

ACTS

Outlined Bible

Introduction: The book of Acts is the only historical record of the birth and early days following Christ's establishing His church.¹² Acts, then, is a book of history. Without this historical record, little would be known about the expansion of the church. The author's primary purpose was to give a detailed account of how men and women were converted to Christ and how churches were planted throughout the Roman world.

Name - From the time of the Septuagint, this book has been called the Acts of the Apostles.

Author - Internal and external evidence point to Luke as the Spirit-inspired author of Acts.

1. Internal evidence is found largely in the "we" sections of the book. (Acts 16:10-17; 20:6-21:18; 27:1-28:16)-see notes on Luke.
 - a. In compiling a list of Paul's companions from the period of time covered by the "we" sections, a total of seventeen individuals is found.
 - b. Through a process of elimination, the list is reduced to Luke.
2. It is the unanimous testimony of church tradition that Luke authored the book of Acts. (e.g. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Irenaeus, etc.)

Purpose - At least three purposes seem to clearly emerge for the composition of Acts.

1. The first purpose was to complete what Luke began in his gospel.
 - a. Luke and Acts are two parts of a whole.
 - b. In volume I (Luke), Luke related the words and works of Christ. In volume II (Acts) he told the story of the words and works of Christ that were done through His apostles.
2. A second purpose in writing Acts was to give a written defense of Christianity.
3. A third purpose in the writing of Acts was to provide stability to the new faith.

I. Background of the Book

A. When was Acts written?

1. The book of Acts ends abruptly with Paul's imprisonment in Rome.
2. The most probable explanation for leaving the reader in suspense is that the outcome of Paul's appeal had not yet been decided when the book was being written.
3. We know that Paul and his associates arrived in Rome in AD 60 and stayed there two full years before going to trial. (Acts 28:30)
4. Therefore Acts must have been written early in AD 62.
5. Note: Acts makes no mention of the persecution Nero would bring upon the Christians in AD 64.

B. Where was Acts written? – Since Luke was with Paul in Rome at the time, it is reasonable that Rome was the place of writing.

II. Main Message of the book.

A. The main message of the book is found in Acts 1:8 “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”¹³

B. Luke traces the pattern of the spread of the gospel:

1. The gospel is preached in Jerusalem. (Acts 2:1 - 8:3)
2. The gospel is taken to Judea and Samaria. (Acts 8:4-11:18)
3. The gospel spreads to the uttermost parts of the world. (Acts 11:19 -28:31)

III. Outline of the book.

- A. The Early Spread of the Church in Jerusalem. (Acts 1:1- 7:60)
 - 1. Jesus ascends to heaven. (1:1-11)
 - 2. Matthias is chosen to replace Judas. (1:12-26)
 - 3. The Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles on Pentecost. (1-13)
 - 4. Peter preaches that the Jesus they crucified God has made Lord and Christ. (2:14-36) 14
 - 5. The church begins. (2:37-47)
 - 6. Persecution begins. (3:1-4:31)
 - 7. The believers share generously with each other. (4:32-37)
 - 8. Ananias and Sapphira are slain for lying to God. (:1-11)
 - 9. A second wave of persecution erupts. (5:12-42)
 - 10. Provision is made for neglected Grecian widows. (6:1-7)
 - 11. Stephen is arrested (Acts 6:8-15), preaches (7:1 -53), and is stoned. (7:54-60)
- B. The Church Spreads to Samaria. (Acts 8:1 -9:31)
 - 1. With increased persecution, the church scatters throughout Judea and Samaria. (8:1-4)
 - 2. Philip preaches in Samaria. (8:5-8)
 - 3. Simon the sorcerer is "converted" and seeks miraculous power. (8:9-25)
 - 4. Philip converts an Ethiopian. (8:26-40)
 - 5. The account of Saul's conversion is given. (9:1-31)
- C. The Church Spreads to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. (Acts 9:32-12:25)
 - 1. Peter raises Dorcas from the dead. (9:32-43)
 - 2. God uses Peter to take the gospel to the Gentile Cornelius. (10:1-48)
 - 3. Peter explains his actions to Jewish Christians in Judea. (11:1-18)
 - 4. A Gentile church starts in Antioch. (11:19-30)
 - 5. Peter is imprisoned by Herod and released by God. (12:1-19)
 - 6. Herod dies. (12:20-25)
- D. The Extension of the Church from Antioch to Galatia. (13:1-5:35)
 - 1. Paul takes his first missionary journey. (13:1-14:28)
 - 2. A council is held in Jerusalem to determine the behavior for Gentile Christians. (15:1-35)
- E. The Extension of the Church to Macedonia. (Acts 15:36-21:16)
 - 1. Paul's second missionary journey is recorded. (15:36-18:22)
 - 2. Paul's third missionary journey is recorded. (18:23-21:16)
- F. The Years of Paul's Imprisonment. (Acts 21:17-28:31)
 - 1. In Jerusalem. (21:17-23:35)
 - 2. In Caesarea. (24:1-26:32)
 - 3. The voyage to Rome. (27:1-28:15)
 - 4. In Rome. (28:16-31)

