temple Beggar (Acts 3:11-4:4)	Acts 3:13-15
First arrest of Peter (Acts 4:8-12)	Acts 4:10
Second arrest of Peter (Acts 5:29-32)	Acts 5:30
Cornelius (Acts 10:34-43)	Acts 10:37

The resurrection of Jesus: “but God raised him up again”

Message	Reference
Pentecost (Acts 2:14-39)	Acts 2:23, 32
Onlookers after the healing of the Temple Beggar (Acts 3:11-4:4)	Acts 3:15
First arrest of Peter (Acts 4:8-12)	Acts 4:10
Second arrest of Peter (Acts 5:29-32)	Acts 5:30
Cornelius (Acts 10:34-43)	Acts 10:40

The statement that “God raised him up from the dead” is one of the strongest structural features of Peter’s sermons. It occurs in almost identical form at this point in every message. In each case there is a close parallel with the crucifixion:

- You: hung Him on a tree (counted Him accursed by God)
- God: raised Him up (vindicated Him)

The exaltation of Jesus: “and exalted him to a position of power” (which explains the miracles)”

Message	Reference
Pentecost (Acts 2:14-39)	Acts 2:33
Onlookers after the healing of the Temple Beggar (Acts 3:11-4:4)	Acts 3:13, 16
First arrest of Peter (Acts 4:8-12)	Acts 4:11
Second arrest of Peter (Acts 5:29-32)	Acts 5:31
Cornelius (Acts 10:34-43)	Acts 10:42

Following on from the resurrection, all five sermons have some statement regarding Christ’s exalted position of power, but there is a variety of expression in the way that this position is described by Peter. Each sermon has a different expression of Jesus’ new authority: “received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit... made... both Lord and Christ”; “his name... has made this man strong”; “has become the chief cornerstone”; “Prince and Saviour”; and “Judge of the living and the dead”.

Repent: “so repent so that your sins will be forgiven and you will receive the promise.”

Message	Reference
Pentecost (Acts 2:14-39)	Acts 2:37
Onlookers after the healing of the Temple Beggar (Acts 3:11-4:4)	Acts 3:17-20
First arrest of Peter (Acts 4:8-12)	Acts 4:12
Second arrest of Peter (Acts 5:29-32)	Acts 5:31-32
Cornelius (Acts 10:34-43)	Acts 10:43

All of Peter’s sermons end with an appeal to respond to the message of the Gospel (Jesus was crucified, resurrected and exalted).

Appeal	1	2	3	4	5
Repent / be converted	*	*		*	
Believe					*
Be baptized					*
Sins forgiven / saved	*	*	*	*	*

It can be seen that there is a call for repentance or belief in all but the third sermon (of which we have a very brief report and in which the appeal is less direct). The most consistent feature is the offer of forgiveness of sins. In sermons one, two and four the forgiveness is linked to repentance. In sermon five it is linked to believe and in the third sermon only the word *saved* is used, but the implication is that it is from sin.

THE REACTION TO THE SERMONS

Acts 4:1-4 “While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the leading priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and some of the Sadducees came over to them. They were very disturbed that Peter and John were claiming, on the authority of Jesus, that there is a resurrection of the dead. They arrested them and, since it was already evening, jailed them until morning. But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so that the number of believers totaled about five thousand men, not counting women and children.”

THE ONLOOKERS:

The reaction of many of the onlookers to the healing of the lame man and the sermon that Peter gave was salvation. They believed in the message of the Gospel and therefore they were saved.

Romans 10:10 “For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.”

THE SANHEDRIN:

Upon hearing Peter and John speak to the people, the Sadducees became angry and arrested both Peter and John. They were placed in jail and the next day brought in before the rulers and elders of Law. It was here that Peter gave his third sermon.

What was the reaction to the sermon?

- They saw the boldness with which Peter and John spoke and recognized that they had been with Jesus. Acts 4:13 “The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men who had had no special training. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.”
- They could not say anything to refute the miracle as the man was standing before them. Acts 4:14 “But since the man who had been healed was standing right there among them, the council had nothing to say.”

- They took counsel together and commanded Peter and John to stop preaching. Acts 4:15-18 "So they sent Peter and John out of the council chamber and conferred among themselves. "What should we do with these men?" they asked each other. "We can't deny they have done a miraculous sign, and everybody in Jerusalem knows about it. But perhaps we can stop them from spreading their propaganda. We'll warn them not to speak to anyone in Jesus' name again." So they called the apostles back in and told them never again to speak or teach about Jesus."

PETER AND JOHN'S REACTION TO THE COMMAND

Jesus repeatedly warned His disciples that they would be persecuted and face severe opposition to their witnessing. Right at the onset of His ministry, He told them: "Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:11-12).

Speaking about the things to come, He told the disciples: "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake (Luke 21:12).

And to His disciples in the Upper Room discourse: "Remember the word that I said to you, "A slave is not greater than his master." If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. These things I have spoken to you, that you may be kept from stumbling. They will make you outcasts from the synagogues; but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God (John 15:20; 16:1-2).

Now we see that what Jesus had given numerous warnings concerning was in fact beginning to take place. Peter and John were being persecuted for the beggar's healing they were thrown into prison and then released with a strong warning to stop preaching. However, Peter and John replied:

Acts 4:19-20 "But Peter and John replied, "Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than Him? We cannot stop telling about the wonderful things we have seen and heard."

No matter what they had been through or were going to be going through because of the Gospel, Peter and John made an important declaration

- We have to obey God rather than man: Acts 5:29 "But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than human authority."
- We cannot stop being His witness: We have been called and commissioned to speak and be a testimony of everything that He has done. This was not a suggestion by Jesus, but a commandment, a commission. Matthew 28:19-20 "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

4. THE STATE OF THE EARLY CHURCH (ACTS 4:23-5:11)

THE MARKS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

THE CHURCH WAS UNIFIED

Acts 4:24 "Then all the believers were united as they lifted their voices in prayer: "O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—"

Acts 4:32 "All the believers were of one heart and mind, and they felt that what they owned was not their own; they shared everything they had."

THE CHURCH PRAYED

Prayer plays a vital role in the forth chapter of Acts. Within this chapter we see quite dramatically, how the believers of the early Church knew how to pray so that God's hand could work in mighty power. Prayer was seen as not an escape from responsibility; but rather it was viewed as man's response to God's ability.

What elements of prayer can be learnt from the believers in the Book of Acts (4:23-31)?

- They exalted the character and the nature of God in the beginning of their prayers. Acts 4:24 "Then all the believers were united as they lifted their voices in prayer: "O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—." These disciples knew to Whom they were praying. They knew His power, His might and His ability. When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He said that they should pray in this manner, Matthew 6:9-10 "Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven."
- They prayed the Word of God: Acts 4:25-26 "You spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor King David, your servant, saying, 'Why did the nations rage? Why did the people waste their time with futile plans? The kings of the earth prepared for battle; the rulers gathered together against the

Lord and against his Messiah.' They understood the power of praying God's Word.

- They prayed for more boldness to preach the gospel to the unsaved: Acts 4:29 "And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give your servants great boldness in their preaching." These men and women of God desired to be a witness despite the trials and persecution that they would have to face. Instead of asking God to remove the opposition, they prayed for the boldness to fulfill God's plan and purpose.
- They asked for the Lord to confirm with further signs and wonders: Acts 4:30 "Send your healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done..."
- They prayed in the Name of Jesus: "... through the name of your holy servant Jesus." Acts 4:31). They understood from where their power and authority came. It was in the delegated authority that Christ had already given to them (Matthew 28:18-20)

In Matthew 16:18-19, Jesus speaks about the "Keys of the Kingdom", without which the Church stands powerless and ineffective before a religious and political world. Only these "Keys" in operation make the Church, His Church effective in ministry!

What "Keys of the Kingdom" were used in the Book of Acts?

- The Word (Acts 4:29)
- The Name (Acts 4:30)
- The Spirit (Acts 4:31)
- The prayers of the saints (Acts 4:31)

These 4 "Keys" are linked in one chain, linked together in operation, each dependent on the other. The Word today, must be quickened by the Spirit, who gives power to use the Name effectively, and all this is made possible as the Church seeks the Risen Lord in Prayer.

THE CHURCH WAS A WITNESS

Acts 4:31 "After this prayer, the building where they were meeting shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And they preached God's message with boldness."

Acts 4:33 "And the apostles gave powerful witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great favor was upon them all."

Acts 5:42 "And every day, in the Temple and in their homes, they continued to teach and preach this message: "The Messiah you are looking for is Jesus."

THE CHURCH WAS CARING AND COMPASSIONATE

Acts 4:34-36 "There was no poverty among them, because people who owned land or houses sold them and brought the money to the apostles to give to others in need. For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means "Son of Encouragement"). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus."

Ananias and Sapphira:

Acts 5:1-2 "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet."

In chapter 4 we read that because of the unity and the compassion of the Church believers many people were bringing money to the Apostles so that it could be distributed amongst those who were poor and without. However, here in chapter 5 we are given a contrast by Luke.

Barnabas (Joseph)	Ananias and Sapphira
He was a man who was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:24)	Their heart was filled with satan (Acts 5:3)
He was truthful	They lied to the church
He had faith in God	They lived in unbelief
He was selfless. He had learnt the principles that Jesus had taught in Luke 3:11 Luke 3:11 "He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise."	They were selfish wanting to keep as much as they could for themselves
His motive was one that came from a heart of love. He desired to give so that others could be benefited	Their motive was to be seen as giving much yet withholding most of it. They wanted to be respected by man.

Peter's response to their actions:

Acts 5:3-4 "then Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God."

Peter brought forth a very important point. The selling of possessions and giving of the money to help others that were in need was not a compulsory act for the early church members. Nowhere in scripture was it commanded that the people were to sell their possession. The act of selling possessions and giving the money to the Apostles was an act of love and compassion for those who had none. It was probably that some, moved upon by the Holy Spirit, saw the needs of other members and their own wealth and therefore gave. The motive for this giving was an act of love and obedience to what God had specifically told that person and was never to become an act of pride.

Ananias and Sapphira never understood this and therefore their lie cost them their lives. They still believed that they were required to follow the law even though their hearts were not in the giving. They had not fully understood the acceptance that comes through Christ only and not law, doctrine and

sacramental observance. It was by grace alone and not works. Romans 15:7 “So accept each other just as Christ has accepted you; then God will be glorified.”

By their very behavior they were denying the most fundamental truth in the Christian faith: we cannot earn significance. We can't achieve wholeness, salvation, through our own efforts. Greatness in Christ's kingdom is a given, a gift, that we gratefully receive in spite of our failures and our sin. Therefore Ananias and Sapphira didn't have to earn what they had inherited by grace.

THE CHURCH WAS POWERFUL

Acts 5:12 “Meanwhile, the apostles were performing many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And the believers were meeting regularly at the Temple in the area known as Solomon's Colonnade.

Acts 5:14-16 “And more and more people believed and were brought to the Lord—crowds of both men and women. As a result of the apostles' work, sick people were brought out into the streets on beds and mats so that Peter's shadow might fall across some of them as he went by. Crowds came in from the villages around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those possessed by evil spirits, and they were all healed.”

THE CHURCH WAS PERSECUTED

The cause of this persecution:

Acts 5:17-18 “The high priest and his friends, who were Sadducees, reacted with violent jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the jail.”

With every success of the early Church, the religious leaders became more and more threatened and therefore rose up and brought opposition against the Church. Luke writes that they were “filled with jealousy” (5:17-18).

The result:

Because of this, the Sanhedrin arrested the apostles and put them in jail. Where previously only Peter and John were thrown into prison, we see here that all the apostles were involved. What was their crime? They had disobeyed the order that had been given to Peter to refrain from preaching in the name of Jesus.

The miracle:

Acts 5:19-20 "But an angel of the Lord came at night, opened the gates of the jail, and brought them out. Then he told them, "Go to the Temple and give the people this message of life!"

An angel of the Lord released the apostles from prison and gave them a command not to remain silent regardless of what the Sadducees had said before to Peter. They were to speak the message of life. Romans 6:4 "For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives."

The Apostles obedience:

Acts 5:21 "So the apostles entered the Temple about daybreak and immediately began teaching...."

When they were released and given the command to go and preach, the apostle immediately went and obeyed. When it was time to have the trial, the officers saw that the apostles had somehow escaped from prison and therefore went and brought them back.

Acts 5:26-32 "The captain went with his Temple guards and arrested them, but without violence, for they were afraid the people would kill them if they treated the apostles roughly. Then they brought the apostles in before the council. [28] "Didn't we tell you never again to teach in this man's name?" the high priest demanded. "Instead, you have filled all Jerusalem with your teaching about Jesus, and you intend to blame us for his death!" But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than human authority. The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead after you killed him by crucifying him. Then God put him in the place of honor at his right hand as Prince and Savior.

He did this to give the people of Israel an opportunity to turn from their sins and turn to God so their sins would be forgiven. We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit, who is given by God to those who obey him."

Once again they were told not to preach in the name of Jesus to which Peter replied that they had to obey God rather than human authority. Since God commanded them to preach about the work of Jesus, that's what they were going to do. Peter and John had affirmed this principle at their first trial, that they are constrained to obey God over human authorities (4:19). They were eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection and glorification (2 Peter 1:16-18). Now they were obligated to testify that the one they heard, saw and touched is the Word of life (John 1:1-2). "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (4:20).

Acts 5:42 "And every day, in the Temple and in their homes, they continued to teach and preach this message: "The Messiah you are looking for is Jesus."

5. STEPHEN, THE MAN GOD CROWNED (Acts 6-7)

Acts 6 and 7 centers on the ministry and martyrdom of Stephen, a Spirit-filled believer who was crowned by the Lord and presents Stephen's faithfulness in 5 different areas of ministry:

STEPHEN THE SERVANT (ACTS 6:1-7)

Because of the rapid growth of the church a problem had arisen. The Apostles were not able to distribute the daily distributions to the widows because they were too busy preaching and teaching (Acts 6:2) and they refused to stop this and said that they would "...spend our time in prayer and preaching and teaching the word" (Acts 6:4). Therefore they looked for men within the Church who would be able to be placed over this area of service so that they could continue in their calling (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Acts 6:3 "Now look around among yourselves, brothers, and select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. We will put them in charge of this business."

