

ACTS

- The Book of Acts is referenced as “Luke Volume 2” since the physician Luke is considered the writer. Technical medical terms are repeated throughout the books of Luke and Acts.
 - The books of Luke and Acts could be considered anonymous because Luke is never mentioned by name.
 - However, the “we” sections of the book identify Luke as participating in Paul’s ministries.

Early Church Fathers Confirm Luke as Author
Muratorian Fragment (170-190AD)
Irenaeus (130-200AD)
Clement of Alexandria (156-215AD)
Origen of Alexandria (185-254AD)
Tertullian (160-200AD)

- Luke was the faithful companion of Paul to the conclusion of Paul’s ministry (Colossians 4:10-14; Philemon 1:24; 2 Timothy 4:11).
 - Additional descriptions about Luke can be found in the “Anti-Marcionite Prologues” (2nd century) which state that Luke was a Syrian initially from Antioch. The historian Eusebius also wrote about Luke.
 - Tradition holds that Luke was never married, and he died peacefully at the age of 84 in Boeotia, Greece.
- Luke was probably a Gentile; he would be the only Gentile author of a book in the New Testament. (Job was the only book written by a Gentile in the Old Testament).
 - An ancient prologue written to introduce the gospel describes Luke as a Syrian from Antioch.
 - The reader is introduced to Luke as the man from Macedonia (Acts 16:9) where Acts turns from third person to first person.
 - Lucas (or Loukas) is a Greek name; the author of Luke writes with a Greek style, and is highly educated with his chosen vocabulary, similar to other Greek writers in his day.
 - Paul also listed him with other Gentiles in his greetings to the Colossians (4:14).
 - The ancient prologue goes on to state that Luke eventually settled in the Greek city of Thebes, where he died at age 84.
- The thorough accounts by Luke were possibly used as trial documents for Paul in Rome. Luke desired to show the Roman authorities that Christianity was non-treasonous and non-troublesome. Each time that Peter or Paul comes before a Roman Official, there is a positive reception, the gospel is presented, and the official declares that they do not find any offense in the Christianity being practiced.
 - 20% of Acts consists of speeches to officials.
 - Just as Luke concludes with the treachery of Jewish leadership against Jesus, Acts concludes with the treachery of Jewish leadership against Paul.

- In 64AD Nero was blaming Christians for the burning of Rome, and Paul was probably arrested and killed around that time.
- From 64AD-73AD, the Jewish nation was in direct revolt against Rome, so Luke may have been distancing Christianity from Judaism.
- Luke accurately depicts the Roman Empire at the time. The governmental officials recorded by Luke accurately represent secular historical findings (flawless historicity).

Different Governmental Systems of Roman Empire	
●	Provinces under the Direct Control of the Emperor
●	Provinces under the Direct Control of the Senate of Rome
●	Independent Provinces for “Grand Scale” Acts of Loyalty

Examples of Secular Historical Events Referenced in Acts		
44AD	Death of Herod Agrippa	Acts 12:20-23
44-48AD	Famine under Claudius	Acts 11:28
49AD	Jews Leave Rome	Acts 18:2
51AD	Office of Sergius Paulus	Acts 13:7
52-52AD	Office of Gallio	Acts 18:12-13
52-56AD	Office of Felix	Acts 23:26, 24:2
57-60AD	Office of Festus	Acts 24:27

- As the gospels covered approximately the thirty years of Jesus’ first advent, this book of Acts covers the first thirty years of the church after the ascension of the Lord. The emphasis is that everything that the early church did was a consequence of the empowerment of the Spirit.
- Although the name of this book has traditionally been “Acts of the Apostles,” it is commonly understood that a more appropriate name might be the “Acts of Jesus and His Spirit.” (Acts 1:1) The Spirit is mentioned frequently at the earlier part of Acts while the Spirit is mentioned less frequently in the latter part of the book.

Different Titles of the Book from Greek Manuscripts & Church Fathers	
“ACTS”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sinaiticus (Aleph) ● Tertullian (Early Christian Apologist) ● Didymus (Early Christian Theologian) ● Eusebius (Historian)
“ACTS OF THE APOSTLES”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vaticanus (B) ● Bezae (D) ● Athanasius (Early Church Leader)
“ACTS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alexandrius (A) ● Bodleian Genesis (E) ● Chrysostom (Early Church Leader/Archbishop of Constantinople)

- This book describes the ways that Jesus works in His church after His ascension. Throughout this book, “the Word” references the message of Jesus. The first segment primarily focuses on Peter (Ch. 1-12) with the second half primarily covers Paul (Ch. 13-28) although there are 95 individuals mentioned in Acts.

Acts Validates the Legitimacy of Christianity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legitimate movement of the Spirit • The Early Church is Legitimate • The Extension of the Gospel to Gentiles is Legitimate • Paul (& His Epistles) are Legitimate

- Acts 1:8 gives an outline for the book of Acts. *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and as far as the remotest part of the earth.”* (Acts 1:8)
 - While the Gospels focused a great deal on the ministry of Jesus in Galilee, the book of Acts focuses on Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Antioch (Syria), and then the mission trips of Paul all of the way to Rome.
 - The Book of Acts references 32 countries, 54 cities and 9 Mediterranean islands.

Acts 1:8	
Chapters	Ministry
1-7	Jerusalem, Judea
8-12	Samaria
13-28	Ends of the Earth

- The Book of Acts shows the growth of the church as the gospel is preached worldwide. The last verse of Acts emphasizes this evangelization of the world. *“...preaching the kingdom of God and teaching things about the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.”* (Acts 28:31)
- The book of Acts presents the mission of the church in meeting needs and evangelizing the world. God’s people are filled with the Spirit (Isaiah 11:2; 32:15; Ezekiel 36:26-27; 37:14; Joel 2:28) as they give generously among the needy and evangelize the world.
 - Just as the Spirit filled the Temple in the Old Testament (Exodus 40:35; 2 Chronicles 7:2) His Spirit filled the individual believers in the New Testament (Ezekiel 43:4; Haggai 2:7)
 - Just as God’s people multiplied during the persecution of Egypt (Acts 7:17), God’s people would continue to multiply during the persecution of Rome (Acts 12:24; 28:31).

15 Acts 1

Read Acts 1:1-3 ... The Preface with a Dedication to Theophilus

1:1 The individual, Theophilus, may have been a Roman Official/Governor which Luke had possibly become better acquainted since writing the book of Luke (Lk 1:3).

- In the general sense, both of these books are beneficial for any believer as they may also be called “Theophilus” meaning “Lover of God”. The name

“Theophilus” is a compound word consisting of “Theo” (“God”) and “Phileo” (“Love”).

- Jesus began to “do” then “teach”; the action of doing is mentioned before teaching.
 - Although Jesus had cried “It is finished” (Jn 19:30) in regards to payment for salvation, this verse shows that Jesus had just begun the work of the Spirit in His church. When believers experience salvation, it is just the beginning of a redemptive experience.
- Luke used the title “most excellent” to describe Theophilus (Luke 1:3) just as the title was used in Acts (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25). Theophilus may have been the benefactor who paid for the publishing of the books of Luke and Acts.

1:2 Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:1, 10:21), and He prepared the recipients for the message of God (Lk 2:25; Mk 1:8; Jn 4:2, 20:22).

- The Greek term for “apostles” (apostolōn ἀποστόλων) means to “to send with official authority” as Christ’s representatives. Christians continue to be Christ’s representatives; the word “Christian” was first used in the church in Antioch to mean “Little Christ.” (Acts 11:26, 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16)
 - Barnabas and Paul were included as an apostle (Acts 14:14)
 - James - the leader of the Jerusalem church (Galatians 1:19)
 - Apollos (1 Corinthians 4:6-9)
 - Timothy & Silvanus (1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2:6)
 - Andronicus & Junia (Romans 16:7)
 - Some believers have been given the spiritual gifts to be apostles (1 Corinthians 12:29; Revelation 18:20)
 - Several times the Greek term “apostolōn” is translated as “messengers.”
 - Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25)
 - Two unnamed apostles (2 Corinthians 8:23)
 - Jesus is also called an apostle (Hebrews 3:1)
- The Lord Jesus always chooses who His followers are to be according to His grace as opposed to their merit (John 1:13; Romans 9:11-21).
- The Greek term for “commandments/orders” (enteilamenos ἐντειλάμενος) may relate to several commands:
 - The command to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes (Luke 24:49)
 - This could also relate to the great commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:45-47; Acts 1:8).

1:3 Jesus remained on the earth for forty days after resurrection; during this time, He was untouchable by Satan and his fallen minions.

- *Quarantine* is a word derived from the Italian word for forty; forty being the number of days thought necessary for a virulent disease to run its course.
- This is the only place where the 40 days between the resurrection and ascension of Jesus is mentioned.
 - The appearances of Jesus after His resurrection is documented 12 times and often on Sunday evenings. Throughout Scripture, the number 12 often symbolizes “organizational witness.”

The Appearances of Jesus after His Resurrection

1.	Mary Magdalene in the garden.	Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18
2.	Salome and Mary, the mother of James	Matthew 28:9-10
3.	Peter	Luke 24:34
4.	Two men on the road to Emmaus	Luke 24:13-32
5.	To the apostles (without Thomas)	Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25
6.	To the apostles with Thomas	John 20:26-29
7.	To seven disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee	John 21:1-25
8.	To the apostles on a mountain in Galilee	Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18
9.	To over 500 brethren	1 Corinthians 15:6
10.	To His brother James	1 Corinthians 15:7
11.	Eating a meal with His apostles	Acts 1:3-8; Luke 24:44-49
12.	His ascension	Acts 1:9-12; Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-53

- Luke provides a listing of some visited by Jesus after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). The 500 believers may have been the setting for Jesus giving the “Great Commission.” (Matthew 28:16-20)
- After the resurrection of Jesus, He continued to teach about the Kingdom of God (just as He had preached prior to His death).

Read Acts 1:4-8 ... The Promise of the Holy Spirit and His Kingdom

1:4 Immediately after the resurrection of the Lord, He led His disciple to Galilee (Matthew 28:10; Mark 16:7) which was probably much safer for them as the public had recently crucified their Lord (John 20:19).

- Directly before the Lord ascended into heaven, He told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem to minister with the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Luke 24:49).
 - It is likely that the disciples did not want to remain in Jerusalem (John 10:31, 39; 11:8, 16).
 - Jesus had been crucified on Passover, and the Pentecost was 50 days later. Jesus had remained on earth for 40 days before ascending, so the disciples remained in Jerusalem for 10 days after the ascension of Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit was promised by the Father of His Spirit (Luke 24:49).
- Although some translations use the word “eating,” the Greek term (συναλιζόμενος) more appropriately means “assembling” or “gathering.”

1:5 John the Baptist is quoted several times regarding the baptism of water contrasted to the Spirit (Mt 3:11, 16; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33), but Jesus must have stated the same truth as well (Jn 3:5).

- The water baptism is symbolic of death to one’s old nature while being resurrected to a new life in the Lord.
- The baptism of fire (by the Holy Spirit – Titus 3:5-6) results in the believer’s faith being refined by fire while the earthly works are tested by fire (1 Peter 1:6-7; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

1:6 The disciples continued to focus on the timing of the restoration of the physical nation of Israel; they were focused on the fleshly instead of the spiritual (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21).

- In 1948, Israel was restored as a nation, and in the Great Tribulation, they will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ as a nation (Acts 3:21).
- The Lord will establish an earthly kingdom during the millennium (Revelation 20:4).

1:7 Although man can seek the Lord and His truths, the only accurate understanding of spiritual truths that man can grasp are the concepts that are allowed him by the Lord (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32).

- The Greek term for “times” (chronous χρόνου) is the root word for “chronology.” (Luke 20:9; Acts 17:30). The term “chronous” means a long period of time like an era or age. This would mean the general time frame.
- The Greek term for “seasons” (kairous καιρούς) which means a specific, calendar date. This would mean the precise date.

1:8 In this, the “Great Commission”, the disciples are not asked to witness, but instead they are told that they will “be” (Esesthe Ἔσεσθε) witnesses.

- This is similar to the ministry of John the Baptist to Jerusalem and Judea (Mt 3:5).
- The power to come on the disciples is represented by the Greek term “dunamis” which is the root of “dynamite”.

Read Acts 1:9-11 ... The Ascension of Jesus

1:9 God had often come down to man (Ex 34:5; Num 11:25; 2 Sam 22:10; 2 Chron 6:1; Ps 18:9; Rev 10:1, 11:12) or spoken to man (Mk 9:7; Lk 9:35) from the cloud (Matthew 24:30, 26:64; Mark 9:26, 14:62; Luke 21:27; 1 Thessalonians), but now the Lord was being taken up to the clouds (Luke 24:50-53).

- The ascension is referenced through later books of the New Testament (Luke 24:50-51; Ephesians 4:10; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:14; 1 Peter 3:27).

Three Stages of the Glory of Jesus	
1.	Transfiguration
2.	Resurrection
3.	Ascension

1:10 The law states that there must be at least two witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15), and there were two witnesses at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:3) as well as the resurrection (Luke 24:4).

The Angels Were Present During the Life of Jesus	
1.	Joseph’s marriage Mt 1:20, 24
2.	Mary’s pregnancy Lk 1:26, 30, 34-35
3.	Birth of Jesus Lk 2:9-10, 13
4.	Joseph’s flight to Egypt & Return Mt 2:13, 19
5.	Spiritual Angels Interacting Through Jesus Jn 1:51
6.	Comforting Jesus Mk 1:13; Lk 22:43
7.	Resurrection Mt 28:2, 5; Jn 20:12

1:11 All of the disciples had originated from the region of Galilee except Judas from the region of Judah. Believers are told to watch attentively for the rapture when the Lord calls His people living on the earth (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51).

Read Acts 1:12-14 ... The Followers of the Ascended Jesus

1:12 The Mount of Olives is a “Sabbath day’s” distance meaning $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile; however, Bethany is on the east side of the Mount of Olives about two miles from Jerusalem (Luke 24:50-51)

- The Jews limited the distance that an individual could walk on the Sabbath (Exodus 16:29; Numbers 35:5).

- Jewish law specified that an individual could only walk 2,000 paces (½ mile) on the Sabbath (a “Sabbath Day’s Walk”). Jewish adherents were frequently seeking loopholes to “lawfully” circumvent the rules of the law (like the Sabbath). Often Scribes were engaged (hired) to determine how to lawfully get around the Jewish law. (Mark 7:8-9)
 - One example of this would be the placing of an article (like a chair or table) a certain distance from home prior to the Sabbath. On the Sabbath, the Jew could walk to that chair which re-established the “home location,” so that the person could walk another Sabbath Day’s Walk beyond that item.

1:13 The “upper room” may have been the same room of the last supper (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12). This may also have been the room where the disciples gathered after His crucifixion (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-23).

- Beyond meeting in this room, the disciples were lodging in this upper room.
- This is the last of four listings of the apostles (Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19, Lk 6:12-19). The apostles were always listed in three tiers of four men with the “Tier Leaders” consistently being Peter, Philip, and James (Mt 10, Lk 6, and Acts 1)
 - This is the first of four listings of the twelve apostles (Mt 10, Lk 6, Acts 1). This is a listing of eleven without Judas Iscariot.
 - Each listing contains identical first four names (1-4), second four names (5-8), and third section of names (9-12).
 - Each tier beginning with a consistent person (Peter, Philip, James) who are thought to be the “tier leaders”. Paul’s ministry tends towards Gentiles while the 12 apostles are primarily associated with the 12 tribes of Israel (Mt 19:20, Rev 21:12-14).

The Four Lists of the Twelve Apostles			
Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:12-19	Acts 1:13
1. Simon	Simon	Simon	Peter
2. Andrew	James	Andrew	James
3. James	John	James	John
4. John	Andrew	John	Andrew
5. Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
6. Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
7. Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
8. Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
9. James (son of Alpheus)	James (son of Alpheus)	James (son of Alpheus)	James (son of Alpheus)
10. Thaddeus	Thaddeus	Simon (the Zealot)	Simon (the Zealot)
11. Simon (the Zealot)	Simon (the Zealot)	Judas (son of James)	Judas (son of James)
12. Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	

- Judas Iscariot was always listed last although he was the Treasurer (John 12:6; 13:29). Judas is disregarded from this list of apostles; however, a different Judas (meaning “praise”) is still listed last.
- The names of Thaddeus and Judas, son of James, were listed for the same disciple.

- 1:14 The early believers perpetually prayed together in singleness of spirit and purpose.
- Although the family of Jesus had doubted throughout His ministry, Mary and the brothers (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3) finally believe that He is the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt 12:46-50; Mk 3:31-35; Lk 8:19-21; Jn 7:5; Ps 69:8) after witnessing His resurrection.
 - This is the last mention of Mary in the New Testament.
 - Two of Jesus' brothers wrote books of the New Testament, James (1 Corinthians 15:7) and Jude.
 - The Greek term for "one mind/accord" (homothymadon ὁμοθυμαδὸν) is used 10 times in the book of Acts (2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 15:25, 18:12; 19:29) and only one other time in the New Testament (Romans 15:6).
 - Luke joined Paul in Macedonia which was the location where women's rights were greatest; Lydia lived there (Acts 16:14).

Read Acts 1:15-26 ... Matthias is Chosen as the Twelfth Apostle

1:15 The number of believers were ten-fold the number of disciples (10 x 12 = 120), so there was no lacking in support of the calling of the ministry.

The Biblical Names of Peter	
Simeon	Hebrew Name
Simon	Greek Name
Peter	Greek Name
Cephas	Aramaic Name

- 1:16 The Psalms of David were inspired by the Holy Spirit (Ps 41:9, 69:25; Acts 1:20) and fulfilled by Jesus Christ (Jn 17:12).
- 1:17 Judas had been the treasurer of the disciple's funds (Jn 12:6), but after this earthly life, the twelve disciples would be called to judge (Mt 19:28; Rev 21:14).
- 1:18 Judas had embezzled funds as the treasurer for the disciples (Jn 12:6) just as he had misappropriated the treasures of the kingdom of heaven to which he had been privy.
- The high priests used the thirty pieces of silver belonging to Judas to purchase the field (Matthew 27:6).
 - Judas plunged "headfirst", but it was his mid-section that burst open, he must have already been decayed and bloating before falling; the limb or rope may have broken after his suicide of hanging (Matthew 27:3-5).
 - The old nature cannot contain a new spirit (Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37).
- 1:19 Everyone in Jerusalem heard of the coarse actions of Judas which resulted in an Aramaic nickname for the field. This field was utilized to bury foreigners (Matthew 27:7-8).
- 1:20 Peter quotes Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. All Old Testament Scripture was fulfilled by Jesus Christ and those around Him (Acts 1:16).
- Old Testament prophecies like this are often overlooked with "local" (Old Testament) interpretations while disregarding the New Testament implications.
- 1:21 Many beyond the twelve disciples had followed the ministry of Jesus and had first-hand knowledge of His teaching.
- 1:22 Throughout the ministry of Jesus (from His baptism to ascension), Jesus taught a faithful group of followers (Mt 27:55). Over 500 had witnessed the resurrection of

Jesus, but a select number of twelve disciples were called to “elder” the new church and give their lives for the testimony (1 Cor 15:6)

Selection of the New Apostle	
Acts 1:23	
<u>Proper Names</u>	<u>Meanings</u>
Joseph	“Addition”; “Increase”
Barsabbas	“Son of Rest”
Justus	“Just”
Matthias	“Gift of God”

- A number of people in the New Testament were called Apostles:
 - Barnabas and Paul were included as an apostle (Acts 14:14)
 - James - the leader of the Jerusalem church (Galatians 1:19)
 - Apollos (1 Corinthians 4:6-9)
 - Timothy & Silvanus (1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2:6)
 - Andronicus & Junia (Romans 16:7)
 - Some believers have been given the spiritual gifts to be apostles (1 Corinthians 12:29; Revelation 18:20)
 - Several times the Greek term “apostolōn” is translated as “messengers.”
 - Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25)
 - Two unnamed apostles (2 Corinthians 8:23)
 - Jesus is also called an apostle (Hebrews 3:1)

1:24 Only God knows the hearts of men (Ps 44:21; Lk 16:15; Acts 15:8) when men do not even know their own hearts (1 Jn 3:20; Jeremiah 17:9, 24:7; Isaiah 44:18).

- The methodology to replace Judas (because he was an apostate) was that they chose men who were qualified, and then they asked for God to select from the qualified. This approach balances the responsibility of the church with the sovereignty of God.
- The least likely candidate, Matthias, was chosen as a “gift from God.” Although nothing in Scripture disqualifies Matthias from being a disciple, even today, modern theologians often disagree with Matthias being appointed.

1:25 Judas’ “own place” is literally “where he was from”. Judas was not of the Lord, but of Satan (1 John 2:19).

- Jesus references Judas as the “son of perdition (John 6:70-71; 13:18-30; 17:12). The Greek term of “perdition” (apōleias ἀπωλείας) means destruction (John 17:12; Philippians 1:28; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 2 Peter 2:1, 3:7)

1:26 There is no luck or coincidence in this world, but instead a divine will and plan (Proverbs 16:33). Although the multiple names (characteristics) of the one candidate were impressive, Matthias had been given (chosen) by the Lord. Matthias is counted as one of the twelve by Scripture (Acts 6:2).

- This is the last time in Scripture that lots were used to know God’s will.
 - Lots were used to discern the will of the Lord (Leviticus 16:8; Proverbs 16:33). Originally, the High Priest kept the Urim (“lights”) and Thummim (“perfection”) to discern the will of God. (Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8; Deuteronomy 33:8)
 - The Roman soldiers cast lots for the clothes of Jesus at His crucifixion (Luke 23:24).

Read Acts 2:1-4 ... The Gift of the Holy Spirit

2:1 Pentecost (means “fiftieth”) occurred 49 days after Passover (Shavuot - Lev 23:15-17), and the followers of the Lord remained together. The Jews referenced Pentecost (“Shavuot”) as “the Feast of Weeks.” (Exodus 34:33; Leviticus 23:15-21)

- Pentecost had three purposes in those days:
 - Commemorate the giving of the Law to Moses
 - Thanksgiving for Harvest
 - Hag ha-Qazir (“Harvest Feast”)
 - Offering of First Fruits of Grain Harvest
 - Yom ha-Bikkurim (“Day of the First Fruits”)
- Pentecost was the second of the three major agricultural feasts for the Jews.
 - Pesach (Passover),
 - Shavuot (Weeks or Pentecost),
 - Sukkot (Tabernacles, Tents or Booths)
- The exact translation is “*together in the one.*” (Homou epi ta auto - ὁμοῦ ἐπὶ τὰ αὐτό) The Greek meaning of this phrase is robust; they were meeting in one place, at one time, in one mind/accord.

2:2 The second chapter of Luke described the coming of Jesus which laid the foundation for the remainder of Luke; in the same way, the Holy Spirit came in the second chapter of Acts.

- The Greek term for “sound” (ēchos ἦχος) is the root word for “echo.” The only other place in Scripture that “ēchos” appears is when the news of Jesus spread as having authority over impure spirits (Luke 4:36-37).
- The term “wind” in Greek is “Nephesh” (נֶפֶשׁ) and in Hebrew is the term “Pneuma.” (πνεῦμα). The term has multiple meanings of “breath,” “wind.” And “spirit.” (Ezekiel 37:9-14; John 3:5-8)

2:3 An indication of the Spirit was something similar to flames of fire (Num 9:15; Lk 24:37).

- These men were one in the body of Christ (Eph 4:4-5) that is cleansed (Isaiah 4:4; Zechariah 13:9) and baptized by fire (Mt 3:11, Lk 3:16) as a living sacrifice (Judges 6:21, 1 Kings 18:38).
- In the Old Testament, fire often represented the presence of God. (Exodus 3:2; Deuteronomy 5:4), but it also represented judgment (Isaiah 4:4, 29:6, 66:16; Jeremiah 15:14; Ezekiel 28:18; Amos 7:4)

2:4 The effect of being filled by the Spirit wasn’t silence, but instead testifying of the Lord (1 Samuel 10:10, 19:23-24).

- The act of being filled with the Spirit means to be under the Spirit’s control and power. Believers are commanded to be “filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) – to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.
 - This seems to often be directed towards evangelism.
 - Those who are filled with the Spirit seem strange and odd in the self-seeking sinful, material world.

- Being “filled with the Spirit” is “controllability” and “submission” to the Lord’s leading and mission for His people.
- The “filling by the Spirit” is repeated throughout the book of Acts (4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9, 50). This is a repeatable experience as Peter was filled with the Spirit on three different occasions.
- The “baptism of the Holy Spirit” is the initial Christian experience coming into the “body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesian 1:13; Romans 8:9, 11). This is different than the “filling of the Spirit” which is the on-going willingness to yield one’s self to God’s calling.

Read Acts 2:5-12 ... The Disciples Speak in Native Languages

2:5 During the Pentecost, the population of Jerusalem swelled from 160,000 to over a million occupants as pious and devoted Jewish men obeyed Scripture through their attendance (Exodus 23:14-17).

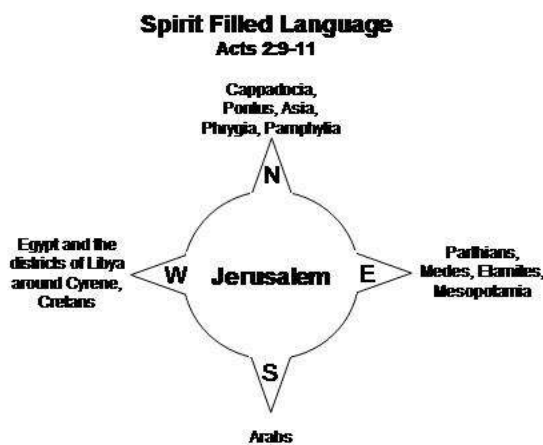
- The Greek term for “devout” (eulabeis εὐλαβεῖς) includes the notion of total, faithful commitment – dependable willingness and faithful, unwavering dedication.

2:6 With the blessed coming of the Spirit, understanding and increased communication was given (Rom 8:26; 1 Cor 14:21-33). This is the opposite of the judgment of Babel (Genesis 10:6-7).

- The focus is not each individual speaking a different language, but instead, the miracle is each one “hearing” (ἔκουον ἤκουον) in his own language.
- The curse of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) is literally reversed with God-given clarity of understanding.

2:7 Galileans had recognizable accents (Mt 26:73; Mk 14:70; Lk 22:59). Galilee was disregarded as lower class of people who were primarily uneducated.

2:8 The languages were spoken as a native born individual would have spoken them.



2:9-11 The people in attendance at Pentecost were from homelands in all directions.

2:9 The first group listed were east of Jerusalem (the fertile crescent) where Israel and Judah had been exiled into captivity by Assyria and Babylon (modern day Iraq, Iran, Persia).

- The second group listed were from Asia Minor where Paul would travel on his missions trips (modern day Turkey)

- 2:10 The third listing of countries includes countries from northern Africa and Rome.
- The Greek term for “strangers” (epidēmōntes ἐπιδημοῦντες) means “visitors.”
 - The Greek term for “proselytes” (prosēlytoi προσήλυτοι) is used only this once in Scripture to mean “converts” (those converted to Judaism).
 - Although many God-fearers were attracted to Judaism because of its high moral and ethical character, those who converted must make a greater commitment:
 - Accept the Jewish Law (written & oral)
 - Be circumcised
 - Be baptized before witnesses
 - Offer a sacrifice in the Temple
 - Before any mission outreaches, numerous churches were started (even in Rome) by those who were filled with the Spirit at Pentecost.
- 2:11 The followers of the Lord testified of the “*magnificent works of God*” by their speech.
- Crete was a Mediterranean island west of Israel, and Arabs lived south of Israel on the Arab Peninsula.
- 2:12-13 There were two responses to the witness of the Lord:
1. Open/Searching
 2. Critical/Divisive
- The world continues to respond to the gospel in these two different ways (Prov 20:1).
 - Although the believers were spiritually filled with new wine (Mt 9:17; Mk 2:22; Lk 5:37), they were not intoxicated by worldly influence.

17 Acts 2:14-47

Read Acts 2:14-36 ... Peter’s First Sermon

- 2:14 Peter becomes articulate after the Holy Spirit (Prov 16:33).
- All twelve of the disciples were proclaiming the Lord through the Spirit.
 - Peter directed his comments to the local inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea (not all of the visiting Jews from the diaspora).
 - As commanded by the Lord, the good news was first proclaimed to the Jew and then to the Gentile (Acts 1:8).
- 2:15 The Holy Spirit had come in the morning as the sun rises to give light, so did the Spirit come to enlighten (Jn 1:4-9). Using Roman time, the third hour translated to 9:00am.
- The believers were filled with the new wine of Christ, but not intoxicated with worldly alcohol (Eph 5:18-21).
 - Peter does not declare that they never drink alcohol, but instead, he said that it was too early to drink alcohol.
 - Although Jews believed that wine brought joy to God and man (Judges 9:13), most Jews did not drink wine until lunch or dinner.
 - Social science research reveals that Jews drink much more regularly than non-Jews, but Jews tend to have lower alcoholism rates than others. Researchers

suggest that the “prescriptive” nature of drinking in Jewish culture establishes clear guidelines for Jewish drinkers.

- Jewish men are obliged to drink wine every day of “*Yom Tov*” and “*Chol Hamoed*” (the "intermediate days" of Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles).
- Restrictions apply to any Jew who has drunk a *revi't* (approximately 3 oz.) or more of an alcoholic beverage:
 - He may not pray.
 - He may not render a halachic ruling (interpretation of the Torah or Talmud).
 - If he is a Priest, he may not administer the priestly blessing.

2:16 Peter quotes a source (the Hebrew Scripture) that would add credibility to the message.

- Joel (“Jehovah is God”) prophesied to Judah (~800BC) about a coming “day of the Lord” wherein judgment will be executed.
- After this judgment would be a time of profound filling of the Spirit.

2:17 Peter adjusts the words of Joel from “*after the day of the Lord*” to “*the last days*” (Heb 1:2) as Jesus has come, died, resurrected, and had sent the Spirit to His people.

- The Spirit had even fallen upon the Gentiles.
- There are a number of women prophets also recorded in Scripture (Exodus 15:20; Judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Nehemiah 6:14; Acts 21:9).
- Unlike Joel, Peter has sequenced the young men first and then the elder men – possibly because of the younger men present at the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost.
- The “last days” began with the giving of the Spirit for the last 2,000 years of the church age. Believers continue to live in the “last days.”

2:18 Peter extends Joel’s text by stating that God’s slaves/servants (those who follow His will as Lord) would also prophesy (declaring some truth through divine enlightenment).

2:19 Peter extends the words of Joel with “above” and “below.”

- The heavens displayed wonders at the birth of Jesus (Mt 2:9-10; Lk 2:13) while the world experienced His miraculous actions throughout His ministry.
- The spiritual aspects would infer the blood of Christ, the fire of the Spirit, and the return of Christ on a cloud; however, the physical application is one of persecution, conflagration, and ruin (the Tribulation before the day of the Lord).
- Apocalyptic language is used to describe the “Day of the Lord;” Jews believe that nature would be disrupted and disturbed when God entered the world.

2:20 The spiritual light will be eradicated from this world, and the believers who reflect the true light will be persecuted. The physical devastation will be such that the light of day and night will be shrouded and obscured.

- At the crucifixion of Jesus, a darkness covered the land. (Mark 15:33)

2:21 To be saved, man must yearn and cry out for the one true Savior, Jesus (Acts 4:12; Rom 10:13). The term “everyone” extends the gospel language beyond the Jews to the Gentiles.

- The amount of faith is not as important as the object of faith. It is the object of faith (Jesus) that determines a saving relationship.

2:22-24 Peter's Threefold Sermon: Jesus Life (v22); Jesus Death (v23); Jesus Resurrection (v24)

2:22 Jesus calls on the "men of Israel" to "hear the words" (akousate tous logous- ἀκούσατε τοὺς λόγους) that he would share.

- "Jesus the Nazarene" is used 7 times in Acts. The term "Nazarene" portrayed Jesus as the branch (netzer) foretelling the Messiah in the Old Testament (Mk 1:24; Is 4:2, 11:1; Jer 23:5, 33:15; Zech 3:8, 6:12); this was also the identity of Jesus that is referenced after His resurrection (Mk 14:67, 16:6).
- Nazareth was an uncultivated, disreputable place (Jn 1:46) that may have been named after the hill behind it (Lk 4:29); the hill Notserah means "one guarding/watching."
- The Jews should have believed the tangible works that the Father had performed through Jesus (John 5:36; 10:38; 14:11).

Supernatural Affirmations by God the Father through God the Son			
1.	Miracles	Dynamesi - δυνάμεισι	"Force; Mighty Deed"
2.	Wonders	Terasi - τέρασι	"Omen; Forewarning"
3.	Signs	Sēmeiois - σημείοις	"Indication"

2:23 God is sovereign with a predestined plan, but man is still accountable for his failures.

- Lawless people represent those who did not adhere to the law (Mt 26:59-60, 27:38) and those (Gentile Roman Soldiers) who had not been given the law (Mt 27:2, 27; Jn 19:23).
- God had a "predetermined" (hōrismenē ὁρισμένη) plan and foreknowledge (prognōsei προγνώσει) that included the death of Jesus on Passover and the giving of His Spirit on Pentecost. (John 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Luke 22:22; Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2, 20).

2:24 As the source of life, Jesus was not to be contained by death; His physical and spiritual sufferings were eliminated in the resurrection of Christ.

- The Greek term for "pain" (ōdinas ὠδίνας) can also be translated as "birth pains" or "agony."

2:25-26 This quote is from Psalm 16:8-11. King David had experienced the hope and peace that comes from the Lord. In a physical sense, these words must refer to the Messiah because David's earthly body disintegrated in a grave. The body of Jesus was glorified in His resurrection.

2:27 Just as (spiritual) life after (physical) death would save David from eroding in Hades, the very body of Jesus was removed from the tomb without being corrupted by the elements of this world (John 20:5).

- The term "Hades" (Sheol/Grave in the Old Testament) was considered by the Jews the holding place for the dead with two divisions: Paradise for God's people (Luke 16:19-31) and Tartarus for those who rebelled against God (2 Peter 2:4).
 - This is different from Gehenna which refers to hell after the judgment.

2:28 The Lord is active in leading His people in His way (Jn 14:6), and the joy of His people will be His fellowship.

2:29 Peter relates to his audience through the term "brothers." First, Peter confirms the fact that David is deceased as is evidenced by David's tomb. Peter explains the

- reason that the Old Testament's resurrection passage must have been focused on Jesus instead of David.
- 2:30 David was more than a King; David was also a prophet (2 Samuel 23:2; Psalm 132:11; Acts 1:16), and he understood Jesus was the eternal King (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 89:3-4).
- 2:31 Therefore, since David knew that Jesus, David's descendant, would be the eternal king, David understood that death would not constrain Jesus Christ (the Messiah).
- The root of "sheol" is ša'al which means "to burrow."
 - Sheol refers to the grave (Job 7:9; Ps 18:5-7; 139:8).
 - Paul would learn this truth and also use this point (Acts 13:35).
- 2:32 The spectators of Peter had also witnessed the resurrection of Jesus during the forty days after His victory over death in which He was on this earth (1 Cor 15:6).
- 2:33 The reference of an "arm" relates to the strength of God in an anthropomorphic way.
- The right hand represents power (Mk 16:19; Lk 22:69; Rom 8:34; Col 3:1; Heb 10:12, 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22).
 - Jesus was exalted to that position of power and received the Holy Spirit that had been promised by God the Father to pour out on His people (Lk 24:29; Jn 14:16, 15:26, 16:7).
- 2:34-35 Peter references Psalm 110:1; this is the most quoted passage from the Old Testament that is cited in the New Testament.
- Peter uses an argument that Jesus had used multiple times (Mt 22:41-46; Mk 12:35-37; Lk 20:41-44).
 - The Jews esteemed their predecessors just as David had exalted his descendant because the Lord Jesus came from David's lineage, but existed before David was (Jn 1:15).
- 2:36 Jesus as Lord and Savior, and Peter urged Israel to take responsibility for the crucifixion of Him.
- The Greek term for "Lord" (Kyriōn Κύριον) carried connotations of "Yahweh;" Jesus was divine.
 - The Greek term for "Christ" (Christōn Χριστόν) is the Hebrew equivalent of the "Messiah."

Read Acts 2:37-41 ... 3,000 Jews Respond & Repent

- 2:37 As promised to Mary, the truth pierced the hearers to the heart (Lk 2:35), and the listeners interrupt Peter's sermon to ask what they should do (Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12).
- 2:38 Peter gives a three-point plan: 1. repent 2. be baptized 3. receive Holy Spirit (Mk 1:4).
- Baptism was the model established by John the Baptist (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3) and the apostles of Jesus (John 4:2).
 - Baptism was the physical testimony of the repentance of an individual. Jesus encouraged His disciples to make disciples and baptize. (Matthew 28:19-20)
 - The Holy Spirit was the gift as the individual was incorporated into the body of Christ.
- 2:39 The promise of the Holy Spirit was made to those who have lived during the church age (1 Corinthians 2:4-11).

2:40 Peter's calling is relevant to the modern world: "*Be saved from this corrupt generation.*"

- Peter gave a much longer sermon that was shortened by Luke.

2:41 As the number "three" is symbolic of revelation/resurrection, there were three thousand people who came to Christ; this was the same number of God's people who had died after building the golden calf as an idol at Mt Sinai (Ex 32:28).

- The 3000 received the Word (faith) and were baptized (repentance). Faith and repentance are necessary for salvation.

Read Acts 2:42-47 ... The Early Church becomes a community

2:42 The early church devoted themselves as they made personal commitments to four activities (Acts 2:46-47):

1. Teaching – Learning the Word was of paramount priority; the teacher was not a single preacher but all of the apostles.
2. Fellowship – Believers are to be encouraging to each other
3. Breaking of Bread – The Lord's Supper is one way of remembering the death and resurrection of Christ. Mealtime fellowship is also an opportunity to encourage fellow believers in the sustaining and nourishment of the Lord (Acts 2:46).
4. Prayers – Intimate fellowship with the Lord also sustains in daily turmoil

2:43 "Fear" of the reality of a mighty God (Ps 111:10) was a defining characteristic of the early church (Acts 5:5, 11; 9:31).

