

A Study of Acts

Robert Harkrider wrote these points about Acts:

1. Acts furnishes the testimony of those who were personal witnesses of the life of Christ. We can see how they fearlessly bore witness and preached the gospel during the first 30 years or so after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
 2. Acts gives us understanding about the church: its beginning, how to become a member, its organization, its mission and work, its growth, its reaction to persecution.
 3. Acts reveals the work of the Holy Spirit in the scheme of redemption. It shows how the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit and later imparted miraculous gifts through the laying on of their hands. It shows how that through the preaching of the inspired word, men were convicted of their sins and converted to the Lord.
 4. Acts provides the record of what sinners were told to do to be saved. The same details are not repeated each time inspiration describes the different cases of conversion, but by comparing the details that are specified, one can thereby conclude the full message that must have been preached to all sinners.
 5. Acts supplies the historical setting for most of the other books of the NT and thereby gives insight into a proper understanding of their messages.
- Comparing Acts 1:1-4 with Luke 1:1-4 reveals the authorship of both books.
 - The spread of the gospel in Acts:
 - Acts 1-7 – The gospel in Jerusalem.
 - Acts 8-12 – The gospel in Samaria and Damascus.
 - Acts 13-28 – The gospel throughout Asia Minor and into Rome.
 - It could also be divided into two sections:
 - Acts 1-9 – The gospel among the Jews.
 - Acts 10-28 – The gospel among the Gentiles.
 - The title could be “Some of the Acts of Some of the Apostles.”

Chapter 1 – The ascension, choosing an apostle.

- Verses 1-3 – Introduction.
 - Acts begins with the Great Commission (v. 2) and the evidence (infallible proofs – Lk. 24) that Jesus provided between His resurrection and ascension.
 - During those 40 days He spoke to them about the Kingdom of God. No doubt this was done to clear up their misunderstandings of the Kingdom.

- Verses 4-8 – The command to wait in Jerusalem.
 - For 3 years He, John, the 12 and the 70 had been preaching, “the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. The OT spoke of the Kingdom of God originating in Jerusalem with signs and wonders (Isa. 2:1-4; Joel 2:28-32).
 - The promise from the Father was the promise of them being filled with the Holy Spirit and it would take place in Jerusalem. “Religions which were launched from Boston, Rome, Salt Lake City, or anywhere else on the face of the earth except ‘from Jerusalem’ cannot be identified with the word of the Lord” (JB Coffman).
 - Acts 2:1-4 will define the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the “power” they would receive.
 - Acts 1:6 indicates (1) the apostles still misunderstood the kingdom and (2) the kingdom was yet future.
- Verses 9-11 – The ascension of Christ.
 - Luke 24:50-53.
 - His return will be literal and physical, just as His departure was.
- Verses 12-14 – The apostles and other disciples gather together in Jerusalem.
- Verses 15-26 – Another apostle is chosen to take Judas’ place.
 - OT Scriptures we fulfilled – Ps. 41:9; 69:25; 109:8. The fact that these events were prophesied does not mean Judas was compelled to betray Christ apart from his own willpower. He confessed the sin (Matt. 27:4).
 - Judas had “obtained part of this ministry.” He possessed the same power and authority the others did (Matt. 10).
 - Two requirements to be an apostle: (1) he had to be with them from the baptism of John and (2) he must have been with them at the ascension.
 - Only two of the 120 are mentioned – Barsabas and Matthias (v. 23).
 - The choosing was done through prayer and the casting of lots and Matthias was chosen.
 - “And he was numbered with the eleven apostles” leads us into chapter 2.

Chapter 2 – Pentecost and the birth of the church.

- Verses 1-4 – The fulfillment of the promise from the Father (Lk. 24:49).
 - *Pentecost* means *fiftieth* and was a Jewish feast celebrated fifty days after the Passover (Lev. 23:15-21). It was always on the first day of the week (Lev. 23:15-16).
 - The apostles being “filled” with the HS is equivalent to the baptism of the HS (Acts 1:5). This filling, or baptism, gave them the ability to speak in other human tongues as evidenced in verses 6-11.
- Verses 5-13 – The effect of the baptism of the HS.

- Verses 6 and 8 use the term *dialektos* meaning, “speech or language of a particular nation.” The miracle was with the speakers, not the hearers.
 - Those on Jerusalem were “Jews and proselytes” (v. 10). A proselyte was a Gentile who had converted to Judaism.
- Verses 14-21 – Peter referenced Joel 2 to explain what was happening. “Last days” is a reference to the Messianic/Kingdom age (Isa. 2:2-3; Heb. 1:1-2). This new age would be miraculous (v. 17-18). The beginning of the Christian age signified the end of the Mosaic age/system (v. 19-20; Isa. 13, 34; Jer. 4; Eze. 32). This new age would be the age of salvation in Christ (v. 21). “Calling on the name of the Lord” = salvation – v. 37-38 explains this.
- Verses 22-28 – Peter quoted Psalm 16:8-11 in an effort to show the Jews that Christ had been raised from the dead. They were guilty of murdering the One who had been “attested (proved by demonstration – Jn. 11:45-48) by God” (v. 22). Verse 23 shows that the death of Christ was determined (deliberated and decided) before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20).
- Verses 29-36 – David was not speaking of himself in Psalm 16. He is dead and buried (v. 29). Christ is the only one who died and “did not see corruption.” David knew that God had promised him a “seed” who would come and sit on his throne (2 Sam. 7:12-13; Lk. 1:32-33). Jesus is at God’s right hand and the HS has come and fulfilled God’s promise (v.32-33). Peter quotes another Psalm (110:1) to prove further that the OT spoke of the Jesus that they had just crucified (v. 34-36). Lord = Master, Christ = Messiah.
- Verses 37-41 - The audience’s response to the “sermon.” What shall we do? They were now convinced of their guilt and realized that something needed to be done. Verse 38 is the answer. *Baptize* is from *baptize* meaning, “to dip, immerse.” Notice Luke 16:24 and Revelation 19:13.
 - The “gift of the Holy Spirit.” Many different views – a miraculous indwelling, a non-miraculous indwelling, a gift given by the HS (salvation or miraculous abilities).
 - Personally, I believe it is a reference to the miraculous abilities those first century Christians would receive – Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17; Eph. 3:7; 4:7.
- Verses 42-47 - The continued response of the 3,000.
 - Continuity is essential – v. 42.
 - Reaction to the miraculous evidence – v. 43.
 - Their care for one another – v. 44-46. This is not inspired support for Communism or Socialism. Political communism is state imposed equality. This was voluntary giving and distribution to those who were in need (Acts 4:32-5:11). These verses are *descriptive* of what was being done to help the needy, not *prescriptive* in that it is a command.

This was not *class warfare* with the government taking control of private property.

- Their image in Jerusalem – v. 47.
- God's activity – v. 47.

Chapter 3 – Peter and John heal a man in the temple.

- Verses 1-10 – The miracle.
 - We do not know how much time has passed since the events of Acts 2. This event took place at about 3 PM. Notice verse 2 – significant because those who came to the temple would know who this man was and that he was “lame (crippled) from his mother’s womb.”
 - What was he expecting (v. 5)? His healing was dependent upon his faith (v. 3-5). Peter knew what he was expecting (v. 6).
 - This was not a progressive healing/miracle (v. 7). The healed man did not lay down and convulse (v. 8). The reaction of the people (v. 9-10).
- Verses 11-26 – People gather and Peter preaches to them.
 - This man was healed by the power of Jesus Christ (v. 11-16).
 - God glorified Jesus and it is through faith in His name that this man was healed (v. 13a, 16).
 - Whose faith? Not the lame man’s faith (v. 3, 5). It was Peter’s faith in Jesus and the power that he received when baptized in the HS (v. 6b).
 - The people who were witnesses of the miracle were guilty of delivering up and denying the Holy and Just One (v. 14), and asking for a murderer to be released by Pilate. Jesus is called the “Prince of life” (v. 15). He is the originator or author of life. Rev. 3:14; Heb. 12:2.
 - Verses 17-26 – God has fulfilled His promises made in the prophets.
 - Ignorance (v. 17) – Many knew exactly what they were doing and to Who they were doing it. Others were carried away in a mob-like hysteria.
 - Verse 18 is similar to 2:23. God’s plan of redemption.
 - Verse 19 and “be converted.” Converted is from a word (*strepho*) that means to turn around, to turn. We must repent and be turned so that our sins may be blotted out.
 - Christ is in heaven until the “restitution” (restoration – NKJ) of all things. Paul said He would reign until all enemies are destroyed and the last enemy is death (1 Cor. 15:25-26).
 - Peter references Moses (Deut. 18:15-18), Samuel (2 Sam. 7), and all the prophets – that they all had foretold of “these days.”
 - He is referring to the fact that they (and we) are living in the days of being turned from iniquity by Jesus Christ (v. 25-26).