The choice of the congregation:

Acts 6:5 "This idea pleased the whole group, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (a Gentile convert to the Jewish faith, who had now become a Christian)".

- He was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:5)
- He was full of faith (Acts 6:4)
- He was full of power (Acts 6:8)
- He was full of wisdom (Acts 6:3, 10)
- He was full of the light (Acts 6:15)
- He was full of vision (Acts 7:55-56)
- He was full of love (Acts 7:60)

STEPHEN THE WITNESS (ACTS 6:8-15)

Just like the Apostle who could not help but be a witness of the Gospel of Christ, so too Stephen was a witness. Acts 6:10 "None of them was able to stand against the wisdom and Spirit by which Stephen spoke." His witness was not only in speech but in power. Acts 6:8 "Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people."

STEPHEN THE PERSECUTED (ACTS 6:9-15)

Acts 6:11-15 "So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen, saying, "We heard him blaspheme Moses, and even God." Naturally, this roused the crowds, the elders, and the teachers of religious law. So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high council. The lying witnesses said, "This man is always speaking against the Temple and against the law of Moses. We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the Temple and change the customs Moses handed down to us." At this point everyone in the council stared at Stephen because his face became as bright as an angel's."

Because the religious leaders could not defeat Stephen's testimony with their arguments or logic, they resorted to lies and deception, physical harassment and persecution. Yet it was not even necessary for Stephen to speak in order to give witness because the very glow on his face told everybody he was a servant of God.

STEPHEN THE PREACHER (ACTS 7:1-53)

After being brought before the leaders, Stephen began to preach and bring judgment on the religious leaders. This is the longest address in the Book of Acts and one of the most important. In it, Stephen reviewed the history of Israel and the contributions made by their revered leaders: Abraham (Acts 7:2-8), Joseph (Acts 7:9-17), Moses (Acts 7:18-44), Joshua (Acts 7:45), David and Solomon (Acts 7:46-50). But this address was more than a recitation of familiar facts; it was also a refutation of their indictments against Stephen and a revelation of their own national sins. Stephen proved from their own Scriptures that the Jewish nation was guilty of worse sins than those they had accused him of committing.

What were these sins?

- They misunderstood their own spiritual roots (7: 1-8)
- They rejected their God-sent deliverers (7: 9-36)
- They disobeyed their Law (7: 37-43)
- They despised their temple (7:44-50)
- They stubbornly resisted their God and His truth (7:51-53)

This is the climax of Stephen's speech, the personal application that cut his hearers to the heart. Throughout the centuries, Israel had refused to submit to God and obey the truths He had revealed to them. Their ears did not hear the truth, their hearts did not receive the truth, and their necks did not bow to the truth. As a result, they killed their own Messiah!

STEPHEN THE MARTYR (ACTS 54-60)

Acts 7:54 "The Jewish leaders were infuriated by Stephen's accusation, and they shook their fists in rage."

Acts 7:57-59 "Then they put their hands over their ears, and drowning out his voice with their shouts, they rushed at him. They dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. The official witnesses took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

What were the results of Stephen's death?

- For Stephen, death meant coronation: Stephen saw the glory of God and the Son of God standing to receive him in heaven (see Luke 22:69). Our Lord sat down when He ascended to heaven (Ps. 110:1; Mark 16:19), but He stood up to welcome the first Christian martyr.
- For the Church, Stephen's death meant expansion: Until now the gospel had only penetrated Jerusalem and Judea. God was about to use this wave of persecution to disperse the Christians resulting in bringing the good news of Jesus to the Samaritans and Gentiles.

- For Saul, Stephen's death meant salvation: Paul never forgot the event (Acts 22:17-21), and no doubt Stephen's message, his prayers and death prepared Saul for his own encounter with the risen Lord (Acts 9).

PRODUCT OF FAITH BIBLE COLLEGE

THE WITNESS IN SAMARIA (ACTS 8:1-25)

1. THE DISPERSION OF THE CHURCH (ACTS 1-4)

Acts 8:1-3 "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison."

Great persecution had come against the Church at Jerusalem. The devil had tried to stop these believers by causing religious and political opposition from without; he had tried spiritual corruption from within (Ananias and Sapphira) and we see that he sought to scatter that which he could not destroy or corrupt. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is much more than an idea. It is "the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). It is God's "dynamite" for breaking down sin's barriers and setting the prisoners free.

Even though the devil brought great opposition against the church which resulted in their dispersion, God turned this situation for good (Romans 8:28). The Gospel of God was on the move. Through this opposition the Gospel was going to move from Jerusalem to Samaria. The time had now come for the message of salvation to be on the move and to spread over all Judea and Samaria.

Saul, the Persecutor

It is in these first few verses of Acts 8 that we receive the first glimpse into the life of Saul.

- Saul was "a Jew, born in Tarsus" (Acts 22:3). According to race and religion he was a Jew and a Pharisee, a sect of the Jewish religion (Acts 26:4-5).
- Saul was very religious. As he later said of himself, he was a Jew and "very zealous toward God" (Acts 22:3).
- He was a Hebrew by decent and education, "an Hebrew of Hebrews" (Philippians 3:5).

- He was one of the most promising young Pharisees in Jerusalem, well on his way to becoming a great leader for the Jewish faith (Galatians 1:14)
- Saul was a persecutor of the churches of Christ (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1; Philippians 3:6). He stood by and held the garments of those who stoned Stephen to death (Acts 7:58; 22:20). He searched for Christians meeting in the Jewish synagogues in order to beat and imprison them (Acts 22:19). Not content to punish the believers merely in Jerusalem, he went to Damascus with authority from the chief priest to persecute them in that city as well (Acts 9:1-2). He was willing to go wherever his career of persecution would take him. He joined wholeheartedly in restraining Christianity any way that he could.

2. THE WITNESS OF PHILLIP IN SAMARIA (ACTS 8:4-25)

THE RESULT OF THE PERSECUTION

Acts 8:4 “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.”

WHO WERE THE SAMARITANS?

Six hundred years before this, the Assyrians conquered this area of northern Israel and they deported all the wealthy and middle-class Jews from the area. Then they moved in a pagan population from afar. These pagans intermarried with the lowest classes of remaining Jews in northern Israel, and from these people came the Samaritans.

Because of their “mixture” the Jews hated the Samaritans. They considered them compromising half-breeds who corrupted the worship of the true God. James and John once thought that the Samaritans were only good for being torched by God’s judgment (Luke 9:51-56). Jesus however demonstrated love towards these people (John 4, Luke 10:25-37).

PHILLIP TAKES THE BATON:

Acts 8:5-8 “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city.”

Philip, like Stephen, was one of the men chosen to serve the church family in practical ways when the dispute regarding Hellenist widows arose (Acts 6:5). He was one of those forced to flee persecution (Acts 8:1), ending up in Samaria. He began to speak to the Samaritans concerning the Gospel. After the Jews had rejected the gospel again, we see God extending the offer of salvation in Jesus out to other peoples, beginning with the Samaritans.

WHEN HE PREACHED CHRIST, PHILIP PREACHED ABOUT:

Topics
The Kingdom of God, Acts 8:12 “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”
The gospel is the power/authority of Christ Acts 8:12 “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”
Water Baptism Acts 8:12 “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”
Preached Christ Acts 8:35 “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.
Preached salvation: Acts 8:37 “And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

SIMON, THE SORCERER

Acts 8:9-13 “But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.”

Who was Simon:

- Simon was a man who had a degree of local fame.
- He was honoured as one who had the power of God.
- He had previously practiced sorcery (occult) and was also a magi (a class of astronomers and scientists known as magi (Matthew 2:1), but local wizards and sorcerers also took the title.) They used it to prey on the ignorance and superstitions of the common people. The Samaritans wrongly assumed that because Simon had *real* spiritual power, it was from God; but that simply wasn't the case.

Upon hearing the preaching of Phillip, Simon was convinced and “... himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done” (Acts 8:13).

Simon's wrong motivation:

Acts 8:18-19 “And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.”

When Simon saw the move of the Holy Spirit, he did not desire the Holy Spirit for himself, but rather he desired the ability to impart the power of the Holy Spirit to others at his will. This would give him much spiritual authority. Essentially, Simon

wanted to be “in charge” of the Holy Spirit! He regarded the Holy Spirit as a “power” he could use as he willed, instead of a *Person* who would rule his life. “The sin was a desire to possess spiritual power for personal ends,” Bible commentator G. Campbell Morgan says.

(The practice of purchasing offices or influence in the church became known as *Simony*, because it is done in the same spirit as this Simon.)

Peter's response:

Acts 8:20-23 “But Peter replied, “May your money perish with you for thinking God's gift can be bought! You can have no part in this, for your heart is not right before God. Turn from your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive your evil thoughts, for I can see that you are full of bitterness and held captive by sin.”

Was Simon ever saved?

No. There is a “faith,” there is a “believing” that does not save, even though it rises in the presence of true preaching and true miracles. Verse 12 says that Philip was preaching good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. Verse 13 says that Philip was doing “signs and great miracles.” True preaching and true miracles were being done in Samaria by Philip the deacon (Acts 6:5). Then we notice that verse 13 says, “Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized, he continued with Philip.” But then something happens that shows this “belief” to be false. The apostles come down and laid hands on the Samaritans so that they receive the Holy Spirit and Simon himself wanted this same power.

The same thing is found in John 2:23-25 “Because of the miraculous signs he did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many people were convinced that he was indeed the Messiah. But Jesus didn't trust them, because he knew what people were really like. No one needed to tell him about human nature.”

Why was his not a true salvation?

- The object of his faith was wrong. To be born again you need to believe "...on the Lord Jesus..." (Acts 16:31). This was not the case. Simon placed his belief in the power of supernatural phenomena--the power of miracles that you can see with the physical eye, not Jesus Christ and the glory of his grace.

Simon was a sorcerer. That means he dealt in supernatural power before he ever heard Philip preach or ever heard of Jesus Christ. He used his magical arts for a long time in Samaria (according to Acts 8:9-11), and amazed the people. He knew real power when he saw it. So when Philip came to town and not only preached but performed signs by healing people and casting out demons (Acts 8:7), Simon knew the power was real, and that it was stronger than his power. So he was ready to switch sides.

- The experience on his conversion was simply amazement. Simon was amazed at Philip's signs, he was not broken for sin and not humble in his trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Luke uses the word "amaze" three times. In verse 9 he says that Simon had "amazed" the nation of Samaria with his magic (sorcery). Then in verse 11 it says again that Simon had "amazed" them a long time by his magic. Then in verse 13, after Philip had shown the power of God, it says, "And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he (Simon himself) was amazed." In other words what Simon had been producing in the Samaritans by his sorcery, he was now experiencing in himself when he saw Philip's miracles, namely, amazement. Amazement at supernatural power is not saving faith. Believing that supernatural power is present and being amazed by it so much that you want it, is not an experience of true faith. Verse 22 points to what was missing. Peter says to Simon, "Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you." What was missing was a heartfelt recognition of sinfulness and a turning to Jesus with a broken and humble trust for forgiveness. Amazement and excitement about signs and wonders is not saving faith.
- The root of Simon's false faith was a crooked heart. Acts 8:21 "You can have no part in this, for your heart is not right before God". At the root of Simon's false faith was a heart problem.

THE ETHIOPIAN, THE HUNGRY SEEKER

In the midst of great crowds and blessings, Philip is called away from the successful ministry in Samaria into the desert to minister to one hungry soul. In this one encounter we are able to see the fact that not only is Christ concerned with the individual, and not just the crowds, but God is able to use an ordinary person to be his witness. Philip, who immediately responded to the Lord, was not only a faithful preacher, but also an obedient personal worker.

The Ethiopian, who was a descendant of Ham, was a man of great authority under Candace the Queen of Ethiopia and had come to Jerusalem to worship - revealing the deep hunger in his heart to encounter the True and Living Saviour. Philip ran to him and preached Jesus!!- His life, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection, ascension, and exaltation.

Jesus' last words to his followers were: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19). He instructed them to be Evangelists. Initially they spread the message only in Jerusalem but after intense persecution this message began to spread to Judea and Samaria. It is during this period of the early church that we read concerning Philip and his sermon to the Ethiopian.

In his meeting with the Ethiopian Eunuch, Philip demonstrated four steps that we need to take before we open our mouths to be His witness:

- We need to have a close relationship with Jesus ourselves.

'an angel of the Lord came to Philip and said "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. So he started out. . . ."' (Acts 8:26).

Before going anywhere or sharing anything we see that Philip had a close relationship with God himself. As a result of this close relationship Philip trusted and obeyed God. The closer we are connected to God, the easier it is to hear His voice.

- We need to be ready and watching for those opportunities that God will send our way.

“So he started out, and on his way he met.” (Acts 8:27).

It was while Philip was on his way that he met an Ethiopian eunuch, a very important and influential official. It's all too easy to say, “One day when I get things under control...then I will share the gospel with other people.” If we live according to the “one day philosophy,” that day will never come. We need to begin the journey today. Begin the adventure of travelling down the path God has set for each one of us but keep our eyes, ears, heart, and mind wide open for the experiences, encounters, and relationships God may have for us as we travel the road of life.

- We need to build relationships with the people God directs us to.

““Philip, go to that chariot and stand near it.” (Acts 8:29)

In order to build relationships with those God directs us to, we have to be willing to draw near to them. Too often we have removed ourselves from getting too close to the world in which we live for fear that the world might influence us. Before we can share the gospel we need to connect with people, we must begin where they are with their questions and their needs.

When we genuinely care about people we will find ourselves praying for them. We will begin to engage people on their terms, on their turf, in their comfort zone. Then we will have earned the right to begin to talk about spiritual matters. In verse 31, Philip asked, “Do you understand what it is you're reading?” The eunuch replied, “No, how could I unless someone would explain it to me?” So, he invited Philip to come up and sit with him in his chariot to teach him. When people ask us questions, it then gives us the right to share the Good News.

- We should open our mouths and share the gospel.