- The Greek word "Phobos" (fear) is the root of the word "phobia."
- Just as God had performed wonders and signs in the Old Testament (Acts 2:11, 7:36) that continued with Jesus (Acts 2:22), this power was also reflected in the apostles to the Jews (Acts 3:10, 4:30, 5:12, 6:8) and then to the Gentiles (Acts 14:3, 15:12, 19:17).

2:44 Another defining characteristic of the early church is "commonism" ("what's mine is yours") contrasted to "communism" ("what's yours is mine").

2:45 Believers loved the Lord more than possessions (Lk 12:33, 18:22), so they selflessly sold what they owned (Acts 5:4) to give to others.

2:46-47 The early church devoted themselves to faithful living every day:

1. Meeting in the temple complex (teaching)
 2. Breaking of Bread in the households – Personal remembrance of Christ's sacrifice
 3. Fellowship – believers ate together with joy and simplicity (as a child)
 4. Pleasing God through praise (prayer) while living lives of testimony (e.g., honesty, righteousness, sacrifice) for favor by people.
- Although the early church was faithful to the calling, the Lord was responsible for bringing in the increasing numbers of believers.

18 Acts 3

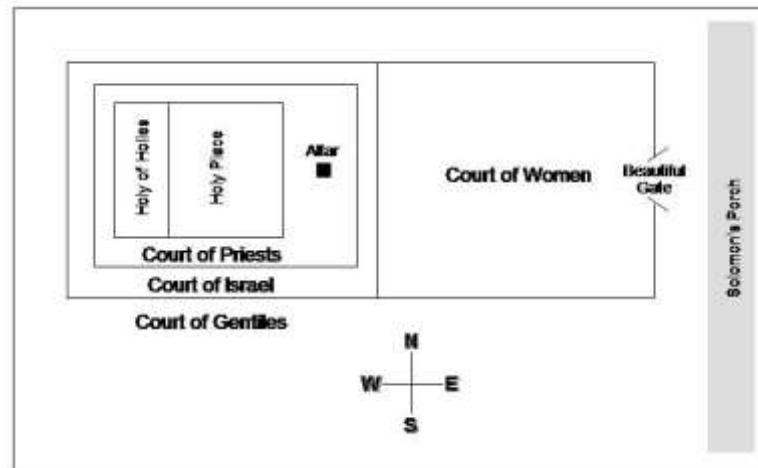
Read Acts 3:1-10 ... Peter & John Heal a Crippled Man

3:1 Peter and John were close companions in the inner circle of disciples (Jn 20:1-8).

- The first congregants met in the temple complex (Luke 24:53; Acts 2:46). Meeting at the Temple was a Jewish Tradition.
 - The Jews had two sacrifices each day – a morning (9:00am) and evening (3:00pm) sacrifice.
 - The Jews traditionally offered prayer three times each day (Daniel 6:10) being morning, noon, evening (Psalm 55:17).
 - This prayer at 3:00pm was the time of Jesus’ death (Lk 23:44-46).
- 3:2 This man was 40 years old and had been crippled from birth (Acts 4:22).
- The giving of alms (charity) was very important to the Jewish lifestyle, and generosity resulted in receiving a blessing (Matthew 6:1-4; Luke 11:41; 12:33; Acts 10:2, 4, 31; 24:17)
 - Synagogues sent out collectors of food every week in order to feed the poor for six meals/days until they would go out and collect again.
 - The Hebrew word for charity is tzedakah (tsedaqah צְדָקָה) means “righteousness;” it is an ethical obligation.
 - In Jewish thought, being charitable to people in need is not something extra; it is the basic correct thing to do.
 - Jewish homes have a Pushke (charity box) to collect for the poor; however, a tzedakah can also be goods or services (i.e., a visit).
 - Tzedakah is prioritized with family over non-family; local over distant; Jew over Gentile.
 - Tzedakah is so important that Jews believe that it can save from death in this world and lead to heaven in eternity. (Isaiah 56:1)
 - It is customary to perform Tzedakah before praying.
 - Jews often make donations in multiples of 18 (i.e., 36, 54, 72, 180, etc.) because the Hebrew word for “Life” (chai חַי), has the numerical value of 18.
 - The areas of the temple became increasingly restrictive from the court of the Gentiles to the court of women (for Jewish men and women) to only men to only the Levites until finally only the high priest.
 - This “Beautiful” gate (on the east of the Temple) that was covered with silver and gold is thought to have been 50-75 feet high separating the court of the Gentiles with the court of women.
 - The Talmud and Josephus give insight into Herod’s Temple. There were nine gates that led from the Court of the Gentiles into the Court of the Women (where Jewish women could enter).
 - The “Nicanor” Gate was made of Corinthian brass and had a beautiful appearance. Josephus wrote that the Nicanor gate was more beautiful than all of the others.



- As an Idumean, Herod constructed the Temple to placate the conservative Jews.
 - It is estimated that over 80,000 laborers were employed on the construction of the Temple.
 - The Temple was positioned on an area of 36 acres which was 20% (1/5) the land mass of Jerusalem at that time.
- This (Herod's) Temple structure was in the midst of being built as the construction lasted from 20BC until 64AD.
 - Herod's Temple only stood complete for 6 years before it was demolished by the Romans.
- The Temple was constructed of either polished limestone or a native stone (mezzah). This was a bright white structure that was trimmed in gold.
- Josephus documented that the stones were 25 cubits x 8 cubits x 12 cubits. An average cubit was 18 inches, so the stones were 37½ feet x 12 feet x 18 feet.
- An impoverished, crippled man, who had never walked, would beg outside of this enormous adorned structure.



- 3:3 The disciples did not approach the crippled man, but instead, the crippled man (understanding his disadvantaged state) approached them.
- Jesus had also walked in the Solomon's Colonnade (Jn 10:23) and most likely had passed this crippled man on various occasions.
 - Jesus had also healed paralytics (John 5:5-9).
 - Another lifetime crippled man will later establish the ministry of Paul (Acts 14:8-9).
- 3:4 Peter and John demanded this crippled man to focus solely on them.
- Paul would later look intensely at a crippled man to discern his faith (Acts 4:9).
- 3:5 Beggars do not typically even obtain attention from passers-by, so this crippled man had faith that he would receive something from Peter and John.
- 3:6 While other miracles had occurred prior to this event, this is the first healing defined in detail after the ascension of the Lord.
- Peter had not put his faith in the articles of this world nor did he have any worldly riches to give, but Peter did have spiritual healing and blessing through the power

of the name of Jesus Christ. Although he had a growing church of 3,000, Peter did not have silver or gold.

- Believers should not strive to give common worldly charity as much as the spiritual blessings that are singular and infrequent.
- The name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth had Old Testament connotations. In Jewish tradition, a name was insightful into the individual himself.
 - The name of “Jesus” is “Joshua” in Hebrew. The name “Joshua” is a combination of the word “Hosea/Yeshua” (“salvation”) and “Yahweh” (the covenant name of God). Jesus means “Yahweh is Salvation.” This name was given by the angel in Matthew 1:21.
- The Nazarene portrayed Jesus as the branch (netzer) foretelling the Messiah in the Old Testament (Mk 1:24; Is 4:2, 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15; Zechariah 3:8, 6:12); this was also the identity referenced after the resurrection (Mk 14:67, 16:6).
 - Nazareth was an uncultivated, disreputable place (Jn 1:46) that may have been named after the hill behind it (Lk 4:29); the hill Notserah means “one guarding/watching.”

3:7 Peter reached out to “raise up” the crippled man.

- The right hand represents strength while the feet represent the connection and dealings with this world.
- Men who are spiritually crippled and are not walking the godly life can also be strengthened and healed.
- Luke (the physician) gave the medical terms for the strengthening of the man’s feet and ankles.

3:8 A believer’s progress begins with first taking a stand and then walking; finally, the believer is running and jumping all of the while praising God.

3:9 The joy of the healed man was a testimony to those around him.

3:10 Anyone entering the Temple would have passed this beggar cripple throughout his life, and now the evidence of his healing was undeniable.

- A spiritual change in a man might be even more meaningful and impactful when his failures and frailties are evident.

Read Acts 3:11-26 ... Peter’s Second Sermon

3:11 The man who had been healed held onto Peter and John, but he needed to understand that Jesus had healed him. Believers who have been saved should also cling to Jesus, the One Who saved them instead of the human “vessel” that was utilized to evangelize.

- Jesus had preached in Solomon’s Colonnade shortly before His death (Matthew 21:23; John 10:23); this “porch” had been constructed with materials from Solomon’s original temple.
- Solomon’s Colonnade (Portico) became the meeting place of early believers after the resurrection and ascension of the Lord (Acts 5:12).
- Solomon’s Colonnade (Portico) was a series of covered teaching areas located on the eastern side of the Temple’s outer court (“women’s court”). The porch would have consisted of two parallel rows of columns supporting a long wooden roof facing the Mount of Olives and overlooking the Kidron Valley.

- After activities at the Temple (prayers, sacrifices), groups would gather in Solomon’s portico to socialize.



3:12 Peter did not want the accolades of this world but instead focused the attention and glory on Jesus. Peter begins the sermon with focusing attention on Jesus instead of the teacher.

Peter’s Early Sermons		
1 st Sermon	Acts 2:14	Giving of the Spirit in Jerusalem
2 nd Sermon	Acts 3:12	Solomon’s Portico in the Temple
3 rd Sermon	Acts 4:8	Priests, rulers, elders, scribes

- Peter corrected the focus from himself to God. The messenger should never get in the way of the message. God performed the miraculous acts with His power in spite of the lack of holiness in His people.
- 3:13 Peter preaches that the God of Israel’s patriarchs had glorified Jesus although these Israelites had crucified Him. The Gentile Pilate had also found Jesus innocent (John 19:12).

- This sermon was focused on the Jewish people of God with myriad Old Testament names and allusions.
- God had made a covenant with the patriarchs (Genesis 50:24; Exodus 2:24; 33:1; Numbers 32:11; Deuteronomy 1:8, 6:10, 9:5, 29:13, 30:20), and God Himself used the patriarchs to identify Himself to Moses (Exodus 3:6, 15)
- The Greek term “paida” (παῖδα) can either be interpreted as son (Luke 9:42), young boy (Acts 20:12) or servant which reveals that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s suffering servant prophecies (Isaiah 41-56)

Peter’s Old Testament Descriptions of Jesus	
3:13	Servant/Son
3:14	The Holy and Righteousness One
3:15	The Prince of Life
3:18, 20	The Messiah
3:22	The Prophet
3:26	The Servant
4:11	The Cornerstone

3:14 Peter repeats that these Israelites denied the Lord and chose the murderer Barabbas instead. This act is often repeated as mankind selects murderous companions and leaders instead of the one true God.

- The “Holy and Righteous One” (hagion kai dikaion - ἅγιον καὶ δίκαιον) is an Old Testament title referring to sinless Jesus as the anointed Messiah (Isaiah 61:1; 1 John 2:20). The demons recognized Jesus in this sinless way (Luke 4:41). Jesus did not die for His own transgression of the law; He died for sinners.

3:15 The spectators were witnesses to their sin of murder, but also to the power of God in resurrection. Barabbas was clearly an insurrectionist which was the same charge that they were prosecuting against Jesus.

- Barabbas was a notorious insurrectionist who had murdered during this rebellion (Luke 23:18-19).
 - As with every sinner, this prisoner destined for punishment by death was set free because Christ would go to His death instead of the one deserving punishment.
 - An ancient church father (Origen 184AD-253AD) gave the full name of Barabbas as “Jesus Barabbas” (in contrast with “Jesus Christ”). Barabbas means Bar (“son of”) Abbas (“a father”); his spiritual father being the devil (John 8:44).
 - The people had a choice between the son of “a father” and the son of “the father.”

- The first step in coming to the Lord is accept personal failings and sin.
- The resurrection of Jesus (Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:17), the source of life, was emphasized in every sermon (Romans 6:4). Jesus is life (John 14:6; 1 John 5:20; Psalm 16:11) and gives life to His followers (Romans 8:11)
 - The world was made through Jesus (John 1:3, 10; Colossians 1:16; 8:6)
- The Greek term for “source/author” (archēgon ἀρχηγόν) was also used for the concept of trailblazer (1 Corinthians 15:23; Acts 5:31). “Archēgon” described smaller ships that led larger boats into the harbor at Alexandria, Egypt.
- The hearers were first person eye-witnesses to all that Peter claimed.

3:16 Peter and John had faith in Jesus’ name to intercede for the crippled man; the object of the faith (not sincerity) is the issue. The source of the healing faith is stressed as being Jesus; restorative faith comes from God alone.

3:17 These religious men who murdered Christ did not have evil intent, but instead killed out of ignorance of the truth (Lk 23:34).

3:18 The failings of these men fulfilled the expectations of the Lord as written in Old Testament Scripture (Is 52:13-53:12).

- The Jews confused the judgment of the Lord’s second coming with His sacrifice in His first coming.
- Christ (the anointed one) suffered in His first incarnation.

3:19 There are two distinct elements in salvation: repent (turning from sin/self) and believe (turning to Christ/selflessness). (Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21)

- The Hebrew concept of repentance was based on action/deed while the Greek concept of repentance was based on thought/mind. Both are involved as a change of mind results in a change in action.
 - Salvation is based on a willingness to change. (Luke 13:3; 2 Peter 3:9)
 - God gives a willingness to repent (Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25)
- The Greek term for “faith” (pistis πίστις) is likened to trust and belief that focus on the trustworthiness of God. In the Old Testament, the word “amen” represented faith – to be certain; to be sure; to be firm.
- God will either “blot out” a man’s sins or a man’s name from the book of life (Rev 3:5).

- The sins of the believers will be wiped away. (Psalm 103:11-13; Isaiah 1:18; 38:17; 44:22; Micah 7:19)
 - The “times of refreshing” may reference a possibility of Israel’s restored kingdom or a postponement of God’s judgement on Jerusalem/Israel.
- 3:20 If Israel had repented and recognized Jesus as their Messiah, Jesus would have returned (Genesis 19:22; Matthew 23:39).
- Israel has long awaited the restoration, but has missed the way in which restoration will be achieved (Acts 1:6).
- 3:21 Jesus is in heaven until the time of restoration (Acts 1:6) and Year of Jubilee (Lev 25). Since the beginning of creation, Prophets were utilized to share the prophecy of restoration with God.
- 3:22 Peter would reference the Torah (Deuteronomy 18:15). Moses was the prophet whom received the law from the Lord; Jesus came to fulfill this law (Matthew 5:17).
- Although Moses had been born in Israel, he was raised among Gentiles (Egyptians), but he would return to lead His fellow Israelites out of captivity; Jesus would follow the same sequence/pattern.
- 3:23 Israel was called to pay attention to the words of their Messiah, but they did not. This denial resulted in the diaspora of Israel and the expansion of Christianity during the church age.
- 3:24 The Old Testament is filled with references to Jesus Christ, but Israel could not make the connection (Luke 24:27).
- The book of Samuel was included in the “Former Prophets” section of the Torah; the Jewish community respected Samuel as a prophet while he was alive (1 Samuel 3:19-20).
- 3:25 Not only had the ancestors foretold the coming of the Messiah (“the anointed one”), but it was through Israel’s lineage that the world would receive the blessing of this Messiah (Genesis 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4).
- 3:26 Israel had the first opportunity to turn to the Lord. (Romans 1:16; 2:9-10)
- Just as God the Father “raised up” Moses for the salvation of His people, God the Father also “raised up” Jesus to bring salvation to His people. (Deuteronomy 18:15)
 - Mankind is blessed by Jesus as He liberates them from their bondage to their evil ways just as Moses led Israel from Egyptian slavery.

19 Acts 4:1-22

Read Acts 4:1-4 ... Peter & John Arrested While Church Grows to 5,000

Three “Seemingly Religious” Classifications Pursue Worldly Intent (Acts 4:1-2)		
1. Priests	Highest order of religious system. Envious of popularity (Mk 15:10)	Teaching of People
2. Commander of the Temple Guard	Second only to High Priest; defender of status quo and religious tradition (1 Chron 26:1)	Provocation towards arrest
3. Sadducees	Aristocratic Elites of Levites whose theology included no afterlife (Mt	Eternal Life is found in Jesus Christ

22:23; Mk 12:18, 23, 26)

4:1 The Sadducees were powerful aristocrats that primarily held to the Pentateuch and were more focused on ethics than theology.

- The Sadducees were the elites who controlled the priesthood and the Temple.
- According to the Talmud, the captain of the Temple guard was second in command to the High Priest who commanded the Levitical Temple Police.

Sadducees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believed in the Torah (Pentateuch) • Rejected Oral Law • Did not believe in angels, demons, eternal punishment, resurrection of the dead or God's interaction in lives • Controlled the Sanhedrin & the Temple • Aristocrats who were politically collaborative with Rome
<i>Destroyed in 70AD with the Fall of the Temple in Jerusalem</i>

4:2 The Sadducees did not believe in the afterlife, so clearly, they were grieved by the resurrection of Jesus.

- The Sadducees wanted to keep the status quo.
- The Sadducees (priests and elders) had bribed the tomb guards from discussing the resurrection of Christ (Acts 28:12-13).

4:3 Although Jesus endured a nighttime trial, this was against the rules of the Sanhedrin according to the Jewish Mishnah.

- Since there could be no criminal session during the night, the confinement was most likely in the Temple as the men awaited their trial the following day.

4:4 The group of believers had now grown by 66% since Passover (from 3000 believers (Acts 2:41) to 5000).

Those Who Believe Throughout Acts		
Acts 4:4	<i>"Many of those who heard the message believed, and the number of the men came to about 5,000."</i>	Jerusalem
Acts 5:14	<i>"Believers were added to the Lord in increasing numbers—crowds of both men and women."</i>	Jerusalem
Acts 8:12	<i>"When they believed Philip, as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized."</i>	Samaria
Acts 9:42	<i>"This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord."</i>	Joppa
Acts 11:21	<i>"The Lord's hand was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord."</i>	Antioch (Syria)
Acts 13:12	<i>"Then the proconsul, seeing what happened, believed and was astonished at the teaching about the Lord."</i>	Cyprus
Acts 13:48	<i>"When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and glorified the message of the Lord, and all who had been appointed to eternal life believed."</i>	Antioch (Asia Minor)
Acts 14:1	<i>"The same thing happened in Iconium; they entered the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed."</i>	Iconium
Acts 16:34	<i>"He brought them into his house, set a meal before them, and rejoiced because he had believed God with his entire household."</i>	Philippi
Acts 17:12	<i>"Many of them believed, including a number of the prominent Greek women as well as men."</i>	Berea

Acts 17:34	<i>“Some men joined him and believed,”</i>	Athens
Acts 18:8	<i>“Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed the Lord, along with his whole household. Many of the Corinthians, when they heard, believed and were baptized.”</i>	Corinth
What It Means to Believe...		
Acts 8:37	<i>“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”</i>	
Acts 10:43	<i>“All the prophets testify about Him that through His name everyone who believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins.”</i>	
Acts 13:39	<i>“Everyone who believes in Him is justified from everything that you could not be justified from through the law of Moses.”</i>	
Acts 15:11	<i>“We believe we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in the same way they are.”</i>	

Read Acts 4:5-12 ... Peter’s Third Spirit Filled Sermon

4:5 The group of seventy elders (Numbers 12:25) would convene in the morning (Jeremiah 21:12) to administer justice as they declared it.

- The Sanhedrin are often called the high priests, elders and scribes or a variation of those three groups.

4:6 Annas (John 18:3) was the retired high priest (6AD-15AD) known for wealth and greed. The high priesthood was a lifetime honor although to serve the active position of high priesthood only lasted several years (Num 25:25).

- In those days, the priesthood was purchased from Rome as a commercial investment. The High Priest controlled the marketplace of the Temple Courts out towards the Mount of Olives.
 - Annas would have five sons, one grandson and a son-in-law (Caiaphas) become High Priest.
 - Pilate had the right to appoint the Jewish High Priest, and Pilate chose to retain the same high priest (Caiaphas) for his entire term; when Pilate was removed from the governorship, Caiaphas was also removed.

4:7 The three parties constitute the Jewish Sanhedrin tribunal:

1. Rulers – the acting and past high priests as well as honored families from which high priests were selected.
2. Elders – tribal and family heads
3. Scribes – the scholars (e.g., lawyers, historians) who copied Scripture and taught the law

- There was no doubt about a miracle being performed; the miracle was an undeniable fact witnessed by all who had passed the crippled man at the gate throughout his forty years.
- The question of the ruling class was about the authority that had been given to perform this miracle.
- The ruling class would sit in elevated rows in a semicircle looking down onto the accused.

4:8 Peter had already experienced the indwelling of the Spirit, but the power of the Holy Spirit filled Peter (Acts 4:29) for this specific occasion in a unique and powerful way (Ephesians 5:18).

- The priestly and head families are addressed, but not the scribes.

- Although not clearly delineated, the Pharisees seemed to stem from the scribes (focused on law) while Sadducees were more closely tied to the priests (social class).
- The filling of the Holy Spirit is often related to evangelism as the gospel message is boldly shared. (Luke 21:12-15)

Peter Was Filled Repeatedly with the Holy Spirit	
Acts 2:4	Filled at Pentecost
Acts 4:8	In Front of the Sanhedrin
Acts 4:31	Upon release from the Sanhedrin

4:9 Peter begins his address to the Sanhedrin by clarifying that the cause of examination was a good deed performed for a crippled man. The world (e.g., media) confuses justice with falsities and tangents.

- The Greek term “ailing/sick” (asthenountōn ἀσθενούντων) can also mean “weak” (Acts 20:35) and the “impotent” (one without strength and unable to help himself).

4:10 The healing of the crippled man is directly and unequivocally attributed to Jesus the Messiah from Nazareth. “Nazareth” was a deprived location with a poor reputation, but it also symbolized the “netzer” (the branch – Is 53:2) Who was prophesied in Old Testament Scripture.

- Peter contrasts the death brought by the religious leaders as differing from the life offered by God; while fallen men despise Jesus, God the Father exalts Him.
- Peter had not attended a well-known rabbinical school of that time; however, he had walked with Jesus.

4:11 Peter quotes from Jesus (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17) and the Old Testament (Psalm 118:22-23) that the religious leadership (the builders) had rejected the foundation of God’s work (1 Cor 3:11; 2 Tim 2:19, Acts 4:11).

- This same analogy of a cornerstone would also be used by Paul (Ephesians 2:20) and used by Peter again (1 Peter 2:7).
- Old Testament prophecies emphasized that the Messiah would be the cornerstone. (Isaiah 28:16; Zechariah 10:4)
- Attributes of a cornerstone include:
 - A cornerstone is placed at the corner of a building.
 - A cornerstone is traditionally the first stone laid for a structure
 - All other stones in the building are laid in reference to the cornerstone; it orients the building by its geographical location and direction.

4:12 There is only salvation in Jesus alone (Matthew 26:39; Jn 14:6, 1 Timothy 2:5-6). There is no other way (no other religion, no other “path”) of salvation.

- All other religions begin with works (behavior) to produce salvation instead of works being a product of salvation.
- Peter and John were sharing the gospel of Jesus with the most religious individuals in Judaism.

Read Acts 4:13-22 ... Jewish Leaders Prohibit Peter & John from Evangelizing

4:13 The worldly lacking (e.g., lack of credentials) of Peter and John emphasized the greatness of Christ.

- Peter and John had not attended a formal rabbinical school as the disciple of a (recognized) prominent rabbi; the rabbi took precedence over obedience to parents.
 - These religious leaders were amazed at the knowledge of Scripture by these laymen (who were not Rabbis).
 - The church must continue to be wary of elevating individuals because of credentials (e.g., seminary) and worldly honors.
 - Only two months earlier Peter had denied Jesus three times, but now he was courageous in his witness (Matthew 26:69-75; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-27).
- 4:14 These learned men of the Sanhedrin could not give an answer; the same will occur in the final judgment when the world has no answer for the obvious rejection of Christ and power of His life. The world cannot deny the miracle of resurrection.
- 4:15 Those advocating the truth (Peter and John) were removed from the worldly situation, so that the wicked and fallen men could continue to pursue their evil ways.
- 4:16 The focus of the world (e.g., media, politicians) is the messenger instead of the message.
- Although the judges could not deny the truth of the miracle, it did not occur to them to sincerely take this knowledge to heart.
 - Instead, the Sanhedrin continued to struggle for clout to maintain worldly position.
 - In effect, the worldly men who cannot deny the truth, do deny the truth for themselves.
- 4:17 Instead of dealing with the truth, the religious leaders (politicians) simply threaten the messengers in the hopes that the sinful leaders would maintain control over the population.
- 4:18 Instead of reason, the worldly court simply asserts that the apostles were not to proclaim the truth. There was no reason given to the apostles for the restriction nor did a valid reason exist.
- 4:19 Although believers are directed to follow earthly authorities (1 Peter 2:13-17), believers must place priority on the higher authority of God than sinful commands that contradict God's will.
- 4:20 Believers who have experienced God's mercy and salvation cannot stop testifying and witnessing about His role in their lives.
- 4:21 Worldly leaders continued to threaten the believers, but since the public correctly attributed the healing to God, the leadership cowered from public opinion.
- 4:22 The number "four" is often used in tests/trials.
- The man was over 40 years old and beyond a chance for natural change (quarantine time frame is 40), but the power of the Lord revitalized the crippled man.
 - The age or length of a fallen state has no bearing on the things that God can do.

20 Acts 4:23-37

Read Acts 4:23-31 ... Believers Pray That God Give Strength to Witness

- 4:23 Upon their release from the Sanhedrin, Peter and John returned to their community of believers to testify of the government and religious directives not to share.

- 4:24 The fellowship did not discuss among themselves, but instead prayed to the Lord as they opened their prayer with the term “Master” and a confirmation of His creative power.
- Believers rarely open their prayers with the designation of “Master”, but the Lord should be understood to be the Master.
 - The Greek term for “Master” (despota δέσποτα) literally means “sovereign Lord” and controller. This term was also used by Simeon at the Temple dedication of the infant, Jesus (Luke 2:24).
- 4:25 An Old Testament passage is quoted (Psalms 2:1-2). God, via the Holy Spirit, spoke through David (Inspired Scripture – 2 Sam 23:2, 2 Pet 1:20-21, 2 Tim 3:16-17) about the futile efforts of the world against God.
- King David is referenced as the servant of God the Father in the lineage of the Messiah who is also a Servant of God the Father. (Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30)
 - Saul/Paul would also be appointed as a servant to be a witness to what has been seen and revealed (Acts 26:16).
 - The Greek term for “rage” (ephryaxan ἐφρύαξαν) is analogous to an upset horse snorting through his nose.
- 4:26 Worldly authorities (e.g., politicians, media, Hollywood, etc.) attempt to struggle against God the Father and God the Son. The leaders of the Gentiles and the Jews war against the message of Christ.
- 4:27 All categories of fallen worldly people were against Jesus (Jn 1:41) at His crucifixion: Herod (Hebrew Nations – although not legitimate as an Idumean); Pilate (Roman); Gentiles; Jews of Israel. The anointing reveals one selected by God for a predetermined calling (1 Chron 16:22; Ps 105:15; 2 Cor 1:21).
- 4:28 The plan of redemption was predestined before the world fell, and each character followed their own nature to fulfill what the Lord knew to be true.
- 4:29 This first recorded prayer of the new church fellowship was for God to endow supernatural boldness in spite of worldly (political, regulatory) threats.
- God’s people should pray for courage to evangelize and speak truth to a lost world. (Ephesians 6:20).
- 4:30 This prayer was directed to God the Father Who would be the source of all miracles through the powerful name of Jesus Who had been set apart (holy) as a servant (Philippians 2:5-11).
- 4:31 The power of God and movement of the Spirit shook the location of the church fellowship (Ex 19:18; Ps 77:16-18; Heb 12:25-30) as the prayer was answered and the believers were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim His truth (Acts 4:8).
- The Greek concept for “shaken” (esaleuthē ἐσαλεύθη) results in unsettling turbulence. The Lord’s voice can unsettle creation and this world; however, God’s kingdom cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:26-28).

Read Acts 4:32-37 ... Church Cares for the Needy & Barnabas Introduced

- 4:32 The first fellowship was a unified church with no false designations of “para-church”, but instead, all ministry was blessed as of the Lord. No believer claimed any worldly asset as their own possession (Lk 12:33; 14:33).
- This is a summary verse that is common to the writing in Acts. (Acts 2:43-47)

- 4:33 The power of the Holy Spirit was reflected in the believer's testimony of a living Lord as they personally experienced the grace of God.
- The witness of the apostles focused on the Lord Jesus who overcame death in the resurrection, and God's grace that is extended to all believers.
 - Humanity is emphasized by the name of "Jesus" while deity is emphasized with the name of "Lord."
- 4:34 Physical needs were eradicated from the early church because those with more possessions sold their assets to provide for other believers who were in need.
- 4:35 The distribution of wealth was entrusted by fellow believers to the apostles. Another defining characteristic of the early church is "commonism" ("what's mine is yours") contrasted to "communism" ("what's yours is mine").
- 4:36 Joseph (meaning "increase") was called Barnabas ("son of prophesy / encouragement") by the apostles; name changes were common for those who were changed by the Lord (Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Paul, etc.).
- Barnabas is considered to have been fairly well-off as he was a "Cypriot", and Cyprus where the property is more valuable.
 - The historian Eusebius documents that Barnabas was one of the seventy apostles sent out by Jesus (Luke 10:1).
- 4:37 In Old Testament Scripture, God directed the Levites not to own any land (Deuteronomy 14:29; Joshua 21:1-3), so Barnabas (the Levite) corrected his disobedient position.
- God's people should continue to be hesitant to "own" anything in this world; even secular authors highlight the fact that items that are "owned" tend to actually "own" their owners.

21 Acts 5:1-16

Read Acts 5:1-11 ... Ananias & Sapphira Lie to the Spirit

- 5:1 Ananias (meaning "God has been gracious") and his wife Sapphira ("beautiful jewel") jointly sold a parcel (not all) of their property.
- 5:2 Ananias purposefully retained some of the revenue from the sale with Sapphira's knowledge of her husband's evil deed.
- It would have been generous for Ananias to give anything, but he attempted to mislead that he had given everything.
 - Many believers pretend that they are wholly giving to the Lord when in reality, they are selfishly holding a good deal from Him.
 - Scholars have noted that the Greek term for "kept back" (ἐνοσφίσατο) is the same term the Septuagint uses to describe Achan's sin in the battle of Jericho. The term is also used to describe slaves who have stolen from their masters (Titus 2:10).
- 5:3 The lie of Ananias was attributed directly to Satan filling his heart as was the case with Peter (Mt 16:23; Mk 8:33), with Judas (Lk 22:3; Jn 13:27) and with the woman who had been disabled by a spirit (Lk 13:10-16).
- Satan attempts to obstruct believers in the present day (1 Cor 5:5, 7:5; 2 Cor 2:11) just as he did in Paul's time (1 Thessalonians 2:18; 1 Timothy 1:20, 5:15)

- Similar to the filling of the Holy Spirit, Satan can fill a heart as well. The filling of the Holy Spirit results in the proclamation of the truth while the filling of Satan results in deceit and lies. (John 8:44)
- 5:4 Sin goes beyond the material world to transgressing against God (Ps 41:4, 51:4, 119:11). Jesus was always hard on hypocrisy (Mt 23).
- Peter's reasoning shows that the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3).
 - A charitable and good act can be categorized as sin when motivated by a sinful heart.
- 5:5 Ananias heard the judgment prior to his punishment of death; the criticality of a lying tongue is evident (Ps 120: 2-3). The reality of the Lord, His power and righteousness caused fear among the believers.
- The Greek phrase "breathed his last" (exepsyxen ἐξέψυξεν) can be translated "gave up the ghost" or "died." (Acts 5:10, 12:23).
- 5:6 The death of Ananias was received passively as his punishment was a just consequence (Lev 10:1-7). It would be ironic if Ananias had been buried in the potter's field (Mt 27:3-10).
- Jewish law mandates that the dead should be buried within 24 hours of passing (no embalming).
- 5:7 The number "three" represents revelation; three hours had passed since the death of her husband yet Sapphira had not been told.
- 5:8 Sapphira sinfully corroborated her husband's false narrative and paid the same penalty of death. Although Sapphira did not keep the extra herself, but abetting as a witness resulted in the same consequence. Sapphira might have been able to save the life of Ananias if she had not agreed to participate.
- 5:9 Every sin tests the Lord as His Word states that there will be consequences. Peter believed in the power and truth of God's Word as he prophesied her death.
- 5:10 "Feet" represent interaction with this world and play a prominent role in the story of Ananias (Acts 5:2, 9, 10).
- 5:11 Although "ekklesian" is used once before (Matthew 18:17), this use of the term "Church" is in clear connection to those who had great fear.
- "Church" has derivations from various Greek words kuriake and ekklesia. Kuriake means "belonging to the Lord" while ekklesia stems from the root kaleo meaning "to call."
 - God uses "the called" to call others to Himself. Even the term Protestant alludes to witnessing (Pro- for; Testament-witnessing and testifying).
 - Earlier Greek words of "Ekklesia" (Matthew 16:18) and "Ekklesian" (Matthew 18:17) have set the stage for the church.
 - The Septuagint extends "Ekklesia" back into the Old Testament assemblies of Israel (Exodus 12:6; Leviticus 16:17; Numbers 14:15, etc. – Hebrew: qahal) as the New Testament church is a heritage of "the gathering" of the Jewish nation under Yahweh.

Read Acts 5:12-16 ... Signs & Wonders Result in Church Growth

- 5:12 The fellowship continued to meet at Solomon's Colonnade where Jesus had been accosted (Jn 10:23-39) and the apostles were arrested (Acts 3:11).

- 5:13 The faithful believers continued to meet and experience that miraculous power of the Lord while pretenders like Ananias and Sapphira were fearful of joining the true believers.
- 5:14 The growing “local church fellowship” is not emphasized, but growth of the Lord’s people is emphasized. As the number of believers grew, the numbers of Jewish converts are counted which trails off as the number of Gentiles begins to grow. Women joined the church as well as men and would need extra care by the believers (Acts 6:1).
- 5:15 Faith by the general population was represented by their coming into public with their faith. The same Greek term for “overshadow” (episkiasē ἐπισκίαση) was used when the Spirit overshadowed someone.
- The Greek term for “overshadowed” (epeskiasen ἐπεσκίασεν) is used at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5) with the same root word of the Holy Spirit “overshadowing” (episkiasei ἐπισκιάσει) Mary when she became pregnant with Jesus. (Luke 1:35)
- 5:16 Beginning in Jerusalem, those from the extended area began to have faith. All who came out in faith for healing were healed.

Valid Judgment Contrasted to Man’s Feeble Court				
Acts 5:1-10			Acts 5:12-42	
Allegation	Peter accused Ananias and Sapphira	Acts 5:3,9	Sanhedrin accused the Apostles	Acts 5:28
Offense	Lying to the Holy Spirit	Acts 5:4	Speaking in the Holy Spirit about the Gospel	Acts 5:32
Decision	Death Foretold by Peter	Acts 5:9	Vain Intimidation; Attempt to Kill	Acts 5:33
Actual Punishment	Death	Acts 5:5, 10	Flogging & Release	Acts 5:40-42

22 Acts 5:17-42

Read Acts 5:17-20 ... An Angel Releases the Apostles from Imprisonment

- 5:17 Power and position (jealousy and envy) were the driving factors of persecution by religious leaders (Mt 27:18). Many temptations (addictions and pleasures) are based on an evil desire for power and control.
- While the apostles were filled with the Spirit, the high priest and his associates were filled with jealousy.
 - A person is filled with whom they yield.
- 5:18 The apostles were arrested again in Solomon’s Colonnade (Acts 3:11). Although the religious leaders attempted to stop the word of Jesus in Solomon’s Colonnade (Jn 10:23), His Word could not be stopped but was spread into the world (Jn 10:39).
- 5:19 The Sadducees did not believe in angels (Acts 23:8), but it was an angel that released apostles.
- 5:20 The Sadducees did not believe in the afterlife (Mt 22:23; Mk 12:18-27; Acts 23:8), but the apostles are told to go witness about “this life.”

- Life is only found in Jesus (John 1:4; 1 Jn 5:12; Jn 3:36; Rev 22:1-2). The Greek word “*Zoe*” is the highest life in contrast to “*Bios*” which references fleshly life.
 - When the term “*Zoe*” is used in the Gospel of John, it references the eternal, spiritual life of the age to come. Everything that has eternal life receives it from Jesus. (John 11:25, 14:6)

Read Acts 5:21-24 ... The Sanhedrin is Confused about the Missing Apostles

5:21 During the night (spiritual darkness), the disciples were protected, and in the morning (spiritual light coming), the disciples began to preach the Word of the Lord.

- The worldly system of the Sanhedrin continued in oblivion without realizing the freedom of God’s people.

5:22-23 The jail had been left intact, but the believers had been released from the bondage. The world continues to imprison the sinner while the believer is set free.

5:24 The top men were confused when confronted by the power of God. The captain of the temple police (next in line and heir to the high priesthood) and the chief priests wondered about the future instead of realizing the truth of the past and the fallen nature of their current state.

Read Acts 5:25-28 ... The Apostles are Re-Apprehended and taken to the Sanhedrin

5:25 The apostles were not hiding, but instead openly teaching which was the exact reason that the Sanhedrin wanted them stopped.

5:26 The captain of the temple police went in person and escorted the apostles to the Sanhedrin. Public opinion was the driving factor of the attitudes of the religious elite.

5:27 The religious leaders were surprised that the apostles were being obedient to the Lord instead of the Sanhedrin; no mention is made by the Sanhedrin of the manner that the disciples had exited the jail without disturbance.

5:28 Just as the apostles “filled Jerusalem” with the message of Jesus, believers should continue to share the Lord with people.

- The Sanhedrin referred to Jesus as “this man” (anthrōpou toutou - ἀνθρώπου τούτου) although Jesus was clearly more than just a man.
- The Jewish Talmud talks poorly about Jesus calling Him “so and so” as well as one who was illegitimately born.

Read Acts 5:29-32 ... The Apostles Obey God Instead of Worldly Authorities

5:29 While respect for authority is expected (1 Pet 2:13-17), obedience to the Lord (the highest authority) is a greater obligation.