IV. Key Themes of the book.

- A. The Growth of the Early Church.
 - 1. In the earliest days, the preaching of the gospel stayed in Jerusalem.
 - 2. The persecution of Christians that followed Stephen's stoning led to the evangelizing of the larger region of Judea and Samaria. (Acts 8:1ff)
 - a. Philip preached in Samaria. (Acts 8:4-25)
 - b. He converted an Ethiopian. (Acts 8:26-39)
 - c. Philip preached in the Gentile city of Caesarea. (Acts 8:40)
 - 3. After about a decade, the first record of Gentile conversion is detailed in Peter's encounter with Cornelius. (Acts 10)
 - a. Not surprisingly, objections are raised. (Acts 11:1-3)
 - b. However, the right of Gentiles to hear the gospel was affirmed. (Acts 11:4-8)

4. At about the time Cornelius was converted (ca. A.D. 40) the gospel came to Antioch. (Acts 11:19-30)

B. The man Paul.

1. The influence of Judaism on Paul.

- a. Paul was a Hebrew patriot. (cf. Romans 3:1; 9:1-3)
- b. He was a "Pharisee of Pharisees". (Acts 23:6; Philippians 3:5)
- c. Paul was therefore a great student of the Old Testament. (22:3)

2. The influence of Hellenism on Paul.

- a. Paul was from Tarsus, the capital city of the Roman province of Cilicia.
 - [1] Tarsus was founded as a Greek city-state in 171 BC by Antiochus Epiphanies.
 - [2] Evidence points to the fact that Jews settled in Tarsus from the founding of the city and were given rights as citizens. (e.g. Acts 21:39)
 - [3] Tarsus was also a seat of learning, having a university there.
- b. As a Jew in the Hellenistic world, Paul must have been well acquainted with the mythological gods and the mystery religions.

3. Paul's personal life.

- a. Saul was his Hebrew name; Paul was his Latin name.
- b. Paul was not married. (cf. I Corinthians 7:8)
 - [1] He may have never married.
 - [2] Some scholars have speculated that his wife died or perhaps left him when he became a believer in Christ.
- c. God used Paul's (Saul's) zealous persecution of the church to spur its growth. (Acts 8:1-4)
- d. His conversion (cf. Acts 9:22-26) is one of the great apologetics (defense) of the Christian faith.

C. The Central Personalities of Acts - Peter and Paul.

1. Luke divides the material in the book proportionately around the two key leaders of the early church.

- a. Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, is the principal figure of the first 12 chapters.
- b. Paul, apostle to the un-circumcision, is the focal point of the remainder.