“Then Philip began with that very passage of scripture and told him the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:35)

The teaching that Phillip gave to the Eunuch led to his salvation and his baptism.

THE WITNESS IN JUDEA (ACTS 8:26-12:25)

1. THE SALVATION OF PAUL

The ninth chapter of Acts centers on the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the leading persecutor of the New Testament Church. It was perhaps the greatest event in church history after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and brings to attention the man whom the Lord had especially chosen to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, once Peter had opened the Door of Faith.

"Paul was a great man," said Charles Spurgeon, "and I have no doubt that on the way to Damascus he rode a very high horse. But a few seconds sufficed to alter the man. How soon God brought him down."

In this ninth Chapter of Acts, we discover that Saul experienced 4 meetings that together transformed his life:

SAUSL MEETS WITH JESUS CHRIST

Acts 9:1-9 "Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath. He was eager to destroy the Lord's followers, so he went to the high priest. He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains. As he was nearing Damascus on this mission, a brilliant light from heaven suddenly beamed down upon him! He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?" "Who are you, sir?" Saul asked. And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you are to do." The men with Saul stood speechless with surprise, for they heard the sound of someone's voice, but they saw no one! As Saul picked himself up off the ground, he found that he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. He remained there blind for three days. And all that time he went without food and water."

Saul viewed Jesus as a false Messiah and Christianity as a false and dangerous movement. He played a role in Stephen's execution (7:58; 8:1) and even led the persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 8:3; 22:4; 26:9-11). But even this wasn't

enough. In this chapter we see that Saul took the persecution extra-local and therefore traveled to Damascus.

In verse 1, "...still breathing threats and murder" , is expressive of a violent anger, and is the action of a man who was violently enraged and bent on vengeance. It denotes an intense activity and energy in persecuting and putting to death as many believers as possible. In spite of his great learning, Saul was spiritually blind. He depended on his own righteousness and not on the righteousness of God. He tried to silence his conscience and cover up his rejection with much religious activity. When Saul suddenly found himself on the ground, he began to make some wonderful discoveries:

- He discovered to his surprise that Jesus was actually alive,
- He was a lost sinner who was in danger of God's judgment.
- The Hebrew of the Hebrews would become the Apostle to the Gentiles; the persecutor would become a preacher and the legalistic Pharisee would become the great proclaimer of the grace of God (9:15-16)

Why are there three accounts to Paul's conversion?

- First, there is the initial historical narrative as recorded by Luke in Acts 9. The primary function of Acts 9 is to sketch the basic details of Saul's conversion to Christ.
- Second, Acts 22 constitutes Paul's "defense" of his change, from opponent to proponent of Christianity, to his Hebrew kinsmen (v. 1). The narrative is designed to show that there is a connection between his Jewish background and his present religious posture. He wanted his Israelite brethren to realize that there was no conflict between Judaism and Christianity, as divinely designed. Rather, the former was intended to be preparatory to the latter (Galatians 3:23-25), and thus the lesser was to give way to the greater (as argued in the book of Hebrews).
- Third, the aim of Paul's "defense" in chapter 26 was to argue that Christianity was never intended to be a political rival to Rome. Paul thus presented his case before Festus, a Roman procurator of Judea under Nero Caesar's authority, and Agrippa II, a Jewish "king" who was the last of the Herod line.

SAUL'S ENCOUNTER WITH ANANIAS

Acts 9:11-17 "The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you arrive, ask for Saul of Tarsus. He is praying to me right now. I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him so that he can see again." "But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! And we hear that he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest every believer in Damascus." But the Lord said, "Go and do what I say. For Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And I will show him how much he must suffer for me." So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you may get your sight back and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

This is what Ananias heard concerning Saul:

- He was a chosen instrument: What is said about Saul, the Lord had earlier said to the original apostles; "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit..." (John 15:16). The apostle Paul later writes and says, "He chose us [all believers] in Him before the foundation of the world." (Ephesians 1:4)
- He will bear the name of Jesus before Gentiles, and kings, and the sons of Israel: As we move forward in Acts, we will see this to be the case. But this statement goes far beyond Acts. The apostle Paul did more to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ than any other person in the history of the Church.
- He will suffer much for his faith in Jesus Christ: "...in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often

without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches." (2 Corinthians 11:23-28)

Ananias was a devout Jew (22:12), a believer in Jesus Christ who once convinced about Saul's conversion, lost no time going to the house of Judas to minister to Saul. Here we can observe some practical lessons that would serve us well when being a witness for Christ:

- God can and does use even the most obscure believer.
- We should never be afraid to obey God's will (even if it may appear to lead us into apparent "danger"). Everyone knew that Saul was a violent persecutor of the Church. Yet Ananias did not look at the evidence, he rather listened to God and therefore went to Saul and baptized him in the Holy Spirit.
- We must never underestimate the value of one person brought to Christ. No person is more important than another. When we are saved God does not look at our past but He looks at our being "new" creatures in Christ. Therefore there is not one person who cannot receive Christ and we should therefore always maintain an openness to the Holy Spirit's prompting when we are witnessing. We need to be ready to preach to the outcast as much as we are ready to preach to those who are well off in society. Everyone needs Christ.

SAUL MEETS THE OPPOSITION

Acts 9:20-25 "And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is indeed the Son of God!" All who heard him were amazed. "Isn't this the same man who persecuted Jesus' followers with such devastation in Jerusalem?" they asked. "And we understand that he came here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests." Saul's preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn't refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. After a while the Jewish leaders decided to kill him. But Saul was told about their plot, and that they were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him. So during the night, some of the other believers let him down in a large basket through an opening in the city wall."

After his baptism, Saul remained with the disciples in Damascus for several days. Immediately, Saul was preaching Jesus in the synagogues, declaring, "He is the Son of God." We notice that Saul did not have to be given a myriad of Bible studies about Jesus Christ before he wanted to proclaim what had happened to him to everyone he could talk to.

Remember that Saul had been given authority to go into the synagogues and find anyone who was a follower of Jesus, arrest the person, and bring them back to Jerusalem for trial. Saul went to the synagogue and instead of seeking out Christians to arrest, began to preach that Jesus is the Son of God. Verse 21 says that all who heard Saul speak were amazed and knew that he had come from Jerusalem to make havoc with anyone who proclaimed the name of Christ.

Saul became more powerful in his arguments, confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving Jesus is the Messiah. This did not go over well in the Jewish community. Verse 23 tells us that after some time had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him. Saul, the champion destroyer of Christianity and powerful man among the Jews, was now having his life plotted against by his own people. The plot became known to Saul. But Saul was unable to leave the city of Damascus because the Jews were standing guard at the city gates watching for Saul so they could kill him. We see how desperate the Jews in Damascus were to kill Saul. Saul was not going to leave the city alive. Therefore, the disciples took Saul and in the night let him down in a basket through an opening in the city wall.

Galatians 1:18 tells us that Saul did not go to Jerusalem for three years. So when we read about this scene, at least three years has passed by before Saul decided to come to Jerusalem.

SAUL MEETS THE JERUSALEM SAINTS

Acts 9:26-31 "When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They thought he was only pretending to be a believer! Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus. Barnabas also told them what the Lord had said to Saul and how he boldly preached in the name of Jesus in Damascus. Then the apostles accepted Saul, and after that he was constantly with them in Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. He debated

with some Greek-speaking Jews, but they plotted to murder him. When the believers heard about it, however, they took him to Caesarea and sent him on to his hometown of Tarsus. The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it grew in strength and numbers. The believers were walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit."

When Saul came to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples there. But the disciples were afraid of Saul and did not believe that Saul was a disciple. Saul had not been in Jerusalem for years. This was likely a great relief to the Christians to not see Saul wandering the streets of the city looking for Christians to imprison. However, suddenly, Saul returned to Jerusalem not to persecute the Christians but rather to fellowship with them.

The disciples were afraid of Saul and would not let him join with them. The Greek word that is used when we read that Saul "attempted to join the disciples" does not reflect a one-time act. Saul was repeatedly trying to join with the disciples there in Jerusalem. But the disciples were afraid.

Barnabas:

Barnabas took Saul, brought him before the apostles, and explained to the apostles how Saul had seen the Lord on the road to Damascus. Barnabas also explained how Saul had been proclaiming boldly in the name of the Lord. With the help of Barnabas, Saul was accepted into the circle of disciples in Jerusalem.

The growth of the church:

Acts 9:31 "The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it grew in strength and numbers. The believers were walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit."

This time was a time of "peace" for the churches, but NOT a time of complacency, for they grew both spiritually and numerically. They seized the opportunity to repair and strengthen their sails before the next storm began to blow! The door of faith had been opened to the Jews (Acts 2), and to the Samaritans (Acts 8), and soon it would be opened to the Gentiles (Acts 10)

2. THE WITNESS OF PETER (ACTS 9:32-11:18)

In this portion of scripture, we find Peter participating in 3 miracles:

- He heals Aeneas
- He raises Dorcas from the dead
- He brings the message of salvation to Cornelius and his household.

PETER'S MIRACLE MINISTRY

• THE HEALING OF AENEAS:

Acts 9:34 "Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! Get up and make your bed!" And he was healed instantly."

Peter's first miracle had been the healing of a crippled man (Acts 3), now this miracle was repeated in Lydda, a largely Gentile city about 25 miles from Jerusalem. The Resurrected Christ, by the authority of His Name, brought perfect soundness to Aeneas. The healing was instantaneous and became a living miracle!!! Just seeing him walk around convinced them that Jesus was alive and that they needed to trust in Him. Since the affliction had been a long well-known one, the miracle was celebrated by an extensive revival throughout Lydda.

• THE HEALING OF DORCAS

Acts 9:40 "But Peter asked them all to leave the room; then he knelt and prayed. Turning to the body he said, "Get up, Tabitha." And she opened her eyes! When she saw Peter, she sat up!"

The believers in Joppa heard that Peter was in the area, and sent for him immediately. In these verses we see the power of resurrection life and the first record of any Apostle raising the dead. Thus their sending for Peter was evidence of their faith in the power of the risen Christ.

It is important to note that in Jerusalem, when a person died, they were buried on the same day. But here in Joppa, a city outside of Jerusalem, a period of

three days was allowed before the body needed to be buried. The body would be washed in preparation for the burial and would be laid in the upper room.

This account should be compared with the account of Jesus' raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:34-43). In both cases, the mourning people were put out of the room and the words spoken were almost identical. As with the healing of Aeneas, the raising of Dorcas (Tabitha-gazelle), attracted great attention and resulted in many people trusting in the Lord.

- **THE MIRACLE OF SALVATION: CORNELIUS**

Chapter 10 is pivotal in the Book of Acts, for it records the beginning of the salvation of the Gentiles which took place about 10 years after Pentecost.

Before this, the Gospel had been preached to the Jews only since they were regarded as the favored people of God. Salvation was not to be offered beyond the limits of their nation. However, the choice of the Hebrew race was distinctly for the purpose of preserving the Sacred Scriptures, holding the Covenants and Promises, and the preservation of a Seed Line from which the Messiah would be born to bless the whole world.

In Acts 2, Peter used the "Keys of the Kingdom" to open the Door of Faith to the Jews. In Acts 10, Peter used these same "Keys" to open the Door of Faith to the Gentiles. Once the Door was open, it would remain open for Paul to step into and continue the apostolic Ministry to the Gentiles.

Caesarea:

This was located 30 miles from Joppa and named in honor of Augustus Caesarea. It was the headquarters for the Roman forces of occupation.

Cornelius:

To bring about the beginning of the ministry to the Gentiles, God selected Cornelius as the instance by which he would fully establish his purpose of conveying the Gospel to the Gentile world. What can we learn about Cornelius?

- Cornelius was a centurion who commandeered a military unit of about 100 men. Centurions were carefully selected as they were to have had noble qualities. They provided necessary stability to the entire Roman system.
- Cornelius was “devout and God-fearing”. The term “God fearing” was used for those people who weren’t a Jewish proselyte but rather who believed in one God and respected the moral and ethical teachings of the Jews. Cornelius was certainly sincere in his obedience to God’s Law, his fasting, and his generosity. In every way, he was a model of religious respectability, and yet was unsaved.

One afternoon at three (the Jewish hour of prayer), Cornelius had a vision (not a dream or a trance, but a revelation) in which he was told to send men to bring Peter, back to him. This vision was obeyed immediately (v8).

Peter “called” to go to the Gentiles:

The next day, at noon, Peter went into a trance, whereby he was given instruction on what he was to do.

Definition of "trance": “to transpire, to pass away, a state of partly suspended animation or inability to function, a state of profound absorption”. This was a state of mind that God produced in order to communicate with Peter.

Upon seeing the clean and the unclean creatures in the dream, God told Peter to “get up, kill and eat”. So deeply ingrained in his mind was the observance of the laws of the clean and the unclean, that Peter refused to obey immediately.

God’s timing is always perfect, and the 3 men from Caesarea arrived at the door just as Peter was pondering the meaning of the vision. But the Spirit commanded Peter to meet them and to go with them. When Peter arrived, he discovered that Cornelius had gathered relatives and friends to hear the message of life. He was a witness even before he became a Christian!

Two important truths can be found in this section:

- The idea that “one religion is as good as the other” is completely false.
- The seeking Saviour will find the seeking sinner (Luke 19:10 Jeremiah 29:13).

Wherever there is a searching heart God responds!

In verses 34-43, Peter preaches one of the greatest sermons of the New Testament to a people who knew nothing of Jesus, yet who were willing and eager to know Him.

Peter states the facts in the following manner:

Topics in sermon	Reference
God does not show partiality to whom He wills save	Acts 10:34-35 "Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God doesn't show partiality. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right."
God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power and as a result He went about doing good : healing, casting out demons, demonstrating God was with Him	Acts 10:38 "And no doubt you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the Devil, for God was with him."
Jesus was crucified	Acts 10:39 "And we apostles are witnesses of all he did throughout Israel and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by crucifying him,
Jesus was resurrected	Acts 10:40 "but God raised him to life three days later. Then God allowed him to appear,"
The Apostles were commanded to preach Christ	Acts 10:42 "And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is ordained of God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead."