5:30 These religious leaders had physically raised up Jesus to be crucified (Jn 3:14) while God the Father had exalted Him.

- Although the religious leaders accepted no guilt in the death of Jesus, everyone had witnessed their conspiracy against Him (Mk 14:53-65; Lk 22:66-23:2; Jn 19:15).
- The Temple Police had mocked Jesus and beat Him (Mk 14:65) while the chief priests incited the crowds against Jesus (Mt 27:20).
- The Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 21:23) established that those hanged on a tree was cursed, so the religious leaders wanted to curse Jesus by hanging Him on the cross. This was Jesus becoming a curse on behalf of His people (Galatians 3:13)

- This verse puts Jewish leadership in direct opposition to God as they killed and buried Him while God raised Him up.
- 5:31 The apostles did not conclude the message with the crucifixion, but the point of forgiveness offered through the resurrected Messiah Who is the ultimate ruler and Lord.
- Jesus offers repentance and forgiveness and sins.
- 5:32 The Holy Spirit given to those who obey the Lord. Being filled the Spirit is a function of obedience. (Luke 6:46) Salvation is a function of God's grace, and afterwards, believers should respond in faith and obedience.
- Not only were the apostles witnesses of the Lord's death and resurrection (Acts 1:8), but the Holy Spirit was a witness as well.
 - Peter had now even preached to the Sanhedrin who were attempting to stop his preaching in public.

Read Acts 5:33-39 ... Gamaliel Advises that God will Determine the Fate of the Apostles

5:33 Conviction brings either feelings of anger or humility. The religious leaders had murderous hearts just as they desired to kill Jesus. (Matthew 26:4; Mark 14:1; Luke 22:2; John 5:16-18)

5:34 The Pharisee, Gamaliel (meaning "reward of God"), was Paul's teacher (Acts 22:3).

- While the apostles were teaching grace, Gamaliel taught the traditional law of the old covenant. Gamaliel is frequently quoted in the Mishnah, the oral tradition of the Jews.
- Gamaliel was the grandson of Hillel the Elder who led the liberal school of Jewish thought.
- At this time, there were two schools of thought among Rabbinical leaders. Shammai (50BC–30AD) and Hillel (110BC–7AD) were influential Jewish scholars whose followers debated topics like divorce.
 - Shammai held a strict interpretation of Jewish law; his teaching on divorce was closer to that of Jesus in that infidelity was the only grounds for divorce.
 - Hillel taught that a man could divorce his wife for any reason. This was the more popular teaching, so the Pharisees may have wanted to force Jesus to alienate many of His followers.
 - Gamaliel "the Elder" was a leader of the Sanhedrin during this time. Gamaliel was the son of Simeon ben Hillel and grandson of Hillel "the Elder."
 - Although Saul/Paul was a student under Gamaliel, Saul/Paul seems to have been much more zealous, conservative and inflexible.

5:35 It would have been better for the "men of Israel" to have been the "men of God" instead (1 Tim 6:11, 2 Tim 3:17).

- Believers should be wary of associations other than the Lord. Gamaliel encouraged discernment instead of reaction.

5:36 A number of insurgents appeared during the end of Herod's reign as false messiahs focused on a physical freedom from Roman aggression.

- Theudas ("flowing with water") egotistically spoke highly of himself possibly claiming to be the messiah to bring about the physical kingdom.

- The number “four” in Scripture often represents trial and testing.
- 5:37 The historian Josephus mentions “Judas the Galilean” multiple times as a leader of a group of zealots in a revolt against the Romans who were taking a census to raise taxes.
- This was not Judas Iscariot; Judas (meaning “praised”) Iscariot was the only disciple not from Galilee; he was from Judea.
 - The historian, Josephus, documented the uprising of Judas in 6AD. This census is thought to have occurred in 6AD-8AD.
- 5:38 Gamaliel demonstrates the way that the Romans had suppressed earlier false messiahs.
- Although the Romans had found Jesus innocent (Acts 3:13), the Jews had actually incited the true Messiah to be murdered.
 - Although the followers of Theudas and Judas were “dispersed” and “scattered”, the Romans would play a central role in extending the gospel message to the Gentile nations.
- 5:39 Gamaliel, being more sincere than most, admitted that they were uncertain as to whether the apostles were from God.
- Gamaliel’s reasoning is flawed in that truth will always endure; however, falsehoods might also last a lengthy time.
 - Gamaliel admits that they do not know whether Christianity was from God, and he did not want to fight against God.

Read Acts 5:40-42 ... The Apostles Rejoice When Flogged & Continue Evangelizing

- 5:40 While Peter and John had not persuaded the Sanhedrin, one of their own (Gamaliel) did persuade them.
- A “flogging” is thought to have been a common occurrence with the offender being beaten with a rod or whip (Deuteronomy 25:3). Later, Paul would also be beaten with rods (Acts 16:22).
- 5:41 Believers should strive to be “worthy to be dishonored” for the name of Jesus. Persecution is the “normal” situation for a believer (1 Peter 4:12-18).
- 5:42 Although the apostles had been arrested in the Temple three times (Acts 4:3, 5:18, 26), they continued to preach in the temple every day. “Home Bible Studies” were held by the first believers in the early church and are still extremely valuable.

23 Acts 6

Read Acts 6:1-7 ... Seven Deacons Are Chosen to Serve While Others Preached

- 6:1 The number of believers were not simply being added, but the momentum of growth was “multiplying” the number (Acts 2:47).
- Although the fellowship had survived the persecution of outsiders well in the previous chapter, the believers must now contend with internal issues.
 - This first problem had to do with racial conflict as well as the allocation of the church’s resources.
 - Hebraic Jews were born in Palestine contrasted to Hellenistic Jews born outside of Israel (the Diaspora – Jews spread out in Gentile territories). The most orthodox

Jews knew Hebrew; however, Judean Jews spoke Aramaic while the world communicated in Greek (after the conquests of Alexander the Great).

- Stephen quoted from the Septuagint and not the Hebrew Old Testament in the seventh chapter of Acts.
- The Jews had a long tradition of taking care of the widows through their synagogues (Deut 10:18; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17, 19-21; 26:12-13; Mal 3:5; Is 1:17, 23; 10:2; Jer 5:28; 7:6; 23:3; Ez 22:7; Ps 93:6), and the early believers had begun a daily distribution to care for their congregants (Acts 2:44-46).
- The Greek term for “complaint” (gongysmos γογγυσμός) is used several times in the gospels (John 7:32; Luke 5:30). The term “gongysmos” carries a connotation of a low murmur or whisper.
- The early church retained many of the practices of Judaism. In Judaism, a weekly alms collection took place that provided enough food for the poor over the next week (two meals each day).

6:2 The twelve disciples (Matthias included – Acts 1:26) bring the issue and solution to the congregants.

- The disciples prioritize for themselves evangelism over humanitarian causes. However, this might be a separation of tasks instead of a prioritization of importance.
- The disciples are focused on pursuing what is “right” instead of other criteria.
- The official title of the disciples became “the twelve.” Scripture often uses the number “12” to symbolize organizational witness.
- The Greek term “to serve” (diakonein διακονεῖν) is the verbal form of the word deacon.
 - The term “diakonein” originally meant “to raise dust.” (sweeping)
 - This is the same term used by Martha while Mary sat at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:40).

6:3 The number of deacons is quantified first as “seven” symbolizes fullness or completeness.

- Seven deacons were chosen for three characteristics:
 - 1) Good reputation
 - 2) Spirit filled (submission to the Spirit's leading)
 - 3) Wisdom
- The most important factor of church structure is not the way that it is organized, it is the loving attitude and heartfelt humility that is willing to serve and change.
- This is the same model that Jethro advised Moses to add helpers (Exodus 18:17-23). The work of God (spiritual responsibilities) should be delegated to trustworthy believers.

6:4 Apostles devoted themselves to prayer and preaching (the Word). Scripture treats elders, pastors and preachers as the same role of teaching the Word of God.

- The salaried occupation of preachers has resulted in many teachers of the word (e.g., elders) not being recompensed by congregants.
- The Greek term for “ministry” (diakonia διακονία) is a form of the word “deacon.”

6:5 The first deacons (1 Tim 3:8-13) are listed from Stephen (the spiritual giant) to Nicolaus (a proselyte – converted Gentile). Only the first two, Stephen (Acts 7) and Philip (Acts 21:8), would be discussed again in Scripture.

First Deacons	
Name	Meaning
Stephen <i>(Filled w/ Faith & the Spirit)</i>	“Crown”
Philip	“Warlike”
Prochuras	“Presides over Choirs”
Nicanor	“Conqueror”
Timon	“Honoring”
Parmenas	“Constant”
Nicolaus <i>(Gentile Convert)</i>	“Victory of the People”
<i>All Seven Names are Hellenistic (Greek)</i>	

- The Greek term translated “faith” (pisteōs πίστεως) includes faithfulness and consistency in his walk with God.

6:6 Apostles prayed and laid hands on the deacons (1 Tim 5:22).

- Many miracles had occurred through the laying on of hands (Acts 5:12, 9:12, 17, 28:8) as the power of the Spirit moved in this way (Acts 8:17, 19; 19:6; Deut 34:9).
- As believers were called into ministries, the laying on of hands would commission the responsibility (Num 27:18, 23; Acts 13:3; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; Heb 6:2).
- The laying on of hands was a way of relating to the object/individual that was being touched to be blessed (Genesis 48:13-20) or cursed (Leviticus 24:14), so believers should be discerning on whom they lay hands on (1 Pet 5:22).
- The sacrifices of the Old Testament would be sacrificed after the laying on of hands (Ex 29:10, 15, 19; Lev 4:15, 8:14, 18, 22, 16:21; Num 8:10, 12).
- The laying on of hands would also be used in the Old Testament to commission a successor (Numbers 27:23).

6:7 After the wise resolution of food allocation to the widows, the early believers experienced a threefold blessing:

1. A proliferation in the preaching of the thriving Word of God
2. The disciples within Jerusalem (the heart of Judaism) continued to increase dramatically
3. Jewish Priests, the individuals who were most likely to oppose the gospel, began rejecting their way of life in acceptance that Jesus was the anticipated Messiah. These priests became obedient to Jesus as Lord in contrast to serving the law.

Read Acts 6:8-10 ... Stephen Evangelizes with Wonder, Signs and Apologetics

6:8 Stephen was a man of grace (from his faith) and power (from the Spirit) which were his key characteristics (Acts 6:5).

- Although he was “relegated” to the role of deacon, this servant responsibility did not diminish his powerful testimony, but instead increased the effect.

6:9 While the apostles were having great success in sharing the gospel with traditional Jewish population, Stephen (as a Hellenistic leader) ministers to the Greek speaking synagogues.

- Freedmen (“Libertines”) were the descendants of emancipated slaves (Jewish slaves of the Romans during Pompey’s conquest in 106 BC – 48 BC) whose synagogue was more similar to a university.
- The Jews had made poor slaves because of their strict adherence to Jewish tradition.
- Saul (Paul) was from Tarsus in Cilicia (southwestern Turkey). Stephen’s discussions with the learned Greeks in Cilicia may have been where Paul was initially introduced to Jesus.
- Asia was located in central Turkey. Cyrenians and Alexandrians were from the north of Africa

6:10 Being filled with wisdom and the Spirit were two criteria for selecting the deacons (Acts 6:3), so Stephen was well qualified to preach the truth.

Read Acts 6:11-15 ... Stephen Accused Before the Sanhedrin with the Face of an Angel

6:11 As the world often does, when overcome by the truth of Stephen’s message, the world attacked the messenger.

- Just as the accusers had done with Jesus (Mt 26:59-65; Mk 14:63-64; Jn 10:33), they falsely charged Stephen with disrespecting Moses (the law fulfilled by Jesus) and God (come incarnate as Jesus Christ).
- The charges against Stephen would later be made against Paul (Acts 21:28)

6:12 Mob rule brought results, so the masses were stirred up against Stephen just as they had been agitated with Jesus (Mk 15:11); the media continues to instigate persecution of believers.

- Stephen was brought to the Sanhedrin by three groups:
 - 1.the people (commoners)
 - 2.the elders (family leads)
 - 3.the scribes (learned men who interpret Mosaic law to the common man).
- Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin.

6:13 The two (witness) accusations against Stephen were in regards to respect for the Temple (Mt 26:61, 27:40; Mk 14:58, 15:29; Jn 2:19-20) and the law, and Stephen’s sermon would focus on these worldly articles that point to greater, spiritual realities.

- The charge of blasphemy was not against God (whom Stephen testified), but against worldly objects (the law of Moses and the Temple).
- Jesus had also been charged as having blasphemed the Temple (Mark 14:58) when He had really been referencing His own body (John 2:19-21).

6:14 The accusers related Jesus with Nazareth as a disgrace, but Nazareth had fulfilled Messianic prophecy of the “Netzer”.

- Jesus was clear that He had come to fulfill the law (Mt 5:17; Mk 13:1, 14:56-59) and not to cancel it.

6:15 The Sanhedrin (Num 11:16-17) was controlled by the Sadducees who also held the high priesthood.

- The Sadducees were the only group in the Bible identified as not believing in angels (Acts 23:8) yet they saw Stephen with the face as an angel.

- Stephen’s face shone like Moses’ after communing with God (Ex 34:33).

24 Acts 7:1-19

- **Stephen preaches the longest sermon in the book of Acts. (1 Peter 3:15-16)**
- **The Greek term “apologia – ἀπολογία” is the root term for apologetics which means to give a defense as in a court case.**
- **Stephen shows Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament passages; he also shows that Israel historically rejected God’s savior.**

Read Acts 7:1-8 ... Stephen Teaches about God’s Work with Abraham

7:1 The acting high priest at this time was Caiaphas, but this could have also been the father-in-law of Caiaphas, Annas, who the Romans had removed from the office of high priest.

- The high priest at this time could not discern truth nor was he open to hearing the word of God.
- The concept of “truth” is discussed more in the gospel of John than the other gospels combined (Jn 4:23, 7:18, 28, 8:16, 26, 17:3, 19:35, 21:24).

7:2 Stephen opened his sermon with the glory of God, and after he finished his sermon, Stephen would witness the glory of God (Acts 7:55).

- Stephen addressed those his age (brothers) as well as the elders (fathers).
- A simple question opened the door for Stephen to share his testimony with the religious leaders.
- The phrase “God of glory” (doxēs δόξης) appears only once elsewhere in Scripture (Psalm 29:1-3) that was written by David.

Stephen Explains the Topics that He was Accused of Blaspheming (Acts 6:12-14)	
God	Acts 7:2-19
Moses	Acts 7:20-36
Mosaic Law	Acts 7:37-43
Temple	Acts 7:44-50

- Jews revere their history and often believe that they are saved because of their hereditary status. (John 8:37-39; Romans 9:7)

7:3 Stephen references Abraham (the first Jew) who it seems initially disobeyed (Acts 7:4) God’s command (Genesis 11:32).

- Mesopotamia (Meso - “between”; potamia – “the rivers”) is considered the region between Euphrates and Tigris (Genesis 24:10; Deuteronomy 23:4; Judges 3:8, 10)
- Abraham had migrated from Ur (north of the Persian Gulf) up the Euphrates to Haran with his family.

7:4 Abraham had traveled from Ur (“flame”) in the land of Chaldea (“destruction”) to Haran (“parched”) until his father, Terah (“delay”), died.

- When his father had passed away, Abraham continued to Canaan with Sarah and Lot who brought additional difficulties to him.

7:5 Just as with every believer, the Lord promised future blessings for Abraham.

- Although Sarah was barren in her old age, God fulfilled His promise to Sarah (90 years old) and Abraham (100 years old) when they had Isaac (Genesis 21:1-5).
- Abraham did not own land or a house; instead, Abraham built altars (Genesis 12:7-8, 13:4; 22:9).
- After Israel’s enslavement in Egypt, God told Joshua that He would give him all the land that he “set his foot.” (Joshua 1:3).

7:6 Although Abraham had no children at the time of promise, his descendants multiplied for four centuries while enslaved in Egypt (Genesis 15:13).

7:7 God promised to liberate His people and judge the worldly oppressors.

7:8 Male Israelites were circumcised on the eighth day to show their dedication to the Lord.

- The number “8” represents “new beginnings”, and there are 8 “I will” statements by God during the first eight verses of Genesis 17.
- The eighth day is optimal to stop the bleeding associated with circumcision because scientists have found that infants have a tendency to bleed more in days two through seven because Vitamin K isn’t developed until fifth through the seventh day.
- Prothrombin, which is critical for the clotting of blood, is at 30% on the third day, 110% on the eighth day, and 100% on ninth day.

Read Acts 7:9-19 ... Stephen Teaches about God’s Work with Joseph

7:9 Jealousy and envy were the driving forces of Jesus’ captivity (Mt 27:18; Mk 15:10).

- Just as the exalted Jewish leaders had maltreated Jesus, the admired patriarchs of the twelve tribes had also mistreated Joseph two millennia prior.

7:10 Although rejected by the patriarchs of Israel, the Gentile (Pharaoh) had exalted Joseph, and the gospel of Jesus would also be furthered by the Gentile church.

- The individual that God selected was the one that Israel (the family of Jacob) rejected.

7:11 Difficulties affected Egypt (the world) as well as Canaan (God’s people).

7:12-13 The Jewish nation did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah during His first advent, but all will recognize Him at the second coming.

- The patriarchs had no recognition of Joseph during the first encounter (Genesis 42:7-8), but Joseph revealed himself in the second encounter with his brothers (Genesis 45:4).

7:14 The Old Testament counted only the nucleus with Joseph’s immediate children (Genesis 46:8-27; Exodus 1:5; Deuteronomy 10:22) while Stephen’s account extends to the five additional kinsmen who are thought to be Joseph’s grandsons (Num 26:29, 35). Stephen extends the “patriarchs proper” to their children and now their descendants.

Jacob’s Descendants who migrated to Egypt Genesis 46:8-27		
Reuben	Hanoch Pallu Hezron Carmi	5
Simeon	Jemuel Jamin	7

	Ohad Jakim Zohar Shaul	
Levi	Gershon Kohath Merari	4
Judah	Shelah Perez Zerah Hezron Hamul (Er & Onan died in Canaan)	6
Issachar	Tola Puah Jashub Shimron	5
Zebulun	Sered Elon Jahleel	4
Joseph	Asenath Manasseh - Machir - Gilead Ephraim - Shuthelah - Becher - Tahan	9
Benjamin	Bela Beker Ashbel Gera Naaman Ehi Rosh Muppm Huppm Ard	11
Dan	Hashim	2
Naphtali	Jahziel Guni Jezer Shillem	5
Gad	Zephon Haggi Shuni Ezbon Eri Arodi Areli	8
Asher	Imnah Ishvah Ishvi Beriah Heber	8

	Malchiel Serah	
Dinah		1
	(Ex 1:5; Dt 10:22)	70
	Grandsons of Joseph	75

7:15 When the patriarchs descended (“went down”) into Egypt (“the world”), they would become enslaved and die, but the Lord would bring them out of that land after their death.

7:16 Stephen continues to emphasize the lineage by extending the work of the patriarchs (Abraham – Gn 25:10) to their sons.

- In actuality, Jacob had purchased (Gen 33:19-20) the land from Hamor (“clay/dirt”) immediately before Hamor’s son, Shechem, raped his daughter, Dinah.
 - Shechem was a town located in Samaria (Joshua 24:32).
 - Hamor continued to encourage the purchase of land with Jacob’s sons (Gen 34:10) until the sons used the invitation deceitfully to murder Hamor’s family as judgment of the act against Dinah.
 - Jacob’s sons did not understand that their behavior reflected on the patriarchs (God’s people).
- Joseph’s bones were brought back from Egypt and buried in Shechem (Joshua 24:32).
- Jacob’s bones were brought back and buried in Machpelah (“the Double”) which is the cave that Abraham purchased from Ephron for 400 shekels (Genesis 23:16-17) to bury Sarah. Abraham was also buried in Machpelah with Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Leah. (Genesis 49:29-33)

7:17 God will always fulfill His Word. His people flourished in Egypt, but as the time of fulfillment neared, God’s people (Israel) came under great persecution.

- This persecution will repeat itself in the end times.

7:18 Stephen uses the Greek word “heteros” to show a “different kind” of Pharaoh in Egypt (Ex 1:8).

- This new Pharaoh may have been Assyrian (Isaiah 52:4), not Egyptian (Deuteronomy 26:5). During the 17th century (1600) BC, the Hyksos ruled all of Egypt except for the southern tip.

7:19 The later Pharaoh was much like a politician who deceived Israel.

- Because Israel had grown to numerous for Pharaoh’s comfort, he ordered the infant boys to be killed (Ex 1:9).
- The manner of death explained in this verse is that the infant Israeli boys would be left outside to the wiles of nature and starvation until they died (Ex 1:15-16).

25 Acts 7:20-43

Read Acts 7:20-36 ... Stephen Teaches about God’s Work with Moses

7:20 God used the beauty of Moses to save his life (Exodus 2:2).

- Moses was nursed (nourished) in his father’s home for three (revelation) months until he was put out onto the water (into the world) according to the directive of the Pharaoh.
- King Herod attempted to kill Jesus as a baby as well (Matthew 2:16-18)

- The Romans gave the directives for the death of Jesus after His 3½ year ministry.
- 7:21 The Egyptian name of Moses reveals his salvation (“Mo”-water; “uses”-saved out of water) as well as the salvation that Israel would experience through the Red Sea.
- Moses was adopted into the King’s family just as believers are adopted (Romans 8:15, 23, 9:4; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5) into the King’s family (Luke 9:38; John 12:13; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14, 19:16).
 - Moses was drawn out of the water by Gentiles (Egyptians).
- 7:22 Egyptian hieroglyphs are among the most ancient writing systems, and Moses (who penned the first five books of the Bible) was trained with royal education.
- When God commanded Moses to return to Egypt, Moses offered poor excuses instead of obedience (Exodus 4:10).
- 7:23 Moses life consist of three segments of forty years which Stephen will define.
- This first forty years was spent in royalty before Moses went to assist his people in their slavery.
- 7:24 Moses intervened for a single man (Exodus 2:11-12) just as the Lord cares for every single one of His people (Matthew 10:29-31, 18:12).
- Moses left the throne to save His people. (Hebrews 11:24-26)
- 7:25 Israel rejected the salvation by Moses until his return on the second visit. Moses is a type of Jesus Christ who was also denied as the Messiah until the time of His second coming.
- 7:26 Moses was able to assist when his people were in conflict with the world, but when their discord was between each other, he could only request that both parties reason. Believers should also strive for unity and peace (Jn 13:35; Eph 4:5; Phil 2:2; 1 Cor 1:12-13, 11:19).
- 7:27 Israel questioned Jesus about whose authority He was acting (Matthew 21:33; Mark 11:28; Luke 20:2; John 6:42).
- 7:28 Israel did not recognize Moses for saving an Israelite, but instead they identified him as a murderer. Israel condemned the saving work of Moses.
- 7:29 Stephen continues to emphasize the lineage with the two (witness) sons of Moses who were Gershom (“expulsion/a stranger there”) and Eliezer (“God is help”).
- Gershom almost lost his life (Ex 2:22, 4:24-26) when Moses did not circumcise him, but both brothers would be taken back to Midian and rejoin Moses in the wilderness (Ex 18:2-5).
 - Similar to the nephews of Moses (the sons of Aaron - Ex 28:1), the sons of Moses and their offspring were numbered among the Levites as God’s priesthood (1 Chron 23:14-25).
- 7:30 The second stage of Moses’ life, the angel (“Messenger” - John 8:58) spoke from the burning bush (thorn bush – sin). (Exodus 3:2)
- The object was not consumed by the flame (symbolic of judgment) as God’s grace draws communion with Himself.
- 7:31 It is because Moses responded to the activity of God and took time to “*go over and look*” that God spoke to him (Exodus 3:3).
- Busy schedules hamper the Lord’s interaction with His people (Mark 4:18-19)
- 7:32 The Scripture of Moses being called by name (Exodus 3:4) is left out because Stephen continues to focus on the relationship to the patriarchs.

- Just as Moses became a shepherd in Midian (a Gentile land), Jesus became the “Good Shepherd.” (John 10:11; 1 Peter 5:4)
- 7:33 Although Moses is revered by the Sanhedrin which Moses established (Numbers 11:16), Stephen speaks of Moses being fearful and told to respect the holy ground on which he is walking.
- 7:34 In the time of the Sanhedrin, Israel was crying out to God for the Messiah to save them from human bondage which was similar to Israel’s cries to God under Egypt oppression 1500 years earlier.
- 7:35 Moses was a type of Jesus Christ; although Jesus was never referred to as “redeemer”, this attribute of Moses also correlates to Jesus.
- Jews rejected God’s chosen savior by questioning His authority. (Matthew 21:33; Mark 11:28; Luke 20:2; John 6:42)
- 7:36 God showed Himself through the signs and wonders of Moses in each of the three settings: Egypt, Red Sea, and wilderness.

Read Acts 7:37-43 ... Stephen Teaches of Israel’s Rebellion Against God & His Prophet

- 7:37 Moses prophesied of the coming Messiah before his death (Deuteronomy 18:15).
- 7:38 The law was a “living oracle” or a “divine word” given to man.
- 7:39 Just as the Israelites had rejected Jesus as the Messiah; their forefathers had rejected the law of God that the Sanhedrin was now claiming to protect.
- Stephen turns the charges against God and the Mosaic Law towards his accusers saying that they had a long held tradition of blaspheming God and Moses.
- 7:40 God’s people, the people of Israel, did not wait for Moses to descend (from Mt Sinai) with the law.
- At the time of Stephen, the Sanhedrin had lost an understanding of the Messiah as well. Just as when Moses descended, when Jesus descended, Israel was not prepared.
- 7:41 Just as the Sanhedrin held sacred their oral traditions which the rabbis had developed over time, the Israelites had worshipped the idol of a cow made by their own efforts and understanding.
- 7:42 God allowed these fallen men to worship their manmade gods as he turned them over to follow astrology.
- Modern societies continue to follow horoscopes, astrology, and the like instead of turning to the living God Who determines their future.
 - God expected Israel to continue to worship and obey Him as He led through the wilderness.
- 7:43 Stephen continues to quote Amos (Amos 5:25-27) who was a simple shepherd called by God to correct the credentialed religious leaders similar to the Sanhedrin (Amos 7:14-15).
- Instead of offering their herds in worship to the one true God, Israel sacrificed their children to Molech, the “sun god” (known as Baal with a brass human body with head of an ox).
 - “Rephan” related to a star, possibly Saturn, and was worshipped by Egyptians.
 - Ironically, the Babylonians were known for their worship of the heavenlies and their astrology, so God turned Israel over to their false gods with captivity in Babylon.

Read Acts 7:44-50 ... Stephen Teaches about God's Tabernacle

7:44 Having discussed the rejection of the law by Israel who replaced His law with their own vanities, Stephen now turns his focus to the Tabernacle/Temple which was a representation of something much greater (Hebrews 9:23-24; Revelation 21:22).

7:45 Joshua had received the Tabernacle from Moses and carried it into the Promised Land where it stayed over four centuries through the time of Judges.

7:46 David found favor with the Lord and requested that He be allowed to build a permanent Temple for the "God of Jacob."

- Jacob is often referred to as the individual Israelite instead of the nation, but Jacob also represents self-effort instead of the dependence of Israel.

7:47 Although good King David had pleased the Lord, he was not allowed to build the Temple, but instead the construction was reserved for his son Solomon (1 Kings 8:17-19).

- Pleasing the Lord (even in offerings – Genesis 4:5) does not result in self-will and way, but instead submission to the Lord and His way.
- God had commanded Israel to build the portable Tabernacle (Exodus 25:9; Hebrews 8:5); however, He never commanded them to construct a Temple.
- During the Babylonians exile, God destroyed the Temple in judgment of His people (1 Kings 9:8; Ezra 5:12; Lamentations 2:6). God would once again destroy the Temple in 70AD because His people had rejected Jesus Christ (Mark 13:2; Luke 19:44)

7:48 God the Father in heaven does not confine Himself to manmade constructs (1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chronicles 2:6).

7:49-50 Stephen now quotes from Isaiah (Isaiah 66:1-2) who had originated in a royal family, but rejected worldly position for the truth of God (Mark 7:6).

- In these two verses, the Lord adjusts the thinking of man that they would be able to offer anything great to Him.
- Although the law was housed in the Temple, God is the Creator of all things, and man's crafts cannot claim or exceed the glory of God.

Read Acts 7:51-53 ... Stephen Accuses the Sanhedrin of Stubborn Rebellion Against God

- **Stephen's sermon moves from history to direct application**

7:51 Stephen once again correlates the Sanhedrin with their patriarchs of old who rejected His law and proudly claimed to be the builders of His dwelling place.

- The term "stiff necked" is an Old Testament term for the sinful people of God (Exodus 33:5; Leviticus 26:41; Deuteronomy 10:16).
- The circumcision of the Jews was only outward; just like their religion, it was all outward (for show), but they were not circumcised inwardly.

7:52 Just like all of the prophets (and all but one of the twelve apostles), Stephen asserts that it is in line with their heritage to not only execute him as a witness of the truth, but also to crucify Jesus the Messiah.

- This sermon (this legal testimony) had not been a defense for Stephen, but instead a prosecution of the Sanhedrin.

7:53 Although Stephen was on trial for disrespecting the law, it was the Sanhedrin who had not kept it (Matthew 23:23, 28).

- The Rabbinical understanding of Deuteronomy 33:2 where “*The LORD came from Sinai and dawned over them from Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran. He came with^{al} myriads of holy ones from the south, from his mountain slopes.*”
- The book of Hebrews identifies angels as messengers of the good news (Hebrews 2:2; Galatians 3:19).

Read Acts 7:54-56 ... Stephen Sees God’s Glory as the Sanhedrin Rages

7:54 Conviction leads to repentance for those with tender hearts, but rage and hate for those who are filled with pride.

- The Greek term for “enraged” actually is the phrase “cut to the heart” (dieprionto TAIS kardiais – διεπρίοντο ΤΑΙΣ καρδίαις) which is ironic because Stephen had just mentioned that their hearts were uncircumcised.
 - This phrase is only repeated one other time when the Sanhedrin had desired to kill Peter after his sermon; however, Gamaliel intervened (Acts 5:33).
- The Greek phrase “gnashing of teeth” (brygmos tōn odontōn - βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων) showed angst; this is the way that Jesus described hell (Luke 13:28).

7:55 In dealing with these worldly leaders, the focus of Stephen was on the Lord.

- Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God (Mk 16:19; Lk 22:69; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 10:12, 12:2), but stands to welcome His faithful servant in (Rom 8:34; 1 Pet 3:22).
- While the Sanhedrin were full of rage, Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit. The filling of the Holy Spirit gives an evangelical power to share the gospel; the filling of the Spirit results in submission to His will and ministry.

7:56 Stephen testifies to the vision that he is witnessing. This is the only passage in the New Testament that the term “Son of Man” is quoted by someone other than Jesus.

- The term “son of man” is referenced in Revelation (1:13; 14:14) as being similar to a human (a “son of man”)

Read Acts 7:57-60 ... Stephen Becomes the First Christian Martyr

7:57 The wicked religious leaders took three ruinous actions in their rejection of the truth:

1. They screamed – ignorant assertions and accusations are used mindlessly
2. They covered their ears – lack of listening and considering
3. They rushed – lack of reasoning and methodical response

7:58 Saul held the robes of the Sanhedrin as Stephen was stoned to death.

- The robes often represent righteousness (Job 29:14; Isaiah 61:10), and these men shed all self-righteousness in this brutal response.
- It is possible that Saul had been in attendance at the time of the crucifixion of Christ as well.
- The two young men of Saul and Stephen are contrasted to each other.

7:59 The body sleeps in the interim between death and the resurrection (1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:13), but the soul goes directly to be with the Lord Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:8)

7:60 Stephen directs his prayer to Jesus (Acts 9:14, 20-21, 21:16 & Revelation 22:20), and his forgiveness is Christlike in nature (Luke 23:46).

- Stephen had been standing while he was being stoned.
- Stephen fell to his knees for one last prayer for God to forgive the people killing him.

Difficult Request to Understand	
Would God actually not “charge them with this sin”? Can anyone sin without being charged because of another’s intercession?	Sin is forgiven because the Lord Jesus intercedes for guilty and deserving man (Rom 8:34).
What does it mean for God to “not charge” someone for a sin?	This seems to refer to either degrees of punishment relative to sin, or less likely, to not harden their hearts so that they will not find salvation.
Should believers today pray the same prayer concerning their offenders?	Believers would be blessed to intercede for enemies with prayer regardless of the outcome to the enemy.

27 Acts 8:1-25

Read Acts 8:1-4... Saul Spreads the Gospel by Persecuting the Early Church

8:1 Saul aligns himself with persecutors, but persecution spreads the gospel (Acts 1:8).

- Acts 1:8.... Acts 8:1
- It was at this point that the testimony of the apostles transcends Jerusalem.
- The apostles bravely remained at the center of Judaism in Jerusalem while other believers spread beyond the borders.
- The first mention of Saul was the scene where Israel’s murderous leaders lay their robes at his feet to stone Stephen. (Acts 7:58)

Acts 8 Use of “Great” (megas μέγας)		
<i>A “Great” Chapter</i>		
1.	Great Persecution	Acts 8:1
2.	Great Lamentation	Acts 8:2
3.	Great Voice	Acts 8:7
4.	Someone Great	Acts 8:9
5.	Least to Greatest	Acts 8:10
6.	Power called Great	Acts 8:10
7.	Seeing Great Miracles	Acts 8:13

8:2 Although Stephen had now passed on to glory, devout brothers mourned his passing because Stephen was such a tremendous brother to partner with in ministry. (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

- Although public mourning for a condemned criminal was forbid by Jewish law (Mishnah), this great grief celebrated the passing of one who was not a criminal, but instead had been wrongly accused.

8:3 These believers in prison were then convicted and murdered with Saul’s blessing (Acts 26:10). Saul’s conversion would show the extreme change that the Lord could bring as Paul would later move from house to house preaching the good news (Acts 20:20).

- Luke often emphasizes the great impact of women in the early church (Lk 23:49; Acts 1:14, 5:14, 8:12, 9:2, 16:13, 17:4, 12).
- 8:4 Believers were scattered with the “seed” (scattering seed) of God’s Word. (Mark 4:26; 1 Peter 1:23)
- Believers should continue to proclaim the good news wherever the Lord leads.

Read Acts 8:5-8... Philip Shares the Gospel & Samaria Joyfully Receives the Good News

8:5 This Philip (Acts 21:8) is viewed by many as a different Philip than the disciple. However, in both instances, Philip is the first to reach out to the Gentiles (John 12:20-23).

- Philip was one of the seven deacons (Acts 6:5).
 - Jesus had laid the foundation of His gospel being extended to the Gentiles from His first recorded message in the synagogue (Lk 4:16-30).
 - Samaria was degraded as being a mixed race (not pure Jews) that populated the land after “true” Jews were exiled into captivity in Assyria (2 Kings 17:24-41).
 - Beyond racial disdain, Samaritans worshipped a form of Judaism mixed with other beliefs. The Jewish prejudice did not deter Philip from preaching of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.
- 8:6 The Samaritans joined in unity to listen to Philip share of the power of God.
- 8:7 The evidence of the Spirit was unmistakable from the loud exorcisms to those who could not walk physically (or the godly spiritually walk).
- 8:8 The result of Samaria accepting the Messiah was joy in contrast to the Jews who were angry with murderous intent (Acts 7:54).

Read Acts 8:9-13... Simon the Magician Believes the Gospel

8:9 Simon was a “has been” who had once been an egotistical sorcerer who promoted himself. Believers should be wary of miracle workers who astonish many (Mt 24:24; Mk 13:5). While Simon “astounded” the Samaritans, Philip’s works caused them to believe.

- Justin Martyr (100AD-165AD) from Samaria wrote that the following of “Simon Magus” was so widely spread that there was a statue of Simon Magus being worshipped in Rome.
 - The second century historian, Irenaeus, attributes Simon Magus with starting the Gnosticism movement.
 - The act of “simony” is defined as paying for a (religious) position (i.e., Pope).
- 8:10 The phrase “the Great Power of God” was a title for the highest mythological god (Zeus).
- 8:11 Although the Samaritans attributed Simon’s power to God, the power was actually demonic in nature (Mt 24:24). This is evidenced by the praise and exaltation of Simon instead of Jesus.
- 8:12 The testimony of Philip led to belief in Jesus Christ in contrast to astonishment at a fellow human. The belief focused on the two truths of Lord (Kingdom of God) and Savior (Jesus Christ).
- 8:13 The sorcerer Simon believed in the gospel message and was baptized. Just as the Jews had been astounded by Simon, he was astounded by the miracles of God

through Philip. The miracles should never be the final focus, but instead the glory and attention should go to the Lord (Lk 10:20).

Read Acts 8:14-17... Peter & John Share the Holy Spirit Through the Laying on of Hands

8:14 Peter and John were the two disciples closest to Jesus who had first witnessed His resurrection. The apostles commissioned Peter and John to minister to the despised Samaritans.

8:15 The Holy Spirit draws individuals to the Lord, so in effect, the Holy Spirit is working prior to conversion. Then at the point of belief the believer is indwelt by the Spirit. However, the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit can be given (and discontinued) at any time according to God's will and purpose.

- John had not always been so charitable towards Samaritans (Luke 9:51-56)

8:16 Another option is that the Samaritans had acquired "head knowledge" and physical baptism without having heart knowledge and "Spirit filled" Baptism. God timed the giving of the Holy Spirit (and the gifts) to the Samaritans so that the Jews could witness it firsthand (Jn 4:20-22; 1 Cor 12:13). All believers are filled with the Holy Spirit at the time of saving faith (indeed, it is this indwelling that enables belief), but the power of the Spirit can move greatly.

8:17 The Pharisees and Sanhedrin also had head knowledge, but no "heart acceptance" or relationship with Jesus Christ. One method, although not the only one, for the power of the Holy Spirit to move was through the laying on of hands (Acts 19:6).

Read Acts 8:18-25... Simon the Magician is Chastised to Repent

8:18 Favor from the Lord can't be bought; He desires those who offer themselves instead of those who offer from their abundance.

8:19 Simon felt that giving money would be a profitable investment, so that he could once again promote himself through spiritual power.