2. Luke not only gives the men equal space but notes how their miraculous acts parallel:

- a. The healing of lame men. (Acts 3:22ff; 14:8ff)
 - b. Miracles of harm. (Acts 5:1ff; 13:6ff)
 - c. Healings through secondary means. (Acts 5:15; 19:12)
 - d. Casting out demons. (Acts 5:16; 16:18)
 - e. Confronting sorcerers. (Acts 8:18ff; 13:6ff)
 - f. Raising the dead. (Acts 9:36ff; 20:9ff)

D. The missionary tours of Paul.

1. The church at Antioch was apparently founded by fugitives from Saul's persecution in Jerusalem. (Acts 11:19)

- a. Gentiles became Christians here. (Acts 11:19-21)
- b. The church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to look into this situation. (Acts 11:22-24)

2. Ironically, Barnabas sought Saul's help in building the church at Antioch. (Acts 11:25)

- a. Barnabas had already vouched for Paul's integrity of conversion. (Acts 9:26-27)
- b. Now he saw a place for Saul's unique background and education.

3. As the church there grew, three great missionary tours were sponsored from Antioch.

- a. The first tour (Acts 12:25 -14:28) occurred between AD 46-47 and was followed by a conference in Jerusalem which debated the issue of Gentile acceptance into the church. (Acts 15:1-35)
- b. The second missionary journey began ca. AD 48 and extended into late 51 or early 52. (Acts 15:36 -18:22) The gospel was carried to Europe.

- c. The third tour began in AD 52 and ended with Paul's arrest in Jerusalem in AD 57. (Acts 18:23 - 21:16) During this time, Paul stayed in Ephesus 2 to 3 years.
4. After these journeys, Acts tells us Paul spent time as a prisoner in Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome.
5. Tradition relates a fourth missionary journey to the West (possibly to Spain) following his release from his first confinement in Rome.

ACTS

Summarized Bible

The Church Christ Established

“In the first book, O Theophilus, I (Luke) have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To them he presented himself alive after his suffering (crucifixion) by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, ‘you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’”

The Ascension of Jesus Back to Heaven

“Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel (Note: the -restore to Israel- they were still thinking about earthly kingdom)?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.’” (Acts 1:7-11)

Holy Spirit Given

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

“Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven (came to Jerusalem because of Pentecost). At this sound, the multitude came together, and they were bewildered because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? How is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language ... both Jews and proselytes? Cretans and Arabs — we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!’ ‘We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.’ All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others mocking said, ‘They are filled with new wine (they are drunk).’” (Acts 2:1-13)

“Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you

suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day (9 O'clock). This is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (from Joel 2:28-32) (Acts 2:14-21)

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs (miracles) that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— this Jesus, delivered up by the hands of lawless men according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed. God raised him up, loosening the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him – 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore, my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'" (Ps 16:8-11) (Acts 2:23-28)

"Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades (the abode of souls of men), nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing (the sound of the rushing wind, speaking and hearing in various languages). For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, -The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool. - Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.' Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (the gift - not the pouring out of the Holy Spirit which had just occurred). For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.' And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation.' So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:14-41)

Fellowship of the Believers

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common. They were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor

with all the people. The Lord added to their number (the Body of obedient believers God added to the Church Christ established) day by day those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42-47)

Lame Beggar Healed

“Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. A man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, ‘I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!’ Immediately his feet and ankles were made strong, leaping up he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. All the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms.”

“While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico astounded. When Peter saw all the people, he addressed them: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. By faith in His name this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.”

“I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers (Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees). But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. It shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet (the Messiah) shall be destroyed from the people.' All the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.” (Acts 3)

Peter and John Before the Council

“As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead (Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection). They arrested them and put them in custody until the next day. Many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.” (Acts 4:1-4)

“On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, ‘By what power or by what name did you do this?’ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today

concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:5-12)

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated (not trained by them in their rabbinical schools), common men, they were astonished. They recognized that they had been with Jesus. But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, saying, “What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.’ So, they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.’ And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.” (Acts 4:13-22)

Boldness

“When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. When they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, ‘Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’—for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.” (Acts 4:23-31)

Fellowship - Everything in Common

“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.” (Acts 4:32-35)

Many Signs and Wonders Done

“Many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. They were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his

shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.” (Acts 5:12-16)

Apostles Arrested

“The high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ‘Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.’ When they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council and all the senate of Israel and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, ‘We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside.’ Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. Someone came and told them, ‘Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.’” (Acts 5:17-25)

“Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people. When they had brought them, they set them before the council. The high priest questioned them, saying, ‘We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us. But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.’”