During this great sermon, God sovereignly interrupted Peter's message by pouring out the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles. God's eternal purpose was being fulfilled where the Gentiles would be fellow-heirs with the Jewish believers. Thus God considers all equal under the New Covenant.

Peter perceived that God is no respecter of persons. In fact God desires that all men be saved. John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

1 Timothy 2:3-6 "This is good and pleases God our Savior, for he wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and people. He is the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. This is the message that God gave to the world at the proper time."

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent."

When questioned by those who were part of the circumcision concerning the salvation of Cornelius, Peter recounted all the events that took place. Having fellowship with the Gentiles was a new experience for these Jewish Christians, who all their lives had looked on the Gentiles as pagans and outsiders. Tradition said that a Gentile had to "become a Jew" (a proselyte), in order to be accepted; but now Jews and Gentiles were united in the Church through faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26-28). His final statement caused the people to recognize that God was not only a God of the Jews but a God of the Gentiles too.

Acts 11:17-18 "And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to argue?" When the others heard this, all their objections were answered and they began praising God. They said, "God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of turning from sin and receiving eternal life."

3. THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH (ACTS 11:19-30)

Many saints ended up in Antioch, the capital of Syria following Paul's persecution on the Church. With a population of half a million, Antioch ranked as the third largest city in the Roman Empire, following Rome and Alexandria. Its magnificent buildings helped give it the name "Antioch the Golden Queen of the East". A busy port and a centre for luxury and culture, Antioch attracted all kinds of people, including wealthy retired Roman officials.

With its large cosmopolitan population and its great commercial and political power, Antioch presented to the Church an exciting opportunity for evangelism!! As a result, not only was an effective Church built in Antioch, but it became the Church that sent Paul out to win the Gentile world for Christ.

Of all the churches in the Bible, the church at Antioch is one of the greatest. Its name means "speed of a chariot." It was a fast-moving church, and yet it was built on the Word of God and did the things that God would have it do. It certainly is a pattern or example church for all churches today. Let us notice some things about the church at Antioch.

THIS CHURCH WAS STARTED BECAUSE OF PERSECUTION

Acts 8:1 "Saul was one of the official witnesses at the killing of Stephen. A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem, and all the believers except the apostles fled into Judea and Samaria."

The death of Stephen had caused a great uproar. The Christians were continually under pressure and persecution. This persecution scattered them. Some went as far as Antioch, and there they founded a church.

THIS CHURCH WAS A CHURCH OF PERSONAL SOUL WINNING

Acts 8:4 "But the believers who had fled Jerusalem went everywhere preaching the Good News about Jesus."

They were scattered everywhere. Their soul winning was not wrapped up inside a church building; in fact, they had no church building, but they won souls

everywhere they went—on the street corner, from house to house, in the public places, etc.

THESE PEOPLE BELIEVED IN AND STARTED A LOCAL CHURCH

Acts 11:19 “Meanwhile, the believers who had fled from Jerusalem during the persecution after Stephen's death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. They preached the Good News, but only to Jews.”

The local church is an institution set up for the building of Christians and the propagation of the Gospel. In the Bible, each church was a local congregation, governing itself without outside intervention. The Antioch church was a growing church (Acts 11:21)

IT WAS AN INFLUENTIAL CHURCH.

Acts 11:22 “When the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch.”

You will notice that this church influenced the church at Jerusalem. In other words, it was a challenge to other churches.

IT HAD PASTORS

Acts 11:22-26 “When the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw this proof of God's favor, he was filled with joy, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord. Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. And large numbers of people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to find Saul. When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching great numbers of people. (It was there at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.)”

In the early days of the church, Barnabas and Saul were the pastors. One interesting thing about Barnabas is found in verse 23. Notice the word “exhorted.” The word “exhorted” is a word akin to the word “paraclete” in the Bible. This is the word used concerning the Holy Spirit in John 15:7, where He is called the Comforter. It is also the word which is translated “advocate” in I John

2:1, concerning Jesus being our Helper. The word means “to run alongside someone to pick him up when he falls.” This is what a real pastor should be. His preaching should pick people up from sin, from discouragement, from error, from backsliding, and from a lost condition.

Verse 24 gives us a "spiritual profile" of Barnabas and we also see a wonderful co-operation and recognition of Ministries in the Church, the Body of Christ. It was Barnabas who introduced Paul to the Apostles at Jerusalem and it is Barnabas who brings Saul to the Church at Antioch.

IT WAS THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH WHERE THE DISCIPLES WERE FIRST CALLED CHRISTIANS.

Acts 11:26 “When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching great numbers of people. (It was there at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.)”

It was at Antioch that the name "Christian" (meaning "Christ-like" or "followers of Christ") was first applied to the disciples of Christ. This term occurs only in two other places. Acts 26:28 “Agrippa interrupted him. "Do you think you can make me a Christian so quickly?" 1 Peter 4:16 “But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his wonderful name!”

THIS CHURCH WAS ALWAYS READY TO HELP THE POOR.

Acts 11:27-30 “During this time, some prophets traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up in one of the meetings to predict by the Spirit that a great famine was coming upon the entire Roman world. (This was fulfilled during the reign of Claudius.) So the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters in Judea, everyone giving as much as they could. This they did, entrusting their gifts to Barnabas and Saul to take to the elders of the church in Jerusalem.”

When this church heard about the needs in Judea they decided to send relief or help. This has always been one of the duties and works of the church. We are to help the poor and care for the physical needs of the needy.

IT WAS A BALANCED CHURCH.

Many churches consider themselves just “teaching places.” Still others think that all they should do is win souls. Still others think that they should just be separate from the world, etc. This church had every phase of the Gospel ministry.

- Evangelical: Acts 11:24 “...much people was added unto the Lord.”
- Taught: Notice in verse 23 the word “exhorted.” They built up Christians, lifted up the fallen ones, and preached against sin. Notice in verse 26 the word “taught.” It was a teaching church. They taught the Word of God as well as preached it.
- Giving: Then also they were Christlike in their conduct. This was a well-balanced church.

THIS CHURCH SENT OUT THE FIRST MISSIONARIES

Acts 13:1-3 ““Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called “the black man”), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul. [2] One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work I have for them.” [3] So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.”

4. THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH (ACTS 12)

THE HERODIAN PERSECUTION

Acts 12:1-3 "About that time King Herod Agrippa began to persecute some believers in the church. He had the apostle James (John's brother) killed with a sword. When Herod saw how much this pleased the Jewish leaders, he arrested Peter during the Passover celebration"

These things apparently happen during the same general period of time as the growth of the church in Antioch (11:19-26), and before Paul's trip to Jerusalem (11:27-30). Using secular records, historians place Herod's death (12:20-23) in A.D. 44, while Paul's visit to Jerusalem (11:30) may be two years later. Therefore, in recording the events of chapter 12, Luke backtracks, going behind the story of the Antioch church and Paul's trip to Jerusalem. The persecution of James and Peter may be connected to bringing Cornelius into the church fellowship. Hence, chapter 12 describes events beginning sometime soon after Peter's defense of his visit to Cornelius in front of the Jerusalem church (11:1-18)

Who was King Herod Agrippa?

The King Herod of Acts 12 is more precisely called "Herod Agrippa I. He was born in 10 BC and reigned from A.D. 37-44. His grandfather was Herod the Great who ruled 47 BC to shortly after Jesus' birth (Matthew 2:15). His grandmother was Mariamne, a Jewess. Agrippa's father was Aristobulus who had been murdered by his own father, Herod the Great in 7 BC. Herod Agrippa was educated in Rome and became friends with Gaius who became the Roman Emperor in 37 AD. Through his grandmother, Herod claimed Jewish ancestry and he exploited that. He enjoyed living in Jerusalem and when he was there he would scrupulously observe Jewish law and tradition including daily sacrifices and the festivals. He was even given the honor of publically reading the law during the Feast of Tabernacles. Jewish leaders accepted him as a Jew. Herod had gained his position by intrigue and making friends with the right people. He desired to keep his position and continued to use those same practices to his advantage. Herod's persecution of the early church was a means to continue to keep favor with the Jewish religious leaders. He "lays hands on" some of the Christians for the purpose of harming them.

Christian martyrdom:

The persecution of the apostles signals a definite change in the attitude of the Jewish community both in Jerusalem and Judea. Earlier, after Stephen's death, the Hellenistic Christian Jews were singled out for persecution. However, the apostles and Hebraic Jewish Christians were apparently not persecuted or suppressed (8:1). The apostles were still respected by the people since they remained observant Jews (3:1). As well, their miraculous works caused the people to hold them in awe as God's instruments for good (3:9; 5:13). The Pharisees were cautious about persecuting the apostles (5:34-39); only the Sadducee-dominated Sanhedrin had threatened them.

What turns the people of Jerusalem and Judea against the apostles? The answer may lie with Peter's evangelizing work. First, he taught among the despised Samaritans. Worse still, he fellowshiped with and baptized the Gentile Cornelius, without requiring that he live as a Jew. We know that the church in Jerusalem quickly heard about Peter eating with "uncircumcised men," referring to Cornelius and those with him (11:3). He was severely criticized even by the Jewish Christians; the scandal was presumably much greater for unconverted Jews.

These people may have seen Peter, and by implication the other apostles, as abandoning the Torah and committing a terrible offense against the community. All Jewish groups became united against the apostles. Together they enlisted the help of Herod to rid the land of the heretic Peter and his co-workers.

Luke only mentions the murder of James the brother of John by name, but it is possible that others may have suffered the same fate. It was important to mention James by name since he was the first Apostle to be martyred. He was executed by the sword which suggests that perhaps the charges against him included leading the people astray after false gods. Deuteronomy 13:12-15 commanded that those who lead people to serve another God were to be destroyed with the edge of the sword. The Jewish leaders therefore no longer viewed the disciples as just being part of a sect of Judaism, but rather as those who belong to a false religion.

Peter Imprisoned:

Acts 12:3-6 “When Herod saw how much this pleased the Jewish leaders, he arrested Peter during the Passover celebration and imprisoned him, placing him under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. Herod's intention was to bring Peter out for public trial after the Passover. But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him. The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, he was asleep, chained between two soldiers, with others standing guard at the prison gate.”

The seven days of the festival of Unleavened Bread were just beginning when Peter was arrested (12:3) therefore Peter was to remain in jail until the festival was over. Herod intended to put Peter on trial and then execute him but he needed to wait until the festival ended because a public execution during the sacred season would offend the people. (The chief priests didn't want to arrest and execute Jesus during the festival of Unleavened Bread "or the people may riot" (Mark 14:2).

“Ironically, Peter's imprisonment comes during Passover, the feast of unleavened bread, the great and festive day of deliverance from Egyptian slavery. This day finds Peter languishing in bondage, not celebrating liberation. The people who once saw God deliver them from slavery now make prisoners of their own kin during the feast of liberation—a bitter irony Luke does not want us to miss. (William H. Willimon, Acts)

Whilst Peter was in prison, Herod took every precaution to make sure that Peter did not escape — he probably knew about Peter's former escape (5:19-24). Peter was probably in the Antonia fortress, the military barracks where Paul was later confined (21:31-23:32). The fortress overlooked the temple. Peter was guarded by four squads of four soldiers each, probably on a rotating basis. He slept bound with two chains between two soldiers, with sentries standing guard at the entrance of his cell.

The Church prays earnestly:

Acts 12:5 “But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.”

Acts 12:12 "After a little thought, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer."

Here and throughout Acts Luke points out to his readers that prayer is central to the life of the church. In this case, the Jerusalem church was facing a life-threatening crisis. There was no doubt as to what Herod and the Sanhedrin with him were intending to do. The goal was to eliminate the leaders of the church and persecute the believers who accepted Gentiles.

The church had no weapons against the forces arrayed against it. Their only recourse was to depend on God to make His will known, with the hope that Peter would be rescued and the church saved.

Peter escapes from prison

Acts 12:7-10 "Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel tapped him on the side to awaken him and said, "Quick! Get up!" And the chains fell off his wrists. Then the angel told him, "Get dressed and put on your sandals." And he did. "Now put on your coat and follow me," the angel ordered. So Peter left the cell, following the angel. But all the time he thought it was a vision. He didn't realize it was really happening. They passed the first and second guard posts and came to the iron gate to the street, and this opened to them all by itself. So they passed through and started walking down the street, and then the angel suddenly left him."

"Tell James"

Acts 12:17 "He motioned for them to quiet down and told them what had happened and how the Lord had led him out of jail. "Tell James and the other brothers what happened," he said. And then he went to another place.

The James mentioned here is Jesus' half-brother, not the apostle (Mark 3:21; 6:3; Matthew 13:55; John 7:5). (James the apostle, the brother of John, was killed a few days ago.) Along with his brothers and sisters, James did not believe in Jesus before the Resurrection. But, as Luke has told us, James and his siblings were among the disciples meeting together before Pentecost (1:14). (See 1 Corinthians 15:7, where Paul mentions that the resurrected Jesus appeared to James.)

It is obvious from the way that Peter singles out James in Acts 12:17 that he was prominent in the Jerusalem church. Peter and the other original apostles were the primary spiritual leaders of the Christian community at large, but James seemed to have a more visible leadership role in the Jerusalem church. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul calls James "the Lord's brother" and implies that he is one of its "pillars" (1:19, 2:9). Luke describes James as the leader of the Jerusalem church about a decade later (21:18).

What happened to Peter?

Immediately after telling the story of his escape and asking the church to give James the details, Peter went away. Luke describes it: "He left for another place" (12:17). Any of the other apostles remaining in Jerusalem probably also left the city as well. Thus, a shift in authority within the Jerusalem church occurred.

Where did Peter go? No one knows. Perhaps Peter went to Antioch in Syria where he remained until "certain men came from James" and then he had a confrontation with Paul over table fellowship with Gentiles (Galatians 2:2:12-14). From Paul's letters, we have circumstantial evidence that Peter also went to Corinth, and was at least known to this Jewish-Gentile church (1 Corinthians 1:10; 9:5).