4:5-22 – Peter and John respond to their arrest and are released.

- The Sanhedrin was composed of 72 men - 24 chief priests, elders, scribes. Jewish tradition traces this back to Moses appointing 70 men to help him judge Israel (Num. 11).
- 4:14-17 let us know that the healed man was present as well.
- In response to the question of their authority (v. 7), Peter responds by the inspiration of the HS (v. 8-12). This is exactly what Jesus told them would happen (Matt. 10:17-20).
- The physical healing (v. 10) and spiritual salvation (v. 12) both proceed from the same source (v. 11 – Ps. 118:22). The source the Jews had rejected.
- 4:13-22 – The response of the court to what Peter said. They could not deny what had been done. John 11:45-48.

4:23-31 – Peter and John return to the brethren and pray.

- In their prayer to God they remembered Scripture (Ps. 2:1-2) and applied it to the murder of Christ and their persecution (v. 27-28).
- Notice that they did not pray for the persecution to come to an end, but for boldness to endure (v. 29-30).
- 4:31 lets us know that God was with them in their efforts.

4:32-5:11 – Christians help each other. Ananias and Sapphira lie to the apostles.

- “One heart and one soul” – The heart often refers to the mind, intellect, or emotions. The soul refers to the life of an individual. They were united in what they were doing. Unity and fellowship are not impossible, but we must allow God to draw the lines.
- 4:33 – *great power* = the miraculous (2 Cor. 12:12). *Grace* = the early church was in favor with God and the people.
- 4:34-35 – They took care of one another by selling and distributing based on need. Barnabas is simply a case in point of what the church was doing.
- BUT...a contrast. Not every Christian is what he ought to be.
- Both husband and wife were aware of the fact that they were attempting to deceive the apostles. When they sold their property they had every right to keep a part of what it brought (3-4). Sapphira tells Peter the same lie and suffers the same punishment (v. 7-10).
- How does Satan fill our hearts?
- Peter points out the divine nature of the HS – v. 3-4. If the husband and wife had succeeded in their lie, the authority (power) of the apostles would have been destroyed.
- 5:11 – God’s authority is not to be messed with!

5:12-16 – The miraculous continues.

- It seems, from the context that verse 13 means that people did not “join” (to cleave, join together) to the apostles because of the miracles they were performing. In other words, they didn’t get too close to them. Perhaps part of this was because of what we read in verse 11.
- Notice – “multitudes” – were being added to the church (v. 14). *Multitude* is from *pleithos* meaning, “great numbers, an assemblage.”
- Verse 15 records the response of the people to the apostles’ power.
- The end of verse 16 is important. There were no failures or relapses in the healings that were performed.

5:17-21 – The Sadducees persecute the apostles.

- Why were they “filled with indignation?”
- We are not told here who all was arrested, but verse 29 indicates that it was all the apostles.
- They were to speak “ALL the words of THIS life.” This shows the importance of the gospel message. They obeyed and it was not yet known that they had been released (v. 21).

5:22-32 – The apostles are again arrested and questioned.

- The Sadducees had to be very careful how they handled the situation (v. 26). Their earlier attempt (4:17-18) had failed.
- Notice that the High Priest would not mention the name of Jesus (v. 28).
- God had commissioned them and they would not disobey (v. 29-32). They had the HS who was confirming their teachings and authority with the miraculous (v. 32).

5:33-40 – A plot and a beating.

- Notice their response to the truth of Peter’s statement (v. 33). The response of their emotions was anger. The response of emotions in Acts 2 was guilt.
- This is probably the Gamaliel of 22:3. His decision was based on policy and past events (v. 35-37), not friendship with the apostles.
- Apostles were beaten, threatened again, and released.

5:41-42 – The response to persecution.

- Rejoicing because the suffering was “for His name” – Matt. 5:10-12.
- Note their evangelism – (1) daily (2) public forum (temple) (3) house to house.

6:1-7 – Growth and “growing pains.”

- While Ananias and Sapphira were the first to challenge the authority of the apostles, this is the first challenge to the unity of the church.

- The specific complaint/problem was that the Grecian (Hellenistic – Greek speaking Jews from a Greek background) widows were being neglected by the Hebrews (Jews). Many passages in the rest of the NT show that there continued to be a problem between Palestinian-born Jewish Christians and those who were from different regions.
- The daily ministration (distribution – NKJ) had been taking place since the beginning (Acts 2:44-45).
- The apostles would not stop the proclamation of the word to deal with this when there were others who were capable (v. 3-4). *Honest report* (good reputation), *full of the Holy Spirit* (full of the Spirit's word – they would receive the miraculous later (v. 6), *wisdom* (good sense, sound judgment).
- What happened when a problem arose and was handled with wisdom? Verse 7 answers the question.

6:8-15 – Stephen preaches and is falsely accused.

- He was full of grace (*charitos*) and power (the ability to perform miracles). He is the first, other than the apostles, to be recorded as performing miracles after the establishment of the church.
- Jews from various backgrounds are opposed to what he was preaching (v. 9-10). They *suborned* (v. 11 – NKJ – secretly induced) people to testify against him. When they could not answer his words they attacked him personally and lied about him. This still happens today.
- They arrest him and continue to falsely accuse him (v. 11-14). He may have been saying things about Moses and the law, but he was not blaspheming!
- In his testimony Stephen addresses the Moses and the old law (7:51-53).
- The council did not see an angel, but something of his appearance made them think about an angel. One man commented that perhaps Stephen's being filled with the Spirit of God gave him a "supernatural radiance."

7 – Stephen is permitted to speak in defense after his arrest.

7:2-53 is the record of what he said. He spoke to the Jews (council) about their history of constantly rejecting God and His messengers – just as they were doing with him.

7:2-8 – History from Abraham to Jacob and the twelve tribes.

- Stephen begins with respect for the audience (v. 2). They were all fleshly Jews, descendants of Abraham.
- He referenced what is recorded in Genesis 12:1-3.
- He referenced God's promise to Abraham concerning Isaac and the Promised Land (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-16; 15:1-4).
- He referenced the fact that Abraham's descendants would receive the land after a period of captivity (Gen. 15:12-16).

- He mentions the covenant of circumcision (Gen. 17), and the births of Isaac (Gen. 21), Jacob (Gen. 25:21-28), and the twelve children of Israel (Gen. 29:31-35; 30:3-13; 17-24).
- All of these things were done because God had made a promise to Abraham that would eventually lead to the birth, life, and death of Christ.

7:9-16 – From Joseph to Egyptian captivity.

- He spoke of the sale of Joseph into Egypt (Gen. 37), the favor that Joseph found in Egypt (Gen. 41), and the preservation of the family of Israel (Gen. 42-50).
- Also, like Stephen, Joseph was persecuted for revealing what God said.

7:17-36 – Birth of Moses to deliverance from Egypt.

- The language of verse 17 is important – “when the time of the promise drew near.” This informs us that God had a plan to save Israel and, ultimately, all mankind.
- Verses 17-29 covers Exodus 1-2 – the first 40 years of Moses’ life.
- Verses 30-36 covers Exodus 3-32.

7:37-43 – Idolatry in the wilderness.

- Stephen, in this section, makes the connection between Moses and Christ (v. 37) by quoting Deut. 18.
- He also quotes from Amos 5:25-27 to show that the Jews had turned to idolatry. Many of the OT prophets mention this sin among Israel.

7:44-50 – From the tabernacle to the temple.

- From their journeying through the wilderness to their arrival and establishment in the Promised Land, Israel had the tabernacle.
- The section would cover Exodus 35-1 Kings 8.
- All of these facts – from Abraham to the temple to the rejection of Christ – proves to the council that they were guilty of murdering the One that their own Scriptures spoke of!

7:51-53 – The history of Jewish rejection of God’s prophets.

- We have here what you might call the “practical application” of Stephen’s sermon.
- The persecution of the prophets and the rejection of Christ is equated with resisting the HS.
- “Angels” (Hebrew – *melech*, Greek – *angelos*) can mean messengers.

7:54-60 – The reaction of the council to Stephen’s defense.

- Their hearts were cut and they were so angry they were grinding their teeth at Stephen!
- His words had been inspired by the HS (v. 55).
- Verses 55-56 indicate that (1) God and Christ were aware of what was about to happen to their faithful servant and, (2) by Christ standing, there seems to be an indication of His respect for the first martyr of the church.

- Their violent reaction came because of the truth that Stephen spoke!
- We are introduced to Saul/Paul in verse 58. Acts 26:9-11.
- Stephen possessed the mind of Christ – v. 60.

8 – The gospel spreads beyond Jerusalem because of Saul’s persecution.

- Jesus told His disciples that the gospel would first be preached in Jerusalem, then in Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth (1:8). Judea is the general area of southern Israel that would include Jerusalem. Samaria is north of Judea and south of Galilee.