“When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, said to the council, ‘Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. Keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!’ They took his advice and then beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” (Acts 5:26-42)

Stephen Is Seized and Stoned

“Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen rose up and disputed with Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. Then they secretly instigated men who said, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.’ They stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, and they set up false witnesses who said, ‘This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.’ And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.” (Acts 6:8-15)

“Stephen ended his speech with ‘You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute?’

They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him—you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it.” (Acts 7:51-53)

“When they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” (Acts 7:54-60)

“On that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.” (Acts 8:1-3) thebiblewayonline.com/servants in the Kingdom

Christ Proclaimed in Samaria

“Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. The crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, crying with a loud voice, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So, there was much joy in that city. There was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. Seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’ Peter said to him, ‘May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.’ Simon answered, ‘Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.’” (Acts 8:4-24)

Ethiopian Eunuch

“An angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is a desert place. He rose and went. There was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. The

Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over and join this chariot.' Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' He said, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' He invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: 'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.' The eunuch said to Philip, 'About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?' So, he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8:26-40) thebiblewayonline.com/html/BaptismIntoChrist.html

The Conversion of Saul

"Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.' The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So, they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank." (Acts 9:1-9)

"There was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias' 'Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.' But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. He has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.' But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.' So, Ananias departed and entered the house. Laying his hands on him he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; and taking food, he was strengthened." (Acts 9:10-19)

"For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. Immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God.' All who heard him were amazed and said, 'Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? Has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?' But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ. When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket." (Acts 9:20-25)

“When he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. They were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. So, he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him. When the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. So, the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. Walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.” (Acts 9:26-31)

Peter Heals Aeneas and Tabitha

“In Lydda a man named Aeneas was paralyzed and bedridden for eight years Peter said to him, ‘Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed.’ Immediately he rose. All the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.”

“In Joppa a disciple named Tabitha. She became ill and died. The disciples sent two men to Peter urging him, ‘Please come to us without delay.’ Peter rose and went when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, ‘Tabitha, arise.’ He gave her his hand and raised her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. It became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. He stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.” (Acts 9:32 -43)

Cornelius

“There was a man named Cornelius a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. About the ninth hour of the day, he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God who said, ‘Cornelius.’ He stared at him in terror and said, ‘What is it, Lord?’ And he said to him, ‘Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. Send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside.’” When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.” (Acts 10:1-8)

Comment: Cornelius was a Gentile and God heard the prayer of a God fearing man.

Peter's Vision

“The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. There came a voice to him: ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.’ The voice came to him again a second time, ‘What God has made clean, do not call common.’ This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.” (Acts 10:9-16)

“While Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. While Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit

said to him, 'Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them.' Peter went down to the men and said, 'I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?' They said, 'Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.' Peter invited them in to be his guests." (Acts 10:17-23)

"The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. Peter opened his mouth and said: 'Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'" (Acts 10:24-43)

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles

"While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. The believers from among the circumcised (Jews from Joppa) who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 'Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days." (Acts 10:44-48)

Peter Reports to the Church

"The apostles and the brothers heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So, when Peter went up to Jerusalem the Christian Jews criticized him, saying, 'You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them' (this was against their traditions). Peter began and explained the vision he received in Joppa and that the Spirit told him to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me. As I began to speak, (to Cornelius) the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?' When they heard these things, they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11:1-18)

The Church in Antioch

"Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and

saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. So, Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, (later called Paul) when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.”

“Prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). So, the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea”. (Acts 11:18-29)

Persecution Begins

“About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. So, Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.”