Herod's death:

Acts 12:19-23 "Herod Agrippa ordered a thorough search for him. When he couldn't be found, Herod interrogated the guards and sentenced them to death. Afterward Herod left Judea to stay in Caesarea for a while. Now Herod was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. So they sent a delegation to make peace with him because their cities were dependent upon Herod's country for their food. They made friends with Blastus, Herod's personal assistant, and an appointment with Herod was granted. When the day arrived, Herod put on his royal robes, sat on his throne, and made a speech to them. The people gave him a great ovation, shouting, "It is the voice of a god, not of a man!" Instantly, an angel of the Lord struck Herod with a sickness, because he accepted the people's worship instead of giving the glory to God. So he was consumed with worms and died."

Luke juxtaposes the story of the death of Herod with good news about the church. Herod dies, "but the word of God continued to increase and spread" (12:24). Earlier we saw that Luke comments briefly on the progress of the church at regular intervals (6:7; 9:31). Here he does so once again.

This summary is illustrative of the pattern of reversals in Luke's account. The story begins with the future of the Jerusalem church being in grave doubt, with one of its leaders killed and its chief spokesperson awaiting trial and execution. But the story ends with Peter's escape, the death of the despot, and the church growing and spreading. There is also another fundamental change in the book of Acts. Up to now, Luke's story could be called "The Acts of Peter." But Peter is about to pass out of Luke's narrative, except for a brief appearance in chapter 15. From now on, Luke's account will be about "The Acts of Paul."

What did Peter learn from his experiences of imprisonment and suffering?

God sees our trails	God hears our prayers	God deals with our enemies
1 Peter 3:12 "The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right,..."	1 Peter 3:12 "...and his ears are open to their prayers...." Peter knew what God's ultimate purpose for him was (John 21:18-19)	1 Peter 3:12 "...But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil."

PART TWO: PAUL – THE EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH

THE WITNESS TO THE UTMOST PARTS OF THE WORLD (ACTS 13:1-20:38)

1. THE FIRST MISSIONARY (ACTS 13:1-14:28)

The Church began in Jerusalem and then spread to other cities, including Samaria, Damascus, Caesarea, and Antioch in Syria and it was from Antioch that the apostle Paul and his helpers carried the Gospel throughout the then known world.



The first missionary journey of Paul takes place in 7 different cities:

ANTIOCH IN SYRIA (ACTS 13:1-5)

There are five men who were listed in chapter 13 as working and ministering in the Church at Antioch during this time:

- Barnabas
- Simeon
- Lucius (Acts 11:20)

- Manaen
- Saul

These men were serving as "prophets and teachers" in the local Church helping to lay the foundation for the Church, (Ephesians 2:20 1 Corinthians 14:29-32) and ground the converts in the doctrines of the faith. (2 Timothy 2:2)

However from these five men only 2 were chosen to go on the first mission. It was while they were worshiping the Lord here, that the Lord told them to set apart for Him "Saul and Barnabas". After fasting and praying, hands were laid upon them and they were sent to go and fulfill the purposes of God for their lives.

PAPHOS (ACTS 13:6-12):

Paphos was the capital of Cyprus. Cyprus was not unfamiliar with the gospel of Christ. In Acts 11:19 we see that the Gospel had previously been preached in Cyprus and that the church in Antioch of Syria had been started by men from Cyprus (Acts 11:20). We read in Acts 4:36 that Barnabas had himself come from Cyprus.

The chief Roman official here in Cyprus was Sergius Paulus. He had called Saul and Barnabas because he wanted to hear the Word of God. However Elymas, the Jewish false prophet and sorcerer sought to turn the proconsul from his faith. Paul however filled with the Holy Spirit looked at him and said, "You son of the Devil, full of every sort of trickery and villainy, enemy of all that is good, will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord? And now the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be stricken awhile with blindness." Instantly mist and darkness fell upon him, and he began wandering around begging for someone to take his hand and lead him. (Acts 13:10-11)

It is here whilst in Paphos that there is a dramatic change in the use of "Saul" by Luke. Acts 13:9 is the last time Saul is mentioned in the New Testament and the first place where Saul is called Paul.

PERGA (ACTS 13:13)

At Perna John Mark deserted his friends and returned to Jerusalem. This later became a sore point with Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:36-40) and thus he was considered unsuitable for the next journey.

ANTIOCH IN SYDIDA (ACTS 13:14-52)

As was his custom, Paul went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath and because of his training was recognized as a teacher or rabbi.

His first sermon can be divided into the following points:

- He showed how God dealt with Israel (Acts 13:17-22)
- He proclaimed that Jesus was the promised Savior (Acts 13:23-26)
- He reviewed Jesus death and provided evidence for His resurrection (Acts 13:27-37)
- He proclaimed that salvation was now offered through Jesus (Acts 13:38-39)
- He warned those who would reject God's gift of salvation (Acts 13:40-41)

Acts 13:42-43 "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God."

The people's response to what they heard was to invite Paul back to preach the following Sabbath. But the next Sabbath, some of the Jews were envious of the large crowds and began resisting Paul (Acts 13:44-45). Paul therefore directed his attention to the Gentiles, who were more receptive (Acts 13:46-49). This led to their persecution and expulsion from the city, forcing them to go to Iconium. Acts 13:50 "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts."

What was there response to this expulsion?

Acts 13:51-52 “But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.”

Jesus had warned the disciples about this type of response in Matthew 5:12 “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

ICONIUM (ACTS 14:1-7)

Again this we see a familiar pattern of Paul in starting to preach first in the local synagogue (Acts 14:1). However, once again because of the great success unbelieving Jews opposed Paul and Barnabas and even began to poison the minds of the Gentiles. Paul and his companions therefore stayed a long time in this city speaking boldly about Jesus and moving in signs and wonders (Acts 14:3). This city eventually became divided between the Jews and the Apostles and an attempt to stone them forced them to flee to Lystra and Derbe (Acts 14:4-7).

LYSTRA (ACTS 14:8-20)

Lystra was in the Roman province of Galatia. This city was full of superstitious people who interpreted events in the light of their own mythology. This was the first of three visits that Paul made to this city. It was here where the first recorded miracle of healing under Paul's ministry took place, similar to the one under Peter's ministry in Acts 3.

When the crowds saw what had happened they named Barnabas, Zeus - the patron god of the city. This was probably due to the fact that he was more imposing than Paul. Paul was identified as Hermes, the Roman Mercury because he was the spokesman (28:6). When the people who usually made an offering to Zeus came into the city to give an offering to Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Barnabas opposed what the people were doing and tore their clothes (a Jewish custom in showing great anguish).

When the Jews from Antioch and Iconium came they persuaded the multitude to stone Paul (Acts 14:19-20, 2 Cor. 11:25). Paul and his companions therefore left Lystra and came to Derbe.

DERBE (ACTS 14:19-21)

Acts 14:20-21 "Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,"

ANTIOCH IN SYRIA (ACTS 14:21-28)

On their return trip to Antioch, the Apostles strengthened and encouraged the believers in the things of Christ and reported to their "sending church" on the work of God.

SUMMARY OF THE WORK DONE ON THIS FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

The pattern established in his early years of service is certainly seen in this first missionary journey of Paul:

- Preaching the gospel, followed by persecution
- Establishing churches, followed by edification

On this first journey, another pattern became evident

- Preaching the gospel to the Jews first, by going to their synagogues
- Preaching the gospel to the Gentiles also, especially after rejection by the Jews

Of this pattern Paul would write later to the brethren in Rome. Romans 1:16 "for I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—Jews first and also Gentiles."

2. THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL (ACTS 15)

The progress of the Gospel has often been hindered by people with closed minds who stand in front of open doors and block the way for others. Paul and his associates faced this challenge at the Jerusalem Conference about twenty years after Pentecost. Courageously, they defended both the truth of the Gospel and the missionary outreach of the Church.

There were 3 stages in this event:

THE DISPUTE (ACTS 15:1-5)

Certain legalistic Jewish teachers from Judea who probably came from the party of the Pharisees came to Antioch and taught that the Gentiles, in order to be saved, had to be circumcised and obey the Law of Moses. A dispute thus arose in which there was a conflict between Jew and Gentile, Circumcised and Uncircumcised, between the Ritual Law and the Spiritual Law, between Flesh and Spirit.

Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians to make it clear that salvation is wholly by God's grace, through faith in Christ, plus nothing!! Paul took the matter to the Jerusalem Church leaders who heard the various groups and made a decision.

The sequence to this meeting is described in v4-22:

- A general meeting of welcome and report (v4-5) - This entailed a report that was cordially received concerning the work which had been done among the Gentiles.
- A meeting of the leaders while the Church was still assembled (v6-11)
- A meeting of the apostles, the elders and the whole assembly (v12-22)

THE DEFENSE (15:6-18)

In this public discussion, four key leaders presented the case for keeping the doors of grace open to the lost Gentiles.

Peter reviewed the past (6-11):

The review that was given by Peter was from his own experience in his ministering to the Gentiles (v7). Peter reminded the Church of four important ministries that God had performed for the Gentiles:

1. God had made a choice that Peter should preach the Gospel to the Gentiles
2. God gave the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles to bear witness that they truly were born again,
3. God erased the difference between the Jew and Gentile,
4. God had removed the yoke of the Law.

Paul and Barnabas reported on the present (12):

Up to that time, the people had remained in place while the apostles and the elders met. The assembly had not remained quiet during that time, but now they became silent, as Paul and Barnabas began to speak. Their emphasis was on the miracles that God had enabled them to perform among the Gentiles

James related it all to the future (13-18):

It is worthy to note that the final court of appeal was to the infallible Scriptures, '... as it is written...'. Though the testimony and experiences of Peter may have been accepted and the ministry of Paul and Barnabas be received to confirm the truth, it was the WORD OF GOD which was the final court of appeal for all.

THE DECISION (ACTS 15:19-35)

The leaders and the whole church directed by the Holy Spirit, made a twofold decision:

A doctrinal decision about salvation:

Circumcision was not required, but four stipulations were laid down. They were to abstain from:

- Food polluted by idols
- Sexual immorality (this was a sin that was taken too lightly by the Greeks and was also associated with certain pagan religious festivals.
- Meat of strangled animals (thus retaining the blood that was forbidden to be eaten (Genesis 9:4)
- Blood (expressly forbidden by the Jewish Law - Leviticus 17:10-12. Reference is given to eating blood apart from meat)

These were all areas where the Gentiles had particular weaknesses and where the Jews were repulsed by the Gentile's violations. It would help the relationships between the Jew and the Gentiles, if these requirements were observed. These were divine directives that the Jews believed were given before the Mosaic law.

A practical decision about how to live the Christian life:

All doctrine must lead to duty. James emphasized this in his Epistle. James 2:14-26 "Dear brothers and sisters, what's the use of saying you have faith if you don't prove it by your actions? ...So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. Faith that doesn't show itself by good deeds is no faith at all—it is dead and useless.... Just as the body is dead without a spirit, so also faith is dead without good deeds."

It is not enough to simply accept a biblical truth; but to apply it personally in everyday life. Church problems are not resolved by passing resolutions, but by practicing the revelations God gives us from His Word.

James advised the Church to write to the Gentile believers and share the decisions of the conference. This letter, which asked for obedience to two commands and a willingness to agree to two personal concessions, accomplished the following practically:

- It strengthened the unity of the Church and kept it from dividing into two extremes
- It made it possible for the Church to present a united witness to the lost Jew,
- Its decision brought blessing as the letter was shared.

3. PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (Acts 15:36-41; 16-17-18:1-23)

Paul's second missionary journey begun in Acts 15:36 and was a result of Paul expressing his desire to visit the local Churches which had been previously established on his first journey.



NEW ELEMENTS IN THIS SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

There were several new elements in this second journey that indicated that God was still at work, in spite of the seeming obstacles and personal difficulties that arose.

A NEW PARTNER (ACTS 15:36-41):

Acts 15:37-40 "Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not shared in their work. Their disagreement over this was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus. Paul chose Silas, and the believers sent them off, entrusting them to the Lord's grace."

While the separation of Paul and Barnabas was unpleasant, it did not keep both men from their service to God. Paul eventually was reconciled with both men (1 Corinthians 9:6; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24).

Silas:

Paul selected Silas to accompany him. Silas was one of the two men sent by Jerusalem with the letters regarding the circumcision (Acts 15:22-27). He stayed in Antioch and was a prophet (Acts 15:34).

What happened to Mark and Barnabas after leaving Paul?

Barnabas:

Acts does not make mention of Barnabas again, but in 1 Corinthians 9:6, Paul names him as setting a noble example in working to support himself, and then in Galatians 2:11-13, he is described as being at the Church of Antioch.

Mark:

Mark evidently returned from his work with Barnabas and became associated with Peter (1 Peter 5:13). During Paul's first imprisonment, Mark was included in Paul's group (Colossians 4:10, Philemon 24). By the end of Paul's life, Paul came to admire Mark so much that he requested him to come to be with him during his final days (2 Timothy 4:11).

A NEW HELPER (ACTS 16:1-5):

It was at Derbe and Lystra that Timothy was enlisted to replace John Mark as Paul's special assistant. Timothy was probably converted through Paul's first journey and was a man who had proven himself and been ordained in the Local Church before being taken with Paul into the Apostolic team. Paul's decision to have Timothy circumcised was not a matter of belief in the value of the ritual but an important strategic one that would enhance his ministry to both Jew and Gentile (1 Corinthians 9:20-21). This was different from Titus' case (Galatians 2:3), where circumcision was refused because some were demanding it as necessary for salvation.

THE CITIES VISITED DURING THIS MISSIONARY JOURNEY

ANTIOCH IN SYRIA (ACTS 15:36-39)

It was in this city that Paul and Barnabas parted company. Barnabas took John Mark and went to Cyprus which was where he was from and which had been visited in the first missionary journey.

SYRIA AND CILICIA (ACTS 15:40-41)

Acts 15:40-41 "Paul chose Silas, and the believers sent them off, entrusting them to the Lord's grace. So they traveled throughout Syria and Cilicia to strengthen the churches there."

Together, Paul and Silas traveled through this area and strengthened the believers in the church. Cilicia was where Paul had come from (Acts 22:3) and where he had spent time preaching before (Galatians 1:21).