8:1-4 – Saul’s persecution against the Jerusalem church of Christ and the results.

- Saul was helping to spread the gospel before he even became a Christian! The church’s enemies thought they were destroying the church, but in reality they were helping her grow!
- This was a violent, forceful persecution (v. 3). The scattered took the word with them.

8:5-13 – Philip, one of the seven, takes the gospel to Samaria.

- Philip went “down” to Samaria. Samaria is N of Jerusalem! Jerusalem is 2,474 ft above sea level. Samaria is 957. This serves as one example of the geographical evidences of the inspiration of the Bible.
- He “preached Christ” and performed miracles (6:6). The result – v. 8.
- Simon the “sorcerer” (v. 9-11). He used *mageuo* (magic) to “move people out of their minds” (*existeimi* – bewitch). The people “regarded” (*paid attention to*) him.
- The gospel (v. 12) and the miraculous signs (v. 13) convinced people that Philip was a messenger from God. Verse 12 tells us what it means to “preach Christ” (v. 5).

8:14-25 – The giving of the HS to those in Samaria.

- The Samaritans had been baptized but had not yet “received the HS” (v. 15, 17).
- Two apostles (Peter & John) were sent and it was through the laying on of the apostles’ hands that “the HS was given” (v. 18). Simon understood that this power was exclusive to the apostles (v. 19) and was forbidden (v. 20-21) and needed to repent of and pray about his sin (v. 22-24).
- An interesting note – every time the HS was literally present in the Bible, the miraculous took place.
- Peter and John return to Jerusalem and preach throughout Samaria along the way (v. 25).

8:26-40 – Philip teaches and baptizes the Ethiopian eunuch.

- An angel (v. 26) and the HS (v. 29) instructed Philip to go teach the gospel to a sincere student of the Bible who had traveled 1,500 miles to worship in Jerusalem. Why not do it themselves?

- This eunuch was an important man (v. 27). All men are subject to the gospel.
- He was reading from Isaiah 53 and wanted to know who the prophet was writing about (v. 28-31). Christianity is a taught religion. You're not "born" into a relationship with God – you must be born again (Jn. 3:3-5).
- *Understand* is from *ginosko* meaning "to know." He needed to be *guided* (*hodeigeo*) meaning "to lead the way."
- Philip answered the question by (1) using Scripture and (2) speaking to the eunuch about Jesus (v. 35).
- We do not know the *content* of the message, but we are to the *result* of hearing the message in verses 36-38.
- Preaching Jesus includes preaching baptism. The baptism took place while both were down "in the water" (v. 38).
- The Spirit instructed Philip to preach to the eunuch (v. 29) and now he was "caught away" (*arpazo* – to seize, to snatch away) and was found reaching in Azotus, another name for Ashdod.

9 – The account of Saul's conversion and persecution. Two miracles recorded.

9:1-9 – Saul is confronted by Jesus Himself.

- The persecution was non-stop (v. 1 – still threatening). He was persecuting the church (8:1, 3) and they (it) is referred to as disciples here. Saul didn't discriminate – he arrested men and women.
- Acts 22:1-16 and 26:9-20 give further insight into the events here recorded.
- Who was Saul persecuting? Verses 4-5.
- Saul fasted and prayed for 3 days (v. 9), but was still told to wait on a messenger who would tell him what he "must do." Read Acts 22:12-16.

9:10-22 – The Lord commissions Ananias and Saul responds.

- Ananias was a well-known and influential Christian – 22:12.
- You can learn more about the "Straight Street" (Acts 9:11) on YouTube.
- Saul spent three days in prayer and the Lord knew he was praying (v. 11). Yet, Saul was told that by Jesus that someone still has to tell him something to do (v. 6).
- Ananias had a natural reaction to his commission (v. 13-14).
- Saul was going to preach to both Jews and Gentiles and suffer (v. 15-16).
- Acts 9 records that Saul was baptized (v. 18). Acts 22:12-16 records that he was commanded to be baptized.
- Saul's early days – v. 19-22. The end of verse 17 explains how Saul went from persecutor to one who was proving that Jesus is the Christ. *Prove* is from a Greek word that means, "to cause to come together, to knit together."

9:23-31 – Saul escapes death.

- The Jews remain consistent with their history. 2 Cor. 11:32-33 mentions this.
- As Saul had been in Damascus so far, those in Jerusalem were hesitant to accept him because of his past, even though three years had passed (Gal. 1:15-18). He was only in Jerusalem for 15 days before the Jews tried to kill him (Acts 9:29; Gal. 1:18). Barnabas becomes an important ally to Saul.
- He was sent back to his home town (v. 30). Acts 22:17-21 informs us that Jesus told him to leave Jerusalem and then Barnabas went to get him (Acts 11:25). Galatians 1:21-24 also mentions these events.
- The church now enjoyed a time of peace and growth (v. 31). Perhaps the Jews were following Gamaliel's advice – 5:33-39.

9:32-35 – Peter heals Aneias.

- This event and the raising of Dorcas are leading us to Caesarea and Cornelius (10). The gospel is progressing north. Lydda is about 10 miles NW of Jerusalem.
- "Sick of the palsy" means that the man had been paralyzed in some way.
- As with the miracles of Christ, this was immediate, observable, and undeniable.
- As a result of the miracle many people *turned* (strepho) to the Lord.

9:36-43 – Peter raises Dorcas (Greek – Tabitha is her Hebrew name).

- Verse 36 is the Holy Spirit's description of her!
- Verse 37 defeats the "health and wealth" gospel.
- The disciples heard that Peter was just a few miles away (6-7) and so they sent for him (v. 38).
- Verse 39 tells us something about death – "when she was with them."
- The miracle that Peter performed seems to have been very calm and orderly (v. 40-41).
- The result of the miracle is the same as the previous (v. 42).

A Chronology of Saul's Conversion

Acts 9, 22, 26 along with 2 Corinthians 11 and Galatians 1 reveals what happened when Saul was confronted by Christ.

1. Traveled to Damascus with letters of permission from the High Priest to arrest Christians – Acts 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:12; Gal. 1:13-14.
2. Confronted by Christ on the road and told to go "into the city" – Acts 9:3-8; 22:6-11; 26:13-18.
3. Went into Damascus and fasted and prayed for 3 days – Acts 9:9.

4. Ananias commissioned to speak to Saul and baptized him – Acts 9:10-19; 22:12-16.
5. Saul preaches in synagogues in Damascus and is persecuted – Acts 9:20-25; 26:19-20; 2 Cor. 11:32-33; Gal. 1:16-17.
6. After 3 years Saul went to Jerusalem and tried to join with the disciples – Gal. 1:18-19; Acts 9:26-28.
7. Saul persecuted in Jerusalem – Acts 9:28-30; 22:17-21; 26:20-23.

10 – The gospel goes to the Gentiles by the hand of Peter.

10:1-8 – Cornelius' prayers are heard.

- This event is so significant that we have the events recorded (10) and an account “in order” (11:1-18).
- This is the first Gentile convert to Christianity. His description: Verse 2 - devout (deeply religious, pious), feared God (reverent), gave alms (wealthy and generous), prayed always (regularly); Verse 22 – just (righteous), of good report among the Jews (good reputation).
- An angel, described by Cornelius as “a man in bright clothing” in verse 30, instructed him that (1) God heard his prayers and was reminded of something (2) and that a man named Peter would tell him what he ought to do. Why didn't the angel tell him what to do?
- Peter was in Joppa after raising Tabitha (9:36-43). Cornelius did exactly what he was told to do (v. 8).

10:9-23 – Peter has a vision and goes to Caesarea.

- The vision was for the purpose of helping this Jew see that God accepted the Gentiles into Christ (v. 28-29). Peter's vision reveals two things: (1) animals forbidden to the Jews by the Law of Moses were no longer forbidden and (2) Gentiles were now too subject to the law of Christ. Leviticus 11 addresses clean and unclean animals. The statement in verse 15 would be understood immediately by Peter in reference to meat and later, in reference to Gentiles.
- While he was thinking about what he saw, the men that Cornelius sent show up at the house and the Spirit tells Peter to go with no doubting (v. 20). *Doubting* is from a word that means to discriminate or to show a difference.
- Cornelius obeyed the message of the angel (v. 22) and Peter obeyed the HS (v. 23).

10:24-33 – Peter meets Cornelius.

- Notice the anticipation and excitement of Cornelius (v. 24-25)!
- No man is worthy of worship – not even an apostle of Christ (v. 26).
- Peter referenced the Jewish mindset in verses 27-29. If it was a sin for a Jew to “keep company with” or “go to” a person of a different nation then Jesus transgressed the Law in John 4. The Jews were extremely prejudiced.

- Cornelius explains why he sent for Peter (v. 30-32) and we see the manner in which he obeyed the angel (v. 33).

