Acts of the Apostles

GBNT- 500

Colorado Theological Seminary

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Acts surpasses nearly all the New Testament books in length. Luke purposed to provide an account of the origin and development of the church under the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit; that theme is carried forward in Acts 1:8 and throughout the book. It is an inseparable link between the gospels and the epistles. Therefore, without Acts the New Testament would be incomplete. Originally, Luke's two writings, his gospel account and Acts, likely circulated as one work. The narrative of Acts was the natural sequel to the story of Luke's gospel account. The publishing of John's record was the final gospel at the end of the first century. Luke's gospel, weaned from Acts, at the same time coupled with the other three gospels, became corporately, "The Gospels". During the same time, Paul's writings were collected and identified by one title, "The Apostle". Thus, seventeen New Testament books were brought together and reduced to two units. Moreover, these two units found their common link in Acts. Therefore, Acts is the continuation of the gospels account and establishes the basis for the epistles.

Portraying the developing church, Luke follows a path that leads him to countries north and west of Jerusalem. Acts narrates the unhindered movement of the gospel from Jerusalem, through Judea, through Samaria and ultimately through the Roman Empire. He relates what occurred in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and Rome, omitting what happened elsewhere. Luke bypasses many names of the countries that he lists as nations (2:9-11). These countrymen came to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Pentecost, heard the gospel proclaimed, and returned to their homelands. Luke disregards what happened in countries to the south and east of Israel.

Luke the master writer was also a professional researcher. He interviewed many witnesses, for their firsthand accounts of the life of Jesus to pen the Gospel of Luke. Research of written sources was also required. Luke had personally experienced much of Acts history or learned about it from his companion Paul. It must be noted, however, that Acts contains predominantly a record of the events of Peter and Paul. Since these two apostles were the leading force in founding and organizing the Christian church, it obvious that a special and permanent record, guided by the Holy Spirit, should be made of their labors.

Luke’s account of the movement of Christianity can also be seen as an apologetic for Christianity. Christianity had been criticized by both Romans and Jews. The apologetic focus seems to look in these two directions, to meet the indictment of the Jews against Christianity and then present Christianity in a sympathetic light to the Roman world. Luke shows that Christianity follows in the historic pattern and upon the foundation of Judaism. In this sense the book can also be seen as a justification toward the Jews who accused Christianity as a subversive movement.

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Luke's major emphasis concerning Christ is two-fold in Acts with a third minor emphasis: he stresses His crucifixion and death, and also His resurrection and mentions His return.

The Crucifixion and death of Christ—many of the statements regarding the death of Christ reflect the apostles' indictment of the Jews in the crucifixion of Christ. Christ was nailed to a cross by godless men (Acts 2:23); Christ was shamefully put to death—by crucifixion (Acts 3:15; 5:30; 10:39; cf. 13:28-29). The Righteous One was murdered (Acts 7:52).

The Resurrection of Christ—several themes regarding the resurrection are emphasized: (1) Christ's resurrection was predicted in Psalm 16:8-11 and fulfilled in Psalm 2:7 (Acts 2:22-32; 13:33-37); (2) Christ's resurrection was proclaimed with great power (Acts 4:2, 10, 33); (3) God not only raised Christ but also exalted Him to a position of authority (Acts 5:31); (4) Christ's resurrection was attended by witnesses (Acts 10:40-41); (5) His resurrection is a harbinger of future judgment (Acts 17:31); (6) Christ's resurrection was to be proclaimed to Jews and Gentiles in fulfillment of prophecy (Acts 26:23).

The Return of Christ—at the ascension of Christ the angels promised the gazing disciples that Christ would return "in just the same way" as they had seen Him go into heaven—visible, physical, and personal (Acts 1:9-11). Peter announced the millennial age when he spoke of the "period of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21).

It is significant that the death and particularly the resurrection were central in the preaching of the New Testament church as recorded in Acts.

A. Sources for Writing Acts

1. Selectivity

From all available, material Luke selects only certain incidents. When describing them, he is deliberately brief. For instance, his report on the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11) raises many questions because of its brevity. He relates that Peter, who is the leader of the Jerusalem church, simply leaves for another place (12:17). Luke states that at the conclusion of Paul's second missionary journey, Paul "went up and greeted the church" (18:22), implying that this was at Jerusalem.

Historians in the ancient world set strict limits to the narrative material, which came by way of oral tradition or other sources. Although, antiquity is unanimous in attributing this book to Luke as its author, it is mentioned as his work without a dissenting voice.

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2. Tradition

Luke had to be brief in view of the wealth of material and length of the period of time he covered. Tradition places Jesus' ascension (described in 1:9-11) about 30 A.D.; Paul's release from prison around 60 - 63 A.D. These dates are only approximate; therefore, Luke covers about thirty years. Luke tells us that Jesus began his public ministry when He was thirty years old. This ministry lasted three and one half years. The period that the Gospel of Luke covers is about thirty years. The total number of years for both Luke and Acts is about sixty years.

This is the second volume of Luke, written to continue the story of the ministry. However, it was separated during the second century. However, the introduction of Luke also applies to Acts. Luke writes that his information was handed down to him by eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word, Luke 1:2. As he collected his material from the apostles and other eyewitnesses for the gospel, he obtained facts for Acts from Peter, Paul, James, Silas, and Timothy. The use of the pronouns we and us in Acts, reveals that Luke was present as an eyewitness. He indicates that he was in Jerusalem when Paul was arrested and that he met James and the elders (21:17-18).

3. Eyewitnesses

Luke begins the book of Acts with the first person singular pronoun "I" (1:1) and in the second half he uses the first person plural "we." Since his style of writing is the same throughout Acts, we can draw the conclusion that the personal pronouns refer to the author of this book.

Luke's gospel can be compared with the other gospels, but Acts as a historical account is unique. This book, written as a historical and teaching description, is the only history book of the early church in the Bible.

The early readers of Acts were acquainted with Paul and his fellow worker, Luke (Col. 4:14; II Tim. 4:11; Phil. 24), and were able to check the accuracy of this writing. Members of the churches at Ephesus and Colosse would know the names and places Luke mentions in Paul's journeys. They would have rejected the book as fraudulent, if Luke had presented fiction.

Therefore, we reason that Luke depended on oral tradition, which he received from persons having personal knowledge of the events that had occurred.

The three movements in Acts follow its key verse, Acts 1:8:

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a. Witnesses in Jerusalem (1:1 - 8:4)

After appearing to His disciples for 40 days (1:3), the Lord tells them to wait in Jerusalem for the fulfillment of His promise concerning the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was careful to have the fact of his resurrection certified to his disciples beyond the possibility of doubt. The post-resurrection appearances confirm the certainty of the Resurrection. Strictly speaking, one meeting was enough. Nevertheless, proofs were multiplied, as his visits were repeated. They grew familiar with his look and aspect; heard him talk; and after all this, they could never suppose that a vision had been imposed upon them. The positive aspect with which they always spoke on this subject was an important element in their preaching and it was their Lord's purpose to build them up in a confidence, which should never be shaken. Though the "forty days", a work of education, was going on the fruits of which were seen in the next forty years.

Note that there are certain characteristics of Christ's risen appearances to his disciples. These appearances were intermittent, and not continuous, they were here or there. They were to the disciples journeying to Emmaus, to the assembled 12, to the five hundred brethren at one, and at other times. We read in the gospels of Old Testament saints' appearances, such as Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration. They are all like those of our Lord after His resurrection. They are sudden, independent of time, space, or material barriers, and yet are visible and tangible though glorified.

Jesus subject matter was pointed- the things of the kingdom of God. The apostles evidently shared the national aspirations of the Jews at that time. We can scarcely realize or understand the force and naturalness of this question. This eager expectation dominated every other feeling in the Jewish mind of that period. It was burned into the very secrets of their existence by the tyranny of the Roman rule. They were thinking simply of such a kingdom as the book of Enoch foretold. This very point seems to us one of the special and most striking evidences for the inspiration and supernatural direction of the writers of the New Testament. Their natural, purely human, and national conception of the kingdom of God was one thing; their final, their divinely taught and inspired conception of that kingdom is quite another thing. Some persons maintain that Christianity in its doctrines, organization, and discipline was but the outcome of natural forces working in the world at that epoch. But take this doctrine alone, "My kingdom is not of this world"

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announced by Christ before Pilate, and impressed upon the apostles by revelation after revelation, and experience after experience, which they only very gradually assimilated and understood. Where did it come from? How was it the outcome of natural forces? The whole tendency of Jewish thought was in the opposite direction. Nationalism of the most narrow, particular, and limited kind was the predominant idea, especially among those Galilean provincials who furnished the vast majority of the earliest disciples of Jesus Christ. How could men like them have developed the idea of the universal Church, boundless as the earth itself, limited by no hereditary or fleshly bonds, and trammeled by no circumstances of race, climate, or kindred? The magnificence of the idea, the grandeur of the conception, is the truest and sufficient evidence of the divinity of its origin. If this higher knowledge, this nobler conception, this spiritualized ideal, came not from God, where did it come? We do not think we can press this point of the catholicity and universality of the Christian idea and the Christian society too far. We cannot possibly make too much of it. There were undoubtedly Christian elements or elements where Christian ideas were developed, prevalent in the current Judaism of the day. Nevertheless, it was not among these, or such as these, that the catholic ideas of the gospel took their rise.

b. Holy Spirit Baptism

Ten days after His ascension, this promise is significantly fulfilled as the disciples are suddenly empowered and filled with the Holy Spirit.

This was exactly what Jesus had told them, "Wait for the promise of the Father". The great promise of the Father was that He would send His Spirit into the hearts of Men. The promise was worth waiting for. The fulfillment of the promise always brings power with it, and will make witnesses for Christ of all those who receive it. When the promise is to be claimed, let no ambitious desires turn a person away from receiving its baptism. The Father, in His own good time, will fulfill His declarations the universal sway of His Kingdom.

At first sight, this promise seems to be Christ's response to a universal craving. Nothing so awakens a man's ambition as power. It is sweeter to him than bread to the hungry, or home to the wanderer, or sunrise to the benighted. Of all the divine attributes, he most intensely and incessantly covets this one. The old classic fable of Prometheus; who made a figure and shaped it after the beauty of a man then animated it with fire; which he had dared to

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steal from heaven, is only a thinly veiled record of man's fierce ambition to create. Powerless to create he seeks control. He summoned almost every known element and force in nature to his service, and compelled them to do for him what he cannot do for himself. He has blasted the rock unshaken by the ages, and hurled its ponderous masses into the air as easily as a child throws up its tennis ball. He has tunneled the mountain and bridged the river to make way for his flying locomotive. He has engirdled the earth with a belt of wire, and through it swifter than thought flashed his messages from pole to pole. From the masterful schoolboy to the statesman on the topmost ladder, and the monarch of a hundred isles, this passion for power is all pervading. The very apostles, to whom these words were addressed, were in this, and in other respects, "men of like passions with ourselves". Observe, this love of power may be as legitimate as it is natural. It s quality is determined by its motive. Still power may be beneficent as well as baneful. Now, mark the power with which Christ promises to endow his disciples.

It is not physical power. Not like that possessed by Samson when he carried upon his back the gates of Gaza, or with the jawbone of the ass slew the Philistines heaps upon heaps. It had nothing at all to do with bone, muscle, or sinew. Men have sometimes forgotten this. They once thought that they could resist the spread of the gospel by physical means. The very efforts, which men have employed to suppress the truth, have been made the means of exalting it to supremacy. Just as the blast which rocks the giant oak makes it strike its roots deeper and wider in the earth; or just as the tempest which beats down the tree carries its winged seeds over land and sea to distant continents, there to take root and become trees themselves, so persecution has this twofold tendency it makes the persecuted cling closer than ever to the truth for which they are assailed, and prompts them to spread it more widely abroad than ever. On the other hand, brute force can no more help the gospel than hinder it. Persecution never made saints yet. If you want to infuse new life into a tree you do not smite it with an axe, but expose it to the genial breath of spring. The weapons of their warfare were not to be carnal.

It is not the power of logic. The disciples were to convert souls, and mere argument cannot do this. You have all seen sheet lightning; they flash, they dazzle, but they do not kill. And arguments, after all, are only sheet lightning, dazzling, enlightening, but seldom or never killing in the sense in which Paul says he was killed.

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It is not the power of eloquence. Certainly, eloquence is not to be despised. Yes, there is tremendous power in words. They breathe, they burn, they fly about the world charged with electric fire and force; but there is one thing they cannot do, they cannot regenerate a soul. You may electrify a corpse, by bringing it into contact with a battery you may even make it imitate the living; but it is after all only the semblance, not the reality of life.

It was spiritual power, the power of the Holy Ghost. "We can do all things through Christ which strengthens us." In other words, it was the power of a living union with a living God. Need we say that this promise of Christ is as much ours as it was the apostles? It has been fulfilled, but no exhausted. There is an essential difference between the two. A postage stamp once used can be used no longer; but it is not so with a bank note. The note may be old and torn, stained and soiled; it may have been cut in halves and pasted together again. It does not matter; whoever holds it can present it and demand its equivalent. So it is with a divine promise. It may pass from lip to lip, and from age to age, and be fulfilled a thousand times; still you may present it and plead it before God in the assurance of success." The light of the sun may fail, the waters of the ocean may be dried up, but the riches of Christ's fullness are the same yesterday, today, and forever. We need this power as much as the apostles did. Nothing else can supply its place. It is to the church what steam or diesel fuel or rocket fuel is to the machinery. Away from Christ, the church is like an army without ammunition and cut off from its base of operations. Near to Him, she will breathe the air, walk in the light, and wield the might of heaven. She shall receive power - power to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil.

c. Disciple transformation

The disciples are transformed and filled with courage to proclaim the brand new message of the resurrected Savior. Peter's powerful sermon, like all the sermons in Acts, is built upon the resurrection, and 3,000 persons responded with saving faith. After dramatically healing a man who was lame from birth, Peter delivers a second crucial message to the people of Israel resulting in thousands of additional responses. The religious leaders arrested the apostles, and this gives Peter an opportunity to preach a special sermon to them.

"…You shall be witnesses unto me." Jesus did not cut short the apostles' speculations to stop there. He gathered up the broken ends of their energy and fastened them to the immediate work. If

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the planets were to stand still, they would be drawn into the central fire and consumed. It is necessary to their well-being that they should be flung with all their force on a path of activity. So, unless Christians are thrown out into a course of vigorous action, they will be drawn into an orbit so narrow that action will be no longer possible. Although the apostles were saved, they were not fit to work any deliverance in the earth by their own wisdom or strength. Their demand for fire might have consumed the adversaries, but it could not have converted them. Wanting the Spirit even they were inclined to persecute, and for the same reason their self-styled successors have persecuted in all subsequent times. The Spirit is like the air. We could not live without air - the sun would not warm us but for it. The sun's heat sustains life; but the atmosphere communicates that heat. The earth, again, is dependent for its supply of water on the air, which obtains it from the ocean and pours it on the land. So the disciples in every age obtain grace from the Lord through the ministry of the Spirit.

d. Problems

The enthusiasm and joy of the infant church is marred by internal and external problems. Ananias and Sapphira receive the ultimate form of discipline because of their treachery, and the apostles are imprisoned and persecuted because of their witnesses. Seven men, including Stephen and Philip, are selected to assist the apostles. Stephen is brought before the Sanhedrin. In his defense, Stephen surveys the scriptures to prove that the man they condemned and killed was the Messiah. The members of the Sanhedrin react to Stephen's words by dragging him out of the city and making him the first Christian martyr.

e. Witnesses in Judea and Samaria (8:5 - 12:25)

Philip goes to the province of Samaria and successfully proclaims the new message to a people hated by the Jews. Peter and John confirm his work and exercise their apostolic authority by imparting the Holy Spirit to these new members of the body of Christ. God sovereignly transforms Saul the persecutor into Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles, but He uses Peter to introduce the gospel to the Gentiles. In a special vision Peter realizes that Christ has broken down the barrier between Jew and Gentile. After Cornelius and other Gentiles come to Christ through his preaching, Peter convinces the Jewish believers in Jerusalem that "the Gentiles had also received the Word of God" (11:1). Even while experiencing more and more persecution, the church continues to increase, spreading throughout the Roman Empire.

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f. Witness to the end of the earth (13 - 28)

Beginning with Acts 13, Luke switches the focus of Acts from Peter to Paul. Antioch in Syria gradually replaces Jerusalem as the headquarters of the church, and all three of Paul's missionary journeys originate from that city. Their first journey, about A.D. 48-49, concentrates on the Galatian cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. After this journey, a council is held among the apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem to determine that the Gentile converts need not submit to the law of Moses. The second missionary journey, about A.D. 50-52, brings Paul once again to the Galatian churches, and then for the first time on to Macedonia and Greece. Paul spends much of his time in the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth, and later returns to Jerusalem and Antioch. In his third missionary journey, about A.D. 53-57, Paul spends almost three years in the Asian city of Ephesus before visiting Macedonia and Greece for the second time. Although he is warned not to go to Jerusalem, Paul cannot be dissuaded.

It was not long before Paul is falsely accused of bringing Gentiles into the temple, only the Roman intervention prevents his being killed by the mob. Paul's defense before the people and before the Sanhedrin evokes violent reactions. When the commander learns of a conspiracy to assassinate Paul, he sends his prisoner to Felix, the governor in Caesarea. During his two-year imprisonment there, about A.D. 57-59, Paul defends the Christian faith before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. His appeal to Caesar requires a long voyage to Rome, where he is placed under house arrest until his trial.

B. Speeches

Acts contains direct speech; with about one half of the entire book is dialogue. There are at least twenty-six speeches, both short and long. They are made by apostles, Christian leaders, and non-Christians, Jews and Gentiles.

Luke presents eight addresses by Peter, a lengthy sermon by Stephen before the Sanhedrin (7:2-53), a brief explanation by Cornelius (10:30-33), James addressing the Jerusalem council (15:13-21), James giving advice to Paul and the elders in Jerusalem (21:20-25) and nine sermons and speeches by Paul. The remaining discourses by Gamaliel, the Pharisees, Demetrius, the silversmith, a city clerk in Ephesus, Tertullus, a lawyer, and Festus, the governor. Luke also relates the text of two letters: one from the Jerusalem Council to the Gentile churches and the other by Claudius Lysias to Governor Felix.

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Speeches are fascinating because when people speak we learn something about their personalities. This sets the book of Acts apart from all other canonical books. Luke portrays people, as they are when we listen or read their speech; we come to know them, personally.

Luke heard Paul in Philippi, Ephesus, Jerusalem, and defending himself before Festus and Agrippa. He gathered information on the addresses of Peter from him. Some of these addresses include; Peter in the upper room; near Solomon's Colonnade; before the Sanhedrin; and at the Jerusalem Council. Perhaps Paul and other witnesses provided information on Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin.

C. History

In his gospel, Luke provides a few time references to demonstrate that his gospel message is founded on historical fact. Read Luke 1:5, 2:1, and 3:1.

The aim of the work is to treat its subject as a department of history and of literature. Christianity was not merely a religion, but also, a system of life and action; and its introduction by Paul amid the society of the Roman Empire produced changes of momentous consequence, which the historian must study. What does the student of Roman history find in the subject of our investigation? How would an observant, educated, and unprejudiced citizen of the Roman Empire have regarded that new social force, that new philosophical system, if he had studied it with the eyes and the temper of a nineteenth-century investigator?

The first and the foremost quality of history is truth. What is said must be trustworthy. Now historical truth implies not merely truth in each detail, but also truth in the general effect, and that kind of truth cannot be attained without selection, grouping, and generally first hand knowledge. The power of accurate description implies in itself a power of reconstructing the past, which involves the most delicate selection and grouping of details according to their truth and reality.

As a preliminary the student of history must make up his mind about the trustworthiness of the authorities. Luke's history lacks exact dates. Nevertheless, historical precision is more pronounced implicitly in Acts than in the Gospel of Luke. We are able to attain time references in Acts. The book itself appears to be written chronologically with a few exceptions. It is, therefore, unnecessary to touch on the authenticity of the Epistles; but the question as to the date, the composition, and the author of the Acts must be discussed. If the main position of this book is admitted, it will furnish a secure basis for the Epistles to rest on.

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D. Luke, the Writer

1. Writer

Most authorities agree that Luke was the writer of Acts. Ancient witnesses, dating as early as A.D. 170, are practically unanimous about this point. The strongest internal evidence for Luke as the author is the fact that Acts and the third gospel are both addressed to Theophilus, and Acts refers to a "first account," which obviously was the gospel.

We have seen that Luke represents himself as having been an eyewitness of some or most of the incidents which he describes. In the parts where he had no personal knowledge his trustworthiness depends on his authority in each case. The “document” was probably Luke’s own written notes (supplemented by memory, and the education of further experience and reading and research) of his time with the apostle Paul. His diary, where he was an eyewitness, and his notes of conversations with Paul, and doubtless others were worked into the book of Acts suitably to the carefully arranged plan on which it is constructed, of which we believe was guided by the Holy Spirit. One finds traces of deep and strong emotion which must be understood as Paul’s own feeling or even passion: the technical term for making a missionary progress through a district.

Paul notes in Colossians 4:14 that Luke was a physician by profession. From an analysis of Luke's vocabulary in both the Gospel of Luke and Acts, we learn that the writer could have been a medical doctor, who in his writings reflects his profession. Both Eusebius and Jerome testify that Luke hailed from Antioch. In Acts, the writer seems to have a tendency for mentioning Antioch.

Out of the fifteen times that Antioch in Syria is mentioned in the New Testament, fourteen instances occur in Acts. For Luke, Antioch is important because here the church had the vision to send forth missionaries to the Greco-Roman world. If he resided in Antioch, Luke would have met Barnabas (11:22), Paul (11:26), and Peter (Gal. 2:11). And in this city he undoubtedly heard the gospel message, was converted, and became a disciple of the apostles.

Luke's gospel and Acts are closely related because of the dedication of these two books to Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). Incidentally, the address "most excellent Theophilus" seems to imply that Theophilus belonged to a high-ranking social class (compare 23:26; 24:3; 26:25). Also, the introductory verse of Acts (1:1) reveals that it is the second volume Luke has written, and a continuation of the first volume (the gospel).

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The name Luke, however, is absent from both his gospel and Acts. The gospel became known as "the Gospel according to Luke," yet the major manuscripts omit the name of Luke in the title of Acts. This is no obstacle if we consider that none of the evangelists mentions his own name in the gospel account he wrote.

Luke became a follower of Paul, as we are able to ascertain from the "we" passages in the second part of Acts (16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1 - 28:16). He was with Paul on the second missionary journey, accompanied him from Macedonia to Jerusalem at the conclusion of the third missionary journey, apparently stayed in Judea and Caesarea while Paul was in prison, and finally traveled with Paul to Rome. In his epistles, Paul himself testifies to the fact that Luke was his companion and fellow worker (Col. 4:14; II Tim.4:11; Phil. 24)

2. Date

Luke probably wrote Acts while in Rome, toward the end of Paul's two-year imprisonment there, or about A.D. 61. Some scholars believe the period to be A.D. 61-63. He could not have completed his writing earlier than either chosen period, since Acts records Paul's imprisonment (28:30), which is dated around A.D. 59-61 or A.D. 61-63. The Holy Spirit's design was not to include any more of Paul's life or of the church's experience in this book, and so He inspired Luke to write at that time.

The following statements present the idea that the Gospel of Luke was written at an earlier date.

a. The Jewish war of A.D. 66-70, climaxing in the holocaust of the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), is not even alluded to.

b. Nero's anti-Christian policy, following the great fire of Rome (A.D. 64), does not find a place in Acts.

c. Though Paul was in prison at the close of Acts, there is no suggestion in the narrative that his death was imminent. Very likely he was soon released. After traveling for a few years in evangelistic work, even as far as Spain, Paul probably was arrested again and placed in the execution cell at Rome. Here he wrote II Timothy, his "dying letter," and then finally was executed shortly before Nero's suicide.

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3. Place

There is no indication where Luke composed Acts. Had he written parts of it already before he accompanied Paul on his voyage to Rome? Was he able to keep his documents safe during the shipwreck at Malta? Did he complete the book in Rome during the two years of Paul's house arrest? The questions can be multiplied. However, a definite answer cannot be found. Some scholars point to Achaia as a possible place of composition, others to Rome.

4. Style and Language

Luke is an able writer who, compared with other Greek authors deserves respect and admiration for composing a book that in style, word, choice, grammar, and vocabulary takes a place between writers of Koine Greek and those of the classical period. In addition to excellent Greek (including the numerous instances of grammatical use and construction), Luke records many Aramaic phrases/names in his account. Some of these are names of places and individuals. For example: Akeldama (1:19), Barsabbas (1:23), Tabitha (9:26,40), and Bar-Jesus (13:6).