8:20 The wealth of a man will disappear just as the ways and means of a man.

8:21-22 The terms "God" and "Lord" are used interchangeably confirming the deity of Jesus. Although Simon had believed, he was called to contrition and repentance.

8:23 Simon showed evidences of envy and sin as he had probably lost much of his prior reputation as a spiritual power. Simon wrongfully wanted to be re-established in public popularity.

8:24 Although Simon sounds contrite, he requests Peter to intercede to the Lord on his behalf; Simon is focusing more on his fellow humans (Peter) than talking to the Lord directly. Simon does not apologize or repent from his corrupt nature, but instead, he hopes to circumvent the ramifications of his wickedness.

8:25 Peter and John continue to testify throughout Samaria on their return trip home.

28 Acts 8:26-40

Read Acts 8:26-31... Philip is Called to Witness to the Ethiopian Eunuch

8:26 "An" (not "the") angel of the Lord tells Philip to go to a vague location in the desert. Specific details are not always given, but believers should be obedient.

8:27 A millennium prior, the Queen of Sheba (Southern Arabia/Ethiopia) had been greatly impressed with Solomon (Mt 12:42; Lk 11:31).

- Tradition records that they had a son together (Menyelek I). When Menyelek I returned to Ethiopia, he took replica of Ark with him, and some contend that he carried the real ark of the covenant.
 - Ethiopia was a broader region south of Egypt (Nubia) where the king's mother (the "Candace") would reign; the king was viewed as deity, so ruling the region was considered "beneath" him.
 - A eunuch may (Dt 23:1) or not have been emasculated, but the term "eunuch" did infer a high ranking official.
- 8:28 This government official was probably a proselyte who was not Jewish, but had accepted the Hebrew God and adhered to the Mosaic Law.
- 8:29 Philip does not assume, but submissively follows the direction of the Spirit each step of the way.
- 8:30 Philip's obedience was immediate and fervent as he ran to the chariot.
- 8:31 Instead of the Spirit speaking directly to the Eunuch, the Spirit led believer was used by God to guide (Rom 10:17). Believers should look for opportunities each day to share the Word of God as the Spirit uses their witness.

Read Acts 8:32-40... The Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch & Philip Gets Carried Away

- 8:32 The verse references the silence of Jesus in His death while the explanation and teaching of Philip draws the Eunuch to the Lord (Is 53:7-8).
- 8:33 Just as the Eunuch had no progeny, the Lord was cut off from the world; however, His followers would continue to increase His lineage (Is 56:3-5).
- 8:34 The Eunuch had not realized that all of Scripture points to Jesus Christ. While many believers focus on the New Testament, the Old Testament tells amazing truths of Jesus Christ (Lk 24:27).
- 8:35 Philip began where the Eunuch was and proceeded good news about Jesus. An effective witness begins where the recipient is spiritually and builds from there.
- 8:36 On the desert road, this source of water was seen for its spiritual use in baptism instead of a drink to quench a physical thirst.
- 8:37 Belief with "all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13; Mt 22:37; Mk 12:30; Lk 10:27) is the foundation for salvation. The believer is called to hold the truth of God above all else (e.g., personal ambitions, wealth and assets, etc.).
- This verse is not included in the Chester Beatty Papyri, the Bodmer Papyri, the A, B, and C Greek manuscripts or in the ancient Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic, and Ethiopian translations.
 - The NASB, English Revised Version and Weymouth New Testament translations do not include this verse.
- 8:38 Full immersion is the only method of baptism represented in Scripture.
- To be a convert to Judaism, a man needed: Instruction, Circumcision, and Full Immersion (using a Mikveh)
- 8:39 Philip had faithfully obeyed the Spirit's call into Samaria (Acts 8:5), to the desert road (Acts 8:26), and to the chariot (Acts 8:29); now the Spirit of the Lord did not tell, but instead carried Philip away to his next ministry. Supernatural intervention often occurs after faithful obedience occurs. Tradition (Irenaeus) tells that the witness of the Eunuch had a profound impact on Ethiopia, and by the 4th century, Christianity was Ethiopia's official religion.

8:40 Philip would now be taken to minister to the area of the Philistines before working his way up the Mediterranean coast to Caesarea where the new convert Paul would arrive (Acts 9:30). Philip the evangelist would make his home in Caesarea (Acts 21:8).

29 Acts 9:1-22

Read Acts 9:1-9... The Conversion of Saul to Paul

9:1 As breath keeps an individual alive, the “breathing” (Psalms 27:12) of Saul (meaning “asked for; requested; demanded”) implies that his reason for living was to persecute believers with bloody zeal (Acts 22:4, 26:9-11).

- The term “disciple” (mathētas μαθητὰς) is only used in the gospels and in Acts; it never appears in Scripture after the book of Acts. The term “disciple” means learner.

Titles for Believers in the Early Church in Acts 9		
“Disciples” Acts 9:1, 19, 25, 26, 36, 38	“Saints” Acts 9:13, 32, 41	“Brothers” Acts 9:17

9:2 As long as Saul’s wicked acts were endorsed (letters – arrest warrants) by the established religious leaders (High Priest), Saul felt comfortable with performing any atrocious act in spite of God.

- Believers were identified as “The Way” (Mt 26:39; Jn 14:6) as they had discovered the only way to God; this is the first of six references to “the Way” in Acts (Acts 19:9, 23; 22:4, 24:14, 22).
- Damascus (meaning “Sack of Blood”) was the capital of Syria (Isaiah 7:8; Amos 5:27) and is the oldest continually inhabited city (Gen 15:2) 150 miles north of Jerusalem.
- Women (gynaikas γυναῖκας) are shown several times to show the severity of Saul’s execution. (Acts 8:3; 9:2; 22:4)

9:3 The light (noun) was so bright that it outshined the sun at noon (Acts 22:6).

- This was a spiritual light from heaven which interrupted the natural fallen world surrounding Saul (Jn 1:4-5; Rev 21:23).

The Light that Shone on Saul	
Acts 9:3	<i>“Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.”</i>
Acts 22:6	<i>““About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me.”</i>
Acts 26:13	<i>“About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions.”</i>

- The supernatural light may have permanently affected Paul’s eyesight (Galatians 4:14; 6:11).

9:4 Jesus claims one identity with His body of the church (Matthew 25:40).

- Saul and companions fell to the ground (Acts 26:13-14) which is the common response when in the presence of the holy, righteous one (Matthew 17:6).
- Jesus knew Saul by name, and called him twice to get his attention.

9:5 As Jesus spoke in Aramaic to Saul (Acts 26:14), Saul does not realize that Jesus is the Lord God; this is in contrast to believers who recognize His voice (Acts 9:10, 10:4).

- Included in the self-identification of Jesus are the words “I am” relating to the covenantal title of God (Yahweh – Exodus 3:14)
- Jesus shares a closeness and intimacy with His church; the church is the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27; Ephesians 1:23; 4:4, 12; 5:30) Jesus takes actions towards the church personally (Matthew 10:40; 25:40, 45).
- Paul mentions that he saw the resurrected Christ (Acts 22:14; 1 Corinthians 9:1).
- The reference to the goad is recorded in Acts 26:14, but not in the Acts 22 account, and not in the Acts 9 account – the King James translation adds “the goad” (found in only one Latin manuscript) to Acts 9:5 where all other versions do not mention the goad in this verse.
 - The goad is a long sharp instrument used to prompt an animal to go a certain direction; greater rejection against the goad increases the pain of being stuck by the goad. (Acts 26:14)

9:6 God continues to motivate His people to action with “*get up and go*” (Acts 9:11, 10:20) as well as submission while God tells what to do.

- New believers are called to arise as if from sickness or death (Acts 9:34, 40; 22:16).

9:7 Similar to Daniel 10:7, fear came over Saul’s peers. Although they saw the light, they did not understand the voice or the calling (Acts 22:9).

- Saul’s companions were symbolic of the unbelieving Jews who heard the sermons and witness of the gospel message; however, they did not truly understand what was being said.

9:8 Just as with any new believer, the spiritual eyes were open to the truth of Jesus’ identity after the introduction to Jesus, but God has yet to give additional spiritual insight that comes through His word and counsel (Ananias). The traveling group may have been walking on foot the entire time (from Jerusalem to Damascus) as the others “stood” and then led Saul “by hand” into the city.

9:9 Just as three days passed before the resurrection of Jesus was witnessed by men, Saul was also blind for three (representing “resurrection/revelation”) days. This was a time of fasting (prayer – Acts 9:11) without food or water as Saul focused on his fallen state and the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Read Acts 9:10-19... The Calling of Ananias to Restore the Sight of Saul/Paul

9:10 Ananias (meaning “God has been gracious”) is called by name and answers the Lord as if this were not the first time (1 Samuel 3:4-10).

- Ananias was respected by the Jews for his adherence to the law (Acts 22:12).

9:11 As the street (“Via Recta”) is called “Straight” (Acts 9:11, 13:9-10, 14:10, 16:11), the inference is not to be distracted by turning to the left/right, but stay focused on God’s will (Ezekiel 1:12).

- The street called “Straight” still exists in Damascus. Most ancient roads had many curves and turns, so a straight street was very unique in those days.
- This “Judas” (“praise”) is different from the betrayer of Jesus, but both the disciple Judas and Saul were made aware of the truth and their sinful nature.



- Saul (“demanded”) from Tarsus (“winged/feathered”) might have had an arrest warrant (Acts 9:2) for Ananias.

9:12 The Lord gave Saul a vision about the laying on of hands enabling sight.

“Laying On of Hands”	
Old Testament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification with Sacrifice • Patriarchal Blessing • Commissioning a Successor
New Testament	
Healing	Mark 5:23; Acts 9:12
Commissioning	Acts 6:6; 13:3
Receiving the Holy Spirit (Gifts)	Acts 8:17; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6
Basic Truth Listed	Hebrews 6:2

9:13 Ananias responds with the word “Lord” (Kyrie Κύριε) as Jesus was the Master.

- Ananias never tells God what he thinks God should do, but instead conveys his understanding of the cruelty of Saul.
- This is the first use of the term “saints” (hagiois ἁγίοις) in Scripture although a similar phrase “of the saints / of the holy” (hagiōn - ἁγίων) is used multiple times beforehand (Matthew 27:52; Mark 8:38; Luke 1:70; 9:26; Acts 3:21).
- This is the only time that “saints” (hagiois ἁγίοις) are mentioned in Acts; however, the word would be used in Romans (1:7; 15:25, 31), 1 Corinthians (1:2; 16:15), 2 Corinthians (1:1), Ephesians (1:1, 18; 3:5. 18; 5:3), Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2, 26; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Hebrews 6:10; Jude 1:3; Revelation 11:18).
- The term “saints” has the same root word of “holy” or “sanctified.” This meant that it was unusually committed and dedicated to the task and purpose of God.
- Although the catholic church uses this term to describe super Christians, Scripture applies the term “saints” to every Christian. All believers are “saints.”
 - Holy (not because of what we do) but because of what He has done.
- Saul’s reputation of persecution was widespread.

9:14 The first church must have been well connected for Ananias to know about the “letters” (arrest warrants) from the High Priest.

- The phrase “*call on your name*” (epikaloumenous ta onoma - ἐπικαλουμένους τὰ ὄνομα) was a distinguishing mark of early believers. (Romans 10:13; Acts 2:21)
- The “name” represented the character or essence of an individual.

9:15 God then commanded Ananias to “Go!” (poreuou πορεύου)

- Saul had been chosen (predestined beyond his personal will – Jn 1:13) by God to minister to three groups: 1. Gentiles 2. Kings 3. Sons of Israel.
- Saul was called first to the Gentiles (Acts 26:20), but the rulers (e.g., Nero) would also sit in his counsel (Acts 24:24; 26:28-29) and eventually kill him.

9:16 Saul was called to suffer (Acts 9:23, 29, 26:13; 2 Cor 11:23), and believers are still called to suffer in this world (2 Tim 3:12; Jn 15:19; Mt 10:38, 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23).

- Salvation is free, but there is a price to be paid to follow Jesus. (Luke 9:23; 12:33; 14:33)

9:17 Ananias greets Saul as his “brother” (Adelphē Ἀδελφῆ) who is a part of the family of God. The term “*Adelphē*” is used only six times in Scripture in Luke 6:42; Acts 9:17, 21:20, 22:13; and Philemon 1:7, 20.

- Saul regains his sight (Mt 15:12-14, 23) and is filled with the Holy Spirit at the point of the laying on of hands.

9:18 The first action of Saul after being filled with the Holy Spirit and gaining sight was to “rise up” (anastas ἀναστὰς) to be baptized.

- Luke uses a medical term to describe something like “scales” (lepidēs λεπίδες) falling from Saul’s eyes.
- The term for “*rise up/get up*” (anastas) is only used in the Gospels and Acts (36 times). The term is used 17 times in Acts (1:15; 5:17, 34; 8:27; 9:11, 18, 39; 10:13, 20, 23; 11:7, 28; 13:16; 14:20; 15:7; 22:10, 16).

9:19 Saul regained physical strength from eating physical bread, but he must have also been encouraged by the spiritual bread being shared with the disciples of Damascus over a number of days.

Read Acts 9:20-22... Saul Testifies to Jesus as the Son of God in Damascus

9:20 Saul immediately began to testify to the deity of Jesus Christ in the Jewish synagogues. Believers should also not be hesitant to testify to the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- This is the only time that the phrase “Son of God” (huios tou theou - υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ) is used in Acts. The term “Son of God” describes the deity of Jesus.

9:21 Everyone was surprised and perplexed at the difference that Jesus made in Saul’s life.

9:22 Saul, who had studied under Gamaliel (Acts 5:34), was able to easily prove that Jesus was the Messiah.

- The Greek term for “prove” (symbibazōn συμβιβάζων) means “putting together” (“to join”) as Paul connected the Old Testament truths with Jesus as the Messiah.
 - This comes from the same root as “symbiosis” which is a mutually beneficial relationship.
- Saul increased in wisdom and insight as he was a recent believer filled with the Holy Spirit.

30 Acts 9:23-43

Read Acts 9:23-25... Saul Escapes from Death Threats in Damascus

9:23 According to 1 Kings 18:1 (same sentence structure), a long time could be three years; the Greek word “hikanos” also means “enough/adequate/sufficient.”

- It is likely that during this time, Saul went into Arabia (Mt Sinai – Gal 4:25) alone to be sanctioned and prepared by the Lord (Gal 1:13-18; 1 Cor 15:8).
- Many ministries began with God spending an extended time alone with His servant (e.g., Moses & Elijah in the wilderness; also, Jesus went into the wilderness for forty days).

9:24 Saul understood the methods and ways of Jewish persecution as they were planning to ambush him as he exited the city.

- The King of Damascus (& Nabataeans), King Aretas IV, attempted to arrest Paul (2 Corinthians 11:32-33). Aretas IV was King from 9BC to 40AD.
 - Paul spent three years in Arabia (Galatians 1:15-24).
- 9:25 Similar to David (1 Samuel 19:12) who escaped through a window and the Jewish spies in Jericho (Joshua 2:15) who escaped through a window in the city wall, Saul also escaped through the window in the wall (2 Corinthians 11:30-33).

Read Acts 9:26-31... Saul's Difficult Reception in Jerusalem

- 9:26 Even after the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, believers still feared Saul. The last time that they had seen Saul, they witnessed his murderous rampage.
- 9:27 The testimony of Saul was not believed until Barnabas ("Son of Encouragement") shared Saul's testimony (Acts 4:36, 11:22-25, 15:22, 38-39).
- 9:28 Saul began to preach in Jerusalem, the heart of Judaism, where Saul remained with Peter for fifteen days (Gal 1:18).
- 9:29 Saul began to dispute (synezētei συνεζήτητε) with the same Hellenistic Jews who murdered Stephen (Acts 6:9). The term "*murder*" (anelein - ἀνελεῖν) is used six times in Scripture; all six times are in the book of Acts (Acts 5:33; 7:28; 9:23, 29; 23:15; 25:3)
- 9:30 The zeal of Saul's new-found beliefs disrupted the ministry of the disciples. The focus turned to hatred of Saul instead of the love of Jesus, so Saul sent home to Tarsus (Acts 21:39) for 5-10 years (Acts 22:17-21).
- Scripture would be silent about Saul/Paul for approximately five years until Barnabas retrieved Paul to be active in the church at Antioch. (Acts 11:25)
 - Paul would preach around his homeland in Cilicia which was the southern coastline of Asia Minor (where Paul's hometown of Tarsus was located). (Galatians 1:21)
 - Pompey (67 BC) made Tarsus the capital over the Roman province of Cilicia as the Tarsus Jews began to receive Roman citizenship. Mark Antony (who controlled Rome's eastern provinces of the Mediterranean) declared Tarsus to be free (42 BC).
 - Tarsus was recognized for making a certain type of felt cloth from the wool of shaggy black goats which would have served tent makers well. (Acts 18:3)
- 9:31 After Saul was sent away, the Church found peace and growth as they (1.) feared the Lord and (2.) were comforted and encouraged by the Holy Spirit.
- During this time, Emperor Caligula (after Tiberias) attempted to have an image of himself placed in the Jerusalem Temple, and these events distracted the Jews from the persecution of Christians; instead of an image of himself, Caligula died of natural causes.
 - The gospel had extended to all three regions of the ancient land of Israel: 1. Judea in the south 2. Samaria in the middle 3. Galilee to the north.
 - This is the first mention of church activity in Galilee; the three regions were united in a single "church" (Acts 1:8).
 - The Greek term for "*church*" (ekklēsia ἐκκλησία) means the "*called out ones*" and is repeated in Scripture 33 times.
 - God uses "the called" to call others to Himself. Even the term Protestant alludes to witnessing (Pro- for; Testament-witnessing and testifying).

Read Acts 9:32-34... The Healing of Aeneas, who was Paralyzed

- 9:32 Peter did not settle into a single fellowship, but instead traveled between places sharing the gospel.
- 9:33 For eight (representative of new beginnings) years, all those in the region northwest of Jerusalem had witnessed Aeneas disability.
- 9:34 Aeneas (meaning “praiseworthy”) was healed from paralysis by Jesus Christ. The glory was not usurped by Peter. Aeneas was told to get up similar to Paul (Acts 9:6, 8, 18), Peter (Acts 9:39) and Tabitha (Acts 9:40); “arise” is used 7 times in Acts. Aeneas was directed to make his own bed (carry his load) just as Jesus had directed (Lk 5:24 as recorded again by Luke).
- 9:35 Lydda was 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem in the region of Ephraim; Lydda is 9 miles southeast of the sea port of Joppa (“beauty”). The city of Sharon (“his song/the plain”) is referenced only this once in the New Testament, but six times in Old Testament as the pleasant rolling coastline.

Read Acts 9:36-43... The Restoration of Dorcas/Tabitha, who was Dead

- 9:36 Disciples consisted of both genders as a female disciple was named Tabitha (Aramaic meaning “clear-sighted”) with a second name Dorcas (Greek name meaning “grace”). These qualities of grace and sensibility would support her generous, self-sacrificing nature.
- 9:37 Even believers who are faithfully devoted to the Lord’s service get sick and die (2 Kings 13:14; 2 Cor 12:7-9).
- 9:38 Although Tabitha was already dead, two (witness) fellow believers were sent to retrieve Peter as they had faith in the power of God.

In Scripture, Life Returns to Eight (new beginnings) Dead Individuals (Matthew 27:52-53)			
God’s Vessel	Deceased	Reference	
1. Elijah	Child	1 Kings 17:17-24	
2. Elisha	Child	2 Kings 4:31-37	
3. Elisha	Man	2 Kings 13:20-21	
4. Jesus	Young Man	Luke 7:11-18	
5. Jesus	Jairus Daughter	Luke 8:40-56	
6. Jesus	Lazarus	John 11:39-44	
7. Peter	Tabitha	Acts 9:36-43	
8. Paul	Eutychus	Acts 20:7-12	

- 9:39 Peter faithfully answered the calling. Just as the deacons had cared for the widows, Tabitha also had made a charitable impression on the widows as a provider of clothing for them. These widows referred to her in her Greek name.
- 9:40 Peter knelt and prayed away from Tabitha. Then Peter turned to her and called her by her Aramaic name. Just as Peter had been stirred to action and “got up” (Acts 9:39), he now calls Tabitha to “get up” as well. The first response to life was to have her eyes open.
- 9:41 Peter assisted with Tabitha raising up (Mk 1:30-31; Lk 8:54). Not all of the widows that had been helped were saints (believers), but Tabitha had cared for them.

9:42 Tabitha’s resurrection became a testimony throughout all of the area in Joppa.

9:43 Unlike Jonah who went to Joppa to catch a boat and flee the Lord, Peter stayed in Joppa to minister. This is the first of three times (Acts 10:6, 32) that Simon’s occupation of being a tanner was emphasized. This was an objectionable environment with the skins of sheep and goats hanging to dry and be preserved. This process was identified with foul odors and gruesome sights as well as being ceremonially unclean to Jews.

JULY

1 Acts 10:1-23

Read Acts 10:1-8... The Answered Prayers of the Centurion Cornelius

10:1 Cornelius (Latin name meaning “of a horn”) would have served under Herod Agrippa with his authority as a centurion as commanding 100 (~120) men of the 6,000 man regiment (Mt 8:5-10; Lk 7:1-9).

- Rome enlisted regiments from their entire empire, and the Italian regiment would have been sourced from Italy.

Roman Military Units	
Legion	5,000-6,000
Cohorts	480-500
Centuria	100

- In the New Testament, the centurions have a favorable disposition towards religious matters. (Matthew 8:13; Mark 15:39)
- Caesarea was the headquarters of the Roman Governors (Proconsuls) like Pontius Pilate. The governors would go up to Jerusalem for the Feasts to ensure peace.

10:2 Like Cornelius, his entire household was devout and feared God; the family of Cornelius would not come to Jesus through his belief, but through their own personal convictions.

- Cornelius was in continuous fellowship with God and treated well the Lord’s people (the Jews).
- Since Cornelius feared God, he may have been a “God fearer” who the Jews called a “Proselyte of the Gate.”
 - Although he is monotheistic who prays to Yahweh, he cannot attend Temple sacrifices because he has not gone through circumcision.
 - “Proselytes of righteousness” went through the entire ritual including circumcision and baptism.

10:3 At 3:00pm, Jesus Christ had died bringing salvation to all who call on His name (Mt 27:45; Lk 23:44); now it was 3:00pm, and the prayers of Cornelius would open salvation to the mainstream Gentiles as well.

- Cornelius was adhering to the three Jewish times of prayer of which 3:00pm is one (others being 9:00am & noon; five times a day expanded to 6:00am & 6:00pm).
- God has a personal relationship with His people and calls them by name.

Roman Time References			
Time	Hour of Day	Time	Hour of Night
6:00 - 7:00 AM	First	6:00 - 7:00 PM	First

7:00 - 8:00 AM	<i>Second</i>	7:00 - 8:00 PM	<i>Second</i>
8:00 - 9:00 AM	<i>Third</i>	8:00 - 9:00 PM	<i>Third</i>
9:00 - 10:00 AM	<i>Fourth</i>	10:00 - 11:00 PM	<i>Fourth</i>
10:00 - 11:00 AM	<i>Fifth</i>	11:00 - Midnight	<i>Fifth</i>
11:00 - Noon	<i>Sixth</i>	Midnight - 1:00 AM	<i>Sixth</i>
Noon - 1:00 PM	<i>Seventh</i>	1:00 - 2:00 AM	<i>Seventh</i>
1:00 - 2:00 PM	<i>Eighth</i>	2:00 - 3:00 AM	<i>Eighth</i>
2:00 - 3:00 PM	<i>Ninth</i>	3:00 - 4:00 AM	<i>Ninth</i>
3:00 - 4:00 PM	<i>Tenth</i>	4:00 - 5:00 AM	<i>Tenth</i>
4:00 - 5:00 PM	<i>Eleventh</i>	5:00 - 6:00 AM	<i>Eleventh</i>
5:00 - 6:00 PM	<i>Twelfth</i>		<i>Twelfth</i>

10:4 Not only the prayers of Cornelius, but also his acts had been offered to the Lord as a sacrifice.

- The “memorial portion” of the grain offering (Lev 2:2, 9, 16, 5:12, 6:15; Num 5:26) was only a portion of the whole that represented all of the aggregate; in the same way, the household of Cornelius represented all of the Gentiles that would be opened to the gospel of Christ.
- This angel of God is later referenced as “a man” (Acts 10:30). Although Cornelius was in favor with God, this vision was intimidating to this courageous military man.
- Believers who have casual relationships with the Lord, do not understand His sovereignty nor His holiness.

10:5 The disobedient prophet Jonah had boarded a ship from Joppa in an attempt to run away from God because God had told him to testify to Nineveh (the capital of the Assyrian Empire). Jonah desired God’s mercy for himself and his people, but he didn’t want the Ninevites to repent. Peter (also in Joppa) was in a similar situation in the call to witness to the Gentiles. The reputation of Peter had many people sending for him (Acts 9:38).

- Joppa is located on Israel's Mediterranean seacoast between Caesarea and Gaza, about 35 miles (57 kilometers) northwest of Jerusalem and has been defeated and pillaged often throughout history. After the Israelites entered the Promised land under Joshua, the tribe of Dan received Joppa, but it was later lost to the Philistines. King David re-took Joppa in his time, and when Solomon succeeded his father as king, he developed it into Israel's major seaport. It was to Joppa that Hiram, king of Tyre sent cedar logs (Cedars of Lebanon) to use in building the original Temple of God in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 2:11,16). Through Biblical history, the city was in turn taken by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans in which it was included in the kingdom of Herod the Great.

10:6 A tanner was an unclean, despised profession; tanners worked with leather which entailed handling dead animals which were unclean according to Jewish custom; anyone who touched a corpse also became unclean, so a typical Jewish person would have had nothing to do with Simon, but Peter stayed with him – either Peter is inconsistent and is willing to overlook uncleanness in a Gentile or that Peter accepted Simon because he was a fellow (Jewish) believer, and acceptance of fellow believers is the right thing to do. If this is the case, it at least begins to prepare Peter to put down his Jewish scruples and eventually receive an unclean Gentile as a brother. The “sea” is often metaphorical for the Gentile world, and indeed, Simon’s home would be the launching point for Gentile outreach. It was practical for the tanner to live

away from the population next to the breezes of the sea in regards to the offensive smells of his profession.

10:7 The two (witness) household slaves were trusted family servants, and the soldier bore the same “devout” characteristic as Cornelius himself. “Devout” infers devotion and application of beliefs.

10:8 Cornelius had a candid relationship with these subordinates about his religious convictions. Although Cornelius physically sent them, the Spirit was actually the cause (Acts 10:20).

- Caesarea was 35 miles North of Joppa.

Read Acts 10:9-16... Peter’s Vision

10:9 Like Cornelius, Peter was also adhering to the Jewish times of prayer; God spoke to both Cornelius and Peter during these times of prayer. Peter’s vision occurred on a level housetop (elevated patio) at the sixth hour (noon – Jn 4:6, 2 Ki 4:20).

10:10 The vision of Peter occurred during an altered state of being. While a kosher Jewish meal was prepared for Peter, God was preparing to broaden Peter’s horizon beyond the law and tradition.

10:11 A carpet was being lowered by the four corners; the gospel would be proclaimed to the four corners of the earth (Acts 1:8).

10:12 Peter was knowledgeable on the unclean animals of Leviticus 11 (Dt 13:3-20), and three categories of unclean animals were presented (animals, reptiles, birds).

10:13 Peter is encouraged after “having gotten up” (anastas ἀναστὰς) to kill; Peter may have already raised up when he saw the vision.

- The Greek phrase “having risen/gotten up” (anastas ἀναστὰς) is used only in the Gospels and Acts; it is repeated 36 times.
 - There are only two commands to “get up” (Anasta - Ἀνάστα). (Acts 12:7; Ephesians 5:14).
 - Various passive forms of “has risen/gotten up” (anestē - ἀνέστη) are mentioned throughout the New Testament.
- The Lord calls Peter in a personal way by name (Acts 9:4, 10).
- The Lord encourages Peter to kill.
- Jewish Scribes believed that God would speak at times without physical representation which they called “Bath Kol” (which means “the daughter of the voice”).

10:14 Peter answers God in nonsense with an oxymoron “Not So, Lord”. Man must either exclaim “yes, Lord” or “not so”, but men should not be deceived that He is the Lord if He is not followed.

10:15 While man is made unclean by unclean objects, the Lord has the power to cleanse the unclean (Mk 7:15-19).

10:16 Just as Peter had denied Jesus three times and Jesus had re-established him three times (Jn 21:15-19), this vision occurred three times while three men from Cornelius came “seeking”; three often represents revelation.

Read Acts 10:17-23... Peter Welcomes Cornelius’ Messengers

- 10:17 The interpretation of the vision was not granted to Peter immediately. Others in the area of Joppa realized that Gentiles were looking for Simon's house because they asked directions.
- 10:18 The three messengers from Cornelius called for Simon Peter from the gate.
- 10:19 While Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit told him about the visitors using explicit language. The Spirit moves in vague visions as well as clear concise sentences.
- 10:20 Once again, Peter is urged to "get up" and to action. Peter is not told where he is going or what awaits him, but simply that what happens is from the Lord.
- 10:21 Peter was immediately forthcoming about his identity prior to asking their purpose.
- 10:22 Three characteristics of Cornelius were evident to his servants: 1. a just man 2. one who fears God 3. one with a good reputation among God's people (the Jews). The colleagues of any believer should understand him to be such a man.
- 10:23 After traveling thirty miles from Caesarea to Joppa, the two servants and Roman/Italian soldier (Gentiles) spent the night in the Jewish household. It was an unbecoming tannery, but all parties were being faithful to their calling. Six fellow believers also joined Peter in the outreach, so there were seven ministers in all (Acts 11:12).

2 Acts 10:24-48

Read Acts 10:24-33... Peter Visits Cornelius

- 10:24 Cornelius did not hide the testimony from his relatives and friends, but instead invited them to join in God's blessing.
- 10:25 Although Cornelius was a military leader, he humbled himself before Peter. God (Jesus) alone accepts the worship of man, and Cornelius was corrected from a grave fault. Believers continue to exalt certain men when only Jesus alone is worthy of worship (Mt 17:4-5).
- 10:26 Peter physically helped Cornelius up showing his sincerity in not distracting from the glory that is due Jesus alone.
- 10:27-28 Peter discovered that there were many more Gentiles present in this influential Centurion household. Peter states that he is aware of the evident Jewish law forbidding association between the Jew and the Gentile, but Peter has also discovered the importance of every person.
- 10:29 This understanding that no man is common nor unclean was the reason that Peter agreed to heed the invitation of the Gentiles. Believers must still be aware to minister to those that whom others deem as unworthy.
- 10:30 The four day effort consisted of an overnight trip to retrieve Peter (Acts 10:9), an overnight stay at Simon's house (Acts 10:23), and an overnight return trip to Cornelius (Acts 10: 24). The view of angelic beings is dazzling and bright (Lk 24:4; Acts 12:7; Rev 15:6).
- 10:31 Not only the prayer (fellowship with God), but also the generosity that Cornelius had towards God's people made an impression on God.
- 10:32 Cornelius was given explicit directions on the location of Simon Peter in Simon's residence.

10:33 Cornelius had obeyed without hesitation, and he confirmed Peter's obedience as well. Although the Spirit could have revealed the gospel message directly, the Spirit chose to minister through Peter (Rom 10:14).

Read Acts 10:34-43... Peter Shares Gospel with Gentile Household

- 10:34-35 "Jesus loves all the people of the world." The righteousness of man is belief in the gospel and provision of the Lord (James 2:24). Believers are called beyond salvation to lives of righteous obedience in submission to the Lord's will.
- 10:36 The good news includes Jesus the Messiah (Christ) as well as the Kingdom of God with Jesus as Lord. The message came first to the Jew, then to the Gentile (Rom 1:16, 2:9-10).
- 10:37 Jesus was raised in Galilee, and His ministry was centered there.
- 10:38 Jesus was the anointed (Ps 2:2) King of all Kings (1 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14, 19:16) Who was filled with the Spirit (Lk 4:1). The tyranny of the Devil himself distresses the world.
- 10:39 Peter and his fellow believers witnessed firsthand the power of Jesus. As Peter testifies of the crucifixion to this Roman household, he does not charge them with Christ's death, but instead says "they killed Him" (Acts 1:23, 5:30).
- 10:40-41 After the resurrection of Jesus, God permitted Jesus to be seen firsthand by a select few who ate and drank with Him (1 Cor 15:3-8). Believers not only benefit from His death, but also His eternal life (1 Pet 1:3, 3:21).
- 10:42 During the first advent, Jesus did not come to judge, but instead to save (Jn 12:47). In the second coming, Jesus will be the Judge of the world.
- 10:43 The Old Testament prophets testified that salvation comes through the name of Jesus (Rom 3:21; Lk 24:27)

Read Acts 10:44-48... The Gentile Household is Filled with the Holy Spirit

- 10:44 Peter continued preaching without laying on of hands, but the Holy Spirit came immediately after Peter spoke of the belief in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.
- 10:45-46 The gift of the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles (1 Cor 12 & 14). The Jewish companions of Peter were amazed as the sign of tongues once again proved the filling of the Spirit (Acts 2:4).
- 10:47 Immediately after salvation, Peter encourages the Gentiles in baptism as a testimony of their conversion. Peter possibly directed his Jewish colleagues to perform the baptisms, so they could be a part of this work of God.
- 10:48 The Gentiles were baptized in the name of the Lord as an act of obedience to Peter. Peter did not leave immediately but stayed several days with the Gentile converts. Although Peter opened the Gentile ministry (facilitating acceptance by the Jews), Paul's primary impact was among the Gentiles while Peter ministered primarily to the Jews.

3 Acts 11

Read Acts 11:1-3... The Apostles Accused of Eating with Gentiles

- 11:1 While Peter and his Jewish brothers remained with the household of Cornelius, reports became widespread throughout Judea of the Gentiles recognizing the Word of God.
- 11:2 The Jewish believers in Jerusalem did not question, but instead accused Peter. They did not realize the calling by the Lord.
- 11:3 Circumcision represented a commitment to the covenant and purity, but more important than the fleshly physical was the spiritual (Dt 10:16, 18, 30:6; Lev 26:41).

Read Acts 11:4-9... Peter Recounts the Vision

- 11:4 Peter did not resort to unkind words, but instead he methodically answered their complaint.
- 11:5 Instead of falling asleep as in Gethsemane (Lk 26:40-41), Peter fell into a trance while praying.
- 11:6 The wild beasts were not mentioned in Acts 10:12, but are included here.
- 11:7-9 Beyond the transformation of the Gentiles, the initial calling was just as much of a validation.

Read Acts 11:10-18... Peter Applies Truth of Vision with Household of Cornelius

- 11:10 It is possible that the image evaporated into the spiritual realm or possibly these animals were taken into heaven where they are to this day.
- 11:11-12 Peter tells of the astonishing timing as the Spirit encouraged him to join the Gentile visitors outside and the way in which the seven Jewish believers were witness to the Gentile conversion (10:45).
- 11:13 Just as Peter had been encouraged by the Lord, so too, Cornelius had also been supernaturally encouraged to act.
- 11:14 All of the household of Cornelius were mature enough to have individual faith in God (Acts 10:2).
- 11:15 Peter was in the midst of speaking when the Spirit fell on the Gentiles. Peter had not solely come to teach the Gentiles or the Spirit would not have been interrupted; instead, Peter had come to witness the Spirit filled Gentiles.
- 11:16 As the Spirit moved, Peter was reminded of the Word of the Lord (Acts 1:4-5); believers should also reflect on the truths of the Lord throughout life. Peter directed the baptism of the Gentiles as he reflected the powerful baptism by the Spirit.
- 11:17 The gift of the Holy Spirit comes at the moment of belief (Jn 4:10; Acts 2:38; Rom 11:29; Eph 4:8; Heb 2:4).
- 11:18 Silence preceded acceptance. God has given the Gentiles the gift of “repentance to life” (2 Cor 7:10). God was indeed merciful giving His life “even” to the lowly Gentiles.

Read Acts 11:19-21... The Church in Antioch, Syria

- 11:19 The martyrdom of Stephen was not the end, but instead it was the beginning of persecution for the believers (Acts 8:1). This was the beginning of fulfillment “to the uttermost parts” by extending central headquarters of the ministry of the Way from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 1:8). The believers were scattered to three separate areas:
1. Phoenicia (“palm trees”): the coastal region north of Galilee (modern Lebanon)

2. Cyprus (“hardness”): an island in the Mediterranean
3. Antioch (“speedy as a chariot”): north of Phoenicia in Syria (300 miles north of Jerusalem)

11:20 Believers from foreign regions witnessed to the Greek (Gentile) Jews in Antioch. The Lordship of Jesus was emphasized as opposed to Jesus the long-awaited Jewish Messiah (Christ). These missionaries were from two (witness) areas:

1. Cypriots from Cyprus
2. Cyrenians from Cyrene (a North African city)

11:21 The power of the Lord resulted in many believing in the Lord. Antioch was to replace Jerusalem as the center of Christianity. Exceeding half a million in population, Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman empire (after Rome and Alexandria).

Read Acts 11:22-26... Barnabas Recruits Paul for the “Christian” Church in Antioch

11:22 The fellowship in Jerusalem was not the “Jerusalem church” but instead it was identified as the “church in Jerusalem”. The local church is a part of a broader church body. Barnabas was selected by the church in Jerusalem to encourage the movement among Gentiles in Antioch. Although the fellowship endorsed Barnabas traveling as far as Antioch (300 miles away), he would travel much further (Tarsus – 80 miles beyond Antioch) to retrieve Saul.

11:23 Barnabas witnessed the grace of God; grace being a gift undeserved such as the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles. Barnabas encouraged the believers to be purposeful about faithfully clinging to the Lord.

11:24 Barnabas met the threefold deacon criteria (Acts 6:3): 1.a good man 2.full of the Holy Spirit 3. full of faith. The witness of Barnabas resulted in many coming to the Lord. The focus was not in growing the church, per se, but in growing the family of God.

11:25 Just as Barnabas had first introduced a converted Saul to the believers (Acts 9:27), he now retrieved Saul for the growing body of believers in Antioch.