10:34-43 – Peter preaches the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles.

- It does not matter where we are from. If we reverence God and do what is right we will be accepted by Him (v. 34-35).
- If what many people believe is true – Calvinism – God IS a respecter of persons.
- God spent 1,500 years sending His word to the Israelites in an effort to prepare them for the coming Messiah. That word included the fact that the Gentiles would be accepted by God in this New Covenant (Isa. 60:1-3; 62:2; 65:1).
- People were not ignorant of the man Jesus Christ (v. 36-38).
- Peter, and the Jews (v. 39), were witnesses and messengers of these events (v. 39-42).
- “whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins” (v. 43). The same apostle that told this to Gentiles said to “repent and be baptized for the remission of sins” to the Jews (2:38). Why two different messages?

10:44-48 – The Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles.

- He “fell upon” the Gentiles and the Jewish (of the circumcision) Christians because “the gift of the HS” was given to the Gentiles also.
- This was proof-positive evidence that Jew and Gentile are equal in God’s eyes (v. 34-35).
- Peter’s conclusion – they need to be baptized (v. 47-48).
- 11:1-18 will clarify what and when it happened, which is very important.

A Study of Angels in Acts

Mentioned 18 times:

1. 5:19 – Opened prison doors for apostles and told them, “Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.
2. 7:30, 35, 38 – References to the “Angel of the Lord” who spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 3:1-10).
3. 8:26 – Instructed Philip to go to the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza.
4. 10:3, 7, 22; 11:13 – Cornelius was “warned” (divinely instructed – NKJ) by an angel to find Peter at Joppa.
5. 12:7-11 – An angel woke Peter up, told him to get dressed, and freed him from prison.
6. 12:23 – An angel of the Lord struck Herod because He did not give glory to God.
7. 23:8-9 – The Sadducees do not believe in angels...the Pharisees said, “...if an angel has spoken to him (Paul), we cannot fight against God.”

8. 27:23 – An angel told Paul that no lives would be lost in a shipwreck as he was on his way to appear before Caesar.

The Angel of the Lord in the OT

- Exodus 3:1-15 – refers to Himself as “God” and the “LORD” and “I AM.”

Jesus is referred to as God – Heb. 1:8

Jesus is referred to as Lord – Heb. 1:10

Jesus is I AM – John 8:24, 58

- Exodus 13:21-22, 14:19-20, and 23:20 – The Angel would guide Israel through the wilderness.

1 Cor. 10:1-4 – Christ was with Israel through the wilderness.

- Numbers 22 – Balaam’s donkey saw the angel of the Lord with His sword drawn.
- Joshua 5:13-6:2 – Joshua saw the Captain (Prince) of the Lord’s host with His sword drawn. Holy ground.
- Judges 2:1-5 – The angel of the Lord had a message for the children of Israel.
- Isaiah 63:7-9 (Isa. 6 & Jn. 12:37-41).

11:1-18 – Peter explains to the Jews in Jerusalem about the Gentiles receiving the gospel.

11:1-3 – Jews from Jerusalem “contend” with Peter about Cornelius.

- To this point, we only know of Peter understanding of the acceptance of the Gentiles into the church (10:9-16).
- *Contend* means that they took issue with it or debated with him about it. Had he not received the vision from God he might have felt the same way. A Jew was considered defiled who ate with Gentiles (Lk. 15:1-2).

11:4-18 – Peter explains what happened, step by step.

1. He was in Joppa and received the vision from heaven (v. 4-10).
2. Three men were sent to him from Caesarea and the Holy Spirit told him to go with them. He took six brethren with him and went to Cornelius’ house (v. 11-12).
3. Upon his arrival, Cornelius told him of the message he received from an angel to send for Peter and that Peter would “tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved” (v. 13-14).
4. As Peter “began to speak” the Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles just like He did the apostles on Pentecost (v. 15).
5. This was evidence to Peter and the six Jews who went with him that “God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life” (v. 16-18).
6. Notice this – the Gentiles: heard (10:33), repented (11:18), and were baptized (10:47-48). Same as with the Jews on Pentecost – they heard (2:37), repented, and were baptized (2:38, 41).

11:19-30 – The spread of the gospel after the martyrdom of Stephen.

11:19-21 – Many people turn to the Lord.

- This section records those who were scattered because of persecution. From Jerusalem they went to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. Preaching to the Jews only. Some of them were from Cyrene – Northern Africa.
- *Preaching the word* (v. 19) and *preaching the Lord Jesus* (v. 20) is the same thing.
- “The hand of the Lord” (v. 21) is indicative of His power. This is taught in Mark 16:16-20.

11:22-26 – Barnabas is sent from Jerusalem to encourage and evangelize.

- Notice, *the ears of the church* (v. 22).
- Barnabas saw the grace (*charis* – favor) of God that was with the church in Antioch. He encouraged them to be determined (*purpose of heart*) to stick with (*cleave*) the Lord.
- He was a *good* man (*pleasant, honorable*). Full of the Holy Spirit? Acts 6:3,6; 8:13-17. This is not a reference to miraculous abilities. I believe this is a reference to the fact that Barnabas was a man who was full of the teaching of the HS (Eph. 6:17) and characteristics of the HS (Gal. 5:22-25).
- Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch and they stayed there 1 year. The disciples (*learners, pupils*) were *called* (*chrematizo* – *an utterance, a transaction*). This word is used 9 times in the NT and always refers to something done or pronounced by God (Matt. 2:12, 22; Lk. 2:26; Acts 10:22; 11:26; Rom. 7:3; Heb. 8:5; 11:7; 12:25). Acts 11:26 is a fulfillment of Isaiah 62:2.

11:27-30 – Agabus prophesies of a famine.

- Claudius Caesar reigned from AD 41-54. Josephus, Eusebius, and Tacitus all wrote of a famine that occurred around AD 44-48 in the Roman Empire.
- Verse 29 coincides with other teachings on giving – 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:12.
- Notice that they sent the relief “to the elders.” This is the first mention of elders in the church in the NT.
- This verse also shows that congregations can cooperate with one another.

12 – Persecution of the church and Herod Agrippa’s death.

12:1-6 – James killed, Peter imprisoned.

- The Herod mentioned here reigned as king of Judea from AD 41 until his death in 44. According to history he was able to keep peace between Roman authority and Jewish autonomy in his region.
- We are told that his persecution of the church “pleased the Jews.”
- James is the first apostle to die. He and his brother made a request of Jesus – Mark 10:35-39. It was probably his intent to also kill Peter. Peter was guarded by 16 soldiers (4 quaternions) and chained in between 2 (v. 6)!

- This was happening during *pascha* – Passover – NKJ (Easter in the KJV). Herod wanted to wait until after the Jewish holy day of Passover, not a Christian celebration of the resurrection of Christ (Easter)! An unfortunate translation of the Greek word!
- In verse 5 the Greek reads that prayer was *intensely* or *fervently* being made for Peter at Mary's house. She was the mother of John Mark and the aunt of Barnabas (Col. 4:10).

12:7-11 – An angel frees Peter from prison.

- The angel woke him up, told him to get dressed and put on his shoes, and follow him (v. 7-8). Was not sure if what was happening was really happening (v. 9). He thought he was dreaming.
- *Ward* (v. 10) is a guard post. The angel safely got him out of prison and from Herod's plan (v. 11).

12:12-19 – Peter goes to Mary's house where the church was praying.

- Mary was obviously well-to-do. She had her own house, a servant, and a gate in front of her house.
- Rhoda's response in verse 14 is amusing! History tells us that the Jewish people had some belief in the concept of disembodied spirits (Matt. 14:25-26).
- Herod and the soldiers are perplexed (v.18-19)! Not the first time – 5:17-25.

12:20-25 – Herod dies and the church grows.

- Verses 20-21 might be a good example of what lobbyists do!
- Josephus wrote about this event and said that Herod suffered from terrible abdominal pain and was dead within 5 days.
- The Jews and Herod worked together to stop the church, but did not succeed.
- Barnabas and Saul had bent sent to Jerusalem with relief (11:27-30). They return to Antioch and bring John Mark back with them. He will later become a source of contention (15:36-41).

13 – Barnabas and Saul begin their work.

13:1-3 – The Holy Spirit's call.

- Nothing is known of Simeon, Lucius, or Manaen.
- The Holy Spirit instructed that Barnabas and Saul be set aside for a special work.
- Fasting and prayer is seen elsewhere in the Bible, but is not a specific command for Christians to obey. The laying on of hands (by the other three) is symbolic of the separation of their work.

13:4-12 – Saul and Barnabas, with John Mark, go to Cyprus.

- Their first step was to go to a “ready-made” gathering of religious people (v. 5).