Perhaps because Luke was recording accounts that were reported to him orally, he often adjusted his style to write popular instead of literary Greek. As a result, in many places the use or construction of words or phrases in a sentence or clause lacks clarity and precision. Following are two examples:

"Then the captain with his officers brought them not with force, for they feared the people that they not be stoned" (5:26). The meaning of the last clause is "for they feared that the people would stone them."

"For many of those who had unclean spirits crying with a loud voice went out, and many who had been paralyzed and [many who] were lame were healed" (8:7). The meaning of the first part of the sentence is, "Evil spirits shrieking loudly were coming out of many people."

These examples are only a couple from countless others throughout the entire book. In some sentences Luke neglects to give the subject of the sentence, so that its meaning is obscure. For instance, "And there after his father died, he made him move to this land in which you now dwell. And he did not give him an inheritance" (7:4-5). The subject of these two sentences is God, which the translator must supply to clarify the meaning.

We can give no explanation as to why Luke, in some instances, presents grammar that is poor and defective. He proves that he is capable of writing excellent Greek. The grammatical irregularities seem to reflect the sources

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Luke consulted for the composition of his book. Yet these peculiarities enhance, not diminish, the stature of Acts. The book itself is a piece of literary art.

5. Title

The title of Acts, probably added in the second century, is problematic in many respects. Some Bible translations feature the designation "Acts of the Apostles", and have the support of early church fathers. But apart from listing the twelve apostles in chapter one, Luke discusses only the ministry of Peter and Paul. To be sure, John accompanies Peter to the temple in the afternoon for prayer, (3:1) and to Samaria (8:14). Obviously, this descriptive title of the book is too broad. The suggestion to resort to the name of "Acts of Peter and Paul" has not met any favorable response because in this book, Luke also narrates the ministry of Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy.

Next a proposal to label the book "The Acts of the Holy Spirit" failed in its bid to gain support. Notwithstanding Luke's emphasis on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem (2:1-4), Samaria (8;17), Caesarea (10:44-46), and Ephesus (19:6), the content of the book is much broader than the proposed title conveys. Moreover, in the first verse of Acts, Luke implies that he is writing a continuation of his gospel. He indicates that his first volume is a book of "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach" (1:1). By implication he says that in Acts Jesus continues his work. The emphasis, then, falls not so much on the Holy Spirit but rather on what Jesus is doing in developing the church in Jerusalem, Samaria, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy.

Still another choice is to name the book "Acts". The brevity of this title is attractive. Although it avoids the objections raised against the other names, it is nevertheless nondescript and colorless. Ancient writers commonly used the expression "acts" to describe the deeds of illustrious heroes, including Cyrus and Alexander the Great. The title for Acts, accordingly, whether long or short, remains problematic.

The sequence of Luke-Acts from the hand of Luke can be compared with the sequence of Paul's two letters to the Corinthians. The difference, however, is that Christians in the first century placed Luke's "first book" with the gospels and considered Acts a history of the church. Thus they placed Acts in the category of historical books. In short, Acts relates the history of the early church.

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E. Outline of Acts

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B. Jesus' Last Day on Earth, 1:6-11

C. Judas' Fate and Replacement: Choosing Church Leaders, 1:12-26

II. THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH, 2:1-7:60

A. The Day of Pentecost and The Coming of the Holy Spirit: The Church is Born, 2:1-13

B. The First Sermon (Part I): The Gospel Message, 2:14-24

C. The First Sermon (Part II): Proofs of the Resurrection, 2:25-36

D. The First Sermon (Part III): Imperatives of Salvation, 2:37-40

E. The First Church: Worthy Traits, 2:41-47

F. The First Recorded Miracle: Lessons for Witnessing, 3:1-11

G. The Second Sermon: Points for Preaching, 3:12-26

H. The First Persecution of the Church: Lessons for Christian Service, 4:1-22

I. The Church Triumphant in Persecution: Victory Over Abuse, 4:23-31

J. The Believers of the First Church: Essentials for Life Together, 4:32-37

K. The First Sin and Trouble in the Church: Keeping Back, 5:1-11

L. The Second Persecution of the Church (Part I): A Picture of Abuse, 5:12-25

M. The Second Persecution of the Church (Part II): Reasons for Remaining Loyal, 5:26-42

N. The First Administrative Problem: The First Deacons, 6:1-7

O. The First Martyr, Stephen (Scene I): A Model Man, 6:8-15

P. The First Martyr, Stephen (Scene II): The Tragic History of Israel, 7:1-53

Q. The First Martyr, Stephen (Scene III): A Study of Martyrdom, 7:54-60

III. THE CHURCH SCATTERED: MISSIONARY BEGINNINGS IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA, 8:1-9:31

A. The Church's Lay Leaders Scattered: How God Uses Persecution, 8:1-4

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B. The Great Revival in Samaria: A Study on Revival, 8:5-25

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D. The Confrontation Between Saul and the Lord: A Life-changing Conversion, 9:1-9

E. The Preparation of Saul: The Needs of a New Convert, 9:10-18

F. The Beginning of Paul's Witness: A Believer's Life and Testimony, 9:19-22

G. The Foretaste of Paul's Great Suffering: Faithful Despite Terrible Trial, 9:23-30

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IV. THE CHURCH SCATTERED: THE FIRST GREAT MISSION TO THE GENTILES—BY PETER, 9:32-11:18

A. A Broader Ministry—In Lydda: Making Men Whole, 9:32-35

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C. A World-Wide Ministry—In Caesarea (Part I): Breaking Down Prejudice, 10:1-33

D. A World-Wide Ministry—In Caesarea (Part II): Preaching Peace, 10:34-43

E. A World-Wide Ministry—In Caesarea (Part III): Receiving the Holy Spirit, 10:44-48

F. A World-Wide Ministry—In Caesarea (Part IV): Gaining a World-Wide Vision, 11:1-18

V. THE CHURCH SCATTERED: GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE CHURCH, 11:19-12:25

A. The First Great Gentile Church: God's Pattern for All Churches, 11:19-30

B. The Jerusalem Church is Miraculously Protected: God's Pattern for Deliverance from Persecution, 12:1-25

VI. THE FIRST GREAT MISSION OF PAUL TO THE GENTILES: TO CYPRUS AND GALATIA, 13:1-14:28

A. The First Missionaries, Barnabas and Paul: The Most Challenging Call Ever Given, 13:1-3

B. Cyprus, The Island: The Beginning of Missions and Evangelism, 13:4-13

C. Antioch of Pisidia, the Main City of South Galatia (Part I): The Preaching of Paul, 13:14-41

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E. Iconium, the Ancient City: God's Pattern for Preaching and Witnessing, 14:1-7

F. Lystra, the Frontier Town: Preaching to a Heathen and Superstitious People, 14:8-20

G. Derbe and the Return Journey: How Churches are Made Strong, 14:21-28

VII. THE GREAT JERUSALEM COUNCIL: PAUL'S MISSION CALLED INTO QUESTION, 15:1-35

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B. The Jerusalem Council Meets: The Great Declaration on Salvation, 15:6-22

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C. Asia, the Forbidden Area, and Europe, the Chosen Area: The Call to World Evangelism—Changing the Cradle of Society, 16:6-11

D. Philippi, a Chief City and Luke's Home (Part I): Europe's First Convert, 16:12-15

E. Philippi (Part II): The Power of Sin and Money vs. the Power of Jesus' Name, 16:16-24

F. Philippi (Part III): A Jailer and Salvation, 16:25-40

G. Thessalonica, a Most Important City: The Message that Turned the World Upside Down, 17:1-9

H. Berea, the Receptive City: A Noble People, 17:10-15

I. Athens, the Great Intellectual and Philosophical City (Part I): The Preacher's Urgency and Various Audiences—Who It Is That Needs the Gospel, 17:16-21

J. Athens (Part II): Preaching to a Heathen People, 17:22-34

K. Corinth, the Bridge of Greece: An Indisputable Christian, 18:1-17

L. Jerusalem and Antioch, the Journey Back: The Heroic Christian, 18:18-22

IX. THE THIRD GREAT MISSION OF PAUL TO THE GENTILES: TO ASIA MINOR AND EUROPE, 18:23-21:16

A. Ephesus, the Market and Religious Center of Asia Minor (Part I): Apollos—Preparing the Way, 18:23-28

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B. Ephesus (Part II): Paul in Ephesus—Lessons on Salvation and Revival, 19:1-20

C. Ephesus (Part III): The Way of the Lord Disturbs People, 19:21-41

D. Europe and Asia Minor, The Great Cities Revisited: The Faithful Minister, 20:1-12

E. Miletus, a Notable City in Ancient Myth (Part I): The Testimony of a Faithful Minister, 20:13-27

F. Miletus (Part II): The Last Words to Church Leaders, 20:28-38

G. Jerusalem, the Final Miles: Warned, Yet Compelled to Preach, 21:1-16

X. THE BITTER EXPERIENCE IN JERUSALEM, 21:17-23:11

A. Paul's Reluctant Decision: A Picture of Compromise, 21:17-40

B. Paul's Testimony Before a Crazed Mob: A Message for Upset People, 22:1-21

C. Paul's Testimony Before the Court, the Great Sanhedrin (Trial 1): God's Guidance and Presence Through Terrible Strain, 22:22-23:11

XI. THE FINAL JOURNEY AND WITNESS OF PAUL: TO ROME AS A PRISONER, 23:12-28:31

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B. Paul and Felix, the Roman Governor—Trial Two (Part I): What Real Worship Is, 24:1-21

C. Paul and Felix (Part II): The Great Tragedy—A Man Who Knows Better, 24:22-27

D. Paul and Festus, the New Roman Governor, and King Agrippa—Trial Three (Part I): A Contrast of Attitudes, 25:1-27

E. Paul and Festus and King Agrippa—Trial Four (Part II): A Life-changing Conversion, 26:1-18

F. Paul and Festus and King Agrippa (Part III): A Much Needed Testimony and Message, 26:19-32

G. Paul Sails for Rome: Great Trust and God's Care, 27:1-44

H. Paul—Shipwrecked and Stranded on an Island: God's Protection Through Trial After Trial, 28:1-15

I. Paul in Rome: A Strategy for Evangelism in the Great City, 28:16-31

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II. KEYS TO ACTS

From a theological standpoint, Acts was written to trace the development of the body of Christ over the one-generation transition from a primarily Jewish membership to a predominantly Gentile membership. This apologetic work presents Christianity distinct from Judaism but also as its fulfillment. Luke's historical method required him in the opening of his Second Book to give a full account of the first condition of the Church in Jerusalem, and then to concentrate attention on the critical steps and persons by whom the Universal Church was molded to the form it had in his time.

A. The Christ of Acts

The resurrected Savior is the central theme of the sermons and defenses in Acts. The Old Testament scriptures, the historical resurrection, the apostolic testimony, and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit all bear witness that Jesus is both Lord and Christ (see Peter's sermons in 2:22-36 and 10:34-43). "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins" (10:43). "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (4:12).

B. Mega-themes In Acts

1. Church Beginnings

Acts is the history of how Christianity was founded and organized and solved it's problems. The community of believers began by faith in the risen Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, who enabled them to witness, to love and to serve.

a. New churches are continually being founded. By faith in Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the church can be a vibrant agent for change. As we face new problems, Acts gives important remedies for solving them.

2. The Holy Spirit

The church did not start of grow by its own power of enthusiasm. The disciples were empowered by God's Holy Spirit. He was the promised Counselor and Guide sent when Jesus went to heaven.

a. The Holy Spirit's work demonstrated that Christianity was supernatural. Thus, the church became more Holy Spirit conscious than problem conscious. By faith, any believer can claim the Holy Spirit's power to do Christ's work.

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3. Church Growth

Acts presents the history of a dynamic, growing community of believers from Jerusalem to Syria, Africa, Asia, and Europe. In the first century, Christianity spread from believing Jews to non-Jews in 39 cities and 30 countries, islands, or provinces.

a. When the Holy Spirit works, there is movement, excitement, and growth. He gives us the motivation, energy, and ability to get the gospel to the whole world. How are you fitting into God's plan for spreading Christianity? What is your place in this movement?

4. Witnessing

Peter, John, Philip, Paul, Barnabas, and thousands more witnessed to their new faith in Christ. By personal testimony, preaching, or defense before authorities, they told the story with boldness and courage to groups of all sizes.

a. We are God's people, chosen to be part of his plan to reach the world. In love and by faith, we can have the Holy Spirit's help as we witness or preach. Witnessing is also beneficial to us because it strengthens our faith as we confront those who challenge it.

5. Opposition

Through imprisonment, beatings, plots, and riots, Christians were persecuted by both Jews and Gentiles. But the opposition became a catalyst for the spread of Christianity, Growth during times of oppression showed that Christianity was not the work of humans, but of God.

a. God can work through any opposition. When persecution from hostile unbelievers comes, realize that it has come because you have been a faithful witness and you have looked for the opportunity to present the Good News about Christ. Seize the opportunities that opposition brings.

C. Key Words

"The growth of the church"— while there is four accounts of the life of Jesus; this is the only book that carries on the story from His ascension to the period of the New Testament epistles. Thus, Acts is the historical link between the gospels and the epistles. Because of Luke's strong emphasis on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, this book could be regarded as "the Acts of the Spirit of Christ working in and through the Apostles." Being a missionary himself, Luke's interest in the

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progressive spread of the gospel is obviously reflected in this apostolic history. Luke was personally involved as a participant in this story, so it was not written from a detached point of view.

D. Key Verses

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. 46And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

E. Key players

Luke shows true historical insight in fixing the reader's attention on Pentecost. Much depends on the successors of the first leader; and the issue is determined in the period following the leader's removal. Who are the key players? And who will take the lead? On the day of Pentecost, the test was fulfilled in the primitive Church; and the capacity of his disciples to carry on his work was shown.

Every Student should have a good working knowledge of every apostle. Jesus disciples were chosen for various reasons and many of those reasons are reflective of believers today.

Why did Jesus select whom He did? Why were many of these men uneducated? As one follows the narrative one will discover that Jesus has a reason for every decision He makes and that decision has a continual affect on the church.

We must remember how little we know concerning any of the apostles. It is natural that we should scan the evangelical narrative for indications of character with reference to those who were ordinary men; there is enough to show they were all pious men.

Study the chart on the next page and completely familiarize your mind to these very important individuals in the early life of the church.

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F. Key Chapter

Acts 2 is considered the key chapter. It records the earth changing events of the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit comes, fulfilling Christ's promise to wait until the Holy Spirit arrives to empower and direct the witness. The Spirit transforms a small group of fearful men into a thriving, worldwide Church that is ever moving forward and fulfilling the great commission.

In 2:1-42 the events of Pentecost (May 26, AD 30), and the effect produced on the character of the converts, are described; and the general state and conduct of this primitive Church is summed up in 2:43-47. The second part of 2:47, "the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved," is one of those phrases in which Luke often hits off a long, steady, uniform process. It is to be taken as a general description of subsequent progress in Jerusalem, during the course of which occurred the events next related. The space devoted by Luke to Pentecost shows that he considered the events of that day to be of the highest importance. On that day the Divine grace was given to the Apostles, qualifying them for the work which they were now required to perform since their Master had left them.

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G. THE TWELVE DISCIPLE/ ACTS 1:12-13

Name	Major Events in His Life	Selected References
Simon Peter (son of John)	One of three in the core group of disciples; recognized Jesus as Messiah; denied Christ and repented; preached Pentecost sermon a leader of Jerusalem church baptized Gentiles wrote First and Second Peter.	Matt. 4:18-20 Mark 8:29-33 Luke 22:31-34 Acts 2:14-41;1-:1-11:18
James (son of Zebedee)	Also in core group; he and his brother, John, asked Jesus for places of honor in his kingdom, wanted to call fire down to destroy a Samaritan village; first disciple to be martyred.	Mark 3:17;10:38-40 Luke 9:52-56 Acts 12:1-2
John (son of Zebedee)	Third disciple in core group; asked Jesus for a place of honor in his kingdom; wanted to call down fire on a Samaritan village; a leader of the Jerusalem church; wrote the Gospel of John, 1,2,3 John and Revelation.	Mark 1:19;10:35-40 Luke 9:52-56 John19:26-27;21:20-24
Andrew(Peter's brother)	Accepted John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus; told Peter about Jesus; he and Philip told Jesus that Greeks wanted to see him.	Matt. 4:18-20 John 1:35-42;6:8-9; 12:20-22
Philip	Told Nathaniel about Jesus; wondered how Jesus could feed the 5,000; he and Andrew told Jesus that the Greeks wanted to see him; asked Jesus to show his followers God the Father.	Matt. 10:3 John 1:43-46;6:2-7; 12:20-22; 14:8-11
Bartholomew (Nathaniel)	Initially rejected Jesus because Jesus was from Nazareth but acknowledged him as the "Son of God" and "King of Israel" when they met.	Mark 3:18 John 1:45-51; 21:1-13
Matthew (Levi)	Abandoned his corrupt (and financially profitable) way of life to follow Jesus; invited Jesus to a party with his notorious friends; wrote the Gospel of Matthew.	Matt.9:9-13; Mark 2:15-17 Luke 5:27-32
Thomas (the Twin)	Suggested the disciples go with Jesus to Bethany- even if it meant death; asked Jesus about where he was going; refused to believe Jesus was risen until he could see Jesus alive and touch his wounds.	Matt; 10:3 John 14:5;20:24-29; 21:1-13
James (son of Alphaeus)	Became one of Jesus' disciples	Matt. 10:3 Mark 3:18 Luke 6:15
Judas (son of James)) (Thaddeus)	Asked Jesus why he would reveal himself to his followers and not to the world.	Matt. 10:3 Mark 3:18 John 14:22
Simon the Zealot	Became a disciple of Jesus;	Matt. 10:4 Mark 3:16 Luke 6:15
Matthias	Chosen to replace Judas Iscariot (who had betrayed Jesus and then killed himself).	Acts 1:15-26

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H. Key Places

The apostle Paul, whose missionary journeys fill much of this book, traveled tremendous distances as he tirelessly spread the gospel across much of the Roman Empire. His combined trips, by land and sea, equal more than 13,000 air miles.

1. **Judea -** Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives, outside Jerusalem, and his followers returned to the city to await the infilling of the Holy Spirit, which occurred at Pentecost. Peter gave a powerful sermon that was heard by Jews from across the empire. The Jerusalem church grew, but Stephen was martyred for his faith by Jewish leaders who did not believe in Jesus (1:1-7:60).

2. **Samaria -** After Stephen's death, persecution of Christians intensified, but it caused the believers to leave Jerusalem and spread the gospel to other cities in the empire. Philip took the gospel into Samaria, and even to a man from Ethiopia (8:1-40).

3. **Syria -** Paul (Saul) began his story as a persecutor of Christians, only to be met by Jesus himself on the road to Damascus. He became a believer, but his new faith caused opposition, so he returned to Tarsus, his home, for safety. Barnabas sought out Paul in Tarsus and brought him to the church in Antioch of Syria, where they worked together. Meanwhile, Peter had received a vision that led him to Caesarea, where he presented the gospel to a Gentile family, who became believers (9:1-12:25).

4. **Cyprus and Galatia** Paul and Barnabas were dedicated by the church in Antioch of Syria for God's work of spreading the gospel to other cities. They set off on their first missionary journey through Cyprus and Galatia (13:1- 14:28).

5. **Jerusalem** Controversy between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians over the matter of keeping the law led to a special council, with delegates from the churches in Antioch and Jerusalem meeting in Jerusalem. Together, they resolved the conflict and the news was taken back to Antioch (15:1-35).

6. **Macedonia** Barnabas traveled to Cyprus while Paul took a second missionary journey. He revisited the churches in Galatia and headed toward Ephesus, but the Holy Spirit said no. So he turned north toward Bithynia and Pontus: but again was told not to go. He then received the "Macedonian call," and followed the Spirit's direction into the cities of Macedonia (15:36-17:14).

7. **Achaia** Paul traveled from Macedonia to Athens and Corinth in Achaia, then traveled by ship to Ephesus before returning to Caesarea, Jerusalem, and finally back to Antioch (17:15- 18:22).

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8. **Ephesus** Paul's third missionary journey took him back through Cilicia and Galatia, this time straight to Ephesus in Asia. He visited other cities in Asia before going back to Macedonia and Achaia. He returned to Jerusalem by ship, despite his knowledge that arrest awaited him there (18:23-23:30).

9. **Caesarea** Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and taken to Antipatris, then on to Caesarea under Roman guard. Paul always took advantage of any opportunity to share the gospel, and he did so before many Gentile leaders. Because Paul appealed to Caesar, he began the long journey to Rome (23:31-26:32).

   Rome - After storms, layovers in Crete, and shipwreck on the island of Malta, Paul arrived in Sicily and finally in Italy, where he traveled by land, under guard, to his long-awaited destination: Rome, the capital of the Empire (27:1-28:31).

I. Acts a Transitional Book

Luke begins the book of Acts where he left off in his gospel. Acts records the initial fulfillment of the great commission of Matthew 28:19-20 as it traces the beginning and growth of the New Testament church. This growth pattern can be seen in: 1:15; 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 13:49; 16:5; 19:20). Acts traces important events in the early history of Christianity from the ascension of Christ, to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and to the rapid progress of the gospel, beginning in Jerusalem and spreading throughout the Roman Empire.

1. History: from the gospels to the epistles

2. Religion: from Judaism to Christianity

3. Divine healing: from law to grace

4. People of God: from Jews alone to Jews and Gentiles

5. Program of God: from kingdom to church (program of God).

III. PURPOSES

Three words may be used to suggest the overall grand purposes of Acts: registration, vindication, edification.

A. Registration

The written record of the history of redemption makes up a substantial part of both the Old and New Testaments. The experiences of individual believers, as

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well as those of the corporate people of God, are registered in the Bible, thereby demonstrating before the audience of the ages that redemption is real, dynamic, and worthy to be sought. God moved Luke to record the narrative of the early church in the Holy Scriptures in order to show the church's relation: 1. to the past (continuation), and 2. to the future (propagation).

1. Continuation

The words recorded by Luke reveals this aspect of the narrative. His purpose in the third Gospel was to record, like the writers before him, the origins of Christianity "To compile an account of the things accomplished among us" (Luke 1:1). The first verse of Acts, by citing "all the Jesus began . . . to do and teach" implies that Luke intends to show how Acts continues the story of Jesus as the ascended, exalted One (Acts 1:2,9).

2. Propagation

Throughout Acts the thrust is one of extension, propagation, multiplication, and advance. Externally, the advance is from Jerusalem to Rome; internally, it moves from a Jewish hearing to a universal audience. Overall, the church makes fantastic progress in its first three decades of life, and Luke accurately registers this phase of its history.

B. Vindication

Acts was written soon after the last event of its narrative. Why was there no delay or waiting period, as with the gospels? As we approach the question we must recognize that although each book of the Bible was written primarily for the ages, its publication date was ordained by God so that its message could fill a contemporary need as well. A study of the times in which Luke wrote reveals that Acts apparently was given to the Roman world to let the history and message of the church vindicate its claim to divine origin. The church needed to make clear to the Roman government that Christianity was not to be associated with Judaism, though both claimed the same God and same Old Testament scriptures. In fact, Luke emphasized in Acts that the leaders of Judaism considered Christians as heretical and blasphemous, and that this formed the basis for most of the persecutions of the disciples of that day. There was a divine purpose in such a clarification of the church's identity at this time, for in just a few more years rebellion of Jewish authorities against the Roman Empire would lead to war. That war would eventually culminate in the destruction of Jerusalem (about A.D. 70) by the Romans.

1. Legality – One purpose of the work is to record consistent legal precedents in favor of the early believers. Every Roman court in Acts declares Christians not guilty. Josephus makes similar claims on Judaism in his writings to the Roman world, it only seems logical

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that a writer of current church history would include the legal aspects of the movement giving legal precedent for future generations.

2. Apologetics – All history is written with a purpose; to influence the reader and demonstrate actions as justified or non-justified. Josephus and other scholars used it to advance their own ideas, principles and morality. History whether current or ancient, is no less history for having an interest or editorial perspective. Aside from the obvious, Luke's perspectives are based on truth, cross-cultural communications, and world evangelism.

C. Edification

The primary purpose of Acts must have been edification, for it was inspired and written to profit in teaching, to bring reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Acts uplifts and edifies the Church of God. A soul may learn how to be saved from Acts, but the book was written primarily for the believer's instruction in how to live and serve God. Your study of Acts should be geared to learning what the book teaches about Christian living and the mission of the church of which you are a part. The fruits of studying Acts are multiplied when it is studied in connection with the epistles of the New Testament, for which it provides the setting and background.