“When Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. An angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, ‘Get up quickly.’ And the chains fell off his hands. The angel said to him, ‘Dress yourself and put on your sandals.’ ‘Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.’ He went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. When Peter came to himself, he said, ‘Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.’”

“Peter went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. When he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. When they opened the gate, they saw Peter and were amazed. Motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. He said, ‘Tell these things to James and to the brothers.’ Then he departed and went to another place.” (Acts 12:1-19)

Set Apart to Preach Christ

“Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.” (Acts 13:1-3)

The Work of The Body Of Christ

Paphos

“So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Salamis and proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Saul now called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, ‘You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time.’ Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. The proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.” (Acts 13:4-12)

Antioch in Pisidia

“Paul and his companions set sail to Antioch in Pisidia. On the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, ‘Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.’ Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. After destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. All this took about 450 years. He then gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul, when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, ‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’ Of this man’s offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. Before his coming, John (the Baptist) had proclaimed a baptism of repentance (not forgiveness or salvation) to all the people of Israel. When John was finishing his course said behold, after me one (Jesus the Messiah) is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.” (Acts 13:13-25)

“Those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. They nor Pilate found in him no guilt worthy of death asked Pilate to have him executed. When they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. God raised him from the dead, and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, has been fulfilled as written in the second Psalm, “‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’ In another psalm David said “‘You will not let your Holy One see corruption.’ As you know David died was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. Let it be known through this man (Jesus of Nazareth, Christ) forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.” (Acts 13:26-39)

“Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about: ‘Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.’ As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. After the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas urged them to continue in the grace of God. The next Sabbath almost the whole city

gathered to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, 'It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.' When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, many believed and the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. But the Jews incited the devout women and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution and drove them out of their district. The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 13:40-52)

Iconium

"At Iconium they spoke (proclaimed God's Word) in the synagogue in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. They remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe to preach the gospel." (Acts 14:1-7)

Lystra

"At Lystra there was a man crippled from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul speaking. Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, said in a loud voice, 'Stand upright on your feet.' He sprang up and began walking. The crowds saw what Paul had done, lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, 'The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!' Barnabas, they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. But Barnabas and Paul tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news (salvation), that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.' Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them. Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. When the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city." (Acts 14:8-20)

Derbe, and back to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch

"The next day they went to Derbe. When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. When they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia, Perga and Attalia proclaiming the Christ. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled."

Circumcision Controversy

“Some men came down from Judea and were teaching, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ After Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, they sent a delegation to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. They were welcomed by the church, apostles and elders then declared all that God had done with them. Some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.’” (Acts 15:1-6)

“The apostles and the elders consider this matter and after much debate, Peter said, ‘Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.’” (Acts 15:7-11)

“Barnabas and Paul related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. After they finished speaking, it seemed good to send for them to send Judas, and Silas go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” (Acts 15:12-29)

“At Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words and then returned to Jerusalem. But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.” (Acts 15:30-35)

Paul Revisits

“After some days Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.’ Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. So, that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, Paul chose Silas and went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.” (Acts 15:36-41)

“Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy well-spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Timothy accompanied Paul as they went on their way through the cities, they

delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.” (Acts 16:1-5)

Macedonian

“They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia. When they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ When Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” (Acts 16:6-10)

Lydia

So, setting sail from Troas, they arrived at Philippi. On the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. After she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” (Acts 16:11-15)

The Jailer

“A slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling followed them, crying out, ‘These men are servants of the Most-High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.’ She kept doing this for many days. Paul turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ It came out that very hour. Her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers and said, ‘These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.’ The magistrates tore the garments off them, beat them with rods and threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. Immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, ‘Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.’ The jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. He took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. He rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.” (Acts 16:16-34)

“The next day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, ‘Let those men go.’ The jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, ‘The magistrates have sent to let you go in peace.’ But Paul said, ‘They have beaten us publicly, un-condemned, men who are Roman citizens, thrown us into prison; and now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out.’ The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. They came and

apologized, took them out and asked them to leave the city. They went out of the prison, visited Lydia, encouraged the brethren and departed.” (Acts 16:35-40)