- A *sorcerer* (Greek – magus) was one who used magic or science to get people to follow them (Simon – Acts 8:9). It was not uncommon for political leaders to have men like this with them for advice.
- Sergius Paulus wanted to hear the word of God, but Elymas (Aramaic name of Barjesus) tried to turn him from “the faith” (v. 8)
- Notice “the word of God” (v. 7), “the faith” (v. 8), and “the doctrine of the Lord” (v. 12) are interchangeable. A miracle was performed and the response is recorded in verse 12.

13:13-52 – The gospel makes it to Asia Minor.

- Paul and Barnabas travel from Cyprus (Salamis and Paphos) to Perga and Antioch in Pisidia (Asia Minor). John Mark returns to Jerusalem at this point (v. 13).
- They do the same thing they did on Cyprus (v. 14-15). When given a chance to speak on the Scriptures, Paul does it (v. 16-41).
- Paul began with Israel’s history from Exodus-Joshua (v. 16-19), Judges-1 Samuel 8 (v. 20), and then 1 Samuel 8 through the ministry of John the Baptizer (v. 21-25). Speaking to Jews and Gentiles (v. 16, 26, 42).
- Paul then speaks to them of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (v. 26-37) by referencing several OT passages.
- The application of what he was preaching is in verses 38-41. They could have forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ that they could not find in the Law of Moses, and he warns them of unbelief (v. 41).
- A mixed response: Jews (v. 44-47), Gentiles (v. 42, 48).
- Verse 48 – “ordained (appointed – NKJ) to eternal life.” The word (*tasso*) means, “to put in order, to station, to appoint.” God has appointed the *place* of salvation, not the specific individuals.
- The persecution occurred because the word was being spread (v. 49).
- “Filled with the Holy Spirit” (v. 52). An apostle had been present (Acts 8:17-18).

14 – Paul’s first missionary journey continues.

14:1-5 – The gospel in Iconium (Roman province of Galatia).

- A great multitude of Jews and Gentiles are believing, but unbelieving Jews “poisoned the minds” (NKJ) of some.
- Preaching and the miraculous was taking place (v. 3).
- Paul and Barnabas are persecuted (v. 5).

14:6-20 – The gospel goes to Lystra.

- They continue preaching (v. 7).
- Paul and Barnabas heal a man and are called gods by the people of the city (v. 8-13). The miracle (v. 8-10). The reaction (v. 11-13). Jupiter is the Roman name, Zeus is the Greek name. He was the god of the sky in mythology.

Mercury is the Roman name, Hermes is the Greek name. He was the messenger of the gods.

- Paul and Barnabas refused the attempted worship (v. 13) and told the people they were “men of like passions” (v. 15). The NKJ says, “We also are men with the same nature as you.”
- God has permitted men (nations) to do as they wish, but the evidence for Him is abundant. There is only one true God (v. 17). It was apparently difficult to convince the crowd not to worship them as gods (v. 18).
- Paul is stoned by Jews and left for dead (v. 19-20).

14:21-28 – Paul and Barnabas preach in Derbe and made a return to other places.

- Stoned and left for dead, yet he keeps doing what brought that on (v. 21)!
- From the end of verse 21 through 25 they made return trips to places they had already been and encouraged the believers to remain faithful, even in the face of tribulation. While encouraging churches to remain faithful they also “ordained elders in every church” (v. 23).
- They return to Antioch and report on their trip (v. 26-28).

First missionary journey

Left Antioch (13:1) and went to Salamis and Paphos on the island of Cyprus (13:4-12). They traveled to Perga (13:13) and then to Antioch of Pisidia (13:14-50). Next, they went to Iconium (13:51-14:5). Because of persecution they went to Lysta and Derbe (14:6-20). They then returned to Iconium and Antioch (14:21-24), Pamphylia, Attalia, and Antioch (14:24-26).

A Study of the Holy Spirit in Acts

Mentioned 53 times.

The KJV uses both “Ghost” and “Spirit” to refer to Him. Here is a list:

Ghost – 1:2, 5, 8, 16; 2:4, 33, 38; 4:8, 31; 5:3, 32; 6:3, 5; 7:51, 55; 8:15, 17, 18, 19; 9:17, 31; 10:38, 44, 45, 47; 11:15, 16, 24; 13:2, 4, 9, 52; 15:8, 28; 16:6; 19:2 (twice), 6; 20:23, 28; 21:11; 28:25

Spirit – 2:4, 17, 18; 5:9; 8:29, 39; 10:19; 11:12, 28; 16:7; 21:4

1. 1:2 – Jesus, through the HS, gave commands to the apostles. Jesus was “filled” with the HS and this has a reference to the power and authority given to Him by the Father.
2. 1:5, 8 – The apostles were going to be baptized with the HS soon and given power from God – which was fulfilled in Acts 2:1-4. Luke 24:47-49 contains the promise that Jesus made to them.
3. 1:16 – A reference to the HS inspiring David in writing Psalm 41:9.
4. 2:4 – The fulfillment of the promise from the Father – Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5, 8.

5. 2:17-18 – Peter quotes Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) about the outpouring of the HS. It is a reference to the miraculous. In the immediate context it was a reference to speaking in tongues – 2:6-8, 11, 15-16.
6. 2:33 – A reference to the fact that the HS gave the apostles the miraculous ability to speak in tongues “as you now see and hear.”
7. 2:38 – The “gift of the HS.” This “gift” is defined by the events at Cornelius’ house – 10:45, 47; 11:17. The “gift of the HS” is a reference to the miraculous.
8. 4:8 – The HS enabled Peter to “speak” to those who arrested him and John. A fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to the apostles – Luke 12:11-12.
9. 4:31 – Peter and John return to the brethren and all were “filled” with the HS and spoke the word of God with boldness.
10. 5:3 – Ananias “lied to the HS.” Verse 4 equates lying to the HS as lying to God.
11. 5:9 – Sapphira “tested the Spirit of the Lord” when she lied.
12. 5:32 – Peter and John had been arrested for preaching on Solomon’s porch after healing a man (Acts 3-5). “To those who obey” (5:32) – they had been commanded by an angel to speak (5:20). They were obeying God.
13. 6:3, 5 – The church looking for men who were “full of the HS and wisdom.” The apostles would lay their hands on them after they were chosen (6:6).
14. 7:51 – The Jews had a history of rejecting the HS. This is a reference to their rejection of God’s inspired message from the prophets (v. 52).
15. 7:55 – Stephen was “full of the HS” and was able to see the glory of God and see Jesus standing at His right hand.
16. 8:14-19 – The apostles go to Samaria and give the HS through the laying on of their hands.
17. 8:29 – The HS told Philip to join the eunuch’s chariot.
18. 8:39 – The HS took Philip to Ashdod.
19. 9:17 – Saul was to be filled with the HS. 1 Thes. 1:5
20. 9:31 – Churches were walking in the “comfort of the HS.”
21. 10:19 – The HS spoke to Peter.
22. 10:38 – Jesus was anointed with the HS (at His baptism).
23. 10:44-45, 47; 11:15-16 – The Gentiles received the HS as did the Jews. Peter specifically mentions “at the beginning” which is a reference to Acts 2.
24. 11:12 – The HS spoke to Peter.
25. 11:24 – Barnabas was “full of the HS.” Similar to Acts 6:3.
26. 11:28 – Agabus prophesied by the HS.
27. 13:2, 4 – Saul and Barnabas called and sent out by the HS.
28. 13:9 – Saul/Paul filled with the HS as he spoke.
29. 13:52 – Disciples are “filled with the HS.”
30. 15:8 – The HS was given to the Gentiles just as to the Jews.

- 31. 15:28 – The HS inspired a letter written by the apostles, elders, and brethren in Jerusalem.
- 32. 16:6-7 – The HS forbade Paul from going into Asia and Bithynia.
- 33. 19:2 (twice) – The Ephesians had not yet received the HS.
- 34. 19:6 – The Ephesians received the HS at the laying on of Paul's hands.
- 35. 20:23 – The HS spoke to Paul about his coming persecutions.
- 36. 20:28 – The HS made men overseers of the church.
- 37. 21:4 – Disciples in Tyre told Paul, by the HS, not to go to Jerusalem.
- 38. 21:11 – The HS revealed to Agabus who revealed to Paul that he would go bound to Jerusalem.
- 39. 28:25 – A reference to the HS speaking through Isaiah.

15 – A dispute over circumcision and the Law of Moses.

15:1-5 – The problem reported.

- Circumcision had been a part of Jewish life since the days of Abraham (Gen. 17). The Gentiles heard and accepted the gospel (Acts 10), but were now being troubled by Christians of a Jewish background (15:1, 5). The damage was coming from within the church!
- Paul and Barnabas had a *dissension* (strife) and *disputation* (seeking, questioning) with the false teachers. We must be willing to do the same today when necessary. They then sought the wisdom of the apostles and Jerusalem elders. Galatians 2:1-5 mentions these events – 17 years after Paul's conversion. The Pharisees who had become Christians were trying to bind, not only circumcision, but also that Gentiles should "keep the Law of Moses."