Luke's review of the growth of the Church reveals the pattern of life in the early parts or many ministries. Its power, its objectives, its methods, its essential organization and discipline as well as missionary expansion; acts as a handbook for the believer. It shows its effectiveness and principles which do nothing but edify the reader.

IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS

The number of prominent subjects in Acts is unusually large and varies in topics. Only a few of these subjects will be discussed here.

A. The Church is Born (History) Acts 2:1-47

Acts is the church's standard textbook on the first three decades of its history and its ageless global task of evangelization. The book is clearly the sequel to the gospel. Its story of the church is the wonderful continuation of the unique and fantastic story of Christ's earthly life. Beyond this, Acts provides the key for the fuller understanding of the epistles, which follow Acts in the New Testament canon and interpret the gospel that Christ lived and preached.

Acts 2 records a new experience in the history of God's people, involving the Holy Spirit. The time was the Feast of Pentecost, one of the three great festivals

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of Jerusalem attended by Jews from all parts of the world. According to God's design, the day had arrived for the beginning of an extended ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers.

1. They were in one accord in one place.

We can see the outward unity of the Pentecostal church. There was unity of spirit and unity in open manifestation to the world at large. Christ's disciples, when they received the gifts of heaven's choicest blessings, were not split up into dozens of different organizations, each of them hostile to the others, and each striving to aggrandize itself at the expense of kindred brotherhoods. They had keenly in remembrance the teaching of our Lord's great Eucharistic supplication (John 17:21). There was visible unity among the followers of Christ; there was interior love and charity, finding expression in external union which qualified the disciples for the fuller reception of the spirit of love, and rendered them powerful in doing God's work amongst men. What a contrast the Christian Church presents to this now. There are persons who rejoice in the vast divisions in the church; but they are shortsighted and inexperienced in the dangers and scandals which have flowed, and are flowing, from them. It is indeed in the mission field that the schisms among Christians are most evidently injurious. When the heathen see the soldiers of the cross split up among themselves into hostile organizations, they very naturally say that it will be time enough when their own divergences and difficulties have been reconciled to come and convert persons who at least possess internal union and concord. Then again, these divisions lead to a wondrous waste of power both at home and abroad. If men believe that the preaching of the cross of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, and that millions are perishing from want of that blessed story, can they feel contentment when the great work of competing sects consists, not in spreading that salvation, but in building up their own cause by proselytizing from the neighbors, and gathering unto their own organization persons who have already been made partakers of Christ Jesus? And if this competition of sects were injurious and wasteful within the bounds of Christendom, surely it is infinitely more so when various contending bodies concentrate all their forces, as they so often do, on the same locality in some unconverted land, and seem as eagerly desirous of gaining proselytes from one another as from the mass of paganism. Then too, to take it from another point of view, what a loss in generalship, in Christian strategy, in power of concentration, results from our unhappy divisions. No blessing can be commanded where there is no unity of purpose, Ps. 133:3.

a. How different it was in the primitive church! Within one hundred and fifty years, or little more, of the ascension of Christ, and the outpouring of the Divine Spirit, a Christian writer could boast that the Christian Church had permeated

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the whole Roman Empire to such an extent that if the Christians abandoned the cities they would be turned into howling deserts. This triumphant march was simply in accordance with the Savior's promise. The world saw that Christians loved one another, and the world was consequently converted.

2. They were filled with the Spirit.

Every part of the complex nature of man was completely pervaded by the Spirit.

a. The intellect was illumined to know the truths of the Spirit.

b. The affections were purified and inflamed with desires after heavenly things.

c. The will was strengthened to obey the motions of the Spirit.

Those who are so filled give out only the language of the life-giving Spirit. Even when they speak of earthly things, it is with a tongue reminding men of the wisdom and simplicity of the children of God. When they do aught in the common business of life, their example recalls the thought of a higher life. All they say or do is to edifying.

3. Differences of being filled with the Spirit and receiving the Spirit.

The difference is not off kind, but of degree. In the one case, the light of heaven has reached the dark chamber, dispelling night, but leaving some obscurity and some deep shadows. In the other, that light has filled the whole chamber, and made every corner bright. This state of the soul-being "filled with the Holy Ghost: is the normal antecedent of true prophetic or miraculous power, but may exist without it; without it, in individuals who are never endowed with the gift either of prophecy or of miracles; without it, in individuals who have such powers, but in whom they are not in action, as in John the Baptist, before his ministry commenced.

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"BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT / *Acts* 2:4		
The term (or concept) occurs only a few times in the New Testament. It is used in basically three different ways:		
Prophetic	**Historical**	**Doctrinal**
Matthew 3:11	Acts 2:1-4	1 Corinthians 12:12-13
Mark 1:8	Acts 11:15-17	Romans 6:1-4
Luke 3:16		
John 1 :33		
Acts: 1:5		
🕮 In the Gospels, John the Baptist used the term in describing Jesus' ministry		
🕮 In Acts 1 :5, Jesus quotes John's prophecy looking forward to Pentecost		
🕮 In Acts 2, *the process was initiated* on the day of Pentecost: the Holy Spirit came to make the church his residence, indwelling every believer.		
🕮 In Acts 11: 16 the term is used by Peter, who referred to Jesus' quote of John's prophecy.		
🕮 In Romans 6:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 12:13 Paul taught its significance.		

The Day of Pentecost is the accepted day by the majority of scholars when the Church was born. However, there had been believers in the Old Testament days and during Jesus' earthly ministry. We do not argue the point; however, we would like to interject an idea that we believe is worthy to note. Principally, the church for all practical purposes can be considered born on Pentecost. But, consider symbolically and typically the following. The Bible is brilliantly constructed with types and shadows of things to come. It gives guidelines through symbolism and typology. God did nothing without a purpose. This every student should remember. There is always a reason for what is written in the Word.

When God gave Adam a help mate, He did not create her from the earth, air or sea. He created her from a rib taken from the first Adam's side. God opened the side of man and took flesh to create woman. The Bride of Christ is a symbolic woman, and the Bride represents the Church. When Jesus was hanging between heaven and earth a soldier pierced the last Adam's side and out flowed water and blood. The woman was the bride of the first Adam and the Church is the bride of the last Adam. The piercing of the side created the Flesh bride and the Spiritual Bride. Flesh is the source of woman and water and blood are its life elements. When those elements were released, through piercing His side, it signified the death of the flesh bride and the birth of the Spiritual bride. The physical elements of water and blood would no longer be the source of life to the bride. The new elements released to the new bride, are the cleansing blood of sacrifice and the washing regenerating water of the Word. Therefore the Church in reality started the day Jesus gave up the ghost and cried "it is finished". The battle for the authority of the Church was won, Jesus was now its true head, and the woman, the bride, was given life by the release of the new elements of life.

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Any time there is a receipt of something from God, there is always a need of preparation on the part of the recipient. In Biblical Mathematics, we see four distinct numbers involved in the creation of the Church: The number 10; the number 40; the number 50 and the number 120. The number ten (10) represents Testimony and responsibility. The number 40 represents trial and testing, the number 50 represents the Holy Spirit, and the number 120 represents Divine Probation and completion. It is of course obvious that Pentecost, in which the Holy Spirit came, stands for the number 50, and after the infilling of the Holy Spirit one can visualize the church now being complete, having its head, Jesus, body in the 120 and power with the Holy Spirit. But, what about the other two numbers.

The days after the crucifixion were a grievous time for the body of Christ. They were confused and somewhat disoriented about their future; Peter even said I am going fishing. Men and women had to make decisions concerning the prophecies. Were they true or was Jesus not what He claimed to be. But Jesus began moving about the disciples showing Himself to the twelve and others. These tests and trials had to separate the chaff from the wheat. Jesus, like a mother hen was gathering her chicks, because very soon He would invite them to spend 10 days waiting for a promise. Remember, they all forsook him save John and a few ladies. These 40 days would prepare the fledgling church, finally a body of 120 believers, to receive its release to the world.

The disciples were told to gather in the upper room and wait for the coming of the “Comforter”. They were gathered praying and preparing for the arrival. The people of the world seen Jesus hanged on a tree and the world wanted to see what would happen to this “sect” of religion. After 40 days the 120 gathered and in 10 days the answer came. The Testimony was they obeyed and persevered until they received what was promised them from Jesus. On the 50th day the responsibility was the obvious, spreading of the Good News through the world. Peter preached the first sermon given by this new, divinely prepared, divinely tested, and divinely gathered body of believers and 3000 were added to their numbers.

From the Day of Pentecost until now, the people of God, known as the church, would be experiencing a new relationship to a more fully revealed God. This extended revelation by the incarnate Christ ("God . . . has . . . spoken . . . in His Son," Heb. 1:1-2) and the in-dwelling Spirit (John 16:13-15. In light of that, it is accurate to say that the Pentecost day of Acts 2 was the birthday of the church.

The Feast of Pentecost needs to be understood in order to see God’s providence at work. Pentecost was celebrated fifty days after the Passover. It was also known as the “Day of the First Fruits” (Numbers 28:26), or the “Feast of Weeks” (Exodus 34:22), or the “Feast of Harvest.”

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Pentecost was a glorious day of celebration, a day when the people were to heap praise and thanksgiving upon God. There were three particular reasons for which they were to thank God.

a. The harvest of the fields. Note the very name of the Feast says that it is a celebration of the "First Fruits." It was celebrated when the first fruits of the harvest began to come in, which was around the first of June. It actually opened the harvest season.

b. The Exodus, the deliverance of the nation Israel from Egyptian bondage (Deut. 16:12). The people were to thank God for the day he delivered them out of slavery.

c. The giving of the law upon Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19-20). This was the day the people were constituted as a nation, as the great nation of Israel. They were to live as God's very own people upon earth. They were to thank God for Himself and for His law, the rules and principles He had given to govern their lives and nation. It is important to note that the Jews figured the law had been given to Moses fifty days after the Exodus.

4. Now note the providence of God, how all three events were fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Spirit.

a. When "Pentecost was fully come" the first fruits were born—the church itself and the first harvest of souls. The new beginning, that is, the filling of the Holy Spirit, began fifty days after Jesus' death and resurrection (Acts 2:4).

b. The coming of the Holy Spirit had a very specific purpose. The Holy Spirit was to live and work within the heart of man, to deliver and free him from the enslavements of this world—from sin, death, and hell. The Holy Spirit came to set man at liberty even as God had delivered the Jews out of Egyptian slavery (2 Cor. 3:17; cp. John 16:8-11).

c. The coming of the Holy Spirit was two things.

5. It was the birth of the church, the new people of God. People who truly came to God were now to be sealed and known by the presence of the Holy Spirit, by His very presence within their hearts and lives.

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6. It was the institution of the new law, the new rule and principle of God. Man is now to be guided by the Spirit who empowers him to live right and to serve Christ.

   a. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. First, both the body (church) and each individual believer were filled. They were "all filled" with the presence and power of the Spirit—all of them corporately and each of them individually. It was both a corporate and a personal, individual infilling. Each believer had been commanded to wait for the baptism of the Spirit, and each one was to be so filled with His presence and power. It was a command to the individual believer as well as to the corporate body. Each one was to experience and know His grace and power and fruit (Galatians 5:22-23).

   A critical point is often ignored and neglected. The command to be filled with the Spirit is still God's command to every believer, both individually and corporately (the church). How neglectful the church is! Ignoring and neglecting the command "[to seek to] be filled with the Spirit." How many churches actually meet together to pray and wait for the filling of God's Spirit?

   Second, the disciples were given the gifts of the Spirit to carry on the work of the ministry upon earth. This fact is not mentioned here, although it is certainly to be demonstrated in the preaching and witnessing about to take place. The giving of the Spirit's gifts is covered in Ephesians.

   This event was fulfillment of scripture, it fused believers into to one group, giving them unity and a sense of purpose.

7. Life of the early church

It is good to know the birth of a thing; but what about the continuance of it. The scriptures tell us plainly what the continuing life-force for the church was. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine". Remember, this newborn church had no New Testament yet to consult for direction. The text tells us how the newly baptized lived, in the bloom and freshness of the gospel. They waited constantly upon:

   a. The teaching of the apostles. There was much for them to learn. They knew nothing yet in detail of the doctrine of their new Master. The particulars of His life, words character, work; how must the apostles have busied themselves in recounting these things to a congregation all but wholly ignorant of them, amidst breathless silence or murmured

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satisfaction, the gospel story. We are too ready to imagine that we have nothing to learn now from public teaching. We sit in judgment upon our teachers, as though we had all truth and knowledge already in possession. And most unwilling would your ministers be to speak as though they had anything which you know not, or might not know, for your selves from the pages of the Holy Book. Nevertheless, preaching is God's method, and to it the emphasis of that solemn caution, "Despise not prophesying." It is still one mark of the true Christian that he waits steadfastly upon the teaching of appointed men, whose responsible office it is rightly to divide the word of truth.

b. Fellowship. That is, the formation and fostering of that brotherly spirit of Christian love which the Apostles' Creed calls "the communion of saints." The converts did not separate after their baptism, each to his home, to live a life of pious meditation. They set themselves resolutely to a life of fellowship. The Christian is one of a community; alone, he is but a limb cut off from the trunk; separately, he must draw his vital vigor from the Head, but that vigor must be used and manifested in a self-forgetting fellowship. He must never fancy himself the whole body, either in being independent of the Head, or of the organized system. "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

The fellowship wrought by the Spirit of God means more than the association existing in secular groups such as civic clubs and community bodies. There is a vast difference between community participation and spiritual participation. Community participation is based upon neighborly association. Spiritual participation is based upon a spiritual union wrought by the Spirit of God. The distinctiveness is this: the Holy Spirit is within the Christian believer. The Holy Spirit creates a spiritual union by melting and molding the heart of the Christian believer to the hearts of other believers. He attaches the life of one believer to the lives of other believers. Through the Spirit of God, believers become one in life and purpose. They have a joint life sharing their blessings, needs, and gifts together. Fellowship forbids an unattached Christian life. Their fellowship is maintained because they continue steadfastly in the Scriptures and in worship. Fellowship is being experienced by the new believers because they join other Christians in learning the Scriptures (apostles' teachings) and in worship

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c. The breaking of bread. The phrase “breaking of bread” means the early believers observed and remembered the Lord’s death. They set aside some time to observe what churches call communion, the Lord’s Supper, or the Eucharist. How instantly the sacrament of the Lord's Supper took its place among the marks and tokens of the true church. From the very first it was understood that a Christian is one who observes all that Christ has commanded, and not least His dying charge, "This do..." Doubtless the Lord’s Supper was a daily celebration. And do you suppose that any of the three thousand dared or wished to turn their back upon it? And yet how many of us are knowingly, willfully, and throughout life, acting as if the charge, "This do" had never been uttered, or as if the apostles only had ever been addressed by it. And no doubt there are those who could not without presumption or profaneness, attend the breaking of bread. But does not that inability, of itself, startle them? Does it not sound in their ears the condemning sentence, "Thou art none of Christ'; thou art yet in thy sins"?

d. In prayers. No doubt they prayed in secret. No doubt it was a life of prayer. The charge which we treat as hyperbolical, "Pray without ceasing" was to them, in its spirit, a literal precept. Their lives were now hidden above with Christ and they might exercise those lives in offices of perpetual communion. Christ was to them not a name nor a doctrine, but a real and living person, their friend, and their Saviour, their Lord and their God. They could not have too much of Him. Therefore a life of prayer was to them a life of happiness. But the particular place occupied by the work "prayers" in the text, leads us rather to think of the worship of the congregation than of the worship of the secret chamber. It was not then, as it is now, that any little fluctuation of feeling, or any passing accident of weather or of company, can thin a congregation almost to nothing. It was not then the case, as it is now, that everything is more attractive than worship.

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The following outline of chapter 2 shows the highlights of Luke's recording:

Event	2:1-4
Reaction	2:5-13
Explanation	2:14-36
Response and Sequel	2:37-47

B. Stephen's Life and Death

Stephen is usually remembered for his martyrdom, that was his ministry "by death" (Phil. 1:20), in Acts 22:20 "witness" means martyr. We should also remember him, however, for his brief but faithful ministry "by life" as one of the seven deacons serving in the business phase of the Jerusalem church (see Acts 6:2-3). The two-fold story of Stephen is organized in Acts as illustrated below:

Stephen's life and death:

Part 1 - By Life	Part 2 - By Death
Ministry of serving tables (Acts 6:1-6)	Ministry of Words & Miracles (Acts 6:8 - 8:1)
Fruit of the Ministry (Acts 6:7)	Fruit of the Ministry (Acts 8:1)

When Stephen was falsely accused by religious opponents, the high priest invited him to defend himself. The essence of his speech (Acts 7:2-53) was that the religious people of his day were the guilty ones, even as their forefathers had been "You people of this day are just like your ancestors; you always resist the Holy Spirit. Only you are worse than your fathers; they killed God's messengers who prophesied of the Messiah, but you have killed the Messiah Himself!" (Acts 7:51-53, writer's paraphrase)

Stephen was on trial for his life. Stephen was saying that God’s will and plan could not be stopped, no matter what the present generation did against Christ and His followers. The charges had been made: he was accused of insurrection, of preaching that the sacred institutions of the nation were to be destroyed, that is, the land, the temple, the law, and the customs (Acts 7:11-15). Stephen defended himself by reviewing Israel’s history and making the following points. It should be noted by the student that Stephen’s defense was a sermon; he preached the gospel to the court.

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C. The Major Themes Of Stephen's Speech / Acts 7:39-52

1. The Jews always reject God's leaders. Acts 7:39
2. God does not dwell in temples made with hands. Acts 7:48
3. God transcends the laws. Acts 7:50
4. Israel tends toward apostasy. Acts 7:51
5. Israel rejects God's redeemers. Acts 7:52

D. The Effects of Stephen's Death/ Acts 8:4

1. Philip's evangelistic tour. Acts 8:4-40
2. Paul's (Saul's) conversion. Acts 9:1-30
3. Peter's missionary tour. Acts 9:32-11:18
4. The Church in Antioch of Syria founded. Acts 11:19ff

The rulers and people became more incensed, and they stoned Stephen to death. His dying words were, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" (Acts 7:60) Stephen experienced the pain and suffering of the trial. This is seen in that he called for the Lord's help. Believers are not removed or relieved from the sufferings of trials, but they are given the grace and strength to endure the trials, even martyrdom.

Stephen called upon the Lord Himself. It was Jesus who was *standing*, ready to receive Him. Jesus wishes all believers to be with Him where He is (John 14:2-3; John 17:24). Stephen called for Jesus to receive his spirit. Stephen still trusted the grace of God, the righteousness of Jesus, for his salvation. He did not trust his own works and goodness. He was still depending upon Jesus and the wonderful love of God. Noticing the key words— still trusting, still depending— Stephen had trusted and lived for Christ during life, so he could expect to trust and live for Christ in eternity.

E. Saul Saved (Acts 9:1-9)

Persecution against the believers in Jerusalem scattered them throughout Judea and Samaria and even to such distant cities as Damascus. It was when the persecution had reached a peak through the fanatic labors of the arch-persecutor Saul (Acts 8:1-3), that God struck him to the ground. In one man's words, "The rabid persecutor was a tormented man, soon to be brought to surrender, and destined to be the greatest name in the history of the Church". The wonderful,

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miraculous conversion of a man who called himself the chief of sinners is the subjects of Luke's reporting in Acts 9:1-19.

While the gospel was reaching farther outside of Jerusalem, Saul was continuing his relentless persecution of the church. So great was Saul's hatred for the church that he went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus. Damascus was not under the control of Judea, Galilee, or the Decapolis. What jurisdiction would the high priest have over synagogues in Damascus? This is usually answered by saying Rome recognized the right of extradition when the high priest in Jerusalem demanded it.

Saul, while in the midst of his efforts to seize and take off to prison those within the synagogues of Damascus who are acclaiming Jesus as Messiah, is confronted by the Lord. Jesus appeared in a personal vision to lead Saul to salvation. Saul saw what others did not. To persecute the church is to persecute Jesus.

Saul begins his "visitation" by of course "falling to the ground" from his donkey. Humility is the first step to salvation. Either one humbles himself or the Lord will do it for him.

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: [4] And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? [5] And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. Acts 9:3-5 (KJV)

Saul is now in a position to which the Lord may speak. As this light shines around Saul we see something happening to Saul. Jesus tells Saul that he is not only persecuting these believers but also doing the same to him. The light of the Lord Jesus, whom we know to be the "light of the world" (Jn. 8:12), was shining directly on Saul. Once that light shined upon the unrighteousness and sin that was in Saul, he recognized that there was a problem. Saul was an educated man, and was well versed in the scriptures. He knew that the Messiah would one day come and like any good Jew, he was looking for His king. The revelation that Saul received that day is the same revelation every new believer receives upon salvation. Jesus had revealed himself as Messiah unto Saul and Saul was in a position to receive the revelation, confess He was Lord and ask what he must do.

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. [7] And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. Acts 9:6-7 (KJV)

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Saul trembled in astonishment, because he know recognized his own deceitfulness and unworthiness. He played repeatedly in his mind the awful murderous crimes he had committed. He now realized he needed saving and he therefore accepted the challenge and went straightway to work for the Lord.

Most people believe that if they live a good life and attend church services regularly that they will make it to the kingdom of heaven. That is incorrect. Saul had studied the scriptures since childhood. He knew the prophecies and the teaching of Messiah better than most. He even heard the apostles preaching in the synagogues and temple. He was probably present when the apostles, brought before the Sanhedrin, preached as "unlearned" men. He heard about the saving grace of Jesus through the message of Stephen and probably many others. Yet he was not converted.

Saul was still in his own dark world. John 1:4-5 states:*" In him was life; and the life was the light of men. [5] And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."* Saul had not yet comprehended the light. It was beginning to shine in the apostles and deacons, but Saul, because of darkness, could not understand. Saul's heart had become so religious, so hard and cold, that the small amount of light that was being shone by the new disciples and believers was not strong enough to break the chains of religiosity and darkness that circumscribed Saul's heart.

The encounter on the Damascus road was earth shattering to Saul. The ascended Christ spoke to Saul converting Him from the persecutor to the proclamator. The chains of religion and darkness were exposed to the light of salvation, breaking the bonds and setting the captive free. The revelation also directs the new believer and starts him on the path to righteousness. It is well to notice that his companions on the trip stood in amazement, hearing a voice but seeing no man. They were witnesses to the event. But they were not privileged to know what was really happening. They were a type of the worldly who saw the miracle of conversion, of God's marvelous grace, yet they never opened their own minds and hearts…

- 🕮 To see the light of the Lord
- 🕮 To confront the Lord
- 🕮 To call upon the Lord, surrendering to obey Him

They could only view the event from their own worldly perspective. And unfortunately perspective becomes most people's reality. The reality to them was; they heard a voice, (sound) saw no man, (sight), therefore they knew not what to do. They only understood sense knowledge. Without the Light of God, they could not confront, confess or surrender to the Lord, which is necessary when seeking God's light.

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Christ directs a man in Damascus to minister to Paul. A disciple there named Ananias is told to commission Saul and to pray restoration of his sight so that he can launch his mission to Gentiles, kings and Israel. His symbolic regaining of sight is followed by baptism in the Holy Spirit and water baptism. Then Saul launches his mission in the synagogues, effectively proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah.

Saul was faithful and steadfast, continuing with Christ. He continued to grow spiritually, increasing more and more in spiritual strength. The Greek words for "increased the more" mean to become strong within, to gain inner strength, to increase spiritually. He continued to preach that Jesus is the Messiah. The more he was able to "confound" (confuse) those who opposed and rebelled against the gospel. The more he was able to "prove" (affirm and confirm) it with more and more power as he grew in Christ.

The Jews plotted to kill Saul. They became disturbed—full of anger, bitterness, and enmity. They considered him a traitor to their religion and nation and cause. They convinced the civil authorities, the governor of Damascus, that Saul was a fanatic, an agitator, a threat to the peace of the city. The Jews were so convincing, the governor sent patrols out on a manhunt for Saul and posted guards all around the city to prevent his escape (Acts 9:23-25; cp. 2 Cor. 11:33). Saul escaped. The plot to kill him was discovered. Patrols and guards were everywhere. The city was surrounded by a wall; however, the disciples put him in a basket and lowered him down by the wall.