THE REGION OF ASIA MINOR:

DERBE AND LYSTRA (ACTS 16:1-5)

Paul had visited these cities previously and this was where the lame man had been healed which led to his being stoned (Acts 14:6-20). It is here that Paul met with Timothy and desired him to join him on this missionary trip. Timothy was a man of good reputation. His mother was a Jew and his father was a Greek (2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15-16). Because of his being part Greek, Paul had Timothy circumcised. Acts 16:3 "so Paul wanted him to join them on their journey. In deference to the Jews of the area, he arranged for Timothy to be circumcised before they left, for everyone knew that his father was a Greek."

They traveled through these cities and delivered the decree which had been decided upon in the Jerusalem council. Whilst being in these cities the church was strengthened and grew daily.

IN PHRYGIA AND GALATIA (ACTS 16:6)

During their travels in this area they likely went to church in Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia. Because they were prohibited to preach the word in Asia they headed towards Ephesus.

IN MYSIA (ACTS 16:7-10)

Near Mysia they were not permitted by the Spirit to head north toward Bithynia and therefore went to Troas.

TROAS (ACTS 16:11-10)

Whilst in Troas Paul had a vision of a Macedonian man asking him to help him. Taking this as to mean that it was God's will to go there, they set off. Notice in this verse that the author Luke, uses the term "we", thereby signifying that at this point he had joined with the missionary trip.

THE REGIONS OF MACEDONAI AND ACHAIA:

PHILIPPI (ACTS 16:11-40):

Philippi was the chief city of Macedonia and was a Roman colony. In this chapter we note that Paul ministers to three different groups of people who would form the foundation of the Church at Philippi.

- **Lydia:**

Acts 16:13-14 "On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we supposed that some people met for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had come together. One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying."

Lydia's home town was four hundred miles away in Thyatira a city famous for its dyes. She was a business woman and an entrepreneur. She traded in purple cloth which was up-market material because purple dye was expensive.

Lydia was a worshipper of God, that is, she had been influenced by the Old Testament Scriptures and come to believe and behave as the Jews did without becoming a Jew. Because she was not a Jew and there was no synagogue in Philippi she would meet with others like herself by the river to worship. Upon listening to what Paul said, she and her household were baptized (Acts 16:15).

- **The slave girl**

Acts 16:16-18 "One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a demon-possessed slave girl. She was a fortune-teller who earned a lot of money for her masters. She followed along behind us shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved." This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and spoke to the demon within her. "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her," he said. And instantly it left her."

After this girl had been set free, her master was furious because he could no longer profit from her bondage. He therefore seized Paul and Silas and brought them to the authorities. It was a result of this miracle that Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned. Acts 16:23-24 "They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. So he took no chances but put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks."

The stripes	Paul and Silas were beaten, probably with a cat-of-nine tails
The Sentence	These men were cast into the prison. The word "cast" means "to throw something without regard to where or how it lands." They were just tossed into the prison without any care for their well-being. The jailer then "thrust" (same word) into the inner prison. This refers to the dungeon, where it would have been dank, dark, dirty and discouraging.
The Stocks	As if it weren't enough to beat these men, throw them into prison and cast them into the dungeon, the jailer placed their feet in stocks to prevent any activity on their part at all.

Paul writes about this experience:

1 Thessalonians 2:2 “You know how badly we had been treated at Philippi just before we came to you and how much we suffered there. Yet our God gave us the courage to declare his Good News to you boldly, even though we were surrounded by many who opposed us.”

Philippians 1:30 “We are in this fight together. You have seen me suffer for him in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of this great struggle.”

- **The jailer:**

Acts 16:25-27 “Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself.”

Despite their punishment, despite their circumstances, Paul and Silas did not become discouraged but rather they were strengthened in their faith as they began to prayer and sing hymns. As a result an earthquake took place and they and the other prisoners were freed from their chains.

What did Paul and Silas bring God to work with?	
Brought Supplication: Instead of pouting, these men prayed. They rolled their burden onto the shoulders of the Lord. Philippians 4:6 “Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.” Matthew 11:28 “Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”	Brought Singing: As they prayed before the Lord, He began to lift their hearts. Soon, they were filled with praise and they began to sing songs. Job 19:25 ““But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth at last.”

What did Paul and Silas tell the jailer?

Acts 16:31 "They replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with your entire household."

What was his response?

Acts 16:32-34 "Then they shared the word of the Lord with him and all who lived in his household. That same hour the jailer washed their wounds, and he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. Then he brought them into his house and set a meal before them. He and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God."

This freedom for Paul and Silas although was a great miracle and a testimony to the goodness of God towards His children, was an even greater display of freedom from spiritual bondage as the jailer and his household were saved.

Paul and Silas eventually departed from Philippi after pointing out the seriousness of the mistake made by the magistrates in beating Roman citizens. Luke did not go with them but must have remained here in Philippi because when speaking of Paul's next destination he said, "...when they encouraged them and departed"

IN THESSALONICA (ACTS 17:1-9)

Whilst in Thessalonica Paul visited the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews for three Sabbaths. Whilst here he "was explaining and proving the prophecies about the sufferings of the Messiah and his rising from the dead. He said, "This Jesus I'm telling you about is the Messiah." (Acts 17:3)

Paul knew that Thessalonica was a strategic city for the work of the Lord. Not only was it the capital of Macedonia, but it was also a center for business, rivaled only by Corinth. It was located on several important trade routes, it boasted an excellent harbor and its city was predominantly Greek even though it was controlled by Rome. Thessalonica was a "free city", which meant that it had an elected citizens' assembly, it could mint its own coins, and it had no Roman garrison within its walls.

On the Sabbaths, Paul ministered in the Jewish synagogue where he knew he would find both devout Jews and Gentiles. As a result of the 3 weeks ministry, Paul saw a large number of people believe, especially Greek proselytes and influential women. But these results did not bring great joy to everyone.

Unbelieving Jews envied Paul's success and were grieved to see the Gentiles and the influential women leave the synagogue. A riot was manufactured and the mob so agitated that under cover of night, Paul and Silas left the city and headed for Berea, about forty-five miles away.

BEREA (ACTS 17:1-14)

When Paul spoke to the Jews in this city, they were more responsive than those of the city at Thessalonica and searched the scriptures daily. As "a result, many Jews believed, as did some of the prominent Greek women and many men" (Acts 17:12).

However when the Jews from Thessalonica heard what was happening they came to Berea and stirred up the crowd. This led to Paul being sent away whilst Silas and Timothy remained (Acts 17:14).

ATHENS (ACTS 17:15-32)

At Athens Paul sent for Silas and Timothy to once again join him on his travels. Moved by the idolatry in Athens, Paul disputed with both the Jews and the Greeks. Invited by the Epicurean and Stoic to speak at Areopagus, Paul speaks of the "Unknown God"

Athens was in period of decline at this time, though still recognized as a centre of culture and education. It had a famous university and numerous beautiful buildings, but it was not the influential city it had once been. The city was given over to a "cultured paganism" that was nourished by idolatry, novelty and philosophy.

The Greek myths spoke of gods and goddesses that, in their own rivalries and ambitions, acted more like humans than gods, and there were plenty of deities to choose from! As for novelty, it was the chief pursuit of both the citizens and the visitors. Paul had to confront two opposing philosophies as he witnessed in Athens; those of the Epicureans and the Stoics.

The Epicureans: These people originally taught that the supreme good is happiness - but not mere momentary pleasure or temporary gratification. By Paul's time however, this philosophy had degenerated into a more sensual system of thought. They were materialists and atheists whose goal in life was pleasure, and thus worshipped the God of Pleasure.

The Stoics: These people taught that people should live in accord with nature, recognize their own self sufficiency and independence and express their desires. At its best, Stoicism, had some admirable qualities, but had degenerated into a system of pride. They rejected the idolatry of pagan worship and taught that there was one "World God." They were pantheists who worshipped the God of Nature, and their emphasis was on personal discipline and self control. Pleasure was not good and pain was not evil.

Left at Athens alone, Paul viewed the idolatrous city and was "stirred" in his spirit. As was his custom, he spoke in the synagogues with the Jews as well as in the marketplaces to the Greeks and it did not take long for the philosophers to hear about this "new thing". One group ridiculed Paul and his teachings and called him a "babbler" (a loafer in the market place who would pick up whatever scraps of learning he could find and paraded them without digesting them himself). Taking him to the Aeropagus (a place where new religions and foreign gods were introduced to the city), , they courteously invited Paul to present his doctrine and in his message, Paul shared five basic truths about God

The theme of Paul's sermon:

Upon visiting Athens he had seen an altar which had the inscription "To the Unkonwn God". Acknowledging that this was a "religious" group of people Paul used this as an opportunity to preach about the "The God whom they did not know."

The main points:

God is the Creator of the universe (acts 17:24)	He made the world and is Lord of Heaven and earth. Because He is God He does not dwell in a temple that is made with hands
God is the sustainer of life (acts 17:25)	He gives to everything their breath
God is the ruler of all nations (acts 17:26-27)	He has created every nation and determined their rise and their fall.
God is the Father of mankind (Acts 17:28-29)	From God we come and in Him we live. Therefore He is unlike any idol of gold, silver or stone
God is the judge of the world (acts 17:30-31)	God commands that all men repent. God will judge the world.

What was the response to this sermon?

Acts 17:32 "When they heard Paul speak of the resurrection of a person who had been dead, some laughed, but others said, "We want to hear more about this later."

Acts 17:34 "but some joined him and became believers. Among them were Dionysius, a member of the Council, a woman named Damaris, and others."

CORINTH (ACTS 18:1-17)

Corinth was the capital of Achaia and one of the two most important cities Paul visited (the other being Ephesus). It was one of the most populous and wealthy cities in Greece and at the same time, one of the most luxurious and ostentatious. With over 200,000 people, Corinth's reputation for wickedness was known over all the Roman Empire. It was here that Paul entered determined to magnify Jesus Christ and the Cross, to depend on the Holy Spirit, and to present the Gospel in simplicity (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

By Divine Providence, he met with Aquilla and Priscilla, a dedicated couple who served most faithfully and who even risked their lives for Paul (Romans 16:3-4). They assisted him in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-28) where they even hosted a church in their home (1 Corinthians 16:19). Aquilla and Priscilla were an important part of Paul's team and a good example of how "lay ministers" can help to further the work of the Lord. It was here that he worked together with them as a tent-maker (1 Corinthians 9:6-15) as well as receiving support from Philippi (2 Corinthians 11:7-10, Philippians 4:15). When he was here he reasoned with the Jews every Sabbath.

After Silas and Timothy joined him from Macedonia (Acts 18:5, 2 Corinthians 1:19), Paul "spent his full time preaching and testifying to the Jews, telling them, "The Messiah you are looking for is Jesus." (Acts 18:5). It was here that Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonica church to praise them for their steadfastness under persecution and to correct them concerning the Second Coming.

After leaving the synagogue Paul preached next door at the house of Justus (Acts 18:6-7).

What was his success in Corinth?

- Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue believed and he and his household was baptized (acts 18:8)
- Many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized (v8)

What was his vision?

Acts 18:9-10 "One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, "Don't be afraid! Speak out! Don't be silent! For I am with you, and no one will harm you because many people here in this city belong to me."

What was Paul's response to this vision?

Paul remained in Corinth for a year and a half (Acts 18:11). During this time he wrote the second letter to the church at Thessalonica.

EPHESUS (ACTS 18:18-21)

From Corinth Paul went to Ephesus where he was joined by Aquila and Priscilla. Here in Ephesus Paul left Aquila and Priscilla. He once again as part of his pattern entered into the synagogue and began to reason with the Jews. When asked to remain for a time Paul rejected the invitation as he wanted to get back to Jerusalem for the coming feast. He did leave them with a promise to return.

JERUSALEM (ACTS 18:21-22)

Paul sailed from Ephesus to Caesarea and from there went up to Jerusalem to visit the church.

ANTIOCH (ACTS 18:22-23)

From Jerusalem he went to Antioch in Syria.

SUMMARY OF HIS WORK DURING THIS MISSIONARY TRIP

On this missionary trip Paul was able to:

- Encourage churches like those in Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch
- Establish churches like those in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and Corinth.
- Write the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonica

4. PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY (ACTS 18:23-20:38)

Paul's third missionary journey was different from the first two. On the first two journeys, Paul reached into new areas where he preached the gospel and planted churches. On the third journey, Paul visited no new areas, but went to strengthen believers in cities where he had already been (Acts 18:23).

On the second missionary journey the Holy Spirit directed Paul away from Asia (Acts 16:6) because God wanted him to spend most of his time in Europe (Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Athens, etc.). On the third missionary journey, most of Paul's time was spent in Asia, in the city of Ephesus.

Between the first and second journeys of Paul, there was an interval of about two years in which Paul spent a "long time in Antioch (Acts 14:28) and where a visit to Jerusalem became necessary (Acts 15).

Between the second and third journeys, Paul did not remain long in Antioch as he only spent some time there (Acts 18:22-23). From here he soon departed to Ephesus where he promised to return (Acts 18:19-20).



As with his second journey, he starts with

THE REGIONS OF ASIA MINOR

GALATIA AND PHRYGIA (ACTS 18:23)

Whilst he was in Galatia and Phrygia he strengthened the disciples. This was the third time that he had been in this region (Acts 14:6-20, 16:6)

EPHESUS (ACTS 18:24-19:41)

Paul according to his promise given on the second missionary journey came to the city of Ephesus. It was in Ephesus that Aquila and Priscilla stayed and converted Apollos (Acts 18:24-28) and where Paul converted the twelve disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-7). Paul stayed in this region for a period of three years. Whilst he was here he:

- Taught in the synagogue for three months (Acts 19:8)
- Taught daily for two years in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-10)
- Worked unusual miracles (Acts 19:1-20)

The ministry of Paul in Ephesus is described in Acts 19 as being a great success:

Acts 19:10 "This went on for the next two years, so that people throughout the province of Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the Lord's message.

Acts 19:20 "So the message about the Lord spread widely and had a powerful effect."