Thessalonica

“Paul went in to the synagogue and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus, whom I proclaim is the Christ.’ Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, ‘These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.’ The people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. When they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.” (Acts 17:1-9)

Berea

“The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, when they arrived, they went into the Jewish synagogue. These Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there agitating and stirring up the crowds. Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off to Athens.” (Acts 17:10-15)

Athens

“Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, he saw that the city was full of idols. He reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers said, ‘He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities’ because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. They took him to the Areopagus, saying, ‘May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?’ Paul said: ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you (Paul proclaimed Christ). The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are indeed his offspring.’ Being God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.’ Now when they heard of the resurrection of the

dead, some mocked. But others said, 'We will hear you again about this.' So, Paul went out from their midst. Some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others." (Acts 17:16-34)

Corinth

"Paul left Athens and went to Corinth and found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He stayed with them for they were tentmakers by trade. He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. When they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." He went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, next door to the synagogue. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. Many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. The Lord said to Paul, 'Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.' He stayed a year and half teaching the Word of God." (Acts 18:1-18)

Ephesus

"A Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. Being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately. From Ephesus he went to Achaia and greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus." (Acts 18:19-24)

"Paul came to Ephesus and found some disciples. He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' They said, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' So, Paul asked, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They said, 'Into John's baptism.' Paul replied, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. There were about twelve men in all. Then Paul entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily." (Acts 19:1-20)

"There arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. A man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, 'Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth (greed is always a problem). You see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. There is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her

magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.’ When they heard this, they were enraged and were crying out, ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!’ They continued for about two hours crying out with one voice, ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!’ When the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, ‘Men of Ephesus, if Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.’ He then dismissed the assembly. After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia and came to Troas.” (Acts 19:21-41)

Troas

“On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. A young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. Being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, ‘Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him.’ When Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.” (Acts 20:1-16)

Comment: The Greek word translated “speech” meant discourse or discussion. A 1600s translation was mistranslated the Greek word as peached to agree with current Church of England practices.

Returning to Jerusalem

“Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. He warned them to pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. Now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:1-38)

“After we had torn ourselves away from them, we put out to sea and landed at Tyre. Finding the disciples there, we stayed with them seven days. They urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. We continued our voyage to Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, ‘The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.’ When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, ‘Why are you weeping and breaking

my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.’ When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, ‘The Lord’s will be done.’ After this, we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us and brought us to the home of Mnason, where we were to stay. He was a man from Cyprus and one of the early disciples.” (Acts 21:1-16)

“When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly. The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: ‘You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law (Christians Jews still holding on to their traditions and the Law of Moses). They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. Take these men, join in their purification rites (traditions) and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everybody will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.” (Acts 21:17-25)

Beginning of Paul’s persecution

“The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them. When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, shouting, ‘Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple area and defiled this holy place.’ (They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple area.) The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut. While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done. Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers. The crowd that followed kept shouting, ‘Away with him!’” (Acts 21:26-36)

“As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, ‘May I say something to you?’ ‘Do you speak Greek?’ he replied. ‘Aren’t you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the desert some time ago?’ Paul answered, ‘I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people.’ Having received the commander’s permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic: ‘Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.’ When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet.” (Acts 21:37-22:2)

“Then Paul said: ‘I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, as also the high priest and all the Council can testify. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished. About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked.’ ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked. ‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’ My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me. A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him. Then he said: ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. Now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’ When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance and saw the Lord speaking. ‘Quick!’ he said to me. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ ‘Lord,’ I replied, ‘these men know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. When the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’ ‘Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’” (Acts 22:3-21)