15:6-12 – Peter speaks to the gathering.

- There was much *disputing* (mutual questioning, discussing).
- Peter revealed that he had preached to the Gentiles (Acts 10) and that God made no difference between Jew and Gentile (v. 9). The attempt to bind circumcision and the LOM on Gentiles was placing a great burden on their necks. All are saved in the same manner (v. 11 – Acts 10:47-48; 2:38). The evidence of all this was with the miraculous (v. 12).

15:13-21 – James addresses the gathering.

- What Peter said happened among the Gentiles was a fulfillment of OT prophecy (v. 14-17). James quoted from Amos 9:11-12.
- The *tabernacle* of David is a reference to his family. His royal family came to an end with Coniah (Jer. 22:30), but would be rebuilt with Christ and the church.
- He then makes inspired recommendations for Gentiles (v. 19-20):
 - Abstain from pollutions of idols (things polluted by idols – NKJ). Any form/feature of idolatry.

- Fornication. Forbidden for any Christian, but particularly in regard to pagan worship practices.
- Things strangled and blood (slaughter practices). Goes back to Genesis 9:1-6. All these things pre-date the LOM.

15:22-29 – A letter is written and sent to Gentile Christians.

- The letter noted that a problem existed and originated with some who “went out from us.” The trouble in the church came from within the church!
- The false teaching did not come from the apostles or the church in Jerusalem (v. 24b).
- The letter detailed the nature of the meeting that took place and who was present (v. 23, 25-26). They also noted that the Holy Spirit was involved in the process (v. 28).
- This is the last event in Acts in which Peter is mentioned.

15:30-35 – Encouragement comes from the letter.

- When problems are addressed and handled properly there should be rejoicing.
- Mutual edification (v. 33).
- The teaching never stopped (v. 35).

15:36-41 – The second journey begins with difficulty.

- The intent of the trip (v. 36).
- A hindrance to Paul for the trip (v. 37-39a). There was a contention (*irritation*), but the work of spreading the gospel did not stop.
- We don’t know why John Mark left, we’re just told that he did (Acts 13:13). Paul would later change his mind – 2 Tim. 4:11.

16 – The beginning of the second missionary journey.

16:1-5 – Paul travels to Derbe and Lystra and gets Timothy.

- Paul had been in Antioch with Barnabas (15:30-35) and decided to revisit some of the churches from the first trip (15:36). He took Silas and went through Syria and Cilicia (15:40-41).
- Paul had been stoned and left for dead in Lystra (Acts 14:19).
- While we know nothing of Timothy’s father, other than that he was a Greek, his mother and grandmother are mentioned by name (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15).
- Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3)?
- Why did Paul not have Titus circumcise (Gal. 2:3)?
- Sometimes decisions are made based on judgment and expediency. This is an example of such.
- They taught the Gentiles what had been written in the letter from Jerusalem (15:22-29). The result – 16:5.

16:6-10 – The Macedonian call.

- Their travels (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) continue (16:6-8).

- They were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go to Asia and Bithynia. We are not told how, but we are told why in verses 8-10. Macedonia was ready to hear the gospel.

16:11-15 – Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke go to Philippi.

- This begins a “we” section of Acts – Luke includes himself in the narrative.
- “The providential hand of God is plainly evident in the story. If they found a ship, it had to be going in the right direction; there must be room on board for the company; it needed to be ready to go soon. All of these requirements were met. They sailed toward Macedonia by a *straight course*. The wind was blowing in the right direction – it took them two days to get from Troas to Philippi. The return trip took them five days (Acts 20:6).”
- What they found and what they did – verses 13-15. How did the Lord open Lydia’s heart? Lydia and these women were practicing a religion (Judaism) that was no longer in force. They were doing what they knew to do in order to be considered people who “worshipped God.” Notice the process – she heard them (v. 14), the Lord opened her heart (v. 14), she listened (v. 14), she and her household were baptized (v. 15). That which opened her heart was the hearing of the gospel – just like today.
- The baptism of “the household.” We are told who was there and heard Paul speaking in verse 13. To assume that infants were there and baptized in unwarranted because (1) it is not in the text and (2) she may not have been married. In fact, she probably wasn’t because she was working to provide for herself.

16:16-24 – Paul and Silas are arrested and beaten.

- Luke and Timothy were traveling with them, but notice “we” and “us” in verse 16 compared to the “them” (Paul and Silas) in verses 19-20.
- They were arrested and beaten based on false charges (v. 20-21). The true reason is found in verse 19.
- The girl was demon possessed and Paul, through the authority of Jesus, cast out the demon (v. 18). “Soothsaying” is translated and “fortune-telling” in the NKJ. The Greek word means “to divine or utter spells.”
- 2 Corinthians 11:24-25.
- The “inner prison” is comparable to our solitary confinement. Not only that, but they were put in “the stocks!”

16:25-34 – The Philippian jailor obeys the gospel.

- Their response to their situation is amazing (v. 25). How are they able to do this? Some Christians today find it too much to assemble 4 hours out of a week!
- Earthquakes are natural disasters. This one was not (v. 26)!
- Paul stopped him from committing suicide and his first question was about salvation (v. 30).

- “Believe and you will be saved.” No one can be saved without faith (Jn. 8:24; Heb. 11:6). However, faith alone cannot save (Jas. 2:14-26). The first thing the jailor needed to do was hear and believe the gospel. He did (v. 32), he repented, and was immediately baptized (v. 33). The result (v. 34).

16:35-40 – Paul and Silas are released.

- There was no escape attempt during the earthquake (v. 28). Paul would have earned a reputation as a fugitive if they had escaped.
- By demanding the magistrates (civic commander) to release them (v. 37) they would avoid the appearance of any illegality.
- Paul used the law of the land for his personal defense. It was a capital crime to beat a Roman citizen without a trial.
- The “we” section ends in verse 40.

17 – The second missionary journey continued - Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens.

17:1-9 – Paul and Silas go to Thessalonica.

- Paul’s reasoning (*had a discourse*). Upon what was his discourse based (v. 2)?
- He opened (*explained*) and alleged (*to set forth by proof*) about Christ.
- The typical response to the gospel – some were persuaded and some were not.
- Those who were not persuaded made the most “noise” (v. 5-9). This explains Matthew 23:13.
- These events are mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2.

17:10-14 – Paul and Silas are sent to Berea.

- The Bereans are called *noble* meaning, “honorable, fair.” The NKJ says fair-minded.
- They were called noble because they listened to the message and compared what they heard to what Scripture said.
- Again, many believed, but not all. The response from Thessalonica is interesting (v. 13)! It was a 50 mile trip! Similar to America today – those who oppose “conservative values” will go to great lengths to express their views.

17:15-34 – Paul goes to Athens and waits for Timothy and Silas.

- Verse 16 – Are there things that bother us that we cannot remain silent about?
- One man said, “It was easier to find a god than a man in Athens.”
- Epicurean – Epicurus (342-270 BC) believed the world was formed by accidents and in mythical gods. “His highest aim was to gratify self.”
- Stoic – established by Zeno (334-262 BC), a Greek philosopher. “Peace of mind comes from living a life of virtue in accordance with reason and nature.”
- They called Paul a *babbler*. The Greek term is “seed-picker.” In other words, they felt he was plagiarist who was picking up parts of various beliefs and speaking them. To these people Jesus was a “strange god” (v. 18).

- They wanted to hear Paul (v. 20), but why (v. 21)? Sounds like 2 Tim. 3:1-9.
- Paul begins by noting that they were very superstitious (KJV) or very religious (NKJ). The Greek word means, “demon-fearing, given to the worship of demons.” This is a reference to inferior gods that they worshiped (v. 23).
- He revealed to them the God they did not know who:
 - Made the world and everything in it (v. 24).
 - Is Lord of heaven and earth (v. 24).
 - Does not dwell in man-made temples (v. 24).
 - Does not “need” the things man might give to Him (v. 25).
 - Created all men to dwell on the earth He created (v. 26).
 - For the purpose that man might find Him (v. 27-28). Evidence for the existence of God is all around us. Seeing that evidence should cause a person to “feel after Him” (grope for Him – NKJ). The existence of a Creator is everywhere, but He can only be found in revelation.
 - He is not shaped according to man’s imagination (v. 29).
 - Has specific commands for man to follow (v. 30). The Athenians admitted their ignorance, but now they must repent of it!
 - Is coming again to judge the world (v. 31).
 - Raised His Son from the dead (v. 31).
- The reaction was typical (v. 32-34).

18 – The gospel goes to Corinth and Ephesus.

18:1-6 – Paul in the synagogue with Jews and Greeks.