He joined the work in Jerusalem, but the believers there refused to trust him (cf. Ananias' similar fear, Acts 9:13). In Damascus Saul needed a friend, Ananias; in Jerusalem he needed another, Barnabas. He whose name means "Son of Encouragement" (4:36) proved to be that for Saul. The believers in Jerusalem, convinced by Barnabas that Saul had in fact been converted, allowed Saul to stay. In Damascus he preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus, and in Jerusalem he was speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. Evidently Saul's debating ability proved to be too much for the Grecian Jews as they attempted to assassinate him. Thus, Saul was made to experience what he had earlier made others feel—the cost of discipleship. The brothers at Jerusalem then escorted Saul to Caesarea, the seaport about 65 miles away by road, and sent him to his hometown, Tarsus. Saul spends nearly eight years at Tarsus. It is somewhat vague as to what Saul was doing. We can only speculate.

F. The Church Embraces the Gentiles (Acts 9:32- 12:25)

In the early chapters of Acts, most of the believers were Jews. That is understandable, since the gospel was the fulfillment of the Jews' scriptures. Jesus and His disciples were Jews and His mission was primarily to the house of Israel. The disciples were thus now taking it for granted that the gospel was mainly for Jews, with Gentiles brought into the fellowship of the church only via

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the Jewish institutions. The time had come for God to emphasize more than ever before that the gospel was for Gentiles as well as Jews. Peter, leader of the church at that time, was the logical one to whom God would give such instruction. Acts 9:32 - 12:25 describes this story.

The scattering of the Jewish believers, which began on the day of Stephen's death, was the first break in the solidarity of Jewish exclusiveness which God would eventually liquidate. It was inevitable that Spirit-filled disciples should touch human hearts with whom they came in contact, regardless of race or religion. That is illustrated in the unrestricted expansions of the church as recorded by Luke in Acts 8:1 - 9:31 and summarized so triumphantly in Acts 9:31.

Peter was involved in an itinerant mission around Judea which brought him to Lydda. Lydda, mentioned only here in the New Testament, is today called Lod; Israel's international airport is just north of the city. Peter later carried on an extensive traveling ministry, evident from 1 Corinthians 9:5. This is also implied from the addressees of his first epistle (1 Peter 1:1). Philip had preceded Peter to the area in and around Caesarea (Acts 8:40).

Miracles lead to church growth. Peter and John had already caused great commotion with the healing of the lame man at the Temple. Peter's reputation was that of a preacher/healer. A certain man had been an invalid for eight years—paralyzed. Peter spoke the Word. This man arose from his bed, and many believed in the Lord. In nearby Joppa, a beloved disciple, Dorcas, died. The Christians sent for Peter, knowing of his commitment. The miracle was unceremonious, and was accomplished quickly. Many "believed in the Lord." No one had been raised from the dead in the early church as far as the records of Acts declare, but the faith of the believers was so great they expected the Lord to use Peter to resurrect Dorcas.

This shows the excellent preparation given Peter for his subsequent experience with Cornelius. These two outstanding miracles confirmed his ministry; that God was with him in a special way. He was also ministering in an area that was partially Gentile. The growth in the number of disciples serves to confirm the church's faith in the miracle-working ministry of church leaders. Such leaders must heed not to take credit for the church's growth. All praise must go to Christ, the Source of miracles. He also quartered in the home of Simon the tanner and this was quite significant. Tanners were considered to be ceremonially unclean because they were constantly in contact with the skins of dead animals (Lev. 11:40).

By separate visions both Peter and Cornelius were prepared for this momentous happening. Cornelius is about to become one of the first Gentiles after Pentecost to hear the good news of Jesus Christ's forgiveness. The Holy Spirit sometimes guides the church in specific ways to accomplish its world mission.

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The Holy Spirit clearly told Peter to go with the three messengers from Cornelius. Since Pentecost Peter had been the outstanding spokesman for the church, so it was important that the Holy Spirit guide him. It was crucially important for the church to realize its mission included Gentiles as well as Jews and Samaritans. The Holy Spirit was vanguard of the church, represented by Peter, over what is perhaps the single most important threshold it would ever cross—the racial barrier. The Holy Spirit seeks to breach the barriers which would prevent the witnessing to any person who does not trust Christ.

Peter's vision was fresh insight to him. However, at origin it is the same inclusiveness for God's message of faith. Perhaps no prejudice is more dangerous or difficult to supplant than one held in place by religious tradition. Place of birth, cultural tradition, color of skin, sex, race, and nationality seem to separate us. The gospel calls us all together as one family in God's church. In retrospect Peter must have recognized that Jesus as the Messiah cleansed all goods from ceremonial defilement.

Peter's sermon is similar to those in Acts 2 and 5, although it contains more information about the life and teaching of Jesus than do those addressed to Jewish audiences in Jerusalem. God looks at man individually with no regard for national distinctions, physical characteristics, or religious heritage Peter and his Jewish companions watched in amazement as the Holy Spirit filled Cornelius and the other Gentiles with unmistakable signs of His presence, "while Peter was still speaking" (10:44). Peter had no choice but to offer them baptism and full fellowship in the community. Since they had already been marked as believers, their baptism would confirm their faith. Now Jew and Gentile were baptized by one Spirit into the one body of Christ. This passage affirmed the power of God to break down even the strongest barriers of prejudice.

Study the five keys one the next page concerning the believer making a difference in the world and its various cultures.

G. Five Keys to Making a Difference/ *Acts* 10:48

Peter and Cornelius provide a great lesson for believers who want to make a real difference in the world. See the following acronym for ***world:***

1. ***W***alk closely with God. (Acts 10: 1-4, 9)

   The text carefully reports on the quality of the spiritual life of Cornelius and the explicit time of prayer of both Cornelius and Peter. Both were devout men, apparently with a regular, consistent habit of walking with God, praying to God, and expecting God to work in their lives. The reason they both were involved in the work of God-Cornelius as the first genuine Gentile convert; Peter as the human instrument in opening the door to the

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Gentiles-was that they were both in the habit of walking with, talking to, and hearing from God on a regular basis.

2. Obey God. (Acts 9:39, 43; 10:8, 23-25, 28-29)

A predisposition to obedience that comes from a deep relationship with God marked both these men. Cornelius was "found," and Peter had the privilege of finding him because they responded positively to God's command. We will not be involved in real world change if we have a predisposition to disobey. To be habitually disobedient is to be habitually useless for the real work of God.

3. Reach out to people outside your comfort zone. (Acts 9:32-43; 10:5-6, 20, 25, 48)

It is hard to feel what Peter would have felt about moving into the Gentile world. He was going against that with his move to Lydda, then Joppa, then to the leatherworker's house, and certainly with Cornelius. The Jewish part of him would balk at every turn, every doorstep, and every meal. But Peter understood the great commission and was committed to spreading the Word to whomever God was calling. How readily do you move outside the confines of your safe relationships? That's where the lost are and where God wants us to be.

4. Look for those God is reaching or softening. (Acts 9:32-43; 10:19,22-23)

This constant theme of Acts shows that God is working, and we must find out where and with whom, and get in on it.

5. Disregard the criticism. (Acts 10:13-14,20,28; 11 :1-3,18)

Jewish culture was resistant; Peter himself was resistant; the church was resistant, critical, and skeptical. But Peter, Cornelius, Peter's traveling companions, and ultimately the church itself overcame the resistance to be a part of what God wanted to do. God was moving, spreading his message by softening and wooing hearts, by awakening souls.

H. Paul's Missionary Journeys

For about ten years (about A.D. 47-56) Saul had the privilege and responsibility of leading the evangelism crusade of the early church in three major journeys. There was one major interruption - the Jerusalem Council - between the first and second journeys (Acts 15:1-35). We will speak about the council later in the course.

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This is probably the most significant series of events in the history of the early church. Saul has been saved between 13 and 14 years, more or less, depending on when the death of Christ is charted. He has prepared, he had struggled, not only with himself but also with the early church. He knew his call, but was unsure about how to accomplish such a call. After 8 years in Tarsus, Saul was coming to grips with his calling.

A man called Barnabas, a man of a good report; a devout man, sought an audience with Saul about ministering to the exploding church in Antioch. From there, God began moving Saul into the position of his call. Notice he was not a novice; he had been in God's service for many years. He was being prepared, he was building a testimony and he was about to be released. Remember the birth of the church in Biblical Mathematics; the church had a testimony, a responsibility and a release. The pattern is clear in all applications of God's work; there is a testimony a responsibility and a release.

Study this chart and you will see Saul covered many miles in 10 years of ministry. They were not covered in a 4 wheel drive vehicle, mostly by foot and ship. This alone was an incredible accomplishment, even in the face of the results.

JOURNEY	DATE (APPROXIMATE)	REGION	MILEAGE	ACTS
1	47-48	SE Asia	1500 miles	13:1 - 14:28
2	49-52	Macedonia Achaia	3,000-4,000 miles	15:36 - 18:22
3	52-56	W. Asia Minor	4,000 miles	18:23 - 21:17

Chapter 13 begins an entirely new section in Acts. Antioch replaces Jerusalem as the major base of operations or the mother city of the church. Saul (soon to be Paul) replaces Peter as the central figure of the evangelistic program. A mission field of all races and religions becomes the church's obligation, while the Jerusalem church continues to minister primarily to Jews. Home missions work in the homelands of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria continues, but foreign missions work to Asia and Europe is added to the responsibility of the apostles.

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V. Overview of the First Great Mission of Paul

A. The First Missionaries, Barnabas and Paul: The Most Demanding Call Ever Given, 13:1-3

1 They were members of a great church, a church that reached out to all

2 They were noted as gifted

3 They were called while ministering and fasting

4 They received a specific call: They were "set apart" by the Holy Spirit

5 They bathed their mission in prayer and fasting

6 They were commissioned by the church

B. Cyprus, the Island: The Beginning of Missions and Evangelism, 13:4-13

1 There was the leading of the Holy Spirit

2 There was the work of missions and evangelism

3 There was the desire to hear the Word of God

4 There was the pronouncement of judgment

5 There was conversion

6 There was desertion

C. Antioch of Pisidia, the Main City of South Galatia: The Preaching of Paul, 13:14-41

1 Paul and Barnabas entered Antioch of Pisidia

2 God has been working throughout all history: He suffered and bore with the ways of Israel and of the world

3 God has consummated history: He has given the world a Savior, Jesus

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D. Various Responses to the Gospel, 13:42-52

1 The people's response to the gospel

2 The preacher's response to the people)

E. Iconium, the Ancient City: The Holy Spirit's Pattern for Preaching and Witnessing, 14:1-7

1 Step 1: A unified spirit and effort

2 Step 2: Following the God-given method

3 Step 3: Experiencing results

4 Step 4: The grumbling opposition

5 Step 5: The boldness and perseverance of the preacher

6 Step 6: The divided opinions

7 Step 7: The turning away to willing hearers

F. Lystra, the Frontier Town: Preaching to a Heathen and Superstitious People, 14:8-20

1 Paul preached on the city streets

2 The nature of a superstitious people, the nature that necessitates a special message

3 The message to a superstitious people

4 The minister needed to reach superstitious people

G. Derbe and the Return Journey: How Churches Are Made Strong, 14:21-28

1. Task 1: Preach the gospel and make disciples

2. Task 2: Be committed to strengthen the church

Acts portrays Paul as the great missionary, blazing trails for Christianity in areas that have never heard the gospel. Under direct divine guidance, the church in Antioch sent him and Barnabas, with Mark as helper, to spread the gospel abroad. Antioch served as a base from which Paul's journeys began.

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Here the Spirit's command to call and commission Paul and Barnabas was quickly obeyed. It was from the church at Antioch that the first teachers were sent forth with the purpose of spreading the gospel of Christ and organizing local churches.

Sailing from the port city of Seleucia, they traveled to Cyprus, Barnabas' home country. Salamis a port city and capital had a large Jewish population living there. There was preaching of the Word, making disciples, reaching out to new areas and confronting false prophets.

At Paphos, Sergius Paulus, after witnessing the miraculous blinding of a sorcerer, responded to the preaching of the gospel. Luke tells us for the first time that Saul was also called Paul. The significance of this is Elymus, the sorcerer "Withstood them" and judgment came from the Spirit of God, not from Paul. He was a deceiver and a fraud, a child of the devil. The conversion of Sergius Paulus signaled a fundamentally new development. This first instance of a Gentile, who was received as part of God's people, may well be the theological problem (and not merely homesickness!) that led Mark to abandon the missionary party and return to Jerusalem.

Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel in the Jewish synagogue there and received a positive response. They entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and as strangers they were invited to speak. Paul took the lead, addressing the Jews and followers of God. God chose and delivered Israel, put up with Israel's weaknesses through the wilderness, led Israel to conquer Canaan, gave Israel judges, prophets and a king of their own choosing: Saul and then God raised up a special king of His own choosing: David.

The Savior was proclaimed by a forerunner, John the Baptist. The Savior is "the word of salvation" being proclaimed to you, was rejected and crucified Men did not know Him or accept nor believe the prophecies about Him. Men fulfilled all prophecy written about Him by rejecting and crucifying Him. The Savior was raised from the dead by God with eyewitnesses who saw Him. He brings glad tidings to men, forgives sin, justifies all who believe; justifies apart from the law and brings judgment upon men.

Some non-religionists desired to hear more. Some who were hungry and desired to hear more immediately, some who never attended came to hear the Word of God; some rejected and opposed then reacted against the crowds and against Paul's message.

They rejected the rejecters of the gospel and they turned to willing hearers. Jesus was the One sent to be the light and salvation of the world. The Gentiles rejoiced and glorified the Word; some were ordained to eternal life and believed and the Word was spread abroad. Despite rejection and persecution, they

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turned away from the rejecters, and forcibly expelled from the city and surrounding area.

Great success among the Gentiles led to further and more vigorous persecution and so they moved on to Iconium. There the pattern of evangelism was essentially the same as that in Antioch. Signs and wonders accompanied them in all areas. There again was division. Once again the Jews "stirred up the Gentiles" and tried to have Paul and Barnabas stoned. The missionaries discovered the plot and fled.

At Lystra they are subjected to great faith in Christ and they were prone to deify men, believe myths, and offer the wrong sacrifice.

They had to break superstitions by showing that they are only men, There is only one living God, The living God is the Creator of all, God permitted men to walk as they willed, and God has always given witness to Himself. Paul and Barnabas were willing to suffer persecution, even martyrdom. They were faithful in bearing disciples and trusting God's delivering power. Paul again was stoned and thrown from the city and in front of disciples rose up and he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

There they preached and made disciples and encouraged believer before retracing their path back home. They revisited their work, strengthening and encouraging the believers, warning of persecution, organizing elders, ordaining, praying and fasting and commending them to the Lord. Eventually they returned to their "headquarters" in Antioch of Syria, where they stayed for "a long time".

VI. The Second Great Mission of Paul to the Gentiles: to Europe 15:36-18:22

A. The Journey Begins in Controversy: A Study on Honest Conflict, 15:36-41

1 The cause of honest conflict

2 The sad result of honest conflict: Division and loss

3 The good result of honest conflict: God overrules—two mission teams were sent forth

B. Galatia: Faithfulness to the Church, 16:1-5

1 Faithful in making disciples

2 Faithful in delivering the church's declaration on salvation and behavior

3 Faithful in bearing fruit: The churches were strengthened

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C. Asia, the Forbidden Area, and Europe, the Chosen Area: The Call to World Evangelism; Changing the Cradle of Society, 16:6-11

1 The leadership of the Holy Spirit step by step

2 The clear call by the Holy Spirit

3 The strong conviction of the Holy Spirit's call

4 The immediate obedience to the Lord's call

D. Philippi, a Chief City and Luke's Home: Europe's First Convert, 16:12-15

1 Paul and his company arrived in Philippi

2 Lydia was a professional woman

3 She sought and worshipped God: Was a Jewish proselyte

4 She listened and heard the gospel

5 She had her heart opened by the Lord

6 She was immediately baptized

7 She led her whole house to the Lord

8 She opened her home—used her wealth for the Lord

E. The Power of Sin and Money versus the Power of Jesus' Name, 16:16-24

1 The power of human sin

2 The power of Jesus' name

3 The power of money and greed

4 Wrongly accused and Jailed

5 Jailer convicted by the events

6 Exonerated fully

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F. Thessalonica: The Message that Turned the World Upside Down, 17:1-9

1 The messenger

2 The message

3 The results of the message: Many believed

4 The world's reaction to the message

5 The charge against the message

6 The world's fear of the message: Feared the loss of material possessions and positions

G. Berea, the Receptive City: A Noble People, 17:10-15

1 A concerned, God-fearing people

2 A receptive people

3 A people who honestly sought the truth

4 A thinking and searching people: They verified the message preached

5 An honest and decisive people: They believe what proved to be true

6 A courageous, protective, helpful, and ministering people

7 A night escape by Paul and Silas

H. Athens, the Great Intellectual and Philosophical City: The Preacher's Urgency and His Audience; Who It Is that Needs the Gospel, 17:16-21

1 The messenger, Paul, was in Athens, the great intellectual and cultural center

2 There were the religionists

3 There were the God-fearing people

4 There were the average persons or citizens

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5 There were the Epicureans or pleasure seekers

6 There were the Stoics or the self-disciplined

7 There were the philosophical questioners of Christ

I. Athens: Preaching to a Heathen People, 17:22-34

1 Paul preached on Mars Hill

2 God was sought by man

3 God was not hid, not unknown

4 God is the Creator

5 God guides the history of all men and nations

6 God has a great purpose for creating man: To seek and know Him

7 God now demands repentance

8 God has appointed a day to judge the world

9 The results of the message

J. Corinth, the Bridge of Greece: 18:1-17

1 Paul left Athens and traveled to Corinth

2 He found and grew people

3 He worked when required

4 He worshipped and taught every Sabbath

5 He experienced terrible strain and rejection, but he marched on

6 He identified with people to whom he ministered

7 He witnessed to high and low

8 He faced terrible discouragement

9 He saw God's hand at work

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K. Jerusalem and Antioch, The Journey Back: 18:18-22

1 He struck out despite being comfortably settled

2 He put himself under a vow when needed

3 He made disciples of those who would go with him

4 He witnessed faithfully wherever he was

5 He showed honor to other leaders

6 He was attached to his home church

Paul's second missionary journey began with a dispute with Barnabas over the taking of Mark. This dissention has been one of many thoughts. I think it more concerned Mark's immaturity toward understanding Paul's position on the Gentiles, yet Barnabas saw the raw and teachable talent that was truly in Mark. Though there were sharp words, they departed somewhat at odds with each other. I believe though later the two were reconciled. Paul chose as his new companion Silas, Barnabas took Mark and they sailed for Cyprus, and Paul and Barnabas went overland to Syria and Cilicia. Out of this conflict brought two missions instead of one.

Paul was apparently impressed with a young man named Timothy who had a godly mother, an ungodly father, a godly testimony and an attempt was made to satisfy tradition through compromise for the sake of the ministry not justification.

Paul's travels eventually took him to Troas. Here he had the well-known vision of a Macedonian asking him to come. The plan to revisit churches was finished. The Spirit forbade the westward mission; the Spirit forbade the northern mission, and the Spirit's restraint producing great stress. Paul kept going in complete agreement. Luke joined the party in Troas and that he accompanied them to Philippi, Paul's first major stop in what is now called Europe.

They waited until the Sabbath, attended a prayer meeting by a river, and saw that only women were present but they preached the Word with boldness.
Lydia, responded in faith to Paul's message. Their baptism established the church in Philippi. She was a woman of considerable means and used her wealth for the Lord and his disciples

Later, the church was increased through the addition of the Philippian jailer and his family.

Some men were exploiting a demon-possessed slave girl for her ability to predict the future. Though her statements were true, the gospel of Christ would be

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damaged by an association with a demon-possessed slave girl. So "after many days" Paul exorcised the demon, speaking directly to the spirit. This caused an outcry and opposition resulting in false charges being filed. The charges against Paul and Silas were serious. Christians could not be charged with rebellion against Roman religious and social customs. The conversion of women in Philippi added to the uncertainty of the proceedings.

Supernatural deliverance, the earth quaking, the prison shaking, doors flying open, chains falling off. The Jailer would have killed himself verses suffer the shame of execution for his dereliction of duty. Paul's immediately wanted to save the jailer and assured him that all the prisoners were still there. The jailer had an idea of why Paul and Silas were in prison, and called out for salvation. Paul and Silas were released but found it necessary to make sure that he and Silas were fully vindicated of any accusation of wrongdoing. His mission demanded that the gospel be recognized as legitimate.

Leaving Philippi, they traveled west to the capital of Macedonia, Thessalonica.

Paul and others often went into the synagogues, just as Jesus had done. There they served as teachers, for education and tutoring was the central emphasis in synagogue services.

The crowds in Thessalonica were so angered by his preaching. They charged Jason for harboring men who had caused trouble all over the world and defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another King, One called Jesus. This accusation is noteworthy for it shows Jews were behind the whole mob scene. Believers there quickly accompanied him to the coast, and boarded ship for Athens.

In Berea, the openness to God's truth resulted in many conversions. Berean Jews were nobler of character than the Thessalonians. Paul's message was welcomed with great eagerness and they examined the Scriptures every day to see if Paul was speaking truth. Therefore many of them believed and they were convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah promised by the OT prophets.

The Jews of Thessalonica came and stirred up the people. This had been done before, from Iconium to Lystra. The brethren sent away Paul but Silas and Timothy remained at Berea to help establish the young church, while Paul went on south to Athens.

Paul's spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. In this city Paul waged spiritual warfare; in the synagogue he no doubt used his normal approach; in the marketplace he "reasoned" with those who happened to be there. The primary antagonists of Paul were the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. The Epicureans, followed a man Epicurus, they taught pleasure

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and happiness. The Stoics followed Zeno, and traditionally taught Pantheism and cosmic purpose through tragedy and triumph.

Paul was intensely concerned about the welfare of the Thessalonians, and decided to send Timothy back to Thessalonica.

The council, which met on the traditional Mars Hill, wanted to know about Paul's new teaching, which was strange to them. Their openness gave Paul an opportunity to preach his message. Paul began wisely by acknowledging they were very religious. To an unknown God is what Paul referred to here and did not emphasize the altar but their ignorance of the true God.

God made everything, He is supreme over all; the Lord of heaven and earth. Everything is subject to him, and he gives meaning to their existence. The difficulty in finding God is not that he is far from man, but that man, because of sin, is far from God.

No one is exempted from the command to repent. Everyone is now called upon to change his or her mind about God, sin, and self. God does not overlook the sins of those who reject Him. Masses did not accept Christ, but the power of the gospel did work among Athens's intellectual elite.

Paul had been anxiously waiting for Timothy's return and for news of the situation in Thessalonica. He left Athens and traveled to Corinth. Some time later Timothy and Silas joined Paul in Corinth.

Luke identifies the proconsul in Corinth as Gallio. Paul's second missionary journey can be dated with relative precision as covering the years 50-52. Paul was obedient to his responsibility to evangelize, even if he was criticized and his gospel message rejected. He clearly spelled out the results of rejection. Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his family believed. His conversion undoubtedly was a motivation for many Corinthians to be converted.

Paul then left Corinth, heading for his sending church, Antioch and because of a vow he had taken got his hair cut. He came to Ephesus and reasoned with the Jews there and then continued on his journey home. Paul's desire to go to Jerusalem was to keep a feast, probably Passover.

Paul went up to Jerusalem, greeted the church, and then went home to Antioch, his sending church. This was Paul's last visit to Antioch.

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VII. The Third Great Mission of Paul to the Gentiles: To Asia Minor and Europe, 18:23-21:16

A. Ephesus, the Market and Religious Center of Asia Minor: Apollos; Preparing the Way, 18:23-28

1 Two great ministers of the Lord

2 He was an eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures

3 He was instructed in the way of the Lord

4 He was fervent in spirit

5 He taught accurately, taught what he knew

6 He spoke boldly

7 He was teachable, willing to be taught even by those of less learning

8 He was faithful to his call

B. Ephesus: Paul in Ephesus—Salvation and Revival, 19:1-20

1 Paul arrived in Ephesus, but missed Apollos

2 The lessons on salvation

3 The lessons on revival

C. Ephesus: The Way of the Lord Disturbed People, 19:21-41

1 Paul's great strategy

2 The Way disturbed the greedy, the materialists

3 The Way was falsely accused and attacked

4 The Way required great courage, but also wisdom

5 The Way was the object of mob action

6 The Way was miraculously protected by God

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D. Europe and Asia Minor, the Great Cities Revisited: 20:1-12

1 He considered the church above all

2 He served quietly, exhorting much

3 He faced constant threat courageously, but intelligently

4 He grew disciples

5 He worshipped with believers wherever he was

6 He preached long and fervently

7 He served tenderly and warmly

E. Miletus, A Notable City in Ancient Myth: The Faithful Minister, 20:13-27

1 Paul's passion—His face set for Jerusalem

2 A constant, unswerving service

3 A sense of urgency in evangelism and teaching

4 A nagging compulsion: To reach the lost

5 A willingness to suffer

6 A total abandonment to Christ

7 A testimony of foreseeing his ministry in the future

8 A clear and pure heart

F. Miletus: The Last Words to Church Leaders, 20:28-38

1 Guard yourselves and the church

2 Feed the church of God

3 Live for God and for God's Word

4 Labor and give, not coveting worldly wealth

5 Conclusion: Pastor and people departed

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G. Jerusalem, the Final Miles: Warned, Yet Compelled to Preach, 21:1-16

1 Paul journeyed over a land rich in ancient history

2 The pull of a Spirit-filled church versus a sense of duty

3 The remembrance of believers and their needs everywhere versus a deep sense of the Spirit's leading

4 The fact of sure persecution versus an immovable compulsion to do God' will

5 The tug of loved ones versus a readiness to die for the Lord Jesus if need be

On his way back to Antioch, Paul stopped to visit the great port city of Ephesus, on the southwestern coast of Asia Minor.