Sanhedrin Demand Paul’s Death

“The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, ‘Rid the earth of him! He’s not fit to live!’ (An attitude of hatred leads to a closed mind) As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, the commander ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and questioned in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like this. As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, ‘Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn’t even been found guilty?’ The commander was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains. In an attempt to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, he brought Paul to stand before the chief priests and the Sanhedrin. Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, ‘My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.’ Knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, ‘My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead.’ When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.) (Truth did not matter but group tradition did.) There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. “We find nothing wrong with this man,” they said. “What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?” The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.” (Acts 22:22; 23:10)

“The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, ‘Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.’ The next morning the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. More than forty men were involved in this plot. They went to the chief priests and elders and said, ‘We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul. Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here.’ But when the son of Paul's sister heard of this plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, ‘Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him.’ So, he took him to the commander. The centurion said, ‘Paul, the prisoner, sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you.’ The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, ‘What is it you want to tell me?’ He said: ‘The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him. Don't give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request.’ The commander dismissed the young man and cautioned him, ‘Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me.’” (Acts 23:11-22)

“Then the commander called two of his centurions and ordered them, ‘Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight. Provide mounts for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix.’ He wrote a letter to His Excellency, Governor Felix from Claudius Lysias. So, the soldiers too Paul to Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him. The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, he said, ‘I will hear your case when your accusers get here.’ Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod's palace. Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor. When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: ‘We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation. Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly. We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect and even tried to desecrate the temple; we seized him. By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him.’ The Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true. When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: ‘I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so, I gladly make my defense. You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. They cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance. But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before

the Sanhedrin— unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: 'It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.'" (Acts 24:11-21)

"Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings stating, 'when Lysias the commander comes,' he said, 'I will decide your case.' Two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison. Festus convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. When Paul appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges against him, which they could not prove. Paul made his defense: 'I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.' Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, 'Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?' Paul answered: 'I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!' After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: 'You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!' (Acts 24:22-27; 25:12)

Paul Going to Rome

"Agrippa said 'this man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.' When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the Imperial Regiment. We boarded a ship from Adramyttium about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia, and we put out to sea. The next day we landed at Sidon; next at Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board. We made slow headway for many days and had difficulty arriving off Cnidus. When the wind did not allow us to hold our course, we sailed to the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea. Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous. Paul warned them, 'Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also.' But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship. Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there. When a gentle south wind began to blow, they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the northeaster, swept down from the island. The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so, we gave way to it and were driven along. We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved."

"After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' So, keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island." On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. They took

soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet deep. A short time later they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet deep. Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. 'For the last fourteen days,' he said, 'you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food — you haven't eaten anything. Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.' After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. Altogether there were 276 of us on board. When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea. When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf. The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. The rest were to get there on planks or on pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land in safety."

"Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, 'This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live.' But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead, but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god. There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably. His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. They honored us in many ways and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed. After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island. It was an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux. We set sail and arrived two days later we reached Puteoli. There we found some brothers who invited us to spend a week with them. So, we came to Rome."

"The brothers there had heard that we were coming, and they traveled as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. At the sight of these men Paul thanked God and was encouraged. When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him. Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: 'My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar — not that I had any charge to bring against my own people. For this reason, I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.' They replied, 'We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of the brothers who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere

are talking against this sect.' They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening, he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet: - Go to this people and say, You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.' For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' "Therefore, I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!" For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ."

Key Points of God's Message from Acts

- His disciples witnessed Jesus' death.
- For forty days after His resurrection", Christ was with His disciples before He returned to God.
- On Pentecost as Jesus had promised, He poured out the Holy Spirit as evidenced by the sound of rushing wind and apostles speaking in language with which they were unfamiliar.
- The Apostles were witnesses of Jesus' return to heaven and boldly proclaimed forgiveness of sin and salvation to all who obeyed His teachings.
- Unbelieving Jews began persecuting which resulted in Christ's message of reconciliation being spread outside Jerusalem.
- Salvation and Eternal Life is offered to all mankind – not to Jews only.

Questions

What is the purpose of the Book of Acts?

Did Christ build; a structure (a sanctuary, meeting place), a religious organization or reconstitute a new Jewish Sanhedrin?