11:26 The disciples were originally called “Christian” in Antioch. Just as Jerusalem was the center for Jewish ministry, Antioch becomes Gentile outreach. The term “Christianity” is mentioned three times in Scripture (Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16).

Read Acts 11:27-30... The Christian Prophet, Agabus, Foresees a Famine

11:27 The term “came down” is used as an inference to symbolize humility, subjection and service as in stepping down from comfort to minister. These prophets from Jerusalem would speak of a coming famine in the area from which they had just come, Judea. Later the church in Antioch would have their own prophets (Acts 13:1).

11:28 Agabus would later correctly prophesy of Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10) although Paul continued to go against warning. There was a famine of historic proportion that occurred between 45-47AD. Jerusalem was uniquely plagued by the famine while the gospel was spread to the Gentiles (Amos 8:11).

11:29 The church in Antioch sent “relief” to believing brothers in Judea. The difficulties of believers in distant lands should be borne by the entire church especially in the affluent American church.

11:30 The funds were provided to the elders in the area of Judea by Barnabas (who they sent) and Saul (who they sent away – Acts 9:30).

4 Acts 12

Read Acts 12:1-5... Peter Arrested as James Becomes First Disciple Martyred

12:1 Although Saul had been converted to Christianity, there remained much persecution of believers, and even more so in the Jewish capital of Jerusalem.

The Line of the Ebonite Family of “Herods”			
Herod (“Son of a Hero” or “Heroic”)			
1.	Grandfather	Herod the Great	Killed Bethlehem Babies Matthew 2:16
2.	Son/Uncle	Herod Antipas	Murdered John the Baptist Matthew 14:1-12
3.	Grandson/Nephew	Herod Agrippa	Murdered James the Apostle Acts 12:1-2

12:2 James became the first apostle to be martyred for his faith. Every apostle had fled from the foot of the cross where Jesus was crucified except for John (the brother of James); every apostle would also die in martyrdom except for John. While the Jews killed by stoning, the Romans killed by crucifixion and the sword.

Martyrdom of the Apostles			
<u>DISCIPLES</u>	<u>CONTEXT</u>	<u>BACKGROUND</u>	<u>DEATH</u>
Simon Peter / Colas	“Pebble”	Bold & Impulsive; Fisherman; possibly orated Mark’s gospel	Peter preached in Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia, and Asia. After hearing Nero’s intention to kill Peter, the Christians convinced him to flee Rome. “But coming to the gate, he saw the Lord Christ come to meet him, to Whom he, worshipping said, ‘Lord, whither dost Thou go?’ To whom He answered and said, ‘I am come again to be crucified.’ By this, Peter, perceiving his suffering to be understood, returned back into the city.” He was then killed in Rome at the order of Nero around AD 68, one of thousands of Christians martyred during this emperor’s reign. According to Tertullian and Origen, he was crucified head downwards at his request. Peter claimed that he was unworthy to be crucified the same way as Jesus Christ.
Andrew	Peter’s Brother	Witness; Fisherman	A small book from the 3rd century says that he was crucified at Greece in AD 60. He suffered on the cross for 2 days, while preaching and encouraging the people gathered around him.
James	James “the great” Son of Thunder	Fisherman	Believed to be the first Christian missionary to Spain. James became the first martyr among the apostles when King Herod Agrippa ordered his execution around AD 43 (Acts 12:2).
John	Son of Thunder	Loved by Jesus; Fisherman; wrote the fourth gospel	Emperor Domitian had started a fierce prosecution against the Christians in the whole Roman Empire. He captured John, brought him to Rome and immersed him in boiling oil. John was not harmed by this event, so the emperor exiled him to the Island of Patmos. He preached the Gospel in Palestine and Asia Minor. After the death of Domitian, John was freed from the Island of Patmos and lived till his death in Ephesus. John was the only apostle who died a natural death in c AD 98–100, when he was about 100 years old.
Philip	The earnest inquirer	Only in John; “Lover of Horses” Practical	He preached in France, southern Russia and Asia Minor. It is believed that he was martyred in Hierapolis, a city in today’s Turkey. He was scourged, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified, A.D. 54
Bartholomew / Nathaniel	The honest Israelite		Bartholomew preached the Gospel in many countries, but mostly in India and Armenia. He died in Armenia, where he was beaten, then flayed alive, afterwards crucified and lastly beheaded
Thomas	The	Skeptical	Thomas preached in India and to Parthians, Medes, Persians

	melancholy		and other nations. He was martyred with a spear in India.
Matthew	The Publican / tax collector	Wrote the first gospel towards the Jews	Matthew preached in Egypt and Ethiopia. He was martyred with a spear in the city of Nadabah, Ethiopia, in AD 60.
James	James "the Less" / son of Alphaeus	Nothing written of him	He preached in Persia. He was beaten and stoned to death by the Jews at the age of ninety-four; and finally had his brains dashed out with a fuller's (for shortening/lengthening wool) club.
Lebbaeus / Thaddeus / Judas of James	The Disciple with 3 Names	In Bible w/ only one question – John 14:22	He preached the Gospel in Mesopotamia and Persia. He was crucified in Edessa, Turkey, in AD 72.
Simon	The zealot	Against Rome; Nothing written of him	He preached the Gospel in Egypt, Mauritania, Africa, Libya and Britain. He was crucified in Britain in AD 74.
Judas	The traitor; the only Judean	Treasurer	Hanged himself Mt 27:3-8

12:3 The hardline Jews had no doubt heard of the uncircumcised Gentiles joining the Jewish believers of the Way (Acts 11). The Days of Unleavened Bread was the time of Passover where Jesus had been killed nearly a decade earlier (Ex 12:17-20)

12:4 Herod arrested Peter, the primary leader of the believers in Jerusalem, who were witnessing to the Jews. Sixteen guards secured Peter in prison as he had already escaped prison once before (Acts 5:17-20). The number four often infers testing/trial as there were four squads of four soldiers.

12:5 The church corporately interceded for Peter. Although believers submit to the will of God the Father, believers should share their heart's desire with the Father in prayer and supplication. The focus of the believers was not to entreat Herod or the guards, but instead to make their request known to God.

Read Acts 12:6-11... Peter Freed from Jail by An Angel

12:6 The church was faithful in prayer even up to the last minute (the "eleventh hour"). Although Peter was set to be executed the following day, he slept in peace (Ps 4:8, 127:2; Prov 3:24). Two (witness) soldiers were chained (handcuffed) to Peter, but the soldiers with him nor the ones guarding the front door were asleep.

12:7 An angel of the Lord appeared with much commotion, but the soldiers were supernaturally prevented from seeing the light.

- The bright light is a characteristic of angels (Acts 10:30, 26:13) although it can be imitated by Satan (2 Cor 11:14). God continues to remove the chains of bondage (e.g., addiction) from the lives of believers.
- Peter awoke when he was physically touched by the angel. Some liken Peter's release to that of Christ who was pierced in the side (Jn 19:34). Although the Lord is sovereign and powerful, the angel expected Peter to obey immediately.

12:8 Although the angel removed the chains, Peter was expected to dress by himself. Peter was told explicitly to put on sandals (symbolic of contact with the world) and cloak (symbolic of covering of righteousness) and to follow the angel of the Lord.

12:9 The visions of Peter were so lifelike (Acts 10:10) that he could not distinguish visions from physical/material state.

12:10 Peter obediently followed the angel through two (witness) guard posts before coming to the iron gate of the city. Iron as well as city gates are symbolic of strength and protection; this iron city gate swung open automatically for Peter and the angel. Immediately after passing the first street with Peter, the angel left him.

Read Acts 12:11-17... Peter Testifies of Being Freed at the Home of John Mark's Mother

12:11 It was only after the angel disappeared that Peter realized in his human state that the Lord had saved him from death. Angels do not act on their own, but instead angels obey the commands of God.

12:12 John Mark listed more miracles in his gospel of Mark than any of the other gospels. John Mark is considered to be the assistant/sidekick of Peter, the cousin of Barnabas (Col 4:10), who also traveled with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). It is thought that John Mark came from a wealthy family and many of church members met in his mother's large house.

12:13 Peter must have been a frequent guest to the house because Rhoda (meaning "Rose") recognized Peter's voice at the door.

12:14 Rhoda told others about him instead of letting them see him. This is similar to believers who convey facts about the Lord Jesus instead of letting the recipient see Him.

12:15 Those who hear the testimony of Jesus often respond by thinking that the witness is wrong/crazy or they create spiritual theories (e.g., new age, false religions, etc.). Possibly the thought was that Peter had a guardian angel (Mt 18:10).

12:16 The Lord continues to "knock" (Rev 3:20), but it isn't until the recipient experiences Christ firsthand that they understand the truth.

12:17 Peter was concerned about maintaining silence as he kept his fellow believers quiet with his hands. Peter did not attribute his freedom to the angel, but gave the glory to the Lord. James, the brother of Jesus, was to become the head of the church in Jerusalem (Mt 13:55). The chapter began with James, the apostle, dying, but the sovereign God was now raising up another "James" while having Peter released from prison. Believers should trust God's will instead of comparing situations.

Read Acts 12:18-25... Herod Dies While God's Word Flourishes

12:18 It was only when the guards saw the light (sunrise) that they realized Peter was no longer confined.

12:19 The inmate's sentence ("debt to society") was hung on his door until he paid the debt in full ("tetelestai"). If a prisoner escaped, the guards paid the escapee's "debt to society" until the debt was "paid in full". Peter's judgment was death, so the punishment of the guards was also death. Caesarea was built by Herod the Great as the Roman capital of the province in Judea. Philip lived in Caesarea (Acts 8:40, 21:8)

12:20 Tyre and Sidon were coastal cities of commerce, but they depended on public policy (set by Herod) for exports and the inland farmlands to supply food (Acts 11:28). Blastus ("bud/bring forth") had an influential position with Herod to arrange the restoration event.

12:21 As with most politicians, Herod was well clothed and able to sway public support by his speech.

12:22 Although Peter rejected the praise of being a deity (Acts 10:25-26) as Paul and Barnabas would also (Acts 14:11-15), Herod Agrippa accepted the glorification.

12:23 Herod did many wrong things, but the offense that resulted in his death was that he did not give glory to God; the account of Herod's death in Acts 12:23 is confirmed by Josephus who speaks of Herod Agrippa being adorned in silver robes. In contrast to

an angel of the Lord saving Peter from death, an angel of the Lord now brings death to Herod.

12:24 Throughout the book of Acts, the believers continue to thrive and increase as their oppressors repent or die (Acts 6:1, 7, 9:31, 16:5).

12:25 Barnabas is listed first as the leader/mentor of the fairly new convert, Saul. Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch with John Mark after delivering the aid to the believers in Judea (Acts 11:27-30).

5 Acts 13:1-23

Read Acts 13:1-3... Barnabas & Saul Prepare for First Mission Trip

13:1 The local church in Antioch consisted of two (witness) positions: prophets (who foretell future events) and teachers (who convey truth and principles). Several prophets had originally come to Antioch from Jerusalem (Acts 11:27).

Five Leaders of the Church in Antioch (Acts 13:1)		
1. Barnabas	Listed first as the leader (Acts 4:36-37)	“Son of consolation”
2. Simeon called Niger	Simeon is a Jewish name while Niger originates from the Latin term for “black”. This early church was racially diverse as was all of Christianity (Acts 8:27, 10:1).	“that hears”
3. Lucius the Cyrenian	May have been an original missionary and founder of the church in Antioch (Acts 11:20) and kinsman of Saul (Rom 16:21)	“the light”
4. Manaen (close friend (possibly half-brother) of Herod the tetrarch)	Josephus wrote of Manaen’s family; Raised in the royal court with Herod the tetrarch who was Herod Antipas (the son of Herod the Great and uncle of Herod Agrippa)	“of the Consoler”
5. Saul	Listed last (1 Cor 15:8)	“that was requested”

13:2 The term minister (Greek word “leitourgeo”) means to “serve” or “do one’s own duty at their own cost.” This is the root word of “liturgy” that described the priests service in the Temple.

- This concept of ministering is likened to both serving God as well as helping the weak and needy (Mt 25:34-40). Even the concept of fasting included self-sacrifice (Is 58:1-7).
- The church was worshipping the Lord as they ministered “to the Lord.”
- The person of the Holy Spirit directed the Antioch believers to set aside two of their five leaders. To be holy is to be set apart and solely dedicated to God’s purpose. To sanctify is to set aside for the use of God.

13:3 The three leaders of the church performed three activities before sending Barnabas and Saul away: 1.fasted 2.prayed 3.laying on of hands.

- The church sent the missionaries out as did the Holy Spirit.

Read Acts 13:4-12... Mission Trip to Cyprus by Barnabas & Paul

13:4 As the Holy Spirit led, Barnabas and Saul traveled 15 miles from Antioch to Seleucia on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea before the 100 mile trip to the island of Cypress. They would preach God's message to Salamis (the Grecian capital of Cypress) and Paphos (the Roman capital of Cypress – Acts 13:6). It was the believers from Cypress who had established the church in Antioch (Acts 11:20), and now missionaries from Antioch would return to minister in Cypress, the home land of Barnabas (Acts 4:36).

13:5 As they preached in the Jewish synagogues, John Mark traveled as their assistant. John was his Hebrew name (translated 'Yohanan' meaning 'grace'). His Latin name was 'Marcus' which may indicate that he was a Roman citizen. Paul wrote his latter epistles in the AD 60's and calls him Mark (Col. 4:10; II Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24) while Luke (also writing in the AD 60's) uses both names together three times (12:12, 25; 15:37), his Hebrew name of John alone, twice (13:5, 13), and his Latin name of Mark alone, only once (15:39).

13:6 Salamis was on the northeastern coast while Paphos was on the southwestern coast approximately 100 miles away. A sorcerer and Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus (meaning "Son of Jesus") had named himself Elymas (meaning "the wise one/magician").

13:7 Peaceful areas of Rome were ruled by Proconsuls/Magistrates while troubled regions of Rome were ruled by Governors. Sergius Paulus ("the little servant") was Proconsul (a Roman title under the Senate) and an intelligent, prudent man. This Magistrate was influenced by the evil sorcerer, the false prophet.

13:8 Elymas was a sorcerer and magician who attempted to distract the proconsul from coming to faith in Jesus. While "straight" often represents "righteousness," the turning from faith comes from the distractions of the world.

13:9 Saul's name mentioned also as Paul for the first time – during his first mission trip – Saul meaning "called of God" to Paul meaning "little".

- It is possible that Saul (the name used with the Jews) had always used the name Paul (a Roman form of the same name) among the Gentiles.
- Of course, Paul was indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit now filled Paul with unique power. Paul (with spiritual sight) stared at the sorcerer (who was already spiritually blind).

13:10 Although Bar-Jesus means "son of Jesus", Paul correctly identifies him as the "son of the devil." Paul defends the "straight" ways of the Lord (Acts 9:11) instead of the distractions of the world; there is only one way to salvation which is simple and straightforward. All other religious tangents (e.g., false religions) are meandering distractions from the truth.

13:11 Just as with Paul's conversion (Acts 9:8), Paul's first miracle recorded in Scripture was in blinding the Jewish false prophet. Although Bar-Jesus had led through deception, his physical state was now reduced to match his spiritual blindness where

- he searched for someone to lead him. The Lord's hand can bless (Acts 11:21) or can judge.
- 13:12 The Gentile Proconsul believed the Word of God because the Jew was blinded to the truth. This is similar to Israel being spiritually blind and the message flourishing with the Gentiles.

Read Acts 13:13-14... John Mark Turns Back from Mission Trip

- 13:13 Paul is mentioned first as he assumes leadership while John Mark leaves the missions group. This would be the basis for the disagreement between Barnabas and Paul on a future mission trip (Acts 15:35-41). Paul felt that John Mark abandoned their group, but Paul would later regain confidence in John Mark (2 Tim 4:11). John Mark returned to Jerusalem (the center of Judaism) instead of Antioch (the center for Christianity).
- 13:14 The missionaries visited Perga which was the capital of the Roman province of Pamphylia before heading north 100 miles to Antioch (different than their origin) the capital of Pisidia.

Read Acts 13:15-23... Paul Preaches the Lineage of Jesus in Antioch of Pisidia

- 13:15 The traditional practice in the synagogues was to read from Scripture (Old Testament – Acts 24:14, 28:23) which consisted of the writings of the Law and the Prophets (Mt 5:17, 7:12, 11:13, 22:40; Lk 16:16, 24:44, Jn 1:45, Rom 3:21) prior to receiving a “word of encouragement.” Being guests, Paul and Barnabas were given the opportunity to share.
- 13:16 The motioning of the hand was to quiet the synagogue and get their full attention (Acts 12:17). This would be the first sermon of Paul captured in Scripture, and Paul addressed both the Jewish Israelites as well as the Gentile proselytes (the “God fearers”).
- 13:17 The message begins with God's choosing of His people and then the signature miracle of the Old Testament of Israel being blessed and freed from Egypt.
- 13:18 For forty (testing) years in the wilderness, God cared for and matured His undeveloped people (Ex 16:35; Dt 1:31, 8:2-5, 29:5).
- 13:19 The defeat of the seven (complete) Canaanite nations (Dt 7:1) came at the hand of God, and not by the strength of the people.
- 13:20 This care by God lasted over four centuries, and then he began raising up Judges until Samuel (1 Sam 7:15) for four centuries to rescue and care for His people.
- 13:21 Paul relates to King Saul as both were from the tribe of Benjamin. Paul emphasizes another forty (testing) years of Israel being led by a King.
- 13:22 Just as with those who came out of the wilderness into Canaan, after the forty years of King Saul, God provided good King David to rescue and care for His people.
- 13:23 It is from the lineage of David that Jesus, who also saved God's people, would come (2 Sam 7:11-16).

6 Acts 13:24-52

Read Acts 13:24-31... Paul Preaches the Death & Resurrection of Jesus in Antioch

- 13:24 Prior to Jesus, the Savior, arriving, John the Baptist called people to recognize their sinful state, and that they were in need of a Savior. The same was true for Paul's audience; they must understand their need.
- 13:25 As John the Baptist completed his "life work", he humbly turned the attention from himself to the coming Savior that was Jesus. Paul quotes John as being Scripture (Jn 1:27; Lk 3:16).
- 13:26 Paul identifies with this message of salvation as he addresses as "brothers" both the Jewish Israelites and "God fearing" Gentiles.
- 13:27 Since the Law and the Prophets spoke of Jesus and His sacrifice, those in Jerusalem unknowingly fulfilled Scripture by crucifying Jesus (Lk 24:27; Acts 3:24, 10:43; Rom 3:21). Those attending and leading the synagogue services did not understand the Scripture that they read every Sabbath.
- 13:28-29 Jesus had lived a perfect and blameless life, but the Jews had Him killed (Mt 27:3, 19, 54; Lk 23:11, 43, 47; Jn 18:38). Even in the death of Jesus, He fulfilled Scripture (Ps 22; Is 53).
- 13:30-31 Jesus overcame death and returned to life which was evidenced by all of the witnesses who saw Him after His resurrection.

Read Acts 13:32-41... Paul Calls the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia to Believe in Jesus

- 13:32 Paul proclaims the good news ("the encouraging word") of the gospel that the long awaited promise of God had been fulfilled.
- 13:33 The term "Messiah" is only used twice in the Old Testament, and Psalm 2 is one of those passages. The passage of Psalm 2:7 (Heb 1:5) emphasizes the incarnation of Jesus as the "Son of God." It was also a common practice for Kings to "adopt" their biological sons, so there would be no question of who the heir to the throne would be.
- 13:34 Jesus was resurrected to life as a fulfillment of God's covenant with King David (Is 55:3).
- 13:35 The resurrection of the Savior was essential according to Scripture (Ps 16:10). Peter had used the same reference (Acts 2:31).
- 13:36-37 King David fulfilled God's plan, but then died, was buried, and his body disintegrated in his tomb; however, the descendant of David and the fulfillment of the promise was resurrected from the dead.
- 13:38 Paul once again identifies with his brothers and proclaims the good news of the forgiveness of sins through the death and resurrection of the Savior. Christians are made blameless without impugning God's integrity through the shed blood of Christ.
- 13:39 Justification comes through belief (Romans 5:1; Habakkuk 2:4). The law reveals the fallen state of man and his need for a Savior (Rom 3:20, 5:20), but only Jesus has the power to save.
- 13:40 Paul preaches application from the prophets as Paul encourages the congregation to not be like those who reject the truth because they do not understand.
- 13:41 Spiritual truths are often either considered or mocked. Some in this world deny obvious and rational truths because of the implications regardless of clear explanation (Hab 1:5).

Read Acts 13:42-52... The Jews of Antioch Become Jealous as Gentiles Believe in Jesus

- 13:42 The response to Paul's first recorded sermon was acceptance as the Antioch Jews pleaded with Paul to return and share more.
- 13:43 Some Jews and devoted Gentiles were not willing to wait a week before hearing more as they followed Paul and Barnabas. These enlightened members of the Antioch church were encouraged to continue walking in God's grace (the undeserved gift).
- 13:44 Success seemed eminent for Antioch as nearly everyone in town desired to hear the word of the Lord, but this seeming success would bring persecution.
- 13:45 The envious Jews used personal accusations and insults instead of Biblical arguments. Envy was the driving force against the message of Jesus (Mt 27:18, Mk 15:10; Acts 7:9).
- 13:46 Paul always gave Jews the opportunity to resist the gospel before taking the "good news" to the Gentiles (Rom 1:16, 2:9-11).

Paul First Approached Jews in Synagogues (Acts 26:22, 23 & 28:28; Romans 11:11-14)	
Cyrus	Acts 13:5
Antioch	Acts 13:14
Iconium	Acts 14:1
Berea	Acts 17:10
Corinth	Acts 18:1
Ephesus	Acts 18:19
Rome	Acts 28:17

- 13:47 The enlightenment of Jesus (John 1:5) was to shine to the Gentiles (Is 49:6). Blindness on Israel until "the fullness of the Gentiles" has come in this "church age" (Romans 11:25).
- 13:48 Just as the Jews had rejected the gospel message; the Gentiles were exceedingly happy to receive it. The Word of God is necessary to reveal salvation; the first broad appeal to the unsaved is creation, but creation only shows attributes of God instead of the plan/path of salvation through Jesus Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles are appointed/predestined to receive eternal life (Eph 1:4).
- 13:49 This gospel message that had been extended to the Gentiles was shared throughout the whole region.
- 13:50 The Jews exploited the prominent women and chief men as pawns against Christianity; in Thessalonica, the opposite happened (Acts 17:4). Admired figures/leaders are deemed strong in themselves when, in reality, they are simply pawns of popular opinion and polls.
- 13:51 Although Paul and Barnabas were expelled from the region, they did not let the polluted things of this world (dust) affect them. The missionaries shook the proverbial "dust" off of their feet and stayed faithful to the calling (Lk 10:10-12; Mk 6:11).
- 13:52 The missionaries did not seek satisfaction in the things of this world, but in spite of the circumstances, they found joy as a fruit of the Spirit (Rom 14:17, 15:13, Gal 5:22, 1 Thes 1:6). God furthered His message by the persecution and eviction of the disciples.

Read Acts 14:1-7... Acceptance & Persecution in Iconium

- 14:1 The same thing that happened at Antioch (Acts 13) now replayed itself eighty miles east in Iconium (meaning “coming”); Iconium was relatively near to Paul’s hometown of Tarsus. Paul and Barnabas began their ministry at the synagogue where large numbers of Jews and Gentiles (i.e., Greeks) believed (Acts 13:44).
- 14:2 Just like the Jews in Jerusalem and Antioch (Mt 27:18, Mk 15:10; Acts 7:9, 13:45), they became jealous and obstinately rejected plain truth. These disgruntled Jews corrupted the acceptance of the gospel by the Gentiles.
- 14:3-4 Paul and Barnabas remained “some time” to directly and bravely confront the resistance that had been encouraged by the envious Jews (Mt 10:34). God confirmed the testimony of the believers as He “granted” signs and wonders to be performed by the hands of Paul and Barnabas, but the influence of the Jews continued to split the community.
- 14:5 Since the world cannot reason against the truth, the world often turns to violence and persecution against the those testifying of God’s message (Mt 10:34). Although both Gentiles and Jews persecuted the disciples, the act of stoning was characteristic to the Jewish culture; no doubt the Jews were instigating the persecution.
- 14:6 The disciples remained in the region of Lycaonia (“she-wolf”), but fled (Mt 10:23) just south of Iconium to Lystra (“dissolve/disperse”) and southeast to Derbe (“a sting”). It is likely that Paul revisited these congregations on all three of his mission trips (Acts 16:1, 18:23).
- 14:7 Regardless of the situation; regardless of public reception; regardless of the persecution; regardless, they continued preaching the good news of Jesus.

Read Acts 14:8-10... Barnabas & Paul Healed a Man who Was Lame from Birth

- 14:8 A man born crippled had been healed and initiated the explosive ministry of Peter and John (Acts 3:2-10); Jesus had also done the same (John 5:5-9). God used this same situation to establish the witness of Paul and Barnabas. Many in the area knew that this crippled man had never walked prior to the healing.
- 14:9 The man sat and listened to the message of Paul; it was important for the man to understand the gospel message and have faith in the saving power of Jesus prior to being healed (Mk 2:5-12).
- 14:10 Paul encouraged the crippled man to stand “straight” (Acts 9:11, 13:9-10, 14:10, 16:11) which is an inference not to be distracted by turning to the left/right, but to stay focused on God’s power and will (Ez 1:12). The man jumped up and walked as he was excited about the new freedom that he experienced in the Lord (Acts 3:8).

Read Acts 14:11-12... Barnabas & Paul were Mistaken for Roman Gods

- 14:11 These Gentiles in Lystra had no issue with accepting the message that God would come to earth in human form, but instead of the Lord Jesus incarnate, the crowd reverted to their false gods. The Lycaonian language may have been a local form of Greek language.
- 14:12 Romans had adopted the Greek culture/gods, but had changed the names of the mythical deities. Barnabas was called “Zeus” (Roman) which was the Greek god “Jupiter” while Paul was called “Hermes” (Roman) which was the Greek god

“Mercury.” Hermes was known as the god of commerce or the flying messenger; he was the son of Zeus who also was the guide of dead souls to the underworld. Tradition records Paul’s height at 5ft tall (2 Cor 10:10).

- The term “hermeneutics” comes from the false god “Hermes”

Read Acts 14:13-19... Paul is Stoned when He Rejects the Worship of the People

- 14:13 The religious leader (priest) of the false religion was the one to incite their followers to action. The only worthy sacrifice had been made by Jesus Christ, so that even Jewish animal sacrifices were unnecessary. This priest did not struggle with envy, but instead misplaced knowledge and faith. Zeus was a character from the “Iliad” and “Odyssey” tales (attributed to Homer) from ~850 BC (a millennium after Abraham lived, six centuries after Moses, two centuries after King David).
- 14:14 Barnabas is called an “apostle” and is mentioned first (the lead) as aggressive repulsion to the false worship and sacrifice of the people of Lystra. Tearing of the robes showed the fury and grief; spiritual leaders in present days should also take offense at receiving credit for the work of the Lord.
- 14:15 The miracle had been wrongly attributed to fellow humans instead of the living God who created everything (Ex 20:11; Ps 146:6). All who serve the living Lord Him in this passing world will be transformed at death (2 Pet 1:4), but until that time believers live as humans in this worthless world that is dying.
- 14:16 God allowed the nations to pursue their own opinions, manmade philosophies, and self-made ways (Rom 1:20-21), but these lead to certain death (Prov 14:12).
- 14:17 The Lord used as a testimony, the blessing of rain water from heaven (Jer 14:22; Dt 11:13-17; Ps 72:6; Hos 6:3, 10:12), the life and growth of harvests, the joy and satisfaction of the people (Rom 1:18-23).
- 14:18 The mob disregarded what the disciples were saying and focused on the religious acts that they were committed to performing. The worldly man wants to “create a god in his own image” according to his own biases and bigotries instead of trusting in the Lord God as He describes Himself in His word.
- 14:19 Jews from Antioch (Acts 13:50) and Iconium (Acts 14:5) purposed to incite the crowd to physically attack Paul just as the world attacked Jesus (Mt 27:20-24). The world hates Jesus (Mt 10:22; Mk 13:13; Lk 21:17; Jn 15:18-19). Paul was persecuted a number of times in his ministry (Acts 9:16; 2 Cor 11:25; Gal 6:17), but this was possibly the “out of body experience” referenced in 2 Cor 12:1-7.

Read Acts 14:20-28... Paul Establish Expectations & Elders in New Churches

- 14:20 This supposed death of Paul accomplished a number of benefits: 1.The disciples witnessed his rapid recovery 2.The Jews did not bother Paul during the remainder of this first missions trip. The believer “Gaius” was a fruit of the trip to Derbe (Acts 20:4); did Gaius move or were there others of the same name (Rom 16:23, 1 Cor 1:14, 3 Jn 1:1)? Iconium, Lystra & Derbe were regions of Galatia; Paul most likely wrote the book of Galatians soon after returning home to Antioch.
- 14:21 Paul had a passion to check and confirm the established churches that he had recently planted. Each of these three locations had persecuted Paul, but he continued in courage: 1.Lystra(Acts 14:19) 2.Iconium (Acts 14:5) 3.Antioch (Acts 13:50)

- 14:22 *“It is necessary to pass through many troubles on our way into the kingdom of God.”* Believers in persecuted areas were encouraged to be faithful and anticipate suffering.
- Believers are sanctified through trials (Romans 5:3-4; 8:17-18; 1 Thessalonians 3:3; 2 Timothy 3:12; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 4:12-16).
- 14:23 The term “elders” is used thirty times (e.g., Mt 15:2, 16:21; Mk 8:31; Lk 22:52; Acts 6:12) for the Jewish leaders who persecuted Jesus. Paul established new leaders after the same fashion to defend the faith (1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; James 5:19; 1 Pet 5:1, 5; Rev 5:5). These elders are called to be “overseers” (Acts 20:28) or “bishops” (Philippians 1:1) which are to be the pastors/preachers who are financially compensated for their ministry (1 Cor 9:14) as they meet strict leadership criteria (1 Tim 3:2-7).
- 14:24-25 Paul and fellow missionaries continued to retrace their steps to the Mediterranean (Acts 13:13-14). Attalia (“that increases”; “sends”) is only mentioned once in Scripture, but there remain Christians in what is now called “Adalia.”
- Paul and Barnabas did not preach at Perga on their way into Asia Minor.
- 14:26 The missions team returned home to Antioch (in Syria) after spending an estimated 2 years traveling more than 1,200 miles (500 miles by sea; 700 miles by land). Grace (an undeserved gift) had resulted in the missions work.
- 14:27 Paul’s first mission trip was God’s work in opening the door (Jn 10:7) to the Gentiles. The church came together to hear testimony; each time that church fellowships gather, believers should share what God has done through them and to them since last they met.
- 14:28 The disciples invested considerable time with the missions team for debrief; spiritual leaders should also spend much time fellowshiping with and learning from missionaries.

8 Acts 15:1-21

Read Acts 15:1-5... Barnabas & Paul Defend Gentile Believers Against Jewish Customs

- 15:1 These men from the elevated Judea to the sea level of Antioch also “came down” symbolically as they were inclined to false directives. Moses had almost been killed by God for not being faithful with the circumcision of his own family as he attempted to lead all of Israel (Ex 4:24-26). But now, circumcision became symbolic of all traditions of men that hamper gospel message. Over time, the Jews had obscured the meaning of circumcision to a commitment to keep the entire law instead of it being a covenant with God. God was concerned with spiritual circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:29, Deut 10:16, 30:6, Jer 4:4) and the spiritual hearing (Jer 6:10).
- 15:2 The judgments of the Jerusalem Council were held in high regard as they could “bind/loose” according to regulations (Matthew 16:19). The rule of the council was expected to be obeyed by the congregants, but in this case, the Jerusalem church led by religious leaders (apostles and elders) would need to be enlightened by Paul, Barnabas and others.
- 15:3 Phoenicia (“land of palm trees”) was the beautiful coastal region with numerous sea faring Gentiles trading around Tyre and Sidon in the commerce of fabrics, glass, pottery and bronze/gold. Samaria (“watch mountain/tower”) were viewed by Jews as

a lesser, degraded race. The truth that the gospel had been extended to the Gentiles would have been warmly received in these Gentile areas.

15:4 The whole church in Jerusalem welcomed the Antioch team and listened to the testimony of God's work (not Paul's; not Barnabas').

15:5 Some Pharisees (meaning "pure/separated") had become Christian, but they did not want the "distraction" to the law by the Spirit. The Pharisees were still more concerned about the law of Moses (an esteemed man) than the will of God.

Read Acts 15:6-11... Peter Defends Gentiles Against Customs at the Jerusalem Council

15:6 The apostles and elders were the decision making committee of the church in Jerusalem; they did not leave the matter to the broad congregation.

15:7 This debate ("zeteseos") occurred approximately 49AD (Gal 2:1) which is estimated to have been a decade after the household of Cornelius accepted the gospel (Acts 10:1-11:18). Peter laid the foundation for the commission to entertain the testimony of Paul and Barnabas. Peter focused on his personal call by God.

15:8 God knows the heart of men, and the Holy Spirit had given visual manifestation of His presence (Acts 10:44-46) just as He had enabled with the Jews (Acts 2:1-4).

15:9 God saved the Gentiles in the same manner as the Jews - by Faith (Eph 2:8; Rom 3:30, 4:9-12; Gal 5:6)

15:10 The yoke (obligation) of the law revealed man's fallen state (Rom 3:20, 5:20), and Israel had never been able to live accordingly. Conversely, the yoke of Jesus was easy (Mt 11:29-30)

15:11 Phrased in humility, the Jews are saved the same way that the Gentiles are; a prideful Jew would have said the Gentiles are saved in the same manner as the Jews.

Read Acts 15:12-21... James Gives Verdict on Jewish Requirements of Gentile Believers

15:12 Barnabas is listed first as Paul follows Barnabas in respect to the Jews. They testified of the miracles of the Lord among the Gentiles. Although a critical figure in the early church, Barnabas is never quoted in Scripture.

15:13 James "the little" was the next younger brother of Jesus (Mt 13:55); Joseph's firstborn. James was the author of the book "James". James is considered the head of the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17, 21:18). James addressed the Church leadership in the same way as Peter had (Acts 15:7) by calling them "Brothers."

15:14 James does not reference the testimony of Barnabas and Paul, but instead refers to the personal calling of Simeon Peter (2 Pet 1:1). The focus of James was not Gentiles converting to Christianity, but instead, God removing the chosen from the Gentile categorization to bear His name (Gal 3:28). Abraham was a Gentile before he became the father of the Jewish nation.

15:15 James quotes Scripture from a poor herdsman, Amos, as he testified to the pious religious leaders (Amos 7:10-15).

15:16-18 The calling of the Gentiles; After these things (Romans 11:25) the second coming of Jesus and the Tabernacle (1 Chronicles 15:1) will be rebuilt and include Gentile servants (Amos 9:11-12) which God made known before the beginning of Creation (Eph 1:4)

15:19 The actions of the existing believer fellowship should not obstruct those who turn to Christ.

15:20 These four abstentions were not directed at the Jewish legacy, but the worldly practices of irreligious pagans. Gentiles were instructed to give up the ways of the world and false religions.

1. Items connected with the idols of false gods (i.e. animal sacrifices)
2. Temple prostitution
3. Strangled (tortured) animals as an act of worship
4. Blood was drunk in ceremonies of false gods (Gen 9:4)

15:21 The converted Gentiles would be guided to reading of Scripture (the writings of Moses) that occurred in the synagogues each Sabbath. Christians should continue to study the Old Testament which tells of God and His plan of salvation. The universal church should have unity and oneness in Spirit and purpose (Book of Ephesians).

9 Acts 15:22-41

Read Acts 15:22-29... The Jerusalem Council Drafts Letter for Gentile Believers

15:22 The apostles, elders and entire church of Jerusalem selected two (witness) men to share of the Jerusalem Council decision regarding the Gentiles. The selected men were Judas (“praise”) who was also called Barsabbas (“son of return/rest”) along with Silas (“of the wood/forest”).

15:23 This decision by the church in Jerusalem results in an inspired letter to the Gentiles. The term “Greetings” begins only one other book of Scripture (the Book of James) which leads some to believe that he penned this letter as well. The three locations of focus consisted of:

1. Antioch – the origin of the initial dissent
2. Syria – the churches surrounding Antioch that may have also been impacted by the dispute
3. Cilicia – the region northeast of Syria which was the home region of Paul from Tarsus.

15:24-26 Christian Jews from Jerusalem had created conflict through legalism, and the Jerusalem Council disassociated themselves with these “certain men” as they had not been authorized to speak on behalf of the Jerusalem church (unlike the unanimous selection of Judas and Silas). Barnabas is again mentioned before Paul as being the most influential to the council, but both are credited with risking their very lives for the Lord.

15:27 Beyond the written decision, two individuals were also sent to testify to the decision.

15:28 The Holy Spirit led the decision making process as the Gentiles were not called to be under the Law (Rev 2:9, Rom 2:28-29).

15:29 The seven laws given to Noah (the Noachian or Noachide Laws) were recorded in the Talmud, and Gentiles were viewed as righteous if they adhered to them against:
1. Idolatry 2. Murder 3. Theft 4. Sexual Promiscuity 5. Blasphemy 6. Eating live animals
7. (But for) establishing just laws

Read Acts 15:30-35... Paul & Barnabas Train the Church in Antioch as New Believers

15:30 The messengers gathered a multitude in an assembly for Jerusalem’s response. It is interesting that the word “church” is not used.

- 15:31 The assembly in Antioch rejoiced in the grace just as every believer should. The Lord has given freedom to live in His joy as believers walk in His way.
- 15:32 Judas and Silas were prophets and encouraged the Antioch fellowship with a lengthy message.
- 15:33 Peace is often the consequence and reward of rightful actions and thoughts.
- 15:34 Silas may have continued to prophesy in Antioch for some time (Acts 15:40). The majority of manuscripts does not contain this verse, but it can be found in the Codex Bezae (5th century) as well as several Old Latin and Vulgate manuscripts.
- 15:35 Paul is, once again, listed first as he takes the lead in evangelizing and discipling the Gentiles in the city of Antioch.