During this time period:

- Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians which was lost (1 Corinthians 5:9)
- Paul wrote Galatians (Galatians 1:1-2)

The riots in Ephesus:

The Holy Spirit impelled Paul to go to Macedonia and Achaia before returning once more to Jerusalem. And then Paul thought it would be time to go from there to Rome, which he had not as yet done. He sent two of his fellow workers in the Gospel, Timothy and Erastus, on ahead to Macedonia while he stayed for a while longer in the province of Asia Minor. But at that time serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning "the way" as it was now often called. It began with Demetrius, a silversmith who had a large manufacturing business, making silver shrines of the Greek goddess Diana. He employed many craftsmen. He called the craftsmen together one day, as well as other skilled men of related trades, and said to them: Acts 19:25-27 "...Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business. As you have seen and heard, this man Paul has persuaded many people that handmade gods aren't gods at all. And this is happening not only here in Ephesus but throughout the entire province! Of course, I'm not just talking about the loss of public respect for our business. I'm also concerned that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will lose its influence and that Artemis—this magnificent goddess worshiped throughout the province of Asia and all around the world—will be robbed of her prestige!"

At hearing this fact, it hit them as never before as to what was happening concerning their goddess Diana. They boiled with anger and started to shout as loud as they could, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" They shouted more, "Great is the goddess Diana!" And on and on they went with, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Soon a crowd gathered around them, then more and more people, until the whole city was in an uproar and utter confusion everywhere set in. Then they all rushed to the Amphitheater. They dragged along with them, Gaius and Aristarchus, who were Paul's travelling companions from Macedonia. Paul wanted to go after them, to try and rescue his friends, but many of the disciples prevented him from doing so. Some of the officials of the area, friends of Paul, also sent messages to him, begging him not to risk his life being taken by entering the Amphitheater.

Inside their stadium all the people were shouting out. A man by the name of Alexander was pushed forward by some of the Jews, who encouraged him to explain the situation to everyone. He motioned for silence and then would have made his defense, but when the crowd realized he was a Jew, they started shouting again as one voice, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians! Great is Diana of

the Ephesians!" And they kept up those kind of shouting for two full hours. Finally the town mayor came forward and explained that any matter against the believers was to be brought before the court.

THE REGIONS OF MACEDONIA AND GREECE

MACEDONIA (ACTS 20:1-2)

In Macedonia Paul found Titus who brought comforting news concerning Corinth. 2 Corinthians 7:5-7 "When we arrived in Macedonia there was no rest for us. Outside there was conflict from every direction, and inside there was fear. But God, who encourages those who are discouraged, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus. His presence was a joy, but so was the news he brought of the encouragement he received from you. When he told me how much you were looking forward to my visit, and how sorry you were about what had happened, and how loyal your love is for me, I was filled with joy!" 2 Corinthians 7:13-16 "We have been encouraged by this. In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was at the way you welcomed him and set his mind at ease. I had told him how proud I was of you—and you didn't disappoint me. I have always told you the truth, and now my boasting to Titus has also proved true! Now he cares for you more than ever when he remembers the way you listened to him and welcomed him with such respect and deep concern. I am very happy now because I have complete confidence in you."

Paul preached throughout Macedonia during this trip just as he had done on his second missionary journey when he established churches in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 16:11-17:15).

Here in Macedonia Paul wrote to the Corinthian church his second letter. 2 Corinthians 1:1 "This letter is from Paul, appointed by God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our dear brother Timothy. We are writing to God's church in Corinth and to all the Christians throughout Greece."

GREECE (ACTS 2-3)

Paul spent three months in Greece. In his visit to Greece he met with the Church at Corinthians. This was his third visit to Corinth one in which he hoped would not be sorrowful (2 Corinthians 2:1) or cause an embarrassment for them (2 Corinthians 9:3-4).

Whilst he was here he wrote the book of Romans. Romans 16:23 "Gaius says hello to you. I am his guest, and the church meets here in his home. Erastus, the city treasurer, sends you his greetings, and so does Quartus, a Christian brother."

MACEDONIA (ACTS 20:3-4)

After just three months, Paul prepared to leave Corinth and head straight toward Syria on his way to Jerusalem. But circumstances demanded a change in itinerary and led him to Macedonia. Several companions joined him whilst he was in Macedonia:

- Sopater of Berea (Romans 16:21)
- Aristarchus (Acts 19:29, 27:2, Colossians 4:10, Philemon 24) and Secundus of Thessalonica
- Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy (Acts 16:1)
- Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21, Colossians 4:7, 2 Timothy 4:12, Titus 3:12)
- Trophimus (Acts 21:29, 2 Timothy 4:20) of Asia

These seven men went ahead of him to Troas while Luke joined Paul at Philippi and sailed with him to Troas (Acts 20:5-6). Notice the use of the term "we"

TROAS (ACTS 20:5-12)

In Troas Paul and his companions assembled with the other disciples. After waiting here seven days Paul about to leave the city began to preach (until midnight). During this sermon Eutychus fell asleep and fell from the third story of the building and was presumed dead. However Paul "went down, bent over him, and took him into his arms. "Don't worry," he said, "he's alive!" (Acts 20:10).

Acts 20:12 "Meanwhile, the young man was taken home unhurt, and everyone was greatly relieved."

MILETUS (ACTS 20:13-16)

When in Miletus Paul meets with the Ephesian elders. Acts 20:17 “But when we landed at Miletus, he sent a message to the elders of the church at Ephesus, asking them to come down to meet him.”

When he spoke with these elders he:

- Reviewed his past work with them: Acts 20:18-21 “When they arrived he declared, “You know that from the day I set foot in the province of Asia until now I have done the Lord’s work humbly—yes, and with tears. I have endured the trials that came to me from the plots of the Jews. Yet I never shrank from telling you the truth, either publicly or in your homes. I have had one message for Jews and Gentiles alike—the necessity of turning from sin and turning to God, and of faith in our Lord Jesus.”
- Revealed his future to them and his commitment to the gospel: Acts 20:22-24 “And now I am going to Jerusalem, drawn there irresistibly by the Holy Spirit, not knowing what awaits me, except that the Holy Spirit has told me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. But my life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about God’s wonderful kindness and love.”
- Encouraged them in their ministry: Acts 20:28-31 ““And now beware! Be sure that you feed and shepherd God’s flock—his church, purchased with his blood—over whom the Holy Spirit has appointed you as elders. I know full well that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. Even some of you will distort the truth in order to draw a following. Watch out! Remember the three years I was with you—my constant watch and care over you night and day, and my many tears for you.
- Commended them to God and His Word reminding them of his own example: Acts 20:32-35 “And now I entrust you to God and the word of his grace—his message that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself. “I have never coveted anyone’s money or fine clothing. You know that these hands of mine have worked to pay my own way, and I have even supplied the needs of those who were

with me. And I have been a constant example of how you can help the poor by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

TO JERUSALEM BY WAY OF TYRE, PTOLEMAIS AND CAESAREA (ACTS 21:14)

The disciples warn him about going to Jerusalem:

On his travel towards Jerusalem Paul met with some disciples with whom he and his companions stayed for several days. Whilst here he was told not to go to Jerusalem (Acts 21:3-6) however Paul did not heed this warning as he knew what his fate was to be.

Agabus warns him about going to Jerusalem:

When in Caesarea Paul stayed in Phillip's house (Acts 21:8-9) where Agabus prophesied concerning his impending imprisonment. Acts 21:10-11 "During our stay of several days, a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, arrived from Judea. When he visited us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, 'The Holy Spirit declares, 'So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Romans.' "

Paul's decision about Jerusalem:

Once again though warned concerning his future Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem and says, "Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! For I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but also to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 21:13)

SUMMARY OF PAULS' WORK ON THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

During this missionary trip Paul:

- Strengthened the churches in Galatia, Phrygia, Asia, Macedonia, Achaia (Greece), Syria
- Remained in Ephesus for three years from where all Asia heard the Word
- Encouraging the churches in Macedonia, with likely excursions into Illyricum
- Dealt with the problems at Corinth, with evident success
- Wrote Galatians, 1st and 2nd Corinthians and Romans
- Motivated Gentile Christians to assist their needy Jewish brethren in Jerusalem

PAUL IN PRISON (ACTS 21:1-28:31)**1. THE MISUNDERSTOOD MISSIONARY (Acts 21:1-22:29)**

Someone once said that to be great is to be misunderstood. Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates and Jesus and Luther and Copernicus and Galileo and Newton. Paul was misunderstood by friends and foes alike. Three of these misunderstandings and their consequences are recorded in these chapters:

PAUL'S FRIENDS MISUNDERSTAND HIS PLANS (ACTS 21:1-17)

In 20:22, we read how Paul was compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. The disciples however, "kept on saying to him" that he should not set foot in Jerusalem because of the apparent danger that he would be in. While Paul rested in Caesarea, the prophet Agabus came to give him a second warning message from the Lord. Some fifteen years before, Paul and Agabus had worked together in a famine relief program for Judea (Acts 11:27-30). It has been suggested that Paul was out of the will of God going to Jerusalem, however several Scriptures reveal that Paul was in God's will.

- Ananias foretold Paul's suffering in Acts 9:15-16.
- Paul knew the will of God in the Spirit (Acts 19:21-22 ; 20:22-24)
- Paul personally knew the will of God for him to go to Jerusalem, even though his witness would not be accepted (Acts 22:17-18; 23:11).

Thus God's will was being done! God's will was confirmed and it is human nature to misunderstand what God is saying. In going to Jerusalem, Paul took his life in his hands in order to try to solve the most pressing problem in the Church: the growing division between the "far-right" legalistic Jews and the believing Gentiles.

THE JERUSALEM CHURCH MISUNDERSTAND HIS MESSAGE (ACTS 21:18-26)

The Jerusalem Church said the same things they said about Jesus and Stephen: - that is that Paul was teaching them to forsake the laws and customs given by Moses and the fathers.

They were not worried about what Paul taught the Gentile believers, because the relationship of the Gentiles to the Law had been settled at the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15). In order to save the situation, these Law-Grace believers encourage Paul to go through the Mosaic Rituals as proof that these reports were not so. Though Paul obliged in these things, it is important to know that he did not believe they counted to God.

THE JEWS MISUNDERSTAND PAUL'S MINISTRY (ACTS 21:27-22:29)

Some Jews from Asia saw Paul in the temple and jumped to the conclusion that he had polluted their sacred building by bringing Trophimus, a Gentile from Ephesus past the barricade. Roman authority had granted the Jewish religious leaders to deal with anyone who broke this law and this included the right of execution. With the temple crowd in an uproar, Paul managed to explain three important aspects of his life and ministry:

- His early conduct (22:3-5): Paul discussed his Jewish credentials in order to gain the respect from his countrymen so that they would listen to him.
- His wonderful conversion (22:6-16): The people in Bible days expected miraculous things to happen and were no doubt fascinated by Paul's story.
- His special calling (22:17-29): God's Word to Paul in Acts 22:21 was that he was being sent to the Gentiles.

It seems in all Paul's witness that the blood of Stephen and the saints continually weighed upon his mind and heart, and that he was willing to lay down his life as a living sacrifice for his brethren whom he had slain. The Jews however cared not about the salvation of the Gentiles and such was their attitude and spiritual blindness and bigotry.

Paul's entire time in Jerusalem was one filled with serious misunderstandings, but he pressed on. It may have looked like the end of the road, but God had other plans for him. Paul would witness again and again and to people he could never have met had he not been a Roman prisoner.

2. PAUL THE PRISONER (Acts 22:30-23:35)

THE PERSONAL APPROACH:

A number of years before, the Lord had stood Himself before the Sanhedrin in trial only to be falsely accused and condemned. Years later, Stephen stood before the Sanhedrin to give his marvelous defense and testimony to the Council. He, too, was rejected and then stoned to death outside the city. Now, during this chapter, the Apostle Paul stood before the Sanhedrin to give witness to the Risen Christ. But history had repeated itself once too often and his witness was also rejected. .

"Conscience": which means "to know with, to know together", is one of Paul's favourite words and is used twice in Acts (23:1:, 24:16) and 21 times in his letters.

- Conscience is the inner "judge" or "witness" that approves when we do wrong (Romans 2: 15).
- Conscience does not set the standard, it only applies it.
- Conscience may be compared to a window that lets in the light. God's Law is the light; and the cleaner the window is, the more the light shines in.
- A good conscience, or pure conscience (1 Timothy 3:9), is one that lets in God's light so that we are properly convicted if we do wrong and encouraged if we do right.
- A defiled conscience (1 Corinthians 8:7) is one that has been sinned against so much that it is no longer dependable.

Paul could claim to have a good conscience, because he had lived up to the light that he had, and that is all that a good conscience requires.

Ananias was a corrupted High Priest, even as Annas and Caiaphas before him had been. He stole tithes from other priests and did all he could to increase his authority. He was known as a brutal man who cared more for Rome's favour than for Israel's welfare. When the Jews revolted against Rome in the year 66, Ananias had to flee for his life because of his known sympathies with Rome. The

Jewish guerrillas found him hiding in an aqueduct at Herod's palace and killed him.

In calling Ananias a "whited wall", Paul was simply saying that the man was a hypocrite (Matthew 23:27, Ezekiel 13:10-12). Jesus had called the Pharisees and Scribes "whited Sepulchres" since they were outwardly appearing beautiful and white, but inwardly full of inner corruptions and filth. This was a metaphor for a "hypocrite"

THE DOCTRINAL APPROACH:

Having failed in his personal approach, Paul used a doctrinal approach. Pharisees were the fundamentalists of the day, believing in the inspiration of the Scriptures, while Sadducees were the modernists of the day, denying the existence of angels and spirit and miracles.

The Lord's message to Paul was:

- One of courage. Jesus often spoke these words during His earthly ministry (Matthew 9:22; 14:27; John 16:33)
- One of commendation for the witness he had given.
- One of confidence since Paul was going to Rome. This had been Paul's desire for months (Acts 19:21; Romans 15:22-29).