The apostle was impressed with the potential of this city for the spread of the gospel and he determined to return. No one knows how long it was before Paul set out on his third missionary journey. This trip Paul appears to have followed the same route he had traveled on the previous journey, except he went to Ephesus, as he planned.

His stay in Ephesus was long, productive, and stormy. As usual, he began to preach in the synagogue; as usual, opposition drove him away. His ministry lasted for more than two years and the gospel spread throughout the large province of Asia.

Luke also relates two major occurrences: a deliverance that led to many conversations and a riot provoked by craftsmen. The craftsmen, who fashioned idols for the goddess Diana, were losing money as a result of Paul's ministry. Paul was not directly affected by the uproar. Officials could find nothing legally wrong with Paul's activities.

While in Ephesus, however, Paul received reports that the church in Corinth was experiencing severe problems, particularly divisions within the congregation.

Paul found it necessary to pay a visit to Corinth as noted in 2 Corinthians 2:1; 13:1, this was not possible, so Paul sent Titus as his representative. It is probable that Titus carried with him one of the Corinthian letters. Paul instructed Titus to attempt to resolve the problem and to meet him in Troas. Titus reported with great joy that the Corinthians had finally come around. During the apostle's three-month stay in Achaia he wrote Romans from Corinth.

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Luke, the physician, affirmed that Eutychus was picked up dead after he had fallen from a third-story window. This was from Paul's long preaching before departure. Like Elijah and Elisha, Paul embraced Eutychus and the young man came alive.

Evidently Paul remained in Troas longer than he originally planned. They sailed on to the island of Miletus, where the elders from nearby Ephesus came to hear a farewell from the apostle.

Paul urged the leaders, Be on your guard! He had repeatedly warned them of the danger of doctrinal error. Paul turned to the future responsibilities of the elders in Ephesus. First, they were to attend to th care of) themselves and all the flock. Notably before they could provide for the flock they had to care for their own spiritual well-being. Paul warns some teachers would attack from without and others would arise from within the church to pervert the truth.

Traveling to Cos to Rhodes to Patara, as far as we know, represented one-day's sea journey. Paul boarded a ship which evidently was larger and would make the journey to Phoenicia. Going south of Cyprus they landed at Tyre where the ship unloaded its cargo, which took a week. The persecution of the early church in Jerusalem had scattered the believers to Phoenicia, so Paul sought out believers there.

Through the Spirit the believers at Tyre urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. In view of the phrase, "through the Spirit," was Paul wrong in pursuing his course to Jerusalem? Agabus prophesied that Paul would be imprisoned. Paul was persuaded, however, that he must fulfill his mission, and he was more than ready to suffer in the name of Christ.

Paul was supposedly taking an offering to the Jerusalem believers. Apparently one reason this trip to Jerusalem was so important to Paul was he wanted to make this presentation of money in order to fortify one of his basic doctrines, the unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ.

H. The Jerusalem Council

During Paul' first Missionary journey much was accomplished in Galatia. We find that a difficulty occurred at Antioch as to the obligation of the Gentile members of the Church to come under the full ceremonial regulations of the Jewish Law; and it was resolved to send delegates to the governing body of the Church in Jerusalem about this question.

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THE FIRST CHURCH CONFERENCE/ Acts 15

Group	Position	Reasons
Judaizers ((some Jewish Christians	Gentiles must become Jewish to be eligible for salvation	1. They were devout, practicing Jews who found it difficult to set aside a tradition of gaining merit with God by keeping the law. 2. They thought grace was to easy for the Gentiles. 3. They were afraid of seeming too non-Jewish in the practice of their new faith- which could lead to death. 4. The demands on the Gentiles were a way of maintaining control and authority in the movement.
Gentile Christians	Faith in Christ as Savior is the only requirement for salvation.	1. To submit to Jewish demands would be to doubt what God had already done for them by grace alone 2. They resisted exchanging their pagan rituals for a system of Jewish rituals – neither of which had the power to save. 3. They sought to obey Christ by baptism (rather than circumcision) as a sign of their new faith.
Peter and James	Faith is the only requirement, but there must be evidence of change by rejecting the old life style	1. They tried to distinguish between what was true from God's Word versus what was just human tradition. 2. They had Christ's command to preach to the entire world. 3. They wanted to preserve unity. 4. They saw that Christianity could never survive as just a sect within Judaism.

As long as most of the first Christians were Jewish, there was little difficulty in welcoming new believer; however, Gentiles (non-Jews) began to accept Jesus; offer of salvation. The evidence in their lives and the presence of God's Spirit in them showed that God was accepting them. Some of the early Christians believed that non-Jewish Christians needed to meet certain conditions before they could be worthy to accept Christ. The issue could have destroyed the church, so a conference was called in Jerusalem, and the issue was formally settled there, although it continued to be a problem for many years following. Above is an outline of the three points of view at the conference.

This event is among the five major events of early church history. Many people fail to understand the implications arising out of this dispute. The early church and its brethren were climaxing and actually beginning to settle into a religious comfort zone in Jerusalem and Judea. They had begun to be passé and thought more of their own religious heritage than their religious future. The ministry of Paul and Barnabas began to challenge the current trend. And of course within a challenge comes a retort. We see this retort in the face of the opposition loyalists who wanted to have Jesus, yet preserve, and still promote the law. This one can imagine was truly counter productive to the ministry of Paul and Barnabas.

The new departure in Galatia and Antioch—the opening of the door of faith to the Nations—forced into prominence the question of the relations of Gentile to

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Jewish Christians. Confusion rose in the Church at Antioch. One can only imagine the firestorm within Paul upon finding out those Judaizers had followed him destroying everything he taught.

We learn from Paul himself (Gal. 2:12) that even Peter, already prepared to some extent by his own bold action in the case of Cornelius, had no hesitation in associating freely with the Antiochian Christians in general. Many if not most of the Jews of Jerusalem were far more rigid and narrow. Some traveling on a mission to Antioch from the Church in Jerusalem, were shocked by the state of things which they found. They had not the authority of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15:24) but began to declare that no one could become in the full sense a member of the Church, unless he came under the Jewish Law, and admitted on his body its sign and seal: the Nations could be received into the Church, but in the acceptance they must conform to the Law (15:2).

As the debate raged between the Gentile Christians and the Judaizers, Paul found it necessary to write to the churches in Galatia. The Judaizers were trying to undermine Paul's authority. The debate over Jewish laws and Gentile Christians was officially resolved at the Jerusalem council.

I. What the Judaizers said about Paul

They said he was perverting the truth.

They said he was a traitor to the Jewish faith.

They said he compromised and diluted his message for the Gentiles.

They said he was disregarding the law of Moses.

J. Paul's defense

He had received his message from Christ himself (Acts 9:15; Galatians 1:11-12). He was one of the most dedicated Jews of his time. Yet, in the midst of one of his most zealous acts, God had transformed him through a revelation of the good news about Jesus (Acts 9: 1-30; Galatians 1:13-16).

The other apostles declared that the message Paul was preaching was the true gospel (Acts 9:28; Galatians 2:1-10).

Far from degrading the law, Paul put the law in its proper place. He wrote that it shows people where they have sinned and points them to Christ (Galatians 3:19-29).

The date of this council is generally taken to be A.D. 49. If the crucifixion was 30 or 31 A.D. then the church had been in existence for over 18 years. When Peter

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referred to God's choice of Cornelius some time ago he was looking back about 10 years (Acts 10:1-11:18).

The dispute between Paul and the Judaizers became the central issue that confronted the mother church in Jerusalem. In spite of a challenge to Paul's gospel in the assembly from some believers who were also Pharisees (15:5), the decision of the elders and apostles was affected by the testimony of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas. Peter's speech reminded the council of the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of the first Gentile, Cornelius. Peter declares the issue of whether to accept Gentiles was settled immediately. This was evidenced, Peter said, because God gave the Holy Spirit to them (10:44-46) just as He did to the Jews (2:4; 11:15). So God made no distinction between believing Jews and Gentiles. All are accepted by faith. Paul and Barnabas also referred to the miraculous work of God in their experiences with the Gentiles.

To James, the brother of Jesus and the leader of the Jerusalem Church were left the final statement. He began by discussing Peter's experience (Acts 10). In referring to Peter as Simon, James used a name which would be logical in its setting in Jerusalem (actually the Gr. has Symeoôn, an even more Jewish spelling). The phrase at first is crucial because it affirmed that Paul and Barnabas were not the first to go to the Gentiles. As Peter had already said (Acts 15:7-11) the question had actually been settled in principle (chaps. 10-11) before Paul and Barnabas went on their first journey.

Quite properly the council desired more than the testimony of experience. They wanted to know how it corresponded with the witness of the Scriptures. This is what every believer should do when new revelation of scripture comes forth. This was the ultimate test of validity. To prove that Gentile salvation apart from circumcision was an Old Testament doctrine, James quoted from Amos 9:11-12. James spoke in the plural about the "prophets" before quoting Amos as a probably example, testifying that this was the position of many of the Old Testament prophets.

Theologically, the Gentiles would not be hindered from becoming Christians; they would not be required to undergo circumcision. Practically, however, the council requested that Gentile Christians refrain from practices that would put a strain on their relationship with Jewish Christians and might create morality issues within their own relationship with Jesus according to scripture.

The council, in their wisdom, thought it prudent to send witnesses back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to confirm what was decided by the council. The whole church as well as the apostles and elders were allowed to debate then address the conclusion. They chose to send two of their important elders to be their witnesses. The qualification of Judas and Silas for exhorting the congregation is carefully stated. Luke lays such evident stress on proper qualification that he seems to have considered Divine gifting necessary in any

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one that was to address a congregation in a capacity of minister. This was also considered necessary as to protect both sides from unwarranted attach of Judaizers.

K. Churches Crisis: Dangerous Opportunities! /Acts 15:31

The Chinese word for "crisis" consists of two letters: one means "danger" and the other means "opportunity." Indeed, every church crisis involves a dangerous opportunity to bring either great glory or great shame to the name of Christ. Acts 15 is a good example of this truth.

Dangerous Opportunity?	How seen in Acts 15	The Root of the Danger	How to avoid the Danger and seize the opportunity	How the situation can glorify God if properly handled
Disputes over Doctrine	Judaizers wanted Gentile converts to be circumcised and to keep the Mosaic Law.	Presuppositions	Submit to the Word of God (rather than our own opinions).	Purity
Diversity in Membership	Those from Jewish backgrounds (tending toward legalism) were in the same body with those from pagan backgrounds (tending toward license).	Prejudice	Submit to one another in love (rather than segregate from one another in suspicion).	Unity
Decisions Bu Authority	Some Judaizers did not submit to decision by Jerusalem council; the defiantly continued their divisive campaign of deception and distortion (as seen in later epistles, such as Titus 1:10).	Pride	Submit to God appointed leadership (rather than demanding and advancing our own agenda.)	Humility

Also consider the central Church in Jerusalem. The said in the letter they were of one accord, v. 25 and it pleased the Holy Ghost. They were also cognizant of the need for compromise and unity. There was still a need for adherence to ethical and moral guidelines and these three requirement or requests were for the good of the Church body ("…ye shall do well."). Both morally and ethically they satisfied both opponents. Therefore in the selection of witnesses, we find it relative to discover that one, Judas was the brother of Joseph, representing the Hebrew sector and Silas, a Jewish-Roman Citizen like Paul, representing the Hellenists.

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The conclusion to be drawn here is that the Church was at a major crossroads in its young life. Before the council, the Jerusalem Church acknowledged the gentiles in name only, not generally within Jerusalem fellowshipping with gentile believers. However, when conflict arose, effectually, the decision on the table was this. Do we accept the gentiles into full fellowship and make the Christian movement universal; or do we just quietly move the events into an outreach of, or another branch of, Judaism. The decision made by the council would affect generations of believers and Jews. We see that God's hand was upon the decision and not men; as the letter stated to the Antiochian Church, "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost…"

L. Paul the Prisoner

Paul the missionary became Paul the prisoner, and he remained in bonds for the remainder of the story in Acts. This is another of the five major events in early church history. Paul's life was effectively changing the world. When Paul becomes a prisoner of Rome, it represents the believer, being imprisoned by the world system. Paul begins to write to the believers all over the Roman world to encourage and entice Christians in proper attitude and behavior even in times of tribulation.

Luke knew he was not writing a complete biography of Paul. Any awareness that Luke had of Paul being given other opportunities to serve God in greater ministries did not deter him from closing his account where he did. Born of the Holy Spirit, the physician-writer designed Acts to close with an action-packed account of the appearances of Paul the prisoner in defense of his Christian testimony. These were appearances before the angry mob, a disorganized council, and confused rulers, all leading to his finally reaching Rome (Acts 28:14), the goal of his heart (Rom. 1:10-11; 15:22-24). One man writes, "Paul's life was the most significant life ever lived, and when he came to Rome, the purpose for which he had toiled and striven was virtually achieved".

Paul states in his epistles that his ultimate goal is to see Rome. Rome is the seat of authority of the known world. It is the world system of that day. It represents all that we as believers face in this day, immorality, greed, lasciviousness, perverseness, pride, arrogance, and secularity. Once he arrives, he begins describing to the believer, even to the point of correcting, the proper conduct and actions needed by the believer no matter what his circumstances are.

Paul's imprisonment and successive examinations marks this as the most important part of the book in the Luke's estimation. It is essential to the purpose to establish the approaching climax, and that what has up till now been a narrated lead up to the great event of the whole work. Study the table below of Paul's journey to Rome.

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M. Paul's Journey to Rome / Acts 27:1-28:1

One of Paul's most important journeys was to Rome, but he didn't get there the way he expected. It turned out to be more of a legal journey than a missionary journey. Through a series of legal trials and transactions, Paul was delivered to Rome, where his presentation of the gospel would even penetrate the walls of the emperor's palace. Sometimes when our plans don't work out as we want them to, they work out even better than we expected.

Reference	What Happened
21:30-34	When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, a riot broke out. Seeing the riot, Roman soldiers put Paul into protective custody. Paul asked for a chance to defend himself to the people. His speech was interrupted by the crowd when he told about what God was doing in the lives of the Gentiles.
22:24-25	A Roman commander ordered a beating to gat a confession from Paul. Paul claimed Roman citizenship and escaped the whip.
22:30	Paul was brought before the Jewish high council. Because of his Roman citizenship, he was rescued from the religious leaders who wanted to kill him.
23.:10	The Roman commander put Paul back under protective custody.
23:21-24	Due to a plot to kill Paul, the commander transferred him to Caesarea, which was under Governor Felix's control.
23:35	Paul was in prison until the Jews arrived to accuse him. Paul defended himself before Felix.
24:25-26	Paul was in prison for two years, speaking occasionally to Felix and Dursilla.
24:27	Felix was replaced by Festus.
25:1,10	New accusations were brought against Paul – Jews wanted him back in Jerusalem for trail. Paul claimed his right to a hearing before Caesar.
25:12	Festus promised to send him to Rome.
25:13-14	Festus discussed Paul's case with Herod Agrippa II.

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26:1	Agrippa and Festus heard Paul speak. Paul again told his story.
26:24-28	Agrippa interrupted with a sarcastic rejection of the gospel.
26:30-32	The group consensus was that Paul was guilty of nothing and could have been releases if he had not appealed to Rome.
27:1-2	Paul left for Rome, courtesy of the Roman Empire.

In the Third Gospel, Luke alone among the four historians records formally the attempt made by the Jews to implicate Jesus in criminal practices against the Roman Empire, and the emphatic, thrice repeated statement of Pilate acquitting Him of all fault (23:2, 4, 14, 22) before the law. Throughout the whole book, from the time when the centurion Cornelius is introduced, great art is shown in bringing out without any formal statement the friendly relations between the Romans and the new teaching, even before Paul became the leading spirit in its development.

When Paul is accosted in the Temple area, this evidence of Roman favor begins to show more prominence. People were warned in the Temple area that gentiles were not allowed beyond a certain point. The person offending would have only himself to blame in case of his death. So deep was this feeling that the Romans gave permission to Jews to fulfill this death sentence, even if the intruder was a Roman citizen. Therefore the quick action of the Roman soldiers is evident for the protection of Paul, as a Roman as well as being known through out the Roman world and some have said he was the most influential man of his time.

The importance of the preliminary stages of the trial lies in its issue; a formal decision by the Supreme Court of the Empire that it was permissible to preach Christianity: the trial, therefore, was really a charter of religious liberty, and therein lays its immense importance. Secondly and of equal importance, was fulfilling scripture and the call.

But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: Acts 9:15 (KJV)

He had fulfilled two of the three challenges now the process of Kings begins.

The accusations against Paul were Jewish, and the best way to unearth these was to have a hearing before the Sanhedrin. If the prisoner was found innocent he could be released, but if the charges were valid the case could be remitted to the procurator, the Roman governor. Paul disrupted the proceedings by starting an argument between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. By using this tactic,

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Paul divided his enemy. Amazingly the Pharisees defended Paul, a fellow Pharisee. Paul was in more danger in the midst of the Jews than he was in a Roman prison. So again he was brought up the steps to the army barracks at the Antonia Fortress.

There was a plot by the chief priests and elders of Israel to kill Paul. Word of course was brought to the Captain and he in turn sent Paul to the Governor at Caesarea. When a prisoner was forwarded to a superior, the subordinate officer was required to accompany the subject with a written statement of the case. The importance of this document is seen in 23:29 where the commander declared Paul innocent. Felix was the procurator, learned Paul was from Cilicia, and he determined to hear the case. The high priest himself went down to Caesarea as well as some of the elders of the Sanhedrin with an orator to present their case.
Paul was in the Caesarea prison for two year speaking many times to Felix and Drusilla. During this period he was in constant written communication with the churches, and some scholars think that he help supervise Luke's writing of the Acts.
Felix is replaced by Festus as Governor and new accusations are brought by the Jews against Paul. The Jews knew their case against Paul was false and the only way to do away with this man was to lay in wait for him as he traveled. Therefore, the Jews requested he be brought to Jerusalem for trial and punishment. Festus did not agree, but said he would reopen the case in Caesarea. The scene of previous trials repeated itself. Luke added, however, that the charges were many and serious. Festus ask Paul if he would return to Jerusalem for trial and Paul refused, he categorically denied the charges against him and appealed to Caesar. So after he had conferred with his council, he announced that in view of Paul's appeal, he must go to Caesar.

A convoy of prisoners was starting for Rome under charge of a centurion of the Augustan cohort, and a detachment of soldiers; and Paul was sent along with it. Luke and Aristarchus accompanied Paul: some may wonder how a prisoner could have traveling companions or servants. Paul occupied a very different position from the other prisoners. He was a man of distinction, a Roman citizen who had appealed for trial to the Supreme Court in Rome. He was probably entitled to companions or servants of some sort. He was allowed extensive freedom while in the custody of Felix, so one could conclude that he was permitted traveling companions as rights granted to any Roman nobleman. We do not know for a surety that Paul was born of "Noble" birth. But several points bear witness to the fact that Paul showed himself as a man of means, either by dress or by requesting such an expensive trial. The Roman government took heed to such a presentation, thereby, receiving audiences directly to the Governor and not a local magistrate as was common for the times. Paul had to maintain himself and friends while a prisoner. He was not held in the public jails, he housed himself. Financial circumstances, from wherever, yielded Paul added public opinion at least with the Roman officials. Again we have no solid facts just circumstances, which lead us to acknowledge that Paul possibly had a

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benefactor somewhere, churches, individuals, possibly an inheritance from family.

The ship worked slowly along the Cilician and Pamphylian coast, as the sailors availed themselves of temporary local land breezes and of the steady westward current that runs along the coast. In the harbour of Myra, the centurion found an Alexandrian ship on a voyage towards Italy. He embarked his convoy on board of this ship. Egypt was one of the granaries of Rome; the corn trade between Egypt and Rome was important, therefore, it is a reasonable probability that this ship was carrying corn to Rome. The ship continues to Fairhaven where it is stationed for over two weeks waiting for prevailing winds. A meeting was held to consider the situation, at which Paul was present, as a person of rank whose convenience was to some extent consulted, whose experience as a traveler was well known. Contrary to Paul's advice the majority (Acts 27:11) decided it best to sail on to a more commodious harbor and to winter there.

They set sail and very soon ran into a Nor'easter, a storm of great magnitude. It drove the ship aimlessly with no stars to guide them they were lost. They did all they could as sailors, but it seem all hope was gone. Paul then spoke, "Sirs, ye should have hearkened [listened] unto me"—his comment was not meant to aggravate the situation, but to give authority to what he was about to say. He encouraged them with a message from God.

Soon the ship would crash into Malta, but God's promise to Paul was sure. No one was lost, they found favor with the local residents, and within three months, they saw another ship docked at the island. Another grain ship bound for Rome. The journey was carefully traced by Luke: from Malta to Syracuse, Sicily; to Rhegium (today Reggio) on the "toe" of Italy; to Puteoli (today Pozzuoli), 152 miles south of Rome; and finally to Rome itself.

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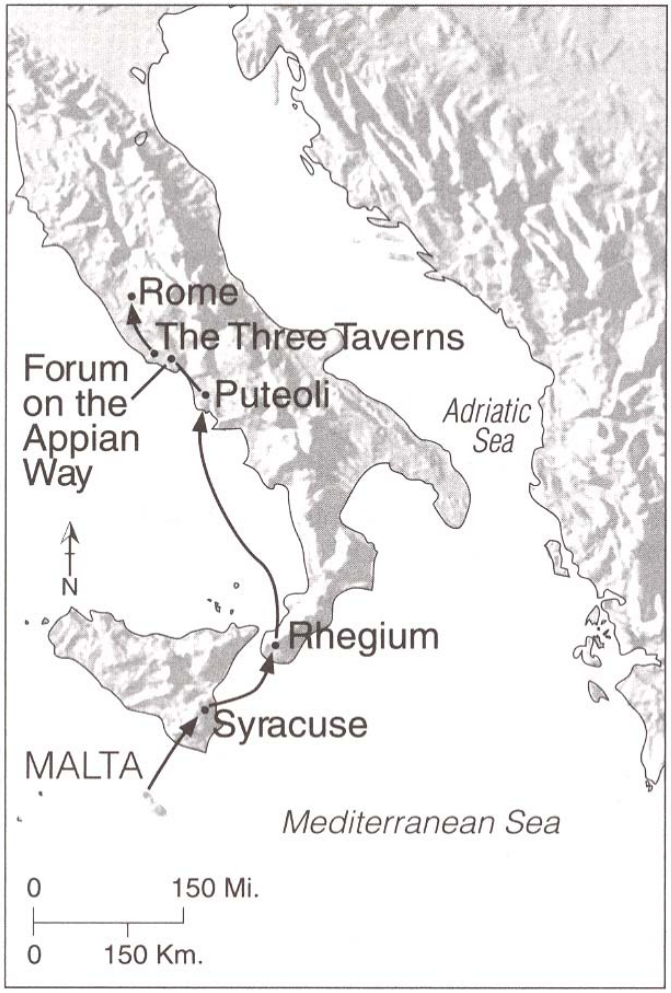

PAUL ARRIVES IN ROME

Acts 28:1-16

The shipwreck occurred on Malta, where the ship's company spent three months. Finally, another ship gave them passage for the 100 miles to Syracuse, capital of Sicily, then sailed on to Rhegium, finally dropping anchor at Puteoli. Paul was taken to the Forum on the Appian Way and to The Three Taverns before arriving in Rome.

Paul and his companions found some brothers. This is significant because it shows that the gospel had already spread from Rome to this Italian seaport. The Christians at Rome soon heard of Paul's coming, so they traveled as far as the Forum of Appius (a market town 43 miles from Rome) and the Three Taverns (33 miles from Rome) to meet him and his companions. At last God was bringing Paul to Rome. And the welcome of fellow believers, whom he had never met, uplifted his soul. So they proceeded on the Appian Way. Paul was delivered to the Captain of the Guard. .