Read Acts 15:36-41... Paul Rejects John Mark & Departs on Second Mission

- 15:36 Paul had an interest in discipling the churches which had been established. This is also reflected as they traced their steps on the return trip of his first missionary journey.
- 15:37 Barnabas (“son of consolation”) had the attitude for restoration with Paul initially (Acts 9:27) and now with his cousin, John Mark (Col 4:10). John represents his Jewish name while Mark corresponded to his Roman name. John Mark had been discipled by Peter (1 Pet 5:13).
- 15:38 Paul judged John Mark’s abandonment (return to Jerusalem) during the first missionary journey (Acts 13:13) had made John Mark unworthy for this missionary trip (Lk 9:62). John Mark would later be reconciled as an encouraging helpmate to Paul (2 Tim 4:11).
- 15:39 This verse is the last mention of Barnabas in the Book of Acts. The disagreement infuriated (Greek “paroxysmus”) both parties. Instead of remaining in active argument with Paul, Barnabas left on the mission trip to the island of Cypress (from where Barnabas originated – Acts 4:36) with John Mark. John Mark had remained with the first missionary trip through the ministry to the island of Cypress, but may not have been open to the ministry to the Gentiles until after the Jerusalem council.
- 15:40 Silas (“of the wood/forest”) had been one of the witnesses sent by the Jerusalem council to alleviate the requirements of Gentiles turning to the Lord (Acts 15:22, 34). Paul remained in good standing with the church of Antioch and (unlike Barnabas) was entrusted to God’s grace for this second missionary journey just as he had been for the first (Acts 14:26).
- 15:41 Since Barnabas and John Mark were ministering to Cypress, Paul and Silas could move northwest by land and focus on the areas that were addressed in the letter from the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:23). Although there was conflict, the ministry of God was doubled from a single team of two into two teams of four.

10 Acts 16:1-15

Read Acts 16:1-5... Paul Recruits Timothy for Missions

- 16:1 At the beginning of the second missionary journey of Paul, he traveled to Derbe (“a sting”) and then twenty more miles to Lystra (“that dissolves/disperses”) where Paul was stoned until thought to be dead (Acts 14:19; 2 Tim 3:11). At this place of dreadful persecution, Paul discovered his most faithful attendant, Timothy (“to honor

- God”) who was most likely led to Christ by Paul during the first missionary journey (1 Cor 4:17; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2). Although Timothy’s mother (2 Tim 1:5), Eunice (“good victory/conquering well”), was a believing Jew (2 Tim 3:15). Timothy represented the convergence of the church as the Jew (his mother) and the Gentile (his father) were a single family bearing him.
- 16:2 A believer’s reputation among others in the church is important (Eccl 7:1; Acts 6:3, 10:22, 22:12; 1 Tim 3:7); however, a reputation must be confirmed by a living relationship with the Lord (Rev 3:1).
- 16:3 Paul had argued vehemently against the need for Gentiles to be circumcised in order for salvation, yet Paul encouraged Timothy to become circumcised in light of additional ministering opportunities.
- 16:4 The decrees of the Jewish council focused on and condemned the continuance of worship of false gods (Acts 15:23-29) which was a common practice in the region of the mission (Acts 14:11-13). This worship of false gods was so deep rooted that the crowds attempted to kill Paul when he first spoke against it (Acts 14:14-19).
- 16:5 The church was growing every day through the testifying of believers. Believers should not wait for the weekly fellowship to witness, but allow the love of the Lord to flow through in every conversation and activity.

Read Acts 16:6-10... Paul Establishes Churches in Europe (Macedonia)

- 16:6 The mission team continued heading west across the northern lands of the Mediterranean. Although the team had ambitions of evangelizing the area of Asia Minor, the Spirit continued to prod them westward. Although witness/evangelism is honorable, obedient undertakings, the believer should always follow the guidance of the Spirit instead of randomly following self-guidance.
- 16:7 Although the missions team set their sights on the northern Roman province of Bithynia (“violent precipitation”), they were obstructed by the Spirit; this province would, however, receive witness through other believers (1 Pet 1:1). The “Holy Spirit of God” is synonymous with the “Spirit of Jesus” as the Trinity a single entity.
- 16:8 The team had traveled from the southeast of Asia Minor to the northwest coast. They had bypassed the region of Mysia (“criminal; abdominal”) and had come to the coastal town within Mysia entitled Troas (“penetrated”).
- 16:9 As Luke transitions from “they” (Acts 16:8) to “we” (Acts 16:10), God may have used poor health to guide the gospel as the physician Luke had now joined the mission team. It has also been suggested that Luke was the man in Paul’s vision beckoning him to Macedonia (“burning/adoration”). The man in Paul’s vision was not an angel, but a desperate man pleading for Paul to come. This is similar to the many times that Jesus crossed over the Sea of Galilee to minister.





16:10 The mission team does not hesitate to follow God’s calling, but instead make immediate plans to follow Him.

Read Acts 16:11-15... Lydia, the Entrepreneur, Believes in Jesus as Lord

16:11 While Samothrace (“height of Thrace”) was a volcanic island (11 miles in length and 5000 ft. in height), the team made their way to the mainland. Neapolis (“new city”) was the port city of the region of Macedonia. This would be the first time that Paul would share the gospel on “European soil” although Europeans had been present at the Pentecost (Acts 2:10). Philippi was known for its natural resources - numerous springs with mines of gold and silver.

16:12 Philippi was an active Roman outpost that had been named after Philip of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great); Luke would become the leader of the church in Philippi which was probably Luke’s hometown (Acts 17:1). The Philippians had assisted Mark Antony against Brutus and as an outcome was granted honorary Roman status.

16:13 According to Jewish custom, a synagogue must consist of at least ten men, and until that time, the group must meet outdoors in the open (usually beside the nearest body of water). Philippi did not have the ten men to meet the synagogue minimum, and this river was most likely the river Gangites which was approximately a mile from town. Although a “man of Macedonia” had called Paul (Acts 16:9), the gospel entered Europe through a women’s group. Although women played a critical role in this new evangelism effort into Philippi, they were also given to bickering (Philippians 4:2-3).

- 16:14 Lydia (“noble kind”) was the first European convert to Christianity. Thyatira, as the center of Asia (Rev 2:18), was known for exporting the extremely unique (thus expensive), royal color of purple dye that had been gleaned from the mucus glands of shell fish (mollusks). Lydia was a wealthy exporter of purple who was not Jewish, but instead a God fearer proselyte. It is only because God “opened her heart” to Paul’s message that Lydia believed. Understanding comes from God opening the heart to His truth (Jn 6:44).
- 16:15 Full immersion was the symbol of the new life of the believer. Lydia was persuasive (as a business woman) and hospitable as new believer (Philippians 4:10-19). Salvation was often accepted by the entire household (Acts 11:14, 16:31). Lydia’s household probably consisted of her servants.

11 Acts 16:16-40

Read Acts 16:16-24... Paul and Silas are Arrested for an Exorcism

- 16:16 The ministry in Philippi was founded on prayer. The book moves from the legitimate business of Lydia to the demonic business of fortune telling (psychic – Dt 18:9-14; Lev 19:31, 20:6). Beyond the physical, the girl was a slave to the demons bearing them much fruit.
- 16:17 The “sound” exclamation by the demon (2 Cor 2:11; 1 Tim 4:1-3) accurately identified Paul, Silas, Luke and the rest as slaves as well; believers are slaves of the Most High God (Lk 16:13). The demons understand the way of salvation for mankind although fallen angels have no way of salvation.
- 16:18 Paul tolerated the demonic interruptions for some time. Paul could have performed the exorcism days before, but was pushed to annoyance before casting the demon out. The name of Jesus the Messiah gave power to expel the demon.
- 16:19 Worldly professions (e.g., Hollywood) continue to persecute Christians when the message of freedom interferes with illicit profit. Luke was a local Gentile while Timothy was a young “partial” Gentile.
- 16:20 Paul and Silas are thought to be Jews, but they are actually Roman citizens (Acts 16:37-38).
- 16:21 Just as the mob had claimed Roman rule in the crucifixion of Jesus, these wicked men conspired to set the government against the gospel (Lk 23:2; Jn 19:12). Although believers understand that the Bible commands respect of authority (1 Pet 2:13, 17), the state is often persuaded by wicked men to fear and condemn loyalty to the King of Kings.
- 16:22 Mob rule (“riotous democracy run amuck”) condemned wrongfully with typical vigilante injustice (1 Thessalonians 2:2). The Roman lictors would typically bind twelve birch rods together to beat offenders.
- 16:23 The guards were given unique orders to be particularly careful in securing the imprisonment of Paul and Silas. This would be the third time in Acts that the prison was opened up for escape (Acts 5:18-20, 12:6-10).
- 16:24 The inner portion of the Philippian jail consisted of a cistern carved into rock. The stocks consisted of a wooden confinement around the ankles.

Read Acts 16:25-34... Prison Doors are Opened and Chains are Broken

- 16:25 Paul and Silas realized that this was not a battle of the flesh (2 Cor 10:3-6; Eph 6:12), and that they were counted worthy to be persecuted (Mt 5:10-12; Acts 5:40-41). Believing inmates were ministering to other prisoners who listened attentively.
- 16:26 Much like the resurrection of Jesus (Mt 28:2), an earthquake demonstrated the power of God to break the chains of constraint. The most powerful earthquake will occur in the last days (Rev 16:18).
- 16:27 It was Roman law that if the inmate escaped, the guard would have to pay the penalty that the inmate owed to society (Col 2:13-14). The entire jail was made open, so the jailor thought it best to commit suicide.
- 16:28 It appears that the other inmates were considering what was being sung and may have come to Christ. Not only did Paul and Silas remain incarcerated, but the extended inmates did not attempt to escape.
- 16:29 In the darkness, Paul understood the guard's intent of suicide. The guard called for physical lights, but he was also coming to the spiritual light as well.
- 16:30 This same question had been asked to Jesus prior to His crucifixion and resurrection. The person was told that they must keep the entire law and be perfect (Lk 10:25), but Christ had since paid the debt.
- 16:31-32 The emphasis on this Gentile guard was the Lordship of Jesus instead of the Messiah (Christ) distinction. Not only would the guard be saved when he believed, but anyone (even his household) would also be saved when they received salvation. Everyone in the household was open to hearing the same gospel message as the guard had received.
- 16:33 Physically the guard washed the inmates, but at the same time, the Word of God washed the heart of the guard.
- 16:34 In this passage, the salvation of the household is emphasized as all within the household believed the gospel message.

Read Acts 16:35-40... The Magistrates of Philippi Offer an Apology

- 16:35 Daylight often symbolizes clarity of understanding. No reason is given for the judgment to release Paul and Silas – possibly the fear of the earthquake; possibly they had discovered the Roman status of the prisoners or the instigators being disgruntled businessmen; possibly God had miraculously opened their hearts just as He had opened the jail.
- 16:36 The new convert would see firsthand that civil authorities must also pay for their sin.
- 16:37 No doubt Paul was concerned about the reputation of his witness as he had been punished unfairly and desired the public to know that the magistrates had now found them without guilt. Paul may have also influenced the magistrates into releasing other inmates (new converts) as well. Lydia's ladies group would now have additional believers from Paul's jail ministry.
- 16:38 The position of the Magistrates depended on their control under Roman law which had now been broken by them. Roman law was the original reason that the Magistrates felt they could punish as they liked without due process (Acts 16:21).
- 16:39 The Magistrates personally came and apologized for their misdeeds; Paul did not accept a messenger. Paul and Silas were urged to leave the area, but they left as the Lord led and not as these Magistrates dictated.

16:40 Earlier in Philippi, there were not enough men for a synagogue (Acts 16:13), but now there were believing “brothers” that were to be encouraged. These brothers must have resulted from the jail ministry.

12 Acts 17:1-15

Read Acts 17:1-9... A Riot in Thessalonica

17:1 It appears that Luke remained in the Roman military city of Philippi as the verbiage reverts to “they” (Paul, Silas, Timothy) traveled by the Egnatian Way (a Roman road from second century BC) thirty-three miles (a day’s journey) southwest to Amphipolis (“city on both sides”) and then thirty miles southwest to Apollonia (“perdition”) before ending another thirty-seven miles west at the Greek commercial city of Thessalonica (“victory against the Thessalians”).

17:2 Although Paul was called to preach to the Gentiles, he would begin each outreach to the Jews because they had Scriptural knowledge to adequately prove Jesus as the Messiah and Paul no doubt felt guilt over his persecution of Christian Jews.

- Paul possibly preached a three point sermon over three Sabbaths:
 - Christ died for our sins; He was buried; He is resurrected (1 Cor 15:3-7)
 - The righteous one (Rom 1:17) will live (Gal 3:11) by faith (Heb 10:38) based on Habakkuk 2:4.

17:3 The sermons of Paul were centered on Christ, the Messiah. Paul taught about the suffering of the Messiah instead of the victorious Messiah that will be experienced in His second coming. Paul then connected the crucified and risen Jesus as the Christ anticipated in the Old Testament Scriptures.

17:4 This is the point when Aristarchus probably joined Paul’s missions team (Acts 19:29, 27:2) and was faithful to the end (Col 4:10; Philemon 1:24). Leading women play a role in revival just as other leading women led rebellion (Acts 13:50); women are very influential.

17:5 The Jews followed past patterns in becoming envious of those converting to Jesus (Mt 27:18; Mk 15:10; Acts 7:9), so they provoked a mob to persecute the Christians. This is still the case today as those in power (religious and political leaders) utilize the media to provoke irrational hatred against the followers of Jesus.

17:6 Jason (“he that cures”) was possibly a relative of Paul (Rom 16:21) and had hosted Paul’s mission team in his house (Acts 17:17). At that time Jewish zealots were rioting against Rome resulting in anti-Semitic (derived from Noah’s son, Shem) decrees by Caesar against the Jews. The world often speaks of Christianity as being close-minded and topsy-turvy when in fact, the world exists in denial of factual evidence of God’s truth and peace. In a sense, the “upside down” phrase suits Paul’s mission team which had indeed had elevated the poor, sick Gentiles of the world to the family of God.

17:7 The rebels continued with their political game just as the mobs had acted with Jesus (Jn 19:12-15).

17:8-9 Although the Jews condemned the message of Paul, they ended up publicizing it to the crowd and the officials, the little time was spent in incarceration because Jason and fellow believers posted bail and were released.

Read Acts 17:10-15... Bereans Rely on Scripture as Authority

17:10 The night shows the spiritual darkness that Thessalonica would be left in as the gospel continued to spread forty-five miles west to Berea.

17:11 Jesus fits so clearly the description of the Messiah in the Old Testament Scripture that those who are intellectually honest understand that Jesus is the Lord Christ (Ps 22; Is 53). Noble Bereans tested Paul's preaching against Scripture (1 Thes 5:21); believers should also test the teachings (sermons) with Scripture to validate truth.

Reasons That Cultures Study:	
Greek	To Comprehend
Western	To Apply Practically
Hebrews	To Revere God

17:12 Women in the Greek culture had much religious freedom and rights.

17:13 When the gospel was preached, peace ensued, but when anti-spiritual forces arrive, there is bitterness, anger and riots.

17:14 The hateful Thessalonians did not reason about Paul's message, but instead directed their persecution towards Paul, the messenger. But this was just another way for God's message to affect more people (Acts 15:39), as Paul separated from Silas and Timothy.

17:15 These fellow believers cared enough to travel over two hundred miles to deliver Paul to Athens. It appears that both joined Paul only to be sent on additional short term trips from Athens (1 Thes 3:1,2). This was the only time in Paul's ministry that he is thought to have been alone (without fellow missionaries) from Athens until Corinth (Acts 18:1, 5).

13 Acts 17:16-34

Read Acts 17:16-18... Paul Shares the Good News in Athens

17:16 There were aspects of Athens which charmed Paul as it was the city of Philosophers, but other aspects such as the 30,000 idols in Athens which upset (Greek word "paroxuno" – provoked) him.

- This was four centuries after Athens' peak (Isaiah 44:9-20; Jeremiah 10:3-5) under the rule of Pericles and during the age of philosophers Socrates/Plato.
- Socrates was put on trial at the Areopagus and then sentenced to die by drinking hemlock poison in 399BC.
 - Both Socrates and Paul begin their defense before the Areopagus using the phrase "*Men of Athens.*"
 - Socrates was convicted of having his own personal god which was considered a false god instead of Athens' pantheon of gods. Socrates had also corrupted the youth with false teaching.

17:17 Paul's "practical" response to being "provoked" was to preach the good news of Jesus perpetually. Paul spoke in the synagogues on the Sabbath because the Jews were awaiting the Messiah and understood the Old Testament Scriptures which so clearly prophesy Jesus as Christ. Paul preached in the marketplace on weekdays as this was the crossroads of secular life during the week.

17:18 Two very different world views united against the ministry of Christianity.

Epicurean – Atheistic materialists believing that life came from chance; no afterlife

with life's ultimate objective being to pursue pleasure (based on the beliefs of Epicurus living 341-270 BC). Stoic – Fatalistic Pantheists believing that everything is god; apathetic to life and holding that in death people become one with god (Romans). This teaching was based on Zeno who taught on the “stoa” (porch) between 360-260 BC. Some philosophers (most likely the Epicureans) doubted Paul's intellect and couldn't discern his message; however, others (most likely the Stoics) characterized exactly the good news message of the resurrection of Jesus.

Read Acts 17:22-29... Paul Explains the “Unknown God” in the Areopagus

17:19 The Areopagus (“Hill of Ares”) was the Supreme Court (representing the ancient council of elders) in Greece which was located on a large marble hill (370 ft. high); it is the location that Socrates was tried and put to death.

- Mars Hill is the Roman name for the Hill of Ares or the Areopagus
- The Areopagus was used to hold the most demanding courts – usually pertaining to capital crimes such as homicide.
- According to their custom, the Areopagus was the location that Ares, the Greek god of war, would have been the first to be tried for the slaying of Halirrhothius, Poseidon's son (Orestes was said to have later been tried there for the murder of his mother, Clytemnestra).
- As the location to judge the death of (false) gods, this was an ironic location for Paul to proclaim the one true God and “put to death” the concepts of the false gods.

17:20 This may or may not have been a trial as the Areopagus was used for trials as well as lectures.

17:21 Paul's approach is complimentary to Gentiles in contrast to Jewish arguments (1 Cor 9:22). The Athenians were open to foreigners and foreign concepts while being much less interested in established truth.

17:22 Paul did not begin his witness with condemnation, but instead by complimenting their interest in religion.

17:23 Paul had spent time observing their customs and was enlightening them about an established “god” instead of introducing an entirely new deity.

- Paul elaborated about an altar built by Epimenides (a prophet from Crete) in 6th century BC.
- Epimenides had traveled from Crete to build altar and end a plague (Titus 1:12).
 - Epimenides convinced the elders of Athens that there was a Deity that they did not know.
 - Epimenides had the elders keep their sheep from grazing from the day he arrived to the next morning; whenever a sheep lay down in the pasture instead of eating (as it would naturally), an altar was erected to the unknown god.
 - A number of sheep lay down instead of grazing, and when the sacrifices were made, the plague receded.
 - This history was recorded by the Greek author (Diogenes Laertius – 3rd century AD) who penned The Lives of Eminent Philosophers.
- Paul later quotes Epimenides (Acts 17:28) and relates through ancient Greek poets.

- In a passage of Plato's Laws, Epimenides is recorded as prophesying that Persia would be successfully turned away a decade later when they attacked Athens. In Plato's description, he identified Epimenides as an "inspired man" who assisted mankind rediscover inventions that were lost during the "Great Flood."
- 17:24 God is not restricted (confined) to worldly structures constructed by men (1Ki 8:27; 2 Ch 2:6; Acts 7:48).
- 17:25 God, the Creator, has no needs (2 Samuel 7:1-7); anything He desires, He could create. All of life in creation comes through Him (Jn 1:3-4; Col 1:15-17).
- 17:26 All of mankind stems from Adam and then again from Noah. All of regenerate believers stem from Jesus; the lives and salvation of men are predetermined by the Lord (Ex 23:26; Dt 32:8; Ps 39:4, 90:12; Prov 16:9; Jer 10:23; Dan 5:26; Rom 11:25).
- 17:27 Some people (like the Stoics) are apathetic towards this life not seeking anything; others (like the Epicureans) have ambitions of pleasure, control, fame and fortune. The wise seek the Lord and reach out to find Him.
- 17:28 Since Athenians were unfamiliar with Scripture, Paul quoted from *Phaenomena* by Aratus of Cilicia (approx. 270 BC).
- 17:29 Mankind is a product of the living God, and not some physical "god" that is produced from man (Isaiah 44:9-20; Jeremiah 10:11-16, 16:19-20; Habakkuk 2:18-19)

Read Acts 17:30-34... The Athenians in the Areopagus Respond to Paul's Sermon

- 17:30 Grace is universal, so the concluding point to mankind is to repent and turn away from their own will to the Lord. Of course, these sinful philosophers were arrogant and self-sufficient, so they will not turn from vanity to faith in the Lord.
- 17:31 Although the Epicureans and Stoics did not believe in life after death, God has established a judgment day (Num 32:23; Prov 24:12; Rom 14:10; 1 Cor 3:11-15; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Tim 5:24; Heb 9:27).
- 17:32 The Athenian scholars were willing to be intellectually stimulated by theoretical discussion, but they rejected the message when it came to action (i.e., repentance). Response to gospel is typically either mocking, marginalize or acceptance. Ridicule and mocking originates in pride (Prov 21:24)
- 17:33- 34 Although Paul left the Areopagus without evident success, Paul's message did bear some fruit of Athenian believers. According to the historian Eusebius, one of the elder Areopagites, Dionysius ("divinely touched"), was the first Bishop in Athens and a probable martyr; the name "Dionysius" was derived from the Greek god of the same name, "Dionysus", who had a death-resurrection concept. While 188 women are mentioned in Scripture, Luke often included the important female believers such as Damaris ("a heifer"). The fact that Damaris is singled out by name could mean that she is the wife of Dionysus or some social distinction (possibly even a prominent prostitute).

14 Acts 18

Read Acts 18:1-4... Paul Joins Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth

- 18:1 After Paul's ministry in Athens (associated with "intellectual pride"), he moved on 60 miles southwest to Corinth (associated with licentiousness).

- The term “corinthizer” means one who indulges in lust.
- Corinth was known for Aphrodite’s 1,000 Temple prostitutes which is one reason “corinthizer” is synonymous with depraved sensuality. Aphrodite (Roman goddess) is the same as the Greek’s goddess, Venus.

18:2 Aquila was a believer who was also new to Corinth. Aquila was originally from Pontus (“the sea”) located on the south part of the Black Sea which had been represented at the downpour of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:9). The Jewish insurrection in Rome was attributed to “Chrestos” which possibly refers to the Jewish reaction to Jesus Christ.

18:3 God traveled with the tent (2 Sam 7:6); and our bodies are now the tent (2 Cor 5:1) – 1 Cor 3:9-17, 6:19, 2 Cor 6:16, Eph 2:20-21, Heb 3:6, 1 Pet 2:5 & 4:17. The Talis was the Prayer Shawl and means Tal=Tent & Ith=Little or “little tent”.

18:4 It is interesting that the term is not “to preach”, but instead, Paul went to the synagogue to reason. Much of Paul’s work was not lecture, but instead it was interactive in nature. Preachers should move beyond “talking to” into a culture of “discussing with”.

Read Acts 18:5-8... Paul Establishes Corinthian Church in Home Beside Synagogue

18:5 Timothy and Silas had rejoined Paul in Athens to be sent out again on a short trip. Timothy was returning from Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:1-3) and Silas from somewhere in Macedonia - most likely Berea (2 Cor 11:9); Silas is not referenced by Luke through the remainder of Acts. When Paul’s companions arrived, Paul was pressed (Greek – “suneicheto”) by the Spirit to witness to the Jews.

18:6 Switch to Gentiles as he shook out his garments (Nehemiah 5:13; Mk 6:11) as if shedding them from his responsibility and protection (Ezekiel 33:1-9; Matthew 27:24). Paul then re-focused his efforts to the Gentiles of Corinth (in later cities, Paul continued to reach out to the Jews at the synagogues first).

18:7 Paul continued to live with Aquila and Priscilla while making the home of Titus (“pleasing”; “honorable”) Justus (“just”; “upright”) a place where the good news could be heard. Titus Justus was a believer who worshipped God; believers need to be careful to understand that “church” is not synonymous with “the Lord”. Believers are to give, serve and be dedicated to Christ alone. Sometimes this includes serving the local fellowship, but often the call is much greater. The home study of Titus Justus was much more pleasing to God than the traditions of the synagogue next door.

18:8 No one is beyond the reach of the Lord as is evidenced by Synagogue leaders such as Crispus (“curled”) turning to Him. The households of these men are also amenable to the truth (Acts 10:2, 11:14, 16:15, 16:31-34). The people of Corinth followed the three-step response to the good news: 1. heard 2. believed 3. baptized

Read Acts 18:9-17... Paul on Trial in Corinth

18:9 The instruction “don’t be afraid” is mentioned in every book of the Bible. The night often represents the dark (symbolic of difficult/oppressed) times of life.

18:10 The Lord expresses the reason for Paul’s protection as being God’s plans for him to reach many in Corinth who had been chosen by God as His own. Although believers who are being used by God are assaulted by wickedness, these obedient (and often productive) believers can take solace in the Lord.

18:11 The number “eighteen” is used to describe the extent of trials (Luke 13:4, 11, 16), and Paul would faithfully serve God in spite of the eighteen months of Corinth persecution.

- In the Jewish culture, the number eighteen represents “life,” so donations are often given in multiples of 18 to result in a good life.
- During this time, Paul focused on teaching Scripture as the word of God. Believers are often attacked as the messenger when the recipients of the message are arguing against the truth of God as expressed by Scripture.

18:12 Lucius Junius Gallio, the Ruler of Greece, had changed his name from Marcus Annaeus Novatus at the time of his adoption into the Gallio family. Lucius Junius Gallio was the older brother of the stoic philosopher Seneca. Gallio was a tutor and counsel of Nero, and Nero’s wife – Poppaea Sabina – was a God-fearer. As a proconsul, Gallio would be the chief Roman official presiding over any court hearings within the Achaia province (southern area of Greece).

18:13 Although a different law, it is ironic how often the Jews clung to the law which was to convict them of sin without embracing the mercy of the Lord (Acts 24:14, 25:8, 28:23).

18:14 This court hearing carried greater weight as the jurisdiction of the decision of this Roman court was to be upheld throughout the Roman Empire and affect similar hearings of other early Christians. Paul did not even need to defend himself as the Lord used Gallio to defend his witness (Acts 18:10).

18:15-16 Gallio treated Christianity as a sect of Judaism to be decided within the synagogue instead of a Roman courtroom. The Jews had reduced their belief system to a matter of “words, names, and law” (instead of a relationship with the living God) and Gallio had the Jewish prosecutors put out of the courtroom.

18:17 When Crispus had become a believer (Acts 18:8), he had been replaced by Sosthenes (“safe in strength”) as the leader of the synagogue. Sosthenes had most likely led the prosecution against Paul which had been expelled by Gallio from the Roman courtroom, so the Jews were taking their animosity out on him. Although Sosthenes had attempted to assail Paul, he would be the one who was judged (similar to Herod in Romans 12). After this beating, Sosthenes turned from living under the Jewish law to the good news message that Paul espoused (1 Cor 1:1).

Read Acts 18:18-23... Paul Returns to Antioch & Begins His Third Missions Trip

18:18 The favorable court decision enabled Paul to minister in Corinth as long as he liked. The vow represents the Jewish practice of taking the “Nazarite vow” which symbolized total dedication to the Lord. The one taking the Nazarite vow would shave his head at the beginning as he would not have his hair cut the remainder of the time (Numbers 6:5). The married couple of Priscilla and Aquila are always mentioned together as they jointly ministered as a team (Acts 18:2; Rom 16:3; 2 Tim 4:19). Cenchræ (“millet grain/small pulse”) is the eastern harbor port nine miles east of the Greek city of Corinth (Rom 16:1-2).

18:19 The length of the Nazarite vow was determined by the individual, but was strictly adhered to once begun. At the conclusion of the vow, the individual must offer sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem, so Paul would leave the married couple of Priscilla and Aquila to minister in the southwest port of Asia Minor as Paul continued

- eastward. Ephesus (“desirable”) was favored by the Romans and the site of the Temple of Artemis Diana (the Greek mythological goddess of virginity and fertility).
- 18:20 Ephesus was the final “church plant” of Paul, but he would return to Ephesus on his third and final missionary trip to teach in Ephesus for two years (Acts 19:1-41, 20:17-38).
- 18:21 The future plans of Paul were not his to establish as he followed wherever the Lord would lead (James 4:15).
- 18:22 Caesarea (Caesar = Kaiser = Czar) was built by Herod the Great (10 BC) in honor of Caesar Augustus and was the Roman capital of Judea; Herod Agrippa (grandson of Herod the Great) had died in Caesarea (Acts 12:19-23). Paul had left via this port shortly after his conversion (Acts 9:30) and would ultimately spend two years imprisoned in Caesarea before being shipped to Rome (Acts 24:27-25:13). Paul visited the church in Jerusalem before traveling down (lower elevation) to those in Antioch.
- 18:23 Paul’s third missionary journey focused on teaching and maturing the established believers who had already converted to the gospel message. The beginning of Paul’s third journey began in the same way as his second journey across the northern lands of the Mediterranean (modern day Turkey).

Read Acts 18:24-28... Priscilla & Aquila lead Apollos to Christ in Ephesus

- 18:24 Apollos (“destroyer”) was a Jew from Egypt’s capital, Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great. The harbor/port city of Alexandria had the largest library in the ancient world, and Apollos is believed to be highly educated with great personal magnetism. Apollos excelled in shepherding and growing Paul’s new converts; Apollos would also find his way to minister on the island of Crete (Titus 3:13)
- 18:25 John the Baptist had taught a baptism of repentance (Acts 13:24).
- 18:26 Apollos must have been humble and teachable although well-grounded in Scripture as the couple explained gospel of the Lord to him. John’s baptism was repentance while forgiveness came through the Messiah, Jesus Christ (John 1:17).
- 18:27 Apollos traveled from the church in Ephesus to the church of Corinth (1 Cor 1:12, 3:4-6, 22, 4:6, 16:12) which was in the land of Achaia (Acts 18:12). There was much sea “traffic” between the second largest Roman city of Corinth and the third largest Roman city of Ephesus where Cayster River flows into the Mediterranean Sea.
- 18:28 Similar to Paul, Apollos used the Old Testament (the accepted Scriptures of the Jew) to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah (Lk 24:27, Acts 3:24, 8:34, 10:43).

15 Acts 19:1-20

Read Acts 19:1-7... Paul leads 12 Disciples of John the Baptist to Christ in Ephesus

- 19:1 Paul returned to Ephesus where he had sailed for Israel (Acts 18:18-22). The term “disciple” (“mathetes”) refers to one who accepts the teaching of another.
- 19:2 These disciples had learned of John’s baptism of repentance from Apollos prior to Apollos learning from Priscilla and Aquila. Followers of Jesus must be Spirit filled (Romans 8:9).
- 19:3 John the Baptist is great among men, but the forgiveness of Jesus Christ is the only way to perfection (Mt 11:11, Lk 7:28).

- 19:4 Similar to the conversion of Apollos (Acts 18:25) enlightenment originated with John's baptism (Acts 13:24) that Jesus Christ would fulfill the good news of salvation for all sinners who have failed to keep the whole law (Rom 3:20, 5:20).
- 19:5 The baptism of John the Baptist was symbolic of a washing while the baptism of Jesus represented death to the old self and being born into new life which closely ties to the resurrection of Jesus.
- 19:6 As in several prior occasions, the Holy Spirit came through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:18; Rom 8:9) which resulted in the men speaking in other (tongues) languages (1 Cor 12-14) and prophesying of truth.
- 19:7 Just as Jesus had twelve disciples in Israel, there were now twelve (group witnessing of the love of God) men to testify in Ephesus.

Read Acts 19:8-10... Paul Teaches Disciples in the Lecture Hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus

- 19:8 The synagogue had earlier welcomed Paul's teaching (Acts 18:19-20) on his second trip, and now Paul would dedicate three months in the synagogue discussing "The Way" of the Kingdom of God (similar to Greece - Acts 20:2-3).
- 19:9 Paul did not persist in sharing through argument and persecution, but when the ridicule began, Paul turned his teaching to welcoming disciples. The Tyrannus (owned by a proselyte) was utilized for schooling in the morning and then rented for lectures between 11:00am through 4:00pm which may have corresponded to the afternoon siesta such as the Europeans typically take.
- 19:10 For two (witness) years (Acts 24:27, 28:30) both Jews and Gentiles received Paul's message of salvation.

Read Acts 19:11-16... Itinerant Jewish Exorcists Attacked by Demon

- 19:11-12 Healing through cloth is not the typical way that God works and is characterized as being uniquely special. Paul worked (as a tentmaker) to provide from his own resources (Acts 20:34), and his sweatbands (handkerchief tied around the head) with an apron was empowered to heal; Paul's toil was used as a conduit of God's power (Acts 5:15). In modern times, some are deceived into sending money in return for a "healing cloth", but the monetary support being given to the so-called "healer" is directly opposite of Paul's clothing from working in his own profession.
- 19:13 When the Spirit moves in power, the world produces distracting counterfeits such as this traveling vagabond who attempted to relate his practices to Paul. The only power of Paul originated from his being filled with the Spirit; believers should not confuse the message with the messenger (Num 22:8).
- 19:14 Seven (represents full or complete), and all of these sons of Sceva ("prepared implement"). Godly relations (e.g., preacher's kids) have no bearing in itself on one's standing with the Lord.
- 19:15 There are different levels of "knowledge" indicated. The evil spirit claimed deep knowledge (Greek – "ginosko") of Jesus and was acquainted (Greek – "epistamai") with Paul, but did not recognize the pretenders. A man must be indwelt with the Spirit of God and not simply know about them like the seven sons of Sceva; the demon could not attack Jesus or Paul who had the Spirit of Jesus within him (Acts 16:7; Philippians 1:19).

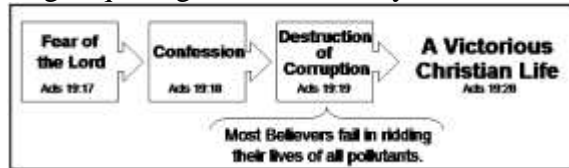
19:16 The demonic man had power in this world for chaos and disaster (Lk 8:29) leaving the counterfeit believers shamed and hurting. Nakedness in Scripture is a symbol of one who is being seen for who they truly are.

Read Acts 19:17-20... Ephesians Burn Their Books of Black Magic & Become Believers

19:17 Fear by the populace initiated glory to God. Even in modern times, fear (e.g., health, war, economy, etc.) continues to turn hearts to the Lord.

19:18 Fear by believers drove them to honesty about their hidden sin and repentance from their failings.

19:19 The Ephesian magicians thought it better to burn the books than to burn themselves in hell; they did not destroy the property of others, but burned their own property. Although the black magic texts were of great worldly value, they were worse than worthless in spiritual economics as they are detrimental (the number five represents judgment and mercy while silver represents redemption). Each coin is worth a day's wage equating to a modern day value of several million dollars.



19:20 Fear of the Lord created a fertile environment for the Lord's message to bear much fruit and triumph over the wickedness of Ephesus.

16 Acts 19:21-41

Read Acts 19:21-27... Demetrius Defends His Manufacturing of False Idols

19:21 Paul was guided by the Spirit (Acts 16:7, 18:21) to visit with the established churches of Athens, Berea, Corinth, Cenchrea, Philippi and Thessalonica on his way to carrying a benevolence offering to the believers in Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-26; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9). According to the secular historian, Josephus, Judea suffered from a famine from 44AD through 48 AD. Believers should also be concerned about the physical needs of the global church, and support those persecuted in distant lands who struggle materially. Paul would indeed be taken to Rome after being persecuted by Jews in Jerusalem.

19:22 Erastus ("beloved") had been the treasurer for the city of Corinth (Rom 16:23) while Timothy was a most trusted companion of Paul (1 Cor 16:10). The characteristics of both men suited the call to prepare believers in Macedonia for Paul's visit to collect funds for fellow believers in Jerusalem.

19:23 Effective ministries may find themselves in conflict with local social trends that encourage sinful practices. "The Way" was an accurate label of believers as they had discovered the only way to eternal life through Jesus Christ (Jn 14:6).

19:24 The Temple of Diana/Artemis at Ephesus was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (60 yards high, 60 yards wide, 130 yards long). Artemis was considered by Greeks as being the goddess of reproductive powers while Diana (thought by Romans to be one in the same) was considered by Romans to be the goddess of the hunt. Demetrius ("belonging to corn") fabricated miniature shrines of Artemis/Diana. A union/guild is primarily focused on economic power of the

- members, so the more important focus of spirituality is de-emphasized. Their objective was to defend their earning potential through self-effort. The ministry of Paul often conflicted with wicked occupations (Acts 16:20).
- 19:25 The world is rarely concerned about the rightful way or the truth; instead, the world simply considers the impact, consequences and repercussions to one's own well-being. Many have used worldly reason/rationale in choosing to defend their professions (no matter how sinful) instead of submitting to the truth of the Lord. Artemis/Diana is portrayed as a woman with many breasts and arms, and currently, a statue of Artemis/Diana is safely kept on display at the Vatican in Rome along with a number of other idols.
- 19:26 This verse illustrates the effectiveness of the ministry of Paul beyond Ephesus to many people. Just as in modern times, the world has difficulty accepting that there is a sovereign creator God. The world cannot form a god from lifeless objects through human effort (Dt 4:28; Ps 115:4-8; Is 40:18-20, 44:8-20, 46:6-7; Jer 10:3-5).
- 19:27 Although the root cause of the disruption was financial profit, a false morality was applied to the movement that drove the populace to senseless action. The world does love false gods who promote fleshly pursuits and pleasures while the world hates the true God Who requires submission to His will.