Paul's life had been in danger from the very beginning of his ministry, when he had witnessed for Christ in Damascus (9:22-25). The Hellenistic Jews tried to kill him (9:29), driven out of Antioch and Psidia (13:50-51) and almost stoned in Iconium (14:5), stoned in Lystra (14:19-20) almost arrested in Corinth (13:12-17), plotted to be killed (20:19), and planned to be killed at sea (20:30). Perhaps it was the Asian Jews who conspired to kill Paul, but in the providence and mercy and will of God, Paul's nephew overheard the plot against Paul's life and was able to save Paul from this occurrence.

This was the last time Paul would see Jerusalem. He had borne witness to the Lord Jesus Christ "before the Gentiles" and "before the Children of Israel" and the religious rulers, and now he was going to Rome to bear witness 'before Kings!'

Charles Spurgeon once said "Let us trust God and be very courageous for the Gospel, and the Lord Himself will screen us from all harm." Paul was alone-but not alone!

3. PAUL THE WITNESS (Acts 24)

1 Samuel 16:7 "....for the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

Often the judgment of man diverges from the judgment of God in that man is often far from "judging righteous judgment" concerning persons and things which come under their notice. This false or erroneous judgment proceeds from two causes; the ignorance of man and the injustice and unfairness of man's mind. In this chapter are standing two men; one is Felix who was praised for his "very worthy deeds" and the other is the Apostle Paul who was judged as "a pestilent fellow."

TERTULLUS: FALSE ACCUSATION (24:1-9)

Tertullus began with the customary flattery, a normal part of the judicial routine. He brought three charges, a personal charge ("he is a pestilent fellow"), a political charge (sedition and leading an illegal religion), and a doctrinal charge (profaning the temple).

PAUL: FAITHFUL RESPONSE (24:10-21)

Paul's defense was in 3 parts:

- Introduction: This showed that he respected the office and the existing order which it represented but not the man in the office (Romans 13).
- Refuting the charges: by saying that he was not a plague or a pestilence, he was not a defiler of the temple, he was not a trouble maker among the Jews. He did this in order that they could not prove that he had violated the law.
- Affirmation: which consisted of Paul's confession (v 14-21)

FELIX: FOOLISH ATTITUDES (24:22-27)

If ever a man failed both personally and officially, that man was Felix, procurator of Judea. His Jewish wife Drusilla had prompted him to give Paul another hearing since it was her family that had been involved with "the Way" on several occasions. (Her great-grandfather had tried to kill Jesus in Bethlehem Matthew 3); her great-uncle killed John the Baptist and mocked Jesus (Luke 23:6-12); and her father had killed the Apostle James (Acts 12:1-2). In verse 25, Paul discusses 3 important things:

- Yesterday's sin (righteousness): In today's society we talk about mistakes, weaknesses, inherited tendencies, faults, and even errors, but we do not face up to the fact of sin. Yet a Holy God demands righteousness. This same Holy God provides His own righteousness to those who trust Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-26).
- Today's temptations (self-control): Man can control almost everything but himself. Here were Felix and Drusilla, prime illustrations of lack of self-control. She divorced her husband to become Felix's third wife, and though a Jewess, she lived as though God had never given the Ten Commandments at Sinai. Felix was an unscrupulous official who did not hesitate to lie, or even to murder, in order to get rid of his enemies and promote himself. Self-control was something neither of them knew much about.
- Tomorrow's Judgment: Roman leaders prided themselves in their ability to restrain their emotions under all circumstances, but a conviction from God gripped Felix's heart, and he could not hide it ("trembled"). However, Felix procrastinated awaiting a more convenient time because of his foolish attitude towards God's Word and towards his sins. When Felix was replaced, he left Paul a prisoner, but it was Felix who was really a prisoner.

4. PAUL THE DEFENDER (Acts 25-26)**PAUL'S TESTIMONY BEFORE GOVERNOR FESTUS (25:1-27)**

The new governor Porcius Festus was a better man than his predecessor and took up his duties with the intention of doing what was right. But, he soon discovered that Jewish politics was not easy to handle. Paul was a Jew, whose countrymen wanted to kill him, and he was a Roman whose government did not know what to do with him.

The new high priest Ishmael had been replaced by Jonathan, who had been killed by Felix and wanted to resurrect the plot of two years before and remove Paul once and for all. "Kill Paul" had been the cry of the unbelieving Jews ever since Paul had arrived in Jerusalem, (Acts 21:27-31; 22:22; 23:10-15; 25:3), so the plot for Paul to go to Jerusalem would have been a good occasion to kill him. But Festus, in his wisdom, did not co-operate with them.

Paul appealed to go to Caesar because:

- He knew that his destination was to go to Rome and the fastest way to get there was to appeal to Caesar,
- He knew that the Jews had not given up their hope of killing him,
- He realized that he could never have a fair trial in Jerusalem

Festus had managed not to offend the Jews but he had not determined the legal charges against his prisoner. He was hoping that upon visiting him King Agrippa and his sister Bernice would be able to assist him in this matter. This youthful king, the brother of Drusilla, the last of the Herodians to rule was the great-grandson of the Herod who killed the Bethlehem babies, and the son of the Herod who killed the Apostle James. The fact that his sister lived with him created a great deal of suspicion on the part of the Jewish people, for their Law clearly condemned incest (Leviticus 18:1-18; 20:11-21).

PAUL'S TESTIMONY BEFORE KING AGRIPPA (26:1-32)

This begins with Paul's third main record of his conversion to Christ, the first being in Acts 9, and the second in Acts 22 before the Sanhedrin and Jewish people. It can be summarized by five key statements that Paul uses in his defense:

- **"I lived a Pharisee" (26:4-11):** Paul had not only been a Pharisee but had also been a zealous persecutor of the Church. What he had in his early years looked on as "religious zeal" (Galatians 1:13-14) in his later years he considered to be "madness" (Acts 26:11).

- **"I saw a light" (26:12-13):** Paul considered himself an enlightened man; after all, he was a Jew (Rom 9:4-5), a scholar (Acts 22:3), and a Pharisee.
- **"I heard a Voice" (26:14-18):** Paul's companions had seen the light, but not the Lord; and they had heard a sound, but they could not understand the words.
- **"I was not disobedient" (26:19-21):** In spite of repeated discouragements and dangers, Paul had remained obedient to the call and the vision that the Lord had given him. Nothing moved him!
- **"I continue unto this day" (26:22-32):** The fact that Paul continued was proof of his conversion and evidence of the faithfulness of God. He was saved by God's grace and enabled to serve by God's grace.

Paul's final challenge is to King Agrippa who knew the historical facts concerning Paul's circumstances for they were not done in secret. Agrippa did believe in the Prophets and the Scriptures, but did nothing about it. As King Agrippa and Bernice, and all the important people were in that Assembly, all heard the Gospel of Christ, leaving them without an excuse. Paul was bound by chains, but was free! They were free, but spiritually bound by the chains of sin!!

5. PAUL ARRIVES IN ROME (Acts 27-28)

Paul had long wanted to preach the Gospel in Rome (Romans 1:14-16) and then go on to Spain (Romans 15:28), but he had not planned to travel as a prisoner. Through it all, Paul trusted God's promise that he would witness in Rome and the Lord saw him through. In Paul's journey to Rome, we see the great Apostle in four important roles:

PAUL THE COUNSELOR (27:1-20)

Paul is placed on a ship with other prisoners under Julius, a Centurion of Augustus' band and with him are Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, and Luke, the beloved physician. But at Fair Havens, Paul foretells the coming storm and shipwreck. He had already experienced 3 shipwrecks (2 Corinthians 11:25), so his advice and Godly counsel was from past experience. However, the men in charge gave little value to Paul's warning, an attitude they lived to regret. It was not long before Paul was proved right, for the "soft wind" became

a stormy wind (tempestuous which means typhoon). Because of the storm, they could not see the sun or the stars, rendering it impossible to determine their position.

PAUL THE ENCOURAGER (27:21-44)

Paul took over the situation when it was obvious that nobody else knew what to do, and so beginning as the prisoner, he ended as the captain and encouraged them by:

- **Sharing the Word of the Lord with them (22-36):** God gave Paul a right Word for the right time for the right situation which he shared with the others.
- **Warning them to do as he had instructed (27-32):** for the men to abandon ship was to take their lives in their own hands and threaten the lives of others.
- **Setting a good example before them (33-38):** Instead of vainly wishing for a change or selfishly trying to escape, Paul got ready for the demands that would come at daybreak.
- **Rescuing them (39-44):** the only thing the passengers could do was to jump into the water and make for the land at the risk of being killed by the soldiers. But it was the presence of Paul that saved them.

PAUL THE HELPER (28:1-10)

After all he had done for the passengers, Paul could have well requested a throne and insisted that everybody serve him!! Instead, he did his share of the work and helped gather fuel for the fire. No task is too small for the servant of God who has "the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:1-13).

PAUL THE PREACHER (28:11-31)

On the day appointed, Paul spent "from morning till evening" explaining the Scriptures and revealing Christ in the Law and the Prophets. He had "dialogued" this way with the Jews in one synagogue after another, and now he was sharing the Word with the leaders of many synagogues in Rome. As a result, some were

persuaded and some were not. But Paul had faithfully given his witness to the Jews in Rome, and now he would turn to the Gentiles.

Paul quoted the words of Isaiah to these men (Isaiah 6:9-10), words that described their tragic spiritual condition. But their unbelief did not put an end to Paul's ministry of the Gospel since it would now be proclaimed to the Gentiles. This is one of the major themes of Acts, how the Gospel moved from the Jews to the Gentiles and from Jerusalem to Rome.

In Matthew 16:16-18, Jesus said He would build His Church and the gates of Hell would not prevail against it. The Book of Acts is the revelation of Him building His Church!! A victorious Church, a conquering Church which was continuing the same ministry as Jesus, their ascended Head. When He returns again the second time, He will come for a Glorious Church without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing. It will be a Holy Church, brought about by the Ministry of the Holy Spirit.

TIME LINE OF PAUL'S LIFE

AD 5-10	Birth of Saul
AD 35	Martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7:57-60) Conversion of Saul (Acts 9:1-9)
AD 35-38	Arabian trip (Galatians 1:17) Two weeks visit in Jerusalem (Acts 9)
AD 38-43	Ministry in Syria and Cilicia (Acts 9)
AD 43	Arrival in Syrian Antioch (Acts 11)
AD 43/44	Famine visit (Acts 11)
AD 46-48	First missionary journey (Acts 13-14)
AD 48/49	Writing of Galatians from Syrian Antioch
AD 49/50	Jerusalem conference (Acts 15, Galatians 2)
AD 51/52	Second missionary journey (Acts 15-18) Writing of 1 Thessalonians from Corinth Writing of 2 Thessalonians from Corinth Appearance before Gallio Return to Jerusalem and Syrian Antioch (Acts 18)
AD 53-57	Third missionary journey (Acts 18-21) At Ephesus (Acts 19-20) Writing of 1 Corinthians at Ephesus Writing of 2 Corinthians at Macedonia Arrest at Jerusalem
AD 57-59	Caesarean imprisonment (Acts 23) Writing of Romans from Cenchrea or Corinth Shipwreck voyage to Rome (Acts 27-28)

AD 59-61/62	First Roman imprisonment (Acts 28) Writing of Ephesians from Rome Writing of Colossians from Rome Writing of Philemon from Rome Writing of Philippians from Rome
AD 62	Release from Roman imprisonment
AD 62-67	Fourth missionary journey (Tit 1:5) Writing of 1 Timothy and Titus from Philippi
AD 67/68	Second Roman imprisonment (2 Tim 4:6-8) Writing of 2 Timothy from Mamertine dungeon (2 Tim 4:6-8) Trial and execution

ASSIGNMENT QUESTION

Question 1

What is the power upon which the ministries and evangelical journeys were founded?

Question 2

The beliefs of the disciples in the Book of Acts and that which we preach and believe in our churches is the same. In an essay of not more than 200 words, discuss the beliefs of the disciples providing scriptures to justify your answer. provide evidence that there is a difference in the operation of the Holy Spirit in the Old and the New Testament. Your answer should include at least four examples of how the Holy Spirit operates in each dispensation and what causes there to be a difference in each dispensation.. All scriptures are to be written out.

Question 3

We often sing about the "Name of Jesus" but what is the significance of this name? Why was there power in this name throughout the Book of Acts? Provide a character analysis of Jesus in the Book of Acts. All scriptures are to be written out.

Question 4

"What man means for evil, God can turn it around and use it for His good." Do you agree with this statement? Using an incident in the Book of Acts, prove that this statement is true. How did God turn the situation around?

Question 5

Which four keys were linked together in operation, dependent upon one another in the Book of Acts?

Question 6

What three things contributed to the death of Ananias and Sapphira?

Question 7

Paul's life testimony is given three times in the Book of Acts. Provide the chapters in which these testimonies were given and in your own words write out the five key statements to his testimony.

Question 8

Acts 12:1-2 "Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church. ²And he killed James the brother of John with the sword."
Acts 24:25 "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

What do the above scriptures have in common? What do they teach us about sin, temptation and righteousness?

Question 9

Paul used the word, "conscience" twice in the Book of Acts. What is the meaning of this word? What does Paul say about this "conscience" in his other writings? All scripture is to be written out.

Question 10

Whilst Paul was in Corinth, what caused Paul to be encouraged?

Question 11

Throughout the Old and the New Testament, God has given a word of assurance to His children. What is the assurance that He gives? Provide three examples from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament. All scripture is to be written out.

Question 12

“The city of Athens was idolatrous.” Is this a true statement? Write out a scripture that supports your answer. How did Paul evangelize to this city?

Question 13

Who was responsible in making the final decision in Acts 15? Why was he responsible for this decision?

Question 14

When people do not come to make a decision for Christ, what will the result be? Provide an example from the Book of Acts to justify your answer.

Question 15

List three of the five men ministered in Antioch in Syria?

Question 16

What encouragement can we learn from the Book of Acts and the epistles of Peter when we are experiencing difficulties in our lives? Write out the portion of scripture.

Question 17

After studying the whole book of Acts, discuss the variety of ministry of the Holy Spirit in evangelism. Write out the event, where the ministry was performed and to whom the ministry was for. A minimum of six examples is to be given.

Question 18

After studying the book of Acts, write a 50 page Exegesis on the Power & Demonstration of the Holy Spirit in & through the life of Apostle Paul

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