The capital of the ancient world was located on the Tiber River. Paul was allowed to dwell by himself, meaning not in the public prison, with a soldier that kept him—this privilege was given to many of the better-class prisoners who were not charged with any serious crime. Festus's letter and Julius's high recommendation probably helped Paul to secure this arrangement. His guards were changed often, which gave him a good chance to spread the gospel among the Praetorian Guard.

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The climax of the book is found in these closing verses. As usual Paul first spoke with the Jews. In this case he called… the leaders to meet with him because he could not go to their synagogues. The response of the leaders was ambivalent: they said they knew nothing about Paul and their only reports about Christianity (this sect) were negative. They were interested in hearing Paul's views since they knew that people were talking against his message. In the second meeting with Paul, they were much more definitive in their responses to the gospel. This time they came in even larger numbers. The discussion was also longer. All day long Paul spoke of the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.

The term "kingdom of God" includes the death and resurrection of Christ as its basis but also looks ahead to Christ's reign on earth. It is clearly eschatological in significance To the Jews the concept of the Messiah dying for sins as atonement and the teaching of justification by faith as the way of entering the kingdom was foreign to the Jew. The Jews were divided in their responses. Some were convinced… but others refused to believe (Acts 28:24).

Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all that came in unto him—He was still under guard and was not allowed to go out but could have visitors in his house. Preaching the kingdom of God . . . with all confidence [boldness]—this characterizes the dynamic energy with which Paul preached about God's kingdom and the Lord Jesus Christ.

VIII. OUTSTANDING CHARACTERS

A. Ananias

We do not know much about Ananias. However, we do know that he was married to Sapphira. At this time in history, it was a common practice for church members to sell what they had and lay the proceeds at the feet of the Apostles. These offerings were then used to care for the needy. Many sold their properties and gave the earnings to the poor. Barnabas was included among those who sold all and gave it to the poor.

Ananias and Sapphira did the same, but unlike the others they held back some of the profit while claiming they gave it all.

Peter accused Ananias of lying to the Holy Spirit and to God. Hearing the Apostle's judgment, Ananias fell down and died. Sapphira agreed with her husband when questioned by the apostles and fell dead three hours after her husband died.

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B. Barnabas

A native of Cyprus and member of the tribe of Levi, Barnabas perhaps served in the temple. Barnabas was a crucial early link between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Luke introduces Barnabas as a generous man who sold land to support the growing church.

Barnabas soon vouched for a new convert named Saul of Tarsus (Paul) who was distrusted by those who had recently been targets of Saul's persecution. Shortly thereafter, Jerusalem church leaders sent Barnabas to Antioch where the congregation contained both Jews and Gentiles. Under Barnabas, the church grew so quickly that Barnabas went to Tarsus and asked Saul (Paul) to join him. Together Barnabas and Saul worked successfully for a year. At this time in Antioch, "the disciples were for the first time called Christians" (Acts 11:26).

Barnabas was sent to Antioch by the leaders in Jerusalem. The church grew so rapidly that Barnabas asked Paul to join him. For a year they worked together there in Antioch.

Barnabas organized a relief drive during a famine. He and Saul took the gifts to Jerusalem. Then, the church sent Barnabas, Paul, and John Mark on a tour to preach to the Gentiles. Their first stop was Cyprus, where the Proconsul, Sergius Paulus was converted. They continued to travel together for a time.

Barnabas and Paul planned one more trip to the sites of their first successes. However, Paul did not want Mark to accompany them because he had abandoned the first mission trip after Cyrus. Unable to agree they went their separate ways.

C. Cornelius

Cornelius was a Roman Centurion, who was sympathetic towards the Jews. He apparently was the first Gentile to become a Christian.

An angel appeared to the Centurion and told him to summon Peter. The next day Peter had a vision, which occurred three times. Peter concluded that, just as no food was unclean, no person could be considered unclean either. Gentiles were as free to receive Jesus as the Jews.

Peter visited Cornelius at his home in Caesarea. While Peter was preaching, Cornelius and other Gentiles began speaking in tongues. Thus, with the vision and the people in Cornelius house receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Peter agreed with God that the Gentiles there should be baptized, just as a Jew.

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D. Dorcas

Dorcas was also known as Tabitha. Everyone was familiar with her acts of charity, including making garments for the poor.

When Dorcas became ill and died, many mourned her. Peter was ten miles away and was sent for. He came to Dorcas' side and prayed over her. He said, "Tabitha, rise," and she opened her eyes and extended her hand to him. Peter presented her alive. This was the first such miracle by an apostle and gained many believers.

E. Felix

Felix, formerly a royal slave, was Procurator of Judea approximately A.D. 52. He was married to Drusilla, daughter of Herod Agrippa.

Felix's procuratorship was characterized by turmoil. Felix held Paul prisoner for two years without charges, hoping to extort a bribe. However, Felix allowed him to receive visitors. The “worthy deeds” referred to in Acts 24:2 was his clearing the country of bandits and impostors.

Felix was replace as procurator (A.D. 60), then proceeded to Rome, and was there accused of cruelty and corruption of office by the Jews of Caesarea. Felix himself barely escaped severe punishment in Rome, where his powerful brother Pallas had to intervene with Nero to spare his life.

F. Festus

Festus succeeded Felix as Procurator of Judea in approximately 60 A.D. During his reign, Festus destroyed a group of bandits who had been terrorizing the land. During his visit to Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders reminded him that Paul was still in prison in Caesarea by Felix's order. Paul was brought before Festus, Herod Agrippa, and Bernice in Caesarea for trial. They all agreed on Paul's innocence. Festus concluded, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar" (Acts 26:32), then unwillingly dispatched Paul to Rome.

G. Herod Agrippa II

Like his father Herod Agrippa I, Marcus Julius Agrippa (his Roman name) was raised in the imperial court at Rome. When his father died suddenly in AD 44, Agrippa was only 17 and, according to the emperor Claudius, too young to inherit the kingdom. It was instead placed under direct Roman administration. Six years later Claudius named the young man ruler of Chalcis, a small kingdom in present-day Lebanon. The previous king, Herod of Chalcis, was Agrippa's uncle and the husband of his sister Bernice. Then, in AD 53, Agrippa surrendered Chalcis in order to receive the tetrarchies formerly held by Herod Phillip and

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Lysanias. In AD 61 the emperor Nero, Claudius's successor, granted him portions of Galilee and Perea as well.

Herod Agrippa II appears in the book of Acts as one of the rulers before whom the apostle Paul defended himself. About AD 56, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem for inciting a riot. He presented his defense first before the Jewish Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, next before the Roman procurator Antonius Felix in Caesarea, then two years later before Felix's successor Porcius Festus. Since Agrippa and his sister Bernice, who had come to live with him following the death of her husband, were visiting Caesarea, Festus informed them of the case. "I should like to hear the man myself", (Acts 25:22) Agrippa told the procurator. The next day Paul was brought before them so that they could help Festus decide what charges were to be pressed against the apostle.

Paul's defense included a review of his life with an emphasis on his conversion and his call to preach to the Gentiles. But he opened with an appeal to Agrippa's knowledge of Jewish customs and closed with a rhetorical question: "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe." (Acts 26:27-28) Agrippa recommended that Paul be released, agreeing with the governor that Paul deserved neither death nor imprisonment. But since the apostle had already appealed to Caesar, he had to go to Rome for final judgment.

In Rome under Claudius, Agrippa had defended Jewish causes, and later, as king in Jerusalem, he undertook costly improvement of the temple. However, his true loyalty was to Rome. When the Jews rebelled against Rome in AD 66, Agrippa, like many other Jewish leaders, judiciously sided with the Romans. After the rebellion had been suppressed, Agrippa was rewarded with additional territories to expand his kingdom. Although he continued to rule until his death in AD 93, Agrippa lived in Rome for much of his last two decades. Since Agrippa never married and was childless, he was the last of the Herodian dynasty.

H. James

James, the brother of John and the son of Zebedee, is the vaguest figure among the twelve apostles. There is no doubt, however, that he held a leading place among the apostles. He was the first apostle to gain a martyr's crown (Acts 12:2).

James appears with his brother John at all times. The only time James appears alone is when he is martyred (Acts 12:1-2). Therefore to obtain a clear picture of James, we need to study John and James, together.

James was a man of both courage and forgiveness. He was without jealousy, as he lived in the shadow of John. He possesses an extraordinary faith, and is a good example of victorious faith.

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Both James and John were members of the inner circle, along with Peter. They participated in most of the sacred occasions with Jesus. They were fishermen, and of a wealthy family. Their father had servants working for him. Both James and John were called by Jesus to be 'fishers of men,' and they accepted the challenge.

James and John are mentioned together throughout the New Testament. James is usually named first, which is believed because he was the elder of the two. Quite often they are referred to as the "Sons of "Thunder" (Mark 3:17). This was thought as given them because of their fiery personalities. In fact, on one occasion, the brothers exhibited their impulsive and rash demeanor.

James death is recorded in Acts 12:2. Herod Agrippa I was the ruler who put James to death. His martyrdom is the only one of the twelve apostles recorded in the New Testament.

I. John

John was the brother of James and the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve apostles. John was a prominent leader in the early Christian church. In fact, Paul lists John as one of the pillars (Galatians 2:9) of the Jerusalem church. James and Peter were also mentioned as pillars of the early church. Acts records John traveling with Peter on important missions trips. On one occasion, they helped a lame man and they encountered the opposition of the Jewish authorities.

John wrote the Gospel of John, and the three letters (epistles) of John and the last book of the New Testament, Revelation.

According to Luke, Peter and John were sent to prepare the Passover meal on the eve of Jesus' crucifixion.

J. Paul

1. General information

Although Paul was the leading persecutor of Christians in the first years of the new faith, Paul became a believer in Jesus and the most influential voice - after Jesus himself - in the history of the church. Paul's conversion placed him on the borderline between two worlds. He had been raised in a strict Jewish home that led him to devote his life to the defense of Mosaic Law against a "sect" that not only questioned that law and worship in the temple but also claimed a crucified Galilean teacher was the Messiah. Paul's transformation convinced him that indeed the crucified Galilean was the Messiah and Son of God and that the Messiah's message was not only for Jews but also for Gentiles. The experience

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could not have been more traumatic or ultimately more joyful for Paul. Although he continued to devote his life to the same God he had always worshiped, Paul came to see God's will as pointing in another direction.

Paul was born in the Greek city of Tarsus, a prosperous and renowned center of education and philosophy in the region of Cilicia in southern Asia Minor. Paul's family thus lived in the two worlds of Greek and Jewish culture. As Paul told an assembly of Pharisees and Sadducees, "I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees" (Acts 23:6). His parents gave him the Hebrew name of Saul, in honor of King Saul, who was of their tribe of Benjamin. He also bore the Latin name Paulus and was proud to assert that he was both a citizen of the Greek city of Tarsus and a citizen of Rome. Relatively few Jewish families of the Diaspora enjoyed such privileges of citizenship, which often required compromise with pagan culture and having sons educated in Greek culture in the city school, called a gymnasion. Paul's father apparently had enough wealth to attain citizen status while remaining a strict Pharisee. Life in the Diaspora, and being besieged by Greek political and cultural influences, evidently made him more devoted to his own religion.

Apparently, while Paul was still a youth, the family moved to Jerusalem. Paul was educated there and his only known sibling, a married sister with a son, still lived there many years later. Paul's Pharisaic roots led him to study with one of the leading teachers of the time, Gamaliel the elder. He was known in tradition as the grandson of the great Hillel, the leading Jewish teacher of the first century B.C. Through this training, Paul said, "I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. 1:14). At the same time, Paul learned the craft of tent making in order to support himself for his study of the law.

A cosmopolitan city, Jerusalem had numerous synagogues where Jews from Greek-speaking regions gathered for study and mutual support. The book of Acts mentions synagogues for Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia (the region around Ephesus). Since he was from Tarsus, Paul most likely made the synagogue of the Cilicians his base, and there he began to dispute with Christians such as Stephen, one of the leaders of the Greek-speaking church in Jerusalem. To Paul such people seemed determined to undermine the law and worship at the holy temple, all in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Though Paul was probably in Jerusalem during the final period of Jesus' life, he never gives any hint in his writings that he saw or heard of Jesus during his ministry. It was only in later debates with Jesus' followers that Paul became alarmed at the rapid development of the movement.

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Paul (still known as Saul) first appears in the New Testament as a consenting witness at the execution of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Stephen was brought before a council to be charged with speaking "against this holy place and the law" and with arguing that Jesus would "destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us" (Acts 6:13-14). Stephen confirmed the worst fears of people like Paul by attacking his countrymen for always opposing God, for believing that God could ever dwell in a man-made house like the temple, and for betraying and killing the Messiah. For Paul, these were words of war. Everything that he held dear, the law, the temple, the traditions of his people, seemed at risk if a sect like this was allowed to survive. What is more, the sect was proclaiming as the Messiah a man who had been hung on a cross, whereas the scriptures taught, "a hanged man is accursed by God" (Deut. 21:23). A broken law, a destroyed temple, and an accursed Messiah-to Paul these heresies summarized the dangerous new sect. Thus, as he later wrote, "I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it" (Gal. 1:13).

The first target of Paul's attacks was evidently the Christians of Jerusalem, who were Jews from the Greek Diaspora, like Stephen and Paul himself. Many, including the evangelist Philip, another of the seven leaders of the Greek-speaking Christians, fled to Samaria, Damascus, Phoenicia, Cyprus, or Antioch of Syria. Paul even used his influence with the high priest in Jerusalem to reach beyond the city to attack Christians in regions outside Judea, obtaining from him letters to the synagogues at Damascus. Though the high priest had no legal authority outside Judea, his word could certainly affect how synagogues would cooperate with Paul in his opposition to the new faith.

2. A transforming vision

About A.D. 35, some five years after Jesus' crucifixion, Paul, perhaps about 30 years old, was on his way to Damascus with the letters from the high priest in hand. God chose that moment to reverse his life. In later years Paul described the event calmly, saying simply that God "was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles" (Gal. 1:16). In Acts, the event is recounted three times in considerable detail.

Paul was nearing Damascus when a brilliant light from heaven surrounded him. A voice addressed Paul by his Hebrew name; "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Paul might have hoped for such a vision to approve his work for God, but he was dumbfounded when the voice accused him of persecution. He could only ask, "Who are you, Lord?" The next words Paul heard crushed his world and transformed his future. The voice answered, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:4-5).

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War is fought by two opposing forces. We find those two opposing forces being the natural and supernatural realms within the life of the believer. Paul was in a struggle, waging war if you will, concerning his own understandings and that of what he did not understand. In the mind of Paul he was in one facet content with his existing knowledge of God, however, when a new idea arose in the midst of Judaism, this caused a great schism in his mind concerning the true faithfulness of God. People are hindered from reality if, in preaching the gospel, one substitute's man's knowledge for the reality of God. Paul was struggling with that precise fact. Judaism made many requirements of man yet this new sect was stating that the only requirement was to believe on a man. This was a new and unheard of way of salvation; for to have confidence in the power of the gospel of Christ was to go against the very teachings that he was accustomed. Could this Jesus be the Messiah?

That would be impossible! Jesus had been crucified-accursed. He could not be the Messiah, much less be speaking to him in a vision from heaven. But Paul was himself experiencing that vision, and he could not deny it. The experience was such that Paul simply knew with profound assurance that this was indeed a heavenly vision (Acts 26:19) from God whom he had been serving but whom he had radically misunderstood. For Paul the impossible had become real.

As soon as you are rooted in reality, nothing can shake you. If your faith is in occurrences, anything that happens is likely to upset that faith. Paul was being uprooted and shaken in his own understanding. But nothing can ever change God or the reality of redemption. Paul tried to reconcile himself with that of what was being preached by the apostles and their followers. He was failing and probably knew it. Base your faith on that of man's requirements and you are not secure in God. Having a personal relationship with Christ, means you hopefully, will never be provoked again unto self. That is one of the meanings of sanctification. God disapproves of our human labors to adhere to the concept that sanctification is merely an experience. Paul struggled to give his consecrated life, by way of the law, to God for His service, this meant to throw away all that he had learned and desired to be.

Paul had heard the preaching of many of the early disciples, especially Stephen. The blood was preached, the atoning facets of Jesus' death and the lack of importance in the actual sacrificial system of that day. Yet, Paul was not converted. In fact it drove him to a state of frenzied fanaticism to "preserve the Law". He sought out permission and letters to persecute believers. Paul was so zealous in his charge that his fame grew rapidly. Yet with all the testimonies around him and even directed toward him, he still resisted conviction by word of mouth. Paul had yet to receive the revelation of Christ.

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The dazzling light had blinded Paul, perhaps to teach him the blindness of the violent persecution he had instigated. The brilliant light that accompanied the voice of Jesus was a common Old Testament symbol of God's presence. Paul submitted without reserve, desirous to know what the Lord Jesus would have him to do. But with his companions Paul continued to Damascus, where he would spend three days praying in that unaccustomed darkness, fasting, cut off from his past, not knowing what the future held. Physically blind for three days, Paul took no meat and the Lord brought to bear his sins. It pleased God to leave him for that time without relief. His sins were now set in order before him and now he was prepared for the maker's hand.

Finally, he was approached by a man named Ananias, a devout Jew who was also an adherent of the new faith. Through Ananias, Paul would begin to experience the true blessings of relationship. He was broken and trembling, stricken and apprehensive, yet praying: he was truly a new convert, seeking God's face; looking for relationship. Then, Ananias called Paul brother. He now had confirmation; he had been truly forgiven and received by the Lord. A relationship was established in both the physical and spiritual. The scales of darkness fell from his eyes, symbolizing how the scales of spiritual darkness and sin and shame had been removed from his heart as the entrance of the keeper of our heart comes. He was baptized and experienced the power of the Holy Spirit of which made Stephen bold. This endued him with power to begin his task.

Immediately, Paul began to proclaim his new faith in Jesus with some of the same vigor he had used before to defend the law. He startled Jews and Christians in Damascus by entering their debates on the opposite side from the one they had expected. He preached Christ, no longer preaching religion, tradition, ceremony, or ritual. He was not preaching himself or his spiritual experiences. He preached Christ and Him alone. Paul stood as a testimony; publicans and leaders of the synagogue were amazed. For they were witnessing a man radically changed by the power of God.

When the situation became dangerous, Paul did not return directly to Jerusalem but traveled south into Arabia, then a part of the kingdom of Nabatea, and remained there two or three years, preaching and teaching. By the time he went back to Damascus, he had evidently become the object of such antagonism that King Aretas of Nabatea had the city guarded to prevent Paul's escape. But aided by Christian friends, Paul "was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands" (II Cor. 11:33).

In about A.D. 38, Paul finally returned to Jerusalem, where many Christians had formerly suffered persecution at his hands. The believers would not receive him. They did not have faith in his testimony. They were

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apprehensive, thinking he was a charlatan trying to work his way into the group of believers to spy upon them. Even the disciples, until Barnabas, acting as an encourager, and vouching for Saul's sincerity and effectiveness in Damascus, were still afraid of Saul's reputation. Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus who was one of the original members of the Christian community in Jerusalem was held in great esteem by the disciples, his guarantee for Paul carried great influence. At that time he met only two of the church's leaders, Peter (whom he calls Cephas) and James, "the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:19), who was becoming the major voice of the Jerusalem community. Paul's very presence in Jerusalem was such a catalyst for conflict, however, that he soon departed for Tarsus and spent the next several years working in Cilicia and Syria.

3. A message for Gentiles

Few details are known of Paul's work in those first 10 to 12 years after his dramatic conversion. It was doubtless a time of much activity but also profound reflection for Paul. He knew that God had called him not simply to repeat the words of others but to delve deeply into the revelation that he himself had received. What did it mean to trust that one who had been crucified was indeed God's Messiah? What did it mean that the message was for Gentiles not as proselytes to Judaism but as Gentiles? Paul was a highly trained Jew, and his understanding of the law, tradition, Israel's history, and God's grace and love had to be completely rethought. The message of the cross, which had once seemed so scandalously foolish, he now saw as the very embodiment of God's wisdom and power.

Paul played a large part in God's plan to take the gospel to the Gentile world. By doing all he could against the name of Christ, he thought he did God service in the eradication of this heretical sect. But God had other ideas. As a principal in the effort to stifle Christianity, he becomes its greatest apologist. Saul of Tarsus, the arch-persecutor of Jesus and His disciples, was soon to become Paul, the most celebrated apostle to the world.

During those years, his preaching and reflection crystallized into the powerful theological message that is apparent in the letters Paul later wrote. In practical terms, the problem of the relevance of the gospel to Gentiles as well as Jews was becoming the thorniest theological dilemma for the early Christian communities. Peter was pushed by a dramatic vision to overcome his strong personal aversion and preached the gospel to a pious Gentile named Cornelius. His action sparked a sharp controversy within the church in Jerusalem. The entire first generation of believers was Jewish, and to many of them faith in the Messiah was intimately linked to observance of the Mosaic Law. It seemed impossible

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to them that a community of believers in the Messiah would not faithfully keep the law.

The admission of Gentiles as equals with the Jews in the church was a principle Paul probably acted on from the very beginning of his ministry. But Peter, on the other hand, had to erase all prejudices and barriers between people. Jew and Gentile are now one in Christ Jesus, a foreign concept to a Jew. Jews had become separatists, extremely prejudiced, building barriers and partitions between themselves and the other people of the world (Gentiles). God had to break these barriers down.

Peter's preparation for the visit is very interesting. He took six Jewish believers, orthodox Jews, with him. Peter knew he was creating problems by associating with Gentiles; he sensed he would need witnesses to what he was doing. Cornelius was so confident that Peter would come and he was so expectant of Peter's message that he called together his relatives and close friends. Cornelius was already witnessing by bringing people to hear the messenger from God.

God alone saves the Gentiles and the Jews, that is, the people of the world. No man can save another man. No man has the authority to save anyone else. Salvation, the gift of the new birth and of God's Spirit, is of God and God alone. This is made abundantly clear in this passage, the passage where the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit of God. Peter's message was rapidly concluded by the sovereign interruption of the Holy Spirit who came on all those who heard Peter's message about Jesus and believed. The Jews who were circumcised believers, were astonished; "they were beside themselves"; at this evidence of equality of Gentiles with Jewish believers.

The faithful Jews contended with Peter over fellowshipping and eating with Gentiles. The lack of understanding led to this confrontation, however, the Spirit of God intervened as Peter explained how the Holy Ghost came upon them all who had believed in the house. The church's early vision was narrow and traditional. They saw Christianity as an extension of Judaism; if a person wished to accept Christ, he had to become a Jew first. Peter had gone contrary to these beliefs and practices. God's will for the church's vision was a world-wide mission. Peter simply reached out to the contentious and explained as clearly and straightforwardly as he could by simply sharing what had happened.

It was evidently in Antioch of Syria that the new faith was first actively taught among Gentiles. The Gentiles were then accepted into the community without having to be circumcised or without being required to observe the dietary laws and regulations of purity that distinguishes Judaism. Barnabas came from Jerusalem and strongly approved of these

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new developments. Needing additional help, he went to Tarsus, found Paul, and brought him to Antioch. Together these two functioned as the leading teachers in Antioch for a year. And there, outsiders began to call the disciples "Christians," meaning "followers of Christ," to distinguish them from other Jewish groups. Though the ethnic mix of this community made it very different from the Jerusalem church, the Christians in Antioch were careful to maintain close ties with that community by sending aid in times of famine. On one occasion, perhaps about A.D. 46, Barnabas and Paul took the aid to Jerusalem and returned with Barnabas' cousin, John Mark.

Soon after their return to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas realized that the Spirit was calling them to new areas of work. With fasting and prayer, the two set out for Cyprus, taking John Mark as their assistant on what has traditionally been called the first missionary journey.

With Barnabas' knowledge of his home island, the company began work in Salamis on the east coast, preaching in synagogues there before traveling west across the island to Paphos. At Paphos they encountered one of the many strange religious characters that could be found in cities throughout the Roman Empire: a Jew named Bar-Jesus who claimed to be a prophet and a magician and who had become a spiritual adviser to the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus. When the magician tried to keep the proconsul from listening to the Christian message, Paul struck Bar-Jesus blind, and Paulus believed, "astounded at the teaching of the Lord" (Acts 13:12). In Acts, this event marks the point at which Paul becomes the leader of the missionary enterprise and, coincidentally, begins to be called by his Latin name; whereas Luke had earlier written of "Barnabas and Saul," he now speaks of "Paul and his company" (Acts 13:7, 13).