Read Acts 19:28-34... Ephesian Mob Riot in Amphitheater Against Gaius & Aristarchus

- 19:28 The crowd identified with the false goddess as a deity that represented their local culture. The world hates the truth and would prefer every irrational (e.g., harmful) indulgence be validated.
- 19:29 Lives of chaos and confusion are the natural consequences of those denying the message of God. The amphitheater (renown for astonishing acoustics) could accommodate 25,000 sitting and was the largest public area in Ephesus. Gaius had (Acts 14:20, 20:4) come to Christ in Derbe (1 Cor 1:14), but had re-located to now host Paul in his travels through Corinth (Rom 16:23). Aristarchus ("best ruler") was a native of Thessalonica (Acts 20:4) and possibly Paul's slave, but considered Paul's co-worker and colleague (Acts 19:29, Col 4:10, Philemon 1:24).
- 19:30 This time, Paul would allow himself be detained from harm's way, but on his way to Jerusalem, Paul would continue in spite of the warnings.
- 19:31 Even some political figures, government officials (Asiarchs), were concerned for Paul's safety. Asiarchs were representatives of each city who controlled the worship of Rome and the emperor.
- 19:32 The convictions of the world are often similar to a mob (Mt 27:24; Mk 15:11-15; Lk 23:23) where nonsense is publicized as reason and most do not understand the truth or even the reason that they are even here.
- 19:33 The Jews chose a representative in Alexander ("defender of men"), but did not trust him entirely as they pressed their counsel on him. Alexander was possibly a dissenter of the Way (1 Tim 1:19-20; 2 Tim 4:14-15). Alexander was probably attempting to protect conventional Judaism by contrasting traditional Jews with the beliefs of the Way, but the crowd did not care about personal defence and turned their focus in support of the false god "Artemis".
- 19:34 The city clerk (Greek – "grammateus") was not a military Roman entity, but instead an elected official who led the city's administrators (e.g., mayor). The clerk

could relate to the people as one of their own. Many believed that Artemis had been carved out of a meteor that had fallen to earth.

Read Acts 19:35-41... Ephesian Mob Riot in Amphitheater Against Gaius & Aristarchus

19:35 The city clerk of Ephesus encourages peace instead of rioting and protests.

19:36 The diplomat confirmed the erred beliefs of the masses and related to their false convictions. The mob was urged to follow due process and not mistakenly do anything impulsive and foolish.

19:37 The message preached by Paul was focused on the good news of Jesus instead of the cultural failures and errors.

19:38-39 The regular court system was available to those with charges, and if inadequate, an appeal could be made to the regional proconsular court. Demetrius and his cronies (e.g., union, guild) were charged with following the established judicial process instead of pursuing vigilante justice. "Might" does not always "make right".

19:40 The city clerk was in some aspects responsible for the condition of the city.

Romans would not tolerate disorder and were standing by to bring orderliness through military might if necessary.

19:41 The influential city clerk dismissed the gathering without ever being named.

Although he was critical to the city of Ephesus and used of God to protect the mission team, the powerful and intelligent city clerk went unnamed in Scripture.

17 Acts 20:1-16

Read Acts 20:1-6... Paul Visits Macedonia & Greece on Third Mission Trip

20:1 Although Paul could not go into public, he sent for his disciples to come for encouragement before he left Ephesus. John would spend his final years as the Bishop of Ephesus.

20:2-3 Beyond exhorting Ephesus, Paul traveled extensively through Macedonia to encourage other fellowships. Similar to the synagogue in Ephesus (Acts 19:8), Paul committed three months of preaching in Greece (like Ephesus - Acts 19:8). Paul was probably headed back to the original "sending" church in Antioch of Syria. This is one of three times in Acts that plots were made against Paul's life (Acts 9:24; 23:12-22), but the Lord sustained (2 Cor 11:22-28) as the plans were made to travel by land to the port of Troas instead.

20:4 Paul was accompanied by seven messengers from seven churches. Aristarchus means slave while Secundus infers Second Slave.

20:5 Luke rejoins the return trip (2 Tim 4:11) in Troas where Paul had seen the vision of the man beckoning Paul into Macedonia (Acts 16:8-10).

20:6 Immediately following the Passover (Salvation of the Lord) was the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Redemption of one's life from sinful nature) which lasted for a seven day week.

Read Acts 20:7-12... Paul Restores Eutychus Who Was Found as Dead

20:7 Communion would be practiced every week (Lev 24:5-8; Lk 24:35; Acts 2:42, 20:11). Beginning on the Jewish new day (6:00pm) on Saturday Night (John 20:19),

- the fellowship held a six hour message (until midnight) that probably included dinner (“the love feast” – 1 Cor 11:20-22).
- 20:8 Paul preached under the light of the lamps (Rev 4:5) on the 3rd floor.
- 20:9 The young man, Eutychus (meaning “fortunate”), had fallen asleep resulting in his downfall. Believers (especially those young in the faith) must stay awake and aware of the message of the Lord or else they are “as good as dead” bearing no fruit for the kingdom.
- 20:10 Paul came down as is often the case when a brother has stumbled and fallen; the mature brother retrieves him from his lowly fallen state. As Paul embraced the fallen brother, life returned to Eutychus (1 Kings 17:21, 2 Kings 4:34, Mt 9:24). Believers can rededicate themselves with new life for the Lord.
- 20:11 Paul returned upstairs for communion (“the” bread) and most likely a regular meal as well. Paul talked with them until the light dawned upon his listeners, and then he departed.
- 20:12 The renewal of the boy, and his return to his family (his home) was a testimony of great comfort.

Read Acts 20:13-16... Paul Travels Towards Jerusalem from Troas to Miletus

- 20:13 Jesus would send his disciples ahead while He stayed behind to be alone in prayer (Mt 14:22-23; Lk 5:16); it is possible that Paul was doing the same. Corporate worship is secondary to an individual relationship with the Lord. As Paul walked the Roman road southeast 20 miles along the coast of Asia Minor to Assos (“approaching; coming near”) while his missions team (including Luke designated by the term “we”) sailed 30 miles to the same port.
- 20:14 Paul joined the missions team on board the boat on the next day to sail for the port of Mitylene (“purity; cleansing”). Mitylene is a port city on the east coast of the Greek island of Lesbos off the mainland of Asia Minor; it is interesting that Paul did not give the island’s title (unlike Chios and Samos). Ships would often put into harbor for the night and sail during the day. A near location of Adramyttium constructed the ship that sailed Paul when he was arrested and sent to Rome (Acts 27:2).
- 20:15 Step-by-step and day-by-day, Paul’s missions group pressed on from harbor to harbor working their way back to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-3). The group docked at the island of Chios (“opening”) and the next day at the island of Samos (“height; mountain”) and the next day on the mainland at the city of Miletus (“red; scarlet”).
- 20:16 Miletus is located 30 miles south of Ephesus. The Ephesian fellowship was unique in that the origin is recorded (Acts 18:19-21, 19:8-10), a Paul’s epistle is recorded (Ephesians), and John’s first church letter in Revelation is addressed to them (Rev 2:1-7). Although Paul’s sights were set on Jerusalem to which he hurried, Paul welcomed the Ephesian elders at Miletus to bid farewell (Acts 20:17-21:1). One member of the missions team, Trophimus (“a foster child”) from Ephesus (Acts 20:4, 21:29), was left sick in Miletus (2 Tim 4:20).

18 Acts 20:17-38

Read Acts 20:17-27... Paul Gives Farewell Address to the Ephesian Elders

- 20:17 Although Paul did not have the time to travel to Ephesus on his return trip to Jerusalem, Paul did send for the Ephesian elders to join him in Miletus 30 miles south of Ephesus. In the early church, fellowships did not have pastors, but instead were led by elders (the mature – Greek “presbuteros”) or overseers (bishops – Greek “episkopos”) which were two terms used interchangeably (e.g., Titus 1:5-7).
- 20:18 This is a rare speech/sermon that is recorded in Scripture although his epistles make up a large part of the New Testament (Acts 22). Just like Samuel (1 Sam 12:2-5), Paul emphasizes his relationship with the Ephesian church (Acts 19).
- 20:19 Paul teaches these prominent elders how to serve the fellowship. Although their teaching gives notoriety, church leaders are to be humble and will most likely experience difficulties and trials. Both the Gentiles (Acts 19:24-25) and the Jews (Acts 19:33) attempted to undermine the ministry of Paul, but Paul had persevered.
- 20:20 Paul was primarily concerned about the truth of the Lord regardless of his popularity Paul did not have to be concerned with pacifying the congregation/audience for the purposes of passing the offertory plate and maintaining preacher’s salaries (2 Tim 4:3). Unlike most modern preachers and elders, interactive Bible Study was critical in home studies. Religious leadership often attempts to remain safely behind the pulpit when the fellowship is looking to interact on a personal basis.
- 20:21 Paul shared the good news with all men (both Jews -always first- and Greeks/Gentiles). Paul’s message consisted of repentance (submission to the lordship of God) and faith in the Lord Jesus as also Savior.
- 20:22 Paul seems to already be captive to the Spirit as he obediently returns to Jerusalem for physical incarceration (Acts 23:11).
- 20:23 Paul already understands that anywhere in this world will as a believer will meet persecution (Jn 3:19-21, 17:14; Lk 9:23; 2 Tim 3:12).
- 20:24 Paul’s purpose was to testify to the grace of God; grace is the undeserved gift of salvation. Paul had no ownership nor responsibilities that would impede his following of the Spirit. Paul had no list of “must see/do/accomplish before I die” because his only purpose in life was to follow the Lord. Believers must be careful of the entanglements of this world; the grasp of worldly bonds grows over time and often become increasingly difficult to eliminate.
- 20:25 Paul understood prophetically that he was en route to his capture and, ultimately, his death.
- 20:26 Paul does not take responsibility for the results of the message, but fulfills his “watchman” calling to being faithful to the entirety of the warning (Ez 3:17-21; 33:1-9).
- 20:27 God’s “whole plan” was beyond the condemnation of the law to the salvation provided by the promised Messiah (Jesus Christ), and that now they were to submit their will to His.

Read Acts 20:28-31... Paul Warns the Ephesian Elders to Be on Their Guard

- 20:28 The blood of God, the Holy Spirit, was shed for fallen man as this verse reflects the divinity of Jesus. The responsibility of the Spirit appointed elders/overseers was shared amongst several men, and never concentrated on a single pastor/preacher (Rev 2:6). Each believer was bought by Christ’s blood at an inestimable price (1 Cor 6:20,

- 7:23), so that salvation might be freely offered (Mt 10:8; 1 Cor 2:12; Eph 1:6; Rev 22:17).
- 20:29 External attacks will come by false teachers (Mt 7:15-16, 10:16; Lk 10:3), so elders are encouraged to guard the flock as a shepherd would (Rev 2:2). Elders are not to be solely focused on maintaining the organization nor pacifying church leadership, but on caring for the congregants.
- 20:30 Internal charmers will lure congregants away from Biblical principles based on their own reasoning, experiences and intelligence. All stated “truths” should be verified against Scripture for validity (Acts 17:11). Believers are referenced as disciples.
- 20:31 Paul invested three (symbolic for revelation) years in Ephesus while teaching God’s word and weeping for their condition. The three years in Ephesus (Acts 18:19-21) consisted of three additional months in the synagogue (Acts 19:8), two years in the halls of Tyrannus (Acts 19:10) and additional time was spent prior to the persecution by Demetrius (Acts 19:22).

Read Acts 20:32-38... Paul’s Farewell Message Concludes with Servant Leadership

- 20:32 Paul worked to encourage and “build up” in Christ (Jude 1:20) instead of pride in self (1 Cor 8:1). The grace of God is able to sanctify (make holy) His people.
- 20:33-34 The focus of Paul was not on the entanglements of this world; religious leaders need to be careful that they are not “purchased” by the salary of their church (1 Pet 5:2; Judges 17-18). The money of God’s people is given to support all who have little including Pastors, foreigners, widows and orphans (Dt 14:28-29, 26:12). Believers should financially support those who spiritually feed them, and Bible teachers are to be paid for their teaching (Gal 6:6; Rom 15:27; 1 Cor 9:14); however, the lifestyle of pastors (e.g. sabbaticals, travel, accommodations) should not be excessive (how sad for the many preachers with salaries greater than the average person in their congregation). Offerings were meant to reach the world for the Lord which is the reason charity from unbelievers should not be accepted (3 Jn 1:7-8).
- 20:35 This concept of generosity followed the reminder to the elders that Paul made his own wage with his hands; Paul concludes his only recorded sermon with the notion of giving. The statement of “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” is not recorded in the Gospels, so Paul had either heard this teaching from the apostles or, more likely, was told this directly by the resurrected Lord (Gal 1:12; 2 Cor 12:2-4).
- 20:36 These esteemed religious leaders humbly knelt before the Lord in prayer.
- 20:37-38 There was much affection between the Ephesian elders and Paul as he departed permanently from them. The elders understood that Paul was going to his death, but in spite of their grief, they supported Paul in submission to the will of the Lord.

19 Acts 21:1-14

Read Acts 21:1-7... Paul Spends Time with Believers in Tyre on His Way to Jerusalem

- 21:1 After a moving time with the Ephesian elders at Miletus, Paul continues once again pressing on from harbor to harbor each night (Acts 20:14-15) as he travels back to Jerusalem with his missions team (Acts 20:4). The first stop was southward at the small Greek island of Cos (“summit”) which was known for its impact on the medical

- world (Hippocrates, the father of medicine, was born in Cos in 460BC). Then the team sailed on to another Greek island of Rhodes (“a rose”) before heading to the city of Patara (“trodden underfoot”) on the coast of Lycia which would be the birthplace of Saint Nicholas in 270AD.
- 21:2-3 Paul’s group had numerous occasions to be slowed or sidetracked while en route to Jerusalem, but they remained focused on the ultimate destination of Jerusalem. In Patara, the team transitioned to a larger sea-faring vessel designed for the open seas and made way directly past the island of Cyprus (Paul’s first stop on Paul’s first journey – Acts 13:4) to the Syrian port city of Tyre approximately six days later. The left is often a Scriptural representation of weakness.
- 21:4 Paul remained with the disciples in Tyre for seven (fullness/complete) days as the ship unloaded their cargo, and the group re-boarded for Ptolemais (25 miles south – one day of walking). This was the first mention of a fellowship in Tyre, and a week-long stay would enable partaking of communion with them (Acts 20:6-7). The Spirit of God spoke to the Tyre disciples as to the persecution of Paul that awaited him Jerusalem, but Paul was already aware and used such times to witness to the dedication even unto death. The Greek word (dia) translated “through” (the Spirit) could also be interpreted as “because of” or “on account of”.
- The term “disciple” (mathētas μαθητὰς) means “learner,” and this is the last use of the term “disciple” as it is only used in the gospels and in Acts; the term “disciple” never appears in Scripture after this verse.
- 21:5 The children were included in the first century church (Acts 20:12) as were the wives. The entire family followed the Way, and knelt in submission for prayer to the Lord Jesus (Acts 20:36).
- 21:6 Each collection of believers had their own ministry whether to the world or in the home.
- 21:7 Paul’s missionary team spent only one day with believers in Ptolemais (“the warlike”) before forging ahead southward. Ptolemais was an ancient port city of Israel’s northern region of Galilee that had originally been called “Acco” (“cure” - Judges 1:31).

Read Acts 21:8-14 ... Paul Meets with Philip the Evangelist & Agabus the Prophet

- 21:8 Upon reaching Caesarea (35 miles away), the missions team was welcomed into the house of the deacon Philip (Acts 6:5).
- 21:9 The Bible records good prophetesses (Miriam/Ex 15:20, Deborah/Judges 4:4, Huldah/2 Ki 22:14/2 Chron 34:22, Isaiah’s wife/Isaiah 8:3, Anna/Lk 2:36) as well as evil ones (Noadiah/Nehemiah 6:14, Jezebel/Revelation 2:20). Philip’s four (symbolic of creation) daughters had never been married, and they had prophesied. These activities (e.g., prophecy) of the Old Testament continued after the life span of Jesus into the early church.
- 21:10 Agabus had prophesied of a Roman Famine (Acts 11:28) which was fulfilled (Acts 22:25).
- 21:11 The Spirit continued to prepare Paul and local believers for the persecution that was to come in Jerusalem. Much like the prophets of old (e.g., Isaiah, Ezekiel), Agabus used “visuals” to demonstrate the prophecy (Acts 21:27-36).

- 21:12 Although God gave a clear premonition of the future, the reactions and ramifications were relative to the individual believer. Believers are often influenced by caring family and friends, but the believer must be faithful to God's calling above all even if persecution is a certainty (Mk 8:31-33).
- 21:13 Paul had a "Pharisee" background (Romans 9:3), and loved his Jewish brethren greatly. Believers should be willing to live or die for the Lord (Philippians 1:21); sometimes it is easier to die for Christ than to live for Him.
- 21:14 Luke includes himself with the missions team as well as the local believers who attempted to dissuade Paul; however, after realizing that they would not get their way, the believers submitted to the will of the Lord. Every believer should yield to the will of the Lord above natural inclinations (Mt 6:10).

20 Acts 21:15-40

Read Acts 21:15-25 ... Paul Is Guided by the Jerusalem Council to Take the Nazarite Vow

- 21:15 With the knowledge of the persecution that awaited the team in Jerusalem, the missions team readied themselves physically as well as emotionally for the maltreatment. The team would be traveling the 65 miles uphill to a higher elevation of Jerusalem (2400-2500 feet above sea level).
- 21:16 The local believers in Caesarea hosted and guided Paul to a host in Jerusalem, Mnason (meaning "reminder"/ "exhorter"). Mnason was not a native of Jerusalem, but instead from Cypress (like Barnabas – Acts 4:36) just as those who established the fellowship in Antioch had been (Acts 11:19-20).
- 21:17 Beyond the love and fellowship, Paul was bringing much needed assistance. Secular historians (Eusebius, Josephus, Suetonius, Tacitus, and Cassius) record a severe famine throughout Judea in that time, and Paul would have brought financial relief from foreign brothers (Acts 11:27-30).
- 21:18 James "the less/little" was the younger brother of the Jesus (Gal 1:19; Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3) who became a leader in the church fellowship of Jerusalem (Acts 12:17, 15:13).
- 21:19 Praise was given to the Lord for His work through Paul with the Gentiles. Rumors about Paul's ministry had spread, so instead of discussing the gossip, Paul focused on the truth and what actually made up his ministry.
- 21:20 The Jews continued attempting to reconcile themselves with the law instead of trusting in the Lord for reconciliation (Rom 9:30-33). The law is beneficial to reflect the fallen state of mankind (Rom 3:20, 5:20).
- 21:21 Rumors had spread that Paul instructed Gentiles to abandon the Old Testament Scriptures of Moses (Hebrews 3:1-6).
- 21:22 Prayer should have led the way as the question should have been raised to the Lord instead of each other. Paul listened to the Lord, but now he would take the human council's guidance which would result in imprisonment; however, there is no denunciation of Paul's action in Scripture.
- 21:23 Four ("creation/worldly") men had become contaminated and were to perform the rite of purification; in the same way, Paul may have been considered unclean for intermingling with the Gentiles. To demonstrate Paul's commitment to Jewish tradition (1 Cor 9:20), Paul pledged the Nazarite Vow which entailed cutting off hair

and then burning it. The length of time and commitment would vary, but traditionally, the individual would adhere to pledge for 30 days with final seven days of work taking place in the Temple. The purchase of “he-lambs” was expensive so sometimes young men were “sponsored” in commitment.

21:24 Just as the Gentiles did not have to live under the law to become believers, Paul would show the Jews that they did not need to surrender their customs either.

21:25 The Jews were encouraged to maintain their position, but as it was emphasized to the Gentiles, the law was not a pre-requisite for salvation (Acts 15:19-29).

Read Acts 21:26-31 ... Paul’s Visit to the Temple Results in a Jerusalem Riot

21:26 Paul did not hesitate to make amends with his people, the Jews. The next day, Paul joined the four Jews in the Temple to serve the week of purification.

21:27 Paul’s ministry comes to an end as the time of purification nears completion.

21:28 Again, the Jewish instigators prompt mob rule and chaos against believers with false accusations of being victimized by the gospel. Although the anti-Semitism sentiment is profuse throughout history, Paul had a great affection for his people (Rom 9:3). The accusing Jews did not purposefully lie, but instead they assumed through instinct and erroneous reason.

21:29 The outer court of the Temple (“the Court of the Gentiles”) completely surrounded the Temple facility with stone pillars warned of certain death to trespassers as they were carved with messages of “Let no Gentile enter”. The Jewish instigators were probably from Ephesus since that was the hometown of Trophimus (Acts 20:4). Trophimus (“foster child”) had fallen ill and had been left in Miletus (2 Tim 4:20; Acts 20:15-17), so Trophimus might have reunited with the missions team in Jerusalem.

21:30 The Temple shut its doors to further “pollution” especially if Paul were to be killed outside the door (Lev 11:24, 31, 21:1, 11, 22:4). This act of shutting the doors not only obstructed pollutants from the Temple, but also anyone wanting to worship.

21:31 Although the Jews wanted Jesus dead, the Gentiles wanted to save Him (Mt 27:24; Acts 3:13). In the same way, the Jews wanted to kill Paul’s witness, but he was saved by the Gentiles. In the same way, the good news had transitioned from the Jews to the Gentiles.

Read Acts 21:32-40 ... Paul Arrested for Instigating the Jerusalem Riot

21:32 Paul had been beaten by the time the Roman contingent arrived. Each centurion commanded one hundred soldiers, so the intervention was sizeable.

21:33 Paul, the one being beaten by the crowd, was arrested and handcuffed before the commanders asked any questions.

21:34 The accusers of the believers had no honest allegations, so the charges were contradictory and unfounded (Mk 14:56).

12:35-36 Just as with Jesus, the Jewish maniacal mob did not care to listen to the truth. This world is led by falsehoods and propaganda with much contradiction and little intellectual honesty.

21:37 The Commander was surprised to hear Paul speak in Greek (the international language) instead of Aramaic which was used by the Jews or even Egyptian.

- 21:38 Josephus tells of false prophet (an Egyptian Jew) who had led an uprising against Rome in 54AD before his force was defeated by Felix the Roman procurator; the Egyptian Jew was able to escape capture. Symbolically, Paul was in stark spiritual contrast with the rebel: Paul led people into life while the other led to the desert wilderness. The Egyptian led insurgents to revolt while Paul led Gentiles to submission under the will of God. Four thousand reveals an emphasis on “4” which is linked to “testing/trial”.
- 21:39 Paul established the fact that as a Jewish man, he had a right to enter the Temple, and his earthly citizenship was in Tarsus, the most prominent city of Cilicia, which was known for wealth and schools of great learning.
- 21:40 Unwittingly, the very Jews that were attempting to quiet Paul’s ministry had enabled Paul to safely have an elevated platform amidst the Jews of Jerusalem with Roman backing.

21 Acts 22

Read Acts 22:1-5... Paul Shares His Credentials Prior to Conversion

- 22:1 Begins first of five of Paul’s sermons in the closing chapters of Acts. Paul relates to the Jewish spectators in familial terms just as he had witnessed the martyr Stephen do years before (Acts 7:2).
- 22:2 The Jews were respectful of the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, and just as Paul understood when to speak in Greek to the Roman commander, Paul now knew to speak in Hebrew.
- 22:3 Paul was possibly raised in Jerusalem by his sister (Acts 23:16) under the supervision of the well-known rabbi, Gamaliel (the grandson of Hillel) who was nicknamed “the beauty of the Law” (Acts 5:34). The student was identified by his “master/teacher” just as the disciples were identified by Jesus Christ.
- 22:4 Paul continues to identify with the onlookers as one who had also been upset by the gospel and who had persecuted “the Way” (John 14:6; Acts 19:2, 9, 23; 24:14, 22). Paul accentuates his zeal by including women as those he imprisoned as well.
- 22:5 Paul emphasizes his association with the religious leaders (e.g., High Priest, Sanhedrin) before recounting his “Road-to-Damascus” transformation (Acts 9).

Read Acts 22:6-21... Paul’s Testimony

- 22:6 Paul’s fervor had taken him 150 miles north of Jerusalem to Damascus (meaning “Sack of Blood”) which was the capital of Syria (Isaiah 7:8; Amos 5:27). The light (noun) was so bright that it outshone the sun at noon (Acts 22:6). This was a spiritual light from heaven which interrupted the spiritually darkened world surrounding Saul (Jn 1:4-5; Rev 21:23).
- 22:7 Paul had fallen to the ground (Acts 26:13-14) which is the common response when in the presence of the holy, righteous one (Mt 17:6). Jesus knew Saul by name, and called him twice to get his attention. Jesus claims one identity with His body of believers, the Way (Mt 25:40).
- 22:8 Although Paul had recognized Jesus as Lord, Paul had not understood the identity of Jesus Christ. On earth, Jesus was identified as a poor, humble Nazarene (Mt 2:23)

- which carried prophetic value as He became a live sprout (the “netzer”) or branch (Is 4:2; 11:1; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zec 3:8; 6:12).
- 22:9 Just as Paul’s companions witnessed the light without hearing the call of God, so it is with many who have observed the activity of God (e.g. the life of Jesus, the ministry of Paul), and yet were not able to hear or respond to the call of God (Dan 10:7).
- 22:10 At the point of conversion, Paul surrenders his own will to that of the Lord, Who then begins to direct Paul’s future ministry. God continues to motivate His people to action with “get up and go” (Acts 9:11, 10:20) as well as submit to His guidance.
- 22:11 The traveling group may have been walking on foot the entire time (from Jerusalem to Damascus) as the others led Saul “by hand” into the city.
- 22:12-13 Paul emphasizes that Ananias lived according to the law and had a good reputation for doing so. Just as with any new believer, the spiritual eyes were open to the truth of Jesus’ identity after the introduction to Jesus, but God has yet to give additional spiritual insight that comes through His word and counsel (Ananias).
- 22:14 God has appointed believers to: 1.Know His will 2.See Jesus 3.Hear His voice. Jesus is called “the Just” seven times (Mt 1:19, 27:19, Lk 23:50; 1 Pet 3:18; Acts 7:52; 10:22, 22:14).
- 22:15 Paul was instructed that he would “be” a witness as he conveyed his personal transformation and testimony to others.
- 22:16 Paul was directed to pursue three activities: 1.Get up 2.Be Baptized 3.Call on His name
- 22:17 Immediately after his conversion, Paul returned to the Temple which was the same location that he was now being condemned for having entered. Paul experienced a number of revelations from the Lord (1 Cor 15:8; 2 Cor 12:1).
- 22:18 These Jerusalem assailants against Paul were now acting out God’s view of them. One way that the Lord protects His people is to forewarn them when they should evade danger (Mt 2:13).
- 22:19 The cruelty and depravity of the persecution by Paul is now more minutely defined as he includes beating those he persecuted.
- 22:20 Paul knows that he deserves to be persecuted as he had guarded the clothes (Lk 4:24-29) of the killers/persecutors (clothing – Isaiah 64:6) of the martyr Stephen.
- 22:21 God had assured Paul that he would be greatly used in ministering to Gentiles (Lk 4:24-27; Galatians 3:8). While the Jerusalem Jews were denying the truth, God would extend His good news to the Gentiles (Lk 4:24-28).

Read Acts 22:22-30... The Roman Centurions and Soldiers Protect Paul from Mob

- 22:22 The Jews would not accept that the God of their patriarchs was extending His good news to the Gentiles (especially on the grounds of their hardened hearts). The charge against Paul had been that he had offended/affronted the Jews, but in reality, the Jews were angered that they had been passed over for ministry to the Gentiles. Even as the world denies the existence of God, the avowed atheists and agnostics often seem envious of God’s revelation to His people.
- 22:23 Regarding Biblical symbolism, “robes” often represent one’s righteousness while “dust” represents the fallen tangible world. These Jews were stripping off all sense of

decency/uprightness and were spewing worldly tendencies/opinions/philosophies that were greatly misguided.

- 22:24 The commander had not been able to understand the charge against Paul from the chaotic mob, and it is unlikely that the commander understood Paul's defense in Hebrew; therefore, the commander would now utilize torture assuming that Paul was guilty of something and that he would admit his crime. Scourging was an extremely painful beating as the flesh of the back was ripped open with the Roman flagellum (whip-like) which was imbedded with bone fragments and metal (it was commonly accepted that forty lashes could kill the beaten man).
- 22:25 The prophecy of Agabus had been fulfilled (Acts 21:10) as the Jews had bound Paul and turned him over to the Romans (much like the crucifixion of Jesus).
- 22:26-27 The citizenship of Paul would be his way out of torment (Philippians 3:20). The centurion commander is thought to be Claudius Lysias (Acts 23:26).
- 22:28 The commander questioned Paul's citizenship because the price was so immense, but just as believers had been reborn into the family of God (Jn 3:3-7; 1 Pet 1:23), Paul had been born a Roman citizen instead of attempting to earn it. An individual could either be born into Roman citizenship, adopted into citizenship or pay themselves. Paul's citizenship was superior as he was born as a Roman citizen.
- 22:29 Those who had arrested Paul realized that they had now broken the law by binding a Roman citizen who had not been found guilty.
- 22:30 The commander now called the Sanhedrin "to task" as the Jews had caused the commander to violate the law. The Sanhedrin did not usually meet with Gentiles, but the commander ordered them to convene. The commander still did not understand the charge against Paul.

22 Acts 23:1-11

Read Acts 23:1-11... Paul Does Not Recognize the High Priest before the Sanhedrin

- 23:1 Paul focused and looked purposefully at his accusers with "intention" as he referenced the Sanhedrin "brothers" and denied conscious guilt before God. Paul had wholeheartedly followed his conviction before and after his conversion.
- 23:2 Ananias ("the grace of God") had a reputation of being a glutton, tyrant, bigot, and murderer; Ananias was a Sadducee who was knifed after hiding in the sewer during the Roman/Jewish War.
- 23:3 At a trial that was meant to ensure justice, Ananias had acted hypocritical (unjust) in having Paul struck for relaying innocence. A "whitewashed wall" was a filthy wall that had been painted over instead of cleaned; Ananias looked clean on the outside, but was darkly polluted inside.
- 23:4-5 This lack of understanding by Paul is often attributed to his poor eyesight and the length of time that he had been away, but in reality, Ananias was no longer the true "High Priest" because Jesus assumed that position. At the crucifixion, the Jewish High Priest was so irate that he tore his robe (Mk 14:63) breaking the law (Lev 21:10) in contrast to the robe of Jesus - who is the believer's high priest (Heb 7:26-8:1 & 9:11) - which was kept intact (Jn 19:23-24). The robe of Jesus given by tetrarch Herod Antipas (Lk 23:11) ended in Gentile (Roman) hands just as the "robe of righteousness" (Is 61:10; Ez 44:19; Gal 3:27) would move to the Gentile church.

- 23:6 Ananias was a Sadducee while Paul had been raised a Pharisee. Paul felt that Ananias was judging him unfairly because of Paul's convictions of the afterlife; indeed, Paul had abandoned any worldly indulgence and ambition to spend eternity with the Lord.
- 23:7 Both the Sadducees and Pharisees often focused on intellectual debates instead of truth. It was possible to be a believer and a Pharisee who believed in following the law of Moses while realizing that only Jesus Christ offered salvation.
- 23:8 Similar to much of modern society, the Sadducees believed that reality consists only of this world without afterlife (Acts 5:17-19 & 6:15). The Pharisees are similar to those who live according to a certain standard of conduct believing that they are good enough to enter heaven by their self-effort alone.
- 23:9 Jewish justice became increasingly unwieldy as mob rule re-occurred even at these prestigious ranks. Passion, conjecture and opinion drove the course of justice just as it does in modern times.
- 23:10 The commander had been thwarted again as he had to send soldiers to save Paul just as he had done the prior day.
- 23:11 Jesus is recorded as saying to "be of good cheer" seven times in Scripture (Mt 6:50, 9:2, 22; 14:27, Lk 8:48, Jn 16:33, Acts 23:11), and the Lord bolstered Paul as he was prepared to testify to much more important men than these local elitists.

23 Acts 23:12-35

Read Acts 23:12-22... Paul's Nephew Reports the Jewish Plot to Kill Paul

- 23:12 The Jews would not be the ones to kill Paul's message, and as such, they would remain under the curse. This was a new day for Israel as they had denied the gospel and spiritual food/drink would be unavailable to them.
- 23:13 As the number four represents "testing/trial", so too was Israel now entering a time of struggle with the broad diaspora.
- 23:14 Just as the religious leaders had exploited the Jewish public any number of times (Mt 27:20), now the masses were influencing the leadership to connive and mislead.
- 23:15 Religious leaders were now being educated on the craft of deceit and ambush in which they must have agreed to participate (Acts 23:20).
- 23:16 Paul's nephew was probably a young child (23:19), and this child would be used mightily to save the testimony of Paul for Rome. God could have saved Paul through His sovereign power, but instead, God used a little boy to accomplish His will. At that time, it was not uncommon for friends and family to have access to a prisoner to provide food; the incarcerated without external support would often starve.
- 23:17 Paul's ambition was not death, but instead to "do the will of the Father", and if that resulted in death, so be it. Paul did not send direction for any logistics to be changed, but instead, Paul wanted the truth to be shared about the ambush.
- 23:18 Paul's identifying characteristic was that he was a "prisoner"; more than physical confinement, Paul was a prisoner of the Lord (Eph 4:1; 2 Tim 1:8; Philemon 1:1).
- 23:19 The commander seemed to understand the nature and sensitivity of the information as he secretly spoke to the boy while walking together. Some meet secretly to kill while others conspire to save.

- 23:20-21 The young person told the commander how the Jews were plotting to use him for their own purpose of killing one of his prisoners.
- 23:22 The commander seems to understand the nature of the Jews as he doesn't question the reliability of the source, but instead accepts the report as true and makes appropriate preparations.

Read Acts 23:23-35... Paul Transferred to Caesarea for Trial Under the Proconsul Felix

- 23:23 Paul's departure from Jerusalem left the Jews in the darkness of night while Paul was escorted by 470 soldiers prepared for battle.
- 23:24 Paul would not have to walk out of the city, but instead, he would ride on horseback out of Jerusalem to Caesarea seventy miles away.
- 23:25 Beyond the protection and transportation (i.e. horseback), Paul also traveled with an authoritative letter that supported Paul's innocence (Acts 23:29).
- 23:26 "The most excellent governor" is a title, but Felix had a reputation of cruelty, lust, dissension for profit although also known for his political savvy. Felix was first slave to be freed and later become a Roman Governor. He was "freedman" just as those who had stoned Stephen (Acts 6:9).
- 23:27 The commander, Claudias Lystras, still felt vulnerable for his initial treatment of Paul who was Roman by birth (Acts 22:25-29). The commander was now attempting to make amends and slanting the event as if he had realized a Roman citizen was in trouble and protected him from the riotous Jews.
- 23:28-29 The recount of Claudias acquits Paul of the charges, but, as was the case with Christ (Lk 23:4; Acts 3:13-14), Paul remained in chains to be found innocent repeatedly for years to come (Acts 25:25-27).
- 23:30 Not only did Claudias send Paul, but he also told the accusers to "tell it to the judge" in Caesarea, so that Claudias would not have to deal with them. The case had been moved to a Roman Court in Caesarea and was no longer a local matter.
- 23:31 Paul was taken to Antipatris (meaning "for") which was 35 miles from Jerusalem (halfway to Caesarea). Antipatris is mentioned only this once in Scripture and was a city constructed by Herod the Great as a tribute to his father, Antipater.
- 23:32-33 Paul and the gospel message had now left the Jewish control for Gentile, and the Jews were left to the power of the Roman army which would decimate them within two decades.
- 23:34-35 The province determined the type of treatment and judicial process that the prisoner might receive. Herod the Great had constructed a number of grand palaces, and this one had been transformed into a "praetorium" that was the official residence of the Roman governor; it is likely that Paul had very comfortable quarters while incarcerated in Caesarea.

24 Acts 24

Read Acts 24:1-9... High Priest & Jewish Elders Bring Charges Against Paul in Caesarea

- 24:1 After five (judgment/mercy) days the high priest came down (from an altitude of 2550 to sea level) with a lawyer (Tertullus – a Roman name meaning "third"). Religious leaders now turned to worldly professionals to accost the work of the Lord.

- 24:2 Although Felix was a former slave of Cilicia (Paul's home province) who had a reputation of corruption and anger, Tertullus flattered without conscience. The policies of Felix resulted in turmoil instead of peace; Felix would be removed from this office in less than two years (Acts 24:27).
- 24:3 The term "most excellent" was a title reserved for only the highest of government officials.
- 24:4 Tertullus hoped to use flattery to encourage a brief trial with swift punishment for Paul.
- 24:5 The charges against Paul described him as: 1.a plague 2.an agitator among the Jews 3.a ringleader of Nazarenes.
- 24:6 Paul had spent seven days in the Temple during the Nazarite time of purification, but (Acts 21:28). Jesus had also been accused as transgressing against the worldly temple (Mt 26:61, 27:40).
- 24:7 Although the Jews had been the violent aggressors, Tertullus hypocritically accused Lysias as retribution for his interference.
- 24:8-9 Tertullus continues to flatter Felix as the other Jews join in wrongfully condemning Paul.

Read Acts 24:10-21... Paul's Defense to Felix in Caesarea

- 24:10 Paul emphasizes that the tenure of Felix must translate into recognition of poor Jewish conduct.
- 24:11 The timeframe had only been twelve days (very little time to cause any disruption of consequence), and Paul had come to worship in the Temple.
- 24:12 Paul's ministry had begun with arguing apologetics after his conversion (Acts 9:29-30), but now Paul had matured to a message of grace as he revealed Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 16:25) by using the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 17:11).
- 24:13 Just as in modern times, no evidence is brought against God's servant, but he stands condemned by the world through assertion instead of fact because of their hatred for Jesus.
- 24:14 Believers at that time were called "the Way" (Acts 24:22), Paul worships the Jewish (Old Testament) God (Isaiah 40:3). Characters (people) in the Bible always take the Bible literally, and sometimes, figuratively as well.
- 24:15 The righteous and unrighteous will have a resurrection (Acts 23:6; Rev 20:4-15). The first resurrection (Heb 6:1-2) will be the resurrection of God's people (1 Cor 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Lk 14:14; Jn 6:39-40, 44, 54; Heb 11:35). The second resurrection will be the ungodly (Rev 20:11-15).
- 24:16 Paul speaks twenty times of his conscience as he keeps it clear before God (Rom 9:1; 2 Cor 1:12; 1 Tim 1:5, 19, 3:9; 2 Tim 1:3), but he did not assume that a clear conscience made one right before the Lord's judgment (1 Cor 4:4; 1 Tim 4:2; Titus 1:15).
- 24:17 Although Paul had been charged with attempting to destroy the Temple (Acts 24:6), Paul had actually brought an offering to give at the Temple. Felix may have mis-understood Paul's resources because of this mention of a love offering as Felix hoped for a bribe (Acts 24:26). Actually, Jerusalem had been in a severe drought for some time, and Paul brought good will from believers in Achaian and Macedonia.