- The decree by Claudius was issued in AD 49. This husband and wife team is mentioned several times by Paul (Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19).
- Paul had a *dialogue* (reasoned) in the synagogue and *persuaded* (convinced or influenced to believe something) Jews and Greeks. Greeks are Gentiles who started following Judaism without being circumcised.
- 1 Thessalonians 3:1-8 speaks of Silas and Timothy coming to Paul. Seems he received some encouragement and boldness upon the arrival of his friends (v. 5).
- Paul had done all he could do to bring salvation to the Jews, but they would not have it (v. 6).

18:7-17 – Paul among Gentiles in Corinth and on trial.

- The gospel spreads and Paul is reassured (v. 7-11).
- Gallio was in the position in AD 51. Achaia was the name of that region of Greece.
- Gallio seems to have seen through their scheme against Paul (v. 15).
- We do not know who this Sosthenes was or why he was beaten (v. 17).

18:18-23 – Paul begins his return to Jerusalem.

- Paul stayed in Corinth “a good while” (many days). Luke skips over a considerable amount of time.
- He stopped in Cenchrea and shaved his head because of “a vow” (v. 18). We know nothing of the vow.
- Paul parted company with Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus and went to the synagogue (v. 19-21). His intent was to get to Jerusalem.
- He landed at Caesarea which is on the Mediterranean coast of Israel and he went “up” to Jerusalem. When he left Jerusalem he “went down” to Antioch (v. 22). These are elevation terms, not directional terms.
- Verse 23 is the record of the end of his second journey that lasted about three years.

Second missionary journey

He started at Lystra and Derbe (16:1), went through Phrygia and Galatia (16:6), Mysia (16:7), Troas (16:8), Samothrace, Neapolis, and Philippi (16:11-12). He then went to Amphipolis, Appolonia and came to Thessalonica (17:1-2). He went to Berea (17:10) and Athens (17:16). He then went to Corinth (18:1), Cenchrea, and Ephesus (18:18-19). He finished in Caesarea, Jerusalem, Antioch, Galatia, and Phrygia (18:22-24).

18:24-28 – Apollos preaches in Ephesus and is confronted by Aquila and Priscilla.

- This section sets the stage for Paul’s work in Ephesus (19).
- Apollos was “eloquent” (an orator), “mighty” (strong) in the scriptures, and “fervent in spirit” (to bubble or boil).
- He taught “diligently” (NKJ – accurately – v. 25). He was precise, careful with his teaching.
- But, he was missing something!
- John’s baptism was legitimate for its given period of time. John’s work was to point people to the coming Christ (Jn. 1:19-34). In fact, John probably did not know about the baptism into Jesus Christ for the remission of sins as he was beheaded prior to it.
- A husband and wife worked together to correct this man (v. 26). Women are teachers too!
- Apollos continued his intense (mightily convinced) preaching (v. 27-28).

Acts 19 – Paul in Ephesus.

19:1-7 – Disciples are baptized.

- Ephesus was known for having one of the Seven Wonders of the World – the temple of Diana. It was about 80,000 sq. ft.
- After being taught in Ephesus, Apollos went to Corinth and Paul came to Ephesus and found some “disciples,” not Christians.

- While they were students of God's word, they had not been baptized into Christ nor did they have the gift of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:8-14 discusses the purpose/necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit.
- When they "received" the HS they spoke with tongues and prophesied (v. 6).
- John's baptism was legitimate for its time, but the Ephesians needed to be baptized into Christ – the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5.
- We must be baptized (1) with a correct understanding of what it accomplishes and (2) into the correct name and body (Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 12:13).

19:8-10 – The teaching in Ephesus continues.

- Paul was *disputing* (conversing, discussing) and *persuading* (to induce by words) about the kingdom of God, i.e., the church for three months.
- When "the Way" was blasphemed before the multitude, not only did he leave, but he took the disciples with him.
- For two years he taught in the school of Tyrannus. Nothing is known of this school.
- The effect of his work – v. 10.

19:11-20 – Miraculous manifestations.

- While miracles are supernatural events, these miracles were even more so – perhaps because of Diana and other gods/goddesses of the region.
- Wandering Jews were claimed to have the ability to cast out demons (v.13-17) and it did not turn out well!
- Former pagans were being convinced by the simple gospel (v. 18-20)! *Curious arts* = magical arts.

19:21-41 – A riot in Ephesus.

- Paul's trips were well planned (v. 21-22).
- The riot starts with those who were being effected by Paul's preaching (v. 23-27). These are not false accusations against Paul!
- The commotion (*no small stir* – KJV) spread reached "the whole city" (v. 29).
- The theater was able to seat over 25,000 people (v. 29). Paul's influence had even reached the *Asiarch* – the chief ruler of Asia (v. 31).
- Verses 32-34 – the same thing happens today!
- The Ephesians held tightly to their paganism (v. 35-36). Verses 37-41 seem to show the clerk's motivation – "We don't want to get into trouble with Rome."

Acts 20 – Paul travels to several places visiting brethren.

20:1-6 – Macedonia & Greece.

- The 3rd missionary journey covered several years and many places. He covered Galatia and Phrygia in Asia Minor and spent three years in Ephesus. He had established congregations in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.
- 2 Corinthians 1:8-9.

- Several people accompanied Paul during this trip (v. 4).
- Another “we” section begins in verse 6, recording that Paul and Luke went to Troas and stayed for seven days so they could assemble with the church on the first day of the week.

20:7-12 – Troas.

- This verse directly connects the first day of the week with “the breaking of bread.” Other passages support this teaching. 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 11:17-20.
- A Roman official, Pliny – the emperor of Trajan wrote in AD 112 about Christians eating the Lord’s Supper on a “fixed day.”
- The Greek reads that they came together “in the first of the Sabbath.” *Sabbaton* means week or seven – Luke 18:12.
- The “Eutychus incident” is recorded in verses 8-12.

20:13-16 – Further travels on his way to Jerusalem.

20:17-38 – Miletus.

- This is an important text when studying the role of the eldership in the church. The terms we use describe a work to be done. Luke uses all three terms in this text:
 - **Elders** – *presbuteros* – one who is of age, experienced – 1 Tim. 3:6.
 - **Overseers** – *episkopos* – guardian, superintendent. One who sees that things are done correctly – 1 Tim. 3:4-5.
 - **Feed** – *poimein* – to tend a flock, keep sheep – 1 Pet. 5:2-3.
- Paul spoke of his manner among the Ephesians (v. 18-21, 25-27, 31, 33-35).
- He also spoke of his future service as he went to Jerusalem (v. 22-24).
- A tearful goodbye (v. 36-38).

Acts 21 – Paul returns to Jerusalem.

21:1-14 – After the third missionary journey Paul returned to Palestine.

- After his meeting with the elders of Ephesus in Miletus, Paul went to Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre, Ptolemais, and Caesarea (v. 1-8).
- Paul is told “through the Spirit” not to go to Jerusalem (v. 4, 10-12). The Holy Spirit revealed to disciples and Agabus what would happen to Paul once he got there. They advised him not to go based on their judgment.
- Paul’s response – v. 13-14.
- Paul and Luke stayed with Philip the evangelist who had daughters who prophesied (v. 8-9). Some use this to “prove” that women should be allowed to preach in the assembly. This is part of the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32. We are not told how, when, or in front of whom they prophesied. We do know that whatever they did would not contradict other passages of Scripture – 1 Tim. 2:8-14; 1 Cor. 14.

21:15-26 – Paul gets to Jerusalem.

- He reports to James and the elders of Jerusalem what had been happening on his mission trips. They all glorified the Lord.
- The reports of what Paul had been teaching were not true (v. 21). Notice. “the Jews who were among Gentiles.” A particular group was singled out in this report about Paul. Also, “they ought not to circumcise their children.” Paul never taught that. The apostles and Jerusalem elders did point out that circumcision was not necessary to salvation (Acts 15). Finally, it was reported that Paul was teaching that Jews should not keep their customs (usual practices). Again, a false charge. While the law was nailed to the cross, there were customs that were not sinful for them to keep.
- There was a division in the church at Jerusalem because of the false reports about what he had been teaching (v. 22). Paul was encouraged to purify himself and pay the expenses for the men who had taken a vow.
- We must understand that during the first century there were many Jews who converted to Christianity yet were still “zealous of the law” (v. 20). Some, after obeying the gospel, still felt obligated to keep parts of the Law of Moses. While Paul knew that the Law had been nailed to the cross, he also “became all things to all men that he might save some” (1 Cor. 9:19-23). We must also remember that Judaism is not comparable to paganism or denominationalism. It was authored by God Himself, not man. The issue of Judaism and temple service was finally completely ended in AD 70 when Rome destroyed Jerusalem. Matthew 24:13-15.
- We should also remember that at this time the NT had not yet been fully revealed.
- The issue of Gentile converts to Christianity had been resolved (v. 25).

21:27-22:29 – Paul arrested and addresses a mob who wants to kill him.