Next, the group of missionaries crossed over to Asia Minor and traveled inland through the region of Pisidia to another of the towns named Antioch, where Paul preached in the synagogue. "We bring you the good news," Paul proclaimed, "that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus" (Acts 13:32-33). Many responded enthusiastically, but others in the synagogue were outraged. The message split the Jewish community and soon stirred up the whole town. But an exuberant Christian community, made up primarily of Gentiles, was formed apart from the synagogue. After a few weeks; however, the opposition to Paul and Barnabas became so intense that they traveled on to other cities; Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, all in the region call Lycaonia.

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4. Hailed as gods

In each of these cities, the missionaries met with a combination of positive response and intense opposition. Pagan crowds in Lystra first thought that Paul and Barnabas were gods for having healed a lame man but later turned on them and stoned Paul till they thought he was dead. The sever injuries from such a stoning might well have weakened Paul's health permanently, for he mentioned later of his physical frailty. Yet communities of believers were established in each of these cities, drawing people from both Jewish and pagan backgrounds into their new faith.

After Derbe, Paul and Barnabas retraced their steps to each city, "strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). At some point on this trip Paul and Barnabas were joined by Titus, a young Greek convert who later became one of Paul's most important coworkers. Together they traveled back to Antioch in Syria and reported to the church there how God "had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles" (acts 14:27).

The simmering tensions between Jews and Gentiles within the church, however, were coming to a boil. Christian teachers from Judea came to Antioch with a warning for all the Gentile converts: "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). These Christians had been Pharisees before they came to believe in Jesus and who vigorously challenged Paul's understanding of the gospel. In the face of this pressure, in about A.D. 49, Paul and Barnabas took Titus-refusing to allow him to be circumcised-and went to Jerusalem to confront the issue with the leaders of the church. Thus, by taking Titus as an example of the power of the gospel among Gentiles, Paul kept the issue from becoming too abstract. For Paul and others like him, the very heart of his message - what he calls "the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:5)-was at stake. If the grace of God in Jesus that he had preached was to be only for Jews and for Gentiles who became proselytes to Judaism, then Paul had profoundly misunderstood the gospel, and indeed, as he expressed it, he "had run in vain" (Gal. 2:2).

The results of this crucial meeting were positive from Paul's point of view. Two accounts of the event highlight very different aspects, but both report the same basic results. In Acts, written a generation later, Luke describes a general assembly of the apostles and elders with speeches by Peter and James the brother of Jesus and a report of their work by Barnabas and Paul. From this meeting the church issued a letter that refused to require Gentiles to be circumcised in order to become Christians but required them to avoid meat from animals sacrificed to pagan gods or from which the blood was not properly removed and to shun immorality. Paul himself

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describes the meeting in his letter to the Galatians. He and Barnabas met with the so-called pillars of the church in Jerusalem, Peter, James, and John the son of Zebedee. They agreed that just as Peter had been chosen by God to lead the mission to the Jews (at that time the great majority of all Christians), so Paul had been chosen to lead the mission to the Gentiles. According to Paul, the Jerusalem leaders gave him and Barnabas "the right hand of fellowship that we should go to the Gentiles and them unto the circumcised." They also asked that the Gentile Christians remember to help the poor, "which very thing," Paul says, "I was eager to do" (Gal. 2:9-10).

The stand of Paul and Barnabas at the conference in Jerusalem by no means ended all controversy over the volatile issue of Jews and Gentiles, but it tipped the balance. Christianity was to be a universal religion; the church could spread freely in the broad world of the Roman empire and beyond and would not be limited to the domain of Jews and proselytes. Questions of dietary laws and table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians remained in dispute, leading to sharp differences between Paul and Peter and even between Paul and Barnabas. But Paul never wavered in his conviction that God had called the Gentiles to faith as Gentiles, entirely apart from the distinctive requirements of the law of Moses, and he was confident enough to defend that conviction even in opposition to a pillar of the church like Peter.

Paul's disagreements with Barnabas led them to continue their ministries separately. Barnabas took John Mark, sailed to Cyprus to preach, while Paul chose Silas (short for Silvanus), and traveled by land to Asia Minor on what is known as the second missionary journey. They passed through Lystra where Timothy, a young man like Titus, who was to become one of Paul's principle aides, joined them. The three traveled north into the interior cities of Galatia, then west into Phrygia, founding small communities of disciples all along the way. Paul perhaps spent extra time in Galatia "because of a bodily ailment," which he does not identify. But the joy of the new converts was such that they cared for Paul "as an angel of God" (Gal. 4:13-14).

5. Beaten, imprisoned, freed

Eventually, Paul and Silas came to Troas (ancient Troy), and sailed from there to Macedonia, taking the Christian message for the first time to Europe. Every city offered its particular challenges, dangers, and opportunities. In Philippi, Lydia was converted under their ministry, a Gentile woman sympathetic to Judaism. Her home became the first center in Philippi of the church; the community there developed a particularly affectionate relationship with Paul. But when Paul and Silas healed a slave girl whose owners touted her as a soothsayer with a spirit

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of divination, they found themselves dragged before the town magistrates in the forum, stripped, beaten with rods, and locked in stocks in prison. Undaunted, they were singing hymns for the other prisoners at midnight when a terrifying earthquake shook the prison, miraculously throwing open the doors and loosening their fetters. After converting their jailer to the faith, they were set free.

Leaving Philippi, Paul's company traveled along the main Roman road, the Via Egnatia, to Amphipolis, Apollonia, and finally to Thessalonica, the Roman capital of Macedonia. As was Paul's practice, the apostle first began to teach in the synagogue, where he would find people who knew the scriptures and what it meant to say, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ" (Acts 17:3). As the radical meaning of Paul's proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah became clear; however, the Jewish community split. From the synagogue Paul drew off a few of the Jews, many "devout Greeks," and "leading women" (Acts 17:4) who had been attracted to the synagogue. These joined with a number of pagans who, as Paul wrote, "turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God". (1Thessalonians 1:9) This diverse group formed the new Christian community at Thessalonica.

It is not hard to understand the bitterness of the many Jews who rejected Paul's teaching and saw their synagogue communities torn asunder by this religious earthquake. In Thessalonica they failed to arrest Paul but brought his host, a Jewish believer named Jason, before the magistrates, accusing him of harboring "these men who have turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). Paul and Silas were often pushed or pulled from town to town both by grateful believers, who desired to protect those who had brought them new life, and by those who were outraged at the effect they had on the community.

Leaving Macedonia, Paul preached briefly in Athens, where he made a memorable speech concerning the unknown God to Greek philosophers before the council known as the Areopagus. His message elicited little positive response among the literati of Athens; and he soon moved to Corinth, the Roman capital of the region of Achaia.

Paul was becoming ever more aware of how vulnerable were the small communities of believers that he had founded. The church in Thessalonica had faced strong opposition, and Paul was afraid that in the weeks since he had left it the community might have been overwhelmed. When Paul "could bear it no longer" (I Thessalonians 3:1), he sent Timothy back north to Thessalonica to learn what had happened. In the glow of relief and gratitude that Paul felt when Timothy returned with good news, Paul began a new enterprise that was to affect the entire history of Christianity. He began to write letters.

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Paul's first letter, to the Thessalonians in about AD 51, represents the earliest writing in the New Testament. The letter was a genuine outpouring of affection for the Christians in Thessalonica. It is colored with memories of the struggles they had faced combined with instruction in their new faith and exhortations to grow spiritually, love each other, live quietly, and "rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances' (I Thessalonians. 5:16-18). It was not a private letter but a public document to be "read to all the brethren" (I Thessalonians 5:27). In the years that followed Paul's letters became an effective tool for dealing with the needs of his far-flung congregations; the documents substituted for the presence of the apostle himself in an era when travel was slow and often dangerous.

Meanwhile, Corinth had proved to be a place of both conflict and profitable work for Paul. He preached in the synagogue and won over Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, as well as Titus Justus, a devout Gentile who lent Paul his house next door to the synagogue for his teaching. Many other Gentiles were also converted to Christianity. Paul was aided in his work not only by Silas and Timothy but also by Aquila and his wife, Priscilla (Prisca). These were Jewish Christians who had been forced to leave Rome and who shared with Paul the craft of tent making. Though the Jews once tried to have Paul condemned as a criminal before the Roman proconsul Gallio, the official refused to hear a dispute "about words and names and your own law" (Acts 18:15).

6. Rich with spiritual gifts

The community Paul founded at Corinth was a diverse assortment of Jews and Gentiles, mostly from the lower classes, but with a few who had some personal wealth. They responded to the message of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit with particular enthusiasm. Both Jews and Gentiles had broken with their own religious traditions and communities to become part of the new fellowship, and they delighted in experiences of spiritual fulfillment, wisdom, freedom, and intimacy with God. The tendency of the Corinthian Christians was always to push their individual spiritual experiences to the furthest extent. They felt like kings, sated with a wealth of spiritual gifts. In spite of strong opposition, Paul was able to remain with them a year and a half, longer than he had stayed at any place since leaving Antioch.

When he left Corinth, Paul took Priscilla and Aquila with him to Ephesus and soon booked passage alone to Caesarea. From there he went on to Jerusalem. After stopping at the temple and calling on the Christian community, Paul headed north to revisit the churches in Antioch and the regions of Galatia and Phrygia before returning to Ephesus, where he

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rejoined Priscilla and Aquila. But part of what Paul found on his third missionary journey deeply disturbed him.

Among the largely Gentile churches of Galatia, other Jewish Christian missionaries had followed his example and had tried with some success to convince these Gentile Christians that they must be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses. Paul wrote an urgent letter to all the churches of the region warning against such revisions of the gospel: "Even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed." "For freedom Christ has set us free," he urged them; "stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." Those who depend on obedience to the law for salvation "are severed from Christ," he warned, and "have fallen away from grace" (Gal. 1:8; 5:1,4).

In Ephesus, the Roman capital of the province of Asia, Paul began a more than two-year period of work, using the city as a base from which he sent his co-workers out into the surrounding regions to establish churches. Paul himself taught daily in a hired lecture room called "the hall of Tyrannus" (Acts 19:9), and the church thrived. But all was not well elsewhere.

Paul received reports of growing problems in the church at Corinth, and a letter from the Christian community there poses a series of questions about such topics as spiritual gifts, the resurrection of the dead and eating food that had been offered to idols. The believers in Corinth were still very enthusiastic in their faith, but their delight in their individual spiritual experiences was straining the fabric of mutual love that held the congregation together. They were competing with each other in displaying such gifts as speaking in tongues; they were dividing in their allegiance to various teachers; they were showing such indifference to taboos surrounding food sacrificed to idols that the faith of some Christians was being destroyed.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, calling on them to refocus their faith not on their spiritual accomplishments but on the self-giving love shown in Christ on the cross, the true "power of God and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. 1:24). The highest spiritual gift, one that would last beyond this world, he told them, is simple love. They must put love for each other and the good of the whole community above personal desires. Without that love, no amount of faith or religious insight would be of any value, (I Cor. 13:1). By keeping the cross of Christ and the love that it expressed as their central vision, the Corinthians could handle all the diverse questions troubling them.

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In Ephesus the impact of Paul's preaching, as always, won converts and roused opposition. Paul told the Corinthians how he "fought with beasts at Ephesus" (I Cor. 15:32) - perhaps a metaphor for strong opposition. It may have been while he was imprisoned there that he wrote to the church at Philippi to encourage the congregation and thank its members for sending one of their own, Epaphroditus, to help him in his work. "Rejoice in the Lord always," he urges them, "again I will say, Rejoice." "I have learned, he confided, "in whatever state I am to be content ... I can do all things through the anointing which strengthens me" (Phil. 4:4, 11, 13).

Paul's "anxiety for all the churches" (II Cor. 11:28), however, could never be fully relieved. He had to deal with rival missionaries in both Corinth and Philippi, men who tried to turn the new Christians away from the gospel. With sharp irony Paul termed these men "superlative apostles" (II Cor. 11:5) because of the extravagant claims they made for their own spiritual power. For a time it appeared that the church at Corinth would renounce its association with Paul and abandon the true gospel. But by using Titus as an emissary, Paul finally reestablished his close relationship with the Corinthians.

The situation at Ephesus finally exploded. Devotees of Ephesus's famous goddess, the many-breasted Artemis, felt the impact of Paul's work on their religion and their livelihood. Led by a silversmith named Demetrius, they rioted against Paul, shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (Acts 19:28) As the object of this uproar, Paul-who had wanted to revisit the churches-decided that it was best to leave Ephesus, and he traveled around the Aegean coast to Macedonia and ultimately returned to Corinth.

7. Summarization of Paul's preaching

Through many difficulties and struggles and in the face of harsh persecution, Paul felt that he had finally brought the churches around the Aegean and in the interior of Asia Minor to a level of maturity and stability that they could maintain on their own. He believed it was time to move on. When he arrived in Corinth for a final three month visit, he had decided to travel west to Spain, a region yet untouched by the message of Jesus.

Paul wrote a letter to the church in Rome, requesting its members' hospitality and aid as he traveled through the imperial city on his way to Spain. Paul used his letter to a distant church-his longest and most important-as an opportunity to lay out in summary fashion the foundations of the gospel he preached.

The gospel, he asserted, "is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). In response to the violence and corruption that enslave humanity, God had

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sent His Son to break the enslaving power of sin through his redemptive death on the cross. Though humanity is weak and unworthy, Paul announced, "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). No human being can break the power of sin and stand righteous before God, but God in his grace chooses to pronounce over the guilty person who trusts in Jesus the verdict of innocent. What is more, as the believer is "baptized into Christ Jesus"; experiences "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," the power of sin and death is broken, and God makes the believer his own child. "When we cry, Abba Father" Paul said, "It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God." The power of this vision gave Paul the basis for profound peace, joy, and confidence in God: "If God is for us, who is against us?" Nothing, Paul concluded, "in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:3; 8:2, 15-16, 31, 39).

Before leaving for Spain, Paul decided to make a final visit to Jerusalem to deliver to the church there gifts for the poor that he had gathered from all the churches he had founded-thereby fulfilling his promise to Peter, James, and John. He bade farewell to the churches around the Aegean, expecting "that they should see his face no more" (Acts 20:38).

He traveled with considerable trepidation toward Jerusalem, where he was welcomed by James and the elders. But unfortunately his notoriety among other Jews had preceded him. When he entered the temple, Jews from the region of Ephesus accused him of desecrating the temple by bringing Greeks inside, and they started a riot. The tribune Claudius Lysias sent Roman soldiers from the garrison that over-looked the temple court to intervene, saving Paul from being beaten to death but also putting him under arrest. From that moment on, Paul was never again free, so far as Acts recounts and all his plans were foiled.

The dislike and hatred for Paul, who had become a Christian and devoted himself to the Gentiles was so great that Lysias had to send his prisoner to Caesarea, seat of the governor, for protection. The governor, Felix, was acquainted with Christianity and evidently discounted all the charges against Paul but held him in custody in Caesarea for two years.

In about AD 59, Felix was replaced by a new governor, Festus, who suggested that Paul be returned to Jerusalem, but Paul refused to go and appealed for a hearing before the emperor in Rome-his right as a Roman citizen. When the well-educated but dissolute Herod Agrippa II and his sister Bernice visited Caesarea, Paul recounted his story and his faith at length before them. Agrippa was amazed at Paul's audacity in trying to convert him, but all recognized that Paul did not deserve to be imprisoned.

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Because of his appeal; however, they agreed that he must be sent to Rome.

8. His final destination

Soon Paul was put aboard ship with several companions in the care of a kindly centurion named Julius, who was transporting several prisoners to Rome. The voyage started late in the year, nearing the time when the Mediterranean becomes too tempestuous for ship travel. At first the trip went well. But as the ship left Crete it was caught in a major storm; for 14 days it was driven by the wind until it broke apart on a shoal (shallow area of water, possibly a sandbar or reef) off the island of Malta. Miraculously, all on board escaped with their lives.

When spring of AD 60 arrived, Paul was transported on to Rome. He and his companions were welcomed by leaders of the church, and Paul met with leaders of the Jewish community. Though he received some positive response from them, the lines between Christians and Jews were already drawn in Rome. The book of Acts concludes with a description of Paul living in Rome for two years under a loose house arrest, but able to preach and teach freely to all who came to him.

Paul's co-workers, including John Mark and Luke "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14), helped him continue his missionary work even under arrest. It was evidently during this period that he wrote letters to the churches in Colosse and Ephesus as well as a short letter to a Christian in Colosse name Philemon about his slave Onesimus, who had become one of Paul's co-workers. He sent these letters back to Asia Minor by Tychicus and Onesimus.

By this time, Paul had evidently given up on his plans to go to Spain. He wrote to Philemon to "prepare a guest room for me" (Phil. 22) because he hoped to visit Colosse soon. Without the aid of Acts, it is difficult to reconstruct the course of Paul's last years. Many scholars argue that the so-called pastoral letters (I and II Timothy and Titus) were not written by Paul himself but by one of his followers, because their Greek style is so different from that of Paul's other letters. In that case, Paul may well have been executed in or about AD 62, perhaps during Nero's persecution of Christians after the fire that destroyed Rome in 64. If the pastoral letters were written by Paul, however, they show that the apostle was released from house arrest in Rome and traveled back to the Aegean area, visiting Crete, Ephesus, Miletus, Troas, Macedonia, Corinth, and Nicopolis in Epirus. Eventually, he was arrested again and taken to Rome for trial. Although, apparently alone at this time, he defended himself successfully and was released.

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Soon Paul was rearrested and accused of a capital offense; perhaps simply the charge of being a Christian leader. When he wrote II Timothy, Paul was awaiting trial but did not expect a successful result. His co-workers were scattered everywhere; only Luke remained with him. But Paul was undaunted. "I am already on the point of being sacrificed," he wrote to Timothy; "the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:6-7).

According to tradition, Paul was beheaded in Rome, though we have no exact record of it. He was probably less than 60 years old. Though he was a highly controversial figure throughout his life, Paul was recognized as a genuine hero of the faith in the generation after his death, when the Acts of the Apostles was written. Throughout Christianity, Paul's powerful formulation of the gospel, emphasizing salvation by the grace of God through faith in Jesus, and his focus on love as the central value of Christian life, has served the church's greatest theologians well.

K. Peter

Peter was known for his leadership; Peter is listed first in the four listings of the twelve apostles in the New Testament.

Peter's attitude is one of humility, even before the start of his ministry. "In those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples". There is no priestly attitude that he assumes. Though he leads, he associates the whole assembly with himself. He will have them to choose candidates for the apostleship; he accepts their nomination; and though it is all but certain that in laying these two before the Lord, he was the spokesman, though this was not said. Nor was it only on this first occasion, when he might be supposed rather to shrink, that he thus acted, but on every subsequent occasion his procedure was in keeping with this. So little ground is there not only for the lordly assumptions of those who call themselves successors of "the prince of the apostles," but for that ecclesiastical ambition which has proved the bane and blight of many who repudiate Romanist pretensions.

1. The New Testament uses three names for Peter

The gospel writers frequently put both Peter's old and new names together and call him Simon Peter (Matthew 16:16; Luke 5:8). This is the most common way Peter is referred to in the Gospel of John.

a. Simon

When Peter first appears in Mark 1:16 and John 1:40, 41, he is called Simon. Simon was Peter's given name. Matthew calls him

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"Simon who was called Peter" (Matthew 4:18; 10:2). Peter is called Simon on domestic occasions. Mark and Luke speak of Simon's house and Simon's wife's mother (Mark 1:29,30; Luke 4:38). Luke speaks of Simon's fishing partners and boat (Luke 5:3,10). In the intimate moments Peter had with Jesus, he is referred to as Simon. Jesus called him 'Simon' to launch his boat into the deep (Luke 5:4). There are many other references to Simon in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Jesus gave Simon his new name (Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14). John records the fullest account of the renaming of Simon (John 1:42). Jesus called Simon, 'Cephas'. Cephas and Peter are different forms of the same name.

Simon was the son of Jona. Jona means a dove and Cephas or Peter means a rock. It is interesting to note that Jesus was telling Peter that no longer would he be a fluttering, timorous dove, but that He would make Peter a rock. Jesus put all His hope and purposes for Peter's future in his name.

b. Simeon

The New Testament calls Peter, Simeon, twice. James calls Peter, Simeon in Acts 15:14. In II Peter 1:1, he called himself Simeon. Simeon is the original Hebrew form of Simon. At the Jerusalem Church, Peter was called Simeon. This was natural that they would use his Hebrew name.

c. Peter, Cephas

It has been stated previously that Peter and Cephas are the same name. Peter is Greek and Cephas is Aramaic for a rock.

In the ancient world everyone spoke his or her native language and Greek. The result being that most people had two names, one which was Greek and known in the business world. Their native language name, therefore, was used in private and to his/her friends.

Following are two examples:

Aramaic	Greek
Thomas	Didymus
Tabitha	Dorcas

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Paul speaks of Peter as Cephas (I Corinthians 1:12; 3:33; 9:5; 15:5; and Galatians 2:9). Peter was the Apostle to the Jews, therefore, Paul naturally calls Peter by his Jewish name, Cephas (Galatians 2:9).

2. Personal facts

Peter was a fisherman, and it was from the boats and the nets that Jesus called him. He was a married man and lived in Capernaum. It was here, at Capernaum, that Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law.

Peter was a Galilean. Josephus, a Galilean Governor says, "Galileans were fond of innovations, delighted in stirring up discontent or resistance. They were ready to follow a leader and to begin an insurrection." He says that they were notorious for quick tempers, given to quarreling, impulsive, emotional, easily roused by an appeal to adventure, loyal to the end. Peter was a typical Galilean.

Within the twelve apostles emerged an inner circle of three who were especially close to Jesus, Peter, James, and John. They were with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, in the garden of Gethsemane, and the raising of Jairus' daughter.

Peter stands out as the spokesman of the twelve apostles. He was not afraid to ask questions, inquiring of the true answers. He was not ashamed to stand up for what he believed. Remember he became indignant at the guard in Gethsemane and cut off his ear!

3. Six "greats" in Peter's life

a. The great discovery:

John 6:66-69; “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and art sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

b. The great promise:

Matthew 16:18; “Thou are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church."

c. The great rebuke:

Matthew 16:22-23 and Mark 8:32-33; Peter protested that Jesus' foretold death must never be; and Jesus' answered him saying "Get thee behind me, Satan."

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d. The great denial:

Mark 14:66-73; Matthew 26:69-75; Luke 22:54-62; and John 18:15-27 all tell the story of Peter's denial. Let us not judge him, remember that the other twelve had fled and were not around.

e. The great commission:

John 21:15-17, Peter was given the commission to be the shepherd of the flock of Christ.

f. The great realization:

Acts 15:7-11, Peter was instrumental in opening the door of the church to the Gentiles. It was through Peter's action in the case of Cornelius that the church experienced the great realization that "God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" Acts 11:18.

4. Strengths and weaknesses.

It is with sharp irony that Mark and Matthew reveal that Peter did not realize the meaning of Jesus' words. When Jesus began to tell them that he must suffer and be killed, ideas that did not fit with the disciples' concept of the Messiah, Peter promptly rebuked Jesus. Jesus realized that Peter was expressing the misconception of all the disciples. He therefore turned on Peter in the strongest possible terms, with a rebuke most Christian followers could not handle. The gospels do not undermine his importance by showing his weaknesses. Rather, he becomes an example of the struggle of faith and understanding that every disciple faces.

Peter was part of the select group of three disciples (along with James and John) that Jesus took along with him at times of special revelation. When Peter saw the transfiguration, he, like many Christians, stuck his foot in his mouth with, "Master, it is good for us to be here", and promptly wanted to stay the rest of his life there. On the last night before Jesus crucifixion, Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him apart from the others to pray. The most compelling and heartrending of Jesus' revelations of his unique relationship with God would have been revealed. However, like the others, Peter was overwhelmed with sleep.

Though Jesus saw this combination of strength and weakness in Peter, he never wavered in his affirmation of him. Even to the end of Jesus natural life, Peter had problems with the lessons Jesus offered. Peter had set himself for the dangers Jesus had predicted. He was devoted to his

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teacher and was sure that he would endure death with him. However, when Jesus began to take up the work of a slave, Peter would not accept his master's foot-washing. But as soon as Peter understood, he wanted not only his feet, but also his head and hands also washed. Later that evening, Jesus announced the defection of all. Just as Peter had known that the Messiah could not suffer, so now he knew that this was impossible also.

No one will ever know the turmoil within Peter as that night wore on. He was startled awake as the mob came to arrest Jesus. he lashed out at the high priest's slave with a sword. He panicked and fled as Jesus was taken into custody. Finally he got up the courage to go where the mock trial was going on, only to deny Jesus as He had said he would. It only took a little maid to set him to flight. As the cock crowed the second time, Peter remembered the saying of Jesus and went out and wept bitterly. Yet when Jesus arose, He told Mary to "go tell Peter and the disciples", thus showing his unfailing trust in Peter.