- 24:18 The Romans were charged with keeping peace, so it was a serious crime to cause a disruption, but now Felix was tasked with discerning who had caused the disruption – Paul or the Jews who had arrested Paul.
- 24:19 The initial accusers of Paul had recognized him from his mission trips through Asia Minor (Acts 21:27), but they did not come to court for the formal accusation. Instead, a lawyer and some elders took up the cause of prosecutors (Acts 24:1).
- 24:20 These Jewish elders that were present had only experienced their own disruption during Paul’s trial before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30-23:10).
- 24:21 Paul admitted to one incident of shouting, but during this incident, it was the Jewish judicial body that generated chaos because of the Jewish groups internal discord.

Read Acts 24:22-27... Paul’s Remains Incarcerated Under Felix in Caesarea for Two Years

- 24:22 The Bible judges that Felix had a clear understanding of the message of Felix; although Felix had not accepted Christ as Lord, he seems to understand the belief and positive consequences of the Way.
- 24:23 Although Felix kept Paul under guard, Felix was lenient with Paul and gave Paul freedom to communicate even while incarcerated. Paul would ultimately be moved to Rome, but still communicate via letters as he wrote (Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians).

Paul’s Epistles Sequenced in the Bible by length (not chronologically)	
Group 1 50 - 51/52 A.D.	Second Missionary Journey 1 & 2 Thessalonians
Group 2 55-56 A.D.	Third Missionary Journey 1 & 2 Corinthians Galatians Romans
Group 3 60-62 A.D.	First Roman Imprisonment Colossians Philemon Ephesians Philippians
Group 4 66 - 68 A.D. (63-64 A.D.)	Released & Second Imprisonment 1 Timothy Titus 2 Timothy

- 24:24 Paul shared of Christianity’s most sacred element – faith in Christ Jesus. Paul spoke with 19 year old Drusilla (whose father, King Herod had beheaded the Apostle James - Acts 12). This was her second marriage and the third for Felix.
- 24:25 Felix was convicted by Paul’s message; Felix’ wife Drusilla, meaning “watered by the dew”, was also there; Drusilla, born about 38 a.d., was the third and youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I. (Acts 12:1-4,20-23). She had been married to Azizus, King of Emesa (a Syrian city). Felix saw her and desired her to be his wife. He sent a messenger who persuaded her to violate Jewish law and marry Felix. They had a son who died in the 79 a.d. eruption of Mount Vesuvius in Italy.

24:26 Paul witnesses to Felix instead of bribing him, and because he wanted to do a favor for the Jews, he left Paul in prison for 2 years until his successor arrived. Paul's possibly did have some material wealth because of his past status and occupation (Philemon 1:18-19).

25 Acts 25

Read Acts 25:1-12... Paul Appeals to Caesar as a Defense to Festus

- 25:1 During this time, a (typical) Jewish uprising occurred, and Felix was so intent on maintaining order that he used excessive force and vicious brutality. The Jewish Sanhedrin complained to Rome, and Festus is sent to replace Felix. Caesarea was a port city located on the Mediterranean 70 miles northwest of Jerusalem. The number "three" in Scripture often refers to "revelation/resurrection".
- 25:2 Festus had just recently arrived to govern the province and upon his arrival into Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders pursued their top priority of killing Paul (who had been incarcerated for two years).
- 25:3 Jewish leaders attempted to plan ambush on Paul as Festus was moving Paul from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Festus is new to governing the Jews and considers their request (Acts 25:9); it would be politically popular to acquiesce to the Jewish demands. The Jews requested a favor instead of justice as they were so overwhelmed by organization and politics that they were blind to truth.
- 25:4 Festus does not concede to the Jewish demands immediately as he would be returning to Caesarea where Paul was being held. Festus no doubt had heard of Paul's relocation by night to avoid another plot on his life (Acts 23:23-26).
- 25:5 Festus invites the accusers (who were replaced at the first hearing by a lawyer; Acts 24:1, 18-19) to join him in Caesarea.
- 25:6 The judge, Festus, spends over a week in developing a relationship with these leading Jews as they lobbied for their political ideals. The day after the entourage arrived in Caesarea, the trial began.
- 25:7 The Jews have many unsubstantiated accusations against Paul just as the false witnesses had lied about Christ. (Mk 14:56-59).
- 25:8 Just as with Jesus, the Jews charged Paul of breaking the Jewish law and sins against the Temple (Mk 14:55-64) as well as breaking laws against Caesar (Lk 23:1-4).
- 25:9 Festus obviously understood Paul's innocence or he would have charged him, but as the judge Festus was of political mind in hopes of winning the approval of his new obligations, he attempted to appease the Jews with the false charges. Festus requested whether Paul was willing to be judged by the Jews who were obviously dishonest in their reasoning and biased in their judgments.
- 25:10 Paul knew of the Jewish plans for the ambush earlier (Acts 23:16), and as a Roman citizen, he evades this ambush by appealing to Caesar. Paul alleges that even Festus knows of Paul's innocence. This reflects the level of depravity that God's people, the Jews, had fallen as Paul trusted the judgment of Rome (even the Caesar Nero) over the Jewish judges.

Paul – the "Capital-ist"

The thrust of Paul's ministry was to focus on the capital cities of the time:

Tarsus – Capital of Cilicia
Antioch – Capital of Syria
Ephesus – Capital of Asia Minor
Thessalonica – Capital of Macedonia
Corinth – Capital of Achaia
Caesarea – Capital of Judea
Rome – Capital of Italy

- 25:11 Paul is willing to die if this is just judgment for his actions (Philippians 1:21), but Paul exclaims that if he is innocent, he should be sent to Caesar. Paul was innocent, so he was sent on to Rome fulfilling Christ's words to him (Acts 23:11).
- 25:12 The council did not allow Festus to force a wrongful judicial decision, but instead consulted of a way that Festus could get out of judging an innocent man without offending the condemning Jews.

Read Acts 25:13-22... King Agrippa and Bernice Visit Festus

25:13 Agrippa II (and wife/sister Bernice) visit Festus; Agrippa was the last of the Idumean/Edomite Kings in the ancestry of Herod; Bernice was eldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I. After the early death of her first husband, she married her uncle, King Herod of Chalcis. After his death in approximately 40AD, she began another incestuous relationship, this time with her brother, Agrippa II. Bernice was later briefly married to King Ptolemy of Sicily, before returning to her brother. She thereafter also became the mistress of the emperors Vespasian and Titus (who sacked Jerusalem in 70AD)

Lineage of Herod (Edomite Kings)	
Herod the Great	Bethlehem
Herod Antipas	Beheaded John the Baptist
Herod Agrippa 1 st	Killed James
Herod Agrippa 2 nd	Acts 25:13

- 25:14 Festus presented Paul's case to King Agrippa as a residual (unmet duty) of his predecessor, Felix. Festus was obviously a politician who blamed others while appeasing those he could.
- 25:15 Festus correctly relayed the immoral manner of the Jews who wanted to wrongly put Paul on trial.
- 25:16 Festus lies about his response to the Jews. Instead of defending the Roman judicial system, Festus had attempted to collaborate with the Jews to undermine justice (Acts 25:9).
- 25:17-18 Festus had responded quickly to the Jews regarding the need for a trial (Acts 25:6). Obviously, Festus did not view Paul as offending Caesar.
- 25:19 Even this Jew, Festus, understood that the core of the disagreement between the Jews and Paul concerned Jesus (Mt 10:22, 24:9; Mk 13:13; Lk 21:17; Jn 15:18). Festus believed (as the world) that Jesus is dead, but Paul insisted that Jesus is alive.
- 25:20 Festus did not disclose that his primary motivation was to please the Jews, but instead Festus offered for Paul to be tried by the Sanhedrin because these were Jewish religious matters.
- 25:21 Festus presents himself as being fair to Paul when in fact, Paul requested trial by Caesar when Festus threatened to hand him over to the Jews.
- 25:22 Even before arriving in Rome to testify to Caesar, Paul had now witnessed to three high ranking officials of Rome (Felix/Festus/Agrippa).

Read Acts 25:23-27... Festus Admits Paul's Innocence to King Agrippa and Bernice

25:23 This was Herod Agrippa II whose father had appeased the Jews by killing James (Acts 12). This was more of a media event than a true hearing of justice; just as today

- (e.g., Congressional Hearings, United Nations Discussions), this was more of an entertaining circus than discerning the truth.
- 25:24 The Jews used shouting (assertion) to compel murder (as with Christ – Mt 27:22-25) instead of reason.
- 25:25 Although Paul was innocent, he was still in chains (Acts 23:29, 26:29).
- 25:26 Festus had held Paul in prison because he found no relevant and plausible charges to write-up concerning Paul.
- 25:27 Festus understands the irrationality of keeping Paul as a prisoner without charges, so he now conveys his own responsibility to Agrippa in uncovering relevant charges against Paul.

26 Acts 26

Read Acts 25:1-11... King Agrippa and Bernice Hear Paul's Defense

- 26:1 Jesus had “stretched out His hands” for healing on numerous occasions (Acts 4:28-30), and now Paul would stretch his hand that was shackled in chains (Acts 26:29) to share his testimony as many persecuted followers of Christ did (Jn 21:18).
- 26:2 Paul groups the Jews together in a single category as the ones who were wrongly pursuing him (Acts 2:22-23).
- 26:3 It was King Agrippa's duty to appoint the high priest of Israel as well as oversee the temple in Jerusalem, so he was well acquainted with the ways of the Jews.
- 26:4 Paul had always been publicly known as radically religious, and this reputation followed him from Tarsus to Jerusalem where he studied under Gamaliel (Acts 5:34, 22:3).
- 26:5 Paul had lived as a Pharisee which translates into being too legalistic. Although the Pharisees had great zeal for God's Torah, they had a legalistic tendency to think that works were the basis of salvation and that traditions were as important as the Scriptures.
- 26:6 The Jews were supposed to esteem Scripture and look forward to the coming Messiah, but Paul was now being accused by the Jews of recognizing the Messiah that the Jewish Scriptures foretold. Paul was being accused for being a good Jew in adherence to the beliefs of the patriarchs.
- 26:7 The original Greek word translated "attain" is “katantao”, which means to "arrive". The hope of a Messiah had been given by God to the twelve Jewish tribes, and the tribes continued to hope in that salvation as they served the Lord. According to this verse, there were no “ten lost tribes” of Israel because all twelve are referenced here. Even in modern times, believers who put their faith into action are often judged by their so-called believing peers who claim to believe the Bible but do not.
- 26:8 Paul focuses the objection on Jesus Christ. No sensible Jew (including Abraham – Heb 11:19) would have disagreed with resurrection.
- 26:9 Paul states blatantly that he, like his accusers, once persecuted believers because of the name of Jesus Christ.
- 26:10 Paul (as Saul) had killed believers. Paul may have been a member of the Sanhedrin who vote by using black/white (Rev 2:17) pebbles which is where the term “black balling” originated meaning guilty. Although Paul calls them “brothers” at his trial

(Acts 22:1), the Sanhedrin were usually older men (Paul would have been young) and most were married (1 Cor 7:7).

26:11 Paul had even tortured believers into blasphemy against God while this fury and anger incited him to travel to distant cities just as the Jews of Asia Minor had come a long way to condemn him (Acts 21:27).

Read Acts 25:12-23... Paul's Conversion Testimony and Calling Before King Agrippa

26:12 In Paul's story of the road to Damascus, Paul had been acting viciously under the same authority that was now accusing him.

26:13 Jesus, the Son, outshone the noonday sun by His brilliance (Mt 17:2; Rev 1:16)

26:14 Paul emphasizes that the Lord even spoke to him in Hebrew – the classical Jewish language. The words of Jesus also applied to Paul's accusers who were also kicking against the goad of truth.

26:15 Jesus identified Himself to Paul as being the focus of the persecution, and in the same way, the Jews were persecuting Jesus through their aggression towards His servant, Paul.

26:16 Paul was told to get off of the ground (and his lowly, worldly ways) to be appointed to share, not only his Damascus conversion testimony, but also his on-going testimony as he walked with the Lord.

26:17 At the time of Paul/Saul's conversion, he was under the influence of the mistaken Jews, and Paul was called to minister to the Gentiles. Once again, Paul would be freed from the hands of the Jerusalem Jews as he would be relocated to the Romans Gentiles.

26:18 The message to the Gentiles would be a "three pronged" message: 1) To open their eyes 2) To receive forgiveness 3) To be sanctified by Faith in Christ.

26:19 Paul infers that he had the choice to be disobedient to his calling; believers today have the same opportunity to deny the calling of the Lord. Paul's point is that he was not pursuing personal convictions, but instead was obeying the will of the Lord.

26:20 Paul began by sharing his testimony with those in his immediate vicinity, then to Jerusalem (the capital of Judaism) and then to the smaller, outer parts of the world as defined by Jesus before His ascension (Acts 1:8). Paul's message to the world incorporated three central ideas: 1) Repent 2) Turn to God 3) Do Good ("works worthy of repentance"). The original Greek word for "repent" is "metanoeo", which means to change one's mind or attitude about something. Paul did not want his listeners to just give up something, but to embrace the Lord and pursue worthy works reflecting/befitting the repentance. The works do not drive repentance, but are a reflection of the repentance.

26:21 Paul points out that the Jews caused the disturbance in the temple by arresting him for preaching of Christ the Messiah to the Gentiles.

26:22-23 Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies that the Messiah would 1) suffer 2) rise from the dead 3) proclaim light to Jews and Gentiles

Read Acts 25:24-32... King Agrippa Finds Paul's Defense Compelling

26:24 Paul's sermons were always interrupted. Although the key audience was Agrippa, Festus interrupts with an incorrect judgment. Festus obviously recognized Paul as a

- learned man who had a solid grasp of Old Testament Scripture, but felt that Paul's efforts had driven him insane.
- 26:25 Paul compliments Festus while correcting him that Paul (unlike the judge Festus) had spoken words of truth and good judgment. Paul upheld the cause of the court in truth and good judgment while worldly judges diminished the judicial process.
- 26:26 Paul reminds Festus that Paul is not defending explaining nor himself to the new governor, Festus. Paul is directing his message to King Agrippa who understood the Old Testament Messiah prophecies and the hatred of the Jews towards the Gentiles.
- 26:27 Paul appeals to the authority of the Old Testament, and reminds Agrippa that he should believe the Messiah foretold by the prophets. The defendant is now questioning the judge. An individual might accept the concept of a "higher power" (like Agrippa did), and still deny Christ.
- 26:28 Agrippa is cynical while using the term "Christian" which is recorded only 3 times on the Bible (Acts 11:26, 1 Peter 4:16).
- 26:29 Paul had now concluded his personal defense for his personal salvation and instead shared the gospel directly hoping for the salvation of the judge and jury.
- 26:30 King Agrippa was the master of ceremony, and when he rose to leave, the court adjourned. When Paul redirected his sermon from his testimony and learnings to the personal application of the audience, the listeners (congregation) stopped the proceedings. Many can listen to the truth of God endlessly as long as it does not impact them personally.
- 26:31 Just as with Jesus (Lk 23:4, 14), the world was shown to be persecuting a guiltless man. Some are bound for destruction (Jude 1:6) while believers are bound for the promised land.
- 26:32 Had Paul not appealed to Caesar, the Jews would have ambushed him and killed him under Festus' protection. Instead, the Lord's word would now move to Rome, the capital of the kingdom.

27 Acts 27:1-25

Read Acts 27:1-8... Paul Sails to Crete as a Prisoner Headed to Rome

- 27:1 The "we" is thought to include Paul's personal physician, Luke, who was also handed over to Julius. The Imperial Regiment was the emperor's elite group; *AUGUSTAN REGIMENT* — one of five cohorts, or regiments, of the Roman army stationed at or near CAESAREA. While the apostle Paul was being transported to Rome as a prisoner, he was put in the charge of "one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment". A regiment, or cohort, was made up of about 600 infantrymen. Since Julius was leading an Augustan cohort, he was probably working directly for Caesar, so he would be able to commandeer any vessel large enough to suit his needs and purposes.
- 27:2 Aristarchus meaning "best ruler", and a native of Thessalonica (Acts 20:4), is possibly Paul's slave, but definitely his co-worker (Acts 19:29, Col 4:10, Philemon 1:24), and according to tradition he was martyred during the persecution of Nero. The ship was from Adramyttium (meaning "I shall abide in death") which is a ship building city of Asia Minor on the coast of Mysia (a province in the northwest of Asia

Minor) near the island of Lesbos (Acts 20:14). This ship was a small “coastal ship” that put into port each night.

27:3 Sidon is 70 miles north of Caesarea. Julius most likely understood that there were no formal charges against Paul (Acts 25:26, 26:31), and so Paul was able to enjoy fellowship in spite of incarceration (Acts 24:23). The distance between Tyre and Sidon is 24 miles (Acts 21:3-4).

27:4 The Lord used winds to direct Paul’s journey even when circumstances were completely out of Paul’s control. The winds forced the boat to sail along the coast; the ship would use the island of Cypress to shield them from the weather, but the length of the trip would be twice as long.

27:5 Paul’s hometown of Tarsus was the chief city of Cilicia (Acts 9:11, 21:39, 22:3). Paul’s first mission trip was to Perga in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13). God may have used the force of the wind to force the ship past Paul’s familiar family and friends for encouragement although the verse seems to imply that this was open ocean sailing without the docking at the ports. Myra was a major port that lies directly north of Alexandria, Egypt. The strong wind would prevent ships from sailing directly westward from Egypt, so instead, the ships would sail north from Egypt to Myra and then westward.



27:6 The Alexandrian ship was a larger vessel with the cargo usually being grain; 276 people were on board (Acts 27:37). God had used the wind to bring Paul’s group into Myra at the same time as the Alexandrian ship ported to avoid the wind.

27:7 The distance from Myra to Cnidus was 130 miles which could have been covered in a day if not for the burden of the headwind. In an attempt to obstruct the wind, the boat sailed southwest under Crete. This may have been where Paul left Titus (Titus 1:5) to establish the elders. In the Old Testament, those from Crete were Philistines called Cherethites (1 Sam 30:14; Ez 25:16; Zeph 2:5).

27:8 Fair Harbors was a major seaport of Crete which is located five miles from Lasea (“wise”).

Read Acts 27:9-13... Paul Advises Against Sailing at That Time

- 27:9 The time of year was around September/October since the Day of Atonement was passed.
- 27:10 As usual, Paul offered insight into salvation by warning these men of danger ahead (Acts 27:21).
- 27:11 The centurion had the final authority, and he listened to worldly wisdom and influence.
- 27:12 Another major seaport of Crete that was four hours away, Phoenix (Φοίνιξ – purplish red/crimson), was more suitable for winter docking because of the safety from the wind and the larger port town for sailor entertainment and vices.
- 27:13 The worldly decision against Paul’s guidance initially seemed to have agreeable consequences. Often, people seem to get away with ungodly decisions, but eventually consequences occur.

Read Acts 27:14-25... A Typhoon Hits Paul’s Ship

27:14-15 Winds swept down from 7,000-foot Mt. Ida on Crete, and the only action that the ship could take was to submit to the force of the wind and be driven by it. Euroclydon is translated “The Typhoon”; Euraquilo is the Mediterranean version of a northeaster which thrives on cold air (which turns circular as it meets the warm ocean air) and has hurricane force winds which bring gigantic waves along with precipitation of ice. Winds would blow in excess of 70 miles per hour as the huge waves of the sea are completely white with foam and the air is filled with driving spray which greatly reduces visibility.



- 27:16-17 The winds blew the ship beyond the island of Crete (about 27 miles from Fair Harbors) until they reached a small island of Cauda (meaning “lame”) which obstructed some of the wind. Taking advantage of the slight Cauda barrier, the crew “secured the skiff” which translates into bringing the small, trailing dinghy on board, and then wrapping the hull (body of the boat) with lines. This “cocoon” of ropes would be used to hold the ship together. After binding the ship together, they tossed the sea anchor from the stern (rear) of the ship which would drag behind the ship acting like a brake to slow the ship’s momentum. The sea anchor would drift with the current and, with the sail’s lowered, the boat would not be driven by the wind. Syrtis (meaning “to pull/to lead”) probably refers to “the shoals of Syrtis”, west of Cyrene which consists of two shallow bays (now known as the Gulf of Sidra and the Gulf of Cabes). The sailors tried their best to avoid those shallows with their hidden rocks and their sands ever shifting in the tides and waves. Syrtis may also reference a region of renown on the African Coast that was renowned to be hazardous to ships, but it was 400 miles away.
- 27:18 It was critical to rid the vessel of the objects weighing it down, so that it could ride over the tops of the waves instead of being pulled into their crushing weight. In the same way, believers are told to jettison their lives of worldly encumbrances that can weigh one down in the stormy sea of life (Lk 12:33, 14:33).

- 27:19 Even the gear to drive the ship was thrown overboard as they were now at the mercy of the wind anyway.
- 27:20 Sailors at that time would have had a difficult time navigating without sky lights.
- 27:21 Paul attempts to re-establish his personal credibility by reminding these fearful sailors that he had forewarned them of these consequences.
- 27:22 Paul once again offers advice; the men had lost everything because of their disobedience to Paul, but they could still escape with their lives through repentance (1 Cor 3:15).
- 27:23 Instead of speaking to Paul directly (as on the road to Damascus), God uses an angel to convey a message to Paul. The angel who spoke to Paul belongs to the same God to which Paul belongs.
- 27:24 The angel infers that all sailors and shipmates were under Paul's authority. Paul was afraid along with the sailors, but the angel prophesied of his future to give him peace.
- 27:25 Men can have peace in believing that God will be faithful to His word. While some claim to believe "in" God, Paul believed God. Believers today should seek to know God and not just be satisfied in knowing about Him.

28 Acts 27:26-44

Read Acts 27:26-38... Paul Prepares Shipmates for Rough Waters

- 27:26 While encouraging the sailors, Paul forewarns them that they must experience a disastrous loss before they are saved. Sea often represents the chaotic worldly (Gentile) world system while the land represents Judaism beliefs in a Messiah. Believers are also cautioned that the world will hate them and that they must lose everything.
- 27:27 Fourteen represents fullness ("7") twice over, so they had spent a complete amount of time in the storm-tossed boat. In modern times the "Adriatic Sea" refers to only the upper portion of that body of water that is east of Italy, with the lower portion - between Italy and Greece - being referred to as the "Ionian Sea"; however, in Paul's time, the "Adriatic Sea" referred to the entire body of water east of Italy down to its southern tip. In modern vernacular, Paul's vessel would have been blown around the Ionian Sea near the Island of Malta.
- 27:28 Conventional "soundings" are measurements of depth made by lowering to the bottom of the sea a cord with a dead weight (e.g., lead) at the end and knots at regular intervals. When the dead weight reaches the bottom, the cord slackens and the cord measured. The soundings measured an increasingly shallow depth from 120-to-90 feet causing an alarm reflected in four anchors being used to halt the ship. Believers should also be able to see the signs of the times and prepare for worldly difficulties.
- 27:29 The sailors prayed for light to better manage the beaching of the vessel through the rocky breakers.
- 27:30 The professional sailors began to sneak away on the skiff (smaller boat or dinghy) by deceptively acting as if they were lowering anchors.
- 27:31-32 Paul used the soldiers to maintain order with the professional sea men, so that they all would be saved. The soldiers released the skiff, so that the sailors would not be able to attempt to sneak away again.

- 27:33 The men had fasted throughout the two weeks (Acts 27:21), but they needed strength for this final push to shore.
- 27:34 Paul re-assured the men of certain success in reaching the shore without any harm occurring. The saying of “not one hair on your head will be hurt” continues to modern times.
- 27:35 Jesus frequently blessed and broke the bread before sharing with those in need (Mt 14:19, 26:26; Mk 6:41, 14:22; Lk 9:16, 24:30), and this passage has echoes of the Lord’s Supper. The same God who provided bread for sustenance would provide safety in the storm. This same God who protected and sustained in worldly trials would be able to provide eternal salvation.
- 27:36 In spite of being tossed by the storms for two weeks, Paul’s message encouraged the men and they were restored by the bread that he offered.
- 27:37 Two Hundred and Seventy-Six people is an exact count as every single person had value and worth.
- 27:38 The reason for the entire risky voyage was the sale of the cargo (e.g., wheat), but now they threw it overboard as a complete loss. Wheat (is often symbolic of “believers”) was thrown into the sea (which is often symbolic for world)

Read Acts 27:39-44... Paul Ship is Shipwrecked & Everyone Reaches Shore Safely

- 27:39 The lightened ship would allow it to float higher in the water and get closer to the land before running aground. Good Judean Kings in the Old Testament off-loaded the practices of their fathers so as not to be encumbered, but instead to rise above the chaotic waters; believers should continue to offload their lives from the entanglements of this world. No one recognized the land, but all agreed that it was favourable to their ship (as a beach instead of a rocky area). In modern times, this is known as St. Paul’s Bay in Malta.
- 27:40 The sailors abandoned everything that could slow the ship and headed for shore with as much momentum as they could muster. It was beneficial to have the professional sailors to coordinate this technical effort of grounding the ship instead of sneaking away.
- 27:41 The destruction of the boat was advantageous. The wooden planks of the boat began to tear away providing a source of salvation for those who couldn’t swim to shore. The destruction of the ship also forced the travellers to remain on Malta for three months (Acts 28:11).
- 27:42 The soldiers were unaware that they themselves needed to plan escape (Hebrews 2:3); all (even the sailors) ended up escaping from God’s wrath (27:44).
- 27:43 All of the prisoners (many deserving punishment/death) were saved because of the regard for the one innocent man (Paul as a type of Jesus). Julius did not allow the soldiers to murder the prisoners; the soldiers were just as fearful of being killed by the Roman judicial system as they were of the shipwreck (the Roman soldiers would be held accountable if any prisoner escaped).
- 27:44 This was only one of three times that Paul was shipwrecked (2 Cor 11:25). Sometimes, God destroys the worldly possessions (i.e., the ship) in order to save lives.

<u>Timeline</u>	<u>Pauline Epistle</u>
Seven Epistles written before Acts 28	Romans, Galatians, 1&2 Corinthians, 1&2 Thes, Hebrews
Seven Epistles written after Acts 28	Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 1&2 Tim, Titus

Read Acts 28:1-6... Paul Survives Poisonous Snakebite on Malta

- 28:1 Malta (meaning “Refuge”) is a small island of 10 miles by 20 miles in diameter that lies 60 miles south of Italy. The reference to “we” shows the Luke is still part of the group traveling with Paul.
- 28:2 God had not eased the weather on those who were shipwrecked, but the hearts of the generosity of the Maltese people was remarkable. It does not appear that any favoritism was shown, but that charity was given to everyone.
- 28:3 As Paul added wood to the fire, a serpent attacked him as it felt the heat of the flames. Satan (like the serpent) attempts to stop the ministry of God’s people as he feels the heat of judgment ever approaching (Rev 20:10).
- 28:4 Just as with the friends of Job, believers should be hesitant to judge a fellow believer according to trials and circumstances (Rom 14:13; 1 Cor 4:5).
- 28:5 The viper was shaken into the fire (Mark 16:17-18), so that others would not be endangered by the snake and the snake would face judgment.
- 28:6 God had used this trial of being snake bitten to immediately turn the attention of all of the natives to the power of God in Paul’s life. When the world observes the power of God, they tend to elevate the minister instead of the message (Acts 14:12); it is important for believers to give God the glory.

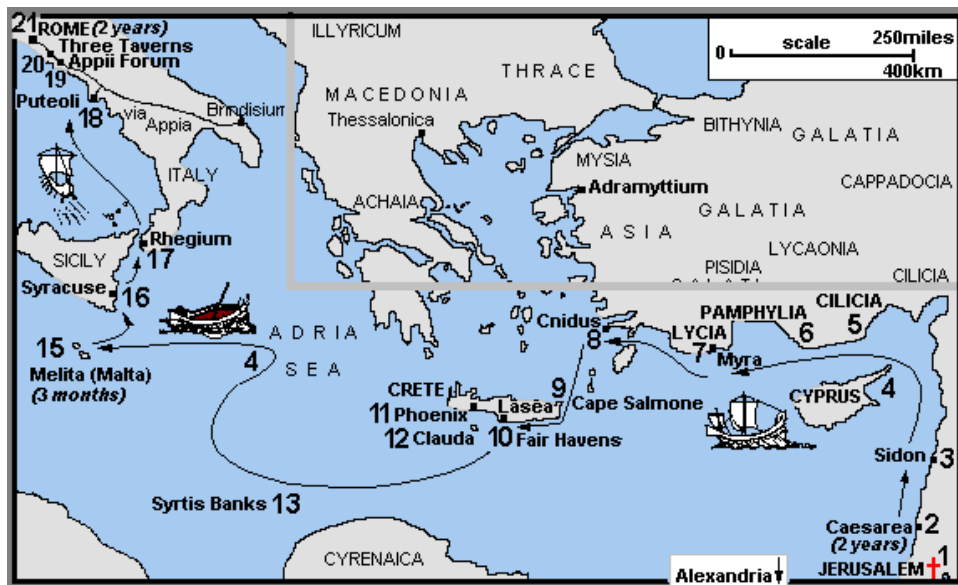
Read Acts 28:7-10... Paul Honored for Healing Ministry on Malta

- 28:7 Even the leading man of the island, Publius (meaning “popular”), was hospitable to those who were shipwrecked as he entertained them for 3 days. Had Publius not been generous, Paul would have not known nor had access to heal the father of Publius.
- 28:8 As a doctor, the author of Acts (Dr. Luke) understood the ailments of Publius’ father. Malta fever is an infectious disease of farm animals that is sometimes transmitted to humans causing infertility and death. This illness is transmitted by contact with contaminated food, water, and excrement. The Greek term for “healing” in this verse is “iasato”.
- 28:9 The Greek term for “being cured” in this verse is “etherapeuonto”. Paul healed; Dr. Luke cured. The different term in this verse implies medical treatment instead of the supernatural healing of the father of Publius. This shows the compatibility of medical treatment and spirituality; of doctors and prayers; of medication and faith.
- 28:10 The Maltese people understood their weaknesses and illnesses and came for healing; in the same way people must recognize their needy state and come to the “great Physician” for healing from sin. Paul no doubt capitalized on the attraction of

physical treatment to emphasize the need for spiritual treatment. The people returned in kind as they provided generously for Paul and his companions (1 Cor 9:6-14; 1 Tim 5:17-18).

Read Acts 28:11-15... Paul Arrives in Rome

- 28:11 “Twin Brothers” was a common theme as a representation of Greek Dioscuri (the twin sons of Zeus), but they also represent Gemini which is symbolic of dual nature – good/bad; yin/yang; spiritual/physical. The sailors may have respected (or worshipped) the mythical twin gods of sailors, Castor and Pollux revealing that idolatry was ubiquitous (even on the seas).
- 28:12 Syracuse (meaning “that draws/pulls violently”) was the capital city of Sicily located on the eastern shore.
- 28:13 The ship sailed 90 miles north from Syracuse to Rhegium (“rupture/fracture”) was Paul’s first stop in Italy on the southwest coast which lasted only a day before being blown northward 230 nautical miles to Puteoli (“little wells”) which was a cargo port for Rome.
- 28:14 The word of the Lord had already spread this distance well before Paul’s arrival (Romans 1:7-12). This fellowship was given time to enjoy as the cargo ship was being unloaded.
- 28:15 The promise of the Lord had been fulfilled (Acts 23:11), and Paul was greeted with fellow believers to strengthen him after his journey. God faithfulness caused Paul to have gratitude towards the Lord and courage towards the men in this world. Several groups of believers set out to welcome Paul; one group met him from the “Forum/Market of Appius” which was on the road, the Appian way (43 miles from Rome) while the other awaited Paul at the town of Three Taverns (10 miles from Rome).



Read Acts 28:16-22... Paul Meets with Jewish Leaders in Rome

- 28:16 The centurion (who may have become a believer on the voyage) turned Paul over to the Captain of the Guard. Paul was a prisoner without charges (Acts 25:26) who had requested to come to Rome, so he was treated preferentially and not put into prison with other inmates. Just as in Caesarea, Paul was guarded for Paul's security as he witnessed about the gospel of Jesus (Acts 23:31-35).
- 28:17 Three months on Malta (28:11); three days on Syracuse (28:11); one day on Rhegium (28:13); seven days on Puteoli (28:14); three days at Rome (28:17) before speaking to the leaders of the Jews in Rome. Since Paul was under house arrest and could not go to them, Paul proactively called these leaders together to hear his testimony.
- 28:18-19 Paul conveys to the Jerusalem Jews that the Romans Gentiles had found him innocent much as Pilate had found Jesus innocent (Acts 3:13-14).
- 28:20 The "hope of Israel" was the Messiah prophesied about in the Old Testament to bring salvation to God's people.
- 28:21 The Jerusalem Jews had not disparaged Paul's testimony to the Roman Jewish leaders.
- 28:22 The Roman Jews considered Christianity as a "sect" (sub-group) of Judaism who believed that the Messiah had come in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christianity – The Oldest Religion

The modern world undermines Christianity as a young religion, but the Roman Jews understood the First Christians to be a “sect” of the oldest religion, Judaism (Acts 28:22). Paul supported this belief by showing that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the prophesied Jewish Messiah that Israel had expected since Abraham (2,500 BC).

Religion	Origin
Aladura	Various prophet-healing churches founded since c.1918, West Nigeria.
Asatru	Revival of Norse and Germanic paganism, 1970s Scandinavia and USA.
Bahá'í Faith	Founded by Bahá'u'lláh, 1863, Tehran, Iran.
Buddhism	Founded by Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) in c. 520 BC, NE India.
Cao Dai	Founded in 1926, Vietnam by Ngo Van Chieu and others based on a séance.
Chopra Center	Founded by Deepak Chopra in 1991, California
Christian Science	Founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879, Massachusetts.
Confucianism	Founded by Confucius (551–479 BC), China
Deism	Popularized in the 18th-cent. Enlightenment under Kant, Voltaire, Paine, Jefferson, etc
Druze	Al-Darazi in 11th century, Cairo, Egypt. Roots in the Isma'iliyya sect of Shia Islam.
Eckankar	John Paul Twitchell in 1965, Las Vegas.
Epicureanism	Epicurus in c.300 BC, Athens.
Falun Gong	Li Hongzhi in 1992 in China
Gnosticism	Various teachers including Valentinus, 1st–2nd cents. AD
Hare Krishna	Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, 1966, USA (roots in 15th-century Hindu movement)
Hinduism	Indigenous religion of India formed of diverse traditions with no single founder. The oldest of ancient Sanskrit texts originates in 1700 BC
Islam	Muhammad, 622 AD, Saudi Arabia
Jainism	Mahavira, c. 550 BC, eastern India
Jehovah's Witnesses	Charles Taze Russell, 1879, Pittsburgh
Mayan Religion	c. 250 AD (rise of the Mayan civilization)
Mormonism	Joseph Smith, 1830, New York, USA
New Age	Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Annie Besant in the 19th C; Alice A. Bailey (1880–1949)
New Thought	Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802–66) and others, late 19th century, USA.
Rastafari	Marcus Garvey (1920s, Jamaica) /coronation of Haile Selassie (1930, Ethiopia)
Scientology	L. Ron Hubbard, 1954, California
Seventh-day Adventists	Founded 1863 in New England; Ellen White, Hiram Edson and Joseph Bates
Shinto	Indigenous religion of Japan originating in 285AD.
Sikhism	Guru Nanak, c. 1500 AD, Punjab, India.
Stoicism	Zeno in c.313 BC, Athens.
Taoism	Lao-Tzu, c. 550 BC, China.
Unification Church	Sun Myung Moon, 1954, South Korea.
Unitarian Universalism	Formal merger of Unitarians and Universalists in 1961, USA.
Wicca	Founded early 1900s by Gerald Gardner.
Zoroastrianism	Zoroaster in c.6th cent. BC, Persia. Official religion of ancient Persia.

Read Acts 28:23-31... Paul Shares Good News Freely

28:23 Paul instructed the leading Jews to return on a scheduled day with more numerous Jews to listen to the gospel of Jesus. Paul focused his message on the prophecies of the Pentateuch (written by Moses) and the books of the Prophets as they had been fulfilled by Jesus (Lk 24:27).

28:24 Some of the leaders did accept the gospel message and believe on the Jesus as Christ.

28:25 The Roman Jews had a willingness to listen to the gospel message from Paul until he quoted another Old Testament Scripture that did not prophecy about Jesus (the coming Messiah), but instead it prophesied about the hardness of these Jewish hearts.

28:26-27 The Jewish response to the message of Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 6:9-10) just as the Jews had rejected the words of Jesus (Jn 12:37-41; Mt 13:10-13; Lk 8:18; Rev 22:11).

28:28 The salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46, 18:6, 22:18 & 21)

28:29 The Jews disliked the Gentiles and rejected the gospel message after Paul exclaimed that the Messiah's salvation would extend to the Gentiles (Lk 4:24-28; Acts 22:21-22). However, the Jews argued over Jesus' fulfillment of the prophecies in spite of their personal Judaistic opinions.

28:30 Paul welcomed everyone who came to him seeking the truth, and for two thousand years since Jesus rose again, the gospel message has continued to be sought. Believers should also welcome the world as opportunities for sharing about the love of Jesus arise.

28:31 Paul's message was twofold: 1. The kingdom of God which reflects His Lordship and rule 2. The Lord Jesus Christ who is not only absolute Lord, but also the Messiah (Christ) who paid the penalty on the cross for our sin.

The last word of the book of Romans is "unhindered" which speaks of the freedom in the Lord. This is referenced as the "unfinished book of Acts" because the church ("the Way") continues to minister through the chapters of the ages until the Lord comes.

The Emperor dismissed Paul, and Paul spent 2 years with established churches in Spain and Rome, but then he was imprisoned again (2 Timothy), put into the Mamertine Prison and beheaded.