- More false charges are brought (v. 27-29).
- He is arrested and beaten (v. 30-32) and then ceased by Roman authorities (v. 33-36).
- Paul seeks permission to address the mob (v. 37-40) and got their attention by speaking Hebrew.

22 – Paul’s defense in Jerusalem.

22:1-5 – Paul’s past.

- Paul had been seized by the Jews in the temple and beaten (21:30-32) and then arrested by Roman soldiers (21:33). He is then given permission to speak to the mob.
- Informs them that at one time he felt the same way as they did right then (v. 3). He did not take lightly what he did as a Jewish man (v. 4-5).

- He was standing in front of the Sanhedrin, from whom he had permission to persecute and arrest Christians in the past. No one questioned his zeal and devotion to the persecution of Christians.

22:6-11 – Saul confronted by Jesus as he was on his way to persecute the church.

- By persecuting the church, Saul was persecuting Christ Himself (Acts 9:4-5).
- 9:7 – “heard a voice,” 22:9 – “did not hear,” 26:14 – the voice was in the Hebrew language. They heard a voice, but did not understand what was said – John 6:60.
- The Lord did not tell Saul what to do, but would send someone (Ananias) who would.
- Verse 11 – Saul during the time he could not see – 9:9, 11.

22:12-16 – Ananias’ message to Saul.

- Verse 13 - Ananias had miraculous ability – 9:17-18.
- “Know His will” (v. 14) – Galatians 1:11-17.
- Paul is still bearing witness to Christ today (v. 15)!
- He spent three days in fasting and prayer – why be baptized?

22:17-21 – What happened to Saul after he returned to Jerusalem.

- This is three years after his baptism (Gal. 1:18-19).
- This was Paul’s commission to take his journeys among the Gentiles.
- Paul felt that perhaps the Jews would be curious as to why he changed his ways (v. 19-20).

22:22-29 – The Jewish reaction to what Paul just said.

- The Jewish people rejected Christ, but it seems they hate the Gentiles even more (v. 22-23).
- The Romans decide to beat Paul to figure out what is going on (v. 24-25). “Bound” means to be stretched out.
- Paul uses his legal status as a Roman citizen to prevent the beating (v. 25-29). Roman citizenship could be obtained by inheritance from your father, purchasing it, or being born into it as was Paul.
- He is untied and the Jewish authorities would hear from him the next day (23).

23 – Paul before the Sanhedrin.

23:1-5 – Paul’s conscience as a Jew.

- Paul was faithful to what he sincerely believed what was right (v. 1). Sincerity and a clean conscience does not make one right with God, only obedience can do that.
- History says that Ananias was “violent, cruel, and a glutton.” He is described as a “whited wall.” Josephus wrote that he “took bribes, was covetous, and used wicked and violent men.” He also wrote that Ananias was murdered a few years after this event.

- Many believe that in verse 5 Paul was saying, “I did not think the High Priest would conduct himself like this man.” He then quoted Exodus 22:28. You smack Paul in the mouth and scripture falls out!

23:6-10 – Paul uses an opportunity.

- Verse 9 is interesting in view of everything that has been happening to Paul!
- They knew this message was from God, but when they disagreed with Paul, they were ready to kill him.

23:11-22 – A plot against Paul.

- “Be of good cheer” = take courage! He would live to see Rome.
- 2 Timothy 4:16-18
- The plan to kill Paul – v. 12-15. 2 Corinthians 11:26
- Paul’s nephew helped save his life (v. 16-22).

23:23-35 – Paul is taken from Jerusalem to Caesarea.

- 470 men are chosen to take Paul safely to Felix, a Roman governor at 9:00 PM.
- Claudius Lysias took the credit for saving Paul – v. 27.

24 – Paul accused in front of Felix.

24:1-9 – Paul accused of sedition.

- Tertullus began by flattering the governor (v. 2-4) and then accused Paul without any evidence (v. 5-6).
- The charges – pestilent (trouble-maker), sedition, a ringleader of Nazarenes, attempted to profane the temple.
- He forgot to mention the violent mob that pulled Paul out of the temple, began beating him, and wanted to kill him (v. 7).

24:10-21 – Paul’s defense.

- Paul was charged with a lot, but had only spent seven days in Jerusalem before he was arrested (v. 11, 1).
- The charges were untrue and unprovable (v. 12-13). Paul was not afraid to speak about what he had been doing (v. 14-16).
- Chapter 21 records Paul’s conduct while he was in Jerusalem for a week. He knew and stated that the reason he was in front of Felix was because of his preaching (v. 20-21).

24:22-27 – Felix’s response.

- Felix stopped the proceedings and kept Paul in custody (v. 22-23).
- Later, Felix and his wife listen to Paul about “the faith in Christ” (v. 24-25).
- Righteousness – doing what is right (Rom. 1:16-17).
- Temperance – self-control (Col. 3:5).
- Judgment to come (Heb. 9:27).
- Felix “trembled” (NKJ – was afraid). As far as we know, Felix did not change.
- Paul’s stays in custody for two years (v. 26-27)!

Paul's third missionary journey

Antioch (18:22), Galatia and Phrygia (18:23), Ephesus (19:1), Macedonia (20:1), Greece (20:2-3), Macedonia and Asia (20:3-4), Philippi and Troas (20:6), Assos (20:13), Mitylene, Samos, Trogyllium, Miletus (20:13-15), Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre, Ptolemais, Caesarea, Jerusalem (21:1-15).

Paul is in Jerusalem from 21:15-23:22. He is then moved to Caesarea (23:23-26:32). After appealing to Caesar, Paul is taken to Rome (27-28).

25 – Paul before Festus and Agrippa.

25:1-5 – Paul is charged by the Jews to Festus.

- Festus was a Roman governor of Judea sometime between AD 57-60.
- The intent of the Jews is revealed in verse 3.

25:6-12 – Charges brought without evidence and Paul appeals to Caesar.

- The “fix” is in – v. 7-9.
- Verse 11 shows Paul's attitude toward government authority. Paul endorses capital punishment. Genesis 9:3-6.

25:13-27 – Festus speaks to Agrippa about Paul.

- Herod Agrippa II and Bernice were brother and sister, living in incest.
- Felix explains what has happened concerning Paul and the charges brought against him (v. 18-19).
- Agrippa wants to hear it himself (v. 22-27).

26 – Paul before Agrippa.

26:1-11 – Paul begins his defense.

- Agrippa was familiar with Jews customs and Paul begins with his training as a Pharisee (v. 4-5).
- He was arrested because of his message, not his conduct (v. 6-8). What is the “hope of Israel?”
- Paul's work as a persecutor of Christians (v. 9-11). He “compelled” Christians to speak out (blaspheme) against Christ. To compel means “to drive or force.”

26:12-18 – The confrontation on the road to Damascus.

- Saul was directly commissioned to be an apostle (v. 16).
- He would suffer from Jews and Gentiles (v. 17).
- Why Paul was sent – v. 18.

26:19-23 – Paul's obedience to the commission.

- He immediately began preaching (9:20).
- The message was for all – v. 23.

26:24-32 – Festus and Agrippa send Paul to Caesar.

- “You are a raving maniac!”
- People will still respond to the truth in this way. “That's the silliest thing I've ever heard!” “That just doesn't make any sense to me.”

- Paul was speaking truth and “soberness.” The NKJ says “reason.” In other words, he was not crazy.
- What happened to Christ and the resurrection was not “done in a corner.” This is approximately 25 years after the death, burial, and resurrection. Paul was relying on the facts of history and, in fact, was willing to die for them!
- Agrippa knew what Paul was talking about and was “almost persuaded.”
- 1 Corinthians 1:14-17.
- Their conclusion – Paul is not guilty of a thing (v. 31)!

27 – Paul’s voyage to Rome as a prisoner.

Paul appealed to Caesar while he was standing before the Roman governor of Judea, Festus (25:1-12).

27 – A description of the events on his way from Caesarea to Malta.

- Notice the difficulty – v. 4, 7, 9, 14, 18, 20, 27, 29, 41.
- 2 Corinthians 11:25-26
- Paul is reassured that he will get to Rome – 27:21-26.

28 – From Malta to Rome.

- 28:1-10 – evidence of Paul’s apostleship.
- Paul arrives in Rome (v. 16) and was permitted to speak before the leaders of the Jews (v. 17-20).
- They were curious about the “sect” (v. 21-22).
- *Sect* is from *airesis* (heresy). They thought Christianity was a division of Judaism.
- He preached to them about the “kingdom of God” from the Law and Prophets.
- He preached to them about Jesus from the Law and Prophets.
- You cannot have or understand the NT without the OT.
- Typical response – v. 24.
- Paul addressed their rejection – v. 25-28.
- While in Rome he continued teaching people about the church (kingdom of God) and the Lord (authority) Jesus (salvation) Christ (Messiah).