As Peter was burned by the fire of his own weakness and cowardice; as he was held fast by the scorching vision of Jesus death; so he was restored to love and service by the mystery of Jesus resurrection.

5. Religious revolution- the call of Peter.

Peter was an unlikely candidate to lead a religious revolution, but now Jesus called him as a disciple, the life of Peter the fisherman changed dramatically and irrevocably. he became not only the most prominent of Jesus' disciples, but also the leader and principal spokesman of a fledgling Christian church.

Little is known of Peter's life before he met Jesus. His name was Simeon bar Jona, Aramaic for "son of Jonah". He was born in Bethsaida Julias on the north coast of the Sea of Galilee. The town, whose name means "house of the fisherman," lay just east of the Jordan River and was thus outside the province of Galilee proper and under the rule of Herod Philip, a son and one of the successors of the notorious Herod the Great. Philip had built the Jewish village Bethsaida into a wealthy town with a mixed population of Greeks and Jews, adding Julias to its name in honor of the Emperor Augustus's daughter. Peter and his brother Andrew, who had been given a Greek name, grew up in a fishing family that no doubt traded with both Jews and Greeks. Peter most probably spoke Aramaic with a Galilean accent as well as some Greek. Although he probably received a basic synagogue education, it is unlikely that Peter was given a scholar's advanced training in the Torah.

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By the time he met Jesus; Peter had married and moved a few miles west to the Galilean town of Capernaum. There, he and Andrew went into partnership with James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Even before they encountered Jesus, Peter and Andrew were filled with messianic expectations for they had traveled down the Jordan valley to hear the prophet John the Baptist as he preached God's coming judgment and the call for all to repent.

The crucial moment when Peter began to follow Jesus is described in three different ways in the New Testament. According to John, Andrew brought Peter to Jesus and Jesus immediately renamed him Cephas (John 1:42). The Aramaic name Cephas means rock just as the Greek name Petros does.

The call of Peter was by the sea, when Jesus simply said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," Matt. 4:19. The writings of Luke provide the most dramatic account of Peter's call. Jesus was teaching by the lake alongside boats where men were washing nets after a night of luckless fishing. Stepping into Peter's boat, Jesus asked him to put out a little from shore, and there he sat and taught. When he finished, Jesus told Peter and his co-workers to go into deep water and let down their nets. Peter protested, and then partially obeyed. The net he let down was an old rotten net. The good nets were washed and drying on shore. He had no faith that he would catch anything, since he had fished all night and caught nothing, Luke 5. The net pulled violently with the weight of a huge catch. Peter instantly perceived that he was not simply having good fortune in fishing. Rather, he was in the presence of a power he could not understand in the person of Jesus.

Peter's response was one of unworthiness and fear, but Jesus did not depart. It was precisely such a person, a man who knew his own weakness and sinfulness but could recognize and acknowledge the presence of God's power that Jesus wanted. "Do not be afraid," Jesus, said tenderly, "for from henceforth you will be catching men," Luke 5:10.

Peter was the first among the twelve. Peter regularly acted as their spokesman, but often spoke impetuously, without understanding what he was saying. Jesus seems to have made Peter's house his home and center for his teaching.

The gospels often present Peter as a paradigm of both vigorous faith and human uncertainty and doubt. There is for example, the story of Jesus walking through the darkness on the wind-tossed waters of the Sea of Galilee toward his disciples, who were rowing their boat against the wind. As soon as Jesus reassured them, Peter wanted to go to him, to whom Jesus replied to, "Come". Peter leaped overboard and began to walk

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toward him, doing the impossible with ease. Yet, when Peter's focus was diverted by the boisterous wind and waves, he began to sink and cried out to Jesus. Jesus lifted him up, and as so often he had to, chided him with "O' man of little faith, why did you doubt?" Peter's uncertain faith epitomized the struggle of the disciples to understand the great mystery of Jesus' coping in a turbulent world.

L. Philip

Philip was an evangelist who helped resolve a major controversy. An altercation began to transpire as murmurings of Greek-speaking Christians were voiced due to the Hebrews neglect of the widows. The widows were not receiving a fair share of food, set aside for the needy. The apostles chose seven leaders to handle this ministry of helps.

Philip was one of the seven chosen to help. With the help of these seven men the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, (Acts 6:7). But the growth halted temporarily with the stoning of Stephen. Philip, along with other converts left Jerusalem "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching" (Acts 8:4).

Episodes from Philip's ministry reveal how the persecution resulted not in the weakening of the gospel but in its expansion. Philip first went to Samaria, where the sick were healed and unclean spirits cast out in the name of Jesus.

As Philip travels south from Samaria he encounters an Ethiopian official to witness to. Apparently the Ethiopian was a student of prophecy. The Ethiopian official described as a eunuch, asked about a passage in Isaiah. This scripture concerned a figure who was suffering injustice and humiliation. Philip applied the prophecy to the life and death of Jesus. The Ethiopian eunuch asked to be baptized. Immediately following the baptizing, Philip was translated to Azotus.

Philip journeyed though Ashdad, an ancient Philistine city. As he passed through all the towns, he preached the gospel to everyone until he came to Caesarea, (Acts 8:40).

Some years later, Philip apparently settled in Caesarea, Acts 21:8-9. This accounts for Philip providing housing for Paul and Luke during their visit to Caesarea. Luke also mentions "Philip had four virgin daughters who prophesied."

M. Silas

Scholars agree that the Silvanus named by Paul and Peter in their letters is the same person Luke refers to as Silas, in Acts of the Apostles. Silas was a Greek name; Silvanus was the Latin form more familiar in Greek and Roman cities.

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Like Paul, Silas is identified in Acts as claiming the privileges of Roman citizenship.

Silas was a leading member of the Jerusalem church and participated in Paul's and Peter's ministries.

The church elders at Jerusalem chose Silas and Judas Barabas "leading men among the brethren" (Acts 15:22) to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch. These four men were to present a letter concerning the necessity of requiring converts to observe Jewish practices specifically, circumcision. This letter introduced Silas as one of "who risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ." Its' message told the new Christians to abstain from eating ritually unclean meat and remain unadulterated. This was well received by the Christians in Antioch for they "rejoiced at the exhortation" (Acts 15:26,31).

Timothy joined Paul and Silas in Lystra, preaching in Phrygia, Galatia, Neapolis, and Philippi. It is here at Philippi that these evangelists stayed in the home of Lydia. This is where Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned. An earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, opening the prison doors. However, Paul and Silas refused to escape. To the jailer's delight no one had escaped. He took Paul and Silas into his house and cleaned their wounds. That same night he and his house were baptized.

Next, Silas accompanied Paul and Timothy to Thessalonica, where Paul preached in the synagogue. Many were converted, provoking an uprising. The three missionaries escaped by night to Berea, the news reaching the Thessalonians. They became outraged, and sought to destroy the missionaries. Paul fled, leaving Silas and Timothy in charge of the mission.

Later, the three were reunited at Corinth. Silas and Timothy brought financial support for Paul. This resulted in Paul devoting himself, full time to the church.

Both letters to the Thessalonians were penned while Paul was at Corinth. Both of these letters open with greetings from Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy.

N. Stephen

The name Stephen is Greek, evidently he was one of the many Greek speaking Jews from the Diaspora (Dispersion) who are described in Acts as "Hellenists" to distinguish them from the Aramaic speaking Palestinian Jews, who are called "Hebrews" (Acts 6:1). Attitudes and religious beliefs varied greatly between the Hellenistic Jews and the Aramaic speaking Jews of Palestine. Jews from both the Hebrews and Hellenists joined the disciples of Jesus. Evidently Stephen was one of the early converts among the Hellenists. He may even have known Jesus and have been among the 120 disciples who were present at Pentecost. He is introduced in Acts as "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5). The

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catalyst that brought Stephen forward as a leader of the Jerusalem church was the first substantial conflict among Christians recorded in Acts. From the beginning, the rapidly growing church cared for its poor, including widows and orphans, through a daily distribution of food and other goods. In some manner not described in Acts, the split between Diaspora Jews and Palestinian Jews led to Hellenist widows being neglected in the distribution.

When the Hellenists began to complain about this situation, the twelve, who were all Hebrews from Galilee, saw the need to face the situation squarely. Through an assembly of the church, seven men were chosen, "men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:2-3), who were to make sure the distribution was fair to all. All seven had Greek names, which probably indicates that the church chose to put seven leaders of the Hellenists in charge of the matter so that there could be no doubt about fairness. These leaders came to be called simply "the seven" (Acts 21:8), corresponding to the twelve. Today they are popularly referred to as the first deacons of the church, though Acts does not refer to them as such. The work of only two of them, Stephen and the evangelist, Philip, is described in Acts, revealing that they were primarily active in preaching and teaching.

Stephen was immediately embroiled in a debate concerning the new faith with Jews from the Greek-speaking synagogues of Jerusalem. He was one of the first to see that Jesus' message could be a direct challenge to many of the most distinctive characteristics of Judaism that separated it from Gentile culture. The debates are not recorded in Acts, but the impact of Stephen's arguments can be seen in the charges that were eventually made against him. Stephen evidently argued that the gospel of Jesus removed the need for the temple and all the sacrifices and other rites commanded by Mosaic law. To his opponents who, like Saul (Paul) of Tarsus, were zealous for the law, Stephen seemed to "speak blasphemous words against Moses and God" (Acts 6:11). His power as a preacher and debater led Stephen's opponents to try silencing him.

The Jews brought Stephen before a judicial council on the charge of speaking "words against this holy place and the law" and of saying that "Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us: (Acts 6:13-14). Stephen's opponents saw the very existence of their faith endangered.

Stephen was given an opportunity to answer the charges, but he did not attempt to satisfy his opponents or to defend himself by convincing the council that their charges were untrue. Rather, he used the occasion to make a forceful attack on his opponents. Following an ancient scriptural tradition, he reviewed the history of his people, high-lighting their repeated rebellions against Moses and other prophets sent by God. He challenged the very idea that God should have a fixed temple built for him.

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Stephen finally used the phraseology of the scriptures to mount a blistering denunciation of his hearers: "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?" (Acts 7:51-52). This ancient attitude, now realized in the present, Stephen charged, had led to the betrayal and murder of "the Righteous One" (Acts 7:52), whose coming the prophets had foretold.

The speech turned the judicial council into an enraged mob, while Stephen, realizing what was about to happen, saw a vision of heaven with "the Son of man [Jesus] standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). The throng rushed at Stephen, took him outside Jerusalem, and stoned him to death. Just as Jesus had prayed "Father, forgive them" and "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:34, 46), so Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" and "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:59-60).

The death of Stephen marked the beginning of an onslaught of persecution directed primarily against Hellenist believers. It was led by Saul, who was a consenting witness to Stephen's execution. With supreme irony, a few years later, God called that same Saul to become an apostle of the new faith and bring the work of Stephen to fulfillment.

IX. Church Government Established

A. Establishing the Church

Biblically the church is an organism not an organization—a movement, not a monument. It is not a part of the community; it is a completely new community. It is not an orderly gathering; it is a new order with new values, often in sharp conflict with the values of the surrounding society. Much of the church is caught up in the success mania of American society. Often more concerned with budgets and building programs than with the body of Christ, the church places more emphasis on growth than on repentance. Suffering, sacrifice, and service have been preempted by success and self-fulfillment. CHARLES COLSON (1931)

A church that is soundly rooted cannot be destroyed, but nothing can save a church whose root is dried up. No stimulation, no advertising campaigns, no gifts of money and no beautiful edifice can bring back life to the rootless tree. A. W. TOZER (1897–1963)

These quotations by two brilliant men from different generations have encapsulated the church. Paul had seen these same reasons, only over1900 years earlier. The churches, having been established by God's sovereignty, control, and will, were set forth very simply, yet as a dynamic pattern for all churches and believers to copy. The church was born by lay believers sharing

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Christ with everyone, no matter who they were, both Gentile and Jew. The church was born through the hand of the Lord, by His sovereignty and control.

The mother church heard about the witness of the scattered believers—Remember, the apostles and the leaders of the church were still in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was still considered the mother church, the one to whom the scattered churches looked for leadership. The church and its leaders wanted to help the new churches springing up all around. The purpose is clearly seen in what Barnabas did. The mother church wanted the new churches... to have ministerial help (Acts 11:22), to be exhorted (Acts 11:23), and to be taught (Acts 11:26). A missionary disciple was commissioned to help the new churches, Barnabas.

1. His ministry: was exhortation. The message was..."with purpose of heart": a determined, set, focused, resolute, steady, purposed heart; to "cleave unto the Lord": to continue, be constant, loyal, steadfast, persistent, persevering, and faithful.

2. His character was striking…"Good" (*agathos*): upright, just, moral, honorable, and pleasing to God. He was what he should be inwardly and outwardly. He was full of the Holy Spirit: conscious and aware of the spirit's presence, power, control and discipline, His will and purpose, guidance and direction—all the fruit of the Spirit.

As Barnabas shows, no disciple of the Lord, certainly no minister of the gospel should be any less.

The need was sensed and the decision was made to seek for addition help. The only question was who should be secured. The task was large and Barnabas only could not accomplish what was needed. A unique person was needed, a person who not only had a Jewish background, but who knew the Greek language and culture and could relate to both Gentile and Jew alike. The person also needed to be fearless and bold in his witness for Christ because of the godless, immoral society of Antioch.

Barnabas knew such a man Saul of Tarsus. So he set out to find him. The word "seek" means to search for, to search back and forth, up and down; to make a thorough search. Paul had been busy throughout Syria and Cilicia preaching Christ (Galatians 1:21). Apparently Barnabas had difficulty finding him. He knew God's will, so he did not give up the search. He kept searching until he found God's choice.

Barnabas traveled to Tarsus and found Saul. He persuaded Saul to accompany him to Antioch. Barnabas and Saul ministered a full year in Antioch, teaching great numbers of people. The church was continuing to grow numerically. Barnabas and Saul establish the first traditions of the

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new church—Teaching. People were recognizing Christians as a distinct group. The church was more and more being separated from Judaism.

But with the advent of Barnabas and Saul, the Antiochian Church history enters on a new phase. It became the center of progress and of historical interest in the Church. A new stage in the development of the Antiochian Church is here marked. It was no longer a mere "congregation"; it was now "the Church" in Antioch; and there was in it a group of prophets and teachers to whom the grace of God was given. The time-frame of teaching had now motivated and encouraged mission.

The Church now had direction and purpose. Paul knew that he was called to "preach to the gentiles", but a direction was needed and an organism would need to grow to support and encourage disciples. That organism was the "Church". Paul preached that the Church needed to be alive with desire, dedication, commitment and sacrifice. Without which the body of Christ would become just another arm of religion. Paul through his journeys establishes churches for the purpose of mission: Not for gathering only, but for mission. Paul will spend the rest of his life writing, editing, performing, correcting and establishing framework for the modern church throughout his letters to the churches and individuals. The Apostle was always appointed by God and not by the Church. The proof of Apostleship lay in the possession of apostolic message and powers, conversion of others and performance of signs and advancing the mission.

Study the following charts and you will discover that the "Church" was establish by blood and much persecution. Below is given the fates of the apostles. The chart below explains pertinent facts for the believer in being an effective witness in the Church.

B. Six Characteristics of a Usable Christian/ Acts 11:29-30

1. **U**nstained by our culture. (11:19-20, 22, 26)

   At Antioch the believer were first called Christians, the Christ-ones. There are some distinctions of a church that must be kept intact. We bear the name of our Savior.

2. **S**tretch our limits. (11:19; 12:1-3)

   From a close look at the early church, we see clearly that struggle, rejection, criticism, and even death for believers was the norm.

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3. **A**dhering to the Savior. (11:21, 23, 26)

   Barnabas encouraged the believers to make a serious, solid attachment to Christ and Christ alone.

4. **B**old in our witness. 11:19-21, 24)

   This church spoke, told and preached the Good News. People believed and turned to the Lord.

5. **L**iberal in our giving. (11:22, 24, 27-30)

   The Antioch church gave. They were unselfish, other-centered, and giving oriented even to a culturally and racially different congregation.

6. **E**quipped in the Scriptures. (11:23, 26)

   This church was taught. The picture here is one of classrooms, study, memorization…. work. Before Antioch became a sending place it was a studying place. We have the picture of an equipping church and an equipped people. No wonder they changed the world.

C. Pastors, Elders, Deacons

The apostles told all Christians to watch over each other with loving care and prayer, but they also appointed in each congregation guardians, called "elders" (Acts 14:23), who would look after the people as shepherds look after sheep (Acts 20:28-31, leading them by example away from all that is harmful into all that is good. The congregation, for its part, is to acknowledge the God-given authority of its leaders and follow the lead they give.

This pattern is already present in the Old Testament, where God is the shepherd of Israel (Ps. 80:1) and kings, prophets, priests, and elders (local rulers) are called to act as his agents in an under-shepherd role. Elder denotes certain persons appointed to hold office in the Christian church, and to exercise spiritual oversight over the flock entrusted to them. From the references in Acts (14:23; 20:17) it may be inferred that the churches generally had elders appointed over them.

The pastoral responsibilities of the apostles and their associates, like Timothy and Titus, were wider than congregational elders. The pastoral role of elders demands mature and stable Christian character and a well-ordered personal life. Elders should be apt to teach, meaning that they should have the ability to teach

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the word and exhort if needed. Not all elders are called to pastor, yet all pastors are elders, and not all teachers are elders, yet truly all elders should be teachers.

While those responsibilities of congregational deacons were narrower, they had particular responsibility for the ministry of mercy and temporal service (Acts 6:2-6). Deacons should be able for service and understand the temporal needs of the church and meeting those needs. Every church needs ministerial functionaries to fulfill the eldership role, and each should set in place a wise method of selecting and appointing them.

These men and women of God appointed to various positions in the body of Christ must be of a good report and have adequate leadership capabilities. In short, they need to be ordained, setting apart,(Acts 14:23) an act of recognition of their peers that they have exhibited the qualities needed and feel the witness of the Holy Spirit about their call. There must be a witness of the Holy Spirit in this process, or the "setting apart" is only ritual and spiritual.

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Acts 13:2 (KJV)

Deacons are also appointed by them in authority, (Acts 6:1-6) and not elected by the body. These are men and women of "honest report" and are able to serve. Full of the Holy Spirit whom we may appoint over this business. Precedent is set with in the book of Acts and Paul follows in later letters giving full detail. Deacons fill an important role in the ministry of the church, serving the needs of the poor, assisting in baptism and the Lord's Supper, and performing other practical ministerial tasks.

Study the section below and familiarize yourself of the biblical role and position.

D. Elders/ Acts 14:23

Near the end of their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas went back through the cities where they had ministered and "appointed" elders in every church…..turning them over to the care of the Lord" (14:23). What does the New Testament teach about the office of the elder?

1. Meaning of term

The Greek term is *presbyteros*, meaning, literally, "an older person."

2. Function or Role

To rule the church (Titus 1:7; I Peter 5:2-3); to watch over/shepherd God' flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2; Hebrews 13:17); to teach the truths of God (2Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9) to the people of God

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3. Qualifications

To be one "whose life cannot be spoken against. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exhibit self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home and must be able to teach. He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, loving, and not one who loves money. He must manage his own family well, with children who respect and obey him. For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a new Christian, because he might be proud of being chosen so soon, and the Devil will use that pride to make him fall. Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not fall into the devil's trap and be disgraced (1 Timothy 3:2-7; see similar list in Titus 1:6-9).

4. Number of Elders

A plurality of elders is described, if not prescribed, in the New Testament (Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1, Titus 1:5). Nowhere is a certain number mandated, however.

5. Length of term

The New Testament does not specify a precise term of eldership.

6. How elected?

Those meeting the qualifications seem to be appointed or chosen by those already functioning as elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). Ordination to the office involved a ceremony that included laying on of hands, prayer, and fasting (Acts 14:23).

7. The Proper Response

Obedience and submission (Hebrews 13:17); respect (1 Corinthians 16:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12)

8. Discipline of elders

Accusations or criticisms against an elder should be received according to 1st Timothy 5:19-21. If the elder is guilty of an offense, he is to be counseled by fellow elders with a view toward restoration (Galatians 6:1-2). If the sinning elder refuses to repent, he is to be removed from office and disciplined according to Matthew 18:15-17.

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X. Conclusion

Acts was written by a great historian, composed by a personal friend and disciple of Paul, a writer who set himself to record the facts as they occurred, a strong partisan, indeed, but raised above partiality by his perfect confidence that he had only to describe the facts as they occurred, in order to make the truth of Christianity and the honor of Paul apparent.

Luke's style is dense and he expects a great deal from the reader. He does not attempt to sketch the surroundings and set the whole scene like a picture before the reader; he states the bare facts that seem to him important, and leaves the reader to imagine the situation. However, there are many cases in which, to catch his meaning properly, you must imagine yourself standing with Paul on the deck of the ship, or before the Roman official; and unless you reproduce the scene in imagination, you miss the sense.

Luke was deficient in the sense for time; and hence his chronology is bad. It is always hard to recreate the remote past; knowledge, imagination, and, above all, sympathy and love are all needed. Luke had studied the sequence of events carefully. He observes it in his arrangement minutely. However, he relies on evidence of the third party for some of the narrative and some from the subject's past from the subject himself. This sometimes creates a vague and somewhat boring read. Notwithstanding, there is the movement of the scriptures that carries one on to the scene and one feels the presence of the Holy Spirit guiding and leading as the writer lays out history.

Acts is "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." The Gospel of Luke concentrates upon the ministry of Jesus in the "days of His flesh," and Acts continues that ministry through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit appears more than fifty times in Acts. He is the moving force in the expansion of the church. He baptizes, in-fills, and leads believers in their daily lives and witness for the Lord Jesus. Most if not all the references to the Holy Spirit in Acts are given here. The Holy Spirit leads these many time obscure men, with distinction and purpose.

Some of the apostles were comparatively obscure, and this cannot be denied; but even the obscurest of them may have been most useful as witnesses for Him with whom they had companied from the beginning. It does not take a great man to make a good witness, and to be witnesses of Christian facts was the main business of the apostles. That even the humblest of them rendered important service in that capacity we need not doubt, though nothing is said of them in the apostolic annals. It was not to be expected that a history so fragmentary and so brief as that given by Luke should mention any but the principal actors, especially when we reflect how few of the characters that appear on the stage at any particular crisis in human affairs are prominently noticed even in histories which go elaborately into detail. The purpose of history is served by recording the words and deeds of the representative men, and many are allowed to drop into oblivion that did nobly in their day. The less distinguished members of the apostolic band are entitled to the benefit of this reflection.

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Far from regretting that all were not Peters and Johns, it is rather a matter to be thankful for, that there were diversities of gifts among the first preachers of the gospel. As a rule, it is not good when all are leaders. Obscure men are needed as well as eminent men; for human nature is one-sided, and little men have their peculiar virtues and gifts, and can do some things better than their more notable companions.

The New Testament defines the church in terms of the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes and patterns through a relationship to all three Persons of the Godhead, brought about by the intervening ministry of Jesus Christ. The church is seen as the family and flock of God, His Israel; the body and bride of Christ; and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Paul through Acts projects the church into the modern era. He and many of his companions establish the church's mission, destiny and purpose. Without a full understanding of Acts, the student will only receive a partial understanding of the rest of the New Testament.

A. THE FATE OF THE APOSTLES/ Acts 12:2

Name	Fate
Simon Peter	Crucified upside down (reported by Origen)
James, son of Zebedee	Martyred by Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1-2)
John, son of Zebedee	Exiled to Patmos; later died of old age (one legend is that Domaition had John thrown into a pot of boiling oil, but he was unharmed)
Andrew	According to tradition, was crucified (in the form of an X) at Patrae, a city of Achaia, because he rebuked Aegeas, the proconsul, for idolatry
Philip	According to tradition, died as a martyr at Hierapolis
Bartholomew/ Nathaneal	Said to have preached the gospel in India or perhaps Armenia where conflicting reports have him flayed live or crucified upside down
Matthew/ Levi	According to legend, preached in unspecified foreign nations
Thomas	Acording to tradition, preached in Parthia and Persia and died as a martyr by being speared with a lance
James, son of Alphaeus	Not known
Thaddaeus/Judas Son of James	Not known
Simon the Zealot	Not known
Judas Iscariot	Committed suicide by hanging himself (Matt. 27:5; Acts 1:18)
Matthais	According to tradition, went to Ethiopia to minister, where he was eventually martyred
Saul/Paul	According to tradition, was beheaded at Nero's command along the Appian Way

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